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Strategies to Enhance the Use of Drama in Agricultural Information Dissemination in Imo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Research indicates that ineffective agricultural information delivery remains a critical gap between research outputs and sustainable agricultural development. Conventional communication channels have largely failed to bridge this gap. Although emerging evidence suggests that drama can be an effective medium, its application in agricultural extension has received limited attention. This study, therefore, examined strategies to enhance the use of drama in agricultural information dissemination in Imo State, Nigeria. The Specific objectives were to identify: farmers' sources of agricultural information; possible constraints to the use of drama in agricultural information dissemination; and strategies to enhance interest in its use. Multistage sampling procedure was used to select one hundred and eighty (180) farmers. Data were analyzed using percentages and mean scores. Most farmers (73.3%) sourced agricultural information from the listed sources, but drama ranked 15th. The farmers considered lack of knowledge on drama (M=3.0), poor financial condition (M = 3.2), among others, as constraints to its use. Inclusion of native language (M = 4.5), enquiring preferred time for drama presentation (M = 4.3), among others were accepted as enhancement strategies. The study recommends that extension agents and rural farmers should be trained on the use and production of different mediums of drama.

Keywords: Drama; agricultural information; dissemination

Introduction

Agriculture remains a critical sector of the Nigerian economy because of its contributions to food security, employment generation, income creation, and rural development. The sector employs a substantial share of the labour force and is a major source of livelihood for rural households (World Bank, 2024). Despite its importance, agricultural productivity in Nigeria remains relatively low, partly due to farmers' limited access to timely, accurate, and understandable agricultural information. Access to effective agricultural communication enhances farmers' adoption of innovations, improves decision-making, and promotes agricultural productivity and sustainability (Ejem et al., 2023).

Agricultural information in Nigeria is disseminated through several communication channels, including extension agents, radio, television, farmer associations, print media, and digital platforms (Samuel & Apata, 2021). Among these channels, interpersonal communication and radio remain widely used because of their

accessibility and ability to reach rural farming populations. However, the effectiveness of agricultural information dissemination in many rural communities is still constrained by inadequate extension personnel, poor infrastructure, low literacy levels, poverty, and weak communication systems (Ejem et al., 2023; Ojo et al., 2024). These challenges have increased the need for participatory and culturally relevant communication approaches that improve farmers' understanding, interest, and participation in agricultural extension activities. The increasing complexity of agricultural information delivery has stimulated interest in innovative communication approaches capable of improving information reach, timeliness, and farmer engagement. (Deji et al., 2023). One communication approach that has gained increasing attention in rural development communication is drama. Drama is recognized as an indigenous participatory communication strategy that combines education with entertainment to simplify complex information and stimulate behavioural change among rural audiences. Through storytelling, role-play, visual performance, songs, and the use of local languages, drama promotes audience participation, improves message comprehension, and enhances information retention among rural populations (Issahaku et al., 2024). In agricultural extension, drama can therefore serve as an effective medium for presenting agricultural innovations within familiar cultural and social contexts, thereby increasing farmers' understanding and acceptance of extension messages.

Despite the potential of drama in development communication, its use in agricultural information dissemination in Nigeria remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on conventional extension methods and ICT-based communication systems, with limited empirical attention to the use of drama as a tool for agricultural information dissemination, particularly among rural farmers in Imo State, Nigeria. This study therefore examined the Strategies to enhance the use of drama in agricultural information dissemination among farmers in Imo State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study were to:
1. identify farmers' sources of agricultural information;
2. determine strategies for enhancing the use of drama in agricultural communication; and
3. examine constraints to the use of drama for agricultural information dissemination.

Methodology

The study was carried out in Imo State. It lies approximately between latitudes 5°12′N and 5°56′N and longitudes 6°38′E and 7°25′E. It has three agricultural zones: Owerri, Orlu, and Okigwe zones. A multistage sampling procedure was adopted in the selection of farmers. The first stage comprised a purposive selection of two (2) Local Government Areas (LGAs) each from the three agricultural zones, for a total of six (6) LGAs, due to their high involvement in agriculture. The second stage was the random selection of two (2) communities from each of the LGAs selected, making a total of twelve (12) communities. The third stage was a random selection of fifteen farmers from the twelve selected communities, making a total of one hundred and eighty (180) farmers.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect primary data from the one hundred and eighty (180) selected farmers, and an in-depth interview (IDI) was used to collect data from ADP staff in the three agricultural zones. Data collected from ADP staff were to assist the researcher in cross-checking the answers obtained from

the farmers on the use of drama for agricultural information dissemination in Imo State. Data collected were analysed using frequency count, percentages and mean scores

Results and Discussion

Farmers' Sources of Agricultural Information

The findings in Table 1 indicate that farmers accessed agricultural information through all the sources enumerated. Fellow farmers constituted the most frequently utilized source of agricultural information (94.4%), followed by radio (86.1%), friends/neighbours (85.6%), and television (76.7%). The dominance of interpersonal and radio-based communication channels underscores the continued importance of informal social networks and mass media in the delivery of rural agricultural extension.

The high utilization of radio supports earlier findings that radio remains one of the most accessible and cost-effective communication tools for disseminating agricultural innovations to rural farmers in developing countries due to its affordability, portability, and ability to reach geographically dispersed populations (Samuel & Apata, 2021). The finding further suggests that integrating radio drama into extension broadcasting may improve farmers' comprehension and retention of agricultural messages through entertainment-education approaches.

Drama ranked 15th among the identified sources of agricultural information, with only 41.7% of the respondents indicating exposure to drama-based dissemination. This low ranking demonstrates that drama is currently underutilized within the agricultural extension system in the study area despite its potential. The finding aligns with Issahaku et al. (2024), who observed that indigenous communication strategies such as drama remain insufficiently integrated into formal agricultural extension programmes in many African rural communities.

Table 1: Farmers' sources of agricultural information

Sources of agricultural information Options	Percentage	Rank
Fellow Farmers	94.4	1st
Radio	86.1	2nd
Friends/Neighbours	85.6	3rd
Television	76.7	4th
Family Members	73.9	5th
Video	58.3	6th
Community Leaders	61.1	7th
Print Media example Newspapers, bulletins, leaflets	56.7	8th
Extension Agents	54.4	9th
Internet example Google	52.8	10th
Agricultural Cooperatives	51.7	11th
NGO	48.9	12th
Social Media Apps: WhatsApp, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn etc.	47.2	13th
Telephone	44.4	14th
Drama	41.7	15th
Private Sector	40.0	16th
Research Institutes	32.8	17th

Source: Field Survey, 2023 ***Multiple responses recorded**

Constraints to the Use of Drama as a Tool for Agricultural Information Dissemination

The study identified several factors constraining the use of drama in agricultural information dissemination. Lack of electricity and other things needed to put up some drama mediums (M=3.5) and lack of equipment for receiving information through drama, such as radio and television (M=3.5), were the most severe constraints. This finding indicates that inadequate infrastructural facilities remain a major impediment to the effective utilization of drama as a medium of agricultural information dissemination in rural areas. The result corroborates the findings of Tham-Agyekum et al. (2024), who reported that access to information and communication technologies significantly influences farmers' ability to obtain and utilize agricultural information.

Similarly, lack of equipment for drama production (M=3.4), poor educational status of farmers (M=3.4), and high production costs (M=3.3) were identified as serious constraints. These findings suggest that both financial and knowledge-related limitations reduce the feasibility of adopting drama-based extension strategies. Lack of knowledge about drama =3.0) further indicates low awareness and limited exposure to drama as an agricultural communication tool among farmers. However, respondents did not consider drama-based dissemination excessively stressful (M=2.4), suggesting a generally positive perception toward its application.

Table 2. Constraints to the use of drama as a tool for agricultural information dissemination.

Options	Mean	SD	Rank
Lack of electricity and other things needed to put up some drama genres	3.5	0.82	1st
Lack of receiving equipment (e.g., radio, television, etc.)	3.5	0.80	2nd
Lack of equipment needed for drama productions	3.4	0.82	3rd
Poor educational status	3.4	0.80	4th
High cost of materials used for drama production	3.3	0.90	5th
Drama communication is more expensive than other methods	3.3	0.86	6th
Poor financial condition of some farmers	3.2	0.89	7th
Lack of roads to reach farmer communities	3.2	0.81	8th
Farmers' lack of interest in extension programmes	3.1	0.90	9th
Lack of knowledge on drama	3.0	0.97	10th
Age of the farmer	3.0	1.04	11th
It will be time-consuming	2.8	0.93	12th
Not feeling talented so avoiding participation in drama	2.8	0.90	13th
Fear of change from old extension methods	2.8	0.96	14th
Because of cultural barriers many people may not want to participate in drama	2.7	1.11	15th
Using drama will involve lots of stress	2.4	0.93	16th

Source: Field Survey, 2023 N = 180. Discriminating index = 2.5

Perceived Strategies that can Enhance Interest in the Use of Drama for Agricultural Information Dissemination

All the identified strategies were accepted by the respondents as effective measures for enhancing the use of drama in agricultural information dissemination. The inclusion of native language recorded the highest mean score (M= 4.5), indicating that the use of indigenous languages improves farmers' understanding, participation, and acceptance of agricultural messages. Drama presented in local languages enhances cultural connection and simplifies complex agricultural information for rural audiences. Sensitization on the use of drama for agricultural information dissemination (M=4.4) and training on drama production techniques (M=4.4) were also highly rated by the respondents. These findings indicate that awareness creation is necessary for improving the acceptance and implementation of the use of drama in agriculture.

The incorporation of farmers into drama production (M=4.3) was identified as another important strategy. Farmers' involvement in drama activities promotes participation, increases message relevance, and strengthens local ownership of extension programmes. Recent studies have shown that participatory communication approaches enhance community engagement and improve the dissemination of development messages among rural populations (Gebeyehu & Jira, 2023).

Drama production by only extension agents (M=3.1) was considered as a strategy. This can be deduced from Drama Resource (2022), that teacher in role strategy is an invaluable technique for shaping the dramatic process and developing students' learning; simply put, the facilitator assumes a role in relation to the learners, this may be as a leader, an equal, or a low status role – whatever is useful in the development of the lesson or in passing the information effectively. Training on the production of different mediums/forms (M=4.4) was also regarded as an important strategy. This is in line with the view of an ADP staff during the in-depth interview, that training is a good strategy to enhance the use of drama in agriculture.

Furthermore, allowing farmers to determine the preferred time for drama presentation (M=4.3) was considered important for improving participation and audience reach. This finding suggests that agricultural communication programmes are more effective when designed around farmers' daily activities and socio-economic schedules. Participatory communication approaches that prioritize dialogue, community involvement, and local needs have been associated with improved acceptance and sustainability of rural development interventions (Gebeyehu & Jira, 2023).

Table3. Perceived strategies that can enhance interest in the use of drama for agricultural information dissemination

Options	Mean	SD	Rank
Inclusion of native language	4.5	0.96	1st
Sensitization on the use of drama for agricultural information dissemination before using it	4.4	0.83	2nd
Trainings on the production of different mediums of drama	4.4	0.88	3rd
Consulting farmers on preferred time for drama presentation	4.3	0.80	4th
Incorporation of farmers in the drama production	4.3	0.91	5th
Using drama occasionally in the dissemination of agricultural information	4.0	1.00	6th
Using drama frequently/regularly in the dissemination of agricultural information	3.6	1.42	7th
Drama production done only by extension agents	3.1	1.24	8th

Source: Field Survey, 2023. N = 180. Discriminating index = 3.0

Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concluded that drama is poorly utilised for agricultural information dissemination in Imo State, despite its potential to enhance farmers' understanding and engagement. This is largely due to inadequate infrastructure, limited access to production facilities, low awareness, poor financial capacity, and limited educational exposure. These findings also underscore the importance of strengthening communication mechanisms within agricultural extension systems, as effective communication remains central to successful information dissemination and farmer engagement (Udoye, 2024). Agricultural messages should be delivered in indigenous languages to improve comprehension and participation, while government and relevant agencies provide adequate infrastructural and financial support for drama-based extension activities. Extension personnel and farmers should be trained in drama production and actively involved in its implementation, with extension programmes scheduled at times convenient for farmers to enhance participation and effectiveness.

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