

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Credibility of Livestock Extension Service Providers: Women Farmers Perception

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ABSTRACT

Present study was conducted purposively in the central plain zone of Uttar Pradesh to assess the Credibility of Livestock Extension Service Providers perceived by women farmers. An ex-post facto and exploratory research design were used. The central plain zone of Uttar Pradesh comprises of 14 districts namely: Allahabad, Auraiya, Etawah, Farrukhabad, Fatehpur, Hardoi, Kannauj, Kanpur Dehat, Kaushambi, Lucknow, Pratapgarh, Raibareli, Sitapur and Unnao. Out of these, four districts: Sitapur, Lucknow, Hardoi and Unnao were selected randomly. From each selected district, one block and from each block, two villages were selected randomly. Two hundred women farmers, 25 from each of the eight selected villages were picked up randomly from the list of milch rearing family and personally interviewed to assess the credibility of livestock extension service providers. Findings of the study revealed that irrespective of the districts, Veterinary Officers as most trustworthy and technically competent person for providing the livestock extension services perceived by women farmers. Paravets were found to be second most credible person due to more safety credibility. Veterinary Officers were ranked Ist with the maximum total score of 479 followed by paravets ranked IInd and Livestock Extension Officers ranked IIIrd with the total scores 445 and 426 -respectively.

KEYWORDS

• Credibility • Livestock Extension Service and Veterinary Officer

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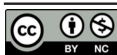
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INTRODUCTION

Livestock sector is an important subsector of the Indian rural economy. This sector imparts important avenues for a plethora of livelihood activities for millions of farmers and contributed 30.23% to the agricultural GVA in 2022-23 (at current prices, Govt. of India, 2024). State Department of Animal Husbandry cater the basic animal husbandry services to the farmers of the state viz. breeding, feeding, disease control and improved animal management practices with the objectives of enhancing productivity of our livestock and increment in the total production of milk, egg, wool and meat. Apart from productivity enhancement and food security, department also helps in the development of employment, general awareness and also generates self employment for rural youths and poor through its various extension activities. Livestock extension services are delivered through various methods including participatory group approaches such as livestock farmer field schools, study tours, farmer field days, mass media, livestock shows, residential training, demonstration units/plots and livestock product promotion. Baloch & Thapa (2017) emphasized that awareness-raising activities are crucial for overcoming resistance to change and promoting policy adoption. These activities may include informational campaigns, success stories, and farmer-to-farmer exchanges that showcase the tangible benefits of policy adoption. The delivery of livestock extension services is emerging as an important priority area for enhancing and optimizing livestock production and management. Male farmers have more access to agricultural extension services than women. Fifteen per cent of extension workers are women but only 5% of women have access to extension services and the extension worker tended to direct their services to male farmers or head of the households excluding female headed households and women members of male headed households (FAO, 1999). However the effectiveness of these services heavily depends on the credibility of the livestock extension service providers. Rural women play a consequential role in agriculture and allied sectors (Jyoti Vishwakarma and NR Meena, 2020). The women farmers who are increasingly recognized as the key stake holders in livestock production the perception of credibility is most significant. Their trust

in livestock extension service providers influences not only uptake of recommended practices but also the overall success of extension interventions. Hence, an effort had been made to assess the credibility of livestock extension service providers perceived by women farmers in central plain zone of Uttar Pradesh.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted purposively in the central plain zone of Uttar Pradesh. An ex-post facto and exploratory research design were used. The central plain zone of Uttar Pradesh comprises of 14 districts namely: Allahabad, Auraiya, Etawah, Farrukhabad, Fatehpur, Hardoi, Kannauj, Kanpur Dehat, Kaushambi, Lucknow, Pratapgarh, Raibareli, Sitapur and Unnao. Out of these, four districts: Sitapur, Lucknow, Hardoi and Unnao were selected randomly. From each selected district, one block and from each block, two villages were selected randomly. Two hundred women farmers, 25 from each of the eight selected villages were picked up randomly from the list of milch rearing family and personally interviewed to assess the credibility of livestock extension service providers. Credibility operationalized as the trustworthiness and competency perceived by the women farmer to assess their preferences for availing the livestock extension services from various service providers available in the study area. It was measured on three point continuum viz., Highly Credible, Credible and Least Credible by direct questioning through structured interview schedule and these were ranked according to their total scores obtained by the respondents.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of Women Farmers

Socio-Personal, economic and other characteristics of women farmers which may affect their involvement in livestock sector. These profile features have a deep impact on the women farmers for various livestock extension service providers. Table 1 revealed that sixty three per cent of women farmers were found in middle age group (34-50 years), followed by young (18-34 years) age 21.5 percent and then old age group (50-66 years) as 15.5 percent. Highest number

of women farmers in the young age group (34-50 years) were found in Lucknow district (40%) followed by Hardoi (24%) and Sitapur (12%). Pandey and Rai, 2023; Rathod *et al.* 2011; Subba, 2010; Sahu *et al.*, 2012; Yadav and Indu, 2012; Bose *et al.*, 2013 also reported that majority of the rural women engaged in livestock rearing belonged to the middle age group i.e. 25-50 years followed by young and old age groups, in the study areas.

Table 1 also points out that about twenty six per cent of respondents were illiterate followed by women, who were educated upto high school (21.5%), primary (13.5 %) and middle level (12%). About six per cent women farmers were also educated upto intermediate and graduate level. Pandey and Rai, 2023 also found that significant proportion of the respondents were illiterate (43.23%), while others had received primary education (36.17%), middle education (12.94%), higher secondary education (5.29%), or had completed undergraduate (1.76%) or postgraduate (0.58%) levels of education.

Irrespective of the districts majority of women farmers (64%) had medium family size comprising of 4-6 members followed by small (25%) and large (11%) comprising <3 and >6 members.

Majority of the respondents (55.5%) had crop farming as major family occupation followed by 35 per cent families, who were rearing livestock as major occupation. Bose *et al.* (2013) also found that agriculture (81.67%) was the major occupation of the family.

Ninety per cent sampled households had small (0.3-5.95 as cattle equivalent score) herd size followed by medium (7.5%) and large (2.5%) herd size with respective cattle equivalents of 5.96-11.6 and 11.7-17.25. Most of the women farmers (88.5%) came from low income (<86000 Rs./Year) families followed by medium with annual income of Rs. 86001-166000 Rs./Year). Kathiriya *et al.* 2013 also reported that 60.83 per cent of the families of women had low income followed by medium income category (35.83%) and high income group (03.34%).

Table 1: Socio-economic profile of women farmers

Particulars	Districts				Overall (N=200)
	Sitapur (n=50)	Unnao (n=50)	Hardoi (n=50)	Lucknow (n=50)	
Age					
Young (18-34)	6 (12.00)	5 (10.00)	12 (24.00)	20 (40.00)	43 (21.50)
Middle (34-50)	32 (64.00)	31 (62.00)	36 (72.00)	27 (54.00)	126 (63.00)
Old (50-66)	12 (24.00)	14 (28.00)	2 (4.00)	3 (6.00)	31 (15.50)
Education					
Illiterate	19 (38.00)	13 (26.00)	14 (28.00)	7 (14.00)	53 (26.50)
Can read only	1 (2.00)	2 (4.00)	-	-	3 (1.50)
Can read and write	6 (12.00)	4 (8.00)	11 (22.00)	4 (8.00)	25 (12.50)
Primary	9 (18.00)	3 (6.00)	7 (14.00)	8 (16.00)	27 (13.50)
Middle school	7 (14.00)	9 (18.00)	5 (10.00)	3 (6.00)	24 (12.00)
High school	7 (14.00)	13 (26.00)	9 (18.00)	14 (28.00)	43 (21.50)
Intermediate	-	3 (6.00)	3 (6.00)	7 (14.00)	13 (6.50)
Graduate and above	1 (2.00)	3 (6.00)	1 (2.00)	7 (14.00)	12 (6.00)
Family size					
Small (1-3 members)	7 (14.00)	19 (38.00)	9 (18.00)	15 (30.00)	50 (25.00)
Medium (4-6 members)	29 (58.00)	27 (54.00)	39 (78.00)	33 (66.00)	128 (64.00)
Large (7-9 members)	12 (24.00)	4 (8.00)	2 (4.00)	2 (4.00)	20 (10.00)
Very Large (>9 members)	2 (4.00)	-	-	-	2 (1.00)
Family occupation					
Crop farming	26 (52.00)	21 (42.00)	34 (68.00)	30 (60.00)	111 (55.50)
Livestock rearing	13 (26.00)	22 (44.00)	20 (40.00)	15 (30.00)	70 (35.00)
Govt service	-	-	1 (2.00)	1 (2.00)	2 (1.00)

table cont...

Particulars	Districts				Overall (N=200)
	Sitapur (n=50)	Unnao (n=50)	Hardoi (n=50)	Lucknow (n=50)	
Laborer	1 (2.00)	6 (12.00)	3 (6.00)	3 (6.00)	13 (6.50)
Private service	-	2 (4.00)	2 (4.00)	-	4 (2.00)
Herd size (cattle equivalent)					
Small (0.3-5.95)	47 (94.00)	47 (94.00)	49 (98.00)	37 (74.00)	180 (90.00)
Medium (5.95-11.6)	3 (6.00)	2 (4.00)	1 (2.00)	9 (18.00)	15 (7.50)
Large (11.6-17.25)	-	1 (2.00)	-	4 (8.00)	5 (2.50)
Family Income (Rs)					
Low (6000-86000)	44 (88.00)	43 (86.00)	48 (96.00)	42 (84.00)	177 (88.50)
Medium (86000-166000)	6 (12.00)	7 (14.00)	1 (2.00)	8 (16.00)	22 (11.00)
High (166000-246000)	-	-	1 (2.00)	-	1 (.500)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

CREDIBILITY TO LIVESTOCK EXTENSION SERVICE PROVIDERS PERCEIVED BY WOMEN FARMERS

Table 2 represents the level of credibility of livestock extension service providers revealed by women farmers in the selected districts of Uttar Pradesh. Credibility of service providers was measured on three point continuum as; Highly Credible, Credible and Least Credible with respective scores of 3, 2 and 1 respectively and then ranked based on the total scores obtained by the respondents. Irrespective of the districts, overall figures indicates that KVK personnel, University personnel and NGOs personnel were the least credible source for providing services perceived by women farmers and Veterinary Officers as most trustworthy and technically competent person

for providing the livestock extension services. Paravets were found to be second most credible person due to more safety credibility. 80 per cent respondents from Sitapur district revealed that Veterinary Officers as most credible source for providing livestock extension services followed by Livestock Extension Officers (80%) whereas paravets (48%) were the highly credible person. In Unnao district seventy four per cent respondents perceived that Veterinary Officers as the credible service providers followed by Livestock Extension Officers (68%) and paravets (58%), while in district Hardoi (60%) and Lucknow (52%), most of respondents revealed that Veterinary Officers as highly credible service providers followed by Livestock Extension Officers and paravets.

Table 2: Credibility to livestock extension service providers perceived by women farmers

N=200

Service providers	Districts												Overall (N=200)		
	Sitapur(n=50)			Unnao(n=50)			Hardoi(n=50)			Lucknow(n=50)			HC	C	LC
	HC	C	LC	HC	C	LC	HC	C	LC	HC	C	LC			
Veterinary Officer	10 (20.0)	40 (80.0)	-	13 (26.0)	37 (74.0)	-	30 (60.0)	20 (40.0)	-	26 (52.0)	24 (48.0)	-	79 (39.5)	121 (60.5)	-
Livestock Extension Officer	5 (10.0)	40 (80.0)	5 (10.0)	10 (20.0)	34 (68.0)	6 (12.0)	9 (18.0)	38 (76.0)	3 (6.0)	12 (24.0)	38 (76.0)	-	36 (18.0)	152 (76.0)	14 (7.0)
University personnel	-	1 (2.0)	49 (98.0)	-	3 (6.0)	47 (94.0)	-	1 (2.0)	49 (98.0)	-	8 (16.0)	42 (84.0)	-	13 (6.5)	187 (93.5)
KVK personnel	-	22 (44.0)	28 (56.0)	-	6(12.0)	44 (88.0)	-	2 (4.0)	48 (96.0)	-	11 (22.0)	39 (78.0)	-	41 (20.5)	159 (79.5)
Paravets	24 (48.0)	19 (38.0)	7 (14.0)	16 (32.0)	29 (58.0)	5 (10.0)	12 (24.0)	38 (76.0)	-	10 (20.0)	35 (70.0)	5 (10.0)	62 (31.0)	121 (60.5)	17 (8.5)
NGOs personnel	-	5 (10.0)	45 (90.0)	-	32 (64.0)	18 (36.0)	-	26 (52.0)	24 (48.0)	6 (12.0)	30 (60.0)	14 (28.0)	6 (3.0)	93 (46.5)	101 (50.5)

HC = Highly credible, C = Credible, LC = Least credible

Table 3 shows the ranking on the basis of total score obtained by the respondents. Veterinary Officers were ranked Ist with the maximum total score of 479 followed by paravets ranked IInd and Livestock Extension Officers ranked IIIrd with the total scores 445 and 426, -respectively. Ranking was low for NGOs personnel (IVth), KVK personnel (Vth) and University personnel (VIth), respectively.

Table 3: Total score and ranks with respect to credibility to livestock extension service providers perceived by women farmer

Service providers	Total Score	Rank
Veterinary Officer	479	I
Livestock Extension Officer	426	III
University personnel	213	VI
KVK personnel	241	V
Paravet	445	II
NGOs personnel	305	IV

CONCLUSION

The study concluded the perception of women farmers regarding the credibility of livestock extension service providers that the Veterinary Officers were the better credible personnel revealed by women farmers for delivering livestock extension services due to high technical competency as compared to Livestock Extension Officers. The findings reveals that while livestock extension services play crucial role in enhancing livestock productivity and rural livelihoods, their effectiveness is significantly influenced by how credible they are perceived by the women farmers. To enhance the credibility and effectiveness of the livestock extension services, it is recommended that service providers receive continuous training in technical knowledge, interpersonal communication and gender awareness. Strengthening these aspects will improve the credibility of extension personnel but also contribute to more effective and equitable livestock production.

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