

Original Research Article

STUDY ON EXTENT OF EXTENSION AGENCY CONTACT AMONG THE RURAL YOUTH OF ANDHRA PRADESH

Abstract

India is the second most populous country in the world and likely to cross China to become the first. India is one of the countries with youngest population with about more than fifty percent of the population were under 25 years of age and above sixty five percent under the age of 65 years. Majority of the country's youth lives in the villages. India relies on its young minds for the progress and development. Thus, it is necessary to study the characteristics of rural youth and in the present study extension agency contact of rural youth was elucidated. Extension agency contact refers to the extent of contact with various government and private extension professionals in order to get information that improves their socio-economic conditions. An Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. Two districts were selected for the study each from Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. East Godavari district was selected from Coastal Andhra and Chittoor district was selected from Rayalaseema purposively based on the rural population. The study revealed that more than two-thirds of the respondents (68.75 per cent) had medium level of extension contact, less than one-fifth of the respondents (17.50 per cent) had low level of extension contact and little more than one-eighth of the respondents (13.75 per cent) had high level of extension contact.

Keywords: *Extension agencies, Extent of contact, Rural youth, Andhra Pradesh*

Introduction

India occupies second rank in the world in population after China. It is likely to cross China to become the first very sooner. India is one of the countries with youngest population with about more than fifty percent of the population were under 25 years of age and above sixty five percent under the age of 65 years. Youth can be categorized into rural and urban based on their living habitat. Rural youth constitute nearly 70 per cent of the total youth in India. India relies on its young minds for the progress and development. This fact infers the need to study the characteristics of youth. The present study deals with the extent of

extension agency contact among the rural youth. Extension agency contact refers to the extent of contact with various government and private extension professionals in order to derive information that aids to improve their socio-economic conditions. The past works done to analyze the extension contact of rural youth were reviewed to get better insights. Alao *et al.* (2015) reported that majority (62.30 per cent) of the rural youth did not have contact at all with extension agents. Debasis (2015) conducted research on attitude of rural youth regarding participation in Agricultural activities of Patan block of Jabalpur district. The study revealed that, out of the 120 rural youth respondents, 25.83 per cent had low contact with extension agents with 50.83 per cent had medium contact with extension agents and 23.33 per cent had high contact with extension agents. Mbah *et al.* (2016) found that about 81.00 per cent of the rural youth did not have extension contact in last one year while, 19.00 per cent had extension contact. Mubeena (2017) reported that majority (56.66 per cent) of the respondents had medium level of extension contact followed by high (35.00 per cent) and low (8.34 per cent) levels of extension contact respectively. Shivacharan (2017) that, most (31.67 per cent) of the respondents had low extension contact followed by medium (30.83 per cent), very low (20.00 per cent) and high (17.50 per cent) extension contact. Sharath (2018) in a study on retaining rural youth in agriculture revealed that more than two-fifth of the rural youth (43.33 per cent) had low level of extension contact followed by medium level of extension contact (34.17 per cent) and high level of extension contact (22.50 per cent). Vihari (2018) reported that majority (57.50 per cent) of rural youth had medium extension contact, followed by those with high (26.64 per cent) and low (15.86 per cent) levels of extension contact. Verma (2019) studied the participation of rural youth in agricultural activities and revealed that almost half of the rural youth (47.50 per cent) had medium level of extension participation followed by high level of extension participation (26.67 per cent had) and low level of extension participation (25.83 per cent). With the insights from these past works an attempt was made to study about the extension agency contact among the rural youth of Andhra Pradesh in the year 2022. The study revealed the level of extension agency contact among the rural youth in present scenario and need to improve it.

Materials and methods

An Ex-post facto research design was adopted for the study. The ex-post facto research design is a systematic empirical enquiry in which the researcher does not have any direct control of independent variables and are not manipulable. Andhra Pradesh state comprises of majorly two regions namely, Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. Coastal Andhra

is comprised of 9 districts and Rayalaseema with 4 districts. Two districts were selected for the study each from Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. East Godavari district was selected from Coastal Andhra and Chittoor district was selected from Rayalaseema purposively based on the rural population.

Two mandals from each district was purposively selected for the study based on the rural population. Tirupathi and Kuppam mandals from Chittoor district and Kakinada Rural and Rajahmundry Rural mandals from East Godavari district were selected as they occupy the first two places in the context of rural population of the district. Five villages from each mandal were purposively selected based on the same criteria followed for the mandal selection. Thus, a total of 20 villages were selected from the four mandals of the two districts. A sample size of 240 was selected for the study. From each district 120 respondents were selected. The respondents were selected using proportionate random sampling method from the mandals and villages based on the rural population and was given here in Table 1

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents in the Selected Districts

S. No.	Name of the District	Name of the Mandal	Actual Rural Population	No. of Respondents selected for the study
1.	East Godavari District	1) Kakinada Rural	1,79,551	62
		2) Rajahmundry Rural	1,66,973	58
		Total = 120		
2.	Chittoor District	3) Tirupathi Rural	1,68,059	66
		4) Kuppam	1,35,533	54
		Total = 120		

Extension contact was operationalized as the acquaintance and degree of contacts maintained by the rural youth with the local personnel, developmental agencies and extension officials to obtain information. In the present study seven different extension agencies which the rural youth prefer to get the information were taken and their extent of contact with the extension agencies was measured. The frequency of contact was measured as Regularly, Occasionally and Never and was scored as 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The primary data was collected in personal interview method in the year 2022 using a well-structured and pre-tested schedule.

Results and Discussion

The data collected was tabulated, analysed using statistical techniques and inferences were drawn. The results of the study were presented here.

Table 2 Frequency of Contact of different Extension agencies by the respondents**(n=240)**

Sl. No	Extension Agency	Frequency of Contact							
		Regular		Occasional		Never		Total	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Friends	163	67.92	56	23.33	21	8.75	240	100.00
2.	Neighbours	61	25.42	122	50.83	57	23.75	240	100.00
3.	Grama Volunteer	62	25.83	126	52.50	52	21.67	240	100.00
4.	Village Agricultural Assistant (VAA)	73	30.42	89	37.08	78	32.50	240	100.00
5.	Agricultural Officials	69	28.75	80	33.33	91	37.92	240	100.00
6.	KVK Officials	53	22.08	106	44.17	81	33.75	240	100.00
7.	Bank Personnel	68	28.34	86	35.83	86	35.83	240	100.00

n - Frequency; % - percentage

The frequency of contact of the rural youth was measured as Regularly, Occasionally and Never and scores of 3, 2, and 1 were allotted respectively. Mean score of each item was calculated and the items were ranked based on their mean score and presented in the Table 3

Table 3 Extent of Contact of respondents over different Extension Agencies

Sl. No	Extension Contact	Mean Score	Rank
1.	Friends	2.592	First
2.	Neighbours	2.017	Third
3.	Grama Volunteer	2.042	Second
4.	Village Agricultural Assistant (VAA)	1.979	Fourth
5.	Agricultural Officials	1.908	Sixth
6.	KVK Officials	1.883	Seventh
7.	Bank Personnel	1.925	Fifth

A critical perusal of the Table 2 and 3 portrayed that Friends occupied first rank with mean score of 2.592 followed by Grama Volunteer with a mean score of 2.042. The

respondents majorly contact their friends and Grama Volunteer of their village to obtain any sort of information. The third rank was given to neighbors. Village Agricultural Assistant (VAA), grass root level extension worker was at fourth rank followed by Bank personnel. Higher level officials like Agricultural Officer, KVK personnel were at sixth and seventh ranks respectively.

The probable reason for these findings might be that friends were the most contacted source of information as they were easily accessible to the respondents followed by Grama Volunteer. Grama Volunteer System was a government's flagship programme implemented by honorable Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Y.S. Jaganmohan Reddy in which a Grama Volunteer will be appointed per 50 families in each village to provide governance services to all the people in the village at their door steps. Thus, these grama volunteers acts as best source of information for any government related activity or village development programme. They were in charge of applying any certificate or avail any government subsidies and allowances. So, the rural youth were in frequent contact with grama volunteers. Agricultural related queries are best clarified with Village Agricultural Assistant appointed at Rythu Bharosa Kendras launched by Govt. of Andhra Pradesh to provide assistance to the farmers of the village in farming related activities. VAA, Agricultural Officers and KVK personnel were at relatively less contacted than Grama volunteer as they were contacted only by rural youth involved in agriculture *i.e.*, farm youth. Bank personnel were contacted for economic needs and credit facilities by the rural youth.

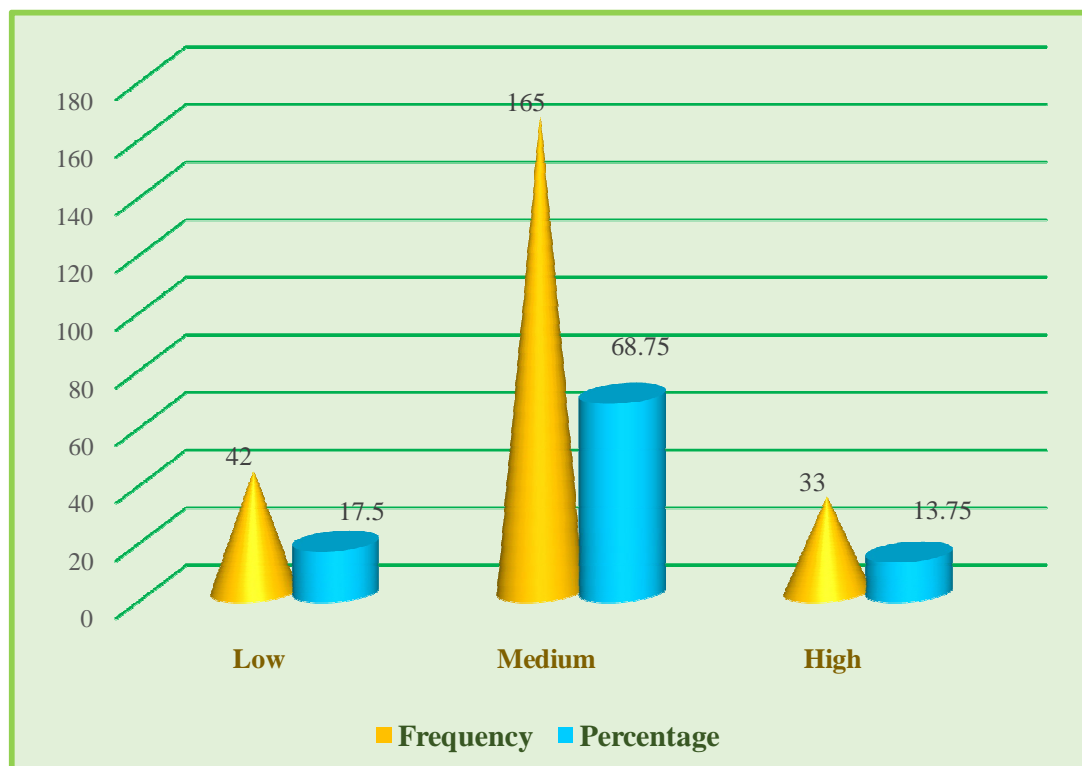
Based on the overall score obtained by a respondent in extension contact the respondents were categorized into low, medium and high categories according to their mean and standard deviation. The results were furnished in Table 4 and graphically represented in Figure 1

Table 4 Distribution of respondents according to their Extension Agency Contact

(n=240)

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low	42	17.50
2.	Medium	165	68.75
3.	High	33	13.75
Total		240	100.00

Figure 1 Distribution of respondents according to their Extension Agency Contact



A glance at the Table 4 and Figure 1 revealed that among all the respondents, 165 respondents possessed medium level of extension agency contact followed by 42 respondents with low and 33 respondents with high levels of Extension agency contact. When expressed in percentage more than two-thirds of the respondents (68.75 per cent) had medium level of extension contact, less than one-fifth of the respondents (17.50 per cent) had low level of extension contact and little more than one-eighth of the respondents (13.75 per cent) had high level of extension contact.

It was comprehended from the above table that above four-fifth of the respondents (82.50 per cent) had medium to high level of extension contact. The possible reason for this trend might be that rural youth thriving to get information had good accessibility to valid and credible sources. There were new government interventions and accountable extension agencies in the near proximity of the respondents. So, they were able to reap the best information in a short period with minimum effort.

The present findings draw support from the results of Tekhale et al. (2015) and Shireesha et al. (2017) who also revealed that majority of the respondents possessed medium extension contact followed by low and high extension contacts.

Conclusion

From the study it was inferred that rural youth opt for contacting friends, grama volunteer and neighbours more frequently to get information. There is a void in frequent contact with higher officials of Agricultural department and KVKs. Thus, the contact of rural youth with these higher officials needs to be enhanced to make them updated with credible information. It could also be concluded from the study that more than two-thirds (68.75 per cent) of the respondents had medium level of extension contact, less than one-fifth (17.50 per cent) of the respondents had low level of extension contact and little more than one-eighth (13.75 per cent) of the respondents had high level of extension contact. It emphasized the need to improve the extension contacts of the rural youth. Due to the limitations of time and resources, the study was restricted to only two districts. But the implications of this study addressed the need to improve extension agency contact among the rural youth. The extension agencies should increase their accessibility to the rural youth. The rural youth could be encouraged by the agencies to increase their contact by supplying them with credible, timely and useful information. Future studies could be taken to study the measures that are to be advocated to increase the extension agency contact of rural youth.

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