AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AGENTS' PERCEPTION OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Work-life balance denotes a worker's stability between the job and personal life. Work-life balance depicts employees accomplishing assigned duties and personal responsibilities without overlapping conflicts. This study investigated the Agricultural Extension Agents' Perception of Work-Life Balance in Kwara State, Nigeria. One hundred and twenty respondents were selected for the study. The findings showed that the Extension agents have a high work-life balance. The statement that the leader creates a positive and supportive work environment (mean = 4.32) was the highest-ranked perception statement on leadership styles. The statement that extension agents arrive for work on time (mean = 4.47) was the highest-ranked perception statement on work-life balance. The statement that a good insurance scheme will make me take my job with all seriousness (mean = 4.59) was the highest-ranked factor influencing the work-life balance of the extension agents. The study concluded that the extension agents have a high work-life balance in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study therefore recommended that the extension organization should ensure the provision of motivational incentives such as insurance schemes and financial benefits to the extension agents

Keywords: Perception, Extension Agents, Work-Life Balance

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension is a process of communication and education that seeks to share the latest information, skills and innovation with farmers to enhance their productivity and livelihoods (Ifabiyi & Abdulrahman, 2023). Extension agents have been unceasingly charged with the task of providing innovation to the farmers (Makinde et al., 2023). Agricultural extension service enhances the output and income through the provision of information on modern farming methods to the farmers and rural people (Adesiji, 2023). According to Ifabiyi and Abdulrahman, (2023), extension service relays innovation to the farmers. Therefore, it is imperative that the

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extension agents have favourable work-life balance so as to make extension service deliveries effective.

Work-life balance is the discrete awareness that works and non-work actions are well-suited and encourage growth in agreement with a person's current life priorities. Work-life balance is defined as satisfaction and agreement at work and home with little or no conflict (Kalliath and Brough, 2008). It mainly describes an employee's capability to prioritize between work and his/her lifestyle. When there is a positive balance between work and life, workers tend to be happy and productive. Attaining a positive balance between work and life is a great task for all workers, particularly working parents (Obianuju et al., 2016).

According to Stoner et al., (2001), an understanding of leadership is imperative because leaders motivate their subordinates to be productive. Also, leadership assists in the daily operations of an organization, efficient leadership influences the overall performance of an organization. The Farmers and other Rural people look up to extension agents as an important development stakeholder. The leaders in extension organizations must ensure that the extension agents have a favourable work-life balance to get the best result from them.

According to Obianuju et al. (2016) lack of work satisfaction, high work pressure and longer working hours are stressing out many Nigerian workers, reducing their job performance and productivity as well as causing broken homes. In the community, there is growing concern that the quality of home and community life is deteriorating. These have resulted to poor employee input and performance at work place (Lamane-Harim et al., 2021).

The entanglements between work and family are a significant source of psychological discomfort for employees This study is important as the work-life balance of extension agents would have an influence on their job performance and subsequently the output and income of the farmers and other rural people that depends on agricultural extension services for their livelihoods. This is so as Noah and Steve (2012) reported that workers would be more productive if they find their job satisfying and pleasant. This study would help to improve the future policy on the work-life balance of the extension agents in the Kwara State Agricultural Development Programme.

Also, there is the dearth of information on the life-work balance of agricultural extension workers in Kwara State, Nigeria. Consequently, there is a gap that this study seeks to fill. This justified the need to carry out a study on the agricultural extension agents' perception of work-life balance in Kwara State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives were to:

I.   ascertain the socio-economic characteristics of the Extension Agents in the study area.

II.   examine the Extension Agents' perception of the leadership styles adopted by the management of the Kwara State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP).

III. assess the Extension Agents' perception of work-life balance in the study area.

IV.   identify factors influencing the Extension Agents' work-life balance in the study area.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The research was carried out in Kwara State of Nigeria. The total land area of Kwara State is 32,500 square Kilometers (NPC, 2006). The state is mainly an agrarian state. The Kwara State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) which is responsible for agricultural extension activities in the State has four agro-ecological zones. The sampling procedure involved a random selection of 120 Extension Agents in all four Agro-ecological Zones in Kwara State, Nigeria. To determine the respondents' perception of the leadership styles adopted by the management of Kwara State ADP, a 4 – point Likert typed scale was used where strongly disagreed = 1 disagreed = 2, Agreed = 3 and strongly agreed = 4. The perception of work-life balance in the study area was measured on a 5 – point Likert-type scale where Never = 1, Rarely = 2, Sometimes = 3, often=4 and always = 5. The factors influencing the respondents' work-life balance was measured on a 5 – point Likert typed scale was used where strongly disagreed = 1 disagreed = 2, Agreed = 3 and strongly agreed = 4. The data were collected with the use of questionnaire. The data was analysed with the use of frequency count, percentages and mean.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

The findings in Table 1 revealed that about 65.8% of the extension agents were male. This result indicates that extension service is dominated by males in the study area. The mean age of the respondents was 44 years. This result denotes that the extension service providers are still young and agile for the extension activities in the study area. This result is in line with the findings of Adesiji et al. (2015) that stated that extension agents in Kwara state were young and agile. The findings presented in Table 1 revealed that about 54.2% had B.Sc. This infers that the majority of the respondents was educated and is experts in their field. The annual income of the extension agents was ₦706,266.67. The average years of experience in extension activities were 11 years. This shows that the respondents have some years of experience in extension activities.

Perception of the Leadership Styles among the Extension Agents

The findings presented in Table 2 revealed that the statement that leadership creates a positive and supportive work environment (mean = 4.32) was the highest-ranked perception of leadership styles. My leader is approachable and easy to talk to (mean = 4.15) and was ranked second. My leader established a new procedure when something goes wrong (mean = 4.14) and was ranked third. This result shows that leadership styles could influence the management of an organization. This finding is in line with Lian, Ferris and Brown (2012) who reported that leadership styles could influence the subordinates' response to their leaders' decisions.

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Perception onWork-life Balance among the Extension Agents

The findings in Table 3 revealed that the overall work-life balance was (Mean = 3.56). The result further revealed that the Extension agent's arrival for work on time (Mean = 4.47) was the highest-ranked perception statement on work-life balance. The extension agent demonstrating appropriate interaction with the public (Mean = 4.38) was ranked second and the extension agent did not take any work-related issues with levity (Mean = 4.37) was ranked third. The high work-life balance indicates that the extension agents are productive. This is in line with French et al., (2020) which reported that a worker with high work-life balance would be highly productive. Also, Oloyede (2012) stated that work-life balance is achieved when an individual's right to a fulfilled life inside and outside paid work is accepted and respected.

Factors Influencing Work-Life Balance of the Extension Agents

The findings in Table 4 revealed that the statement that a good insurance scheme will make me take my job with all seriousness (Mean = 4.59) was the highest-ranked factor. Personnel guidance and counseling will encourage my undivided attention during work (Mean =4.57) was ranked second and financial assistance will motivate me to work better (Mean = 4.54) was ranked third. This finding indicates that the extension agents need more incentives in the form of insurance and financial assistance to motivate them to do their work better. This result concurred with the findings of Adesiji et al., (2015) who stated that productive extension workers should be rewarded with financial incentives. This justifies the need to motivate the extension workers as Ifenkwe, (2012) stated that unless the extension workers are motivated and supported, most of the extension programmes would not be achievable.

CONCLUSION

According to the findings of this research, the study concluded that the majority of the extension agents were married, had some years of experience in extension activities and were educated. The study concluded that the extension agents have a high work-life balance in the study area. The perception statement that my leader creates a positive and supportive work environment was the highest-ranked perception on leadership styles. The statement that an extension agent arrived for work on time was the highest-ranked perception statement on work-life balance among the respondents. The statement that a good insurance scheme will make me take my job all seriously was the highest-ranked factor influencing the work-life balance of the extension agents in the study area.

Based on the findings of the study, the study therefore, recommended that as extension agents have a positive attitude towards work, the extension organization should ensure that extension agents are continually motivated. There should be provision of motivational incentives to inform of insurance and financial benefits to the extension agents from the Extension Agencies and also from the government.

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APPENDICES

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Respondents (N=120)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation
Gender				
Male	79	65.8		
Female	41	34.2		
Age(years)				
21-30	1	0.8	44years	6.38
31-40	34	28.3		
41-50	69	57.6		
51 and above	16	13.4		
Religion				
Christianity	44	36.7		
Islam	76	63.3		
Marital status				
Married	119	99.2		
Single	1	0.8		
Education Status				
OND	20	16.7		
HND	24	20.0		
B.Sc	65	54.2		
M.Sc	11	9.2		
Annual Income (Naira)				
100,000-500,000	59	46.6	N706,266.67	375936.606
501,000-1,000,000	50	41.6		
1,001, 000-2,000,000	11	11.6		
Years of Experience				
≤10	60	50.1	11years	5
11-20	47	39.2		
21 and above	13	10.7		

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2: Respondents Perception on the existing Leadership Styles among the Extension Agents (N=120)

Statements	SA F(%)	A F(%)	D F(%)	SD F(%)	Mean score	Rank
My leader creates a positive and supportive work environment	48(40.0)	66(55.0)	2(1.7)	1(0.8)	4.32	1st
My leader is approachable and easy to talk to	46(38.3)	59(49.2)	11(9.2)	1(0.8)	4.15	2nd
My leader establishes a new procedure when something goes wrong	42(35.0)	60(50.0)	5(4.2)	1(0.8)	4.14	3rd
I feel so happy and relaxed whenever I see my boss at work	52(43.3)	40(33.3)	9(7.5)	3(2.5)	4.08	4th
I am involved in the task of implementing a new procedure	33(27.5)	54(45.0)	22(18.3)	1(0.8)	3.80	5th
I am closely monitored to ensure I am performing correctly	33(27.5)	54(45.0)	29(24.5)	3(2.5)	3.71	6th
I feel free to approach my boss on any issue concerning my life and family	28(23.3)	48.8(40.0)	30(25.0)	5(4.2)	3.53	7th
My boss rewards me for outstanding performance	32(26.7)	39(32.5)	24(20.0)	12(10.0)	3.46	8th
My boss always considers my opinion in determining what to do and how to do it	16(13.3)	63(52.5)	11(9.2)	23(19.2)	3.31	9th
My tends to make decisions without consulting the team	12(10.0)	42(35.0)	47(39.1)	9(7.5)	3.02	10th
There is a scheduled time for counseling between my boss and me	25(20.8)	18(15.0)	51(42.5)	13(10.8)	3.00	11th
My boss is aware of my family condition	11(9.2)	16(13.3)	49(40.8)	20(16.7)	2.58	12th
My boss does not consider suggestions made by me and my co-employees because he does not have the time for us	5(4.2)	8(6.7)	47(39.2)	52(43.3)	1.89	13th
I Intend to quit my current job	1(0.8)	4(3.3)	32(26.7)	74(61.7)	1.55	14th

Source: Field Survey, 2023. SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree)

Table 3: Perception of work-life balance among the Extension Agents (N=120)

Statements	N F(%)	R F(%)	S F(%)	O F(%)	A F(%)	Mean Score	Rank
I arrive for work on time	7(5.8)	2(1.7)	5(4.2)	20(16.7)	86(71.7)	4.47*	1st
I demonstrate appropriate interaction with the public	7(5.8)	2(1.7)	7(5.8)	26(21.7)	78(65.0)	4.38*	2nd
I do not take any work-related issue with levity	8(6.7)	5(4.2)	5(4.2)	19(15.8)	78(65.0)	4.37*	3rd
At work, I feel secured while carrying out the day's task	10(8.3)	-	11(9.2)	15(12.5)	83(69.2)	4.36*	4th
I join other members to participate in religious activities	5(4.2)	2(1.7)	16(13.3)	26(21.7)	71(59.2)	4.30*	5th
At home, I feel relaxed while carrying out the house chores	11(9.2)	2(1.7)	23(19.2)	17(14.2)	67(55.8)	4.06*	6th
When making decisions involving my partner, I do so fairly and objectively	14(11.7)	9(7.5)	13(10.8)	18(15.0)	66(55.0)	3.94*	7th
I am encouraged to work effectively with the management support	7(5.8)	16(13.3)	5(20.8)	10(8.3)	62(51.7)	3.87*	8th
When I see my partner before we part in the morning, I feel pleasantly relaxed	11(9.2)	12(10.0)	17(14.2)	26(21.7)	54(45.0)	3.83*	9th
I feel satisfied and happy when going to work	12(10.0)	7(5.8)	27(22.5)	21(17.5)	53(44.2)	3.80*	10th
When making decisions at work, I am too bored to think out of situation	30(25.0)	46(38.3)	12(10.8)	1(0.8)	31(25.8)	2.64*	11th
When considering world events, I become depressed because things are beyond my control	41(34.2)	20(16.7)	26(21.7)	9(7.5)	24(20.0)	2.63*	12th
When my children do something that displeases me, my temper flares and I lose control of myself	48(40.0)	26(21.7)	24(20.0)	2(1.7)	20(16.7)	2.33	13th
When I see my partner in the evening after work, I am tense, unable to relax and flit from one activity to another.	57(47.5)	19(15.8)	21(17.5)	5(4.2)	18(15.0)	2.23	14th
At home, when trying to sleep, I cannot relax my muscle and toes and turn	56(46.7)	25(20.8)	22(18.3)	3(2.5)	14(11.7)	2.12	15th
Grand Mean						**3.56**	

Source: Field Survey, 2023. 1+2+3+4=10/4=2.5, ≥ 2.5 High Work-life Balance*, ≤ 2.5 Low Work-life Balance; N (Never), R (Rarely), S (Sometimes), O (Often), A (Always)

Table 4: Factors Influencing the Extension Agents Work-Life Balance (N=120)

Statements	SA F(%)	A F(%)	U (F%)	SD F(%)	Mean score	Rank
Good insurance scheme will make me take my job with all seriousness	75(62.5)	43(35.8)	-	-	4.59	1st
Personnel guidance and counseling will encourage my undivided attention during work	70(58.3)	48(40.0)	2(1.7)	-	4.57	2nd
Financial assistance will motivate me at work better	66(55.0)	53(44.2)	1(0.8)	-	4.54	3rd
On-site child care will assist workers to focus more on their work	69(57.5)	46(38.3)	2(1.7)	1(0.8)	4.50	3rd
Flexible working hours will make me work effectively	72(60.0)	38(31.7)	2(1.7)	1(0.8)	4.44	5th
I am supported by other members when faced with tedious assignment	51(42.5)	57(47.5)	7(5.8)	1(0.8)	4.28	6th
I feel so relaxed in my working environment	44(36.7)	54(45.0)	10(8.3)	4(3.3)	4.05	7th
Less bulkiness of work will good for me	41(34.2)	7(5.8)	17(14.2)	6(5.0)	3.93	8th
Telework will enhance proper devotion to work despite my absence	37(30.8)	41(34.2)	12(10.0)	19(15.8)	3.55	9th
Delayed salaries make me depressed	30(25.0)	41(34.2)	7(5.8)	4(3.3)	3.46	10th
Working overtime hinders my personal life	31(25.8)	19(15.8)	14(11.7)	24(20.0)	3.01	11th
Technology make it difficult to disconnect from work outside regular business hours	14(11.7)	30(25.0)	24(20.0)	23(19.2)	2.86	12th
My work environment impacts my ability to achieve work-life balance	24(20.0)	32(26.7)	7(5.8)	42(35.0)	2.84	13th
My co-worker's habits or behaviors impact my ability to achieve work-life balance	13(10.8)	34(28.3)	6(5.0)	27(22.5)	2.72	14th
Personal priorities interfere with my ability to focus on work	8(6.7)	29(24.2)	4(3.3)	55(45.8)	2.26	15th

Source: Field Survey, 2023. SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree)