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A Study on Indentification of Farm Opinion Leaders in Guntur District of Andhra Pradesh*

Recent developments in agriculture have increased the demand of extension services. Government with limited personnel has to resort to trickle down strategy to disseminate agricultural information through farm opinion leaders to all the rural community. Reaching every individual farm family is an uphill task for the professional extension worker as the ratio between extension workers and the farm families is wide in India. This warrants a need for the extension workers to work through the opinion leaders who can guide the community towards the established goals and this strategy will be more effective as opinion leader adds his opinion to the message.Keeping in view the above aspects, the research study was conducted, to measure the knowledge level of opinion leaders and followers regarding recommended rice cultivation practices and to find out relationship between personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics of opinion leaders and followers with their knowledge level.

The present study was conducted in purposively selected Bapatla mandal of Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh during 1998-99. Out of 20 villages in Bapatla mandal, two villages namely Murukondapadu and Bhartipudi were selected based on the progressiveness criteria as progressive and non progressive villages respectively. From each village 6 opinion leaders and 48 followers were identified with the help of sociometric technique, making the total sample size of 108.The 'teacher made test' method was employed for the measurement of opinion leaders and followers knowledge regarding recommended cultivation practices of rice (Saikrishna, 1998). The independent variables used to know the association with knowledge level of opinion leaders and followers were education, mass media participation, participation in formal organizations, innovative proneness and economic motivation. The data was collected by personnel interview method and analysed using percentage, frequency and zero order correlation. It was observed that, in progressive village, cent per cent of opinion leaders were in high category, in case of followers 8.33 per cent were in low, 77.08 per cent were in medium and 14.59 per cent were in high categories according to their knowledge level. In non progressive village, in case of opinion leaders, 50.00 per cent of them were in medium category and 50.00 per cent were in high category and in case of followers, 14.59 per cent of them were in low category and 85.41 per cent in medium category according to their knowledge level regarding recommended cultivation practices of rice. In total, nonprogressive village, 12.96 per cent were in low, 81.48 per cent were in medium and 5.56 per cent were in high categories according to their knowledge level.

In total, in progressive village, 7.40 per cent were in low category, 68.52 per cent were in medium category and 24.08 per cent were in high categories according to their knowledge level regarding recommended cultivation practices of rice. (Table 1). The relationship between knowledge and personal, socio economic and psychological characteristics of opinion leaders and followers has been presented in table 2. As the data indicates the independent variables viz education, mass media participation, participation in formal organizations, economic motivation, innovative proneness of opinion leaders and followers in non progressive and progressive villages had positive and significant relationship with knowledge level of opinion leaders and followers in non progressive and progressive villages. The data in table 2 depicts that the relationship between education and knowledge level of the respondents in both progressive and non progressive villages about

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Table 1. Distribution of opinion leaders and followers in progressive and non progressive villages according to their knowledge level about recommended cultivation practices of rice

Categories	Progressive villages			Non progressive village		
	Opinion leaders	Followers	Total	Opinion leaders	Followers	Total
Low (< X-SD)		4	4		7	7
		(8.33)	(7.40)	-	(14.59)	(12.96)
Medium	-	37	37	3	41	44
		(77.08)	(68. 52)	(50.00)	(85.41)	(81.48)
(X-SO to x+SD)						
High	6	7	13	3	-	3
(> X + SO)	(100.00)	(14.59)	(24.08)	(50.00)		(5.56)
X: 19.184 80:4.469						

recommended cultivation practices of rice was positive and significant which implies that the education level of opinion leaders and followers had positive influence on their knowledge level.

There was positive and significant relationship between participation in formal organizations and knowledge level of opinion leaders and followers in progressive and non progressive villages about recommended cultivation practices of rice. The reasons for this might be the full involvement of the respondents in to various formal organizations. While interacting with other members in the organizations they might have gained the knowledge.

From the table 2, it was evident that the relationship between mass media participation and knowledge level of respondents in non progressive and progressive villages about recommended cultivation practices of rice was significant. It is logical to expect that educated farmers with more exposure to mass media will acquire more knowledge about recommendations through media. From table 2, it was also evident that the relationship between innovative proneness and knowledge level of respondents about recommended cultivation practices of rice was positive and significant. The reason for this may be that more number of farmers desired to seek changes in traditional methods of agriculture, as and when they are practical and feasible. The farmers with higher innovative proneness had the urge of acquiring more information and tryout new methods suitable to them.

From table 2, it was evident that the relationship between economic motivation and knowledge of respondents in non progressive villages about recommended cultivation practices of rice was positive and significant. The reason for this may be, in order to gain more knowledge which is required for getting good results, economic motivation is the factor which helped in increasing their thirst for knowledge. Since knowledge happens to be the basic component in any enterprise the farmers who are mainly entrepreneurs with higher economic motivation had general tendency of acquiring more knowledge to implement the practices of rice cultivation.

It can be inferred that from the above findings that there is a need to identify the opinion leaders and utilize them in the dissemination of agricultural information to their followers and other farmers by the extension personnel.

Table 2. Relationship between knowledge level and selected independent variables of opinion leaders and followers progressive and non progressive villages

Sl. No	Variables	Progressive village 'r' value	Non progressive village 'r' value
1	Education	0.619**	0.722**
2	Participation in formal organizations	0.455**	0.591 **
3	Mass media participation	0.558**	0.735**
4	Innovative proneness	0.315*	0.436**
5	Economic motivation	0.634**	0.392**

** : Significant at 1 % level

*: Significant at 5 % level

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