Job Performance and Job Satisfaction of Agricultural Extension Agents Inriversstate Agricultural Development Project (Adp)

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Abstract: *Employees who are satisfied tends to be more productive, creative and committed. The job performance and job satisfaction of Extension Agents (EAs) in Rivers State Agricultural Development Projects (ADP) were investigated. The population of study included all 216 male and female EAs in the study area. Multistage sampling procedure was employed to selected 48EAs who comprised the sample for the study. Data were collected with the aid of structured questionnaire. Relevant data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean, percentages, pooled mean and ranking. Among others, it was found that about 90% of the EAs were male, more than 77% were aged 31-40 years, over 93% were married and about 91% were academically qualified. Majority of the respondents were living outside their circles whole 72%-93% of all the EAs were only able to achieved less than 34%of expected regular field visits, attendance to Block and Fortnightly Meetings, establishment of On Farm Research (OFR) and the number of Small Plot Adoption Techniques (SPATs). Although, majority of the respondents were satisfied with their job routines and relationships existing among farmers and other staff of the extension service, they were not satisfied with remuneration and allowances, opportunities for promotion and their general work environments. It was recommended that more EAs, especially females be recruited systematically until a 1:1 male: female EA ratio is achieved. The government should overhaul the current UAES which appears to have gone moribund. The need to review the salaries and allowances of EAs upward while upgrading general facilities for a more effective extension service was also recommended.*

Keywords: *Job performance, job satisfaction, extension service, Extension Agents (EAs) Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs)*

I.   Introduction

Successive governments in Nigeria have implemented various programmes aimed at increasing agricultural productivity and achieve food sufficiency for the citizenry. Some of these programmes as highlighted by Ijere (1992) and Olatunji (2005) include: the Farm Settlement Scheme, the National Accelerated Food Production Programme, Operation Feed the Nation, Green Revolution, the Young Farmers' Club and the School to Land Farming Programme. Olatunji, Unamma and Nwachukwu (2014) explained that one common feature of these trials was that the results have been sadly unsatisfactory. The goal of food security was still far from being realized. Even the agricultural extension programmes that were put in place failed to bring about expected turn-around in farmers' productivity. Some of the factors that contributed to the failure of extension service in Nigeria were highlighted by Udo (1990) to include: inadequate training of Extension Agents and low morale arising from poor career prospects and frustrating work environments, large Extension Agent to farmer ratio, bureaucratic set up, absence of single line of command and overload of extension staff with non-extension activities such as supervision of government ad-hoc projects.

The search for permanent panacea to the problems relating to technology generation, transfer and diffusion brought about the idea of Agricultural Development Projects (ADPs) in 1975. The success of story recorded in the first and second generations of ADPs led to the full implementation of ADPs in all the States of Nigeria (Unamma, Uwaegbute, Edeoga and Nwosu, 2004). The ADPs had employed the Training and Visit (T&V) system of managing the extension service. At first, concentration was limited to the crop-sector. The experiment was adjudged very successful (Ilevbaoje, 1994, FGN, 2004, Unamma et al, 2004). Consequently, the use of T&V was applied to all other subsectors under a unified approach. Thus, the Unified Agricultural Extension Service (UAES) was introduced in 1991. Under the UAES, an Extension Agent (EA) is assigned the responsibility of informing, advising and teaching farmers new and improved agricultural practices as well as providing feedback to research and other input agencies. An Extension Agent is expected to visit each of his 6-8 Representative Contact Farmer (RCF) groups every forth-night on a fixed day of the week with a view to disseminating production recommendations to them. He/she attends the Forth-Night Training Meetings (FNT) where he reviews farmers' reactions to previous recommendations and is taught specific recommendations to

disseminate in the next two weeks. It is his responsibility to encourage farmers to try recommended practices on, at least, a small portion of his farm (SPAT).

In spite of its notable benefits, the T&V system fell under severe criticisms not too long after its adoption in Nigeria. Several modifications were introduced and eventually some critics began to clamour for setting up of a separate extension service for female farmers. Ever since, the Nigerian government have been introducing here and there, ad-hoc agricultural projects which are likely to truncate effective operations of the T&V system and how EAs work. For example, Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000), Special Project for Food Security (SPFS) and Fadama I, II and III projects (Ilevbaoje, 2004, Olatunji et al 2014).

The pertinent question is how has these modifications and changes affected job performance of Extension Agents and how has the changing tasks and work schedules affected their job satisfaction? Brown (1994) had explained that employees who are satisfied tend to be more productive, creative and committed.

Hence, the objective of this study was to assess job performance and job satisfaction of Extension Agents in Rivers State, Nigeria. More specifically, the study:
1. identified personal characteristics of Extension Agents in the area of study
2. assessed the level of job performance of the respondents
3. determined job satisfaction of Extension Agents and
4. ascertained constraints to effective job performance among the Extension Agents.

II.   Methodology

The study was conducted in the Rivers State Agricultural Development Project (ADP). The population of study included all the 216 male and female Agricultural Extension Agent (EAs) in the area of study. Multistage sampling procedure was employed to select sample.First of all, 2 out of the 3 ADP Zones were selected through simple random sampling. Four (4) Blocks were randomly selected from each of the two Zones. All the 64 EAs in the 8 Blocks were included in the sample for the study. However, only 48 EAs who were available at the time of data collection comprised the sample for the study. A structured questionnaire was used to collect relevant research data. Data were analyzed with the aid of descriptive statistics such as percentage, mean and ranking.

III.   Results And Discussion

The results of data analyses were presented in frequency distribution tables and discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

1.   Personal characteristics of Extension Agents in Rivers State ADP
Personal characteristics of extension Agents in the area of study were examined and the results were as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: percentage distribution of extension Agents on the basis of their personal characteristics.

S/No	Variables		Frequency	Percentage
1	Sex	Male	43	89.6
		Female	5	10.4
2	Age (yrs)	21-30	6	12.5
		31-40	37	77.1
		≥ 41	5	10.4
3	Marital status	Married	45	93.7
		Single	3	6.3
4	Educational Attainment	Senior School Certificate(SSC)	4	8.3
		Ordinarily National Diploma (OND)	19	39.6
		Higher National Diploma (HND)	16	33.3
		Bachelor of science (BSc)	8	16.7
		Masters of Science (MSc)	1	2.1
5	Yearsof experience	1-10	19	39.6
		11-20	22	45.8
		≥ 21	7	14.6

As shown in Table 1, 89.6% of EAs were males while only 10.4% were females. The extension field staff were predominantly males.The irony is that most of the farmers in the area of study are females while only 10.4% of EAs are females. Chances are that socio-cultural and religious barriers which do prevent public interactions between males and females world inhibit normal flow of extension information from male-dominated extension service to large number of female famers in the study area. The consequence would be that the few female EAs may be over-worked or the large percentage of female farmers are prevented from benefiting from extension service. It should be noted that the major activities of Women In Agriculture (WIA) involves assisting female farmers to from women groups as a platform for disseminating extension messages

related to processing, utilization, storage and marketing of agricultural produce (Olatunji, 2005). There is the need to consciously increase the percentage of female EAs whose duties are to disseminate agricultural production (not merely processing) information to the large percentage of female farmers in the study areas. Indeed, several studies have revealed that, with the exception of yam, higher percentage of women were involved in production of all food crops and vegetables (Aboh, 2007, Okwusi and Aboh, 2007). Studies have equally established that women contribute more to labour activities on the farm than men in Burkina Faso, Kenya, Nigeria and Zambia (Saito 1992 in Okwusi and Aboh, 2007; CTA, 2000). In view of this, the gender distribution of EAs ought to be biased in favour of females.

Data in Table 1 also show that about 12.5%, 77.1% and 10.4% of the respondents aged between 21-30, 31-40 and 41 and above respectively. Majority (77.1%) of the EAs were in the age bracket of 31-40 years. Again, 93.7% were married while only 6.3% were single. It can also be seen in Table 1 that about 39.6%, 33.3%, 16.7% and 2.1% of the respondents holds OND, HND, BSc and MSc certificates respectively. Put together, 91.7% of EAs have minimum academic requirement of OND. It is commendable that the Rivers State ADP was able to maintain high percentage of professionally qualified extension staff.The same trend was recorded by Olatunji (2005) in respect of Abia and Akwa Ibom ADPs.However, it should be noted that there were still about 8.3% of EAs who are not professionally qualified on the roll of Rivers State ADP. It is unlikely that they would be able to effectively understand the technologies they are expected to extend to farmers. They should either be expunged or made to upgrade their educational status.

2. Assessment of the level of job performance by EAs the extent to which EAs

The extent to which EAs carried out their expected job schedules was investigated and the results were presented in Table 2: The results revealed that about 67% of EAs were not living within their circles. There are chances that this phenomenon would impact negatively on their job performance. Benor and Harrison (1977) had explained that under on ideal T&V system, all EAs were expected to live within their respective circles. In fact Nwakor, et al (2014) in a study found that 90.47% and 76.19% of EAs had indicated poor road networks and inadequate vehicles for transportation as the first two main constants they faced in the discharge of their duties. Nwakor, etal (2014) maintained that that was an anomaly because, should EAs live within their circles, problems related to vehicles and road networks wouldn't have become serious constraints to their job performance.

Again, it can be seen in Table 2 that out of the expected 96 visits each EA was to make to farmers' groups in 6 months, 18.8% made no visits at all. About 75.9% achieved less than or equal to 32 visits while only 8.3% made between33-64 visits. Under the ideal T&V system being operated in the Unified Agricultural Extension Service (UAES) in Nigeria, an EA is expected to visit 8 Representative Contact Farmer (RCF) groups in his circle within 2 weeks . He would have made 96 visits to all the 8 RCF groups his in circle in 6 months. Most of the EAs fulfilled about 32 visits (representing about 33% of their expected number of visits.) Unamma et al (2004) had explained that agriculture is a time-bound work and as such, all production recommendations must get to the farmers at the most appropriate time. Hence, the strict regularity of EAs' visit to farmers. The finding that EAs were not keeping the fixed visits is an indication that the extension service is ineffective in the area of study.

The bi-monthly Block Extension Meetings which is a medium through which all EAs in a block comes together to review their work and farmers' production problems. All EAs and Block Extension Agents (BEAs) meets with the Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs) forth-nightly (FNT) to review farmers' reactions to previous recommendations and are taught specific recommended practices that will be taught to farmers in the next two weeks. The results of data analyses revealed that out of the expected 12 Block Meetings and 12 FNTs in the 6 months under study, 85.4% and 81.3% of the respondents were able to attend 1-4 (representing about 33%) of such meetings. This is an indication that the extension service in the area of study is wobbling. Irregularity in EAs attendance to Block Meetings and FNTs would definitely impact negatively on extension activities and farmers' productivity.

The results of data analyses in Table 2 also indicate that as large as 79.2% of EAs were only able to establish 1-2 On Farm Research (OFR) in 6 months. Extension Agents were supposed to test the product of On Farm Adaptive Research (OFAR) on the farmers' farm. All things being equal, an EA is expected to have at least one of such experiments in his 6-8 sub-circles with a view to demonstrating to the farmers the superiority of extension recommendations over farmers' indigenous practices. Again, EAs were expected to encourage farmers to adopt recommended practices on, at least, a small portion of their farms (SPATs). Expectedly an EA in supposed to be able to mobilize at least 80 (representing 10% of his 800) RCFs to establish SPATs. However, the findings of this study revealed that as large as 93.8% of EAs under study were able to achieve merely less than or equal to 10 SPATs. Thus, about 93.8% of the EAS achieved only 12.5% of SPATS expected of them. Significantly better results were recorded by Ilevbaoje (1991) in a study of Benue and Plateau ADPs and that found by Olatunji (2005) in the study of Abia and Akwa-Ibom ADPs. The results of

this study represents abysmal downward trends in extension service effectiveness. Asiabaka(1992) also recorded similar low level of job performance in respectof Women Agricultural Extension Personnel. Job performance of EAs in this study area was at low ebbs and requires amelioration.

Table 2: Analyses of job performance by EAs in the study area

S/No	Activities	Frequency	Percentage
1	Living within the circle		
	Yes	16	33.3
	No	32	66.7
2	No of visits to the RCF groups in 6 months		
	No visits	9	18.8
	≤ 32	35	72.9
	33-64	4	8.3
	≥ 65	0	0
3	Attendance to block meetings in last 6 months		
	1-4	41	85.4
	5-8	7	14.6
	9-12	0	**0**
4	Attendance to forth meetings in the last 6 months		
	1-4	39	81.3
	5-8	9	18.7
	9-12	**0**	**0**
5	No of OFRTs established in the past 6 months		
	1-2	38	79.2
	3-4	7	14.6
	>5	3	6.2
6	No of SPATs that farmers in his circle have established		
	≤ 10	**45**	93.8
	11-20	3	6.2
	≥ 21	**0**	**0**
7	Submitting reports of field activities promptly		
	All reports submitted promptly	5	10.4
	Reports not submitted as expected	43	89.6

Table 3: Mean ratings of job satisfaction indices by Extension Agents

Indices		Mean rating	Pooled mean	rank
(a) Job satisfaction in relation to extension job routine				
	1. Regular fixed visits to RCFS & other farmers	*3.27		
	2. Attending FNT meetings	*3.64		
	3. Diagnosing farmers' production problems.	*3.16		
	4. Establishing of OFR	*2.92	*2.8	1
	5. Mobilizing farmers to establish SPATs	2.30		
	6. Keeping and subtracting records of field visits and farmers' problems.	2.42		
	7. Organizing field days	1.71		
(b) Job satisfaction in relation to opportunities for promotion				
	1. Promotion comes a as at when due	2.28		
	2.Opportunities to attend workshops/confirms/seminars/in-service trainings are adequate	1.84	2.08	3
	3. Opportunities for professional growth are adequate	2.12		
(c)Job satisfaction on the basis of remunerator				
	1. Income adequate for normal expenses	1.71		
	2. Salaries are paid as at when due	1.68	1.69	4
(d)Job satisfaction on the basis of existing relationships				
	1. Relationship with farmers is good	*3.01		
	2. Relationship with other Extension Agents is commendable	*2.85		
	3. Relationship with other extension staff, eg. BE, SMS, ZEos etc are smooth	*2.51	*2.50	2
	4. Relationship with the extension Administration	1.64		
(e) Job satisfaction in relation to EAs work environment				
	1. The work environment such as office accommodation and furniture are adequate	1.3		
	2. The psychological environment is all right	1.64	1.32	5
	3. Equipment and material resources for extension work eg. mobility are good enough	1.02		

*Mean ≥ 2.5 is significant

3. Assessments of job satisfaction among Extension Agents

The extent to which Extension Agents were satisfied with their job was investigated. The results of data analyses were presented in Table 3 and discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

As shown in Table 3, EAs were generally satisfied with their job routine. The pooled mean was 2.8 and ranked first among indices of job satisfaction assessed. It implies that most of the EAs were self-motivated and were satisfied with their job routines of fixed field visits, attendance to FNTs, establishing of OFR and mobilizing farmers to establish SPATs. Most of the EAs were also satisfied with the relationships existing among them and between them and farmers, and other extension staff. However, they all indicated that they were not satisfied with the opportunities for promotion (ranked 3rd), their remuneration (ranked 4th) and their work environment (ranked 5th). It should be noted, as explained by Brown (1994), that only employees who are satisfied tends to be more productive, creative and committed. Agricultural extension is pivotal to agricultural development in developing nations such as Nigeria. It is therefore pertinent to have EAs who are very committed to work so as to be able to achieve the goal of food sufficiency and sustainable agricultural development. It is imperative to remove these bottlenecks that EAs indicated were inhibiting effective performance of their job schedules.

4. Constraints to effective job performance by extension Agents

Constraints that EAs were facing in the way of effective job performance were investigated. The findings were as presented in Table 4.The results of data analyses in Table 4 showed that farmers usual rejection of production recommendations, delay or denial of promotion, inadequate salaries and allowances and too large areas for coverage by EAs were the major constraints to effective performance of their jobs. Respondents agreed that non-adoption of recommendations by farmers was the first among other constraints. Although, farmers reasons for rejecting extension recommendations were not investigated in this work,it may not be unconnected with farmers perception that most extension recommendations were not compactable with their farming environment, culture or even religion. Adekunle and Olatunji (1999) had explained that most farmers have catalogue of indigenous knowledge that they claimed were superior to modern techniques. Amalgamation of indigenous and modern techniques would seem to be a better approach to making farmers adopt extension recommendations more readily.

Delay or denial of promotion, inadequate salaries and allowances, and inadequate in-service training for EAs appeared to be an endemic problem in the Nigerian Agricultural Extension Service. Several other studies have recorded similar results (Ilevbaoje. 1991, PCU, 2002, Olatunji et al 2014).

Table 4: Mean ratings of constraints to effective job performance by EAs

S/No	Constraints	Mean rating	Rank
1	Limited access to research findings/ innovations	2.01	8
2	Denial or delay of promotion	*2.55	2
3	Inadequate salaries and allowances	*2.53	3
4	Farmers' usual rejection of production recommendations	*3.24	1
5	Inadequate facilities and material resources for extension work	2.26	5
6	Inadequate accommodation	2.12	7
7	Inadequate in-service training for staff.	1.64	9
8	Inadequate transportation facilities	1.28	6
9	Too large areas of extension coverage for EAs	*2.51	4

IV.   Conclusion

The job performance and job satisfaction of EAs in Rivers State ADP was investigated. The results of data analyses showed that majority of the EAs were males, aged between 31-40 years, married and possess requisite OND or higher certificates. However, there were still about 8.3% who were not professionally qualified to be EAs. More than 66% of sampled EAs were not living within their circles while between 72%-93% of all the EAs only achieved less than 34% of their regular field visits, attendance to block meetings, attendance to FNTs, establishing On Farm Research (OFR) and number of SPATs that they were expected to have supervised in their circles. Majority of the respondents were satisfied with their job routines and the relationships that existed among them and between them and farmers and other staff of the extension service. However, all the EAs were not satisfied with the opportunities for promotion, their remuneration and work environments. The major constraints to effective performance of their jobs relates to non-adoption of recommendations by most farmers, delay or denial of promotion, inadequate salaries and allowances, and too large numbers of farmers to cover by each EA.

V. Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were put forward for implementation.

1. There is the need to recruit more EAs to achieve optimal EA: Farm Family ratio for a more effective job performance by EAs. More specifically, there should be a conscious effort at recruiting more female EAs to balance up the very low inclusion of female EAs as found in this study. The number of female EAs should be increased systematically until the extension service is able to achieve a 1:1 male: female EAs. This is necessary even as it has been established that there are more female farmers than males and social, cultural religious and family inhibitions preventing public interactions between males and females are yet to be overcome.

2. The Rivers State ADP has maintained a high level of qualified staff but the 8.3% who are not academically qualified should either be relieved of their jobs, redeployed or supported to upgrade their academic status.

3. There is the need to over-haul the entire extension service in the state. The extension system being implemented currently has no clear identity. The UAEs and the T &V system put in place in all states of the federation in 1980s appear to have fallen apart. There is the need to come up with a clear-cut description of the extension system being implemented or revert to the ideal T&V system.

4. The government should review of salaries and allowances of EAs upward. Adoption of a more satisfactory policy for promotion and staff's professional development while up grading facilities for extension activities would be worthwhile.

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