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Effectiveness of training program 'MAOs as agronomists' in Telangana

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Abstract
The study was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of training program 'MAOs as agronomists' in Telangana designed and conducted at Extension Education Institute (EEI), Hyderabad. This training was jointly sponsored by department of agriculture and Professor Jaya Shankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJTSAU) aiming to transform mandal agricultural officers into agronomists by making use of agro technologies for productive and profitable agriculture in Telangana. Ex-post facto research design was followed for the study, 120 trainee- mandal agricultural officers (MAO's) were selected from all the three agro climatic zones of the state randomly. The results indicated that the effectiveness of training program was observed to be high (47.50%) followed by medium level (39.20%) and (13.30%) low level category. The results are in consistent with the results of level of knowledge where found under high category (72.50%) followed by medium level (27.50%) and low (0.00%) and perceived training utility under medium category (63.30%) followed by high category (28.40%) and low (8.3%). Job performance found highly improved (48.30%) followed by moderately improved (42.50%) and 9.20 percent under slightly improvement category.

Keywords: Effectiveness, level of knowledge, perceived training utility, job performance

Introduction

Agriculture plays an important role not only in the economy of the Telangana state but also for achieving food security for the state and also for the country. Agriculture and its allied activities are integral to Telangana development. Besides the fact that the sector helps in ensuring food security, it also provides livelihoods to more than half of the state's workforce (around 60% of the workforce in the state is engaged in agriculture and allied activities). (Source: Agriculture action plan 2021-22 DOA, Telangana).Mandal Agricultural Officers are extension personnel and the most important technical personnel at the Mandal level, who are entrusted with the vital role of inducing the farmers to take up improved agricultural technology to the farming community such as 1) To enable farmers to procure timely and cost-effective agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizer, pesticides, farm implements and credit required 2) Provide services on soil, water, seed, fertilizer and pesticide testing 3) to implement programs of Natural Resource Management for sustaining land productivity and through watershed development approach 4) to provide technological and financial assistance in the event of calamities such as drought, floods, hailstorm etc.

This investigation attempts to study the effectiveness of training program 'MAOs as agronomists' in Telangana.

Materials and Methods

Ex-post facto research design was followed for the study. The study was conducted three agro climatic zones in Telangana state. Forty trained-mandal agricultural officers were selected from two districts in each agro climatic zone were selected randomly. Total 120 trained -MAOs were selected as respondents for the study. The data was collected with the help of interview schedule from respondents at their office.

The statistical methods and tests such as frequency, percentage, class intervals, mean, Standard deviation was used for the analysis of data.

The study was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of the training program 'MAOs as agronomists' in terms of level of knowledge, perceived training utility and job performance of MAOs after undergoing training.

Results and Discussion

Level of knowledge

Based on the responses, majority of the respondents were in high level of knowledge to medium level of knowledge category regarding problematic soil management, IPM strategies and popular varieties in rice fall army worm (FAW) emerging problem in maize, on strategies for sustainable and profitable cotton cultivation, on micro irrigation types, weed control in black gram and green gram and water saving technologies in rice production, on moisture stress in red gram and varieties of bengal gram, agro- technologies in transplanted red gram, on agriculture market information, on integrated disease management in

vegetables low level of knowledge in the topics on mobile apps, bio pesticides, integration of forage and food crops, applications of biotechnology in agriculture.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their level of knowledge

S. No	Categories	Class Interval	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low	below 16	Nil	0.00
2.	Medium	16 - 20	33	27.50
3.	High	above 20	87	72.50
			120	100.0

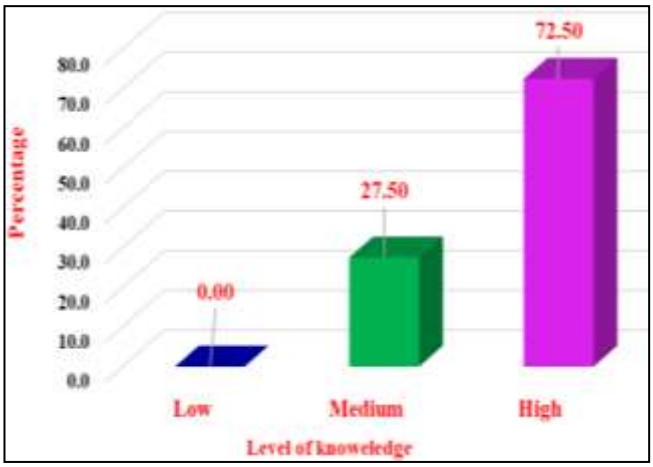

Fig 1: Distribution of respondents according to their level of knowledge

This could be because all the respondents were professional graduates and are able to utilize the opportunity to learn more and get updated by understanding the subjects dealt in the training program, at the same time EEI has fulfilled its motto by creating learning situation making mandal agricultural officers knowledgeable, other respondents fall under medium level might not have gained adequate knowledge as they could have lost attention due to age factor, less interaction and participation, pending work stress and pressure from work place also may the some of the topics which were dealt may not be suit to their jurisdiction or area of operation might be the reasons for not utilizing the learning opportunity completely. It clearly indicates the scope for improvement in the program and respondents may be called for the short duration refresher training programs. The findings of study are similar to that of Sandhya Choudhary (2000) [8].

Perceived Training Utility

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their perceived training utility

S. No	Categories	Class Interval	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Less	62-66	10	8.30
2.	Medium	66-70	76	63.30
3.	High	70-74	34	28.40
			120	100.00

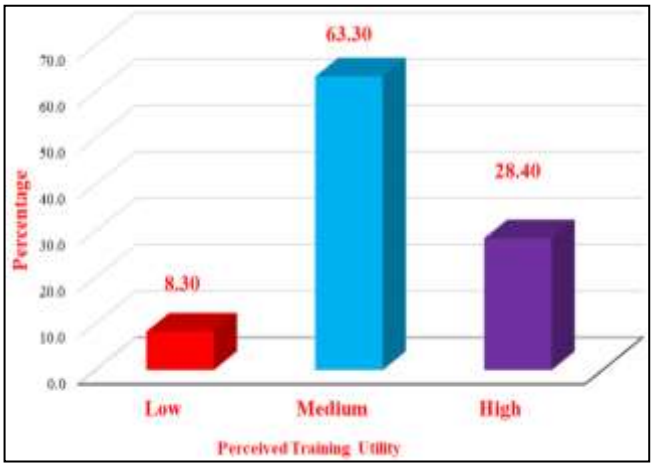

Fig 2: Distribution of respondents based on their perceived training utility

It was clear from this data that majority of the trained-respondents (63.30%) were in the medium category followed by 28.40 percent and 8.30 percent in high and low categories of perceived training Utility, respectively. These findings imply that most of the trained participants of 'MAOs as agronomists' training program perceived training utility up to 'medium' level.

Training utility, in the present study, referred to trainee's extent of usefulness of the different subject matter areas at their work situation. It is worthwhile to recall here that the training program considered for the purpose in this study were designed aiming to improve the technical competency in agro technologies for productive and profitable agriculture in Telangana. i.e., in crop production, crop protection, value addition, post-harvest, farm mechanization disseminates technical know-how to the farming community and enable them to enrich their knowledge, skill and scientific capabilities. Develop networking between scientists and the agriculture officers, solving the field problems of farmers also learn advancements which will enhance the officers to deliver better services to the farmers. Hence, the utility perception of training is highly contextual as it is highly depending on the trainee himself, trainee's organization (Department of agriculture Telangana) and training organization (EEI), besides actual training content, design, delivery and logistics. Viewed from this perspective, there would always be gaps in desired and actual utility perception of training. Results indicate satisfactory scenario for training program, though there is still scope to improve it further.

Job performance

Operationalized as the degree to which trainee officers accomplishes the technical as well as general tasks at their workplace after attending training program.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their job performance

S. No	Categories	Class Interval	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Slightly Improved	63-67	11	9.20
2.	Moderately Improved	67- 71	51	42.50
3.	Highly Improved	71-75	58	48.30
			120	100.00

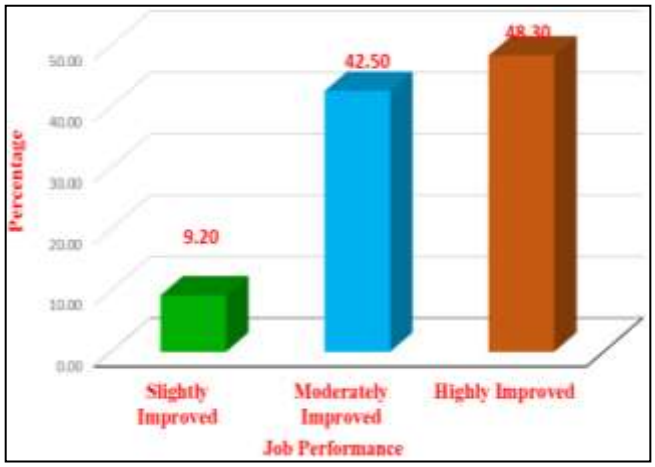

Fig 3: Distribution of respondents according to their job performance

Job performance of respondents working in the departments has been improved considerably because of training. The results of this study revealed that, for positive impact on performance of respondents, training is essentially required at various levels. Efficient and effective workforce is essential in any department to come up with productive outcome.

Overall effectiveness of training program as perceived by respondents

In this study effectiveness of training program was measured in terms of dimensions viz., i) level of knowledge 2) perceived training utility and 3) job performance, as detailed in methodology chapter, schedules were worked out for these dimensions and the respondents' distribution was arrived at accordingly. Keeping this in view, results pertinent to individual dimension as well as overall training effectiveness are presented and discussed in this section.

Table 4: Overall distribution of respondents based on the training effectiveness dimensions

S. No	Categories	Class Interval	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Less	141-152	16	13.30
2.	Medium	152-163	47	39.20
3.	High	163-174	57	47.50
			120	100.0

The overall effectiveness of training results (Table 4) indicated that around half of the respondents (47.50 percent) of the trainees fall in high category of training effectiveness followed by 39.20 percent and 13.30 percent in medium and low categories respectively.

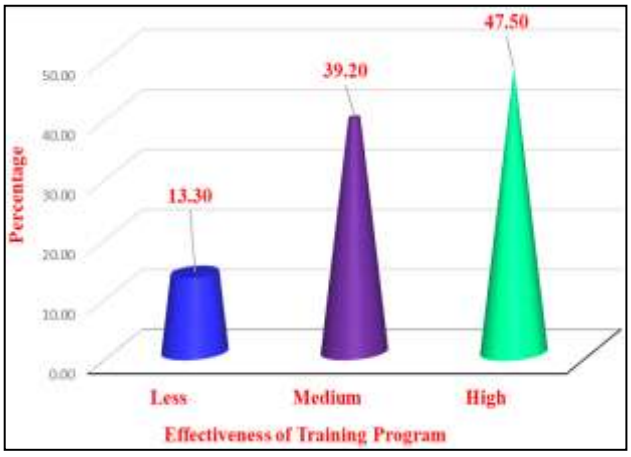

Fig 4: Overall distribution of respondents based on the training

Effectiveness dimensions

These results are consistent with the results on dimension-wise distribution of respondents. Hence, it was inferred that training program 'MAOs as Agronomists' is perceived as effective to reasonably good level by majority of the trained respondents.

This could be attributed to standard systematized program schedule followed by EEI on all the dimensions of training management. The results also hint at possibilities of further improvement so that the perception of respondents under medium category could improve to higher levels. Similar results were reported in studies conducted by Samanta *et al.* (2005) [9].

Conclusion

Training program 'MAOs as agronomists' had positive impact on improving knowledge, perceived utility and job performance that will contribute much for sustainable development

Future Scope

Capacity building programs, technical trainings along with stress and time management sessions are to be organized periodically to augment the job competencies, build up confidence among officers. Incentives and rewards could be given for good work, flexible work schedules and good working climate & Transport facilities, must be provided to the MAOs. This will motivate and enhance the self- esteem of officers.

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