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ASSESSMENT OF THE JOB PERFORMANCE OF EXTENSION STAFF IN AKWA IBOM STATE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study assessed the job performance of extension personnel as well as determined the relationships between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of these extension workers in Akwa Ibom State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). Data for the study were obtained from 90 respondents who were randomly selected. Percentages, mean scores, and correlation statistic were used in data analysis. The findings of the study indicate that the level of job performance for each of the EAs, BEAs and BESs was rated slightly above average. Level of formal education of EAs was positively and significantly associated with regular and timely field visits to farmers. The need to design policies aimed at improving the level of formal education of EAs was indicated.

Key Words: Assessment, Job Performance, Extension Staff.

INTRODUCTION

The Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) are currently responsible for carrying out the bulk of agricultural extension activities in the States of Nigeria as well as in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. The ADPs are designed to improve the agricultural productivity, income, and general well being of the small scale farmer who is the centre-piece of all agricultural development efforts in Nigeria (Asiabaka, 1991; Madukwe and Obibuaku, 1991; FGN, 1997).

The success of ADPs depend on a large scale adoption of improved agricultural technologies by farmers and brilliant performance of frontline extension workers, that is, extension agents (EAs), block extension agents (BEAs), and block extension supervisors (BESs) saddled with this responsibility (Akinsorotan and Adah, 1997). The performance of BESs depends partly on effective supervision from the zonal extension officer (ZEO). Also, the performance of EAs/BEAs depends partly on effective supervision from BESs. Poor performance of the ZEO can result in performance failure of BESs. Poor performance on the part of the BES will largely lead to poor performance of EAs/BEAs and ultimately contact farmer groups/women groups (Benor and Baxter, 1984; Ekumankama, 2000).

The job performance of field extension workers in ADPs is a great concern to agricultural administrators, policy makers, and

development practitioners. Subsequently, appraising the job performance of these extension workers will provide policy makers, programme administrators, and development practitioners at all levels with relevant information they need for improvement and future planning.

The evaluation of individuals in terms of their job performance places a considerable responsibility on the managers involved. The expression 'performance appraisal' usually relates to the assessment of staff performance. There are two main categories of appraisal, viz., informal and formal. Informal appraisal is the continuing assessment of a worker's performance by his manager in the normal course of work. It is adhoc in nature and is as much determined by intuitive feelings as by factual evidence of results. Formal appraisal is an assessment of employee performance in some systematic and planned way (Cole, 1993).

Performance requirements are a determination of the acceptable behaviour directly related to the worker's performance on the job or operation. The general requirements of most jobs are stated in the form of job descriptions or job specifications, and procedures or work methods. The manager should translate the requirements of the job into meaningful and, possibly measurable objectives so as to make performance requirements understood. Ideally, these objectives should be in measurable terms, such as quantity (how much or many), quality (how well), and time (how long). A major advantage of translating performance requirements into objectives is that objectives become a motivational tool or target for achievement (Morgan, 1982).

In the performance of extension task, some personal characteristics having positive or negative influences may come into play. This study will help to identify the characteristics of extension staff that affect (favour or disfavour) their level of job performance. This will partly provide the solution to ineffective extension services and subsequently agricultural production. Added to this, it will form an information pool which future employers of extension staff will use in selecting EAs, BEAs, and BESs with potentially acceptable characteristics.

The study was designed to assess the job performance of extension personnel at the block level in Akwa Ibom State ADP. The study also highlighted the relationship between personal characteristics and job performance variables of these extension workers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Akwa Ibom State which has thirty-one local government areas (LGAs) is located between longitude 7^0 30' and 8^0 30' East of the Greenwich Meridian and latitude 4^0 30' and 8^0 30' North of the Equator (Akpabio, et al., 2002; Ekong and Olowu, 2002; Ekop, 2002). The target population for this study was the field extension workers that included the ZEOs, BESs, BEAs, and EAs in Akwa Ibom State ADP (AKADEP).

Multi-stage random sampling procedure was used in the selection of the agricultural zones, blocks, and circles. The first stage involved simple random sampling of two agricultural zones. Ikot Ekpene and Uyo zones were selected. The ZEOs whose

zones were selected served as respondents. The second stage involved simple random selection of seven blocks from each of the agricultural zones. The BESs and BEAs working in these blocks served as respondents. The third stage involved simple random sampling of five circles from each of the blocks. The EAs whose circles were selected served as respondents. A total of one hundred (100) respondents consisting of 2ZEOs, 14BESs, 14BEAs and 70EAs constituted the sample size for the study in 2003/2004. However, ninety (90) questionnaires where found suitable for use in the analysis. Questionnaires for EAs and BEAs were designed to elicit information on their personal characteristics which are relevant to this study and other factors that are not part of this study. Questionnaires for the BESs sought to elicit information on their personal characteristics and their assessment of the job performance of the EAs and BEAs who are their immediate subordinates. The questionnaire for the ZEOs was designed to collect data on their personal characteristics and their assessment of the job performance of the BESs who are their immediate subordinates.

To assess the job performance of the field extension workers, each of the sampled EAs, BEAs and BESs was assessed by his/her immediate supervisor on a five point Likert-type scale. The five points on the scale were graded as follows: 1= Very Low, 2=Low, 3=Average, 4=High and 5=Very High job performance. The job performance indices or variables were derived from the respective performance requirements of these groups of respondents as reported by Benor and Baxter (1984), Ezeano(1996), Amalu(1998), Okarimia and Nwogu(2000) and Okpongete(2000). The ZEOs were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the 14 different job performance statements or items or indices represent the performance level of each of the BESs under them. The BESs were asked to indicate the extent to which each of the 16 different job performance statements or items or variables represent the level of performance of each of the EAs under their jurisdiction. The BESs were also asked to indicate the extent to which each of the 14 different job performance statements or items or indices represented the performance level of each of the BEAs working in their respective blocks. The mean performance score for each of the different job performance statements or items or variables for BESs, BEAs and EAs was calculated by dividing the total job performance score by the number of respondents, respectively. The job performance level for each group of respondents was computed by dividing the grand mean performance score by the number of the different job performance statements or items.

Percentages, mean scores and correlation statistic were utilized for data analysis. The correlation statistic was used to test the relationship between selected personal characteristics and the job performance variables of the extension workers. The level of probability that was accepted as indication of statistically significant relationship for correlation analysis was at 0.05.

Personal characteristics

The personal characteristics of ZEOs, BESs, BEAs and EAs are presented in Table 1. One of the sampled ZEOs was in the age range from 40-49 years, while the

other was between 50 and 59 years old. Majority of the BESs (64.1%) were within the age bracket of 40-49 years. About 67.0 percent of the BEAs compared with 60.0 percent of the EAs were in the age range from 30-39 years.

The ZEOs have higher national diploma (HND) certificate. Fifty percent of the BESs have HND while about 29.0 percent of them have first degree certificate. Majority of the BEAs (58.3%) compared with about 40.0 percent of the EAs have first degree certificate.

One of the sampled ZEOs had between 6 and 10 members in their households, while the other had between 11and 15 household members. Majority of the BESs (64.3%), BEAs (66.7%), and EAs (75.8%) had between 1 and 5 members in their households, respectively.

One of the ZEOs had extension experience that ranged from 21 to 25 years, while the other had between 31 and 35 years in extension work. Only 7.1 percent of the BESs had more than 20 years extension experience (21-25 years). Majority of the BEAs (91.7%) compared with 61.3 percent of the EAs had extension experience that ranged from 1 to 5 years. The survey shows that the ZEOs were generally more experienced in extension work than the other groups of respondents. This could be explained by the fact that the ZEOs are senior officers who reached that level by promotion from EA to BES to ZEO. Therefore, it naturally follows that higher officers have put in more years in most cases.

Job performance of extension agents

Entries in Table 2 shows the means of the job performance variables for the EAs in Akwa Ibom State ADP. Each BES evaluated the job performance of 5 sampled EAs under his jurisdiction. The table reveals that EAs were rated highest on regular and timely attendance to FNT (MT) and BM by their immediate supervisors (X=4.0). Next to this was motivating contact farmers/ farmers groups to adopt different technologies in each sub-circle (X=3.77). This was followed by contributions during FNT (MT) and BM (X=3.67).

The grand mean for job performance of the EAs in Akwa Ibom State ADP was 52.18, while their job performance level was 3.26. It could be inferred from these findings that the performance of the EAs was rated slightly above average. This finding is in agreement with the results from similar study by Asiabaka (1992).

Job performance of block extension agents

Data on the means of the job performance indices for the BEAs in Akwa Ibom State ADP are presented in Table 3. Entries in the table show that the BEAs were rated highest on regular and timely attendance to FNT (MT) and BM (X= 3.93). This was followed by keeping of diary containing primary, self-recorded information on her visits to women groups (X=3.86). The grand mean for job performance of BEAs in Akwa Ibom state ADP was 45.93, while their job performance level was 3.28. These findings imply that the job performance of the BEAs was rated slightly above average.

Job performance of block extension supervisors

The means of the job performance variables for the BESs in Akwa Ibom State ADP are presented in Table 4. The table shows that the BESs were rated highest on holding of block meetings (BMs) as scheduled (X=4.00). This was followed by regular and timely supervisory visits to EAs/BEAs (X=3.64), having agenda for BM (X=3.64), and making of report at FNT (MT) which reflects field situation (X=3.64).

The grand mean for job performance of the BESs in Akwa Ibom State ADP was 47.63 while their job performance level was 3.40. It could be inferred from these findings that the job performance of the BESs in Akwa Ibom State ADP was rated slightly above average.

Relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of extension workers

Four personal characteristics, namely, age, level of formal education, household size, and years of extension experience were selected and their relationships with job performance variables of the respondents were determined using Pearson correlation. Three hypothesis stated in the null form were tested. The results are shown in Tables 5-7.

Relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of extension agents.

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of extension agents in Akwa Ibom State ADP. Entries in Table 5 show that only level of formal education was positively and significantly correlated with regular and timely field visits to farmers (r=0.29), implying that the higher the level of formal education received by the EAs, the more they made regular and timely field visits to farmers and thus, the higher their job performance. Extension visits to farmers is the most effective method through which extension makes contact with farmers in Nigeria (Obinne, 1991). The frequency of extension contact is very crucial as it leads and guides the farmers from the awareness stage to the adoption stage. Therefore, regular and continued transfer of proven technologies to farmers is a key to continued high adoption of agricultural innovations by most farmers (Onyenweaku and Mbuba, 1991; Ekumankama, 1997). There was no significant correlation between any other personal characteristics and any job performance variables. The null hypothesis of no significant relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of EAs in Akwa Ibom State ADP was accepted excepting the relationship between level of formal education, and regular and timely field visits to farmers.

Policies should be designed to improve the level of formal education of EAs since this factor was found to show positive and significant relationship with regular and timely field visits to farmers. The implication is that well-articulated in-service training courses should be mounted for EAs, both new and old recruits especially those that received lower level of formal education.

Relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of block extension agents

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of block extension agents in Akwa Ibom State ADP. Data in Table 6 show the relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of BEAs. According to the table all the correlation values were not significant at $P<0.05$, meaning that no significant relationship exists between the selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of BEAs. The hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of BEAs in Akwa Ibom State ADP was therefore accepted. The analysis indicates that the personal characteristics of the BEAs in Akwa Ibom State ADP were not significantly associated with job performance.

Relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of block extension supervisors

The third hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of block extension supervisors in Akwa Ibom State ADP. The relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of BESs in Akwa Ibom State ADP is presented in Table 7. According to the table all the correlation values were not significant at $P<0.05$, meaning that no significant relationship exists between the personal characteristics and job performance variables of the BESs in Akwa Ibom State ADP. The hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of block extension supervisors in Akwa Ibom State ADP was therefore accepted.

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Table 1: Percentage distribution of respondents by personal characteristics

Variables	Categories	ZEOs N=2	BESs N=14	BEAs N=12	EAs N=62
Age	20-29	-	-	33.3	16.1
	30-39	-	28.5	66.6	59.7
	40-49	50.0	64.1	-	22.6
	50-59	50.0	7.1	-	1.6
Formal education	FSLC	-	-	-	1.6
	GCE/WASC	-	-	-	3.2
	OND	-	21.4	-	14.5
	NCE	-	-	25.0	17.7
	HND	100.0	50.0	16.7	22.6
	First degree	-	28.6	58.3	33.9
	Master's degree	-	-	-	6.5
Household size	1-5	-	64.3	66.7	75.8
	6-10	50.0	35.6	25.0	24.2
	11-15	50.0	-	8.3	-
Years of extension experience	1-5	-	-	91.7	61.3
	6-10	-	28.6	8.3	29.1
	11-15	-	28.4	-	6.4
	16-20	-	35.7	-	3.2
	21-25	50.0	7.1	-	-
	26-30	-	-	-	-
	31-35	50.0	-	-	-

Key: FSLC=First School Leaving Certificate
WASC=West African School Certificate
NCE=National Certificate in Education
GCE=General Certificate in Education
OND= Ordinary National Diploma Certificate
HND= Higher National Diploma Certificate

Table 2: Job performance of extension agents

Job performance indices	$\overline{X}$ Performance score
Living within his/her circle	3.50
Regular and timely field visits to farmers	3.66
Regular and timely attendance to FNT (MT) and BM	4.00
Contributions during FNT (MT) and BM	3.67
Diagnosis and profering of solution to field problems	3.59
Knowledge of subject matter	3.64
Establishment of eight SPATs in a month	2.90
Distribution of SPATs in all the sub-circles	2.89
Establishment of SPAT of three various components-crops, fisheries, livestock, agro-forestry and land management in each sub-circle	3.09
Establishment of SPATs within the farmer's farm	3.36
Having equivalent check plot for SPATs	3.04
Proper location of SPATs, example, for crop not under shade and for livestock not in the open	3.51
Holding of a field day in a month	2.07
Making of report on field day	2.13
Motivating contact farmers/farmer groups to adopt different technologies in each sub-circle.	3.77
Keeping of diary containing primary, self-recorded information on his/her village/ field visits	3.36
Grand Mean ($\overline{X}$) Job Performance Score =	52.18
Job Performance level =	3.26

Table 3: Job performance of block extension agents

Job performance indices	X Performance score
Living within her block	3.29
Formation of eight functional contact women groups	3.29
Establishment of eight skill plots by her women groups	2.86
Carrying out eight processing demonstrations in a month	3.00
Teaching of processings to three women groups in a month	3.21
Distribution of the processings e.g. cassava based, cocoyam based, soybean based, yam based, among others	3.21
Carrying out one preservation demonstration in a month	2.86
Holding of a field day in a month	2.21
Regular and timely visits to contact women groups	3.50
Regular and timely attendance to FNT (MT) and BM	3.93
Contributions during FNT (MT) and BM	3.43
Diagnosis and profering of solutions to field problems	3.64
Knowledge of subject matter	3.64
Keeping of diary containing primary, self-recorded information on her visits to women groups	3.86
Grand Mean ($\overline{X}$) Job Performance Score =	45.93
Job Performance level =	3.28

Table 4: Job performance of block extension supervisors

Job Performance variables	$\overline{X}$ Performance score
Regular and timely supervisory visits to EAs/BEAs	3.64
Holding of block meetings (BMs) as scheduled	4.00
Having agenda for BM	3.64
Recording attendance during BM	3.50
Regular and timely attendance to FNT (MT) and BM	3.29
Making of report at FNT (MT) which reflects field situation	3.64
Reviewing of the FNT (MT) production recommendations during BM	3.57
Diagnosis and profering of solutions to field problems	3.43
Knowledge of subject matter	3.50
Signing of the EAs/BEAs diaries on making scheduled field visits	2.57
Covering circles without EAs according to his/her schedule	3.21
Establishment of one SPAT in a circle without EA in a month	3.07
Encouraging adoption of technologies by farmers/farmers groups	3.14
Keeping of diary recording the findings of his/her supervision visits and the issues on which he/she believes he/she should send feedback messages to his/her superiors or to agricultural research centers	3.43
Grand Mean ($\overline{X}$) Job Performance Score =	47.63
Job Performance level =	3.40

Table 5: Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of extension agents

Personal characteristics	Job performance variables															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Age	0.02	0.02	0.07	0.03	0.04	0.08	0.05	0.01	-0.01	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.12	0.03	0.06	0.06
Level of formal education	0.08	0.29*	0.15	0.25	0.20	0.11	0.19	0.23	0.23	0.10	0.16	0.12	0.18	0.07	0.15	0.15
Household size	0.02	0.05	-0.21	0.00	0.09	0.07	-0.09	-0.13	-0.13	-0.07	-0.21	0.10	-0.06	0.01	-0.04	-0.04
Extension experience	0.04	-0.07	-0.10	-0.05	-0.04	-0.05	0.04	-0.05	-0.09	0.05	-0.15	-0.04	-0.00	-0.10	0.10	0.10

*Significant at P<0.05

Key:
1= Living within his/ her circle
2= Regular and timely field visits to farmers
3= Regular and timely attendance to FNT (MT) and BM
4= Contributions during FNT (MT) and BM
5= Diagnosis and profering of solutions to field problems
6= Knowledge of subject matter
7=Establishment of eight SPATs in a month
8=Distribution of SPATs in all the sub-circles
9=Establishment of SPATs of three various components- crops, fisheries, livestock, agro- forestry and land management in each sub-circle.
10= Establishment of SPATs within the farmer's farm
11=Having equivalent check plots for SPATs
12=Proper location of SPATs, examples, for crop not under shade and for livestock not in the open
13= Holding of a field day in a month.
14= Making of reports on field days
15= Motivating contact farmers/ farmer groups to adopt different technologies in each sub-circle.
16= Keeping of diary containing primary, self-recorded information on his/ her village/ field visits.

Table 6: Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of block extension agents

Personal characteristics	Job performance variablesns													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Age	0.46	0.41	0.55	0.35	0.47	0.55	0.43	0.20	0.37	0.42	0.53	0.18	0.18	0.45
Level of formal education	0.09	-0.09	-0.07	-0.22	-0.19	0.15	-0.06	-0.22	0.00	0.00	0.24	0.13	-0.13	-0.09
Household size	-0.23	-0.27	-0.34	-0.37	-0.24	-0.09	-0.36	-0.46	-0.53	-0.20	0.09	-0.39	-0.39	-0.16
Extension experience	-0.36	-0.50	-0.41	-0.33	-0.38	-0.39	-0.19	-0.11	-0.33	-0.16	-0.17	-0.10	-0.10	0.00

[ns] Not significant P<0.05

Key:

1= Living within her block
2=Formation of eight functional contact women groups.
3=Establishment of eight skill plots by her women groups.
4=Carrying out eight processing demonstration in a month.
5=Teaching of processings of three women groups in a month
6=Distribution of the processings e.g. cassava based, cocoyam based, soybean based, yam based among others.
7=Carrying out one preservation demonstration in a month
8=Holding of a field day in a month
9= Regular and timely visits to contact women groups
10=Regular and timely attendance to FNT (MT) and BM
11=Contributions during FNT (MT) and BM
12=Diagnosis and profering of solutions to field problems
13=Knowledge of subject matter
14= Keeping of diary containing primary, self-recorded information on her visits to women groups.

Table 7: Pearson correlation analysis of the relationship between selected personal characteristics and job performance variables of block extension supervisors

Personal characteristics	Job performance variablesns													
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Age	0.09	0.14	0.09	-0.24	-0.41	-0.06	0.05	-0.23	-0.24	-0.28	-0.19	0.06	-0.11	-0.23
Level of formal education	-0.24	0.18	-0.24	0.00	0.09	-0.08	-0.25	0.25	0.00	0.12	-0.09	-0.10	0.03	0.25
Household size	0.17	0.00	0.17	0.19	0.12	0.21	0.31	0.17	0.19	0.11	0.26	0.32	0.21	0.17
Extension experience	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.90	-0.31	0.18	0.21	0.10	0.09	0.08	-0.02	-0.01	-0.22	0.10

[ns]Not significant at P<0.05

Key:
1= Regular and timely supervisory visits to EAs/BEAs
2=Holding of BMs as scheduled
3=Having agenda for BM
4= Recording attendance during BM
5=Regular and timely attendance to FNT (MT) and BM
6=Making of report at FNT (MT) which reflects field situation
7=Reviewing of the FNT (MT) production recommendations during BM
8=Diagnosis and profering of solutions to field problems
9= Knowledge of subject matter
10=Signing of the EAs/BEAs diaries on making scheduled field visits
11=Covering circles without EAs according to his/ her schedule
12=Establishment of one SPAT in a circle without EA in a month
13=Encouraging adoption of technologies by farmers/farmer groups
14=Keeping of diary recording the findings of his/ her supervision visits and the issues on which he/ she believes he/she should send feedback messages to his/ her superior or to the agricultural research center.