Job Performance of Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers of the Department of Agricultural Extension

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Abstract

The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), the largest extension agency in Bangladesh, plays a key role in disseminating agricultural technology generated from research institutes of the country. Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) are the front line extension workers of DAE. The purpose of the study was to assess the job performance of SAAOs of DAE. Five upazilas were selected randomly from eight upazilas under Jessore district. Data were collected from 90 SAAOs, where all of them were taken from the selected five upazilas. Data were collected through personal contact with a structured and pretested interview schedule during the period from 15 to 30 November, 2016. The job performance was assessed by the SAAOs themselves. The study revealed that 90 percent of the SAAOs belonged to the low to medium job performance categories. Multiple regression analysis was conducted for data analysis. Among the variables age, service length, and extension media contact were significant contributor to the job performance of SAAOs. Other variables, namely level of education, job facilities, cosmopoliteness, job satisfaction, farmers' problem awareness and problem confrontation were found insignificant to the job performance of SAAOs. On the basis of the findings it was concluded that, overall job performance of the SAAOs was not satisfactory. So, appropriate approaches like training, workshop, extension media contact etc. should be used by the Department of Agricultural Extension to improve the job performance of the SAAOs.

Keywords: SAAO, DAE, job performance, cosmopoliteness, job satisfaction.

Introduction

Bangladesh is predominantly an agricultural country and a major part of its economy and livelihoods of rural people depend on this sector. The sector contributes about 19% of GDP (BBS, 2015).The Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), under the Ministry of Agriculture, is the mainstream and largest agricultural extension agency of Bangladesh. With the objective of changing the quality of village life, DAE is playing an important role. It assists farmers to improve productivity and increase their income by promoting appropriate farming practices. In the context of changing socio-economic situation and challenges of issues like climate change, population growth and diminishing natural resource bases, transfer of technology among farming communities has become an increasingly challenging responsibility of the extension staff of DAE. Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs), the field level extension agents of DAE, play a vital role in transfer of technology. Because SAAOs are the extension workers who are directly involved with farmers and their communities, they teach farmers about the production of crops and also recommend improved technologies. The success of DAE hugely depends upon the job performance of its grass-root level workers.

SAAO are the grass-root level extension worker of DAE. The SAAOs visit farms and homes, conduct demonstrations and hold meetings to teach farmers useful agricultural technologies..

Personal contact between SAAOs and farmers develops effective relationship for successful extension programmes. Ultimate result depends on the performance of the Sub Assistant Agricultural Officers.Job performance is one of the most important determinants for all types of profession and has become a major focus of management level studies for decades. Borman and Motowidlo (1993) identified two types of employee behaviour that arenecessaryfor organizational effectiveness: task performance and contextualperformance. Task performance refers to behaviours that are directly involved in producing goods or service, or activities that provide indirect support for the organization's core technical processes (Borman and Motowidlo, 1997; Werner, 2000). These behaviours directly relatedto the formal organization reward system. On the other hand, contextualperformance is defined as individual efforts that are not directly related to their main task functions. However, these behaviours are important because they shape the organizational, social, and psychological contexts serving as the critical catalyst for task activities and processes (Werner, 2000).Vroom (1965), reported that performance is a function of ability and motivation. Vinake (1962) explained that a number of characteristics of individual affect the quality and quantity of his performance. Lynch (1971) also reports that job performance of an individual is basically a function of both his abilities and his motivation. Herman (1973)

explained job performance as the result of individual's responses to stimulus objects.Davis (1984) explained job performance as a way howan individual actually performs in a given position, as distinct from how he is expected to perform.

In the context of extension service, job performance is the degree to which one of success Union Assistants (the then extension agents in Bangladesh in the 1970s) in performing the various duties and responsibilities assigned to them (Mahboob et al., 1978). In India, a number of studies have been conducted on job performance of agricultural extension officers and other extension personnel. In Bangladesh, until now very few studies have been conducted in this regard. Considering the above facts the researchers felt it appropriate toundertake an investigation to assess the job performance of the SAAOs who are responsible for disseminating information to the farmers. This study was, therefore, undertaken to focus on the job performance of Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers of Bangladesh. The specific objectives of the study were: (i) to assess the extent of job performance of Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers of the Department of Agricultural Extension, (ii) to determine and describe the socio-economic characteristics of the SAAOs, and (iii) to explore the contribution of the selected characteristics of the SAAOs on their job performance.

Methodology

Study Location, Population and Sample

Jessore district of Khulna division was selected purposively as the area for this research work. There are eight upazilas in Jessore district. Among eight upazilas five upazilas were selected randomly. The Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) of five upazilas of Jessore district were the population of the study. The total of 113 SAAOs were working in different blocks of five upazilas of Jessore district which constituted the population of the study. Among the population 90 SAAOs were selected randomly. Hence, the 90 selected SAAOs constituted the sample of the study.

Instrument for data collection: An interview schedule was used as the research instrument in order to collect relevant information from the respondents. There were nine independent variables, namely age, level of education, service length, job facilities, extension media contact, cosmopoliteness, job satisfaction, farmers' problem awareness, problem confrontation, while job performance of SAAOs was the dependent variable. The independent variables were measured using appropriate methods. Age, level of education and service length were measured using standard units, while the other variables

were measured by scores obtained by developed scales.

Job performance of the SAAOs was the dependent variable of this study. It was measured by self rating .This means the job performance of the SAAOs was assessed by the SAAOs themselves. The job responsibilities of the SAAOs assigned by DAE were sorted out from the DAE Manual (DAE, 2010). In total 23 aspects of job responsibilities were identified for assessment. For computing the extent of job performance score of the SAAOs a modified 5 point Likert type scale was used. A respondent was asked to assess her/his job performance level (very high to very low) against all 23 aspects. Appropriate weightage were assigned to each of the scale such as:

Respondent categories	Weight
Very high performance	5
High performance	4
Medium performance	3
Low performance	2
Very low performance	1

Job performance score of a respondent was computed by summing up the obtained scores (weights) against all the 23 items. Thus, the job performance score of a respondent SAAO could range from 23 to 115, where 23 indicated 'very low performance' and 115 indicated'very high performance'. For determining the contribution of the selected characteristics of the SAAOs with their job performance, multiple regression analysis was used.

Data Collection and Analysis
The entire process of data collection took half a month from 15 November to 30 November 2016. Data collected from the respondents were complied, coded, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study. Various statistical measures such as frequency counts, percentage distribution, average, and standard deviation were used in describing data. SPSS (version 22.0) computer program were used for analyzing the data. The categories and tables were used in describing data. For determining the contribution of the selected characteristics of the SAAOs with their job performance, multiple regression analysis was used. In order to find out the contribution between the selected dependent and independent variables multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Results and Discussion

There are many interrelated and constituent attributes that characterize an individual and form an integral part in the development of one's behavior and personality. It was, therefore, assumed that job performance of SAAOs might be influenced by their various characteristics. Nine characteristics of the SAAOs were selected and the salient features of the characteristics are presented in the Table 1.

Data presented in Table 1 clearly show that majority (73.34 percent) of the SAAOs are middle aged, while majority of them (83.3%) had up to Diploma level of education and did not having any further educational exposure. Service length is an important factor to perform the job and majority of the SAAOs belonged to the short to medium service length categories. Majority (94.44 percent) of the respondents had low to medium job facilities, while majority of them had medium extension media contact. The table also revealed that more than half of the respondents had medium level cosmopoliteness, while an overwhelming majority (83.33 percent) had medium level job satisfaction. An interesting observation is that majority of the SAAOs (73.33 percent) had medium level awareness of the problems faced by the farmers. On the other hand, 74.44 percent had medium level problem confrontation while discharging their responsibilities in field and with farming communities. It should be mentioned here that as the classifications were made based on mean and standard deviation, more or less a similar distribution of the categories across the characteristics were observed.

Job performance of Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officers

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their selective characteristics (n = 90)

Characteristics and measuring unit	Categories	Number	Percentage	Mean	Standard deviation
Age (year)	Young (up to 30) Middle-aged (31-50) Old (above 50)	12 66 12	13.34 73.34 13.34	38	7.22
Level of Education (year of schooling)	Up to Diploma (below 15) Above Diploma (15 to above)	75 15	83.3 16.7	13.33	0.75
Service length (year)	Short (below 7) Medium (7-22) Long (above 22)	20 60 10	22.23 66.67 11.11	12.38	7.08
Job facilities (score)	Low (below 15) Medium (15-21) High (above 21)	18 67 5	20 74.44 5.56	17.10	3.20
Extension media contact (score)	Low (up to 14) Medium (15-22) High (above 22)	17 66 7	18.89 73.33 7.78	17.87	3.96
Cosmopoliteness (score)	Low (up to 7) Medium (8-10)	43 47	47.78 52.22	7.53	0.89
Job satisfaction (score)	Low (Below 11) Medium (11-15) High (Above 15)	6 75 9	6.67 83.33 10	13.11	2.26
Farmers' problem awareness (score)	Low (Below 31) Medium (31-41) High (Above 41)	15 66 9	16.67 73.33 10	35.48	4.72
Problem confrontation (score)	Low (Below 34) Medium (34-44) High (Above 44)	12 67 11	13.33 74.44 12.22	38.91	5.12

Job performance of SAAOs

The score of job performance of the SAAOs ranged from 42-77 against the possible range 23-115. The mean was 62.91 with a standard deviation of 6.35. This indicates that the study group was moderately heterogeneous in terms of job performance. On the basis of their job performance assessed by self-evaluation, the respondents were classified into three categories, namely 'low', 'medium' and 'high' job performance. It might be mentioned here that as the respondents themselves made the assessment (a type of self- assessment), some of them might assessed their performance higher than the actual situation. The distributions in accordance of job performance of the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers are presented in the Table 2.

Table 2: Classification of the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers according to their job performance

Categories according to job performance	SAAOs		Mean	Standard Deviation
	Number	Percent		
Low performance (below 55)	9	10	62.91	6.35
Medium performance (55-70)	72	80		
High performance (above 70)	9	10		
Total	90	100		

Data contained in Table 2 revealed that the highest proportions (80 percent) of the SAAOs were in medium job performance category, while 10 percent belonged to the high job performance category and the remaining 10 percent were in the low job performance category as assessed by self-evaluation. Considering the majority criteria and the average score, it could be concluded that the job performance of the SAAOs is not satisfactory level for discharging the responsibility for technology transfer activities among the farming communities.

Contribution of individual characteristics of SAAOs' on the job performance
In order to estimate contribution of independent variables on the job performance of SAAOs, multiple regression analysis was used which is shown in the Table 3.

Table 3: Multiple regression coefficients of contributing factors related to the job performance of Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers

Independent variables	B	*P*	R^2	Adj. R^2	F	*P*
Age	1.045	0.007				
Level of education	0.958	0.308				
Service length	1.066	0.006				
Job facilities	0.343	0.116				
Extension media contact	0.569	0.002	0.423	0.336	2.552	0.012
Cosmopoliteness	1.010	0.182				
Job satisfaction	0.255	0.418				
Farmers' problem awareness	0.314	0.054				
Problem confrontation	-0.164	0.245				

Table 3 shows that there is a significant contribution of respondents' age, service length, extension media contact, on the job performance of the SAAOs.
Forty two percent ($R^2 = 0.423$) of the variation in the respondents' job performance can be attributed to their age, service length and extension media contact, making this an excellent model. The F value indicates that the model is significant. However, each predictor may explain some of the variance in respondents' job performance conditions simply by chance. The adjusted R-square value penalizes the addition of extraneous predictors in the model, but values of 0.336 still show that the variance in respondents' job performance can be attributed to the predictor variables rather than by chance, and that both are suitable models. In summary, the models suggest that the respective authority should consider age, service length, extension media contact of the SAAOs while undertaking any human resource development programmes.

Conclusions

Findings of the study and the logical interpretations of their meanings in the light of other relevant facts prompted the researcher to draw a number of conclusions. Firstly, the job performance of the SAAOs indicated that, 10 percent had low, 80 percent had medium and the rest 10 percent had high job performance.On the basis of above findings it may be concluded that overall job performance ofthe SAAOs is not satisfactory because only 10% had high job performance.There is chance to improve the job performance of SAAOs by taking proper steps by the Department of Agricultural Extension and other concerned authorities. Steps may be arranging appropriate training, workshop, motivational approach, use of different extension

media etc. Secondly, the service length of SAAOs had significant contribution with the job performance of the SAAOs. So, the study indicated that, the higher the service length the higher the job performance of SAAOs. Higher service length facilitates the SAAOs to have more experience through participating different training, practical experience and other means of learning that helps them to contribute more in their profession. Thirdly, an overwhelming majority (92.23 percent) of the SAAOs were young to middle aged. Age was an important contributing factor with the job performance of the SAAOs. The study indicated that, with the increasing of the age the job performance of

SAAOs will be increased. Therefore, it can be concluded that with the increase of age experience increased and SAAOs' develop them through experience, training and other means of learning and perform better. Finally, multiple regression coefficients indicated that extension media contact had significant contribution with the job performance of the SAAOs. So the study indicated that, the higher the extension media contact the higher the job performance of SAAOs. It leads to conclude that SAAOs can develop and update their knowledge through using different extension mediathat helps them to provide better service to their clients.

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