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## PERCEPTION OF VEGETABLE FARMERS ON THE USE OF LOCAL LANGUAGE FOR EXTENSION SERVICE DELIVERY IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

Adefalu<sup>1</sup>, L.L., Aderinoye-Abdulwahab<sup>1</sup>, S.A., Olatinwo<sup>2</sup>, L.K., Adewumi<sup>3</sup>, I.I. and Jimoh<sup>1</sup>, S.A

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### ABSTRACT

*This study focused on the perception of vegetable farmers on the use of local language for extension service delivery in Kwara State, Nigeria. The objectives were to: describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the farmers, identify extension activities on vegetable production, and examine the vegetable farmers' perceived benefits of extension agents' use of local language in message delivery. Data were collected from 120 randomly selected farmers using well-structured interview schedule and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, and means. Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis of the study. The study revealed that, the mean age of the respondents was 48 years, mostly females and were married with an average household size of 7 persons with 24 years of farming experience. Seed Production and certification (88.3%), marketing (87.5%), and safe use of agro-chemicals (86.7%), were the major extension activities enjoyed by farmers in the study area. The farmers identified 'improvement in farming activities' as the major benefits derivable from extension agents' use of local language in message delivery with a weighted mean score of 3.42. PPMC analysis at 0.05 level of significance shows that marital status ( $r=0.231$ ,  $p=0.011$ ), household size ( $r=-0.253$ ,  $p=0.005$  and educational status ( $r=0.223$ ,  $p=0.014$ ) had significant relationship with respondents' perception on use of local language. The study recommended that extension agents who pass instruction to farmers should be encouraged to improve on the use of local languages in transmitting extension innovations to the farmers to enhance their efficiency.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Vegetable Farmers, Local Language, Extension Service Delivery

### INTRODUCTION

All over the world, extension services are required to help rural people advance their agricultural productivity and improve their living standard (Wambura, Acker, & Mwasyete, 2012), whilst agricultural extension is responsible for serving over a billion small-scale farmers in the world Davis., Nkonya., Kato., Mekonnen., Odendo., Miiro., & Nkuba, J. (2010). Extension agents are primarily committed to transferring results from research stations to farmers and vice versa. The role of extension is to enhance the capacity of farmers to be able to identify and analyze their own agricultural problems so that they could take appropriate decisions (Kimaro, Mukandiwa, & Mario, 2010). Suvedi and Ghimire (2015) noted that the role of extension today goes beyond technology transfer to facilitation; beyond training to learning and includes assisting farmers to form groups, dealing with marketing issues, and addressing public interest issues in rural areas. In order to do these, effective communication is required between extension agents, and farmers

(Okpolo, 2002). This has led to increasing emphasis on the development of core competencies which are necessary for the extension personnel to perform at maximum and produce expected results in service delivery. One of such competencies is communicating effectively, particularly using the local language. Competent extension professionals are the assets of agricultural extension services.

Language competence is an important aspect of effective communication as they determine how well farmers will be able to understand and critically analyze knowledge pertaining to the subject matter. Reaching farmers in a language they can understand is a vital consideration in extension message delivery. In this way, they will easily adopt the information delivered and, hence, improve productivity and income (Karbasioun, Mulder, & Biemans, 2007).

Information and knowledge are very important in agricultural development in any community and where they are poorly disseminated the community is at a risk of development. Vegetable farmers need relevant information to help improve their productivity (Aderinoye-Abdulwahab & Salami, 2017). To become a successful vegetable farmer, information on improved technology and market potentials are needed on regular basis. For this information to be useful, it must be communicated in the language of the farmers without ambiguity or language adulteration of any kind. However, extension agents are often confronted with the problem of communicating extension innovation to their clientele using the local language without distortion due to the long years of training with English language being the language of instruction. As a result of this challenge, creative, and very expensive and novel innovative packages are prone to avoidable rejection by local farmers. It is against this background that this study examined vegetable farmers' perception on the use of local language for extension service delivery in Kwara State, Nigeria with the view to identifying extension activities on vegetable production in the study area, examine the vegetable farmers' perceived evaluation of extension agents' use of local language in message delivery by the respondents and establish possible relationship between some selected socio-economic characteristics of the farmers and their perception on extension agents' use of local language for extension service delivery.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study was conducted in Kwara State Nigeria. Kwara State which is one of the 36 states in Nigeria is located between latitudes 7°45' and 9°30' and longitude 2° 30' and 6° 25' east on the prime meridian. The state has 16 Local Government Areas and four Agricultural Development Zones. Kwara State is an agrarian state as majority of the populace are farmers residing in the rural areas. A two-stage sampling technique was used to select vegetable farmers for the study. The first stage involved purposive selection of Ilorin East local Government Area of the state where majority of vegetable farmers are domiciled. Second stage involved random selection of 30% of vegetable farmers from list of 400 registered vegetable farmers obtained from the extension unit of Ilorin East Local Government to make a total population of 120 vegetable farmers.

## **RESUTLS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Socio-Economic Characteristics of the vegetable farmers**

The socioeconomic characteristics of the vegetable farmers are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 shows that 42.5% of the respondents were between 30 and 45 years of age. A lesser proportion (36.7%, 15.8%, and 5.0%) was within the ages of 46-60, over 60 and less than 30, respectively.

Table 1: Socio-economic Distribution of vegetable farmers in the study area

| Variables                        | Frequency | Percentage | Mean      |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| <b>Age(years)</b>                |           |            |           |
| < 30                             | 6         | 5.0        | 48 years  |
| 30 – 45                          | 51        | 42.5       |           |
| 46 – 60                          | 44        | 36.7       |           |
| <b>Sex</b>                       |           |            |           |
| Male                             | 31        | 25.8       |           |
| Female                           | 89        | 74.2       |           |
| <b>Marital Status</b>            |           |            |           |
| Single                           | 2         | 1.7        |           |
| Married                          | 91        | 75.8       |           |
| Widowed                          | 26        | 21.7       |           |
| Divorced                         | 1         | 0.8        |           |
| <b>Educational Status</b>        |           |            |           |
| Non Formal                       | 92        | 76.7       |           |
| Primary Education                | 21        | 17.5       |           |
| Secondary Education              | 6         | 5.0        |           |
| Tertiary Education               | 1         | 0.8        |           |
| <b>Household size(number)</b>    |           |            |           |
| ≤ 5                              | 37        | 30.8       | 7 persons |
| 6-10                             | 67        | 55.8       |           |
| 11-15                            | 12        | 10.0       |           |
| Over 15                          | 4         | 3.33       |           |
| <b>Farming Experience(years)</b> |           |            |           |
| ≤ 10 years                       | 22        | 18.3       | 24 years  |
| 11-20 years                      | 40        | 33.3       |           |
| 21-35 years                      | 33        | 27.5       |           |
| 36 – 50 years                    | 22        | 18.3       |           |

Source: Field Survey, 2019

From the results in Table 1, the mean age of the vegetable farmers was 48 years. This implies that the majority of the vegetable farmers are still within the productive age and has the maturity to interact with extension agents. It had previously been asserted that farmers who fall within the productive age of 20 and 55 years are those who are likely to possess the necessary strength to carry out farming operations (Ibitoye, 2013). Majority of the vegetable farmers (74.2%) were females while (25.8%) were males. This implied that more women were involved in vegetable farming in the study area than men. This may be due to the less tedious nature of vegetable farming compared to other agricultural crop production that requires rigorous farming procedures. Adebayo and Adekunle (2016) asserted that the gender of an individual can influence the type and quality of work carried out by the individual. Most of the vegetable farmers (75.8%) were married while others (21.7%, 1.7% and 0.8%) were widowed, single and divorced respectively. Married people are generally known to raise family that could help as work force for income generation and this has the possibility of exposing the farmers' household

to extension contacts. A notable proportion of the respondents (76.7%) have no formal education. This may be due to low premium given to female education in rural areas. The finding conforms with what was reported by Aderinoye-Abdulwahab and Salami (2017) that majority of rural farmers had low formal education. In addition, the average household size of the farmers was 7 persons and the average years of farming experience was 24 years. Similarly, Aderinoye-Abdulwahab and Salami (2017) found that vegetable farmers have experience of 11-30 years and such farmers would have mastered the nitty gritty of the enterprise.

### **Extension Services Received on Vegetable Production**

Table 2 shows the distribution of vegetable farmers based on the extension services they received from the extension agents in their area.

Table 2: Distribution of the vegetable farmers according to the extension services received in the study area.

| <b>Extension Services</b>         | <b>Frequency (120)</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Marketing Assistance              | 105                    | 87.5                  |
| Safe Use of agro-chemicals        | 104                    | 86.7                  |
| Capacity building                 | 60                     | 50.0                  |
| Data gathering                    | 78                     | 65.0                  |
| Seed production and certification | 106                    | 88.3                  |
| Crop improvement                  | 78                     | 65.0                  |
| Irrigation management             | 99                     | 82.5                  |
| Storage techniques                | 87                     | 72.5                  |
| Package of commodities            | 80                     | 66.7                  |
| Pest and diseases management      | 81                     | 67.5                  |
| Pre-season training               | 83                     | 69.2                  |

Source: Field Survey, (2019)

The results on Table 2 showing extension activities received by farmers in the area indicated that seed production and certification (88.3%), marketing of produce (87.5%), safe use of agro-chemicals (86.7%), and irrigation management (82.5%) were highest. Similarly, storage technique (72.5%), pre-season training (69.2%), pest and disease management (67.5%), packaging of commodities (66.7%), crop improvement (65.0%), and data gathering (65.0%) were also regarded as prevalent extension activities in the area as well as capacity building for farmers. This result aligns with the opinion of Ijeoma and Adesope (2015) who stated that the mission of the extension service is to provide research-based information, educational programs, and technology transfer to farmers, enabling them to make informed decisions about their economic, social and cultural well-being.

### **Perceived evaluation of extension agents' use of local language in message delivery**

Perceived evaluation of extension agents' use of local language in message delivery on extension activities is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Farmers' perceived evaluation of extension agents' use of local language in message delivery on extension activities in the study area.

| Extension service                     | Excellent | Very Good | Good     | Fair      | Mean | Ranking         |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|------|-----------------|
| Improved farming practices            | 71 (59.2) | 37 (30.8) | 3 (2.5)  | 9 (7.5)   | 4.03 | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| Market Information                    | 69 (57.5) | 37 (30.8) | 9 (7.5)  | 5 (4.2)   | 3.45 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Motivation for farmers' participation | 66 (55.0) | 40 (33.3) | 5 (4.2)  | 9 (7.5)   | 3.36 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Leadership and group dynamics         | 56 (46.7) | 49 (40.8) | 10 (8.3) | 5 (4.2)   | 3.31 | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| Preparation of feasibility study      | 58 (48.3) | 50 (41.7) | 3 (2.5)  | 9 (7.5)   | 3.27 | 5 <sup>th</sup> |
| Storage                               | 37 (30.8) | 69 (57.5) | 9 (7.5)  | 5 (4.2)   | 3.15 | 6 <sup>th</sup> |
| Processing                            | 9 (7.5)   | 37 (30.8) | 3 (2.5)  | 71 (59.2) | 1.89 | 7 <sup>th</sup> |
| Data collection                       | 10 (8.3)  | 31 (25.8) | 8 (6.7)  | 71 (59.2) | 1.83 | 8 <sup>th</sup> |

Source: Field Survey, (2019); Excellent=4; Very Good=3; Good=2; Fair=1

According to Table 3, the vegetable farmers rated extension agents' use of local language in the dissemination of farming practice, market information and motivation for farmers' participation in extension activities 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. However, processing of agricultural commodities and data collection were poorly rated as they ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> respectively. The poor ability of the extension agent to communicate effectively in the local language on processing based innovation is capable of impacting negatively on farmers' ability to add value to their farm produce. This situation conflicts with the position of Born & Bachmann (2006) in a study where they asserted that value addition in agriculture predominantly offers the opportunity to receive a bigger share of the consumers' spending in the market. Furthermore, poor evaluation of extension agents' ability on the use of local language in data collection by farmers could rub on the quality, characteristics and skills of planners and implementers which is the hall-mark of the success in any extension programme (Coutts, Robert, Frost & Coutts, 2005).

### Testing of Hypothesis

Table 4: Relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics and perception of the farmers on Benefits of Extension Agents' Use of Local Language

| Variable           | r-value | p-value | Decision        |
|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| Age                | 0.177   | 0.053   | Significant     |
| Marital Status     | 0.231   | 0.011   | Significant     |
| Educational Level  | 0.223   | 0.014   | Significant     |
| Farming Experience | 0.131   | 0.153   | Not Significant |
| Household Size     | -0.253  | 0.005   | Significant     |

Source: Field Survey, (2019). Significant at 0.05

The study showed significant relationship between age ( $r = 0.177$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Marital Status ( $r = 0.231$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), Educational level ( $r = 0.223$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and Household size ( $r = -0.253$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and their perception on benefits of extension agents' use of local language. The positive relationship

of educational level confirms the fact that educational level influences people's view (positively or negatively) and to a large extent, determines ones' perception towards extension agents' mastery in the use of local language for their work.

## CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the vegetable farmers in the study favourably rated extension agents' use of local language in the dissemination of farming practices, market information and motivating farmers' participation in extension activities. The farmers are of the view that if extension agents could use local language in disseminating information to their clients, it would go a long way in increasing or boosting their effectiveness. However, processing of agricultural commodities and data collection were, on the other hand, poorly rated as farmers feel that regardless of the language used, extension agents would effectively perform the specified tasks. The perception of the farmers on extension agents' use of local language for service delivery is highly influenced by the level of farmers' educational attainment as the educated farmers are the ones who hold this view.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study therefore recommends that government and non-governmental based extension agencies should inculcate training on efficient use of local language in their in-house training so as to allow for improved extension service delivery and increased productivity for farmers.

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