



Enhancement of Communication Skills of Agricultural Scientists Through Increased Exposure on Mass Media: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract: This study is an assessment of scientist's perception regarding the role of mass media in improving their presentational skills by increased exposure on media via different training tools of mass media. The total respondents were 50 key informants from different research institutes of National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), Islamabad. The study results revealed the highly significant difference of respondents before and after mass media exposure for confidence level of effective knowledge transfer, effective speaking level, conversational skills, interpersonal skills and motivational skills. The respondents perceived that training was satisfactory in reducing the communications hurdles (64%) and in improving the voice and tone and the speed of your conversation was 50% satisfactory. About 44% respondents described that Audio Visual Presentation Exercise was very useful activity, 58% mentioned that the voice over and Presentations for Documentaries was useful aspect, 46% responses were in favour of Recorded TV Programmes.

Key words: Agriculture, knowledge, media, television

INTRODUCTION

The electronic media and communication tools have a much strong impact on educational environments than any other medium (Asnafi and Hamidi, 2008). Many social scientists and academicians have done research and verified the better understanding of farmers and other stakeholders toward the adoption of relevant knowledge (Gamon *et al.*, 1992; Akar-Vural, 2010; Faiola *et al.*, 2010). The results of their research indicate that varied tools and media are employed by extension educators for the communication of innovative technologies to the farming community. Use of modern communication tools has a significant effect towards increasing the awareness level of farmers. Apparently, the major reason, behind the popularity of TV, lies in its easy access to its audience. The main intention of the people is to adopt the simplest way for learning, therefore, it can be found in television's informative programs (Buren, 2000).

Through decades, various research studies have indicated numerous external deterrents for the utilization of mass media. The main deterrents described were budgetary issues for finding resources, lack of audio-visual facilities and lack of skilled audiovisual

workforce (Windschitl and Sahl, 2002). It is worth mentioning here that perception can be influenced by the personality characteristics of the perceiver. It can also be influenced by the features of the thing/object perceived. Unfortunately, in any perception study, one cannot be sure about which has more control over the other (Simonsen and Dick, 1997).

Television is recognized as the most important medium for transfer of knowledge to the farming community living in remote areas of developing countries (FAO, 2001). The purpose of current study was to check the enhancement of presentational skills of research scientists through increased exposure on mass media.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Present study was conducted under the Directorate of Audio Visual Communications, NARC, Islamabad, to check the response of the training delivered to scientists in 2015. Qualitative as well as quantitative method was employed for data collection. For the qualitative data key informant surveys with different agriculture experts of NARC were conducted, while for the quantitative data, the information was collected through primary

information with a well-designed questionnaire. A sample of 50 scientists was collected from different institutes/programmes of NARC. The collected data was analyzed by applying descriptive statistics and paired t-test, using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and MS Excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socioeconomic characteristics: Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics of selected respondents. Based on the information of the sample data, average ages of the respondents were 46.60 with a minimum of 29 and a maximum of 59 years. Professional experience, on an average, was 19.46 with a maximum of 33 and a minimum of 33 years (Table 1).

Paired difference of activities before and after training: For the comparison of before and after training of the respondents paired t-test has been employed. The results of the paired t-test show that the confidence level for effective knowledge transfer mean has a significant difference (about -0.70), which is significant at 1% level of significance. On the same level, effective speaking level has mean difference of before and after training

-0.66, conversational skills level has -0.58, interpersonal skills level has -0.76 and motivational skills level has -0.070 mean difference, respectively. All these variables were significant at 1% level of significance (Table 2).

The respondents perceived that training was satisfactory in reducing the communication hurdles (64%), in improving voice, tone and speed of conversation, 50% found it satisfactory and 42% respondents perceived it as good. Lastly, the training improved the body language as 48% responded it as satisfactory and 38% perceived it as good (Table 3).

Most useful aspect of the training: About 44% respondents described that Audio Visual Presentation Exercise was very useful activity, 58% mentioned that Voice over and Presentations for Documentaries was a useful aspect, 46% responses were in favour of Recorded TV Programmes and 42% mentioned satisfactory response for Live Talk Shows (Table 4).

In response to check the willingness of the respondents in attending other trainings of mass media, 90% respondents showed their positive response in attending other trainings (Table 5).

Overall rating of training: In response to overall rating for the training, 40% respondents responded that training was good, 34% responded that training was satisfactory and for 18% the training was excellent. Only 8% respondents described that training was unsatisfactory (Table 6, Fig. 1).

Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation
Age of respondent	50	29.00	59.00	46.60	7.92
Professional experience	50	5.00	33.00	19.46	6.98

Table 2: Paired difference of activities before and after training

Variables	Before (Mean)	After (Mean)	Mean difference	t-value
Confidence level for effective knowledge transfer	1.92	2.62	-0.70*	-10.69
Effective speaking level	1.92	2.58	-0.66*	-8.98
Conversational skills	1.98	2.56	-0.58*	-8.22
Interpersonal skills	1.88	2.64	-0.76*	-9.67
Motivational skills	1.98	2.68	-0.70*	-8.05

*Indicate that coefficients are significant at 1% significance level

Table 3: How do you rate the effect of training on your following skills?

Variables	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory
To reduce communication hurdles	3 (6.0)	14 (28.0)	32 (64.0)	1 (2.0)
To improved voice, tone and speed of conversation	1 (2.0)	21 (42.0)	25 (50.0)	3 (6.0)
To improved body language	4 (8.0)	19 (38.0)	24 (48.0)	3 (6.0)

In percentages in parenthesis and frequency out of parenthesis

Table 4: Most useful aspect of the training

Variables	Very useful	Useful	Not very useful	Completely useless
Audio visual presentation exercise	14 (28.0)	22 (44.0)	13 (26.0)	1 (2.0)
Voice over and presentations for documentaries	9 (18.0)	29 (58.0)	11 (22.0)	1 (2.0)
Recorded TV programmes	13 (26.0)	23 (46.0)	22 (24.0)	2 (4.0)
Live talk shows	17 (34.0)	21 (42.0)	12 (24.0)	0 (0.0)

In percentages in parenthesis and frequency out of parenthesis

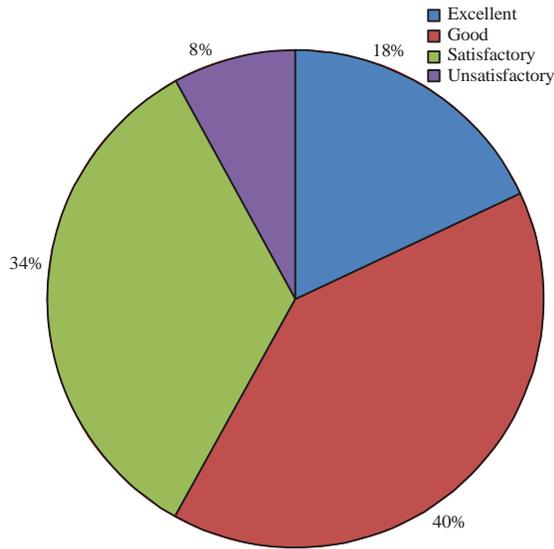


Fig. 1: Overall rating of training course

Table 5: Do you plan to attend other trainings?

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	45	90.0
No	5	10.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 6: Overall rating of training course

Response	Frequency	Percent (%)
Excellent	9	18.0
Good	20	40.0
Satisfactory	17	34.0
Unsatisfactory	4	8.0
Total	50	100.0

CONCLUSION

The present study was conducted to highlight the importance of access and usage level of Electronic Media in capacity building of the scientist to transfer their knowledge through electronic media for farmers. The organizations and departments, concerned with agricultural development, need to understand the potential of mass media for the fast transfer/dissemination of information to farmers. In Pakistan, the government, at national and state level, needs to change the focus and

direction of agricultural policies, so that a full-fledged strategy is bent to strap up mass media potential for assisting overall agricultural development. The core purpose of the research was to determine when, how and what media research scientists consider useful, their awareness, attitude and media preferences as well as their expectations. This survey was conducted with a view to generate baseline data that can be used to expand capacity building for researchers and dissemination of agricultural information to farmers.

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