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Problem Confrontation in Participating Professional Trainings by the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers

M. N. A. S. Mithun[1], M. J. Hoque[2] and M. H. Rahman[3]

Abstract

The main objective of the study was to determine the problem confrontation in participating professional trainings by the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) in four selected upazilas (sub-districts) under Mymensingh district namely, Mymensingh *sadar*, Bhaluka, Trishal and Muktagachha. Data were collected from a sample of 80 skilled, experienced and trained SAAOs who were selected purposively among 139 SAAOs during 01 October to 07 November, 2018 by using a structured interview schedule. The study identified ten major problems as faced by the SAAOs during participating in professional trainings. The majority of the SAAOs (85%) confronted medium to high problems in participating professional trainings. Among ten problems 'less amount of fixed travel allowance' got the highest problem confrontation score (167) and 'autonomy by the trainer' got the lowest score (103). Among nine selected characteristics of the SAAOs: social mobility, communication exposure and job satisfaction were significantly related to problem confrontation in participating professional trainings. On the basis of the suggested solutions (providing necessary technical trainings timely, supplying necessary agricultural inputs, etc.) mentioned by the SAAOs, attention and necessary funds should be given by the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and other training providing organizations to overcome the problems and also to make them more confident, efficient and productive.

Keywords: *Problem, confrontation, participation, professional trainings, Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers.*

Introduction

The Department of Agricultural Extension is the largest department among all the extension organizations in Bangladesh which provides unified agricultural extension services to the farmers throughout the country. Extension programmes require a large number of qualified, trained, confident and efficient Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) as extension workers to work with mostly illiterate rural people engaged in agriculture (Rashiduzzaman, 2005). According to Ahmad (2002), due to lack of extension skills, the SAAOs are not able to provide satisfactory extension services to the farmers. In this regard, professional trainings are essential for the SAAOs so that they can provide training to the farmers to make them more skilled about agricultural production practices in every sector. Training has a direct relationship with the performance of the trainees (Armstrong and Mahmud, 2008). Despite the immense importance of training, the SAAOs are not getting proper training due to a) Lack of specific established training plan, b) Inadequate training resources and facilities, and c) Too little cooperation and coordination among extension providers (Ahmad, 2002). As a result, the professional

[1]Lecturer, [2&3]Prpfesspr, Department of Agricultural Extension, Bangladesh Agricultural University, Mymensingh.

trainings for the SAAOs should make up an essential point to include all the serious agricultural and extension problems in the training curriculum. In view of above circumstances, the researchers undertook this research keeping in mind the following objectives: (i) To determine the problem confrontation in participating professional trainings by the SAAOs; (ii) To describe the selected characteristics of the SAAOs; and (iii) To explore the relationships between the selected characteristics of the SAAOs and their problem confrontation.

Methodology

Mymensingh district and its majority of the upazilas (sub-districts) are well communicated and acquainted to the researcher. Four upazilas of the district were purposively selected as the locations of the study namely Mymensingh *sadar*, Bhaluka, Trishal and Muktagachha for obtaining a representative sample of the study. The selection was based on an important consideration also i.e. availability of a good number of skilled, experienced and trained up Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) in those four upazilas of Mymensingh district. As a result, it was assumed that conducting an empirical research in those four upazilas would best reflect the reality of the situation. A total of 80 skilled, experienced and trained up SAAOs (58% of total population) were selected purposively from a population of 139.Data were collected with the help of a structured interview schedule during 01 October to 07 November, 2018.Problem confrontation in participating professional trainings was the focus variable and nine selected characteristics of the SAAOs were selected as explanatory variables namely age, level of education, rural background, tenure of service, training received, social mobility, communication exposure, dedication to extension work (for farmers & DAE) and job satisfaction. The study identified ten major problems as confronted by the SAAOs during participating in professional trainings. Each SAAO was asked to indicate the extent of problem confrontation by each constraint by using a 4-point rating scale such high, medium, low and not at all and weights were assigned to these responses as 3, 2, 1 and 0, respectively (Hoque and Usami, 2008). The problem confrontation score was obtained by adding weights of responses of the problems and therefore, the problem confrontation score could vary from 0 to 30, where 0 indicating no problem and 30 indicating high problem confrontations in participating professional trainings by the SAAOs. Mean value of the problems was computed and on the basis of individual mean value a rank order of the problems was prepared.

For making rank order Problem Confrontation Index (PCI) was computed as used by Rahman and Rahman (2014). The PCI was computed by using the following formula:

$$PCI = (P_{hp}\times 3) + (P_{mp}\times 2) + (P_{lp}\times 1) + (P_{np}\times 0)$$

Where,

PCI = Problem Confrontation Index
P_{hp} = Number of respondents with high problem
P_{mp} = Number of respondents with medium problem
P_{lp} = Number of respondents with low problem
P_{np} = Number of respondents with no problem

Thus, the PCI of individual problem could range from 0 to 240, where 0 indicating no problem and 240 indicating high problem confrontation in participating professional trainings.

Findings and Discussion

Selected characteristics of the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers: In this section, summary of the selected characteristics of the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) have been presented in Table 1.

The findings revealed that the majority of the SAAOs (76.25%) belong to middle to old aged category and most of them (86.25%) had S.S.C with agricultural Diploma to H.S.C with agricultural Diploma level of education. The highest proportions of the SAAOs (91.25%) had high rural background and most of them (91.25%) had moderate to long tenure of service. Majority of them (70%) received short duration training. Maximum respondents (78.75%) had medium level of social mobility, and communication exposure of majority of them (98.75%) was medium to high. Most of them (78.75%) had high dedication to extension work. More than half i.e. 51.25% of the SAAOs worked in medium work environment and rest of them (48.75%) faced high work environment. The highest proportions of the SAAOs (71.25%) had medium level of job satisfaction.

Table 1 Characteristics profile of the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (n=80)

Characteristics (Measuring units)	Score ranges		Categories	Trained		Mean	SD*
	Possible	Observed		No.	%		
Age (Years)	Unknown	22-58	Young (up to 35)	19	23.75	44.225	11.085
			Middle aged (36-50)	24	30.0		
			Old (above 50)	37	46.25		
Level of Education (Years)	Unknown	10-16	S.S.C with Agril. Diploma	49	61.25	11.325	2.06
			H.S.C with Agril. Diploma	20	25.0		
			B.Sc. with Agril. Diploma	11	13.75		
Rural background (Years)	Unknown	2-50	Low (up to 5)	1	1.25	31.975	12.706
			Moderate (6-15)	6	7.5		
			High (above 15)	73	91.25		
Tenure of service (Years)	Unknown	2-37	Short (up to 5)	7	8.75	20.987	11.40
			Moderate (6-15)	33	41.25		
			Long (above 15)	40	50.0		
Training received (Days)	Unknown	1-130	Short duration (up to 7)	56	70.0	9.462	18.806
			Medium duration (8-30)	20	25.0		
			Long duration (above 30)	4	5.0		
Social mobility (Score)	0-33	6-32	Low (up to 11)	14	17.5	15.85	4.401
			Medium (12-22)	63	78.75		
			High (above 22)	3	3.75		
Communication exposure (Score)	0-51	17-51	Low (up to 17)	1	1.25	35.337	7.695
			Medium (18-34)	43	53.75		
			High (above 34)	36	45.0		
Dedication to extension work (Score)	0-33	22-33	Low (up to 11)	0	0.0	26.962	3.863
			Medium (12-22)	17	21.25		
			High (above 22)	63	78.75		
Job satisfaction (Score)	0-30	10-30	Low (up to 10)	3	3.75	17.625	4.779
			Medium (11-20)	57	71.25		
			High (above 20)	20	25.0		

SD* stands for Standard Deviation

Problem confrontation in participating professional trainings: The computed problem confrontation score of the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) ranged from 3 to 28 with an average of 16.850 and standard deviation 6.224. Based on the observed scores the distribution of the respondents has been presented in Table 2. The data presented in Table 2 reveal that the highest proportion of the respondents (53.75%) confronted medium problems, while 31.25% and 15.0% of them confronted high and low problems, respectively. The findings lead to illustrate that the majority of the SAAOs (85%) confronted medium to high problems in participating professional trainings. Islam *et al*. (2013) found similar findings in his study.

Table 2 Distribution of the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers according to the extent of problem confrontation

Categories	No. of respondents (n=80)	Percent	Mean	Standard deviation
Low problem (up to 10)	12	15.0	16.850	6.224
Medium problem (11-20)	43	53.75		
High problem (above 20)	25	31.25		
Total	80	100.0		

For determining the extent of confrontation of the individual problem rank order was made computing Problem Confrontation Index (PCI). According to the rank order (Table 3), the top three problems with highest score have been described here. Data presented in the Table 3 show that 'Less amount of fixed travel allowance' got the highest score (167) and hence was considered as the 1st ranked problem. During professional trainings, the trainees did not get sufficient travel allowance from the training providing organizations. As a result, the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) were not interested to attend in a training venue long away from their block and residence. The problem 'Lack of transport for traveling' got the 2nd highest scores (161) and hence was considered as the 2nd ranked problem. This might be due to the lack of sufficient number of transports of DAE and other organizations during practical exposure sessions and field visits. The problem 'Inadequate accommodation facilities' got the 3rd highest scores (159) and hence was considered as the 3rd ranked problem. Accommodation facilities were very poor and insufficient for the SAAOs during training sessions due to low support from funding organizations to establish a comfortable training venue with adequate accommodation facilities.

Relationship between problem confrontation by the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) and their selected characteristics: In order to determine the relationship between problem confrontation by the SAAOs and their selected characteristics correlation analysis was conducted. The results of correlation analysis have been shown in Table 4. From the Table 4, it could be revealed that social mobility shows a positive significant relationship with the problem confrontation in participating professional trainings. Here, it obviously indicated that with the increase of the social mobility of the SAAOs, the problem confrontation in participating professional trainings also increases. This finding may be for the reason that the SAAOs were more cosmopolite, very much busy with their responsibilities and they visit different places frequently outside of his/her block. Similar relationship was observed by Alam (2009).

Table 3 Rank order of the problems based on their extent of confrontation

Problems	Extent of problem confrontation				PCI*	Mean	Rank order
	High	Medium	Low	Not at all			
Less amount of fixed travel allowance	41	16	12	11	167	2.088	1
Lack of transports for traveling	38	16	15	11	161	2.013	2
Inadequate accommodation facilities	32	25	13	10	159	1.988	3
Lack of time management	25	31	14	10	151	1.888	4
Over burden with other responsibilities	9	29	25	17	139	1.738	5
Lack of personal incentives	10	43	13	14	129	1.613	6
Lack of appropriate information and guidance from trainers	9	42	24	5	125	1.563	7
Biasness in trainee selection	5	33	30	12	111	1.388	8
Lack of enough skills of the trainers	9	34	17	20	104	1.3	9
Autonomy by the trainer	4	34	23	19	103	1.288	10

PCI*: Problem Confrontation Index

Table 4 Result of correlation analysis between explanatory variables and focus variable

Focus variable	Explanatory variables	Correlation coefficient(r) with 78 *df*	Tabulated values of r with 78 df	
			.05	.01
Problem confrontation in participating professional trainings	Age	-.069	.219	.286
	Level of education	-.091		
	Rural background	.035		
	Tenure of service	-.002		
	Training received	-.219		
	Social mobility	.246*		
	Communication exposure	.472**		
	Dedication to extension work	.063		
	Job satisfaction	-.494**		

Notes: **: Significant at 1% level of probability;*: Significant at 5% level of probability

The positive significant correlation of communication exposure with the problem confrontation in participating professional trainings clearly pointed out that the SAAOs had enough opportunity to gain necessary knowledge and information on different agricultural issues by contacting with extension media which made them less interested and careless to face problems in participating professional trainings. The job satisfaction had significant negative relationship with the problem confrontation in participating professional trainings, indicating that a good number of trainings with different problems decreased the job satisfaction of the SAAOs.

Suggested Solutions: Some solutions were suggested by the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) for the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) to overcome the problems and also to make them more efficient and productive as shown in Table 5.

Table 5 Rank order of the suggested solutions

Suggested solutions	No. of citation	Rank order
Providing necessary technical training timely	39	1
Supplying necessary agricultural inputs timely	31	2
Increasing transport facilities for communication in Block	30	3
Providing long term training on specific subject matter	21	4
Providing training scope in abroad	20	5
Arranging foundation training	19	6
Increasing training allowance	17	7
Increasing travel allowance	16	8
Providing ICT-based training	15	9
Promotion and recognition for work timely	13	10
Providing administrative power in block	11	11
Providing scope for higher education	10	12
Providing insect pest management training	5	13
Providing training scope in research organization	4	14

Data presented in Table 5 indicate that there were 14 solutions suggested by the SAAOs and among them 'Providing necessary technical training timely' was cited by 39 respondents and hence was considered as the 1st ranked suggested solution. 'Supplying necessary agricultural inputs timely' and 'increasing transport facilities for communication in Block' were mentioned by 31 and 30 respondents, respectively and hence were considered as the 2nd and 3rd ranked suggested solutions. So, the concerned authority specially the DAE should take necessary steps for the SAAOs to overcome the problems and also to make them more confident, efficient and productive considering all of the suggested solutions.

Conclusions

The findings showed that the majority of the Sub Assistant Agriculture Officers (SAAOs) (85%) confronted medium to high problems in participating professional trainings. Mainly the less amount of fixed travel allowance, lack of transports for traveling and inadequate accommodation facilities given to the SAAOs made them less interested and careless to participate in the professional trainings. The suggested solutions mentioned by the SAAOs to solve the problems were 'providing necessary technical trainings timely, "supplying necessary agricultural inputs," increasing transport facilities', etc. This findings lead to the conclusion that the problems might be taken into consideration by the DAE and other training providing organizations to solve them properly for increasing participation of the SAAOs in professional trainings and also to make the more confident, efficient and productive.

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