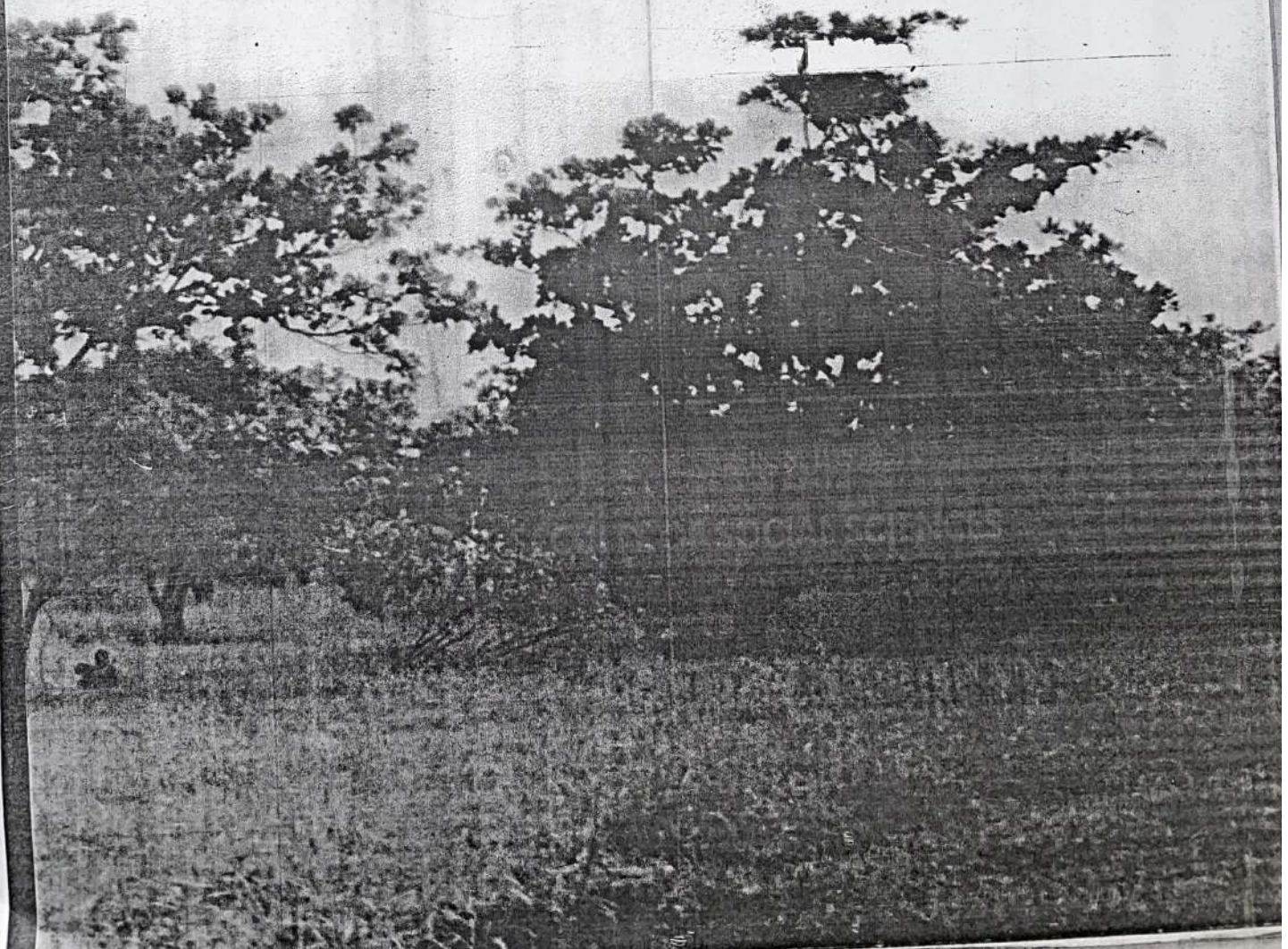


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The Assessment of Extension Activities of Local Government Agricultural Workers in Kwara State of Nigeria

By

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Abstract: This work analyzed the various agricultural extension activities and the challenges behind its in-effective performance among agricultural workers in Kwara State of Nigeria. The data sets obtained were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. It has been subsequently observed that over 50% of the respondents were within 21-40 years' age range, 41.7% had secondary education, and nearly half were on working grade level 7-10 while almost half of the respondents had 11-15 years of working experiences. Essentially, funding of agricultural projects" was the most prominent constraint for delivering extension services. Chi-square result revealed that a significant relationship exist between job satisfaction of the respondents with other variables such as age ($X^2=104.89$, $t=28.87$), marital status ($X^2=118.27$, $t=36.42$), academic qualification ($X^2=120.45$, $t=28.87$), position ($X^2=190.15$, $t=43.77$), working grade level ($X^2=85.23$, $t=21.03$), years of working experience ($X^2=89.08$, $t=28.87$), average monthly salary ($X^2=91.44$, $t=28.87$). The study therefore recommends for the need for agricultural workers to be motivated through the provision of adequate and regular remuneration as well as in-service training in enhancing their capacity towards quality extension service in the Local Government Areas of the State.

Introduction

Agriculture plays an important role in the development of all nations. It is only through agriculture that man can feed. Agriculture supplies food and generates household income for the majority of people in the country (Akande, 2000). Nigerians are high consumers as well as producers of employment of labour, contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and until 1970, agricultural export were the main source of foreign exchange earnings (Amasa & Olayemi,

2002). Agricultural extension is a service or system where educational advantage of institution is passed on to person unable to avail them of such information which brings improvement in a systematic manner through carefully planned and organized programmes. Agricultural extension activities are essential activities carried out by lower tiers of government through the extension workers whose roles are to teach and carry information, links in between information and advice for making good decision. Agricultural extension workers occupy strategic positions in the agricultural production cycle with the aim of liaising between the farmers and research scientist. The effectiveness of extension officers lies in the ends they achieved in teaching and informing farmers. Therefore, an adequate supply of information will lighten the burden of extension workers. It has been suggested by Lawani (2002) that one can identify somebody who is literate in the farming community and make him/her the information gatekeeper from whom other farmers will receive information on a regular basis.

Local Government is a tier of government closest to the people and it is vested with certain powers to exercise control over the affairs of people in its domain (Lawal, 2000). And it is a government at the grass root level of administration meant for meeting peculiar grass root needs of the people (Agagu, 1997). Local Government is a government by the popularly elected bodies charged with administrative and executive duties in matters concerning the inhabitants of a particular district or place (Appadorai, 1975). Looking at the existence, performance and relevance of local government, Laski (1996) opined that the full benefit of democratic government cannot be realized unless we begin by the admission that all problems are not central or national, and the result of problems, not being so central/national in their incidence requires decisions at the place, and by the person, where and by whom the incidence is mostly deeply felt.

Nigeria is the largest and most populous country in Africa with approximately 65% of people living in rural areas (NPC, 2006). Agricultural workers in the 774 Local Government Areas in Nigeria are actively involved in the execution of various agricultural extension activities ranging from food production, storage and processing techniques, provision of relevant information to local farmers on how to access farm machinery and soft loans as well as marketing channels. Despite the fact that these agricultural workers are strategically positioned at the lowest tier of government and are closer to the people at the grass root, little or nothing is usually heard about their effort to

ensuring effective extension service delivery. The fact that these workers are more or less extension personnel, they are also faced with the problems of poor remuneration, mobility and appropriate skills for value chain service delivery like their counterpart in the ADPs.

This study is therefore poised to provide solution to the challenges in these areas of agriculture by attempting to highlight extension activities carried out by agricultural extension workers. The general objective of the study is to assess the extension activities of Local Government Agricultural Workers in Kwara State while the specific objectives are to:

Describe the socio-economic characteristics of local government agricultural workers, analyze the various agricultural extension activities being carried out by the respondents in the local government, examine the level of job satisfaction among the respondents, and evaluate the challenges facing agricultural officers which are militating against their effective performance.

This will allow the stakeholders involved in agricultural development to address areas where agricultural extension services are needed and the constraints militating against effective service delivery thus motivating agricultural extension workers for effective and efficient performance.

Materials and Methods of Study

This study was carried out in Kwara State, Nigeria. The study area is located in the North Central zone of Nigeria and it is bounded by Niger State in the North, Oyo, Osun and Ekiti States in the South and Kogi State in the East. Kwara State shares an international boundary with the Republic of Benin along its North Western part in Baruten Local Government. Because of its unique geographical position, the State is referred to as the "Gateway" between the North and South of the country. Kwara State has a population of 2.37 million and a land area of 36,825 square kilometres, and it is populated by Yoruba, Nupe, Fulani, Hausa and Baruba as major ethnic groups with other Nigerians as well.

The population for this study comprises of all agricultural workers in the sixteen Local Governments Areas of Kwara state. A well structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from one hundred and twenty (120) agricultural workers that were purposively selected from one Local Government each from the four administrative zones of the Kwara State Agricultural Development Projects (Kwara ADPs) in the study area. In this study, data that was collected include the socio-economic characteristics of agricultural workers and the extension activities they carry out in the Local Government areas while the

dependent variables were the job satisfaction of agricultural workers and the constraints hindering effective and efficient performance. These variables were measured as follows.

Extension activities carried out by agricultural workers

The agricultural workers were presented with seventeen (17) different items on extension activities carried out in the Local Government to determine if they truly carry them out or not and were asked to rate the items which was presented on a 3-point Likert Type duration scale of always (3), occasional (2) and never (1)

Job Satisfaction of agricultural workers

Respondent were presented with six (6) item pertaining to job satisfaction and were asked to rate the items appropriately which were presented on a 4-point Likert Type satisfactory scale of highly satisfactory (4), satisfactory (3), not satisfactory (2) and not satisfactory at all (1).

Constraints facing agricultural workers

Respondents were presented with six (6) most important constraints they were facing in their work place and were told to state the ones they that hindered their performances

Chi-square analysis was used to determine the relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of agricultural workers and job satisfaction on extension services.

Data Analysis and Discussion of Results

Socio-economic characteristics of Respondents

Socio-economic characteristics may hinder the level of job satisfaction of agricultural workers as well as their total performance. Table 1 presents the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. As indicated in Table 1, the mean age of the respondents was 30 $\frac{1}{2}$ years. The oldest respondent was aged 40 years and above while the youngest respondent was below 20 years of age. Majority (67.5%) of the respondents were below 40 years of age. This age distribution of the respondents may give them more opportunity in extension service delivery as they fell generally within their active, innovative and productive years. The gender of an individual can influence the type and quality of activities they carry out. The results obtained revealed that there were more (69.2%) males involved in agricultural extension services than their female (30.8%) counterpart. This might be due to the nature of agricultural extension

activities which involves a lot of tasks requiring more physical, mental and emotional stability.

Generally, in agricultural production, the amount of family labour available is usually closely related to the marital status of an individual. Table 1 shows that majority (42.5%) of the respondents were married. Majority (55%) of the respondents were Muslims which implies that Mosques could be an appropriate medium through which agricultural workers in the area could be counselled on social welfare. Level of education is expected to influence an individual's innovativeness and ability to impart more positively on others. Education is therefore required for extension activities to be effectively carried out such that sustainable growth and development is attained in agriculture. As indicated in table 1, majority (41.7%) of agricultural workers had secondary education. This implies that further training is required in order to improve their performance. Position of an individual often depicts how well he or she is able to conduct his or herself in such a way that he or she is able to achieve 100% efficiency in his or her work. Table 1 also shows that majority (35.8%) of agricultural workers were holding other specify positions such as foreman, forester, horticulturist, sectional heads, desk officers, etc. Grade level sometimes determines the kind of tasks or activities assigned to an individual and the amount of money he or she obtained from the tasks. In table 1, nearly half (48.3%) of agricultural workers were between grade level 7 and 10 and were vested with the task of assisting the most senior workers in extension work although they do take charge of and supervise agricultural extension activities of some junior officers within their department or unit. Years of working experience is also related with the kind of tasks assigned to an individual in his work place. The result from Table 1 reveals that majority (48.8%) of agricultural workers had between 11 to 15 years of working experience in the area of extension service delivery and the average years of experience was 12 years. This indicates that agricultural workers have some years of reasonable experience in agricultural extension service which might have assisted in their performance efficiency and improve their effectiveness.

Table 1: Socio-economic characteristics of the respondents

Socio-economic characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Mean		
Age		
10-20	8	15.0
21-30	42	35.0
31-40	21	17.5
≤ 40	39	32.5
Total	120	100
Gender		
Male	83	69.2
Female	37	30.8
Total	120	100
Marital Status		
Single	9	7.5
Married	51	42.5
Divorced	25	20.8
Widowed	19	15.8
Separated	16	13.3
Total	120	100
Academic Qualification		
Primary Education	14	11.7
Secondary Education	50	41.7
OND/NCE	32	26.7
BSc/MSc	24	20.0
Total	120	100
Position		
HOD Agriculture	4	3.3
Agronomist	23	19.2
Livestock Overseer	17	14.2
Pest Control Overseer	17	14.2
Tractor Operator	10	8.3
Field Workers	43	35.8
Total	120	100
Grade Level		
4-6	38	31.6
7-9	21	17.5
10-12	20	16.7
13-15	38	31.7
≥16	4	3.2
Total	120	100
Years of Working Experience		
1-5	22	18.3
6-10	30	25.0
11-15	55	45.8
≤ 16	13	10.8
Total	120	100

Source: field Survey, 2011.

The Examined Extension activities

Agricultural workers highlighted some areas where extension activities were been carried out. Table 2 indicates that agricultural workers always collects and assists in evaluating data on agricultural extension services ($x=2.64$), assists farmers to procure agricultural machinery ($x=2.38$), provides adequate information to local farmers on marketing ($x=2.29$) and supervises agricultural extension programmes in a defined geographical zone within their local Govt areas ($x=2.27$) they ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th respectively while the respondents occasionally provides information on a good nutrition to farmers and their families ($x=2.18$), takes charges of agricultural pilot projects ($x=2.13$), assists in storing agricultural produce ($x=2.09$), and liaise with State and federal agents in respect of State and Federal agricultural extension projects in the Local Government Area which were ranked 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th respectively. The implication of this is that agricultural workers were not involved in advising the Local Government on matters relating to agricultural policies and programmes as they never monitor the execution of agricultural extension projects and programmes which would have lead to appropriate funding of agricultural projects and programmes.

Table 2: Various agricultural extension activities carried out by the respondents

Extension activities	Always	Occasionally	Never	Mean	Rank
Collecting and assisting in evaluating data on agricultural extension services.	89 (74.2%)	19 (15.8%)	12 (10%)	2.64	1 st
Assisting farmers to procure agricultural machinery like tractors.	60 (50%)	46 (38.3%)	14 (11.7%)	2.38	2 nd
Assisting on providing adequate information to local farmers on marketing.	53 (44.2%)	49 (40.8%)	18 (15%)	2.29	3 rd
Supervision of agricultural extension programmes in a defined geographical zone within a local Government Area.	54 (45%)	45 (37.5%)	21 (17.5%)	2.27	4 th
Provision of information on good nutrition to farmers and their families.	38 (31.7%)	65 (54.2%)	17 (14.2%)	2.18	5 th
Taking charge of agricultural pilot project.	42 (35%)	51 (42.5%)	27 (22.5%)	2.13	6 th
Assisting on storing agricultural produce.	37	57 (47.5%)	26	2.09	7 th

Liaison with State and Federal agents in respect of state and federal agricultural extension project in the local Govt. area.	35 (29.2%)	60 (50%)	25 (20.8%)	2.08	8 th
Assisting in providing relevant information.	39 (32.5%)	52 (43.3%)	29 (24.2%)	2.06	9 th
Attending ADP's Fortnight Training Review Meetings (FTRM)	46 (38.3%)	31 (25.8%)	43 (35.8%)	2.03	10 th
Monitoring the execution of agricultural extension project and programme.	40 (33.3%)	29 (24.2%)	51 (42.5%)	1.91	11 th
Provision of agricultural consultancy service.	38 (31.7%)	24 (20%)	58 (48.3%)	1.83	12 th
Assisting in providing local farmers with improve farming techniques.	19 (15.8%)	62 (51.7%)	39 (32.5%)	1.83	12 th
Supervision of agricultural loan.	33 (27.5%)	32 (26.7%)	55 (45.8%)	1.82	14 th
Assisting on processing of agricultural produce.	32 (26.7%)	19 (15.8%)	69 (57.5%)	1.69	15 th
Coordinating the activities of a number of junior agricultural workers in the local Government area.	23 (19.2%)	30 (25%)	67 (55.8%)	1.63	16 th
Advising Local Government. on matters relating to agricultural policies and programmes.	33 (27.5%)	7 (5.8%)	80 (66.7%)	1.61	17 th

Source: Field Survey, 2011.

The Job satisfaction of agricultural workers

Job satisfaction may impair the effectiveness of agricultural workers in extension service delivery. The respondents rated some items they perceived as aids to job satisfaction. Table 3 discloses the satisfaction of agricultural workers toward extension service delivery using four point Likert type scale of highly satisfactory, satisfactory, not satisfactory and not satisfactory at all with ratings of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. As indicated in table 3, the respondents were highly satisfied with in-service training ($x=3.30$) and job security ($x=3.03$) as they ranked 1st and 2nd respectively, some respondents were satisfied with the provision of

mobility ($x=3.00$) and salary adequacy ($x=2.93$) as they ranked 3rd and 4th respectively while others were not satisfied with regular monthly salary ($x=2.91$) and work satisfaction ($x=2.53$) which ranked 5th and 6th respectively. The implication of respondents high satisfaction in in-service training and job security reveals that since their work is pensionable, they were able to undergo various trainings that were either organized by the government (Local or State) or the educational institutions which might make them more effective and efficient in their performance. In order to increase their motivational level, agricultural workers should be paid regularly so that they would be happy delivering extension services to the farmers within their locality.

Table 3: Job Satisfaction of Agricultural Workers

Variables	Highly Satisfactory	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory at All	Mean	Rank
In-service training	59 (49.1%)	45 (37.4%)	10 (8.3%)	6 (4.9%)	3.30	1 st
Job security	54 (48%)	28 (23.3%)	25 (20.8%)	13 (10.8%)	3.03	2 nd
Provision of mobility	49 (40.9%)	39 (32.5%)	15 (12.5%)	17 (14.2%)	3.00	3 rd
Salary adequacy	43 (35.8%)	40 (33.3%)	22 (18.3%)	15 (12.5%)	2.93	4 th
Regular Monthly salary	42 (35%)	45 (37.4%)	14 (11.7%)	19 (15.8%)	2.91	5 th
Work satisfaction	30 (25%)	34 (28.3%)	26 (21.7%)	30 (25%)	2.53	6 th

Source: Field Survey, 2011

Constraints on the effective extension service delivery

Agricultural workers were faced with one problem or another in the process of carrying out their duties and as such, were asked to indicate from the list which one they perceived to be militating against effective service delivery in the study area. Results from Table 4 revealed that more than half of the respondents were faced with the problem of poor/non funding of agricultural which hindered them from delivering extension services to farmers within their locality. Very little above quarter were faced with the problem of mobility (26.7%), technical support (25.8%) as well as coverage of large farm families (27.5%). Only 21.7% respondents perceived in-service training as a constraint however, 40% were not given allowances for over-time duty and this hindered their effectiveness in extension service delivery. This might be due to the fact that

agricultural project were not funded appropriately if funded at all. The implication of this is that extension services were not adequately delivered to farm families since many of them could not be covered.

Table 4: Constraints facing Agricultural Workers

Constraints	Percentage	Frequency
Mobility	32	26.7
In-service Training	26	21.7
Technical Support	31	25.8
Coverage of large Farm Families	33	27.5
Funding of Agricultural Projects	74	61.7
Allowances for over-time duty	48	40

Source: Field Survey, 2011; NB: Multiple response

Relationships between socio-economic characteristics of respondents and job satisfactions

The Chi-square analysis in Table 5 indicates that age ($X^2=104.89, t=28.87$), gender ($X^2=120.00, t=12.59$), marital status ($X^2=118.27, t=36.42$), religion ($X^2=80.59, t=21.03$), academic qualification ($X^2=120.45, t=28.87$), position ($X^2=190.14, t=43.77$), grade level ($X^2=85.23, t=21.03$), years of working experience ($X^2=89.08, t=28.87$) and average monthly salary ($X^2=91.44, t=28.87$) are all related to job satisfaction of the respondents. This implies that all the variables in the chi-square equation were significant with job satisfaction of agricultural workers at $p \leq 0.025$. As a result, it is decided that the stated null hypothesis be rejected implying that there is a significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of agricultural workers and job satisfaction as it affect their effective performance.

Table 5: Relationship between selected socio-economic characteristics of respondents and job satisfaction

Variables	Calculated X^2	Table value	Decision
Inference			
Age	104.89	28.87	Rejected
Significant			
Gender	120.00	12.59	Rejected
Significant			
Marital Status	118.27	36.42	Rejected
Significant			
Religion	80.59	21.03	Rejected
Significant			
Academic Qualification	120.45	28.87	Rejected
Significant			
Position	190.14	43.77	Rejected
Significant			
Grade Level	85.23	21.03	Rejected
Significant			
Years of working Experience	89.08	28.87	Rejected
Significant			
Average Monthly Salary	91.44	28.87	Rejected
Significant			

Source: Data analysis, 2011; Test is significant at 0.025

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was evident that agricultural workers are satisfied with their job as they partook in all activities involved in extension services and the fact that their job is pensionable, they were able to fortified themselves with various in-service training programmes which would boost their knowledge for effective extension service delivery. However, they were still faced with some constraint which is limiting them from utilizing their potentials for maximum efficiency in extension service delivery. In order to ensure that extension services contribute positively to agricultural development in Nigeria, the study therefore recommends that government should provide adequate funding for agricultural pilot projects within their locality such that agricultural extension service is delivered to farmers as at when due. Extension agencies at all levels of Government (Federal, State and Local) should work together to motivate agricultural workers through provision of incentives in terms of over-time allowances to be able to carry out all agricultural extension activities within their locality. Government should ensure that agricultural workers' salary is attractive,

adequate, reasonable and regularly paid so that they would be geared toward performing their duties effectively and efficiently in the Nigerian environment.

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