

JOB PERFORMANCE OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION EXPERTS OF YAZD PROVINCE, IRAN

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the job performance of agricultural extension experts in Yazd province of Iran. All the agricultural extension experts of Yazd province (N=120) were included in the study. By use of Proportional Stratified-randomization method 67 respondents were selected. The study was a descriptive-co relational, survey research. A questionnaire was designed and employed to gather the required data. Data was analyzed using percentage, mean score, analysis of variance, coefficient of correlation and coefficient of variation. The findings revealed that the job performance of extension experts was moderately appropriate. Also the findings revealed that there was significant correlation between job performance and job satisfaction, job motivation, job attitude, job ability, amount of use of information resources and communication channels, amount of participation with mass media, amount of participation with organization management. Also the affective constraints items most felt on reduce of job performance were "Small and non economical farms", "Non cooperation of experts in the implementation stage of decisions" and "Illiteracy of farmers".

Key words: Extension Experts, Job Performance, Yazd province

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a significant economic sector in the national development framework of our country and plays a vital role in our national development. Those determinants are required for any further developments. Moosher (1996) considers five factors essential in this case and regards five accelerating determinants. Education and extension of agriculture are among the second factor. Hence, the role of extension and education of agriculture is vital in the agriculture development and can't be gainsaid (Shams, 2003). Agricultural extension and farming systems sectors are among the most momentous economic sectors of the Iran which are economically highly fruitful activities despite previous negligence. Some of the momentous pickles of this sector comprise the lack of appropriate investments, the lack of technical conditions, and the human development, human resources and making plans about them, because the know-how, skill and organization of the manufacturing depends upon strengthening and utilizing the employed forces in this sector (Extension-Office for People Participation and Movement, 2002). They need personnel who have characteristics such as performance initiations, optimum human relations, human and moral commitments, keenness on job and development of services, and nonstop endeavors to be able to perform one's duties and vocation. The human forces available inside an organization are among the required human sources, in fact development organizations take action to solve problems and remove requirements by relying upon their expert personnel to identify and discern tangible and intangible needs of the huge active personnel in the manufacturing sectors. The apparent point here is the evolution of the human resources and the amelioration of the performance of agents who are active in these organizations (Bown and et al, 1991). This is a world of enormous developments in which organizations are competing with each other so vehemently, and a colossal section of each organization is busy supervising the staff, because it has been witnessed that each organization personnel are the factors that make any organization survive in the competition, and their productivity is the main determinant for the

organization orientation. Modern organizations revamp their own activities by relying upon their human resources, and are quite active in diverse markets. The establishment of diverse units inside an organization such as the human resources planning unit, education unit, etc is a proof of the above matter. If any systematization considers its personnel as tools in a traditional manner, it will gain no status internally and externally (Ismailei, 2004).

This establishment must be more sensitive towards its addresses in the agricultural extension. The extension unit of the agricultural extension organization has a great calling to realize the promoted objectives and the farming development. Extension establishment must observe the administrative hierarchy however; they should observe a reverse hierarchy in the technical and procedural aspects. This is the only way they can survive and manage to be highly honored in the agricultural communities (The personnel and organization committee of the extension committee on organization and policy, 1992).

Since the personnel of each organization are the most momentous strengthening factor, highly qualified knowledgeable human resources are the most significant at competitive advantage of each systematization and the rarest source in the modern knowledge-based economy. Some of the advantages of utilizing highly qualified knowledgeable human resources comprise the presentation of diverse high quality products and services, reduction of costs, creativity and initiations, highly competitive powers. Hence, progressive systematizations make indescribable endeavors to use this key source in disparate sections such as quality, manufacturing, management, to realize their own strategic objectives using new methods and systems.

Matters such as technology, universal coalitions, and innovations will influence the competition advantage in future. After all, the circulation of each one of the above matters depends upon human talents and tastes. Hence, it looks as though you the strategic and economic advantage will be wielded by establishments which manage to absorb the most brilliant human talents in the market, and nurture them and maintain them efficaciously (Dini et al, 2005). And since the performance of persons in an organization is a momentous variable in this field, agricultural extension organization needs highly qualified experts to achieve success and efficiency. The identification of actors which affect the job performance of experts and the obstacles available in this way are vitally significant. Assessment of the job performance of the personnel and experts is quite momentous in most establishments. Unfortunately this matter is dealt with tentatively, hesitatingly and negligently while it can be used as a powerful tool to recognize the weak and strong points of the personnel and the planning of measures to remove them.

Diverse views have been presented about the performance. Job performance concerns the collection of compartments that people express with regard to their jobs, in other words, it amounts to the product or the yield which is achieved based on the (service, educational or manufacturing) vocation that is carried out (Rashidpoor, 2000). Job performance is the same as the human yield based on the legal duties and comprises the consequences of the human forces about the implementation of tasks which are assigned to them. This indicates the job success and endeavors of an employee to execute the job obligations and the behavioral allegiances (Vijayaragavan, K et al, 1997). And the amount of tasks achieved by experts has been defined as the job performance in this research. Marchant (1999) regards two effective factors in the job performance. He states that people have to be trained to become strengthened, and motivating factors have to be utilized to foment them. In his opinion, two educational and motivating factors are decisive in the job performance of people. Wright (1995) examined the relation between the job performance and the personality of people in a research. And he concludes that the recognizing capabilities act as a mediating agent among them so that people who are highly motivated and capable have a better job performance and

those with low motivation and capabilities have a lower rate of job performance. Personality reflects the motivation of people to do their tasks and the talents represent the abilities.

Radhakrishna et al (1991) made a research to express the job ability of promotional agents and managers and to determine the reception rate among managers, top managers and subordinates and quantified seven variables known as budgeting, planning, coordination, job knowledge, leadership relationship and supervision. The research results denote that they are in complete agreement in 3 fields of budgeting, leadership and supervision but some disagreement occur in 4 fields of planning, coordination, job knowledge, and relationship. Shams (2003) dealt with the job performance of the extension experts of the eastern Azerbaijan province, the pertinent conclusions and evince that there is a positive meaningful relation between participation in the in-service educational courses, experience in the promotion field, job satisfaction, job motivation (independent variables) and job performance (dependent variable). In other words, he shows that, when the extension expert's participation in the in-service educational courses, experience in the promotion field, job satisfaction and job motivation are more, the job performance is relatively more.

The general objective of this research is the examination of factors affecting the job performance of experts and the specific objectives of this research were analysis of the educational, individual and organizational characteristics of the extension experts; determination of the job performance of the agriculture extension experts of the project; analysis of the relation among the educational, individual and organizational specifications of the extension experts with their job performance; determination of the factors restricting the job performance

METHODOLOGY

The study used a survey design for data collection. All the agricultural extension experts of Yazd province (N= 120) were included in the study. For sample size determination of this research, we used Cochran's Formula and it determined sample size should be 67 persons. Then, by use of Proportional Stratified-randomization method 67 respondents were selected. A specific questionnaire was developed to measure the job performance of agricultural extension experts from Yazd province in Iran. The questionnaire contained three parts: part 1 pertained to general demographic variables of the respondents like age, gender, level of education, experience, job satisfaction, job motivation, job attitude, job ability, amount of use of information resources and communication channels, amount of participation with mass media, amount of participation in organization management, for the study. Part 2 contained the scale to measure of job performance. For measuring the job performance, 32 important roles pertaining to their job were identified which were rated on a five point continuum – "very low", "low", "mediate", "high", "very high". The maximum possible score for a respondent was 160 and the minimum was 32. The higher scores on the scale indicate higher job performance while lower scores indicate lower job performance. The scale has high reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.97).

Part 3 contained the constraints on job performance of agricultural extension experts. These 40 constraints items were identified by discussion with agricultural extension experts, agricultural assistants, farmers and agricultural scientists. the severity of the constraints were measured by subjecting each constraint to a five point continuum from most felt, felt, undecided, less felt and unfelt having scores 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1, respectively. By analysis of variance and coefficient of variation, constraint rank was obtained. The scale has high reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.96). The instrument was given to the faculty of the department of agricultural extension and education, university of Tehran to test for face

validity. Data was analyzed using descriptive and interference statistics such as: percentage, mean score, analysis of variance, coefficient of correlation and coefficient of variation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Professional and individual characteristics of the extension experts.

According to the resultant data of this research, 64 persons (95.5 percent) of the extension experts are men and there are merely 3 female experts. Considering the educational level, most of the extension experts have bachelor degree (46.3 percents) and 3 persons bear MA or PHD (the least percentage of 4.5 percents) and the rest of them (49.2 percents) have diploma. 47 persons (70.1 percents) among the extension experts have agricultural studies, and the rest of them (namely 20 persons or 29.9 percents) have been educated in other fields. The average age of the research group experts is 41.6 years and their average rate of experience in the extension system is 18 years. The average marks of the experts about the utilization of information and network sources, their participation in the mass media, their contribution to the organization management and the pertinent unit, familiarity with the job responsibilities and duties, job ability of the experts, job motivation, job attitudes, career satisfaction, of the sample studied are respectively 16.10, 7.84, 14.45, 19.33, 14.61, 26.89, 30.49, 36.66, in the distance scale (table 1).

Table 1: the individual and professional characteristics of the extension experts of Yazd Province, Iran 2007 (n=67)

	Average	Minimum	Maximum	Standard deviation
Age	41.6	25	52	7.02
Job experience	18	1	29	7.9
The utilization rate of the information sources and channels	16.10	6	25	3.66
Participation with the mass media	7.84	4	12	1.94
Participation with the organization manager and the pertinent unit	14.45	5	25	4.30
Familiarity with the job duties and accountabilities	19.33	6	25	3.47
The job ability of the specialist	14.61	7	20	2.61
Job attitudes	26.89	19	35	3.5
Job motivation	30.49	21	35	3.06
Job satisfaction	36.66	18	50	7.02

Abundance of responders based on the job performance

According to the resultant data of this research (table 2) the minimum, maximum and the average marks of the job performance are respectively 32, 155 and 108.91. Tripartite classification of the job performance of the experts demonstrate that the job performance of most of the responders is intermediate namely 50.7 percents, 38.8 percents are high, and 10.4 percents are low. The aforesaid results show intermediate job performance of the extension experts.

Table2: the abundance of responders based on their job performance of the extension experts of Yazd Province, Iran 2007 (n=67)

Job performance	Abundance	Percentage
Low (75)	7	10.4
Intermediate (75-118)	34	50.7
High (118)	26	38.8
Total	67	100
Average 108.91 maximum = 155	standard deviation = 24.58	minimum = 32

Correlation of the independent variables and the job performance variables

According to the resulting data, there is a positive meaningful relation among the independent variable concerning the utilization of the information sources, communication channels, with the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.442$ and $p = 0.000$) with the job performance. The more experts use information sources and communication channels, the higher their job performance will achieve. According to the findings of this research, there is a positive meaningful relationship among the variables of participation with the mass media (participating to proffer statistics and reports about the regional agricultural situation, presentation of the expertise discussion, on the regional agricultural quandaries, proffering views, suggestions, and collaborations to make radio and TV programs, educational and promotional films), ($p = 0.01$, $r = 0.313$) and the job performance variable. There is also a positive meaningful relationship among the variables of the experts' contribution to the organization management and the pertinent unit (participation to analyze diverse manners of productivity of the organization, participation in decision making, active participation with the administrative council, making participation in the subsequent stages of the decision making in the organization or the pertinent unit) and the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.508$) at the level of 0.01. there is also a positive meaningful relationship among other variables which contain physical and psychological characteristics of individuals for instance, the job ability of the expert, job motivation, are respectively related to the correlation coefficient 0.442, 0.591 at the level of 0.01 and the job attitude variables and job satisfaction respectively with the correlation coefficients 0.305, 0.265, at the level of 0.05 with the job performance variable (table, 3). Plenty of researchers have corroborated the momentous role of the physical and psychological characteristics to increase the job performance. Some of them are Marchanet (1998), Belhaj (1995), confirming the relationship of the job capability and the job performance. Tatum (2000), Ahmadi (2001), Marchanet (1998), confirmed the relationship between the job motivation and the job performance, Goosh (2000), Poorsafari (1998), Rezaei (2000), confirmed the relationship between job satisfaction and the job performance.

Table 3: Correlation analysis of the independent variables with the job performance

Independent variable	Correlation coefficient	Significant level	Remarks
Age	-0.174	0.172	Not Significant
job background	-0.22	0.074	Not Significant
utilization of information and communication sources	0.442**	0.000	Significant
participation with the mass media	0.313**	0.01	Significant

participation with the organization management and the pertinent unit	0.508**	0.000	Significant
familiarity with duties and the job accountabilities	0.211	0.086	Not Significant
organizational support	0.186	0.133	Not Significant
the job ability of the specialist	0.422**	0.000	Significant
job attitudes	0.305*	0.012	Significant
job motivation	0.591**	0.000	Significant
job satisfaction	0.265*	0.030	Significant

**Meaningfulness at the level of 1 per cent *Meaningfulness at the level of 5 per cent

Prioritization of the factors restricting the job performance

According to the resultant data of the prioritization of the responders' views based on the changes coefficient, the following factors restricting job performance are respectively set in the priority No 1 up to 4 which are "the existence of farms and their uneconomic nature", determination of objectives by superiors and the insistence of the extension experts to implement them", "most of the farmers", "obligation of the ministry to plant some of the products irrespective of the region, needs and facilities of the farmers. Some other factors such as "disinterest and lack of responding a specific group of farmers, "inexperienced problem making colleagues", difficult ways of accessing computer and internet, "lack of agreement between the extension experts and their colleagues, are among the factors which have had the least effect upon the diminishing of the job performance (table 4).

Table 4 – Prioritization of the factors restricting the job performance of the extension experts of Yazd Province, Iran 2007 (n=67)

Option: Factors restricting the job performance	Mean	Standard deviation	Coefficient variation	Ranking
Smallness of the farms and non-economic nature of most of them	4.10	0.94	0.2293	1
Determination of goals by superiors and extension experts insistence to carry them out	3.36	0.84	0.2485	2
Illiteracy of most of the farmers	4.06	1.04	0.2552	3
Obligation of the ministry of agriculture to plant specific products irrespective of the region, needs and facilities of the agriculturalists	3.72	0.95	0.2554	4
Conservative attitudes of the farmers and their low-level literacy, hence lack of performing the promotional recommendations	3.85	1.02	0.2647	5
Nonobservance of justice and fair granting of wages and bonus	4.00	1.09	0.2725	6
Disorder and lack of schedule in diverse levels of the ministry of agriculture	3.39	0.94	0.2782	7

Heedlessness of the executive officials and systems with regard to the extension	3.50	1.03	0.2934	8
Vast extent of the area under cover	3.62	1.08	0.2994	9
Incorrect nature of the job improvement criteria	3.64	1.11	0.3052	10
Lack of all-out sincere cooperation of the mass media with the agricultural extension	3.17	0.97	0.306	11
Sporadic land of rustic areas	3.76	1.15	0.3061	12
Lack of coordination among diverse sections of the extension organization	3.24	1.01	0.3089	13
Difficulty of accessing information and printing sources	3.15	0.99	0.314	14
Lack of a precise assessment system and fixed criteria to evaluate the task of the extension experts	3.35	1.06	0.3164	15
Vagueness of the experts' plans	3.12	0.98	0.3196	16
Lack of educative and scientific cooperation of the organization	3.11	1.01	0.3248	17
Heedlessness of the supervisor to the quandaries and needs of experts	3.33	1.09	0.3282	18
Lack of the experts' participation in the agricultural planning of the area	3.28	1.08	0.3305	19
Insufficient time for doing educational and promotional activities	3.06	1.01	0.331	20
Too much bureaucracy instead of dealing with the promotional and development activities	3.49	1.16	0.3324	21
Lack of a separate working plan for each province and area	3.37	1.14	0.338	22
Vagueness of the agricultural development policies	2.32	1.13	0.3413	23
Lack of appropriate warehouses for storing agricultural productions	3.54	1.21	0.3418	24
Lack of applied educational courses	3.01	1.04	0.3445	25
Lack of agreement of extension experts with the superiors	2.99	1.05	0.3518	26
Insufficient assistants to perform agricultural operational affairs	3.20	1.13	0.3519	27
Insufficient financial support of the promotional plans in the organization	3.24	1.14	0.3528	28
Difficult manner of accessing vehicles	3.22	1.14	0.3547	29
Insufficient access routes to render better services	3.12	1.12	0.358	30
Lack of precise statistics and correct information about the agricultural	3.18	1.17	0.367	31

situation and farmers for making plans				
Insufficient number of assistants to do office works	3.09	1.15	0.3725	32
Difficulty of insuring agricultural products and be creditor of farmers towards extension experts	3.30	1.23	0.373	33
Weak attendance in educational courses	3.02	1.17	0.3874	34
Non-correspondence of the academic education and the extant jobs	2.95	1.21	0.4095	35
Inappropriateness of the work location	2.84	1.16	0.4095	36
Disagreement between the extension experts and their colleagues	2.85	1.08	0.4174	37
Difficult manner of accessing computer and internet	3.02	1.27	0.4202	38
Inexperienced colleagues who are problem making	3.13	1.36	0.4339	39
Disinterest to reply a specific group of farmers	2.77	1.23	0.4422	40
Scale:	1 = totally ineffective		5 = totally effective	

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were derived.

- Agricultural extension experts in Yazd province, as a group, were generally medium job performance with their current work position.
- According to correlation analysis utilization of information and communication sources, participation with the mass media, job motivation, job ability and amount of participation with organization management was found to have correlated with job performance among agricultural extension experts.
- Data revealed that existence of non cooperation of experts in the implementation stage of decision making, Illiteracy of farmers, non-attendance agricultural inputs according to local demand with assessing the actual requirement and suitability and problems of farmers were the main constraints on reduce of job performance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from this research have recommendations for Iranian Extension Employee Development Network. As results of the study, the following recommendations are forwarded.

- Agricultural extension experts under study had generally medium to low level of job performance so it is recommended to determining and definition of different kinds of responsibilities and communicate main functions of extension experts through human resource development programs.
- Considering the positive meaningful among the variables of the participation rate and the mass media, contribution in the organization management and assisting the manager of the pertinent unit with the variable of the job performance, it is suggested that the manager of the pertinent organization and unit pay more attention to the

participation of the experts in the internal activities of the organization by heeding the views of the extension experts while making decisions and plans.

- Existence of non cooperation of experts in the implementation stage of decision making, Illiteracy of farmers, non-attendance agricultural inputs according to local demand with assessing the actual requirement and suitability and problems of farmers were the main constraints on reduce of job performance so, converting standing traditional and industrial-aged (boss-oriented) systems of management, economical development of small farmers, increasing mobility, motivation, and effective recruitment amongst extension personnel, and distribution of infrastructural instruments among farmers will ensure increasing level of job performance amongst extension personnel.
- Considering all the matters, it is suggested that agricultural extension organization pays special attention to the individual and professional factors of the extension experts such as their job performance, their familiarity with duties, job responsibilities, job attitudes, job satisfaction, job motivation, and organizational factors such as supervision, leadership, participation of the personnel in tasks, reward bonus and encouragement to ameliorate the experts performance by combining the above factors.

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