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Training needs of women agriculture extension officers in Telangana state

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Abstract

Training is the process of gaining knowledge, abilities, and skills necessary to perform roles effectively in a job. The training needs for extension officers differ from person to person, crop to crop, agroclimatic zone, and from time to time as a result of the rapid advancements in technology. The present study deals with the training needs of Women Agriculture Extension Officers (AEO's). The respondents from all the 33 districts of Telangana state were covered, making a total of 120 samples for the study. Hence, it was revealed that majority of the respondents had overall medium level of training needs in all the aspects of trainings. Individual aspects included Technical (65.83%), Managerial (67.50%), Extension (75.00%) and Frontier areas of agricultural sciences (49.17%), respectively. It was observed that the variables like family size, information seeking behaviour and achievement motivation were having significant and positive correlation with the training needs while age, education, total years of experience and access to trainings were having a significant and negative correlation with training needs.

Keywords: Training needs, agriculture extension officers, department of agriculture

Introduction

India's economy relies heavily on agriculture, which contributes 14.5% to the GDP and supports 70% of the rural population (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India). The sector's progress, bolstered by the Green Revolution, is vital for economic development and poverty reduction. The Department of Agriculture, established in 1883, focuses on improving agricultural productivity through advanced technologies and extension programs. Extension services play a critical role by equipping farmers with the necessary knowledge and skills to enhance productivity, emphasizing the importance of empowering extension personnel (Yadav, 2013; Anand, 2014) ^[10, 11].

The process of gaining specialized abilities to carry out a job more effectively is called Training (Jucious, 1963) ^[3]. It aids employees in becoming competent and skilled at their occupations (Dhama, 1979) ^[2]. The training needs for extension officers differ from person to person, crop to crop, agroclimatic zone, and from time to time as a result of the rapid advancements in information delivery systems and technology. Therefore, the first and most crucial step that needs to be taken before starting any training work is identifying the training need.

Despite the crucial role of extension services, there are

significant challenges, especially concerning gender equality. Historically, extension activities have prioritized male workers, neglecting the specific needs and roles of women in agriculture, thereby hindering overall development (World Bank and IBRD, 2009). Focussing on women extension officers and addressing their training needs is essential for sustainable agricultural growth. These needs include updated knowledge of modern agricultural practices and overcoming constraints such as limited resources, access to information, transport facilities, etc. Effective training and capacity building are vital for improving the performance and motivation of women extension officers, ensuring an equitable and efficient agricultural extension system (Patil, 2016) ^[8].

In this context, the study explores the training needs of women extension officers in the agricultural sector with the goal of offering guidance for the creation of more adaptable and fair extension initiatives.

Objective

1. To analyze the training needs of women extension officers in agriculture sector.
2. To find out relationship between personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics and training

needs of women extension officers in agriculture sector.

Methodology

The present study was conducted in Telangana State. Ex-post facto research design was used for the study. A sample of 120 women agriculture extension officers was purposively collected from all 33 districts. The questionnaire was designed to obtain relevant and accurate information about the four major areas of training i.e., technical training needs, managerial training needs, extension training needs and frontier areas of agriculture sciences. The data was collected by sharing the

questionnaire to women agriculture extension officers via WhatsApp. The collected information was analyzed and tabulated. To assess the relationship between the selected independent and dependent variables, correlation analysis was conducted using the statistical software SPSS.

Results and Discussion

The present study addresses the training requirements for women agricultural extension officers. An attempt has been made to study their training needs in various broad areas viz., technical, managerial, extension related and frontier areas of agricultural sciences.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their training needs

S. No.	Training Needs	Category	F	%
1.	Technical Training Needs	Low (39-65)	2	1.67
		Medium (65-91)	39	32.5
		High (91-117)	79	65.83
2.	Managerial Training Needs	Low (15-25)	4	3.34
		Medium (25-35)	35	29.16
		High (35-45)	81	67.5
3.	Extension related Training Needs	Low (29-48)	2	1.67
		Medium (49-68)	28	23.34
		High (68-87)	90	75
4.	Training Needs on Frontier areas of agricultural sciences	Low (9-15)	11	9.16
		Medium (15-21)	59	49.17
		High (21-27)	50	41.67

Technical training for agriculture extension officers is crucial for enhancing their ability to assist farmers and stay updated of the latest technological advancements in agriculture. Through proficiency with these technologies, extension agents may efficiently share important information with farmers, assisting them in increasing agricultural yields, optimizing resource usage, and implementing creative farming methods. So, it is evident from the above table that most (65.83%) of the respondents had high technical training need regarding their job like soil testing, improved varieties of important crops, selection of suitable varieties in field situation and others, followed by nearly one-third (32.5%) felt medium training need and only 1.67 per cent of the respondents had low training need.

Agriculture extension officers must possess strong managerial abilities in order to effectively supervise field operations, plan and organize extension initiatives, and work with stakeholders. The goal of management-focused training programs is to enhance the leadership, project management, strategic planning, and other competencies of extension officers. Hence, Table 1 indicates that majority (67.5%) women extension officers had high managerial training need like Personality development, Managerial Techniques, Office management and record keeping, Time management, etc. 29.16 per cent of them had medium training need and only 3.34 per cent had low training need.

Extension related training need is essential to provide agriculture extension officers with the information and abilities necessary to provide efficient extension services and promote rural development. Training programs with an emphasis on extension are designed to improve the knowledge about participatory methods, theories of extension and community engagement tactics. In this context, it is clear from the above table that exactly three-

fourth (75.00%) of the respondents had high training needs in extension aspect like planning, preparation, use and evaluation of audio visual aids, selection of farmer group and contact farmers, documentation skills, agro tourism for profitability in agriculture, etc. 23.34 per cent of them felt medium need for training and rest (1.67%) of the respondents had low training needs related to extension.

Frontier areas of agricultural science is essential to enhance the knowledge and skills, that can enable AEO's to implement advanced agricultural techniques, improve crop yields, and promote sustainable agricultural practices. In regards to training needs on frontier areas of agricultural science it was revealed from the table that more than half (49.17%) of the respondents had medium training need in frontier areas of agriculture like Issues related to Intellectual Property Rights, Climate Change, Nanotechnology, and many more. 41.67 per cent and 9.16 per cent of them had high and low training need, respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their overall training needs

S. No.	Overall training Needs	F	%
1.	Low (142-184)	12	10
2.	Medium (185-227)	55	45.83
3.	High (228-270)	53	44.17
Total		120	100

The results in the Table 2 revealed that nearly half (45.83%) of the women AEO's had medium training needs in all the aspects like Technical, management, extension and frontier areas of agriculture. 44.17 per cent of the respondents had medium training needs and remaining 10.00 per cent had low training needs in all the aspects.

Table 3: Relationships between personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics and training needs of women extension officers in agriculture sector

Independent Variables	Training Needs
Age	- 0.181*
Education	- 0.727**
Family size	208*
Total years of experience	-0.932**
Information seeking behavior	0.807**
Access to trainings	-0.849 **
Achievement motivation	0.675**

*=Significant at 0.05 level of probability

**=Significant at 0.01 level of probability

It is observed from the data in Table 3 that the independent variables viz., age, education, total years of experience and access to trainings were having a significant and negative correlation with the dependent variable i.e. training needs. Information seeking behaviour, family size and achievement motivation of respondents was found to have a having significant and positive correlation with the training needs. The other variables like family type, number of years completed in present post, family income, membership in organization, mass-media exposure, sources of information, value orientation and cosmopolitaness were having no relation with the training needs. These findings were in line with the findings of Kharde (2014)^[4].

Conclusion

The study indicated a significant need for technical, managerial, and extension-related training among women extension officers. This necessitates the formulation of comprehensive training programs to address these areas. The findings would be helpful to the department of agriculture, policy makers and training institutions in order to develop future strategies for enhancing the potential of the agriculture extension officers in all the aspects related to their job. So, to bridge the gap in training needs and enhance the performance of women agriculture extension officers, it is essential to develop and implement comprehensive, context-specific training programs that address their unique challenges and aspirations. This approach will not only empower the officers but also foster a more effective and equitable agricultural extension system, promoting sustainable agricultural development and rural prosperity.

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