RESEARCH ARTICLE

INFORMATION PROCESSING PATTERN OF EXTENSION PERSONNEL

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted in two regions of U. T. of Puducherry namely Puducherry and Karaikal. The extension personnel of Puducherry Department of Agriculture were involved in technology transfer for the upliftment of farming community. The extension personnel from all the organizational positions (ADAs, JDAs, DDAs, AOs, AAOs, Field Men and Demonstration Assistants) engaged in transfer of technology were selected as respondents (115 Nos.). A well structured questionnaire consisting of various indices, tests and scales was prepared and used. The results revealed that majority of the respondents (63.48 per cent) were in medium information processing category. More than half of the extension personnel frequently discussed the received information with farmers and higher-ups for evaluating the information. Majority of extension personnel always stored the information on a record book. Only one-fourth of the respondents have sometimes transformed the information in the form of power point slides and written materials or handouts.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural Extension is the most important service for agricultural and rural development. Primary responsibility of agricultural extension work is to help farmers make efficient use of available resources towards better production from their holding. The ultimate goal of Agricultural Extension is to transfer improved farming practices to the rural people using various strategies of communication to encourage farmers to adopt agricultural innovations. Information processing is one of the important strategies which include evaluation, storage and transformation of information. Information acquired from various sources cannot be easily understood, if disseminated to them as such. Hence, it has to be evaluated based on the needs of the farmers, stored and transformed, then transferred to farmers in a form acceptable by them. In this context, the job of extension personnel is challenging and it does not end with dissemination of technologies alone. They have to motivate and convince the farmers to accept their advice and act on it. Keeping these in view, a study was undertaken to find out information processing pattern of the extension personnel with the following objectives (i) To find out the distribution of extension personnel based on their information processing (ii) To find out the information processing pattern of the extension personnel.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was undertaken in Union Territory of Puducherry during 2007 – 2008. The study was conducted in two regions of Pondicherry Union Territory, i. e. Puducherry and Karaikal. Entire population of the extension personnel of 'Puducherry State Department of Agriculture' working in all the organizational positions from the level of Additional Director of Agriculture to Demonstration Assistants who were involved in transfer of technology were considered as respondents. Total number of respondents was 115. Expost-facto research design was used. A well structured questionnaire consisting of various indices, tests and scales to measure the variables were prepared in consultation with experts and review of literature. Different statistical tools viz. cumulative frequency, percentage analysis and correlation analysis were used for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Distribution of extension personnel according to information processing

Distribution of extension personnel on the basis of information processing was studied and presented in Table 1. Depicts that a large number of extension personnel 63.48 per cent had medium information processing whereas 33.04 per cent of them had high and only 3.48 per cent of them had low information processing. Many of the respondents might not

have been well educated and not undergone more number of trainings. Hence they would have moderately followed the procedures of processing the information acquired by evaluating, storing and transferring them into the form in which it is easily understandable and adoptable by farmers. These might have resulted in more number of extension personnel falling under medium category of information processing. Malik and Narwal (1994) and Raju (1997) also reported similar results in their study on information processing by extension personnel.

Table 1. Distribution of extension personnel according to information processing (n = 115)

Sl.No	Category	Number of respondents	Per cent
1.	Low	4	3.48
2.	Medium	73	63.48
3.	High	38	33.04
	Total	115	100.00

Information processing pattern of the extension personnel

Information processing pattern of the extension personnel was studied in terms of their activities of evaluation, storage and transformation of information acquired by them. The results are furnished in Table 2, 3 and 4.

Perusal of Table 2 indicates that more than half of the extension personnel frequently discussed the received information with farmers (58.26 per cent) and higher-ups (52.18 per cent) to evaluate the information received and they also evaluated the information based on the past experience (50.44 per cent). Nearly half of them (47.83 per cent) frequently evaluated the information taking into consideration of technical feasibility and 40.00 per cent of them discussed the information with colleagues and then evaluated accordingly. They sometimes evaluated the information by cross checking against the past recommendations (44.34 per cent) and conducted a trial in farmers' field to know the suitability of technical information (39.13 per cent). Making judgment on socio-economic feasibility of local farmer on the information received was always done by 32.17 per cent of the extension personnel. The information received must be checked for its suitability with farmer's requirements. Its credibility can be checked with higher-ups. The respondents in the present study might have discussed with farmers and higher-ups for its suitability and credibility. They also might have evaluated the information based on past experience and discussion with colleagues. Hence, this result would have emerged. This finding is supported by Kambar (1985). Table 3 brings to notice that majority (52.18 per cent) of extension personnel always stored the information on a record book and preserved them briefly on a small personal note book (33.92 per cent).

Table 2: Extent of frequency of evaluation of information by extension personnel

(n=115)

Sl. No.	Methods	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1.	Discuss the received information with farmers	33 (28.70)	67 (58.26)	12 (10.44)	3 (2.60)	0 (0)
2.	Evaluate the information based on the past experience	30 (26.09)	58 (50.44)	27 (23.47)	0 (0)	0 (0)
3.	Make judgment of socio-economic feasibility of local farmer on the information received	37 (32.17)	33 (28.70)	33 (28.70)	12 (10.43)	0 (0)
4.	Conduct a trial in farmers' field to know the suitability of technical information	24 (20.87)	33 (28.70)	45 (39.13)	10 (8.70)	3 (2.60)
5.	Evaluate the information by cross checking against the past recommendations	24 (20.87)	30 (6.09)	51 (44.34)	10 (8.70)	0 (0)
6.	Evaluate the information taking into consideration of technical feasibility	30 (26.09)	55 (47.83)	27 (23.48)	3 (2.60)	0 (0)
7.	Discuss the information with colleagues and then evaluate accordingly	27 (23.48)	46 (40.00)	27 (23.48)	15 (13.04)	0 (0)
8.	Make a discussion with higher-ups to evaluate the information received	27 (23.48)	60 (52.18)	22 (19.14)	3 (2.60)	3 (2.60)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

Table 3. Extent of frequency of Storage of information by extension personnel

(n=115)

Sl. No.	Methods	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1.	Preserve the information in the form of a detail note on a personal diary	48 (41.74)	33 (28.70)	30 (26.08)	4 (3.48)	0 (0)
2.	Store the information on a record book	60 (52.18)	33 (28.70)	22 (19.12)	0 (0)	0 (0)
3.	Maintain Subject wise file for the information obtained	25 (21.74)	34 (29.56)	43 (37.39)	8 (6.96)	5 (4.35)
4.	Keep the information indexing	32 (27.82)	35 (30.44)	32 (27.83)	11 (9.56)	5 (4.35)
5.	Preserve the information briefly on a small personal note book	39 (33.92)	36 (31.30)	15 (13.04)	15 (13.04)	10 (8.70)
6.	Store the information in a computer	12 (10.44)	22 (19.13)	15 (13.04)	15 (13.04)	51 (44.35)
7.	Preserve the information in a CD	4 (3.47)	20 (17.39)	27 (23.48)	4 (3.48)	60 (52.18)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

Table 4. Extent of frequency of Transformation of information by extension personnel

(n=115)

Sl. No.	Methods	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1.	Developing information board	0 (0)	6 (5.22)	21 (18.26)	40 (34.78)	48 (41.74)
2.	Preparing posters/slogans	2 (1.74)	6 (5.22)	7 (6.08)	40 (34.78)	60 (52.18)
3.	Preparing success stories	3 (2.60)	3 (2.60)	14 (12.18)	45 (39.14)	50 (43.48)
4.	Preparing charts and graphs	0 (0)	13 (11.30)	18 (15.64)	42 (36.53)	42 (36.53)
5.	Preparing power point slides	9 (7.83)	18 (15.64)	22 (19.13)	9 (7.83)	57 (49.57)
6.	Preparing written materials or handouts	12 (10.43)	15 (13.04)	46 (40.00)	21 (18.26)	21 (18.26)
7.	Preparing circular letters on the selected messages	3 (2.60)	6 (5.22)	33 (28.71)	30 (26.08)	43 (37.39)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage)

This finding goes in line with the finding of Reddy (1997). It is also found that 52.18 per cent of extension personnel never preserved the information in a CD and 44.35 per cent of them never stored in a computer. Information indexing was frequently done by 30.44 per cent of the respondents and 37.39 per cent of them sometimes maintained subject wise file for the information obtained. Preserving information in a CD is a time consuming process and it needs specific skills to operate the computer through which the information can be stored. They might not have been trained in the usage of computers. But storing the information in a record book is very easy for which only pen and paper are required that can be easily accessed by the extension personnel. So the extension personnel might have stored information in record book than in a computer or in a CD. Table 4 reveals that more than half of the respondents have sometimes (59.13"per cent) transformed the information in the form of power point slides and written materials or handouts. Whereas majority of extension personnel never prepared information board, posters/slogans, success stories, charts and graphs and circular letters. Personnel in higher organizational positions might have organized meetings and trainings who were in limited number in the population studied. They would have prepared power point slides and written materials in support of their lectures during the meetings or trainings. This might be the probable reason for only a limited extension personnel transformed the information they gathered. This result corroborates with the result of Kambar (1985).

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that large number of extension personnel was having medium information processing.

The results pertaining to different dimensions of information processing of extension personnel indicated that majority of the respondents frequently discussed the received information with farmers and higher-ups for evaluating, always stored them in a record book and sometimes transformed the information in the form of power point slides and written materials or handouts. Hence the department may motivate the extension personnel to prepare more number of handouts and distribute to large number farmers for effective transfer of technology.

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