

Extent of Contact of Extension Agency with the Farmers

By

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ABSTRACT

Extension contact of Village Level Workers (V. L. W.) with farmers was more than Agricultural Extension Officer or Block Development Officer. Their contact appears to be more with farmers of higher status and education. The contacts were generally confined to roadside or market place than farm or home.

INTRODUCTION

It is admitted by all concerned that the contact of extension agency can greatly accelerate the adoption of agricultural practices. But the evidence to indicate the exact extent of this influence is not much. To gain precise knowledge, this study was carried out with the specific objective of determining the extent of contacts between the extension agents and the cultivators. Lionberger (1952) concluded that contacts with formal and informal agencies were significantly related to the adoption of practices. Dhaliwal and Sohal (1965) observed that frequency of contacts with extension agency was significantly related to the adoption of agricultural practices. They also stated that extension agency had concentrated its contacts with farmers having high educational and economical status. Roy *et al* (1958) found that the cultivators had more contacts with village level workers and that the rela-

tionship between adoption and extension contact was positive, serving as a useful prediction of adoption behaviour.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Community Development Block, Thiruvudaimarudur in Thanjavur district, provided locale for this study. The block was selected on the basis of two considerations *viz.*, physical facilities needed for the investigator and resourcefulness and potentiality of the block. The data were collected by personal interviews with a random sample of 120 heads of farming families. A specially structured and pretested schedule was developed. Respondents were classified into two adoption categories i. e., high adopters and low adopters based on the adoption score obtained by them in the manner explained hereunder.

Adoption of a practice for three or more years, two years and one year was suitably quantified by arbitrarily

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assigning a score value of six, two and one respectively. Fourteen farm practices were selected. One could get a maximum score of 84 on this basis. Farmers whose adoption score was 37 and above, were rated as high adopters while those scoring less than 37 were categorised as low adopters.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The personal contact of extension agency is proved to be the best extension method to help the farmers in adopting the innovations. The extent to which farmers establish contacts

with the members of the extension staff largely determines the adoption of recommended package of practices in any given area.

It is observed that Village Level worker (VLW) contacts all farmers whereas the Agricultural Extension Officer (AEO), the Block Development Officer (BDO) had contacts with 40 and 21 farmers respectively. The VLW is in charge of a limited area of about two villages and it is therefore, possible for him to contact all the farmers of his circle (Table 1).

Table 1. Extent of extension agent's contact

Extension agents	Adopters		Chi-square value
	Low N=63 %	High N=57 %	
Village level worker (120)	52.5 (63)	47.5 (57)	0.30 NS
Agricultural Extension Officer (40)	7.5 (3)	92.5 (37)	28.90 **
Block Development Officer (21)	9.5 (2)	90.5 (19)	12.21 **

** Significant at 0.01 level. d. f. = 1.

NS-Not significant at 0.01 level.

Figures in parentheses indicate the number of farmers

It is a common belief that the extension agency makes frequent contacts with farmers of high status. Here higher may mean one or more factors like ownership of large size farm, more income, higher education and upper caste. The data in the same table will be useful to analyse the fact.

In the case of A. E. O and B.D.O the chi-square values indicate a statistically significant association with adopter categories. The null hypothesis that these two extension agents meet the farmers irrespective of the farmers status and position is not validated. It means that there is some association

in the contact of these agents with adopter categories.

The A.E.O contacts 40 farmers. It is observed that out of 40 adopters contacted by A.E.O, 92.5 per cent of them are high adopters and only 7.5 per cent are low adopters. Similarly, in the case of B.D.O who contacts 21 farmers, 90.5 per cent of them are high adopters and only 9.5 per cent are low adopters. It appears that these two agents, namely A.E.O and B.D.O devote more attention towards high adopters who happen to possess higher status as found in another related part of this study and their contact with low adopters is negligible.

To know whether V. L. W has such discrimination in contacting farmers as in the case of A.E.O and B.D.O, additional data regarding the degree of contact with individual farmers are required. The level of V. L. W contact is furnish in Table 2.

The value of chi-square gives a statistically significant association between degree of contact and adopter category. The null hypothesis that the V. L. W is having some degree of contact with both high and low adopter is rejected here. It indicates that there is discrimination in the degree of contact of V. L. W from high to low adopter category (Table 2).

Table 2. Level of Village Level worker's contact and adopter category

Frequency of contacts	Percentage of farmers under	
	Low adopter category	High adopter category
Very rarely (1.3 visits per month)	11.1 (7)	1.8 (1)
Once in a way (1 visit per week)	76.1 (48)	22.8 (13)
Now and then (2-3 visits per week)	6.4 (4)	26.3 (15)
Quite frequently (4-5 visits per week)	6.4 (4)	26.3 (15)
Very frequently (6-7 visits per week)	—	22.8 (13)
Total	100.00 (63)	100.00 (57)

χ^2 49.88. Significant at 0.01 level d. f = 3

Under the highest degree of contact 'very frequently' it is interesting to note that 22.8 per cent of high adopters and none of low adopters fall under this degree of contact. In another low degree of contact 'once in a way', there are 76.1 per cent of low adopters and 22.8 per cent of high

adopters. When the degree of contact ascends from 'very rarely, to 'very frequently', there is corresponding increase in the percentage of high adopters of the respective degrees of contact. On the contrary, there is decrease in the percentage of low adopters as degree of contact increases.

It can, therefore be concluded that V.L.W devotes more attention towards high adopters who are generally highly educated and large size farm holders.

The B.D.O contacts all the high adopters excepting one as well as the two low adopters in block office (Table 3).

The A.E.O cotacts majority of the high adopters, (65.6 per cent) in block office while he meets all the three low adopters in respondent's house. The V.L W meets most of the high adopters accounting for 57.9 per cent and nearly all the low adopters (92 per cent) on the road side of market place.

TABLE 3. Place of contact of farmers by different agents

Adopter category	Percentage of farmers contacted at				
	Respondent's house	Respondent's farm	Change agent residence	Block Office	Road side, market place etc.
B. D. O.					
High adopters	5.3 (1)	—	—	94.7 (18)	—
Low adopters	—	—	—	100.0 (2)	—
A. E. O.					
High adopters	18.9 (7)	5.4 (2)	—	65.6 (25)	8.1 (3)
Low adopters	100.0 (3)	—	—	—	—
V. L. W.					
High adopters	33.3 (19)	5.3 (3)	—	3.5 (2)	57.9 (33)
Low adopters	3.2 (2)	1.6 (1)	3.2 (2)	—	92.0 (58)

Figures in parenthesis indicate number of farmers

It is thus evident that the V. L. W contacts majority of the farmers on the road side or market place while the number of contacts of the other two agents with farmers either in the farm or home are found to be less. To what extent the Village Level Worker's contacts on the road side and market place could be effective, offers scope for further research.

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