



Supporting and Obstacling Factors of Interpersonal Communication Competence of Field Agriculture Extensions in Enrekang Regency

Lusiana Seli¹, Muh. Akbar¹, Arianto Arianto¹

¹Faculty of Social and Political Science, Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia
lusianaselii@gmail.com

Abstract. In increasing shallot yields, farmers need the role of an agricultural extension worker. They provide assistance in the form of monitoring, technical direction, sharing experiences and skills, as well as pre- and post-harvest guidance. Besides that, they can provide additional information about prices in the market. In an effort to increase shallot yields, especially in Enrekang Regency, agricultural extension officers are needed, especially in terms of interpersonal communication competence in carrying out their role as communicators in delivering extension messages. Good relationships with farmers are an important factor in order to establish effective communication in carrying out their role to share relevant knowledge and skills. Onion cultivation must be done correctly, through effective interpersonal communication to overcome obstacles, provide motivation, and build ideal cooperation between farmers and extension workers. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method. The results of this study are that by using interpersonal communication competencies, field agricultural extension workers play an important role in increasing shallot yields in Enrekang district. One of the obstacles is that some farmers are still reluctant to follow the directions of agricultural extension workers because they consider themselves more experienced in shallot farming.

Keywords: Agricultural Extension Workers, Enrekang, Interpersonal Communication.

1 Introduction

Shallots have a variety of uses, besides being used as a seasoning, shallots also have other properties for health that are no less important as a person's needs, which can be used as traditional medicines [1]. Usually there is a time when the demand for shallots increases, generally occurs before religious holidays, which is followed by a surge in demand in the market, so that prices in the market must balance high consumer demand with existing supplies. Shallots are one of the horticultural commodities that are needed by the people of Indonesia, especially as a cooking spice. The high demand for shallots requires a sufficient national supply of shallots [2].

There are several regions in Indonesia that are shallot producing centers. Some of them are Bima in West Nusa Tenggara, Brebes in Central Java, and Enrekang in South Sulawesi. In 2018, South Sulawesi managed to produce around 92,392 tons of shallots where of the total production, 73,581 or around 79.64 percent were contributed from Enrekang district. [3]

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In increasing shallot yields, the role of agricultural extension workers is very important. They communicate by providing technical assistance, providing additional knowledge, skills and sharing experiences, as well as monitoring and counseling from pre- to post-harvest. Equally important is that they also share information about business development and marketing techniques. With the help of agricultural extension workers, farmers gain additional insights and apply best practices, how to overcome obstacles, and how to increase yields, as well as gain profits from their agricultural businesses. The field agricultural extension workers are needed in disseminating information to farmers by socializing, guiding, mobilizing to make changes or innovations, and establishing relationships with the community. [4]

The involvement of extension workers requires their ability to communicate in every extension activity, so that farmers can more easily understand the extension messages given. In an effort to increase shallot yields in Enrekang Regency, the interpersonal communication competence of agricultural extension workers plays a very important role.

In overcoming obstacles encountered in the field, agricultural extension workers provide motivation, and build cooperation between farmers.

2 Research Methods

This research uses descriptive qualitative research methods, which will produce a series of words, pictures or paintings systematically and accurately about the facts, characteristics, and relationships between phenomena. In this research, the researcher considers the problem under study to be quite complex and dynamic so that the data obtained from the sources can be simplified using direct observation and interviews so that natural answers are obtained.

This research was conducted in Batu Noni Village, Anggeraja Sub-district, Enrekang District. This location was determined because Batu Noni Village is one of the largest shallot production centers and developments in South Sulawesi. [5] The data processing technique used is applying and developing the interaction model, analyzing data through three steps, namely:

1. Data Condensation

The process of selecting, simplifying, abstracting and or informing data that approaches the whole of the written field notes, interview transcripts, documents and empirical materials.

2. Presentation Of Data

Organizing information in a way that allows drawing conclusions or retrieving this data helps to understand the events that occurred and leads to further analysis or action based on understanding.

3. Drawing Conclusions

Includes simplified meaning, presented in data testing with how to note the regularity of logical and methodological patterns of explanation, configurations that allow prediction of causal relationships through empirical law. So that the data

can be tested for reason or trustworthiness, strength, and confirmability of validity.

3 Results

The results of this study describe that the role of field agricultural extension officers who have interpersonal communication competencies in Batunoni Village is quite strong and effective, as an important ability in building working relationships between extension officers and farmers, as well as to achieve better agricultural results. For more details can be explained at several points below:

3.1 Ability to Convey Information Well

In interpersonal communication, the ability of agricultural extension workers to convey information well to shallot farmers is important. So far in Batunoni Village, agricultural extension officers have good skills in providing information to farmers. Their status as local residents can make it easier for them to communicate in a language that is familiar and relevant and easily understood by farmers. In addition, their knowledge and experience in agriculture is a real example that can be seen directly by farmers. This can be measured by the achievement of increased production yields based on practical techniques delivered by extension workers. The results of this study indicate that extension workers have adequate skills, which are influenced by a number of supporting and inhibiting factors.

Their agricultural education background and experience are supporting factors that strengthen extension workers' ability to convey information. In-depth knowledge of farming techniques provides a foundation for delivering accurate information to farmers. Practical experience in cultivating their farms also contributes, becoming concrete examples that make it easier for extension workers to communicate and convince farmers to understand the concepts explained. Another important supporting factor is the use of visual media such as photos and videos. In illustrating concepts, techniques, or the results of agricultural practices, visual media is very helpful for extension workers in carrying out their duties, so that farmers are easier to understand from the visualization of messages and information provided and shown better.

The ability to convey information well is a person's ability to convey information clearly, briefly, and precisely using appropriate methods/media and following a logical flow. In addition, they are also able to use appropriate grammar and vocabulary and adjust their speaking style to the listener. Communication with simple language is also an effective approach, making it more convincing that information can be accessed and understood by different levels of farmer education.

In conveying information to farmers, in addition to supporting factors that greatly affect the ability of extension workers to convey information, there are also inhibiting factors such as the attitude of some farmers who feel more experienced in cultivating shallots, making it difficult for them to accept suggestions and input from extension

workers. To overcome these obstacles, extension workers must strengthen a more effective communication approach. They must understand the knowledge and experience of the farmers, and be able to communicate information in a language and method that is more easily understood by the audience receiving the message, namely the farmers. Overall, the ability of agricultural extension workers to deliver information well is mainly influenced by a combination of these supporting and inhibiting factors, as well as real efforts to adapt to the needs and characteristics of shallot farmers.

3.2 Open Attitude and Ability to Listen to Others

Agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village have an open attitude and good listening skills. Because an open attitude and the ability to listen to what is conveyed by others is one of the keys to success in interpersonal communication. They must be good at building an atmosphere where farmers feel listened to and valued enough. This skill helps extension workers to know and understand the problems faced and the needs of farmers in a more in-depth manner. Even if there are differences of opinion, agricultural extension officers accept farmers' opinions and views wisely enough, so that farmers feel respected. These conditions help build a good, strong and effective working relationship. The analysis reveals that extension workers have significant abilities, in this case influenced by several supporting factors and inhibiting factors.

A strong supporting factor is the communicative approach of extension officers who are responsive and empathetic to farmers' opinions and experiences. Agricultural extension officers should be open and respectful of diverse views, and have a strong desire to learn and share agricultural experiences. The ability to be a patient listener allows extension officers to better understand the needs and challenges faced by farmers. Accepting different opinions with a humble attitude in communication can build good and more productive relationships between agricultural extension officers and farmers.

Meanwhile, inhibiting factors affect the ability of extension workers to be open and listen. Although in practice some farmers find it difficult to accept the opinions of extension workers, because they believe that their knowledge and experience are sufficient. In addition, cultural and language differences can also cause gaps in understanding between extension workers and farmers.

In overcoming these barriers, extension workers should create a conducive environment, conduct open dialog by providing space for farmers to express their complaints, questions, and opinions, so that farmers feel heard and valued. Regular meetings and visits to farmers' fields, as well as farmer group activities can help in developing a mutually beneficial relationship.

In approaching farmers, it is important for extension officers to instill respect and readiness to learn from farmers' experiences. This approach can create a closer and more mutually beneficial relationship. Overall, extension agents' ability to be open and listen to others is strongly influenced by a combination of enabling and constraining factors, as well as active efforts to create an effective, respectful and respectful communication environment.

Communication context, it is important for each party, both the communicator and the communicant, to have the ability to listen to each other according [6]. Communication is considered successful if both are able and willing to find a point of harmony in understanding the message or information to be conveyed. This applies generally in the social framework of the community as a place where they socialize or interact. When an extension worker has communication skills, the process of delivering message material will be interactive and become a two-way communication process. Thus, achieving the intent and purpose of the material delivered will be easily understood and absorbed by the communicants, in this case the farmers.

3.3 Ability to Develop Relationships Through Communication

In the process of interacting between agricultural extension workers and shallot farmers, the ability to develop relationships through the communication process is important. Agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village have proven to be able to develop harmonious relationships with shallot farmers through the communication process. They are able to create and build trust and respect the diversity of farmers' views and experiences. Friendly, empathetic communication approaches and farmers' proactive attitudes at every stage of the extension process are good supporting factors, helping to facilitate effective and sustainable information exchange.

Another supporting factor that influences capability is the communicative approach. This can be done through a series of actions such as direct visits to farmers' fields, conducting farmer group activities, and farmer meetings. Extension workers are actively involved and committed to the development of agriculture. They have in-depth knowledge of the needs and problems faced by farmers, and they demonstrate a commitment to active mentoring and direct involvement in the agricultural process. Meanwhile, inhibiting factors that need to be watched out for and addressed in developing effective relationships are cultural differences, language, or differences in views between extension workers and farmers.

Extension agents need to take a more responsive approach to overcoming these barriers, to the local context and needs of the farmers, extension agents need to be able to create an effective environment and build trust, where farmers feel heard and valued. Continued efforts to engage in farming activities and provide balanced support, such as telephone communication to monitor crops, also play an important role in developing strong relationships

Overall, the ability of agricultural extension workers to create and develop relationships through the communication process is strongly influenced by supporting and inhibiting factors. Extension agents who are successful in creating sustainable relationships with farmers tend to adopt a responsive, empathic approach and active involvement in agricultural activities. In overcoming barriers, it is important for extension workers to understand the social, cultural, linguistic and economic context of the farming community, and to strive to create an environment of effective communication and mutual respect.

3.4 Ability to convey information creatively

The ability of agricultural extension officers to convey information creatively plays an important role in providing better understanding and application of agricultural practices by shallot farmers. Ability to convey information creatively is a person's ability to share information with others that can improve overall performance. In addition, they are able to convey information to others in a way that is interesting, easy to understand, and can attract the attention of the listener.

From the results of the study, it was found that agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village have the skills to deliver information creatively. The approach they use is not only a conventional approach, but combined with modern methods that can be well received by farmers. Such as the use of visual media, inspirational stories, and case examples, greatly helps to bring the extension material to life and makes it easier for farmers to understand the message material. This ability allows extension workers to maintain long-term and sustainable farmer engagement.

Extension's ability to convey information creatively is an innovation in the communication approach. Agricultural extension officers utilize various media, such as photos, videos, and banners, to illustrate and prove the success of their recommended practices. The use of these visual media helps illustrate complex concepts in a way that is easier for farmers to understand and relate to. In addition, creative strategies such as showing real-life examples through the implementation of innovative practices, such as using mosquito nets to block pests, have proven effective and resulted in positive impacts. The inhibiting factor that needs to be faced in delivering information creatively is the limited access or lack of knowledge about technology among farmers. Some farmers may not be familiar with the use of visual media or modern technology, so sometimes there are creative strategies related to technology that are not effective for them. In addition, differences in cultural or educational background can also affect the level of understanding and engagement of farmers in receiving such creative information.

To overcome these obstacles, extension workers must consider the characteristics and needs of their audiences. In delivering information, extension workers should choose methods that are most relevant and easily understood by farmers. In some cases, an approach through interpersonal communication, such as speaking directly or using actual examples from local farming practices, may be more effective than visual media that may be difficult to understand. In addition, extension workers need to ensure that the creative strategies used illustrate practical linkages and benefits that can be applied by farmers in their daily practices.

Based on this study, it is known that the interpersonal communication competencies of agricultural extension workers play an important role in efforts to increase shallot yields. In Batu Noni village, agricultural extension officers have strong skills in three main aspects of interpersonal communication, namely: communication knowledge, communication skills and motivational ability. Extensive communication knowledge can assist them in communicating information effectively and relevantly to farmers. Strong communication skills enable them to provide information in a way that farmers

can easily understand and apply. Meanwhile, the ability to motivate agricultural extension workers is reflected in their ability to encourage farmers through a friendly approach that is passionate and inspiring.

The ability to convey information well is a key cornerstone, and educational background and experience as a farmer gives them an advantage in this regard. An open attitude and active listening skills enable agricultural extension officers to better understand farmers' problems and needs. Furthermore, the ability to develop relationships through communication creates a strong connection between agricultural extension workers and farmers, builds mutual trust, and supports effective agricultural development. The assessment of interpersonal communication competencies in agricultural extension workers illustrates that agricultural extension workers can utilize supporting factors and overcome various communication barriers.

The ability of extension workers to deliver information creatively, in this case, using various extension methods, such as the use of visual media, to illustrate complex concepts in a way that is interesting and easily understood by farmers. Other efforts to build close relationships with farmers include two-way communication, where in the communication process farmers feel valued because they are listened to and have space to talk and share problems that arise and are being faced.

The interpersonal communication competence of agricultural extension workers in an effort to increase shallot yields in Batunoni Village is very important. Through communication knowledge, skills and the ability to motivate, it is a strong communication, leading extension workers to the success of creating effective and efficient interactions with farmers. Supporting factors such as educational background and experience, as well as the ability to listen to each other in creating, developing and maintaining relationships, are the basis for the success of this interpersonal communication. Thus, the competence of interpersonal communication of agricultural extension workers is an absolute thing that acts as a major factor in increasing shallot yields in Batunoni Village.

4 Conclusion

Communication competence is an important aspect of agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village, Anggeraja Sub-district, Enrekang Regency. The ability to motivate by extension workers is proven to provide benefits and positive impacts in interacting with the aim of increasing shallot farmers' yields, igniting farmers' enthusiasm and stimulating active involvement in agricultural practices. In addition, the communication skills required from extension workers in conveying information clearly and effectively, including using visual methods are critical in overcoming communication challenges among farmers with diverse backgrounds of experience, education and knowledge. Their communication skills in proactively listening, elaborating and explaining information, and managing conflicts that occur also have a positive impact on the relationship between extension agents and farmers.

The ability to communicate in the local language also facilitates more effective interactions, the utilization of telephone media and direct visits to farmers' homes or fields are effective approaches, onion agricultural extension workers in Batunoni Village are

also onion farm owners, so they can speak from first-hand experience which facilitates farmers' understanding, these are supporting factors. In addition, their status as local natives and strong educational competencies provide an advantage in understanding local culture and relevant agricultural techniques. However, inhibiting factors include the difficulty some farmers have in accepting advice from extension workers because they feel they are more experienced than the extension workers.

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