

Assessment Of Attitude To Work Of Agricultural Extension Agents In Katsina State ;Implication For Agricultural Transformation Agenda

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Abstract: The main objective of the study was to determine attitude to work of the extension agents in Katsina State. Multistage sampling technique was employed to select cells and blocks from each of the three KTARDA Zones while simple random sampling procedures were used to select 108 extension agents as respondents. Questionnaires were used to collect information for the study which was analyzed using correlation, descriptive statistics such as percentages, frequency counts and measures of central tendency. The results revealed that majority (49.07%) of the agents had a moderate attitude towards extension work. Finding from correlation analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between attitude to work and age ($r = 0.102ns$), performance ($r = 0.153ns$), work experience ($r = 0.042ns$) and the rank ($-0.048ns$) of extension agents, but the relationship between age and work experience ($r = 0.476**$) is highly significant while the relationship between work experience and rank ($r = 0.185*$) is significant at 0.05 level of significant. Similarly, finding of the survey revealed that extension agents endorsed four problems as some of the problems faced by extension service in the state. The problems endorsed include insufficient number of extension staff, inadequate funding, poor logistics supports and lack of promotion and insufficient allowance to field staff. Results revealed good salary, regular promotion of staff, provision of in-service training, involvement of staff in planning and decision making of extension service in the state, some level of autonomy and recognition to staff. as factors influencing attitude to extension work. Thus it is recommended that the state government should employ more extension agents, pay them good salary and involve them in decision making and planning of extension programmes in their establishment for effective agricultural transformation agenda in the state and Nigeria at large.

Key words: Katsina, Agents, Attitude

I. Introduction

The growth of towns and the number of people involved in non agricultural activities have led to an increasing demand for agricultural products. This has placed an even greater strain on soil and pasture resources which are being used up rapidly, especially in semi-dried areas and this made more difficult to provide a livelihood for a rural labor force which is expected to double by the end of the century. A more intensive and productive use of land can help to solve the problem. To achieve this, millions of farmers must be given access to agricultural extension education as it is generally believed that one of the most important tools for increased agricultural development in Nigeria is the provision of efficient agricultural extension services to farmers.

Van Crowder (1996) reports that based on food and agricultural organization (FAO) projections for food demand and supply, it is clear that national and international investment is required in agricultural extension so that there is widespread dissemination and efficient use of productivity enhancing technologies without adverse environmental consequences. Thus, it becomes imperative for all agricultural extension agencies to recruit, hire or employ qualified and competent extension staff that could deliver agricultural information successfully to farmers so as to help achieve the agricultural transformation agenda.

To deliver successfully, an extension agent needs to possess those qualities expected of a good change agent. One of these qualities is a positive attitude towards both his job and his client as this can help him gain the confidence of the farmers for easy change of their attitudes and acceptance of the change he wants to introduce.

This study is therefore meant to assess the attitude of the extension agents towards their work.

II. Methodology

This study was conducted in Katsina state of Nigeria consisting of thirty-four local government areas located between latitudes 11°08'N, 13°22'N, and longitudes 6°52'E and 9°20'E (Adamu, 2000). The state had a population of 5,792,578 persons. (NPC, 2006).

Main objective of the study is to analyze the attitude to work of Agricultural extension agents in Katsina state. The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i Describe socio-economic characteristics of the extension agents
- ii Determine the attitude of the extension agents toward their job.
- v Examine the relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the Extension agents and their attitude to work.
- vii Identify the problems faced by the extension agents in the study area

Multistage sampling technique was employed to select 108 cells and 27 blocks from sampling frames of 312 cells and 39 blocks respectively from the three agricultural zones of the State. A total sample size of 108 extension agents were selected from the sampling frame of 237 extension staff. The selection was carried out by use of simple random sampling using random number method. Four (4) cells were selected per block while nine (9) blocks were selected in each of the three zones. One extension agent was then selected from each of the cells to obtain a total of one hundred and eight extension agents (1 extension agent x 4 cells x 9 blocks x 3 zones).

Data for the study were collected from both primary and secondary sources through questionnaires and review of relevant materials and it was analysed using descriptive statistics, Spearman's correlation analysis, Likert scale, performance rating scale and force distribution.

Objective one and five which described some selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the problems faced by the extension staff were achieved by the use of descriptive statistics. Objective two which sought to determine the attitude to work of the extension agents was achieved using the Likert approach of measuring attitude adopted from Jibowo, (1973). In this approach, respondents were requested to indicate their preferences to some questions on a five-attitude responses scale. They could either be strongly agree (SA) which is scored five points, agree (A) which is scored four, undecided (U) with a score of three, disagree (D) which is scored two points or strongly disagree (SD), with a score of one point for positive statements. The scores were reverse in the case of negative statement with SA scored 1, A = 2, U = 3, D = 4, and SD = 5. Averages of scores were calculated for each respondent by summing up values of his/her responses to all questions and divided by the total number of questions respectively. Scores above the mean indicated a positive attitude and those below show a negative attitude. The scores of the respondents according to the Likert rating scale were summarized in table 2 with 60 as the maximum score and 40.82 as the total mean score. Those with score equal to or above the mean score indicate favorable attitude to extension work while those with scores below the mean indicate unfavorable attitude towards extension work.

Objectives three, which described the relationship between socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and their attitude to work, were achieved using correlation analysis.

The study hypothesised that there is no significant relationship between age and attitude to work of the extension agents, there is no significant relationship between attitude to work and job performance of the extension agents, there is no significant relationship between attitude to work and work experience of extension agents, there is no significant relationship between attitude to work and the rank of extension agents.

To test the hypotheses of the study, Spearman's coefficient of rank correlation model symbolized by r_s was used with the help of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS16.0) The formular for the model is as follows:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum_{i=1}^N d_i^2}{N(N^2 - 1)}$$

Where:

- d = The difference between the rankings of the same item in series.
- N = The total number of extension agents (108 extension agents)

III. Results and Discussion

Socio-economics characteristics of extension agents

Age: Table1 Shows that 68.96% of the extension agents were more than 40 years old. This is similar to the finding of Haruna (2001, Oladosu and Okunade, 2004) who also observed that majority of village extension workers in Kebbi State and Oyo Agricultural Zone of Oyo state respectively were above 40 years.

Sex

Results of the study revealed that 94.44% of the respondents were male. This finding is in agreement with previous finding of (Ban et al., 1988, Haruna, 2001, and Abdulmotaleb et al., 2008) who also reported that most of extension agents (100% Kebbi State, Nigeria, 95.5% Yazd province, Iran) were male

Qualification.

Table1 revealed that the extension worker course certificate (EWC) or farm training centre certificate was the major qualification for 33.33% of the extension agents. This finding is also similar with that of Abdullahi (1996) who observed that most of extension agents in central Zone of Sokoto (82.89%) were secondary school certificate holders.

Working experience:

Results shows that 46.30 of the agents has more than 20 years of work experience.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of extension agents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age(years)	12	11.11
20-30	28	25.93
31-40	68	68.96
Total	108	100
Mean age = 37.30 ,SD = 4.659		
Sex		
Male	102	94.44
Female	06	5.56
Total	108	100
Educational qualification		
HND/B.sc	21	19.44
OND/NCE	14	12.96
Secondary Cert.	28	25.93
Primary Cert.	09	8.33
Total	108	100
Work experience (years)		
1 -5	2	1.85
6 -10	17	15.74
11 -20	39	36.11
20	50	46.30
Total	108	100
Mean age = 16.67 , SD =4.520		

IV. Attitude to work of the Extension Agents

Table 2: presented the distribution of extension agents by scores for attitude to extension work. The table indicated that majority (49.07%) of the agents had a moderate attitude towards extension work. This finding disagrees with that of Anthony (2003) who described work attitude of the Nigerian civil servant as poor and characterised by corruption and inflation of contracts. This finding indicates that there is the need for the government to provide all necessary work conditions that could make the respondents to maintain their good work behaviors.

Table 2: Distribution of extension Agents by scores for attitude to extension work (N=108)

Scores on Attitude Scale	Frequency	Percentages
21-30	0	0
31-40	53	49.07
41-50	53	49.07
51-60	02	1.86
Total	108	100
Mean=40.83 ,SD =5.360		

Relationship between attitude to extension work and Socio-Economic characteristics

Table3: shows correlation matrix between attitude to work and some selected socio- economic characteristics of the extension agents. The results revealed that there is no significant relationship between attitude to work and age ($r=0.102$), attitude to work and job performance ($r=0.153$), attitude to work and work experience ($r=0.042$) attitude to work and rank of the extension staff ($r=-0.048$). Thus, as the hypotheses suggested that there is no significant relationship between attitude to work and some select socio-economic characteristics of the extension agents. The hypotheses were tested using Pearson correlation coefficient through the use of statistical package for social sciences (SPSS 16.0) Therefore; this implies that hypotheses 1 – 4 should be accepted. However, the relationship between age and work experience was highly significant ($r=0.476$) while the relationship between work experience and rank of the extension agents was significant at 0.05 level ($r=0.185$).

Table 3: Simple correlation matrix

	Job attitude	Age	Job performance	Work Experience	Rank
Job attitude	1.00	0.102ns	0.153ns	0.042ns	-0.048ns
Age		1.00	-0.034ns	0.476**	0.100ns
Performance			1.00	-0.017ns	
Experience				1.00	0.185*
Rank					1.00

. ns = Not significant * = significant, ** = highly significant

Problems faced by extension agents in Katsina State

Problems faced by extension staff in the state as endorsed by the extension agents are depicted in table 4. Majority of the extension agents (96.30%) have identified insufficient extension workers as one of the problems faced by extension service in the state, (96.30%) agree with the statement that poor/inadequate funding is one of the problems facing extension service, (92.59%) were in agreement with the statements that poor logistics support such as lack of adequate means of transportation for staff, lateness in providing working materials for on- farm demonstration are serious problems to extension work in the state. Furthermore, 87.96% of the extension agents agree that lack of promotion of staff and non- payment of allowances to field staff are other problems facing extension work in the state.

The above finding is similar with previous finding of Benor, et al., (1984. Williams, 1989 and Agbamu,2005) who also observed that poor financing of agricultural extension programmes has been a longstanding problem facing extension service in most Developing countries.

Table 4: Distribution of Extension agents based on their assessment of problems facing extension service in the state (N=108)

S/No	Statement/item	Agree		Disagree	
		Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Insufficient number of extension workers that can provide service to huge population of farmers	104	96.30	4	3.70
2	Inadequate funding is one of the problems facing extension service in the state	104	96.30	4	3.70
3	Poor logistics support such as lack of adequate means of transportation to staff, lateness in providing working material for on- farm demonstrations also cause problems to extension work in the state	100	92.59	8	7.41
4	Lack of regular promotion of staff and non-payment of allowances to field staff is another problem facing extension work in the state	95	87.96	13	12.04

Positive Attitude to work of extension agents and Agricultural transformation agenda

In the present climate of change, poverty alleviation and food security are major Concerns for the world. This was evidenced at the 1996 World Food Summit, at which the representatives of FAO member countries pledged their dedication to alleviating poverty using every means available. Agricultural extension is one of the means available to help alleviate poverty and improve food security. It promotes the transfer and exchange of information that can be converted into functional knowledge, which is instrumental in helping to develop enterprises that promote productivity and generate income.(FAO,1997).

In his statement to support the above statemet Van Crowder (1996) reports that based on food and agricultural organization (FAO) projections for food demand and supply, it is clear that national and international investment is required in agricultural extension so that there is widespread dissemination and efficient use of productivity enhancing technologies without adverse environmental consequences. Thus, it becomes imperative for all agricultural extension agencies to recruit, hire or employs qualified and competent extension staff that could deliver agricultural information successfully to farmers as all research findings from animal scientist, agronomist, soil scientist and agricultural engineers and the rest can only be utilised or put into practice when they were effectively disseminated to practicing farmers and this is easier, easily acceptable and faster with an effective agricultural extension system and this effective extension system is based on the attitude to work of the extension agents. Therefore, if revive, funded sufficiently and provided with enough extension agents with positive attitude towards extension work, agricultural extension can assist greatly in making agricultural transformation agenda one of the successful agricultural policy in Nigeria .

Summary, Conclusion And Recommendations

A survey meant to determine the attitude to work of extension agents of Katsina state Agricultural and Rural Development Authority.(KTARDA) was conducted in Katsina state of Nigeria.Using simple random sampling, a total sample size of 108 extension agents were selected for the study from a sampling frame of 237 extension staff in the state.

Structured questionnaires were used to collect information for the study from extension agents. Secondary information was collected through the review of relevant literature. The data collected were analyzed using Likert scale of measuring attitude, Pearson correlation analysis, performance self- assessment scale and descriptive statistics

The results revealed (68.96%) agents were above 40 years of age, and 94.44% of them were male, 33.33% were holders of either extension work certificate or farm training centre certificate (EWC/FTC), 46.30% had more than 20 years work experience.

On attitude to extension work, findings revealed that majority of the extension agents (49.07%) had moderate to favorable attitude towards extension work while correlation analysis revealed that there is no significant relationship between attitude to work and age, job performance, work experience and rank of the extension agents. However, the relationship between age and work experience of the extension agents was highly significant while the relationship between their work experience and rank was significant at 5%. Finding from the study have revealed that majority of the extension agents also had identified the problems faced by extension service in the state to include insufficient number of extension staff, inadequate funding, poor logistics support and lack of promotion and insufficient allowances to field staff.

V. Conclusion

From the findings of the study, it could be concluded that:

68.96% of the extension agents were more than 40 years old, 94.44% of the respondents were male, extension worker course certificate (EWC)or farm training centre certificate was the major qualification for 33.33% of the extension agents, 46.30% of the extension Agents had more than 20 Years of work experience, Majority of extension agents in the state (49.07%) had moderate to favorable attitude towards extension work,there is no significant relationship between attitude to work and age, job performance, work experience and rank of the extension staff, there are problems of in sufficient number of extension staff, inadequate funding, lack of regular promotion and poor logistics support in the states' extension service.

VI. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations might help improve agricultural extension service in the state.

The state government should employ more extension staff, involved them in decision making and planning of extension programmes in the state, provide them with good accommodation within or near their area of operation and extension staff should be given chance to go for in-service training.

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