

KEY COMMUNICATOR NETWORKS USED IN DISSEMINATION OF AGRICULTURAL INFORMATION : A STUDY IN KOYA SUB-TRIBE SETTING

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Introduction

Effective communication of scientific findings to the millions of farmers is a necessity and key to economic progress of the nation. This is more so in developing countries like ours, where the gap between intellectuals and the common man is very wide. The gap is much more wider in tribal farmers when compared to the non tribal farmers. As the prosperity of a nation depends largely on the agricultural development, communication is apparently applicable to the development of agriculture because it is the fundamental step in bringing about a desirable change in any aspect of client system.

Even now, we are not able to build up appropriate communication strategy for tribals in popularizing the improved and latest technology suitable to them. As a result, the technology is still at the research laboratories without being effectively transferred to the door steps of tribal farmers or their fields. This has become a challenging task and it can be overcome only through skillful communicators.

During 1970s and 1980s under T& V system of extension an average of 2-3 V.E.Os (village extension officers) were made available for each mandal to cover nearly 10 villages. There is a considerable reduction in the strength of the extension officers at the field level and at the same time the challenges in agriculture growing day by day. It is just not possible for the existing VEO or AO (agricultural officer) to cover all the farmers or villages on regular basis. Therefore to meet the growing demands and challenges of the present tribal agriculture i.e. from subsistence of food grains to commercial agriculture, a hand holding support to the present extension machinery is required.

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In agricultural extension work, it is very important to know persons in a community who have been mostly sought as information sources. The key-elements in a process of person-to-person communication are certain individuals who play a very important role in accelerating the spread of change. They can be called as key-communicators who play an appreciable role in dissemination of new farm ideas to other farmers. Further it was found from the research results, farmers pay more credibility to the advice and information given to them by their fellow farmers rather than any other source. It is worth while that such communicators be identified, trained and utilized properly as the hand holding support to the extension machinery. It is possible to locate them only by identifying through communication net-works. Keeping this in view the present study was taken up with the following objectives.

- To identify the key communicators with reference to dissemination of information in a Koya tribal setting.
- To study the communication net-works among the Koya tribal farmers.

Methodology

Regulapadu village in Bhadrachalam agency area of Andhra Pradesh was purposively selected because it is representing one of the predominant subtribe "Koya" in Andhra Pradesh state. 10 per cent of the total tribal farmers (50 respondents) was selected as a sample for this study.

Identification of Key Communicator

The sociometric method as suggested by Cambell (1960), Singh (1967) and used by Reddy (1983) has been followed to identify the key communicators. This method involved by asking each respondent to give his first, second and third choices in the order of his preference to any of those three persons in the same village by whom he was influenced in matters of agriculture in general. 50 respondents in the village were interviewed. The number of first / second / third choices obtained by each respondent from others, the weighted sociometric scores were calculated by allocating the weightages

of 3,2,1 for first, second, third choices respectively. Based on the total socio-metric scores obtained by the respondents, they were categorised into high, medium and low communicators by using ascending order cumulative percentages of the message score given below.

Categorization of communicators

S.No	Category of Communicators	Range of Cumulative Percentage
1	Low	0-25
2	Medium	26-75
3	High	76-100

Identification of Communication Networks

Identification of communication networks for agricultural information in general was done by using the sociometric scores of the respondents and developing sociograms based on these scores. The sociograms were drawn by following Northway's Target Pattern Method. For this purpose the high category communicators were placed in center of the concentric circle, the medium category communicators in the third and non communicators on the periphery of third concentric circle. The sociograms were drawn on the basis of first choices of the respondents and are presented in results and discussion part. While drawing the sociograms the high, medium, low and followers were represented with the symbols ^a, ?, r and £ respectively. The choices were denoted by arrow marks pointing the arrow edge to the person from whom the information is sought by the respondents. While drawing the sociograms care was taken to avoid the crossing of arrows representing the choice making.

Results and Discussion

The results and discussion of the study was presented below.

a) Identification of key communicators

The overall picture of information seeking pattern in the village for agricultural information in general was analysed based on the sociometric scores of the respondents and presented in the following table.

Categorisation of Communicators based on Sociometric Scores

Identified key communicators	Preference (no)			Sociometric score of key communicators	Percent age	Cumulative percentage	Communicators category
	First	Second	Third				
1	1	-	-	3	1.00	1.00	Low
2	-	-	3	3	1.00	2.00	Low
3	1	1	2	7	2.33	4.33	Low
4	3	1	2	13	4.33	8.66	Low
5	2	6	4	22	7.33	15.99	Low
6	16	5	4	62	20.68	36.67	Medium
7	4	22	23	79	26.33	63.00	Medium
8	23	15	12	111	37.00	100.00	High
Total	50	50	50	300	100	-	-

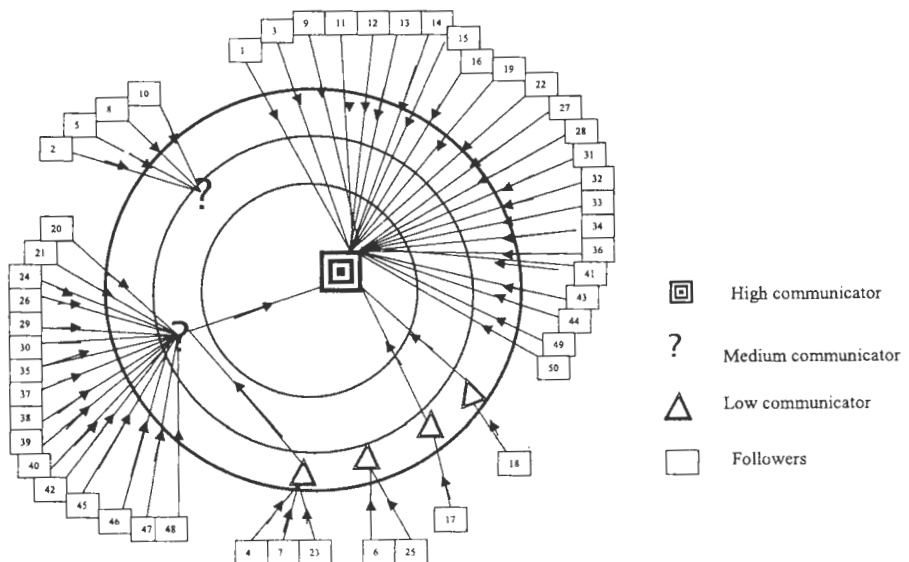
From the above table it can be seen that 8 key communicators were identified by the sample respondents in the village. These 8 key communicators were categorized into 3 i.e low communicators (5 nos), medium communicators (2 nos) and high communicator (1 no). These 4 low communicators sociometric score cumulative percentage was between 1.0 to 15.99 (below 25 per cent). This may be due to the reason that a few farmers are consulting them for agricultural information as their 2nd or 3rd preference or both. Two farmers were identified as medium communicators and their cumulative percentage of sociometric scores were 36.67 and 63.00 (between 26-75 per cent). This is because majority of the farmers are consulting them for agricultural information as their 2nd or 3rd preference and a very few farmers are consulting them as their 1st preference. Only one farmer was identified as high communicator with sociometric score of 100 cumulative per cent (above 75). This is because majority of the respondents are consulting him as their 1st preference for agricultural information in general followed by 2nd and 3rd preferences. All the respondents are consulting only one key communicator for all agricultural activities like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. The tribal farmers are still practicing primitive agriculture and the local

farmers have less expertism in specific activities like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides etc. This may be the reason for consulting only one person for all agricultural activities.

Communication Networks

A careful examination of communication network (given in figure-1) among the farmers seeking agricultural information in general, a high communicator with cumulative sociometric score of 100 per cent occupied the central position in the net work as the holder of influence and power with respect to dissemination of agricultural information. One medium communicator and 2 low communicators were also consulting high communicator as their key communicator. Medium communicator was a key communicator for one low communicator for dissemination of agricultural information. The net working of respondents with medium communicators was also more in this study. It was observed from the net working one medium communicator and one low communicator were not in the sample respondents but they were farmers in the village. On the whole high communicator had more influence in the village.

Fig-1: Communication network among tribal farmers of Koya (for agricultural information in general)



Therefore, we may conclude that there is a high degree of communication integration in the tribal village of 'Koya' sub tribe with very few key leaders which would be advantageous to channelise the agricultural information in general. The developmental personnel in this village should concentrate their efforts through the key communicators having large number of followers to multiply their extension efforts. The capacity building of key communicators will be taken by continuous trainings, exposure visits to the success stories in the area of latest technologies and communication techniques.

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