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ABSTRACT

The communication roles and the challenges faced by university extension workers were explored based on their lived experiences. Underpinned by the theory of phenomenology, I gathered narratives from 10 purposively selected participants from August 2020 to February 2021 and analyzed their answers using Saldaña's open, axial, and thematic codings.

The communication roles of extension workers have extended: 1) from project proponent and leader to being a product developer; 2) from being a subject matter expert to being a researcher and researcher-extensionist; and 3) from being a multimedia communicator to being a market manager. They maintain communication roles as facilitator and coordinator; monitoring agent; community builder; and administrative support. In these roles, they need communication skills; innovation and resourcefulness; and, mediation skills.

The challenges they face include implementation problems; gaps between research and extension system and between extension system and farmers; the need for professional leadership and management; and overloaded extension staff. To address these challenges, they suggest harmonization; innovation; professionalization; and, cultural immersion. Suggestions are given to enhance the communication roles and skills of university extension workers.

Keywords: Research-extension linkage; RDE system; BIDANI program; extension skills; communication in extension