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Determination of Professional Factors Affecting Working Efficiency of Extension Field Staff in Pishin District (Pakistan)

[1]Manzoor Ahmed, [1]Amjad Ali, [1]Jaffar Ali, [2]Qamar Raza, [3]Shagufta Fahmid and [4]Nida Ali

[1]Department of Agricultural Extension, Balochistan Agriculture College, Quetta, Pakistan
[2]Department of Statistics, Balochistan Agriculture College, Quetta, Pakistan
[3]Department of Chemistry, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Quetta, Pakistan
[4]Department of Zoology, Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Quetta, Pakistan
*Corresponding author: *Jaffaraj2010@yahoo.com*

Abstract

Extension Field Staff (EFS) is the front line extension workers who have direct contact with the farmers and play an important role in educating and motivating them towards adoption of modern technology. This means that the extent of adoption of new technologies by the farming community depends upon the working efficiency of agricultural EFS. Therefore, their working efficiency has direct bearing on agriculture production. The present study was planned to determine the professional factors affecting the working efficiency of agricultural EFS in district Pishin. Data for the study was collected from 100 respondents including Deputy Directors of Agriculture (DDAs), Agriculture Officers (AOs) and Field Assistants (FAs) of Agriculture Department (Extension wing) working in Pishin district of Balochistan. Data showed that all (100%) of the respondents were of the view that they have received trainings. Whereas, 53 and 11% of the respondents said that they have received training on plant protection and water management respectively. The data further showed that 48 and 36% respondents always received the messages in the form of printed material and lecture/discussion. However, method demonstration was other form through which messages were sometimes received as reported by 33% of the respondents. The data regarding duration of training revealed that majority (62%) of the respondent were in favour of half month of training while only 9% opined that duration of training should be of three months. Lecture and result demonstration were always used to convey the messages to farming community as reported by 33 and 20% of the respondents. Data further revealed that overwhelming majority (76%) of the respondents reported that there was negative effect of farmer's conflicts on their working, whereas 24% claimed that there was no effect of farmer's conflicts on their working.

Keywords: Extension Field Staff, working efficiency, professional factors, Pishin district

Introduction

The agriculture sector continues to be an essential component of Pakistan's economy. It contributes 21% to GDP. Agriculture generates productive employment opportunities for 45% of the country's labour force and 60% of the rural population depends upon this sector for its livelihood. It has a vital role in ensuring food security, generating overall economic growth, reducing poverty and the transforming towards industrialization (Govt. of Pak., 2012). But the productivity for most crops is very low compared with developed countries (FAO, 2010). There is also a huge gap between the potential and actual yield of major crops (Govt. of Pak., 2003). This reflects an inadequate access of farmers to better farming technology (Khan *et al*., 2005).

Agricultural Extension is the system of introducing new agricultural techniques and ideas to the farmers for incorporating them into their farming practices (Ahmed *et al*., 2007). Agricultural education, information and skill development are the main concerns of agricultural extension agencies (Farooq *et al*., 2007). Thus agricultural extension organizations are entrusted with the primary task of educating and disseminating the latest agricultural technologies to the farmers (Khan & Akram, 2012).

Agricultural extension workers are important as they promote the adoption of new agricultural technologies (Ahmad *et al*., 2007). Agricultural extension agents has the objective to assist farmers in improvement of the methods and techniques of agricultural production, increase of income, farm management, productivity and production quality, increase of livelihood sources and elevating of social and educational standards of rural and urban farmers (Israr *et al*., 2013). This means that the extent of adoption of new technologies by the farming community depends upon the working efficiency of agricultural EFS. The extension services provided by agricultural EFS play an important role in agricultural development and can contribute to improving the welfare of farmers and other people living in rural areas (Ahmad *et al*., 2014). But agricultural extension services in Pakistan are facing number of problems. One of these factors is the professional factors that affect the extension services provided by agricultural EFS. Keeping the above views, the present study was designed to determine the professional factors that affect the working efficiency of agricultural EFS in Pishin district of Balochistan.

Methodology

This study was conducted in Pishin district of Balochistan province (Pakistan). Out of three hundreds of total population, One hundred respondents were selected randomly. Out of 100 selected respondents, 2 DDAs, 21 AOs and 77 were FAs of Agriculture Department (Extension Wing). The data were collected with the help of pre-tested interview schedule and statistically analyzed with the help of SPSS and thus drawn conclusions.

Results and Discussion

a) Professional trainings received by the respondents

Professional trainings play an important role to promote knowledge and transfer the agricultural technology to the farmers and it may affect the working efficiency of the respondents. So, the respondents were asked about their professional trainings which they received from time to time within department or out of the department. The information regarding this aspect were collected which are presented in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Professional trainings received by the respondents

Type of training	No.	%age
Plant protection training	53	53
Water management training	11	11
Induction training	27	27
Refresher courses	9	9
Total	**100**	**100**

The data presented in **Table 1** revealed that 53% of the respondents got training on plant protection while 11 and 9% have received training on water management and refresher courses respectively. However, 27% of them also got induction training. It means that the department is regularly creating some training opportunities to the respondents in different fields.

b) Forms of receiving message from training staff

The information should be concise, clear, and effective and should fulfill the needs of the farming community. This objective can be achieved if EFS is fully receptive for agricultural message prepared by training staff. Therefore, training staff should be capable of making effective message. Keeping this in view extension workers were asked about the forms in which they receive message from training staff. Hence information regarding this aspect were ejected which are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2: Forms/extent of receiving message from training staff

Forms	Always		More Often		Often		Sometimes		Never		Total
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Printed material	48	48	17	17	15	15	20	20	0	0	**100**
Lecture	36	36	23	23	23	23	18	18	0	0	**100**
Video cassette	0	0	15	15	24	24	45	45	16	16	**100**
Audio cassette	0	0	12	12	22	22	42	42	24	24	**100**
Method demonstration	11	11	17	17	17	17	33	33	22	22	**100**
Result demonstration	6	6	20	20	17	17	33	33	24	24	**100**
Seminar	4	4	17	17	17	17	36	36	28	28	**100**

The data presented in the **Table 2** shows that 48 and 36% respondents always received the message in the form of printed material and lecture/discussion respectively. However, video-cassettes, audio-cassettes, method demonstration, result demonstration and seminars were other forms through which the message was sometimes received as reported by 45, 42, 33, 33 and 36% of the respondents respectively.

c) Duration of professional training/refresher courses

The researcher experience shows that short and long trainings may be given to the respondents, therefore, the researcher wanted to find suitable duration of training. The respondents were asked about the duration of training. The data were collected in this regard, which are presented in **Table 3**.

Table 3: Opinion of the respondents regarding duration of professional training/refresher courses

Response	No.	%age
Half month	62	62
One month	14	14
Two month	15	15
Three month	9	9
Total	**100**	**100**

Table 3 reflects that a fair majority i.e. 62% of the respondents were in favor of half-month of training whereas 14% of them advocated that the training should be of one month. There were some respondents who opined 2 months duration of training. Only 9% opined that training should be 3 months. According to international norms professional training of three weeks per year is desirable but due to limited resources in this country it is not possible. However, efforts should be made to keep updating knowledge and skills of extension workers.

d) Forms of transferring message to the farmers

It was assumed that transfer of message affect directly on the adoption of innovation by the farmers. So the respondents were asked for the transfer of agriculture message to the farming community in what form and to what extent. The data regarding in this aspect were collected which are presented in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Forms/extent of transferring message to the farmers

Forms	Always		More Often		Often		Sometimes		Never		Total
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Printed material	20	20	14	14	19	19	35	35	12	12	**100**
Lecture discussion	33	33	26	26	19	19	22	22	0	0	**100**
Method demonstration	16	16	2	2	25	25	26	26	6	6	**100**
Result demonstration	20	20	20	20	24	24	26	26	8	8	**100**

The data presented in **Table 4** revealed that lecture/discussion was prominent method which was always used by the respondent to convey the message to the farmers as reported by 33% of the respondents. This method was followed by result demonstration (20%) and printed material (20%) which were always used by the respondents for the purpose.

e) Social Status of the respondents

It is generally observed that social status of the respondents has great influence on the transfer of innovations. Therefore, each individual was asked about his social status as compared to workers of other department and the data regarding this aspect were collected, which is presented in **Table 5**.

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents according to their social status

Social status	No.	%age
Low	60	60
Same	29	29
Better	11	11
Total	**100**	**100**

The data presented in **Table 5** shows that social status of Agricultural EFS in the farming community was lower than that of other workers of the same status in other departments as reported by majority (60%) of the respondents. However, the status was considered even better by 11% of the respondents whereas 29% of the respondents considered it equal to other departments. Facilities like residence, transport, are closely related with the social status in the society. Smooth flow of facilities can ensure raise in relative statuses of the respondents.

f) Behaviour of contact farmers with the respondents

Cooperation of contact farmers with the respondents reflects the interest of the respondents as well as contact farmers in the transfer/adoption of agricultural technology. An attempt was, therefore, made to study the extent of cooperation between contact farmers and respondents and the data regarding this aspect were collected, which is presented in **Table 6**.

Table 6: Behaviour of contact farmer with respondents

Behaviour	Always		More Often		Often		Sometimes		Total
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Cooperative	6	6	60	60	30	30	4	4	**100**
Non Cooperative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	**0**

The data presented in **Table 5** shows that all the farmers were cooperative but degree of their cooperation varied. The data further reveled that large majority 90% of the respondents reported that the contact farmers were cooperative most of the time and none of the respondents reported that the behaviuor of the contact farmers was non cooperative. This shows that transfer of know-how from the respondents to the farmers was proper.

g) Effect of farmer's conflicts on the working efficiency of respondents

Farmer's conflict may affect the social activities of the respondents as was assumed by the researcher that they may affect the working efficiency of the respondents. The data regarding this aspect were collected, which is presented in **Table 7**.

Table 7: Effect of farmer's conflicts on the working of respondents

Response	No.	%age
Negative effect	76	76
No effect	24	24
Total	**100**	**100**

The **Table 7** depicts that overwhelming majority (76%) of the respondents that there was negative effect of farmer's conflicts on their working, whereas (24%) claimed that there was no effect of farmer's conflicts on their working.

Conclusion

From the results of the study it is concluded that different type of professional trainings were provided to the EFS from time to time within the department. It is further concluded that 48 and 36% respondents always received the message from training staff in the form of printed material and lecture/discussion respectively while lecture/discussion was prominent method which was always used by the respondent to convey the message to the farmers. The study further concluded that social status of Agricultural EFS in the farming community was lower than that of other workers of the same status in other departments as reported by majority (60%) of the respondents. However, large majority 90% of the respondents reported that the contact farmers were cooperative most of the time and none of the respondents reported that the behaviuor of the contact farmers was non cooperative.

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