

Research Article

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Agricultural Extension Interpersonal Communication Competence in Enrekang Regency

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ORCIDLusiana Seli: <http://orcid.org/0009-0006-5909-5261>**Abstract.**

Agricultural extension workers play an essential role in increasing shallot yields. They provide technical counseling, transfer knowledge and skills, and are involved in post-harvest monitoring, mentoring, and counseling. In addition, they also provide information about business development and marketing. Agricultural extension interpersonal communication competence plays a crucial role in efforts to increase shallot yields in Enrekang. With these competencies, agricultural extension agents can establish good relationships with farmers, understand their needs, and communicate effectively to transfer relevant knowledge and skills. Through effective interpersonal communication, agricultural extension workers can assist farmers in implementing proper cultivation practices, overcoming obstacles, providing motivation, and building collaboration between farmers and related parties. This article uses a qualitative descriptive methodology. The result showed that the agricultural extension interpersonal communication competence is outstanding and has a positive value for farmers in Enrekang Regency. Some farmers are still reluctant and indifferent to following directions from extension agents because they consider themselves quite experienced in farming.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Shallot is a horticultural commodity needed by the people of Indonesia, especially as an ingredient in cooking spices. This type of spice vegetable is necessary to complement cooking spices to add to the taste and enjoyment of food. The high public demand for shallots requires sufficient national shallot supplies[1]. Besides being used as a cooking spice, It is noteworthy that shallots are rich in compounds used throughout history in various traditional medicinal practices. Demand for shallots generally increases ahead of religious holidays, followed by soaring prices in the market because the supply of shallots does not keep pace with consumer demand[2]

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In Indonesia, several regions are the centers of shallot farming. Some are Bima in West Nusa Tenggara, Brebes in Central Java, and Enrekang in South Sulawesi. 2018 South Sulawesi produced around 92,392 tons of shallots, equivalent to 6.14 percent of the total national production. Of the total shallot production in South Sulawesi, as much as 73,581 tons, or around 79.64 percent, was donated by Enrekang Regency[3]

Agricultural extension workers play an important role in increasing shallot yields. They provide technical counseling, transfer knowledge and skills, and post-harvest monitoring, mentoring, and counseling. In addition, they also provide information about business development and marketing. With the help of agricultural extension workers, farmers can apply best practices, gain new knowledge, overcome obstacles, and increase the yields and profitability of their farming businesses. Khasanah and Awza (2022) state that field agricultural extension workers are needed to disseminate information to farmers by socializing, guiding, mobilizing to make changes or innovations, and strengthening relations with the community[4].

Agricultural extension interpersonal communication competence plays a crucial role in efforts to increase shallot yields in Enrekang District. With these competencies, agricultural extension agents can establish good relationships with farmers, understand their needs, and communicate effectively to transfer relevant knowledge and skills. Through effective interpersonal communication, agricultural extension workers can assist farmers in implementing proper cultivation practices, overcoming obstacles, providing motivation, and building collaboration between farmers and related parties. Thus, the agricultural extension interpersonal communication competence is essential in increasing shallot yields in Enrekang District.

2. METHOD

This research is included in qualitative research so that it will produce descriptive data in the form of words. The data analyzed in it is descriptive. The purpose of descriptive research is to make descriptions in a series of words instead of numbers, pictures, or drawings systematically and accurately regarding the facts, characteristics, and relationships between the phenomena being investigated[5]. This study uses a qualitative descriptive method because researchers consider shallots to have medicinal properties. Shallots have medicinal properties. Shallots have medicinal properties. The problems studied are complex and dynamic, so data obtained from informants can be filtered using more natural methods, namely direct observation and interviews, to receive honest answers.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study illustrate that the interpersonal communication competence of shallot agricultural extension agents in Batunoni Village is quite strong. The extension-ist's ability to convey information well, openness, listening skills, developing relationships, and communicating information creatively all play an important role in facilitating effective communication between extension agents and farmers. The results of this study indicate that effective interpersonal communication is an important foundation in building a solid working relationship between extension agents and farmers and in achieving better agricultural results. More details can be described in the following points.

3.1. Ability to Convey Information Well

The ability of agricultural extension agents to properly convey information to shallot farmers is an essential factor in interpersonal communication. Agricultural extension workers in Batu Noni Village have good skills in informing farmers. They use their background as local residents to communicate in a familiar and relevant language to farmers. In addition, their knowledge and experience in agriculture help provide concrete examples that farmers can understand. This is reflected in the increase in production results in the field based on applying techniques conveyed by extension agents. The research results show that extension workers have an adequate capacity, influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors.

Supporting factors that strengthen the ability of extension workers to convey information include agricultural educational background. In-depth knowledge of farming techniques provides a solid foundation for conveying accurate and relevant information to farmers. Practical experience in agriculture also contributes significantly, giving concrete examples that make it easier for farmers to understand the concepts explained.[6]

Islami (2013) explains that the ability to convey information well is a person's ability to concisely and precisely use appropriate methods/media and follow a logical flow. In addition, they can also use proper grammar and vocabulary and adjust the style of speech to the listener[7].

According to this study's results, using visual media such as photos and videos is also an important supporting factor. This visual media assists extension workers in illustrating agricultural practices' concepts, techniques, or results, making it easier for farmers to better understand and visualize information. Communication in simple language is also

a practical approach, ensuring that information is accessible and understandable to all levels of farmer education.

However, there are also inhibiting factors that can affect the ability of extension agents to convey information. Some farmers' experienced attitude can make it difficult for them to accept suggestions or input from extension workers. Some farmers may also have local knowledge that differs from the technical information provided by extension workers, which can hinder the adoption of new practices. Distrust of change and limitations in language and understanding can also be obstacles to communicating information properly to farmers.

In overcoming this barrier, extension workers need to develop a more sensitive and inclusive approach to communication. They must understand farmers' knowledge and experience and communicate information in a language and method that the target audience can understand. The use of concrete examples, visual media, and interactive approaches can help overcome language and comprehension barriers. Overall, agricultural extension agents' ability to properly convey information is determined mainly by a combination of these supporting and inhibiting factors, as well as tangible efforts to adapt to the needs and characteristics of shallot farmers[8].

3.2. Open Attitude and Ability to Listen to Others

An open attitude and the ability to listen to others are key aspects in the interpersonal communication of agricultural extension agents with shallot farmers. Agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village have an open attitude and good listening skills. They create an environment where farmers feel heard and valued. This listening skill helps extension workers understand the problems and needs of farmers in greater depth. Extension officers treat farmers' opinions and views with respect, even when opinions differ. This helps build strong and inclusive cooperative relationships. The analysis reveals that extension workers have significant abilities influenced by several supporting and inhibiting factors.

A robust supporting factor is the extensionist's communicative approach, which is responsive and empathetic to the opinions and experiences of farmers. Agricultural extension workers adopt an open attitude that respects various views and a willingness to learn from farmers' experiences. Good listening skills enable extension agents to understand more deeply the challenges and needs faced by farmers. Acceptance of differences of opinion and humility in communication builds solid and productive cooperative relations between agricultural extension workers and farmers.

However, there are also inhibiting factors that affect the ability of the instructor to be open and listen. Some farmers are reluctant to share their opinions, believing their knowledge and experience are sufficient. In addition, cultural and language differences can create gaps in understanding between extension workers and farmers.

To overcome these barriers, extension workers create an environment that promotes open dialogue. They allow farmers to express their complaints, questions, and opinions while feeling heard and valued. Extension agents' approaches, such as regular field visits and farmer group activities, also help develop mutually beneficial relationships.

It is important for extension agents to approach farmers with respect and a willingness to learn from their experiences. This approach creates stronger relationships and benefits both parties. Overall, the ability of agricultural extension agents to be open and listen to others is strongly influenced by a combination of enabling and inhibiting factors, as well as active efforts to create an inclusive and mutually respectful communication environment.

Prayoga et al. (2019)[9], in their research, suggested that in the context of communication, it is crucial for each party, both communicators and communicants, to have the ability to listen to each other. Communication is considered successful when both are able and willing to find common points in understanding the message or information to be conveyed. This applies within the framework of the social system that exists in the community where they interact. When an instructor has strong communication competence, delivering material will be interactive and communicative in two directions. As a result, the purpose and intent of the material presented will be more readily understood and absorbed by the recipients of the information.

3.3. Ability to Develop Relationships Through Communication

Developing relationships through communication is essential in the interaction between agricultural extension agents and shallot farmers. Agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village can develop good relationships with farmers through communication. They build trust and value the diversity of farmers' views and experiences. This capability is supported by a friendly, empathetic communication approach that prioritizes the active involvement of farmers in every stage of extension. Well-established relationships help in facilitating an effective and ongoing exchange of information.

A supporting factor that affects the ability of extension agents to develop relationships is the communicative approach used by extension agents. Through a series of actions such as direct visits to farmers' fields, farmer group activities, and farmer meetings,

extension agents have created active involvement and commitment to agricultural development. In this case, extension workers have a deep understanding of the needs and challenges faced by farmers, and they show a commitment to be directly involved in the agricultural process.

However, inhibiting factors also need to be addressed in developing an effective relationship. Some challenges may arise from differences in culture, language, or views between extension workers and farmers. Sometimes, external factors such as government policies or economic factors can also affect this relationship. In some cases, the lack of support or coordination from the parties involved can also be a barrier.

To overcome these barriers, extension agents need to adopt an approach sensitive to the local context and the needs of farmers. They must build trust and create an inclusive environment where farmers feel heard and valued. Efforts to continue to be involved in farming activities and provide ongoing support, such as via telephone communications to monitor crop conditions, also play an important role in developing solid relationships.

Overall, the ability of agricultural extension agents to develop relationships through communication is strongly influenced by supporting and inhibiting factors. Extension agents who are successful in creating sustainable relationships with farmers tend to adopt approaches that are responsive, empathetic, and actively involved in farming activities. In overcoming barriers, extension workers need to understand the social, cultural, and economic context within farming communities and strive to create an environment of inclusive and respectful communication.

3.4. Ability to convey information creatively

The ability of agricultural extension agents to convey information creatively is essential in facilitating the understanding and adoption of better agricultural practices by shallot farmers. Islami (2013) suggests that the ability to convey information creatively is a person's ability to share information with others, which can improve overall performance. In addition, they are able to convey information to other parties in ways that are attractive, easy to understand, and can attract listeners' attention.

The results of this study indicate that agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village can convey information creatively. They do not only rely on conventional approaches but also use various methods that attract the attention of farmers. Using visual media, inspirational stories, and real case examples helps bring extension materials to life and facilitate farmers' understanding. This capability allows extension agents to maintain the long-term involvement of farmers.

Supporting factors that support the ability of extension agents to convey information creatively are innovations in the communication approach. Agricultural extension workers use various media, such as photos, videos, and banners, to illustrate and prove the success of recommended practices. Using this visual medium helps visualize complex concepts in a way that is easier for farmers to understand. In addition, creative strategies, such as providing concrete examples through innovative practices, such as using mosquito nets to avoid pests, successfully illustrate the positive impact of these actions[10].

However, inhibiting factors also need to be faced in conveying information creatively. Challenges can come from limited access or knowledge of technology among farmers. Some farmers may not be familiar with the use of visual media or modern technology, so these creative strategies may not work for them. In addition, differences in cultural or educational background can also affect the level of understanding and involvement of farmers in receiving information creatively.

To overcome this barrier, extension agents must consider their audience's characteristics and needs. In conveying information creatively, extension agents must choose the most relevant method and be easily understood by farmers. In some cases, more straightforward approaches, such as speaking directly or using concrete examples of local farming practices, may be more effective than complex visual media. Extension officers must also ensure that the creative strategies used can describe the practical implications and benefits that farmers can apply in their daily practice.

Based on the analysis that has been done, the agricultural extension interpersonal communication competence plays an essential role in efforts to increase shallot yields. Agricultural extension workers in Batu Noni Village have strong skills in three main aspects of interpersonal communication: motivational skills, communication knowledge, and communication skills. The motivating ability of agricultural extension workers is reflected in their ability to encourage farmers through a passionate and inspiring approach. In addition, their extensive communication knowledge helps them communicate information effectively and relevantly to farmers. Strong communication skills enable them to convey information in a way that farmers can easily understand and apply.

Assessment of interpersonal communication competence in agricultural extension agents also illustrates that they can overcome various supporting and inhibiting factors for communication. The ability to convey information well is the main foundation, and educational background and experience as a farmer provide advantages in this regard. An open attitude and active listening skills enable agricultural extension workers to

understand farmers' problems and needs better.[11] Furthermore, the ability to develop relationships through communication creates close connections between agricultural extension agents and farmers, builds mutual trust, and supports inclusive agriculture development.

One of the things that becomes an important focus is the ability of extension workers to convey information creatively. In this regard, agricultural extension agents have successfully used various methods, such as visual media, to illustrate complex concepts in ways that are attractive and easy for farmers to understand. In addition, efforts to build good relations with farmers include two-way communication, where listening to each other is the primary key. The success of this two-way communication indicates that extension agents can create an environment where farmers feel valued and have space to talk and share their concerns.

Overall, the interpersonal communication competence of agricultural extension workers to increase shallot yields in Batunoni Village is crucial. Agricultural extension agents can create compelling interactions with farmers through solid motivational skills, knowledge of communication, and communication skills. Supporting factors such as educational background and experience, as well as the ability to listen to each other and develop relationships, form the foundation for the success of this interpersonal communication. Thus, the agricultural extension interpersonal communication competence significantly increases shallot yields in Batunoni Village.

4. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that communication competence is an essential aspect of agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village, Anggeraja District, Enrekang Regency. The ability to motivate extension agents has been shown to positively impact interactions with shallot farmers, boosting farmer enthusiasm and involvement in agricultural practices. In addition, the communication skills of extension workers in conveying information clearly and effectively, including using visual methods, are vital in overcoming communication challenges among farmers with diverse educational backgrounds. Their communication skills in active listening, explaining information, and managing conflict also positively impacted the relationship between extension agents and farmers.

The supporting factors that strengthen interpersonal communication between agricultural extension workers and shallot farmers in Batunoni Village include educational background providing technical expertise in conveying accurate information, using appropriate language to facilitate better understanding, and the role of fellow farmers in

creating closeness and trust. All contribute to effective communication between extension agents and farmers. Then, the inhibiting factor in interpersonal communication between agricultural extension workers and shallot farmers in Batunoni Village is the attitude of some farmers who are reluctant to accept suggestions or input from extension agents because they feel they need more experience cultivating shallots. They are reflected in their high self-confidence and the view that their knowledge has become a firm reference in agricultural practices.

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