



Research Article

PERSONAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PERSONNEL IN THE REVITALIZED EXTENSION SYSTEM IN ASSAM

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Abstract- The present study was carried out in the 11 districts of Assam to access the Personal, Psychological and Organizational Characteristics of the agricultural extension personnel in the revitalized extension system in Assam. A total of 112 agricultural extension personnel were interviewed who were working under the revitalized extension system in Assam with the help of structured schedule during the period of 2015. The study was undertaken as a part of PhD research work entitled "Role performance of the Agricultural extension personnel in the Revitalized Extension System in the state of Assam" in the Department of Extension Education under Assam Agricultural University, Jorhat, Assam. A total of 15 characteristics of the respondent were considered in the study which was classified as personal, psychological and organizational characteristics. The data analysis was done by using various statistical methods like frequency, percentage, standard deviation and co-efficient of variation. The findings of the study reveals that most of the extension personnel working under the revitalized extension system in Assam were young and middle aged and had high to medium level of exposures to their respective personal, psychological and organizational characteristics.

Key words- Level of role performance, Agriculture Technology and Management Agency (ATMA), Extension reform

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Introduction

The Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) calls for integrated approach wherein different stakeholders come closer to plan, organise, and execute the activities to take full advantage of the technologies demonstrated in the operational area [1]. The rationale behind the revitalized extension system in India is that the public sector extension system on its own is not capable enough to meet the ever increasing and multi-faceted demands of the farming community due to agro-ecological and socio-economic variation of the country. It was realized that public extension system will have to be placed in a new decentralized institutional arrangements which are demand driven, farmer-accountable, bottom-up and have farming system approach. To address the situation, the Government of India (GOI) and the World Bank pilot-tested a new, decentralized, market-driven extension model under the National Agricultural Technology Project (NATP). The Key institution in implementing this new approach was the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) which was responsible for facilitating and coordinating "farmer-led" extension activities within each district. There have been very few studies related to personal, psychological and organizational characteristics of the extension functionaries working under this changing scenario. The performance of an organization depends on the organization climate and how best its employees were clear about their roles and responsibilities. The motivational climate of an organization is the environment prevailing in the organization which specifically activates, energizes, direct an employee towards the achievement of organizational and personal goals [2]. The 'Job satisfaction' of employees working in an organization which ultimately affects the performance can be defined as the level of fulfilment of ones needs, wants and desire. Satisfaction depends basically upon what an individual wants from the

world, and what he gets [3]. Employee satisfaction is a measure of how happy workers are with their job and working environment. Effective organizations should have a culture that encourages the employee satisfaction [4]. It is therefore important to measure the level of internal and external characteristics possessed by the agricultural extension personnel in the revitalized extension system in Assam.

Methodology

The study was conducted in Assam, one of the states of North-Eastern India. At the time of the study, there were 27 districts in Assam. Out of these, 11 (eleven) districts were purposively selected for the study because Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) was first constituted in these districts under the World Bank aided Assam Agricultural Competitiveness Project (AAP). A total of 112 agricultural development officers were selected and interviewed in the 11 selected districts for the study. A total of 15 characteristics of the respondents were considered in the study. Out of 15 variables, age, educational qualification, service experience and training exposure were classified as personal, decision making ability, role awareness, role perception, job involvement, role conflict, role ambiguity, attitude towards ATMA and achievement motivation as psychological and motivational climate, job satisfaction and job anxiety as organizational variables. On each variable, respondents were categorized and their frequency and percentage were worked out. The mean and standard deviation were calculated and relative extent of homogeneity and heterogeneity among respondents with respect to each variable were examined with the help of co-efficient of variation. The primary data in the present study were collected directly

from the respondents through personal interview method.

Result and Discussion

Personal characteristics of the respondents: The findings of the present study [Table-1] revealed that majority (61.61%) of the respondents belonged to the middle aged category, followed by 20.54 per cent in old aged and 17.85 per cent in young aged category. The mean age value (42.89 years) indicated that on an average the respondents belonged to middle aged category. The value of coefficient of variation (16.06) indicated that the respondents were relatively homogenous with respect to their age. This might be because of the fact that the most of the newly recruited agriculture development officers are young or middle aged and they are very much interested in taking additional charge of convener to work under extension reform. There were only two categories of educational level which is found out in the study. Majority (53.57%) of the respondents were M.Sc (Agri.) while others (46.43%) were B.Sc. (Agri.) passed. No respondent was found with a Ph.D. degree. The standard deviation (0.50) and coefficient of variation (32.68) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their educational qualification. It might be because of the fact that majority of the agriculture officer working under extension reforms are very young and possess post graduate qualification before entering into the professional career. In regards to service experience, it was found that majority (73.21%) of the respondents had

7 to 17 years of service experience followed by 15.18 per cent respondents who had above 17 years of service experiences. The least numbers of participants (11.61%) had below 7 years of service experiences. The mean service experience value (12.02 years) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of service experience. The coefficient of variation (40.93) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their service experience. This might be because of the fact that many of the young agricultural development officers who have taken the charge of convener to work under extension reform have less service experience. Majority (77.68%) of the respondents had training exposure to 17 to 42 days followed by 16.96 per cent respondents who had exposure to above 42 days of training. The least number of participants (5.36%) had exposure to below 17 days of training. The mean training exposure value (29.82 days) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of training exposure. The coefficient of variation (12.57) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their training exposure. It also might be because of the fact that many of the agriculture officers working under extension reform were very young and got less opportunity to expose themselves to higher days of training. The less service experience of most of the agriculture officer might also be one of the reasons for not getting adequate training opportunities.

Table-1 Distribution of respondents according to their personal characteristics
N = 112

Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	S.D	C.V
Age						
Young aged	32- 36 years	20	17.85			
Middle aged	37 to 50 years	69	61.61	42.89	6.89	16.06
Old aged	51 to 58 years	23	20.54			
Educational qualification						
B.Sc. (Agri.)	1	52	46.43	1.53	0.50	32.68
M.Sc. (Agri.)	2	60	53.57			
Service Experience						
Short	4 to 6 years	13	11.61			
Medium	7 to 17 years	82	73.21	12.02	4.92	40.93
Long	18 to 25 years	17	15.18			
Training Exposure						
Low exposure	12 to 16 days	6	5.36			
Medium exposure	17 to 42 days	87	77.68	29.82	12.57	42.15
High exposure	43 to 66 days	19	16.96			

Psychological characteristics of the respondents: The finding of the present study revealed that [Table-2] that majority (76.79%) of the respondents had medium level of decision making ability followed by 16.96 per cent of respondents who had high level of decision making ability. The least (6.25%) number of participants had low level of decision making ability. The mean decision making ability value (29.25) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of decision making ability. The coefficient of variation (17.40) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their decision making ability. This might also be supported by the fact that the young agriculture officers working under extension reform were reluctant to take higher risk while making decision. It might also be due to the fact that limited years of 'service experience' and 'training exposure' acting detrimentally to lower down their confidence to make sound decisions in their profession career. Majority (68.75%) of the respondents had medium level role awareness followed by 18.75 per cent of respondents who had low level of role awareness. The least number of respondents (12.50%) had high level of role awareness. The mean role awareness value (23.91) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of role awareness. The coefficient of variation (28.52) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their level of role awareness. This might be because of the fact that limited years of 'service experience' and 'training exposure' letting the agricultural development officers to pose less consciousness about their respective set of roles to be carried out in their respective fields. It was found that majority (71.43%) of the respondents had medium level of role perception followed by 15.18 per cent respondents who had

low level of respondents. The least number of respondents (13.39%) had high level of role perception. The mean role perception value (69.08) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of role perception. The coefficient of variation (28.26) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their level of role perception. This might be because of the fact that majority of the respondents had medium level of awareness about their roles to be carried out. As a result, majority of the respondents had identified a fewer roles as their duties to be performed in their job situation. Majority (63.39%) of the respondents had medium level of job involvement followed by 19.64 per cent respondents who had low level of job involvement. The least number of respondents (16.96%) had high level of job involvement. The mean job involvement value (40.98) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of job involvement. The coefficient of variation (28.21) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their level of job involvement. The probable reason being the 'medium' by majority of the respondents in respect to 'role involvement' might be due to medium level of 'role awareness' and 'role perception', as a result of which majority of the respondents were not identified the importance of all the roles assigned to him in performing their duties. It was found that majority (63.39%) of the respondents had medium level of role conflict followed by 18.75 per cent respondents who had low level of role conflict. The least number of respondents (17.86%) had high level of role conflict. The mean role conflict value (33.46) indicates that on an average, the respondents had medium level of role conflict. The coefficient of variation (25.25) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their level of role conflict. The lower level of 'role

awareness', 'role perception' and 'role involvement' might put the agricultural development officers in confusion or in congruence of various job responsibilities which is indicated as being the medium by the majority of the respondents in respect to 'role conflict'. It was revealed in the study that majority (58.93%) of the respondents had medium level of role ambiguity followed by 22.32 per cent respondents who had high level of role ambiguity. The least number of respondents (18.75%) had low level of role ambiguity. The mean role ambiguity value (39.32) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of role ambiguity. The coefficient of variation (20.88) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their level of role ambiguity. The lack of role clarity and insufficient information about the process to accomplish these roles might put majority of the respondents in the medium level of ambiguous situation. It was found that majority (66.07%) of the respondents had favourable attitude towards ATMA. An equal proportion (16.96%) of the respondents had less favourable and highly favourable attitude towards ATMA. The mean attitude towards ATMA value (54.42) indicates that on an average the respondents had favourable attitude towards ATMA. The coefficient of variation (25.25) indicates

that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their attitude towards ATMA. This might be because of the fact that ATMA guidelines are easy to follow and the opportunity given for self and professional up scaling is much more visible and achievable by the agriculture officers. The study reveals that majority (66.96%) of the respondents had medium level of achievement motivation followed by 17.86 per cent respondents who had low level of achievement motivation. The least number of respondents (15.18%) had high level of achievement motivation. The mean achievement motivation value (61.59) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of achievement motivation. The coefficient of variation (25.85) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their level of achievement motivation. This might be because of the fact that majority of the respondents willing to do something well for the greater sake of farming community rather than to gain power or love or recognition or profit. The another reason might be due to the fact that most of agriculture officers are young and energetic and most of them had experienced short period of service life so far.

Table-2 Distribution of respondents according to their psychological characteristics N = 112

Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	S.D	C.V
Decision making ability						
Low ability	12 to 23	7	6.25			
Medium ability	24 to 34	86	76.79	29.25	5.09	17.40
High ability	35 to 38	19	16.96			
Role awareness						
Low role awareness	11 to 16	21	18.75			
Medium role awareness	17 to 31	77	68.75	23.91	6.82	28.52
High role awareness	32 to 42	14	12.50			
Role perception						
Low role perception	28 to 49	17	15.18			
Medium role perception	50 to 89	80	71.43	69.08	19.52	28.26
High role perception	90 to 126	15	13.39			
Job involvement						
Low job involvement	18 to 28	22	19.64			
Medium job involvement	29 to 53	71	63.39	40.98	11.56	28.21
High job involvement	54 to 70	19	16.96			
Role conflict						
Low role conflict	15 to 24	21	18.75			
Medium role conflict	25 to 42	71	63.39	33.46	8.45	25.25
High role conflict	43 to 51	20	17.86			
Role ambiguity						
Low role ambiguity	21 to 30	21	18.75			
Medium role ambiguity	31 to 48	66	58.93	39.32	8.21	20.88
High role ambiguity	49 to 53	25	22.32			
Attitude towards ATMA						
Less favourable attitude	23 to 40	19	16.96			
Favourable attitude	41 to 68	74	66.07	54.42	13.74	25.25
Highly favourable attitude	69 to 86	19	16.96			
Achievement motivation						
Low motivation	27 to 45	20	17.86			
Medium motivation	46 to 78	75	66.96	61.59	15.92	25.85
High motivation	79 to 92	17	15.18			

Organizational characteristics of respondents: The findings of the study revealed [Table-3] that majority (58.93%) of the respondents perceived the motivational climate as favourable followed by 20.54 per cent respondents who perceived the motivational climate as highly favourable. An equal proportion of them perceived the motivational climate as less favourable. The mean motivational climate value (166.10) indicates that on an average the respondents perceived the motivational climate as favourable. The coefficient of variation (25.27) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their perception of motivational climate. The findings imply the prevailing congenial environment in the organization which specifically activates, energizes, direct an employee towards the achievement of organizational as well as personal goal. Majority (66.07%) of the respondents had moderate level of job satisfaction followed by 18.75 per cent respondents who had low level of job satisfaction. The

least number of respondents (15.18%) had high level of job satisfaction. The mean job satisfaction value (61.82) indicates that on an average the respondents had moderate level of satisfaction. The coefficient of variation (24.28) indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their level of job satisfaction. This might be because of the fact that most the respondent could get satisfaction from the job and working environment. Another reason might be due to the fact that most of the agricultural development officers got ample opportunities to help the farming community up to the desired level through the ATMA interventions. It was found that majority (65.18%) of the respondents had medium level of job anxiety followed by 19.64 per cent respondents who had low level of job anxiety. The least number of respondents (15.18%) had high level of job anxiety. The mean job anxiety value (10.50) indicates that on an average the respondents had medium level of job anxiety. The coefficient of variation (32.76)

indicates that the respondents were homogenous with respect to their level of job anxiety. It might be due to the wariness of the young agricultural development officers regarding future prospect, recognition and fair evaluation. As most of the young officers' shoulder down the additional responsibilities of work under extension reform, they might think it as burden or misgiving worry.

Table-3 Distribution of respondents according to their organizational characteristics N=112

Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Mean	S.D	C.V
Motivational climate						
Less favourable	89 to 123	23	20.54			
Favourable	124 to 208	66	58.93	166.10	41.97	25.27
Highly favourable	209 to 242	23	20.54			
Job satisfaction						
Less satisfied	28 to 46	21	18.75			
Moderately satisfied	47 to 77	74	66.07	61.82	15.01	24.28
Highly satisfied	78 to 96	17	15.18			
Job anxiety						
Low job anxiety	3 to 6	22	19.64			
Medium job anxiety	7 to 14	73	65.18	10.50	3.44	32.76
High job anxiety	15 to 16	17	15.18			

Conclusion

The findings revealed that most of the extension personnel working under the revitalized extension system in Assam were young and middle aged and had medium level of service experience and training exposure to cope up with the changing agricultural scenario. Only a small proportion of them had exposure to above 42 days of training. Awasthi, *et al.*, 2001 and Maiti, *et al.*, 2011, found in a similar study that age, education, exposure to training, service experience had positive correlation with job performance [5, 6]. Colquitt, *et al.*, 2015, defines performance as follows, "job performance is formally defined as the value of the set of employee behaviours that contribute, either positively or negatively, to organizational goal accomplishment" [7]. Therefore, it means that Performance can be formally described as a set of values from a set of employee behaviours that contribute both positively and negatively to the fulfilment of organizational goal. The mean training exposure value indicated that on an average the respondents had medium level of training exposure. The adequate exposure to professional training through capacity building will help to reorient the extension personnel with the new set of roles, their perception and performance.

Application of research: As an application of this study it is suggested that adequate care should also be taken to improve the motivational climate to increase the job satisfaction and achievement motivation to enhance the performance of extension functionaries under extension reform in Assam. Manjunath and Shashidhra (2011), Raza and Arid (2010) found out a positive and highly significant relationship with productivity and motivational climate in their studies [8,9]. Wiwi Widarsih, *et al.*, 2018, defines positive relationship between performance and organization support system [10]. An effective management strategy should be made to increase the level of awareness as well perception of respective roles to be played under extension reform in the state through higher level of training exposures. At the same time, it should also accompanied by lower level of job conflict, role ambiguity while ensuring higher level of job satisfaction.

Research Category: agricultural extension

Abbreviations:

NATP: National Agricultural Technology Project
ATMA: Agricultural Technology Management Agency

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