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Farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural extension agents in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency

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Abstract. This study discusses farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural extension officers as communicators, facilitators, innovators, educators, and motivators in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency. Farmers' perceptions of extension activities determine the intensity of farmer participation. So it is hoped that the active role of extension agents in building trust in farmers is expected. This research took place from January to March. The data analysis method used is descriptive quantitative, where the data obtained from interviews with 138 respondents from all levels of the farmer class will be scored and explained descriptively to provide an overview of the role of extension agents for farmers. The results showed that agricultural instructors in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency were sufficiently involved as communicators, facilitators, innovators, educators, and motivators.

1. Introduction

Perception is essentially a cognitive process experienced by everyone in understanding information about their environment, either through sight, hearing, appreciation, feeling, and smell. The key to understanding perception lies in recognizing that perception is a unique interpretation of a situation and not the correct recording of a situation [1].

Interpretation of situations in perception can be in the form of summarizing information or messages obtained from learning experiences about the object of events or relationships such as intrapersonal communication, namely communication that occurs within a person, therefore perception will influence a person in thinking, acting, and communicating with other parties. The existence of message interpretation, thinking, acting and communicating with other parties affects one's adoption rate.

Farmers' perceptions of extension activities determine the intensiveness of farmers attends the extension program. The role of extension agents is expected to help solve the farming problems. Sufficient knowledge and insight can be used to solve problems faced by farmers. Therefore some farmers do not want to participate in agricultural extension activities and even these farmers do not believe in the programs held by agricultural extension workers, but agricultural extension workers still try to help farmers in overcoming problems faced by farmers. The role of agricultural extension workers is to help farmers form healthy opinions and make good decisions by communicating and providing the information needed by farmers, besides that, agricultural extension agents also play a role in helping farmers improve their farming [2].

Agricultural extension is a non-formal education for farmers which includes activities in expert knowledge and skills from extension agents to farmers and their families that take place through a teaching and learning process [3]. Agricultural extension workers must be competent in agricultural experts to guide farmers. Agents also provide motivation, information, and increase farmer awareness, so that they can encourage their interest in learning in dealing with problems in the field. Observing



this, in extension activities, the role of an extension worker is needed to encourage changes in farmer behavior, both as communicators, facilitators, innovators, educators, and motivators.[4].

The extension aims to change farmer behavior, through increasing knowledge, attitudes, skills, and motivation of farmers target, so that farmers can make decisions in running and developing their farming independently. Through the role of extension workers, farmers are expected to be aware of their needs, increase their abilities, and be able to play a better role in the community. In other words, the success of an extension is strongly influenced by the size of the extension's role that is given through extension activities. Mosher [5] describes the role of agricultural extension workers is as a teacher, analyzer, advisor, organizer, a developer of change needs, a driver of change, and a stabilizer of farmer community relations. Based on this, empirically agricultural extension is the spearhead of the success of agricultural development[6].

Based on that, researchers were encouraged to examine farmers' perceptions about the role of agricultural extension agents in rice farmer groups. The author hopes that the results of this study can provide many benefits for all interested parties.

2. Research Method

This research was conducted in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency from January to March 2019. The location selection was carried out by purposive with the consideration that this area is one of the centers for lowland rice production. Also, this area has groups of farmers who have different class levels and the determination of this location is based on villages that are easily accessible.

This research is a quantitative study using a survey method, which is a study that takes respondents from one population and uses a questionnaire as the main data collection tool[7]. Information was collected from respondents using a questionnaire. Respondents to farmer groups were determined through a multistage sampling method with a technique of taking respondents through the selection of farmer groups. There are 3 selected farmer groups. Taking into account the existence of farmer group class levels, it is possible to see the different roles of extension workers from each farmer group level. The three selected farmer groups were the Mamminasae farmer group, the Sanggalea Jaya farmer group, and the Garuda Jaya farmer group.

Table 1. Respondents Taken from Each Farmer Group

Farmers Group	Hamlet	Membership	Class
Mamminasae	Baniaga	45	Madya
Sanggalea Jaya	Sanggalea	59	Lanjut
Garuda Jaya	Maccopa	34	Pemula
Total		138	

Samples were selected based on suggestions from field agricultural extension agents in Taroada Village with the consideration that the location of the farmer groups is easy to reach and has active meeting activities of 138 respondents.

The data analysis method used is descriptive quantitative, where the data obtained from the interviews will be scored. The method used in compiling the data is to use a Likert scale through tabulation where the respondents' scores are added up, this is the total score then the average is calculated, and this average is interpreted as the position of the respondent's assessment on a Likert scale so that it makes it easier to categorize and present data. The Agricultural Instructor Role Level Assessment Score is measured using a Likert scale. The attributes assessed are divided into five categories, namely instructors as communicators, facilitators, innovators, educators, and motivators. The criteria for each response in each category were 3 = very important, 2 = sufficiently important, 1 = less important. The data obtained from the interview results are described descriptively to provide an

overview of the role of agricultural instructors to be analyzed using descriptive methods by looking at the role of agricultural agents.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. The Role of Agricultural Extension in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency.

The new invention in the form of an idea or technology requires a medium so that can be communicated to its target. Agricultural instructors play an important role so that discoveries in agriculture can reach their target. The role of extension workers used in research in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency that has been implemented is as a communicator, facilitator, innovator, educator, and motivator. Of all the roles of extension workers, not all of them were carried out by the instructors as expected. There are still weaknesses in the role of extension personnel to farmer groups, which can be seen from the class level of the farmer groups, namely:

3.1.1. *The Role of the Extension Agents as a Communicator.* The role of agricultural extension agents as communicators in the performance of farmer groups is a task that can be expected to be carried out by agricultural extension agents in providing information and connecting farmers with sources of information to solve the problems they face. The agents as communicators can be measured from a frequency of information provision, clarity in information delivery, and linking sources of information with farmers. The role of agricultural extension agents as communicators in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Role of Extension Agents as Communicators, Taroada Village, Maros Regency.

Role	Beginner		Advanced		Middle	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Less important	3	33,33	2	13,33	2	18,19
Sufficiently important	6	66,67	13	86,67	9	81,81
Very important	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	9	100	15	100	11	100

The role of extension agents as communicators at the beginner class level is sufficient with the number of respondents who chose to play a sufficient role as many as 6 respondents or 66.67%. Meanwhile, 13 respondents in the advanced class level farmer group, or 86.67% chose to play a sufficient role. And as many as 9 respondents or 81.81% of the middle-class farmer groups chose the role of extension personnel as communicators.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents had a significant role in establishing good relationships and communicating between extension agents and farmers. Farmers stated that they played a role because they used language that was easy to understand. They were able to have good discussions with group members so that farmers did not feel tense and were able to adapt to the environment. Also, they could convey information about farming management, because extension workers always provided materials and practices good in managing the farm so that farmers feel helped by the information about the management of the farm.

Farmers also stated that extension agents played a role because everything related to the material needed for farmer's problems, for example controlling pests and diseases of rice plants that were often experienced by farmers. As well as providing technical knowledge and agricultural practices directly in the field so that farmers understand better.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a role in conveying information on the importance of farmer groups because agents always conveyed things that were obtained when joining farmer groups such as subsidized agricultural production facilities and a high sense of cooperation

between group members who could become friends to share when experiencing problems on their farm.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a role in helping farmers in the decision-making process. Farmers instruct played a role, when giving the material, the extension agents asked whether the group members had mastered and understood the technology so that the farmers knew which method to choose or do later.

Measuring the role of agricultural extension agents towards farmer groups is intended to measure the role of extension personnel as communicators in farmer groups. The measurement variable consists of 6 statements with a score of 1 to 3. The results of the measurement based on the table above show that the extension agent is quite instrumental in carrying out their duties as communicators..

3.1.2. Role of the Extension Agents as Facilitator. The role of agricultural extension agents as facilitators is a task that is expected to be carried out by agricultural agents in serving the needs required by the assisted community or providing assistance in implementing a process or activity. This is under what was conveyed by Soeharto[8] that the extension facilitator or trainer is responsible for providing an adequate, effective learning environment and other facilities that will facilitate an active process to take place. One of the agricultural extension agents' duties as facilitators is to provide training. From the survey results in the field, the respondents stated that the field school is one of the extension agents' roles as facilitators. In the field school, agricultural extension agents deliver material using lectures, discussions and demonstrations. From a practical point of view, the demonstration method was carried out by extension agents during their visit to the demonstration rice fields. As for the theoretical point of view, the extension worker provides at the discussion stage. It was at that time that the extension worker gave recommendations to the farmers. The role of agricultural extension agents as facilitators in Taroad Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency can be seen in Table 3 below:

Table 3.The Role of Extension Officers as Facilitators, Taroad Village, Maros Regency, 2019.

Role	Beginner		Advanced		Middle	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Less	1	11,12	4	26,67	3	27,28
Sufficiently	4	44,44	8	53,33	4	36,36
Very	4	44,44	3	20	4	36,36
Total	9	100	15	100	11	100

From the table 3, the role of the extension agents as a facilitator at the beginner class level is sufficient with the number of respondents who chose to play a very important role as many as 4 respondents (44.44%). Meanwhile, 8 respondents (53.33%) chose to play a role in the advanced level farmer group. And as many as 4 respondents (36.36%) from the middle class farmer group chose the role of extension personnel as a very important communicator.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a very important role in helping members to get capital, both knowledge and funds for agricultural business development. Farmers stated that extension agents played a very important role because extension workers provided knowledge through regular extension activities so that according to farmers this was a good asset for the development of their farming business, such as farming management from planting to post-harvest management. This is inversely proportional to the research conducted by Asdar et al. [9] that in fact, extension workers have less role as facilitators, especially in obtaining capital, both knowledge and funds.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a very important role in assisting farmer group members to attend training held by the government or private institutions. Farmers stated that the extension workers played a very important role in providing information about the training held both by the government and the private sector so that group members could participate in these activities freely to increase their knowledge of the training materials being held.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a very important role in helping the group collaborate with government agencies or the agricultural agency. Because extension workers gave access to farmer groups to ask for cooperation in the form of direct assistance to the government or the agricultural service.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a very important role in helping the group cooperate with other farmer groups. Farmers stated that extension workers played a very important role because extension workers initiated the meeting of farmer groups with each other in extension activities so that all farmer groups developed a sense of togetherness and good cooperation.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a very important role in helping the group develop work programs and quality improvement plans. Because in compiling work programs, farmer groups were assisted by extension agents so that the program was made according to what the group needed and could make the group develop.

Measuring the role of agricultural extension agents towards farmer groups is intended to measure the role of extension agents as facilitators in farmer groups. The measurement variable consists of 6 statements with a score of 1 to 3. The measurement results based on table 3 show that the extension agent plays a very important role in carrying out their duties as facilitators.

3.1.3. The Role of Extension Agents as Innovators. The role of agricultural agents as innovators in the performance of farmer groups is a task that is expected in exploring new ideas by utilizing existing facilities to seize opportunities so that they can help farmers through increasing their income in farming. A good relationship between agents and farmers is very important so that extension workers gain credibility in the eyes of farmers. The advice given by extension agents is easier to obey or trusted by farmers. The role of agricultural extension agents as innovators in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency can be seen in Table 4 below:

Table 4.The Role of Extension Agents as Innovators, Taroada Village, Maros Regency

Role	Beginner		Advanced		Middle	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Less	0	0	1	6,67	1	9,09
Sufficiently	9	100	13	86,66	9	81,82
Very	0	0	1	6,67	1	9,09
Total	9	100	15	100	11	100

Table 4 show the role of extension agents as innovators at the beginner class level is sufficient with 9 respondents (100%) who chose to play a sufficient role. Meanwhile, 13 respondents (86.66%) chose to play a role in the advanced level farmer group. And as many as 9 respondents (81.82%) from the middle class farmer group chose the role of extension personnel as innovators.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a role in providing the latest ideas or breakthroughs on agricultural cultivation, for example in lowland rice farming. Agents can provide extension materials about cultivation in rice farming, which has been carried out for a long time, to extension material on new cultivation. This is in accordance with the opinion of Mardikanto[3] which states that the role of extension agents as innovators, namely encouraging changes or providing innovations in planting crops, practices, working methods, or changing the mindset of farmers, so that they can implement and implement these changes. in life and business.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a role in providing the latest ideas or breakthroughs on plant care and pest and weed control. Extension workers could provide information on pest and weed control using pesticides that were in accordance with existing pests or biological control using predators and natural parasites from existing pests to pest control using natural ingredients.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension agents played a role in providing the latest ideas or breakthroughs regarding harvest and post-harvest handling. Agents provided information on good

harvest handling processes and also gave ideas on post-harvest handling to farmers who carried out commercial businesses.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension workers had a significant role in practicing the latest ideas or breakthroughs regarding harvest and post-harvest handling. The farmer stated that the extension agents had a role because after providing the extension material, they gave practice when the farmer was harvesting so that the extension worker provided assistance regarding the idea of handling the harvest and post-harvest so that the farmers' crops were in good condition and suitable for immediate consumption or sale. Post-harvest handling is carried out to get good seeds and this is done by selecting seeds, cleaning, drying, sorting, packaging, storing, and others.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension agents played a role in providing the latest ideas or breakthroughs on the packaging and marketing of agricultural products. Agents provided material on product packaging so that agricultural products had high selling value and well-packaged products would have their value in the community so that they were easily recognized. However, in practice the farmers have not yet reached the stage of carrying out proper packaging because in marketing, they only use ordinary sacks and the marketing is only in the nearest factories.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents had a role in providing information about product marketing or a place to obtain agricultural production facilities. Agents provided access to information about where to market agricultural products, in this case rice, to farmers, making it easier for farmers who wanted to market their agricultural products. Measuring the role of agricultural extension agents towards farmer groups is intended to measure the role of agents as innovators in farmer groups. The measurement variable consists of 6 statements with a score of 1 to 3. The results of the measurement based on the table above show that the extension agent has enough role in carrying out their duties as innovators.

3.1.4. The role of agricultural extension agent as an educator. The role of the instructor as an educator is to facilitate the learning process carried out by the beneficiaries. Although the educational process should not patronize, let alone impose one's will (indoctrination, agitation), but must take place as a participatory and dialogical collective learning process. The role of agricultural extension agents as educators in Taroda Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency can be seen in Table 5 below:

Table 5. The Role of Extension Officers as Educators, Taroda Village, Maros Regency, 2019

Role	Beginner		Advanced		Middle	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Less	2	22,22	1	6,67	2	18,18
Sufficiently	7	77,78	11	73,33	9	81,82
Very	0	0	3	20	0	0
Total	9	100	15	100	11	100

The role of the instructor as an educator at the beginner class level is sufficient with the number of respondents as many as 7 respondents (77.78%). Meanwhile, 11 respondents (73.33%) chose to play a sufficient role in the advanced level farmer group. and as many as 9 respondents (81.82%) from the middle class farmer group chose the role of extension agents as innovators.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a significant role in helping increase farmers' knowledge of new ideas. Because extension workers were able to convey their knowledge of how to cultivate rice plants. Agents provided innovations that made it easier for farmers in their work, also provided guidance to farmers and their groups, so that they would be more advanced and knowledgeable in agriculture.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension workers had a sufficient role in providing training on how to use new technology. In the current era, agricultural technology is already in the modern

category, such as transplants, tractors, and combine harvesters. Many farmers have known this technology from extension agents' information and the practice of its use from the agents themselves.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension workers had a role in providing good advice and enthusiasm in improving farming. The extension agents always assist the farmers to fix the problems in their farming.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension workers played a role in helping farmers in finding suitable farming options to develop. Agents assisting farmers in planning what crops to plant according to the season, the goal is to reduce the risk of loss faced by farmers.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension agents played a role in explaining to farmers what would be the advantages of their farming. The extension workers provided information on the benefits in the form of a fairly standard rice production yield so that this triggered farmers can continue to develop their farms. Measuring the role of agricultural instructors in the development of farmer groups is intended to measure the role of extension agents as educators in farmer groups. The measurement variable consists of 6 statements with a score of 1 to 3. The results of the measurement based on the table above show that the instructor plays a sufficient role in carrying out their duties as educators.

3.1.5. The role of agricultural extension agents as a motivator. The role of agricultural extension agents as a motivator in the performance of farmer groups shown when agents in arousing farmer enthusiasm and influencing farmers to be motivated to participate in farming activities. To find out the extent of the agricultural extension's role as a motivator, it can be seen from the contribution of agricultural extension agents that have been given to farmers to provide encouragement and enthusiasm to participate in farmer group activities.

Dinar [10] argues that one of the efforts to motivate someone is to help develop individual thinking, by first raising their enthusiasm. From the survey results, it is known that the agricultural extension efforts are good, because the agricultural extension agents take a personal approach by giving good treatment from the beginning to the end of the activity so that farmers feel close to the agricultural extension workers. This motivates farmers to participate in extension activities and implement agricultural extension recommendations. In addition to motivating farmers to participate in activities by raising their enthusiasm, agricultural extension workers also broaden their thinking by providing counseling filled with information about the benefits of participating in group activities so that farmers are more enthusiastic about participating in group activities. The role of agricultural extension agents as motivators in Taroad Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency can be seen in Table 6 below:

Table 6. The Role of Extension Officers as Motivators, Taroad Village, Maros Regency, 2019

Role	Beginner		Advanced		Middle	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Less	1	11,11	2	13,33	2	18,18
Sufficiently	6	66,67	11	73,34	8	72,73
Very	2	22,22	2	13,33	1	9,09
Less	9	100	15	100	11	100

The role of the instructor as a motivator at the beginner class level is sufficient for as many as 6 respondents (66.67%). Meanwhile, 11 respondents (73.34%) chose to play a role in the advanced level farmer group. And as many as 8 respondents (72.73%) from the middle class farmer groups chose the role of extension agents as a motivator.

Respondent farmers stated that extension agents played a role in encouraging farmers to advance their farming well. According to farmers, agents had provided input in improving group farming, but not all inputs could be carried out, also routine guidance in developing the managerial ability of farmer groups. The agents help provide input in increasing the production results that are cultivated, in providing input, the extension worker also always gives encouragement to farmers, and for

agricultural processing, the extension worker reminds farmers to process it according to what has been practiced.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension workers were sufficient in encouraging farmers to participate in all extension activities. Agents always say that extension activities will increase farmers' knowledge so that it will be easier to make decisions and with extension, there will be openness among group members so that it is always in.

Respondent farmers are responsible for encouraging farmers to stay with farmer groups because extension agents always tell them the advantages of joining farmer groups and the disadvantages of not joining farmer groups so that farmers continue to join.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension workers were sufficient in supporting the activities carried out by the farmer groups based on the group work program. Extension workers are sufficiently involved because in realizing the farmer group work program, extension workers provide suggestions so that the program can run well and smoothly.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension workers had a significant role in encouraging farmers to take part in the training held by farmer groups, extension workers and the government. Farmers stated that the extension workers were sufficient to participate, that is, because they attended the training, members could jointly create an atmosphere of openness in expressing and views among members to achieve common goals.

Respondent farmers stated that the extension workers were sufficient in encouraging group members to improve skills in entrepreneurship. Farmers stated that extension workers were participating because the farmer group assessments of extension workers helped farmers provide information on marketing agricultural products. Measuring the role of agricultural extension agents in farmer groups was recorded to measure the role of extension workers as motivators in farmer groups. Measurement variable measurement from 6 statements with a score of 1 to 3.

The measurement results based on table 6 show that the extension workers are sufficient in carrying out their duties as motivators. From the three groups who became respondents, it can be seen that the role of the extension agent in each group is different. There are differences in the role of extension personnel at the farmer group class level. The extension worker acts as a dynamic actor and organizer in the preparation and development of farmer groups, meaning that the extension worker must be able to mobilize and motivate the group to be more active in carrying out and participating in group activities [11]. But in reality, more extension workers come to these farmer groups only to convey innovations and new programs from the government and facilitate group meetings with other parties. Rather than the role of extension workers to be more active in motivating members in the group to carry out an activity that is useful to increase cohesiveness in the group. Because it is conventional, the role of extension workers is only in their obligation to deliver innovation and influence extension targets through certain methods and techniques, to them (target extension agents or farmers) with their own awareness and ability to convey the innovations that are delivered.

According to [12] in its development, the role of the extension worker is not only limited to the function of delivering innovation and influencing the decision-making process carried out by the target extension, but they must be able to become a mediator between the government and the target community. Both in terms of delivering innovations or policies that must be accepted and implemented by the target community. As well as for the government or extension agencies concerned. Because only by placing himself in a position or position like that he will be able to carry out his duties properly. The results of the overall role of the instructor in the development of farmer groups which consist of the role of extension personnel as communicators, innovators, educators, and motivators, were obtained with a sufficient role category. The categories and results of the overall role of extension workers from each farmer group in the development of farmer groups can be seen in Figures 1 and 2 below.:

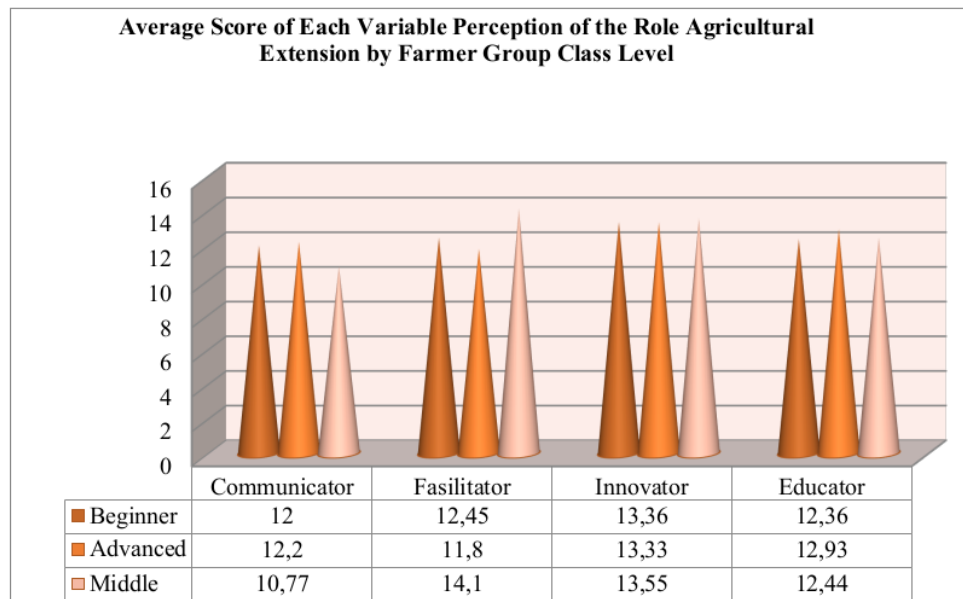


Figure 1. Graph of Average Score of Each Variable Perception of Farmers on the Role of Agricultural Extension by Farmer Group Class Level

Figure 1 explains the average score of each variable perceptions of the role of agricultural extension agents as communicators in the middle farmer group class which has an average score of 12 in the moderate role category. While the advanced farmer group class has an average score of 12.2 in the category. it has enough role and the beginner farmer group class has an average score of 10.77 in the moderate role category.

Farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural extension agents as facilitators in the middle farmer group class had an average score of 12.45 in the moderate role category. While the advanced farmer group class had an average score of 11.8 in the moderate role. And the beginner farmer group class had a score of an average of 14.1 in the less important category.

Farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural extension agents as innovators in the middle farmer group class had an average score of 13.36 in the moderate role category. While the advanced farmer group class had an average score of 13.33 in the moderate role category and the beginner farmer group class had a score an average of 13.55 in the category that played a role.

Farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural extension agents as educators in the middle farmer group class had an average score of 12.36 in the moderate role category. While the advanced farmer group class had an average score of 12.93 in the moderate role and the beginner farmer group class had an average score of 12.93. an average score of 12.44 in the category played a role. And farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural extension agents as a motivator in the middle farmer group class had an average score of 13.18 in the moderate role category. While the advanced farmer group class had an average score of 13.73 in the moderate role category and the beginner farmer group class had an average score of 14.11 in the category that played a role.

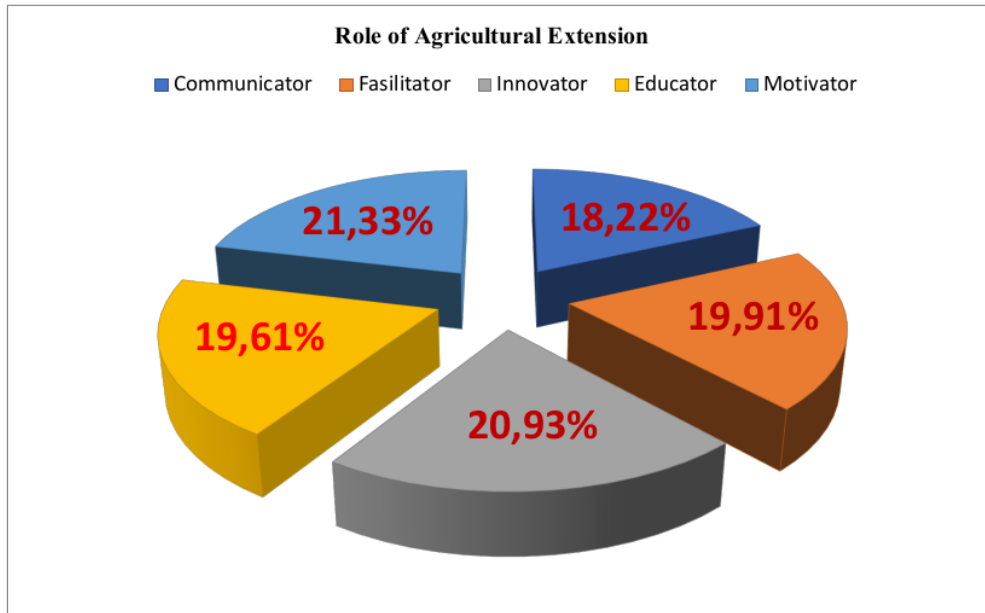


Figure 2. Graph of the Overall Results Average Score of Each Variable Perception of Farmers on the Role of Agricultural Extension

Figure 2 explains the average score of each variable of farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural instructors as communicators at an average score of 11.65 at a percentage of 18.22%, the category has quite a role. Farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural instructors as facilitators at an average score of 12.78 at a percentage of 19.91%, category played quite a role. Farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural extension agents as innovators at an average score of 13.41 at a percentage of 20.93% are quite important. Farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural instructors as educators at an average score of 12.57 at a percentage of 19.61%, category played quite a role. Farmers' perceptions of the role of agricultural extension agents as a motivator at an average score of 13.67 at a percentage of 21.33%, the category are quite important.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

The role of agricultural extension agents in Taroada Village, Turikale District, Maros Regency as communicators, facilitators, innovators, educators, and motivators is categorized as having quite a role. However, in carrying out their duties, agricultural extension agents need to deliver material according to the class level of the farmer group.

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