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Learning Experience of Small Farmers in Sugarcane Cultivation

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ABSTRACT

The effective learning experience can be had effective learning situations provided by a skillful instructor who knows what he wants, who has the materials to accomplish his goals and the skills to use them effectively. The study was conducted in Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu. A total number of ten sugarcane technologies with technical units were selected for the study. The result of the study small farmers possessed low level of learning experience. The learning experience may be further enhanced by majority of the small farmers to prefer personal localite channels for getting information.

The key to agricultural development lies in the mind, heart and hands of the farmers. Communication of agricultural information was inefficient and ineffective leading to an increase in the gap between innovations in the lab and the adoption in the fields by the farmers. Thus, there is need to have more effective transfer of technology system. Realizing the gap in research and accumulated felt needs at the grass root level, the present investigation was formulated as an attempt to study the following objectives

1. Relationship of socio- economics and psychological characteristics with the learning experience of small farmers.
2. To study the practice wise learning experience of small farmers in sugarcane cultivation

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in selected six villages from six blocks of Cuddalore district of Tamil Nadu. A total number of ten sugarcane technologies with technological

units were selected for the study. The eighty respondent were selected from six villages using proportionate random sampling. Fourteen independent variables were selected based on judges opinion. Data collection was done through a well constructed and pre tested interview schedule. Collected data were analysed by using appropriate statistical tests.

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

In this study, learning experience was operationalised as a service of learning activities performed by the respondent to learn the selected sugarcane technologies. Respondents were asked to indicate the learning activities performed by them under three major information sources *viz.*, personal localite, personal cosmopolite and mass media sources to learn each and every selected sugarcane technology.

Assigning weightage to learning experience

Following the procedure adopted by Athimuthu (1990) and Mahendrapandian

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(1992), 48 learning activities were identified under three major categories of information source viz., personal localite, personal cosmopolite and sugarcane technology. The arithmetic mean of the weightages of the judges was taken as the activity weightages to the respective learning experience under selected sugarcane technologies. This resulted in a separate set of learning activity weightages for each sugarcane technology.

Computing learning experience

This was quantified by utilizing the activity weightages of such learning activities reported to have been performed by the respondents to learn a particular sugarcane technology. The addition of activity weightages for all the 48 learning activities of particular sugarcane technology was calculated. Then the actual

learning experience score was divided by the maximum learning experience score and multiplied by 100 to yield the extent of learning experience for a particular sugarcane technology. In this way, the extent of learning experience for all the ten sugarcane technologies were added and then divided by 10 (the total number of sugarcane technologies), which yielded the extent of learning experience of sugarcane technology. Besides this, the learning experience gained through various learning activities performed under three major information sources viz., personal localite, personal cosmopolite and mass media channels for the individual technologies was also worked out.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The zero order correlation coefficient (r) was

Table 1.
Relationship of Socio - Economics and Psychological Characteristics with the Learning Experience Level of Sugarcane Cultivators

Sl. No	Variables	't' value Small farmers (n = 80)
X ₁	Age	-0.071 NS
X ₂	Educational status	0.014 NS
X ₃	Occupational status	-0.06 NS
X ₄	Area under cultivation	-0.026 NS
X ₅	Farming experience	-0.028 NS
X ₆	Experience in sugarcane	-0.021 NS
X ₇	Annual income	0.009 NS
X ₈	Social participation	-0.084 NS
X ₉	Extension agency contact	0.385**
X ₁₀	Decision making	0.174 NS
X ₁₁	Mass media exposure	0.177NS
X ₁₂	Scientific orientation	-0.081NS
X ₁₃	Information source utilization	0.491**
X ₁₄	Innovativeness	0.0247*

* - Significant at 5% level; ** - Significant at 5% level; NS - Non - Significant

worked out to study the relationship of independent variables with the learning experience of small sugarcane cultivators and the results are presented in Table 1.

It could be seen from the table 1 that out of fourteen independent variables, only three variable *viz.*, Extension agency contact (X_9) Information source utilization (X_{13}) and innovativeness (X_{14}) were found to have positive and highly significant relationship with the learning experience of small categories sugarcane growers. The extension agency contact and information source utilization

might have provided the opportunity for the farmers to contact authenticated sources of information to learn. This might have resulted in higher learning experience. Similar finding was also reported by Athimuthu (1990).

Practice wise learning experience of small farmers

The data collected on the recommend practices learn by the small farmers through the learning activities under the personal locality, personal cosmopolite and mass media channels are presented in table 2.

Table 2.
Practice wise Learning Experience of Small Farmers in Sugarcane

Sl. No.	Technology	Learning activities					
		Personal localite		Personal		Mask media	
		Ho	%	Ho	%	No	%
1	Sett selection	64	80.00	32	40.00	19	23.75
2	Sett treatment	45	56.25	32	40.00	26	32.50
3	Planting	67	83.75	20	25.00	11	13.75
4	Herbicide application	40	50.50	43	53.75	19	23.75
5	Bio-fertilizer application	66	82.50	27	33.75	17	21.25
6	Phosphatic fertilizer	75	93.75	19	27.75	11	13.75
7	Nitrogenous fertilizer	76	95.00	28	35.00	12	15.00
8	Potash fertilize	72	90.00	14	17.50	15	18.75
9	Control early short borer	61	76.05	37	46.25	17	21.25
10	Bio-control agent for inter-node borer	39	48.75	37	46.25	21	26.25

* Multiple Response

From table 2, it could be observed that majority of the small farmers performed the learning activities under personal localite channels learning of nine practices *viz.*, sett selection (80.00 %), planting (83.75 %), bio fertilizer application (82.50 %), phosphotic fertilizer application (93.75 %), nitrogenous fertilizer application (95.00 %) and potash fertilizer application (76.25 %). The learning

activities under personal cosmopolite channels were utilized by majority of the farmers (53.75% %) for one practice namely, herbicide application. The mass media sources were utilized by comparatively less number of farmers.

It could be inferred that the small farmers performed the learning activities under personal localite channels in their learning for

most of the practices. It might be due to easy accessible, approaches and cost effective nature of personal localite channels. Mass media sources were found to be less utilized by the respondents. This might be due to there poor accessibility and less affordability to buy mass media sources like television and radio. The same trend was reported by Mahendra pandian (1992).

CONCLUSION

In this light of the present investigation, it can be concluded that only three characteristic like extension agency contact, information sources utilization and innovativeness have significant and positive relationship with learning experience.

The majority of the small farmers to prefer personal localite channels for getting information due to easy approachable, accessible and cost effective nature of personal

localite channels this might have enabled the small farmers to use them frequently.

Hence it is necessary to identify the extension educational programmes such as trainings, discussion meetings, demonstration and field visit etc., for perceptual changes among the sugarcane cultivators.

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