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The Reality of Extension Activities Provided By Extension Centers From The Point Of View Of Farmers In Halabja Governorate.

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ABSTRACT

The research sought to examine the current state of agricultural extension services offered by agricultural extension centers, as perceived by farmers in Halabja Governorate. It also aimed to assess the level of satisfaction among farmers regarding the performance of agricultural extension workers. Additionally, the research aimed to identify the variations in farmers' perspectives on the agricultural extension activities provided by these centres, based on different research variables. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and personal interviews, the research population included all the villages in Halabja Governorate, numbering (141) villages, A simple random sample was taken from the villages at a rate of (25.53%) and in the amount of (30) villages, The number of farmers in these villages was (720) farmers, Then a proportional random sample was taken at a rate of (17.5%), so the sample size was (126) farmers. At a rate of 25.53% and in thirty villages, a basic random sample was drawn from the villages. There were 720 farmers living in these villages. Following that, a proportionate random sample of 126 farmers was drawn at a rate of 17.5% from the research population. The research findings indicated that, from the farmers' perspective, the effectiveness of the extension activities provided by the extension centers is perceived to be very low. Additionally, the level of farmers' satisfaction with the performance of agricultural extension workers is low, with a tendency towards being average, as will as there is no variation among farmers in the extension activities provided by the extension centers according to the research variables (Age, Gender, Marital Status, Years of agricultural experience, Size of farm holding, Type of farm holding, Participation in training courses). At the same time, there is variation according to two variables (Educational level, sources of agricultural information), Therefore, researchers recommend the need to provide continuous training programs for agricultural guides to ensure updating knowledge and skills, work to build trust between extension centers and farmers by providing reliable and effective services, and use modern technologies in disseminating agricultural information and guidance.

***Keywords*:** Extension activities, Extension centers, Agricultural extension workers, Farmer, Halabja Governorate.

INTRODUCTION

In most of the world's developed or developing countries, the agricultural sector is one of the most significant economic sectors comprising their economic structures. [1, 2] This sector plays a pivotal strategic role, as it bears a major responsibility in achieving food security, providing basic inputs for other economic sectors, and meeting local demand for food [3], Therefore, modernizing and expanding the agricultural sector's production methods is currently imperative in order to optimize the prospects for attaining economic development across the board, not just a goal pursued by developing nations [4]. The effectiveness of agricultural extension agencies has allowed many developed and some developing nations to experience a groundbreaking agricultural renaissance. Through agricultural educational extension programs, agricultural extension aims to achieve food security that serves the interests of all members of society, particularly the poor, and can be achieved through available agricultural production. [5] Agricultural extension works to provide the conditions that lead to improving the methods and means of exploiting the resources available to rural people, through the programs, projects and activities provided that aim to modernize the agricultural sector and increase its ability to compete in the market.[6] Through behavioral changes in farmers' knowledge, skills, attitudes, and culture, agricultural extension is one of the most crucial development tools and agricultural policies to achieve sustainable agricultural development [7]. This increases agricultural productivity and raises the standard of living for rural families. [8] These behavioral changes can only be achieved through guidance programs and activities that are considered the starting point for bringing about targeted changes [9].

The extension activity is defined as the effort made by the agricultural extension worker in carrying out the basic tasks of his extension function. Extension activities are considered among the most important educational activities provided by the various agricultural extension agencies to the audience of extension workers. Their success depends on the extent of farmers' participation in them and their benefit from them by applying their extension content in working to increase production and improve its quality, and thus increase incomes and improve the standard of living [10]. Abdullah [11] believes that the extension activities in which farmers participated were represented in: attending extension meetings, reading agricultural extension publications, increasing extension fields, participating in extension campaigns, field days,

practical data, seminars, video presentations, and mobile agricultural theatre.
Some studies indicate the weakness of extension activities by extension centers, including study [12] and study [13] in Iraq, where their research verified the lack of extension activities and services directed to farmers by extension centers. This is not far from the extension organizations in the Kurdistan Region, which is a part of Iraq and has the same issues as other Iraqi extension organizations. They suffer from the poor extension services that extension centers offer to farmers. which has had a negative impact on the level of performance and effectiveness of the extension organization [14].

These developments had an impact on the Kurdistan Region, which includes the Halabja Governorate. As a result, the sector became weaker and the government had to rely more on imports to make up for the shortfall in domestic production, and to stay up with the rapid advancements in both production and agriculture, agricultural extension centers must be developed, along with its diverse activities and practices. Agricultural extension must be tailored to farmers' growing demands for increased agricultural productivity. [8]. This study came to show the level of extension activities provided by agricultural extension centers in agricultural development and to know the extent of farmers' satisfaction with the performance of extension agents for their roles in developing the agricultural sector and developing rural areas. Generally, the study aims to respond to these queries:

1. What is the level of the extension activities offered by extension centres from the perspective of the farmers in the Halabja Governorate?
2. To what level do farmers in Halabja Governorate feel satisfied with the performance of agricultural extension workers?
3. Do farmers in the Halabja Governorate have differing views about the quality of extension services provided by the extension centers?

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES:

1. Identify the level of extension activities provided by extension centers in the Halabja Governorate from the point of view of the farmers.
2. Identify the degree of farmers' satisfaction with agricultural extension workers.
3. Determining the variation in the respondents' views about the level of extension activities provided by extension centers in Halabja Governorate according to the independent variables studied.

3. HYPOTHESES FOR RESEARCH:

There are significant differences between the research sample categories in their views about to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to the following independent variables (age, gender, educational level, marital status, years of experience in the field of agriculture, size of farm holding, type of farm holding, participation in training courses, and sources of agricultural)

4. MATERIALS AND METHODS:

Methodology for Research: This research fits into the descriptive research approach because it describes the current state of affairs and interprets it by collecting information on the range of viewpoints, stances, and responses regarding the extent of extension activities offered by extension centers. [15]

Research area: The Halabja Governorate in the Kurdistan Region was selected for the study because it is regarded as a significant agricultural region, providing the majority of the population in the region with a means of subsistence. Situated in the northeastern region of Iraq, the Halabja Governorate is situated 76 kilometers southeast of Sulaymaniyah. Of the (342107) dunums total area in the district, 232243 dunums are unsuitable for agricultural use. It is (109864) dunums that are suitable for agriculture, of which 62480 dunums are rain-fed and (47384) dunums, are irrigated.

The research population and its sample:

The research population included all the villages in Halabja Governorate, numbering (141) villages. A simple random sample was taken from the villages at a rate of (25.53%) and in the amount of (30) villages. The number of farmers in these villages was (720) farmers. Then a proportional random sample was taken at a rate of (17.5%), so the sample size was (126) farmers.

Data collection tool:

The questionnaire is a useful tool for gathering factual data, information, and information that will help achieve the research objectives. [16]. in order to achieve the research objectives, a special questionnaire was designed consisting of two parts. It was created after the researcher read the scientific and literary works about agricultural extension and spoke with experts in the field: The independent factors are listed in the first part along with their age, gender, educational level, marital status, years of agricultural experience, size of farm holding, type of farm holding, participation in training courses, and agricultural information sources. The second part included two axes: The first axis measures the extent of extension services offered by extension centers from the perspective of farmers in the Halabja Governorate. Through a likert-type scale containing (19) items and three alternatives (high activity, low activity, and non-existent) assigned weights (3, 2, 1) respectively, this scale's scores fell between (19 - 57) degree. The second axis measures the degree of farmers' satisfaction with agricultural extension in the Halabja Governorate extension apparatus. It was composed of (18) items with a three alternatives scale (satisfied with work, neutral, and dissatisfied), with weights (3, 2, 1) assigned to each item on the scale. This scale's scores fell between (18 - 54) degree. The questionnaire was given to a group of experts in the University of Sulaimani's Department of Agribusiness and Rural Development to confirm its face and content validity. The questionnaire was amended by adding or removing paragraphs based on their advice. In order to verify the validity of the questionnaire items, a pre-test was conducted on the form on 5/5/2024 on a sample of (20) farmers in Halabja Governorate outside the research sample. The split-half method was followed to measure the reliability using the Pearson equation, which reached a value of (0.83) and was corrected for the scale as a whole using the Spearman Brown equation, which reached a value of (0.90) and the validity, was extracted, which reached (0.94). As a result, the questionnaire had

excellent validity and reliability. Reliability is deemed acceptable and satisfactory when it reaches a value of 0.70 or higher [17], which indicates that the scale produces comparable results when used again on the same subjects under the same circumstances and after some time has passed. [18] The questionnaire was prepared for distribution and data collection upon completing paragraph modifications and reliability and validity assessments. The respondents' information was gathered between May 20, 2023, and June 20, 2024.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. 1. Identify the level of extension activities provided by extension centers in the Halabja Governorate from the point of view of the farmers.

According to the research findings, on a scale of the degree of extension activities offered by extension centers, which ranged from (57-19) degrees, the highest numerical value obtained by farmers was (42) degrees, and the lowest numerical value was (20) degrees. The average of these values was (24.76) degrees, with a standard deviation of (2.96). The respondents were distributed according to the degrees of extension activities into three categories (low, medium, high) based on their respective scores, as shown in Table 1.

Table No. (1): Respondent distribution according to the degrees of extension activities

Level of extension activities	Frequency	%	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low (20 – 26)	117	92.8	24.14	1.44
Medium (27 – 33)	6	4.8	29.66	1.75
High (34 – 42)	3	2.4	39.33	2.51
Total	126	100%	24.76	2.96

It is clear from Table (1) that the majority of respondents (92.8%) fell into the low category, and 4.8% fell into the medium category, this indicates that the low and medium categories accounted for 97.6% of the respondents. Therefore, the level of extension activities provided by extension centers can be described as low to average, perhaps due to the lack of capabilities available by extension centers to implement agricultural extension programs in the research area, or there may be a shortage of trained and qualified human resources to provide effective agricultural extension in the governorate, this is consistent with the study [12].

2. Identify the degree of farmers' satisfaction with agricultural extension workers.

According to the research findings, farmers' satisfaction with agricultural extension workers level scale scores ranged from (54–18) degree, with the highest numerical value being (50) degree and the lowest being (29) degree, The scale's average was (37.1) degree, with a standard deviation of (4.11), The respondents were distributed according to their levels of satisfaction with agricultural into three categories (low, medium, high), as seen in Table 2

Table No. (2) Distribution of respondents according to satisfaction with agricultural extension workers levels

Level of farmers' satisfaction	Frequency	**%**	Mean	Std. Deviation
Low (29 – 35)	70	55.5	34.10	1.93
Medium (36 – 42)	50	39.7	39.92	2.31
High (43 – 50)	6	4.8	46.66	1.96
Total	126	100%	37.10	4.11

It is clear from Table (2) that the low and medium categories accounted for 95.2% of the respondents, As a result, it is possible to characterize farmers' satisfaction with agricultural extension workers as low to medium. The reason for this could be that the advice given by agricultural extension workers is not applicable or appropriate for the conditions of the local farm, or it could be that the information they provide is outdated or erroneous, eroding public trust in their services.

3. Determining the variation in the respondents' views about the level of extension activities provided by extension centers in Halabja Governorate according to the independent variables studied.

The findings indicated that the respondents' ages varied from 19 to 71 years old, with an average age of 41.48 years. Three age categories were created based on the respondents' ages. The results show that the age group of 54–37 years old has the most significant percentage of people (46.0%), while the age group of people above 54 years old has the lowest percentage (16.7%). Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to age categories. The result was (0.355), which is less than the tabular (F) value at a significance level of (0.05). Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to age groups) are rejected. According to Table (3), this indicates that farmers of various ages have similar views about the extension activities offered by the extension centers.

Additionally, according to the research's findings, 36.5 percent of respondents were women and 63.5 percent of all respondents were men. Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to gender categories, After the analysis of variance was performed, the result showed that the calculated value of (F) was (0.245), which is less than the tabular (F) value at (0.05), Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to gender) are rejected according to Table (3), this indicates that farmers of the same gender hold comparable opinions regarding the extension services provided by the extension centers.

According to the findings, the category with (unlearned) achieved the most percentage (40.5%), while the group with institute graduates obtained the lowest proportion (4.8%). Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to the educational level, after the

analysis of variance was performed, the result showed that the calculated value of (F) was (3.392), which is greater than the tabular (F) value at (0.05). Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according the Educational attainment) are accepted, this means that farmers differ in their opinions about the extension activities provided by the extension centers according to their educational level. This may be because uneducated farmers are dedicated to agricultural work and feel the services provided by extension, unlike educated farmers, as shown in Table (3):

The research findings indicated that the married group represented the highest percentage at 83.3%, whereas the divorced group had the lowest percentage at 3.2%. Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to marital status categories, after the analysis of variance was performed, the result showed that the calculated value of (F) was (0.321), which is less than the tabular (F) value at (0.05), Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to social status) are rejected. This indicates that farmers, regardless of their social status, hold similar views regarding the extension activities offered by the extension centers, as illustrated in Table (3).

The research findings indicated that farmers' agricultural experience varied from 3 to 54 years, averaging 24.76 years. The most significant proportion, 40.5%, of farmers had between 3 and 15 years of experience, while the smallest proportion, 7.1%, fell within the range of 42 to 54 years. Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to years of agricultural experience categories, After the analysis of variance was performed the result showed that the calculated value of (F) was (0.355), which is less than the tabular (F) value at (0.05), Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to years of experience) are rejected. This indicates that farmers, regardless of their years of experience, hold similar views regarding the extension activities offered by the extension centers, as illustrated in Table (3).

The findings indicated that the respondents' farm holdings varied from 2 to 25 dunums, with an average size of 8.74. The largest proportion, 66.7%, was found in the category of 2 to 9 dunums, while the smallest proportion, at 6.3%, was 18 to 25 years.

Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to size of the farm holdings categories, After the analysis of variance was performed, the result showed that the calculated value of (F) was (1.907), which is less than the tabular (F) value at (0.05), Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to the size of the farm holdings) are rejected, this indicates that farmers of the same gender hold comparable opinions regarding the extension services provided by the extension centers, this indicates that farmers, regardless of the size of their farm holdings, share similar views on the extension activities offered by the extension centers, as illustrated in Table (3).

regarding the type of agricultural land tenure, the results showed that the most significant % of respondents, at 68.3%, belong to the ownership category, with an average of 24.96 degrees. Conversely, the smallest proportion of respondents, at 7.1%, is in the participation category. Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to type of agricultural land tenure categories, After the analysis of variance was performed, the result showed that the calculated value of (F) was (0.610), which is less than the tabular (F) value at (0.05), Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to Type of agricultural land tenure) are rejected, this indicates that farmers, regardless of the Type of agricultural land tenure, share similar views on the extension activities offered by the extension centers, as illustrated in Table (3).

The research results also indicated that 89.7% of farmers do not engage in training courses, whereas 10.3% do take part in such courses. Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to training courses, After the analysis of variance was performed, the result showed that the calculated value of (F) was (2.245), which is less than the tabular (F) value at (0.05), Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to training courses) are rejected, this indicates that farmers, regardless of the training courses, share similar views on the extension activities offered by the extension centers, as illustrated in Table (3).

The findings of the research indicated that the maximum numerical value representing the information sources is 28 degrees, while the minimum is 11 degrees, resulting in an average of 19.61 degrees. The respondents' exposure to

Table (3): Distribution of respondents according to Independent variables

Variables	Frequency	%	Activity Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Age						
19-36	47	37.3	25.04			
37-54	58	46.0	24.63	2.96	0.355	0.702
More than (54)	21	16.7	24.47			
Gender						
Male	80	63.5	24.66	-	0.245	0.622
Female	46	36.5	24.93			
Educational level						
unlearned	51	40.5	24.49			
Primary education	20	15.9	24.30			
Intermediate	21	16.6	23.85	-	3.392	0.007*
High School	20	15.9	26.55			
Diploma	6	4.8	23.16			
Bachelor	8	6.3	24.76			
Marital status						
Married	105	83.3	24.68			
Single	17	13.5	25.29	-	0.321	0.726
Divorced	4	3.2	24.50			
experience in the field of agriculture						
3-15	51	40.5	25.00			
16-28	49	38.9	24.78	2.96	0.355	0.786
29-41	17	13.5	24.35			
42-54	9	7.1	24.11			
Size of farm holding/ Dunums						
2-9	84	66.7	25.06			
10-17	34	27.0	24.41	2.96	1.907	0.153
18-25	8	6.3	23.12			
Type of agricultural land tenure						
Ownership	86	68.3	24.96			
Agricultural contracts	20	15.9	24.50	-	0.610	0.610
Rent	11	8.7	24.54			
Participation	9	7.1	23.66			
Participate in training courses						
Participated	13	10.3	25.92	-	2.245	0.137
Non-Participated	113	89.7	24.62			
Sources of agricultural information						
11-16	18	14.3	23.83			
17-22	88	69.8	24.59	2.96	4.091	0.019*
23-28	20	15.9	26.35			
Total	126	100				

information sources was categorized into three groups, as illustrated in Table 3. The most significant proportion of respondents, at 69.8%, is situated within the 22-17-degree category, whereas the smallest proportion, at 14.3%, is found in the 16-11-degree category. Analysis of variance was performed to compare the arithmetic means of the degree of extension activities offered by the extension centers according to information sources, after the analysis of variance was performed, the result showed that the calculated value of (F) was (4.091), which is greater than the tabular (F) value at (0.05). Consequently, the research hypothesis that claims (that there are significant differences between the research

sample categories in their response to the level of extension activities provided by the extension centers according to information sources) are accepted, this indicates that farmers, based on their information sources, have differing opinions regarding the advisory activities provided by extension centers. This variation may be attributed to the fact that an increase in information and knowledge among farmers can enhance collaboration and participation between them and the extension centers. Consequently, this could lead to improved effectiveness of advisory programs and greater farmer involvement in workshops and training sessions, as illustrated in Table (3).

CONCLUSIONS:

Based on the findings of the research, the subsequent conclusions can be made:

1. The study results reveal that the extension services offered by the extension centers, as perceived by farmers in Halabja governorate, are inadequate. This may imply a scarcity of resources at the extension centers for executing agricultural advisory initiatives in the region, or it could indicate a shortfall in the trained and competent personnel required to provide effective agricultural support within the province.
2. Low of farmers satisfaction with agricultural extension agents may lead to non-compliance with their extension, which may lead to farmers using incorrect or even harmful practices, thus reducing agricultural productivity.
3. There is a discrepancy in farmers' opinions regarding the extension activities provided by extension centers in Halabja Governorate according to the research variable (educational level, sources of agricultural information). This suggests that higher levels of education improve farmers' capacity to interact with agricultural extension, leading to a more productive sharing of information, experiences, and expertise. Additionally, those farmers who possess a greater depth of knowledge are better equipped to provide comprehensive and accurate feedback to the extension centers regarding their needs and difficulties. Such feedback can enable the centers to customize their services to address these particular demands more effectively.
4. The research findings indicate that farmers in Halabja Governorate exhibit uniformity in their perceptions of the extension activities offered by the extension centers, irrespective of various demographic and experiential factors such as age, gender, social status, years of agricultural experience, size of farm holding, type of farm holding, and participation in training courses. This consensus among farmers across different categories suggests a significant level of awareness regarding these variables.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

1. Providing continuous training programs for farmers and agricultural extension workers to ensure updating knowledge and skills.
2. Building trust between extension centers and farmers by providing reliable and effective services, and transparency in dealing.
3. Increasing the level of education among farmers can motivate extension centers to focus more on research and development to provide innovative and effective solutions to agricultural challenges.
4. Using modern technologies to disseminate agricultural information and guidance, such as smart applications and e-learning platforms for farmers.
5. Undertaking additional research akin to this study, this seeks to identify the factors and barriers that may influence the counseling services offered by extension centers.
6. considering the study results when designing comprehensive guidance curricula that cover various agricultural aspects such as crop management, animal husbandry, soil conservation, and water resources management.

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واقع النشاطات الارشادية المقدمة من قبل المراكز الارشادية من وجهة نظر المزارعين في محافظة حلبجة

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الخلاصة

استهدف البحث التعرف على واقع النشاطات الارشادية المقدمة من قبل المراكز الارشادية من وجهة نظر المزارعين في محافظة حلبجة ، التعرف على درجة رضا المزارعين عن المرشدين الزراعيين، فضلاً عن تحديد التباين بين آراء المزارعين نحو النشاطات الارشادية المقدمة من قبل المراكز الارشادية وفق لمتغيرات البحث، وقد تم جمع البيانات باستخدام استبيان و بطريقة المقابلة الشخصية، شمل مجتمع البحث جميع القرى في محافظة حلبجة والبالغ عددهم (141) قرية، وتم أخذ عينة عشوائية بسيطة من القرى بنسبة (% 25.53) وبواقع (30) قرية وقد بلغ عدد المزارعين في هذه القرى (720) مزارعاً ثم اخذت عينة عشوائية تناسبية بنسبة (17.5%) فكان حجم العينة بمقدار (126) مزارعا، وقد ظهرت نتائج البحث ان مستوى واقع النشاطات الارشادية المقدمة من قبل المراكز الارشادية من وجهة نظر المزارعين منخفض جداً، وبينت نتائج البحث ان مستوى رضا المزارعين عن المرشدين الزراعيين بأنه منخفض يميل الى المتوسط ، وانه لايوجد تباين بين آراء المزارعين نحو النشاطات الارشادية المقدمة من قبل المراكز الارشادية وفق متغيرات البحث (العمر، الجنس ، الحالة الاجتماعية ، سنوات الخبرة الزراعية ،حجم الحيازة المزرعية، نوع الحيازة المزرعية، مشاركة في الدورات التدريبية) في حين يوجد

التباين وفق متغيرين (المستوى التعليمي ، مصادر المعلومات الزراعية)، لذا يوصى الباحثون بضرورة توفير برامج تدريبية مستمرة للمزارعين والمرشدين الزراعيين لضمان تحديث المعارف والمهارات ، العمل على بناء الثقة بين المراكز الإرشادية والمزارعين من خلال تقديم خدمات موثوقة وفعالة، واستخدام التقنيات الحديثة في نشر المعلومات والإرشادات الزراعية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النشاطات الارشادية ، المراكز الارشادية ، المرشدين الزراعيين، محافظة حلبجة.