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Postgraduate research in agricultural extension education in the DBSKKV, Dapoli, Maharashtra: A content analysis

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Abstract

Content analysis is a research method used to systematically examine and interpret the content of written, spoken or visual material to identify patterns, themes or meanings. The study was carried out to analyze research areas of postgraduate research conducted in the Department of Agricultural Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Dapoli under Dr. B. S. Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth (DBSKKV), Dapoli, Maharashtra. A 10 year period from 2014 to 2023 was selected for this study. A total of 77 theses were submitted during this period. Qualitative or relational content analysis was the research method utilized for data collection. Data were collected from the hard copies of theses available in the university library using a structured proforma, and were analyzed using frequency and percentage method.

The results revealed that most of the research was concentrated on the theme area of agricultural extension (45.45%), followed by extension education (38.97%). Research on agricultural communication and agriculture and allied enterprises was comparatively lower, with each accounting for 7.79 per cent. Among the subareas of research social and educational psychology held the highest proportion (31.18%), followed by knowledge diffusion and adoption (19.48%) and human resource development (10.39%), entrepreneurship development and behavior, extension communication methods, crop production and cropping pattern (7.79% each), administration, personal development and role performance, agricultural and rural development programmes (6.49% each), capacity development and impact assessment (2.60%). The concentration of research in only a few areas and limited work in others indicates a mismatch between field needs and academic output, implying that curriculum in agricultural extension education must be revised to promote balanced research by integrating emerging themes such as climate services, digital extension, AI in agriculture, policy research and social innovation.

Keywords: Content analysis, Postgraduate research, Department of Agricultural Extension Education, Dr. B. S. Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth, Research area, Theme area, Sub areas of research

Introduction

Agricultural research can contribute to solving critical global challenges such as food insecurity, climate change and sustainable development. Sound communication is fundamental in agriculture research and underlies the successful development and sharing of findings, innovation, and technology. The pursuing of research in agricultural extension education is moving more and more beyond boundaries of discipline focusing on other research areas like organizational development, documentation and validation of indigenous technical knowledge, training needs assessment, entrepreneurship development, program evaluation and impact assessment. However, it needs further strengthening to address emerging changes in agriculture and the societal needs.

According to the data from the Press Information Bureau (Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare, 2021), India's National Agricultural Research System (NARS) is a

vast and multifaceted network orchestrated by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmer's Welfare. The NARS has contributed immensely to make India self-sufficient in food production and serves the agricultural technology and information needs of the country. NARS has a research network of 102 ICAR Research Institutes, 11 Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes (ATARIs) and 73 Agricultural universities (including 3 Central agricultural universities and 5 universities with agriculture faculty) spread across the country. For popularization of ICAR technologies, 725 Krishi Vigyan Kendras are operating throughout the country for different extension activities.

Dr. B. S. Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth, Dapoli in the state of Maharashtra, is one of the renowned universities among the 73 agricultural universities that are included in NARS in India. The Konkan region falls under the jurisdiction of Dr. B. S. Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth, Dapoli and it comprises

five districts: Thane, Palghar, Ratnagiri, Raigad and Sindhudurg. Crop farming, cattle, horticulture, and fisheries might all be expanded in the Konkan region. The College of Agriculture in Dapoli, was established in 1957. Earlier, it was under Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth, Dapoli in the state of Maharashtra. Later, it was renamed as Dr. Balasaheb Sawant Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth in the year 2003. Postgraduate courses in extension education at the College of Agriculture, Dapoli started in 1964.

The Konkan region of Maharashtra is a high-rainfall, coastal and hilly agro-ecological zone characterized by a farming system dominated by horticultural crops such as mango, cashew and coconut along with lowland rice and important fisheries sector. Dr. B. S. Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth (DBSKKV), Dapoli, the state agricultural university established for this region, plays a central role in developing and disseminating location-specific technologies through education, research and extension. The university caters to the agricultural needs of five major Konkan districts: Ratnagiri, Thane, Sindhudurg, Raigad and Palghar. Hence, It would be appropriate to carry out a content analysis on agricultural extension education PG research, as it plays a vital role in technology dissemination.

Content analysis is a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication (Berelson, 1952) ^[1]. This research delves into a comprehensive content analysis of agricultural extension education postgraduate theses submitted in the College of Agriculture Dapoli. Content analysis in agricultural extension education postgraduate research offers great analysis of the theme areas in the subject. The coverage is usually including the most frequent themes, topics, and research foci within the agricultural extension discipline. Thus, it helps to identify under-researched or neglected areas and thereby pointing to potential future research opportunities of agricultural extension in the Konkan region of Maharashtra.

Methodology

Department of Agricultural Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Dapoli under Dr. B. S. Konkan Krishi Vidyapeeth, Dapoli, Maharashtra was the locale selected for this particular study. A time period of recent 10 years was selected for this study. All postgraduate theses submitted between 2014 and 2023 were chosen, and a total of 77 postgraduate theses were submitted under the department during this time period. All 77 theses were analyzed to identify their respective research areas. In order to analyze the research areas of postgraduate theses a classification system adopted by Samanta *et.al* (1995, as

cited in Reddy 2002) ^[7] was used with slight modification. Qualitative content analysis was the research method used to analyze the research areas of postgraduate theses. Data were collected manually from the hard copies of postgraduate theses available in the university library. The outcomes were presented in terms of frequency and percentage.

Results and Discussion

A research area is a broad domain of the study encompassing related topics and questions within a particular discipline or field. A classification system adopted by Samanta *et.al* (1995, as cited in Reddy 2002) ^[7] was used with slight modifications. Data with respect to area of research are presented in table no 1. According to the modified classification adopted by Samanta *et.al* (1995, as cited in Reddy 2002) ^[7] four theme areas and nine sub areas of research were identified. These nine areas were again divided into thrust areas of research. Table 1 showed that agricultural extension is the most focused theme area of research with frequency 35 and 45.45 per cent. Extension education stands as the second most studied area with frequency 30 and percentage 38.97. Agricultural communication and allied enterprises are the least focused theme area of research.

Analysis of the sub areas showed that, social and educational psychology represented the largest share of research with frequency 24 and percentage 31.18, indicating a strong academic inclination towards understanding behavioural, psychological and learning –related aspects of stakeholders in agriculture. This was followed by Knowledge, diffusion and adoption (19.48%) reflecting a sustainable interest in technology transfer and adoption processes. Human Resource Development (HRD) accounted for 10.39 per cent, highlighting a moderate attention to issues concerning farmers, tribal communities, women and rural development.

Extension research is primarily intended for technology dissemination. It also deals with social and psychological traits of people. Overall, results revealed that postgraduate research has largely followed the same areas of research. The findings revealed that areas such as extension communication methods, entrepreneurship behaviour, crop production and cropping pattern, capacity development and impact assessment, agricultural and rural development programmes, administration and role performance had not been focused sufficiently. Capacity development and impact assessment is the least focused areas of research. Despite their significant contribution in advancing research, these domains remain under -researched.

Table 1: Distribution of data according to the area of research or coverage of theses

Sl. No.	Theme area	Sub areas of research	Frequency	Percentage
1	Extension education (Frequency:30) (Percentage:38.97)	Social and educational psychology		
		Attitude	8	10.39
		Intention	2	2.60
		Perception	8	10.39
		Student aspirations and learning	2	2.60
		Technology utilization behaviour	2	2.60
		Agribusiness anxiety	1	1.30
		Professional soft skills	1	1.30
		Sub Total	24	31.18

		Entrepreneurship development and behaviour		
		Entrepreneurship behaviour	3	3.90
		Marketing behaviour	3	3.90
		Sub total	6	7.79
2	Agricultural extension (Frequency:35) (Percentage:45.45)	Knowledge, diffusion and adoption		
		Adoption of agricultural technology	12	15.58
		Adoption of nutritional practices	1	1.30
		Indigenous technical knowledge	2	2.60
		Sub total	15	19.48
		Human resource development		
		Research on small and marginal farmers	1	1.30
		Research on tribal development	4	5.19
		Women in agricultural and social groups	3	3.90
		Sub total	8	10.39
		Administration, personal development and role performance		
		Job performance	2	2.60
		Role performance	2	2.60
		Rural institutions and voluntary organisations	1	1.30
		Sub total	5	6.49
		Agricultural and rural development programmes	5	6.49
		Capacity development and impact assessment	2	2.60
3	Agricultural communication (Frequency:6) (Percentage:7.79)	Extension communication methods		
		Communication behaviour	1	1.30
		Mass media	5	6.49
		Sub total	6	7.79
4	Agriculture and allied enterprises (Frequency:6) (Percentage:7.79)	Crop production and cropping pattern		
		Horticultural crops	3	3.90
		Field crops	1	1.30
		Forest crops	1	1.30
		Cropping pattern	1	1.30
	Sub total		6	7.79
	Total		77	100.00

This classification of research areas are on par with Reddy (2002) and Biswas (2009) ^[2, 7]

Conclusion

The analysis of 77 postgraduate theses revealed distinct patterns in the thematic orientation of research within the field of agricultural extension education during 2014-2023 in the DBSKKV, Dapoli. The study indicated that postgraduate research in agricultural extension needs a more balanced and diversified focus. While behavioural and technology adoption studies dominate several important areas such as agricultural communication, entrepreneurship development, rural institutions, capacity development and allied enterprises are under researched suggesting the need for university to consider these trends when supporting research initiatives. A research theme framework should be developed for the university for a particular time period after including current research trends such as climate smart agriculture, policy research, social innovation and ICTs so that research areas won't be missed out. The university can organize regular workshops to guide researchers and ensure a balanced and diversified focus across all research areas.

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