

Constraints faced by farm women in gaining knowledge and skill through selected extension methods

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Abstract: Studies conducted at six villages of Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu revealed that the constraints faced by the farm women in gaining knowledge and skills through the selected extension methods were in adequate access to the technologies, lack of knowledge, lack of time and hesitation of family members to allow them outside were the most important constraints faced by majority of the farm women in gaining knowledge and skills.

Key words : Farm women, constraints, knowledge, skill, extension methods.

Introduction

Extension teaching is viewed as the process of arranging situations that stimulate and guide learning activity, amongst participants towards pre-determined educational objectives. The effectiveness of communication however depends to a greater extent on the choice and use of extension teaching methods. Each one of the communication methods has its own special features and appropriate purpose. A wide range of extension teaching methods are used for promoting agricultural development through educational approach. The extension worker, who intends to achieve desired changes and improvement in the behavior of rural people needs the help of some tools and devices. These tools and devices which he or she uses to impart knowledge to the learners, can be termed as extension teaching methods. Hence number of teaching methods are available to impart training to the farmers and farm women. As this research was mainly focused on farm women and their learning, it was considered appropriate to select such of those teaching methods which are most applicable

to them. In this connection, it was decided to select one modern teaching technique (Video method) and one conventional method (Lecture followed by discussion method), Keeping this points in mind, an experimental study was conducted with the specific objective to identify the constraints faced by the farm women in gaining knowledge and skills through the selected extension methods and their suggestions to over come the constrains

Materials and Methods

Out of 21 blocks of Coimbatore district, Sarkarsamakulam was selected for the study because, more number of farm women of the block have been trained through the Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture Project (TANWA). Among 19 revenue villages in this block, six villages which received TANWA training were selected for the purpose of the study. The selected six villages were Chinna-mettupalayam, Keeranatham I, Keeranatham II, Agarharasamakulam, Kalaipalayam and Vellamadai. All the TANWA trained farm women in each of the six villages were selected

Table 1. Constraints faced by farm women in gaining knowledge and skill in agriculture

Sl.No.	Problems	No.	Per cent
1.	Inadequate access to the technologies	134	89.33
2.	Lack of knowledge	129	86.00
3.	Lack of time	118	76.67
4.	Hesitation of family members to allow them outside	105	70.00
5.	Less number of days for training	91	60.67
6.	Lack of demonstration	78	52.00
7.	Monotonous presentation	76	50.67

Table 2. Suggestions offered by farm women to overcome the constraints in gaining knowledge and skill in agriculture

Sl.No.	Suggestions	No.	Per cent
1.	Recruitment of more women extension agents	137	91.33
2.	Formation of women groups	126	84.00
3.	Create timely awareness	115	76.67
4.	Increase the number of days for training programme	109	72.67
5.	More demonstration on latest technologies	95	63.33
6.	Use variety of extension teaching methods	77	51.33

as respondents of the study, Thus, 150 farm women were considered for the study. "Before and After" technique was used to assess the relative effectiveness of the selected extension methods in imparting knowledge and skills to the farm women.

Results and Discussion

Constraints faced by farm women in gaining knowledge and skill in agriculture

The respondents were asked to express the constraints faced by them in gaining knowledge and skill in agriculture. Such identified constraints and the percentage of farm women reporting them are presented in Table 1.

It could be seen from the table 1, that inadequate access to the technologies was reported as a major problem by 89.33 per cent of farm women. Most of the technologies are disseminated by male extension workers, who mainly concentrate on male farmers and it is not easier for them to reach and communicate to women in rural areas due to the socio-cultural setting. Hence, inadequate access to the technologies was perceived as an important problem by majority of the farm women. The finding is in line with the finding of Parvathi (1995) and Sriram (2000).

Lack of knowledge was perceived as another important problem by 86 per cent of the respondents. This might be due to less frequent interaction / contact with extension agencies and meagre use of information channels by the respondents. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Sathiyaseelan (1998).

Lack of time was also considered as a problem by 76.67 per cent of the farm women. It was observed during the data collection in the study area that women do all kinds of field work. They were found to help the menfolk in preparing the field for sowing, preparation of the embankment in the fields, weeding and hoeing, winnowing, carrying heavy load of fodder on their heads to home and burdened with all other household responsibilities. All these make them busy from early morning to till late in the evening and they find less time to participate in training programme and other agricultural related programmes. Hence, lack of time in gaining knowledge and skill in agriculture was one of the problems faced by majority of the farm women.

Hesitation of family members to allow them outside was stated as a major problem by 70 per cent of the respondents. It was observed during the data collection that many of the family members were reluctant to send their daughters and daughters-in-law to go outside to attend meetings, trainings and they like to safeguard the “prestige” of their family. Sending women outside was considered as unsafe by them. Hence, hesitation of family members to allow them outside for gaining knowledge and skill acquisition in agriculture was perceived as a problem by majority of the farm women.

Less number of days for training was reported by 60.67 per cent of the respondents. Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture (TANWA) programme organises the training programmes for farm women in a particular period and for less number of days only. So, the farm women were finding it difficult in getting enough knowledge and skill on latest technologies.

Lack of demonstration in the farmer's field was perceived as another problem by 52 per cent of the farm women. Demonstration is one of the best extension methods to impart knowledge and skill to farmers. But in actual field situation, most of the farm-oriented technologies are transferred by extension personnel through inter-personal methods only. This might be the possible reason for majority of them reporting this constraint.

Monotonous presentation was one of the problems for 50.67 per cent of the farm women. This might be due to lack of variety of teaching methods used in imparting knowledge and skill by extension personnel. To overcome the constraints and difficulties in imparting knowledge and skill in agriculture, suggestions were offered by the respondents.

Suggestions offered by the farm women to overcome the constraints in gaining knowledge and skill in agriculture

The suggestions of the farm women to overcome the constraints in gaining knowledge and skill in agriculture were grouped and the percentage analysis was done.

It could be observed from the Table 2 that majority of the farm women (91.33%) have suggested to recruit more women extension agents in rural areas. Involving more women extension agents will facilitate the easy access to technology by the farm women. However, recruitment of women extension agents should encourage the farm women to contact the extension personnel more frequently and get adequate information regarding latest technologies.

Formation of women groups was suggested by 84 per cent of the farm women. Formation of women groups such as self help groups, mahila mandals and farm women discussion forum will facilitate easy access of male extension agents to women cultivators. This group approach alleviates many cultural barriers of male extension agents. The extension workers should work with existing women groups and impart technical know-how to farm women.

Creating timely awareness was suggested by 76.67 per cent of the farm women. The mass media such as Radio, TV and newspaper should focus more on women farmers and their role in agriculture. This would encourage the farm women to participate in the training programmes and other agricultural related activities organised by the extension personnel. It will provide opportunities to interact with variety of people that would have helped

them to acquire knowledge on the latest technologies.

Increase the number of days for training programme was the suggestion offered by 72.67 per cent of the farm women. Tamil Nadu Women in Agriculture (TANWA) training programme is organised for 5 days only. It should be increased to 10 days. This will encourage the farm women to get more knowledge and skill on agricultural technologies. This finding derived support from the finding of Saravanakumar (2000).

Majority of the farm women (63.33%) have suggested conducting of more demonstrations in the farmer's field. The extension official and research scientists should take adequate steps to conduct more method and result demonstrations in farmer's fields and motivate them to participate in the demonstration programme as demonstration is the best method to impart knowledge as well as skill on various technologies.

The study reveals that inadequate access to the technologies, lack of knowledge, lack of time and hesitation of family members to allow them outside were the most important problems faced by majority of the farm women in gaining knowledge and skills. Further it could be concluded that increase the number of days for training programme, more demonstration on latest technologies and use variety of extension teaching methods were suggested by the majority of the farm women to overcome the above said problems. The results will be useful for the officials of the state department of agriculture, researchers and policy makers to plan and refining the existing extension programmes.

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