Extent of Knowledge of Change Agents and Correlational Analysis of Variables with Their Communication Skill

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted in Baghpat district of Western Uttar Pradesh to know the knowledge level of change agent about communication material and skill. Baghpat district has six blocks namely; Baghpat, Pilana, Khekhra, Baraut, Chhaprauli and Binouli. Hence, all the six blocks were taken up for the study. From each block BDOs, ADOs and VPDOs were taken by using census method. In all, 250 change agents from six blocks formed the sample for the study. Data from respondents were collected through well-structured pre-tested interview schedule. It was found that respondents were nearly three-fourth of respondents found to have possessed low to medium level of knowledge. Data indicated that the variables education, socio-economic status, communication facilities, training attended and mass media exposure had positive correlation with communication skill of change agents. Age and service experience were found to have negative significant association with communication skill. No association was found between communication skill and other independent variables like change proneness, job satisfaction and workload.

Key words : *Antecedent Variables; Communication Skill; Change Proneness; Job Satisfaction;*

*S*ince independence, attempts have been made to improve agricultural production activity and living standards of farmers through introduction of several programmes and projects related to agriculture, for instance, IADP, HYV, MFDA, SFDA, CDP, and IRDP etc. Similarly training units have been set up to impart training to farmers on various dimensions and related aspects. Despite best efforts through these training units, the desired outcomes have not been yet achieved, although tremendous development in agriculture sector has taken place. However, there is still need for further improvement. The low agricultural productivity particularly among small and marginal farmers who form the bulk of farming community are the probable indication of low adoption of farm technology which, in turn speaks of poor skill and knowledge of the farmers and also maybe poor or ineffective communication skill of change agents. This maybe resultant of poor linkages between the three system i.e., research, extension and client system. This is evident from the fact that hardly 25 to 40 per cent of technologies have gone to farmers. The reasons may be several such as inappropriate technology, inputs constraints, lack of knowledge, inadequacy of technology transfer system etc. It is very difficult to pin point particularly reasons responsible for poor adoption. But one factor, which is widely accepted, is that the transfer of technology system should be effective and efficient and for that change agents need to be equipped with the latest knowledge of subject matter.

The change agents acting as communicator of information become an indispensable element in the process of communication in implementing and securing desired changes/results in agriculture. There is no denying that subject matter training course for change agents are frequently organized to keep them abreast with technical know-how but training course on extension methodology, communication skill are perhaps rarely organized. Keeping in the present study was conducted in Baghpat district of Western Uttar Pradesh to know the following objectives:

1. To know the knowledge level of change agent about communication material and skill.

2.   To find out the relationship between Antecedent variables of change agents with their communication material and skill.

3.   To identify the constraints in the use of communication sources/methods.

METHODOLOGY

Baghpat district of Western Uttar Pradesh as a whole formed the locale for the study. Baghpat distt. Has six blocks namely; Baghpat, Pilana, Khekhra, Baraut, Chhaprauli and Binouli. Hence, all the six blocks were taken up for the study. From each block BDOs, ADOs and VPDOs were taken by using census method. In all, 250 change agents from six blocks formed the sample for the study. Data from respondents were collected through well-structured pre-tested interview schedule. Averages, percentages, correlation and multiple regression statistical techniques were used to arrive at valid inferences. Knowledge was measured with the help of knowledge test developed in consolation with the expert scientists. There were 25 basic questions which change agents are supposed to know. The score one was assigned to correct reply and zero to incorrect. The respondents wise score obtained were summed up and mean ± S.D. procedure of categorization was followed for computing low, medium and high knowledge level. Relationship between independent and dependent variables was calculated by employing formula suggested by Pearson's.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Knowledge Level of Change Agents about Communication Material: The data about the knowledge level of change agents about communication material have been presented in Table 1. The respondents were further classified into three categories namely, low, medium and high.

Table 1. Knowledge level of Change Agents about Communication Material

S.No.	Category	Score range	No.	%
1	Low	7-10	76	30.4
2	Medium	11-13	105	42.0
3	High	14-21	69	27.6

The data in Table 1 indicated that the knowledge scores of respondents ranged between 7-21 as against attainable knowledge score of 25. The mean knowledge score computed to be 12.18, which is equal to 48.72 per cent. This speaks of average knowledge level of respondents about communication material equal to

48.72 per cent. The data revealed that the sizable number of change agents (42%) possessed medium knowledge level followed by 30.4 per cent who acquired low level of knowledge and remaining 27.6 per cent respondents obtained high knowledge level.

Communication skill of Change Agents : The data about the communication skill of change agents have been furnished in Table 2. The respondents were further classified into three categories namely, low, medium and high.

Data in Table 2 indicated that communication skill score of respondents ranged between 48-73 as against attainable score of 92. The mean score computed to be 59.51, which is equal to 64.68 per cent. This speaks of average communication skill level of change agents.

Table 2. Communication Skill of Change Agents

S.No.	Category	Score range	No.	%
1	Low	48-53	87	34.8
2	Medium	54-61	94	37.6
3	High	62-73	69	27.6

The data in Table 2 revealed that the sizeable number if change agents (37.60%) possessed medium communication skill level followed by 34.80 per cent who have low level of communication skill and remaining 27.6 per cent respondents obtained high level of communication skill. It can be concluded that tree-fourth of change agents had medium to high level of communication skill.

Relationship of Antecedent Variables of Change Agents with Their Knowledge about Communication material and Communication Skill : With a view to find out relationship between independent and dependent variables taken for this study, the coefficient of correlation statistical technique was employed. This technique was used analysis to find out the variation caused in the dependent variables jointly by the independent variables. This was done to focus on the predictive ability of independent variables over dependent variables because correlation analysis does not provide this ability as it gives strength and direction of association. The predictive power was estimated with the help of coefficient of multiple determination (r^2). The result obtained have been presented and discussed as follows:

Influence of Respondents' Antecedent Variables on their Knowledge about Communication Material : It is observed from Table 3 that the variables education, socio-economic status, change proneness, job

satisfaction, communication facilities and mass media exposure were positively and significantly associated with knowledge about communication material of change agents. The variables of age and service experience had shown negatively significant correlation with knowledge about communication material. The variables of workload and training attended though positively related did not exert any influence on knowledge about communication material. The similar findings were also recorded by *Sangwan (2000)* and *Singh (1998)*.

Table 3. Correlation Coefficient between Respondents' Antecedent Variables and their Knowledge

Variables	'r' values
Age	-0.2605**
Education	.3295**
Socio-economic status	.2490**
Change Proneness	.3512**
Job Satisfaction	.2033**
Workload	.1012
Communication Facilities	.2050**
Training Attended	.1072
Service Experience	-.2661**
Mass Media Exposure	.6235**

** Significant at 1% level of probability

It is therefore, concluded that variables having significant correlation and are manipulative in nature should be manipulated so that the respondents' knowledge about communication material can be increased.

Influence of Respondents' Antecedent Variables on their Communication skill: The correlation coefficients worked out between antecedent variables of change agents and their communication skill have been presented in Table 4. A cursory look at the data indicated that the variables education, socio-economic status, communication facilities, training attended and mass media exposure had positive correlation with communication skill of change agents. Age and service experience were fond to have negative significant association with communication skill. No association was found between communication skill and other independent variables like change proneness, job satisfaction and workload. The similar observations were also recorded by *Sangwan (2000)* and *Singh (1998).*

Constraints in the Use of Communication Source : Constraints are the hurdles or bottlenecks that hinder the use of communication materials. The constraints were divided into four major groups namely,

'infrastructural', 'financial', 'technical and manpower' and 'organizational support and procedural constraints'. The data regarding these constraints, so collected, have been furnished in Table 5.

Table 4. Correlation Coefficient between Respondents' Antecedent Variables and their Communication Skill

Variables	'r' values
Age	-.1912**
Education	.2558**
Socio-economic status	.2880**
Change Proneness	.1059
Job Satisfaction	.1175
Workload	.0941
Communication Facilities	.1723**
Training Attended	.0456**
Service Experience	-.1839**
Mass Media Exposure	.5022**

** Significant at 1% level of probability

Infrastructural Constraints : The constraints related with physical facilities were grouped in this category. The data indicated that among this group 'inadequate facility of audio-visual aids' was reported to be the main constraints by majority of change agents. The next serious problem felt by change agents was that of 'lack of alternate arrangement of electricity' followed by 'uncertainty of electricity', 'inadequate transport facility' and non-availability of equipment'.

Financial Constraints : Data in Table 5 revealed that among this group 'non-availability of fund on time' was reported as the main constraint by BDOs and VPDOs. In case of ADOs 'lack of fund for accessories and repairs' was the main constraint. Second and third serious constraints were 'costly material' and 'lack of fund for accessories and repairs'. It was also found that 'less recurring budget' was the least felt constraints by all categories of respondents.

Technical Know-how and Manpower Constraints : Considering the individual categories of change agents as well as polled data in Table 5, the constraint of 'lack of skilled person to handle audio-visual aids' was considered as the most serious amongst this group. Second, third and fourth serious constraints for BDOs and ADOs were, 'lack of artist', 'lack of work culture' and 'non-functional projectionist', respectively. In case of VPDOs they considered second, third and fourth serious constraints 'lack of artist', 'lack of writing skill' and 'lack of work culture', respectively.

Table 5. Constraints in the Use of Communication Source

S. No	Categories of Respondents	Constraints								
		BDOs (6)			ADOs (40)			VPDOs (204)		
		TS	MS	RO	TS	MS	RO	TS	MS	RO
1.	*Infrastructural Constraints*									
a.	Uncertainly of electricity	8	1.33	II	41	1.02	III	236	1.15	III
b.	Inadequate facility of A.V. aids	9	1.50	I	44	1.10	II	254	1.24	I
c.	Lack of alternate arrangement of electricity	8	1.33	II	46	1.15	I	245	1.20	II
d.	Inadequate transport facility	6	1.00	IV	34	0.85	IV	225	1.10	IV
e.	Non-availability of equipments	5	0.83	III	31	0.78	V	213	1.04	V
2.	*Financial Constraints*									
a.	Less recurring budget	4	0.66	IV	24	0.60	IV	121	0.59	IV
b.	Costly material	5	0.83	II	29	0.72	III	155	0.75	II
c.	Lack of funds for accessories and repairs	6	1.00	III	40	1.00	I	133	0.65	III
d.	Non-availability of fund on time	8	1.33	I	35	0.87	II	229	1.12	I
3.	*Technical know-how and Manpower*									
a.	Lack of skilled person to handle A.V. aids	9	1.50	I	50	1.25	I	233	1.14	I
b.	Lack of artist	8	1.33	II	42	1.05	II	195	0.95	II
c.	Lack of writing skill	5	0.53	V	32	0.80	V	176	0.86	III
d.	Non-functional projectionist	6	1.00	IV	34	0.85	IV	133	0.65	V
e.	Lack of work culture	7	1.16	III	40	1.00	III	171	0.84	IV
4.	*Organizational Support and Procedural Constraints*									
a.	Programme are not planned in advance	9	1.50	I	39	0.97	III	187	0.92	III
b.	Less time for preparation, treatment of subject matter	8	0.33	II	49	1.22	I	224	1.09	I
c.	Lack of cooperation, from juniors, seniors and colleagues	3	0.50	IV	37	0.92	IV	177	0.86	IV
d.	Equipment are not purchased as per need, specification and choice of person in-charge	5	0.83	III	45	1.12	II	215	1.05	II

Organizational Support and Procedural Constraints: As per data contained in Table 5, majority of change agents felt 'less time for preparation, treatment of subject matter' as the most serious constraint with in this group whereas, BDOs felt 'programme are not planned in advance' as the most serious constraint. Other constraints surfaced were, 'equipment are not purchased as per need, specification and choice of person in-charge'. It can be concluded from the data that, 'lack of cooperation from juniors, seniors and colleagues' was a least problem for the change agents which, is a healthy sign of an organization.

CONCLUSION

This clearly indicates that nearly three-fourth of respondents found to have possessed low to medium level of knowledge and medium to high level of communication skill. It was observed that the variables i.e education, socio-economic status, change proneness, job satisfaction, communication facilities and mass media exposure were positively and significantly associated with knowledge about communication material of change agents. The variables of age and service experience had shown negatively significant correlation with knowledge about communication material. No association was found between communication skill and other independent variables like change proneness, job satisfaction and workload and inadequate facility of 'audio-visual aids'.

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