

AN ANALYSIS OF CONSTRAINTS BEING FACED BY THE PUBLIC SECTOR EXTENSION FIELD STAFF IN THE PUNJAB, PAKISTAN

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ABSTRACT

Japan, France and many British colonies started extension services in 1879. In Pakistan, extension services came in progress under community development programs. This study was designed to analyze the constraints faced by the agricultural extension staff regarding rural development. The main objective of this study was to explore the ground realities behind in effectiveness of extension workers. Extension services are provided to farmers, instead of preferring the size of their farm land. The study revealed that extension workers faced several challenges but the financial issue (60%) is most salient problem. About (98.9%) extension field staff forced to do non-professional duties. The bureaucracy use extension workers for their own purposes that divert the direction of their original work. About (34.4%) bureaucracy effect the working efficiency of extension field staff. Majority of the extension workers reported negative feedback regarding ICT's. Policy problem in agriculture also affect the working efficiency of extension workers. Inadequate staff is one of the most salient constraints faced by extension field staff. Agriculture officers (100%) reported that they had no proper transport. We should also train the extension field staff for the farmer's behavioral and psychological study. For the efficient performance of extension field staff we should develop good agricultural policy and modern technology.

Keywords: Extension Field Staff; Constraints; Cloud Technology; Rural Development

INTRODUCTION

Public sector extension is a state responsibility that has gone through many changes since independence. Initially, the main theme of extension was human and community welfare but now it also works on dissemination of agricultural technology. In the changing agriculture conditions, public sector extension has to play a significant role. It has to give information and guidance to farmers on a variety of topics including

technology, specific field concerns, market-related issues, price, crop quality, and the implication of government policy changes throughout time (Ghosh, 2012). Extension services offered public sector play a critical role in the economic development of the rural communities; developing countries strive to improve their extension services (Yaseen et al., 2020).

The public extension system must be revamped to satisfy not just the current policy framework, but also to appropriately service developing and commercial farmers (Ngomane et al., 2002). Various degrees of improvement have been seen throughout the last 25 years of public extension. According to current situation extension policy was developed and modified which positively affected farmer coverage as well as the number of farmers visited by per extensionist (Gemo et al., 2013). Agriculture extension is one of those development efforts which are taken by government and non-government sectors for raising the living standard of rural community (Saikia et al., 2021). Firstly, modern extension was started in 1845 in Ireland during the potato famine. During the late 1800s extension started in United States and Canada. Japan, France and many British colonies also started extension services in 1879 (Anandajayasekeram et al., 2008). In Pakistan, extension services were came in progress under community development programs. Village and Agriculture Industrial Development Program (Village-AID) was the first formal step taken by the government in 1952 (Ashraf and Hassan, 2021). The reviews explore that the gov. initiated several agricultural extension programs after Village-AID in different era like Basic Democracy System, Rural Works Program,

Integrated Rural Development program, Peoples Works Program, Traditional Agriculture Extension System, Training and Visit Extension System (Abbas et al., 2009). The gov. of Pakistan has adopted a policy to raise rapidly the output and income of villagers through better methods of farming by disseminating appropriate knowledge and technologies. Extension services are provided to farmers, instead of preferring the size of their farm land (Baloch and Thapa, 2016). Extension services are decentralized, privatized and pluralistic, with monitoring and accountability procedure in place. Governance of extension system is concerned with the duties and responsibilities of individuals, public sectors as well as the coordination and connectivity between these entities (Bitzer et al., 2016). Agricultural extension acts as a bridge among the farmers and research to solve the problems and modification of agricultural policies to uplift the rural communities (FAO, 2002). In Pakistan, large majority (67%) people are living in rural areas. Government has started several extension programs to uplift the living standard of rural people. But unlucky, these programs were abolished due to ineffective linkage between the researcher, farmer and extension worker (Farooq et al., 2018).

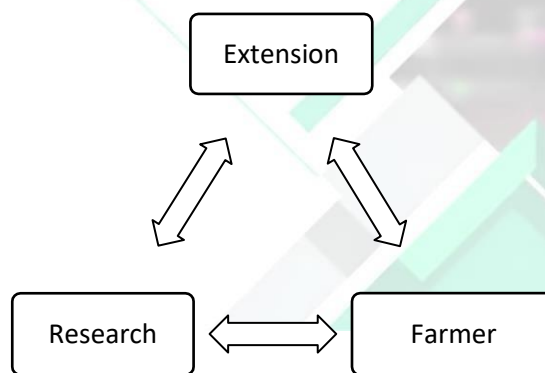


Figure-1: The extension triangle (Memon, 1997).

The aim of extension services are to positively changes the behavior of the farmers towards the modern agricultural technology. Extension creates a link between research and farmer. It disseminates the technology from research to farmer and also

motivates the farmers to adopt the new technology. It also carries the problems of the farmers to research and provide suitable solution to their problems (Memon, 1997; Anandajayasekeram et al., 2008 and Farooq et al., 2018).

Need of study

This study was designed to analyze the constraints faced by the agricultural extension staff regarding rural development. The purpose of the study to determine the physical, political, administrative, economic, professional and social elements that effects the performance of extension field staff in Pakistan (Muhammad et al., 2021). The need of this study was to improve technical and communication abilities of extension workers and to ensure the provision of facilities which are necessary to assist farmers in learning new agricultural methods, which will improve their efficiency. The study was conducted to divert the government attention to fill the gap among farming communities and the extension services (Yaseen et al., 2020).

Constraints faced by the extension workers

In Pakistan, Extension Field Staff facing many barriers like insufficient funds, dominion area of frontline extension worker (Agricultural Extension Officer) and less coordination among allied departments (Yaseen et al., 2015). Prime obstacles regarding with extension services are: fault in extension organization, inadequate concessions to the extension experts, financial and absence of resources, and in-service training facilities (Baig and Aldosari, 2013). Lack of access to resources and inefficient operation of admirable agricultural services limit the effects of expansion. Coordination and liaison with complimentary agricultural services are key issues for expanding organization, particularly with research, input supply system, credit and marketing organizations (Anandajayasekeram et al., 2008). In the country extension has confront less authority. Less qualified extension workers and have low incomes are the obstacles of extension department. Extension workers encountered poor and awkward working conditions and uncomfortable environment (Shalaby et al., 2011).

Prime issues faced by the extension staff are vast communication gap within extension organization, difficulties in effecting attitude change in farmers

to adopt modern technologies to enlarge crop yields, extension workers need proper training, current specialized abilities and proper capability, low earning, inappropriate mobility and inappropriate working conditions, lacking of inspiration, pride in work and job satisfaction (Shalaby et al., 2010). According to Petrovic et al. (2009) there were a lot of constraints confronted by the extension field staff, some prime constraints are small number of advisors; lack of equipment and laboratories, lack of permanent education, inadequate finance, inadequate management and no strict division between extension and other tasks. According to Asif et al., (2014) Agriculture officers (100%) reported that they had no facility of vehicles, technical literature, internet, subsidized input, residence, audio-visual aids, and sufficient stationary. They reported that (100%) agriculture officers have no access to subsidized input, internet, audio-visual aids, mobile phones, and vehicles. While (90%) reveled that they have no access to laser land leveler, clip charts and (70%) have no residence. The physical constraints which are being faced by majority of field assistance are residence (93.3%), Audio-visual aids (100%), subsidized input (100%), mobile phone (100%), vehicle (100%), sufficient stationary (62.5%), offices (70.8%), and laser land leveler (95.8%).

The prime hurdles confronted by extension field staff (EFS) are, coverage of too many target groups by one agent, too much official work in addition to field work, lack of suitable technology, lack of knowledge in understanding problems and need of farm, lack of essential teaching and communication equipment (Saikia et al., 2021). The constraints faced by the extension workers regarding ICT's are lack of computer, lack of financial incentives, lack of interest, lack of management incentives, weak communication network, poor and weak financial support (Al-Shayaa et al., 2011). While only 48%, 54% and 57% organizations are facing the issues of agricultural development curriculum, small number of workers, and the existence of bureaucracy, respectively (Challob et al., 2020).

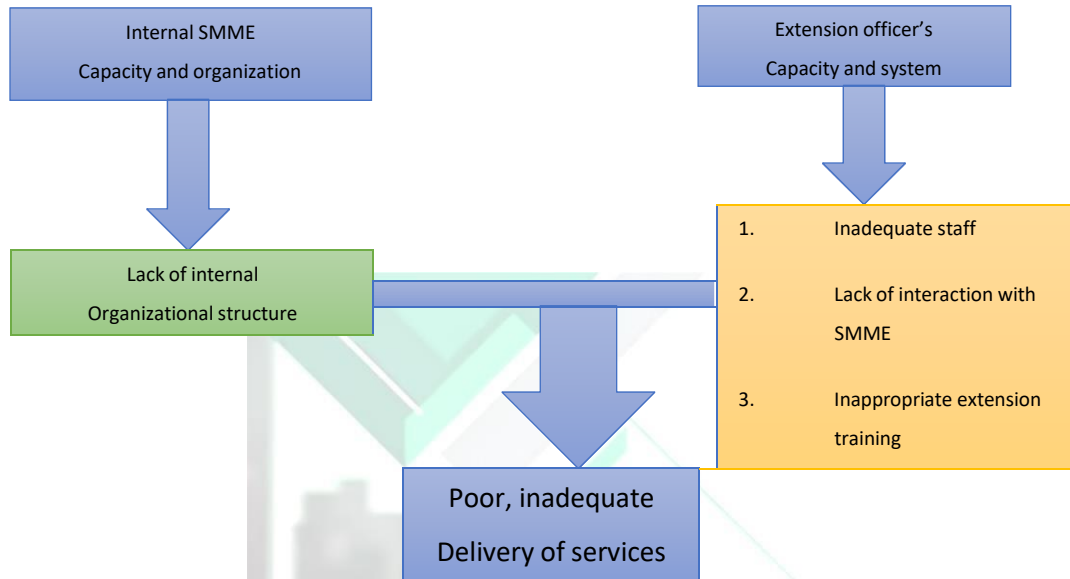


Figure-2: Challenges that affect the delivery of services to AGRI-SMMES (Mmbengwa et al., 2009).

There were a lot of challenges confronted by extension staff like, lack of internal organization of farming Small, Micro and Medium Enterprises (SMME's) they, coupled with insufficient extension workers, inappropriate extension training and a lack of networking forums are the sources of poor, inadequate delivery of extension services. To reduce the damages extension workers

must be trained in these fields. Farming performance is partly dependent on organizational structures and management information systems. There is a need of proper management, proper interaction among people and technical staff to overcome the challenges being faced by extension staff (Mmbengwa et al., 2009).

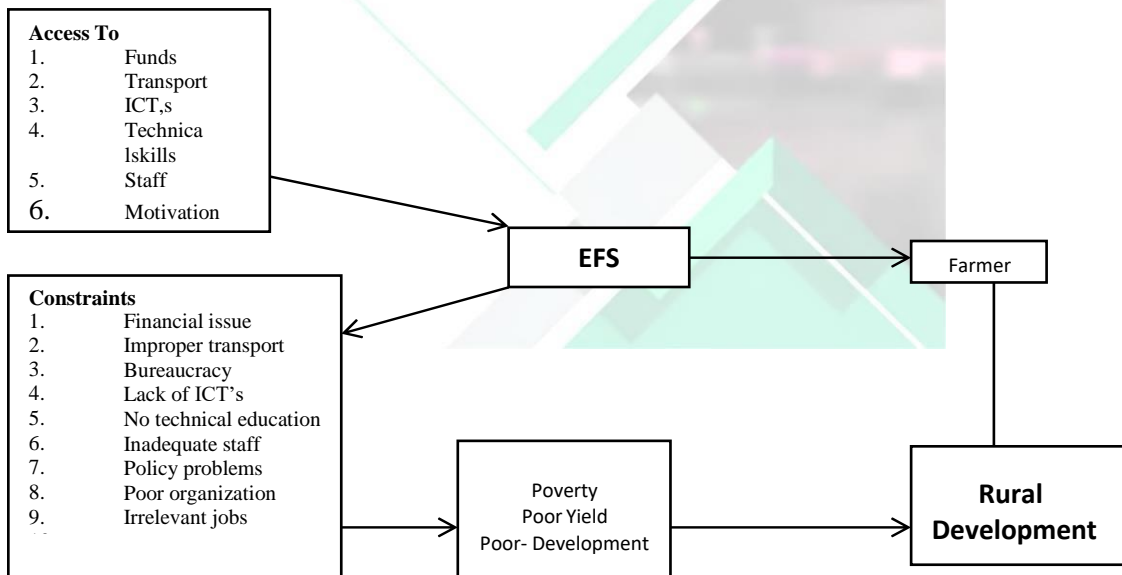


Figure-3: Frame work of the constraints faced by extension field staff (Author computing)

The constraints being confronted by extension field staff are financial issue, improper transport, bureaucracy lack of ICT's, no technical education, inadequate staff, policy problems, poor organization, and irrelevant jobs. If the extension department has access to these resources then their performance will be more effective. The efficient performance of extension department will ultimately lead towards rural development. The issues of extension field staff are explained below so we need to overcome these issues. The study revealed that extension workers faced several challenges but the financial issue (60%) is most salient problem (Cahyono, 2014). Agricultural extension organizations were mainly (94%) affected by the financial issue (Challob et al., 2020). Financial issue is the prime obstacle regarding extension service (Baig and Aldosari, 2013). The bureaucracy use extension workers for their own purposes that divert the direction of their original work. Majority 57% agricultural officers revealed that bureaucracy effect their performance (Challob et al., 2020). Less majority 34.4% bureaucracy effect the working efficiency of extension field staff (Patel et al., 2015). Policy problem in agriculture also affect the working efficiency of extension workers. According to Challob et al., (2020) 88% extension workers facing agricultural policy problem. About (42.8%) extension workers were not satisfied with the performance of extension organization (Petrovic et al., 2009). According to Muhammad et al., (2021) stated that large majority (98.9%) extension field staff forced to do non-professional duties. Patel et al. (2015) stated that 34.6% extension workers have inadequate technical

knowledge and inadequate staff is one of the most salient constraints faced by extension field staff. About (36.4%) extension department have inadequate staff. The study revealed that the ratio of training programs to improve technical knowledge is very low. Agriculture officers (100%) reported that they had poor transport facility and extension workers are unable to perform effective duties due to lack of transportation (Patel et al., 2015; Cahyono, 2014 and Asif et al., 2014). . In Pakistan, Extension Field Staff (EFS) facing barrier like lack of proper transportation (Yaseen et al., 2015). Majority of the extension workers reported negative feedback regarding ICT's. Large majority 97.1% reported that ICT's used for fraud while majority 84% reported that ICT's are boring are stressful to use (Cynthia and Nwabugwu, 2016).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The research study concluded that the prime constraints which affected the performance of Extension Field Staff (EFS) were; improper transport, less authority, harsh environment, awkward conditions, lack of technical education, poor organization, irrelevant jobs, lack of motivation, financial issues etc.

- Agricultural Department must provide offices to EFS to enhance farmers contact
- Basic resources such as funds, equipment, mobility and staff should be made available
- Government should make suitable agricultural policies
- Government should ensure the linkage among Agricultural extension and research wings

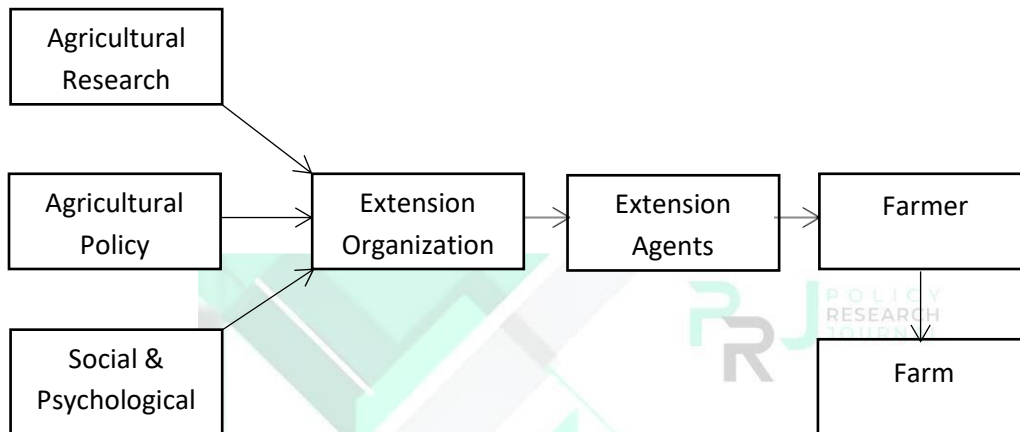


Figure-4: Information flow of agricultural extension (Jan et al., 2008).

For the efficient performance of extension field staff we should develop good agricultural policy and modern technology. We should also train the extension field staff for the farmer's behavioral and psychological study. We should link up agricultural research, agricultural policy, social and psychological research with extension organizations then will be implemented in the field that will ultimately lead to the rural development (Jan et al., 2008). The government should make policy regarding, supporting the farmers and controlling area change conflicts. Extension workers should play key role between research and farmers. The extension agents should motivate the farmers by providing innovative information (Prasetyo and Hariani, 2018).

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