The Pharma Innovation Journal 2023; 12(4): 570-572

www.ThePharmaJournal.com

The Pharma Innovation

ISSN (E): 2277-7695
ISSN (P): 2349-8242
NAAS Rating: 5.23
TPI 2023; 12(4): 570-572

www.thepharmajournal.com
Received: 01-01-2023
Accepted: 08-02-2023

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Effectiveness of ICT in job performance perceived by the field extension functionaries

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Abstract
The study was conducted in the Northern Hills of Chhattisgarh state during the year 2020-22. To analyze the effectiveness of ICT in the job performance of field extension functionaries. Sarguja, Surajpur and Jashpur districts of the Northern Hills of Chhattisgarh state were selected purposively and four blocks from each of the selected districts were selected purposively based on maximum field extension functionaries posted in these areas. Thus the total of twelve blocks were considered for the study. Two frequent visits were taken to each selected block headquarters by the researcher for attending the scheduled fortnightly meeting. All field extension functionaries presented during the scheduled fortnightly meeting at respective blocks of the selected district were considered respondents for this study. In this way a total of 240 field extension functionaries were selected for the study. An Ex-post-facto research design was followed for the study. The collected data was analyzed, classified and tabulated. Statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean percent score and class interval were used to interpret findings and draw conclusions. Among the 240 field extension functionaries more than half (72.92%) of the field extension functionaries perceived a medium level of effectiveness of ICT in job performance while 19.17 percent and 7.92 percent field extension functionaries perceived high and low levels of effectiveness of ICT, respectively.

Keywords: ICT (Information and Communication Technology), Field Extension Functionaries, Effectiveness, Northern Hills

Introduction
Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are diverse technological tools and resources used to communicate, create, disseminate, store and manage information. Information and communication technology have played an important role in the world as we are now in the age of information era. The development of information and communication technology (ICT) and advancements in telecommunications have profoundly impacted today's globe and every part of human endeavors everywhere. ICT technologies are increasingly being used in the workplace in many developing nations as globalization grows more rapidly. Information technology development and utilization have changed how businesses operate as well as how people work and live. Modern corporate organizations require their employees to adapt to this ever-changing environment. ICT has the potential to revitalize the crumbling extension system. For a nation like India, the relevance of ICTs is relatively high for agricultural development in general and agricultural extension in particular. Agricultural extension services are essential to rural development and food security, and their impact will be felt in these areas. ICT through the human interface is the key to bringing about improved agricultural practices and rural development. Information and communication technology (ICT) is crucial to agricultural extension because it helps to improve information availability, supplement the lack of technical staff, ensure gender parity in the technology transfer process, and support the creation of effective feedback systems. With the help of ICTs, extension workers can now collect, store, retrieve, and disseminate a wide range of information that farmers need, including information on best practices, more affordable input and output prices, better storage facilities, better transportation connections, the ability to unionize with buyers, and weather data. This has turned extension workers into knowledge workers. It will be possible to make bottom-up, demand-driven technology generation, appraisal, refinement, and transfer as a result of the emergence of such knowledge workers. Extension agents' work will be made easier and their ability to deliver information will be facilitated by the effective and efficient use of ICT.

Therefore, field extension functionaries need to switch from their traditional style of functioning to a digital style that involves using ICTs more frequently for work-related purposes.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted in the Northern Hills of Chhattisgarh state during the year 2020-22 with the objective "To analyze the effectiveness of ICT in job performance of field extension functionaries". Three districts namely Sarguja, Surajpur and Jashpur were selected purposively based on maximum field extension functionaries from the Northern Hills. Four blocks from each selected district were selected purposively for the study. Two frequent visits were taken to each selected block headquarters by the researcher for attending the scheduled fortnightly meeting. All field extension functionaries presented during the scheduled fortnightly meeting at respective blocks of the selected district were considered respondents for this study, in this way total of 240 respondents were considered for the study. In consideration of the study's objective, an interview schedule was created, and information was gathered. For the study, an ex-post-facto research design was used. A well-structured interview schedule developed with the study's objectives in mind was used to collect the data. The gathered information was analyzed, categorized, and tabulated. Frequency, percentage, mean percent score and class intervel were used as statistical tools to analyze data and draw conclusions.

The effectiveness of ICT in job performance was operationalized as the perception of the field extension functionaries about effectiveness of ICT in job performance. The variable was measured by the schedule developed by Ngerema (2019) [1] with slight modification was used. The responses are taken with the help of five-point continuum to represent the agreement and disagreement with the statement. The scores were assigned as strongly agree '5', agree '4', undecided '3', disagree '2' and strongly disagree '1'. The total score of the effectiveness of ICT in job performance was obtained by adding the scores of all statements on the scale. Based on the total score obtained the respondents are divided into three categories by using the class interval method.

Results and Discussion

The presented data in Table 1 depicts the effectiveness of ICT in jon performance in different areas. Figures in the table revealed that the majority FEFs perceived the effectiveness of ICT most on the statement "ICT tools facilitate easy access to information for Field extension activities" with the highest MPS 88.42 ranked Ist followed by the statement "ICT tools makes it easier to get information on ongoing schemes and programs in agriculture/horticulture and allied sectors" with MPS 86.17, "ICT tools make extension service delivery the most cost-effective" with MPS 86.08, "ICT tools help to store and retrieve the same information any number of times." with MPS 83.83, "ICT tools help to share information and maintain constant contact with other department officers and agencies involved in agriculture development" with MPS 83.75, "ICT tools help in the quick dissemination of information in geographically dispersed hilly areas in case of emergency" with MPS 83.67 and "Access to web-based resources makes learning new concepts in the profession easier, increasing job performance" with MPS 80.75 were ranked as IInd, IVth, Vth, VIth and VIIth respectively.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their perceived effectiveness of ICT in job performance

SI. No.	Statements	SA		A		UD		DA		SDA		MPS	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	ICT tools increased contact between farmers and other agricultural stakeholders.	95	39.58	91	37.92	27	11.25	19	7.92	8	3.33	80.50	VIII
2	ICT tools make extension service delivery the most cost-effective.	116	48.33	98	40.83	13	5.42	9	3.75	4	1.67	86.08	III
3	ICT tools help in the quick dissemination of information in geographically dispersed hilly areas in case of emergency.	86	35.83	131	54.58	10	4.17	7	2.92	6	2.50	83.67	VI
4	ICT tools makes it easier to get information on ongoing schemes and programs in agriculture/horticulture and allied sectors.	96	40.00	127	52.92	12	5.00	5	2.08	0	0.00	86.17	II
5	ICT tools help on provide assistance on short period in risk management including climate change, crop insurance etc.	41	17.08	157	65.42	31	12.92	7	2.92	4	1.67	78.67	IX
6	ICT tools make it very easy and faster on confer advisories on soil health management water conservation and other technical areas.	44	18.33	151	62.92	13	5.42	17	7.08	15	6.25	76.00	XII
7	ICT tools help to store and retrieve the same information any number of times.	84	35.00	128	53.33	18	7.50	10	4.17	0	0.00	83.83	IV
8	ICT tools help to share information and maintain constant contact with other department officers and agencies involved in agriculture development.	96	40.00	116	48.33	12	5.00	9	3.75	7	2.92	83.75	V
9	ICT tools help in facilitating training for the farmers very efficient and effectively.	20	8.33	139	57.92	39	16.25	30	12.50	12	5.00	70.42	XIV
10	ICT tools facilitate easy access to information for Field extension activities.	154	64.17	59	24.58	7	2.92	14	5.83	6	2.50	88.42	I
11	Access to web-based resources makes learning new concepts in the profession easier, increasing job performance.	77	32.08	119	49.58	26	10.83	12	5.00	6	2.50	80.75	VII
12	The use of ICT tools in the office has increased the performance of Field extension functionaries.	73	30.42	88	36.67	62	25.83	11	4.58	6	2.50	77.58	XI
13	Access to information through different ICT tools has helped to transfer technology among farmers.	88	36.67	71	29.58	59	24.58	13	5.42	9	3.75	78.00	X
14	ICT tools have increased the flexibility of performance at field-level work.	73	30.42	86	35.83	50	20.83	21	8.75	10	4.17	75.92	XIII

SA= Strongly Agree, A= Agree, UD= Undecided, DA= Dis Agree, SDA= Strongly Dis Agree
F= Frequency, %= Percentage, MPS= Mean Percent Score

It was also revealed that the FEFs perceived effectiveness of ICT less on these statements "ICT tools increased contact between farmers and other agricultural stakeholders" with MPS 80.50 ranked VIIIth followed by "ICT tools help on provide assistance on short period in risk management including climate change, crop insurance etc" with MPS 78.67, "Access to information through different ICT tools has helped to transfer technology among farmers" with MPS 78,

"The use of ICT tools in the office has increased the performance of Field extension functionaries" with MPS 77.58, "ICT tools make it very easy and faster on confer advisories on soil health management water conservation and other technical areas" with MPS 76, "ICT tools have increased the flexibility of performance at field-level work" with MPS 75.92 and "ICT tools help in facilitating training for the farmers very efficient and effectively" with MPS 70.42 were ranked as IXth, Xth, XIth, XIIth, XIIIth and XIVth respectively.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the level of effectiveness of ICT in job performance

SI. No	Category	Field Extension Functionaries		
		F	%	MPS
1	Low (score up to 51)	19	7.92	71.35
2	Medium (score 52 to 59)	175	72.92	79.92
3	High (score Above 59)	46	19.17	87.52
	Overall effectiveness of ICT index (%)	80.70		

F = Frequency, % = Percentage, MPS=Mean Percent Score

It was also revealed in Table 2 that the majority of the FEFs perceived medium level of effectiveness of ICT in job performance with MPS 79.92. where 19.17 percent of the FEFs perceived a high level and only 7.92 percent of FEFs perceived a low level of effectiveness of ICT in job performance with MPS 87.52 and 71.35 respectively. The overall effectiveness of ICT index was 80.70 observed by all the FEFs.

The findings was supported by Ngerema (2015) and Jane and Nagapan (2022) [2].

Conclusion

An attempt was made in the present study to analyze the effectiveness of ICT in job performance of field extension functionaries. The majority of the FEFs perceived medium level of effectiveness of ICT in job performance because the ICT tools enable them to carry out their duties effectively such as: the transfer of technology, the dissemination of information among the farming community and interact with subordinates and farmers at work. Very few FEFs perceived high level of effectiveness of ICT in job performance the reason behind this may be not received any training on ICT during their service period.

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