



The reality of the extension tasks provided by agricultural employees to improve extension work in the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate.

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to identify the actual responsibilities assigned to agricultural staff to improve the extension work in the Directorate of Agriculture of Nineveh, to determining the correlation between the reality of the extension tasks provided to agricultural employees and the variables (age, Academic achievement, job service, participation in training courses, desire for renewal). In addition to identifying the most important proposals of agricultural employees to overcome the extension obstacles they face while performing their work. The research population included all employees within the agricultural sector of the Directorate of agriculture, and its agricultural divisions, and their number (400) employees, in the city center and the agricultural divisions, amounting to (28) divisions, , a simple sample was extracted randomly and by (25%) Therefore, the final research sample reached (100) employees. A questionnaire form was used to collect data consisting of three parts, the first part includes personal and functional characteristics of respondents. The second part was a measure to determine the reality of the extension tasks provided to agricultural employees to improve the extension work, which included 20 items. The third part included the most prominent proposals made by the employees themselves and identified the proposals related to their work. The findings indicated that the level of application of agricultural employees to the extension tasks is average and tends to rise, findings indicated a significant association between the reality of the extension tasks provided to agricultural employees and the following independent variables (age, Academic achievement, desire for renewal).

Keywords: Extension work, Extension tasks, Extension, reality, agricultural employees, Nineveh.

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INTRODUCTION

The nations of the globe encounter significant obstacles in the realm of agriculture, with the primary concern being the attainment of sustainable food security, which is counterbalanced by a rise in population. [1]

The challenges of agricultural production, increasing farmers' incomes, conserving natural resources, ensuring food security, and reducing rural poverty continue to be of utmost importance in the world today. These challenges place significant pressure on governments, particularly in developing countries, as well as on ministries, relevant national development organizations, and service systems. [2]

Agricultural extension comes among those systems, whose importance can be summarized as there is a positive relationship between the level of development of agriculture in any country and the level of development of the extension system. [3]Agricultural extension has been crucial in facilitating agricultural and rural development since its establishment. [4] .Hence, the government is keen on promoting extension activity and its workforce to enhance the effectiveness of the agricultural extension system, aiming to increase agricultural production by urging the official agencies to work to exploit all the opportunities available to them to advance the agricultural sector to reach the stage of self-sufficiency of society [5]. Through the development of extension work and its workers with the state's orientation to the need for comprehensive reform of all agricultural bodies and sectors [6].

Agricultural extension organisations contribute to development by raising the efficiency of production elements, including the human element, by educating the human element and linking scientific research to real production problems. [7]. In addition, it will exploit the potential of the rural environment and the human energies of the rural family, as well as develop, implement, and follow up local extension programs according to economic indicators [8] .

The agricultural extension agency is one of the pillars of achieving sustainable development, through the dynamic function as it does not work away from the surrounding environment and requires it to continue to develop its organizational structure, as the main channel for transferring the results of agricultural research and modern technical methods into application and implementation by farmers to modernise agriculture and increase agricultural productivity [9].

The agricultural extension apparatus provides comprehensive training to its workers on the latest advancements in agricultural extension. This training aims to enhance the quality of the extension services offered by rehabilitating workers in the area of agricultural extension, especially agricultural extensionists, by providing all their needs while providing a positive psychological atmosphere in field work. [10].

Providing agricultural extension workers with the modern and advanced knowledge and skills necessary for their work so that the agricultural extension can use all his psychological, cognitive and skill tools to improve the extension activities he provides to farmers, which are reflected in the form of effective agricultural extension services and thus facilitate conviction and adoption, which is reflected in increasing knowledge, improving the performance of farmers, increasing their productivity and increasing the quality of crops [11].

Successful extension work of any kind will be reflected in improving the performance of individuals, which in turn positively affects the improvement and increase of agricultural production [12].

Due to the continuous change of agricultural expertise, the workers in the agricultural extension apparatus, including engineers, extension workers and agricultural technicians, must be aware of all the new agricultural ideas and modern techniques in the field of agriculture [13].

This is accomplished by identifying training and rehabilitation programs that aim to enhance the skills and capacities of agricultural extension workers in the field of agricultural extension. These programs must be tailored to address their specific needs and requirements [14].

As government recruitment in the agricultural sector has increased for top graduates and holders of advanced degrees, this has prompted the researchers to highlight the rise in the number of workers in the agricultural extension sector. There is a pressing need to develop an understanding among those responsible for allocating extension tasks among employees based on criteria and specifications that align with the capabilities and characteristics of agricultural staff on one hand, and the practical realities of the targeted agricultural communities in the development process on the other.

Accordingly, the study questions were as follows.

- 1- What is the reality of implementing extension tasks provided to agricultural employees to improve extension work?
- 2- Is there a correlation between the independent and dependent factors and what form of relationship?
- 3- What proposals do agricultural employees consider necessary to solve the counselling obstacles they face while performing their work?

Operational definitions

- 1- **Agricultural employees:** They are all employees working in the field of agricultural extension who undertake extension duties and tasks and are assigned by their supervisors to organize, plan, implement, and evaluate work to achieve the objectives of their departments.
- 2- **extension work:** It means the number of tasks and duties that the respondent performs in his field of work in agricultural extension within the level at which he is located in the extension organizational structure.

Research Objectives:

- 1- Identify the reality of the extension tasks provided by agricultural employees to improve the extension work in the Directorate of Agriculture of Nineveh.
- 2- Identifying the correlation between the reality of the extension tasks provided by agricultural employees and the following independent variables (Age, Academic achievement, Job service, Participation in training courses, Desire for renewal).

Identify the most important proposals of agricultural employees to overcome the extension obstacles they face during the performance of their work.

Materials and Methods

1- The research Population and sample:

The research Population in Nineveh Governorate included all agricultural workers in the Directorate of Agriculture of Nineveh and its agricultural divisions, and their number is (400) employees, in the city center and the agricultural divisions, amounting to (28) division, extracting proportional and stratified random sample and by (25%), thus the final research sample reached (100) employees.

2- Research tool:

The questionnaire was used as a tool in this research. The face validity and content validity of the questionnaire was found by presenting the research tool to a number of experts in the department of Agricultural Extension and Technology Transfer. (30) forms were excluded from the main research sample for the initial test to extract reliability, The Cronbach alpha coefficient was used to determine the dependability value of the instrument, yielding a score of 0.89. as the questionnaire form consisted of a number of questions that are sent by hand delivered to the respondents specified for the study sample to write down their answer without the help of the researcher. Where the researchers prepared the questionnaire form, which was prepared specifically for the subject of the research, and the initial items of the questionnaire related to the subject of the research were collected from several sources such as previous studies and some publications on the Internet, as well as through some personal interviews with a number of employees specialized in the subject of the research, in addition to some discussions with professors specialized in the subject from the College of Agriculture and Forestry, University of Mosul. The questionnaire form consisted of three parts as follows:

FIRST PART:

includes data and personal and functional characteristics of the respondents under study, which included (age, Academic achievement, job service, participation in training courses, desire for renewal), has been measured as follows:

Age: At the time of data collection, this variable was quantified by the respondent's age of existence.

Academic achievement: This variable was measured according to the following levels (preparatory, agricultural

diploma, bachelor's, higher Education degrees) and was given the following numerical values: (4,3,2,1) respectively.

Duration of Career Service: Determined by the employee's number of years of employment.

Participation in training courses: The respondents were classified according to their participation in the training into two categories (yes, no), and numerical values were allocated to them, which are (2,1) respectively, in addition to the number of courses in which they participated if they answered the participation.

Desire for renewal: This variable was measured by a three-tiered scale that included three levels (often, sometimes, rarely) for the positive items, of which numerical values were given represented by (3,2,1) in order for each of the eight items, and inverse numerical values were given (1,2,3) respectively, where the paragraphs (4) were positive and while (4) were negative and with the total scores of the scale, the variable of desire for renewal was measured.

SECOND PART: included a scale to measure the reality of the extension tasks provided to agricultural employees to improve the extension work, which included (20) items where the answer alternatives were identified for each paragraph (I always do it / I do it often / I do it sometimes / I do it rarely /) has been set numerical values for each of these alternatives quadruple as follows (4, 3, 2, 1), respectively

THIRD PART: Where it included the most prominent proposals made by the workers themselves and to determine the proposals of employees working in the agricultural sector, an open question was developed for the purpose of collecting the answers of employees and knowing their proposals freely, and frequencies and percentages were used to know the most frequent proposals of agricultural extension workers to, develop solutions to address the obstacles facing the respondents in their work.

Statistical means: After the completion of data collection, it was audited, classified and classified in special tables in the program (Excel) analyzed the data in the statistical analysis program ((Spss and some other statistical means such as (frequencies, percentage, range, arithmetic mean, standard deviation, simple correlation coefficient for Pearson, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient).

Results and discussion

Identify the reality of the extension tasks provided to agricultural employees to improve the extension work in the Directorate of Agriculture of Nineveh.

The lowest value of this variable was (25), the highest value was (72), the arithmetic mean (49.14) and the standard deviation was (9.6), and the range was used to divide the categories of respondents into 3 categories, as shown in Table (1). The percentage of the low category (25-40) (13%), the percentage of the middle category (41-56) (68%), and the percentage of the high category (57-72) (19%).

Table (1) Distribution of agricultural employees according to the reality of the extension tasks

| Categories of respondents | Freq. | % | means |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Low Category (25-40) | 13 | 13 | 33.15 |
| Middle Category (41-56) | 68 | 68 | 48.36 |
| High Category (57-72) | 19 | 19 | 62.84 |
| Total | 100 | % 100 | |

The data shown in the table indicates that 87% of the participants have an average level of application of the extension tasks and tends to rise, and this may be due to their sense of the importance of agricultural work, especially with the high prices of local product after the closure of import ports according to the instructions of the Ministry of Agriculture, in addition to the possibility of a high level of ambition for respondents who have a desire to complete postgraduate studies and therefore tend to prove their capabilities in front of executives. The results of this research are in agreement with those of the study (15), but the findings of the studies (9 and 16) are in disagreement with this result.

1- Determine the correlation between the reality of the extension tasks provided to agricultural employees and the following independent variables (age, academic achievement, duration of career service, participation in training courses, desire for renewal).

Age: Table (2) indicates that the respondents' age ranges from a minimum of 25 years to a maximum of 54 years.. This variable was divided into three categories using the law of the range, where the percentage of young ages was (25-34) years (31%), the middle age group (35-44) years was (53%), while the percentage of the large age group was (45-54) years (16%).

Table (2) displays the breakdown of responders by age

| Categories of respondents according to age | Freq. | % | Means | pearson value |
|--|-------|------|-------|---------------|
| Young Ages (25-34) | 31 | 31 | 52.54 | - *0.215 |
| Middle Ages (35-44) | 53 | 53 | 47.43 | |
| Elderly Employees (45-55) | 16 | 16 | 46.87 | |
| Total | 100 | %100 | | |

Table (2) indicates that the middle age group had the highest proportion, reaching 53%, and their degree of execution of the leading tasks was 47.43. The Pearson correlation analysis test revealed a significant negative association at the 0.05 level., and this may be due to the fact that employees with young ages tend to carry out the guiding tasks to a high degree as a result of their enjoyment of an updated level of information on how to face working conditions in the extension environment, in addition to the desire of some of them to improve the reality of his job by proving capabilities and merit when trying to assume leadership positions and this result is consistent with the study of (1) This result differs from the findings of a study (7)

Academic achievement: Table (3) indicates that the respondents were distributed according to their level of education into four categories, where the percentage of respondents who had an academic achievement (agricultural preparatory school) was (25%), while the percentage of respondents with an academic achievement (agricultural diploma) and (bachelor's) was (33%) for both categories, while the percentage of respondents who had their level of education (higher education certificate) was (9%).

Table (3) displays the distribution of participants based on their academic achievement.

| Categories of education level | Freq. | % | Means | Spearman value |
|-------------------------------|-------|------|-------|----------------|
| agricultural preparatory | 25 | 25 | 50.79 | *0.195 |
| Agricultural Diploma | 33 | 33 | 43.55 | |
| Bachelor | 33 | 33 | 41.87 | |
| Higher education | 9 | 9 | 49.88 | |
| Total | 100 | %100 | | |

Table (3) shows that more than two-thirds of the respondents had a good academic achievement, and to find the correlation between the reality of the extension tasks of agricultural employees and their level of education, the Spearman Brown correlation coefficient was used, and its value reached (0.195), which it has a statistically significant positive value at the 0.05 significance level, and this may be due to the fact that increasing The educational attainment of the respondents increases the information and knowledge of the respondents, which in turn is reflected in the development of employees' skills and enhance their efficiency in specific areas, whether in the development of technical skills. or leadership skills or organizational skills, enhancing the capabilities of employees can lead to improving their performance and enhancing their professional capabilities

Time spent in the field of career Service: Table (4) indicates that the respondents had a maximum term of service of (29) years and a minimum age of (9) years. The variable was categorized into three groups based on the range. The Low length of career service (9-15) years accounted for 55% of the total, the intermediate category (16-22) years accounted for 24%, and the old category (23-29) years accounted for 21%.

Table 4 displays the distribution of responses based on the career service length variable.

| Categories of duration of career service | Freq. | % | Means | Pearson value |
|---|-------|-----|-------|---------------|
| Low duration of career service (9-15) | 55 | 55 | 43.44 | 0.066 |
| Middle duration of career service (16-22) | 24 | 24 | 39.55 | |
| old duration of career service (23-29) | 21 | 21 | 45.90 | |
| Total | 100 | 100 | | |

Table (4) indicates that about 55% of the participants had a low duration of career service. To determine the relationship between the practical tasks assigned to agricultural employees and their duration of career service, Pearson's correlation coefficient was utilized. The coefficient value obtained was 0.066, which is considered statistically insignificant at a significance level of 0.05. This lack of significance may be attributed to the fact that most of the respondents had limited work experience, resulting in a lack of proficiency in their assigned tasks. These employees require supervision and training, which can be time-consuming and demanding. It should be noted that these findings may differ from those of previous studies (7) and (14).

Participation in training courses: This variable was divided into two categories, trainee and non-trainee, where the percentage of (trainee) category (23%), and the category of (non-trainee) was (77%).

Table (5) displays the distribution of responders based on their involvement in training courses

| Categories | Freq. | % | Means | Spearman value |
|---------------|-------|-----|-------|----------------|
| Trainee | 23 | 23 | 51.45 | 0.085 |
| Non - trainee | 77 | 77 | 53.89 | |
| Total | 100 | 100 | | |

Table (5) indicates that most respondents did not take part in the training courses, accounting for 77% of the total. The Spearman-Brown correlation coefficient was employed to determine the relationship between the actual extension tasks of agricultural employees and their level of participation in training courses. The coefficient value was found to be 0.085, statistically insignificant at the 0.05 level. This lack of significance may be attributed to the fact that most respondents did not participate in any training courses. Furthermore, a small percentage of respondents who participated in training courses were enrolled in subjects unrelated to their field of expertise, such as environmental issues, pollution, and other unrelated topics.

Desire for renewal: Table (6) shows that the highest value is (22), and the lowest value is (8). The variable was classified into three groups based on its range. The low category (8-12) accounted for 20% of the total, the intermediate category (13-17) accounted for 49%, and the high category (18-22) accounted for 31%.

Table (6) The distribution of respondents according to the variable of desire for renewal

| Categories of respondents according to desire for renewal | Freq. | % | Means | Pearson value |
|---|-------|-----|-------|---------------|
| Conservative respondents (8-12) | 20 | 20 | 42.56 | **0.390 |
| Middle category of respondent according to their desire for renewal (13-17) | 49 | 49 | 50.80 | |
| Modernization Respondents(18-22) | 31 | 31 | 40.34 | |
| Total | 100 | 100 | | |

Table (6) shows that approximately (80%) of the respondents have a great tendency to desire and prepare for renewal. To find the correlation between the reality of the extension tasks of agricultural employees desire for renewal was used Pearson correlation coefficient has reached (0.390), a significant value at the level of 0.01 and may be because most of the respondents have the desire to renew, which prompted them to search for all that is new in their field of work of methods and techniques and applied, which facilitates the performance of the duties assigned to them.

2- Identify the most important proposals of agricultural employees to overcome the extension obstacles they face during the performance of their work.

Table (7) shows the order of the proposals proposed by the agricultural employees to overcome the indicative obstacles they face during the performance of their work and they were arranged by relying on the answers of the respondents who were arranged according to frequencies and percentages.

Table (7) The order of the proposals of agricultural employees to overcome the extension obstacles

| No. | proposals of agricultural employees to overcome the extension obstacles | Freq. | % |
|-----|--|-------|------|
| 1- | Involvement of farmers in the execution of agricultural extension programs | 55 | 50 |
| 2- | The importance of giving incentives and grants to workers in agricultural extension | 41 | 37.5 |
| 3- | The need to have skills to identify the needs of agricultural extension workers | 30 | 27.5 |
| 4- | The need to have the skill of good communication with farmers | 25 | 22.7 |
| 5- | The need to have a sufficient number of agricultural extension workers | 10 | 9.0 |
| 6- | Attention to the humanitarian and social aspects of agricultural extension workers | 7 | 6.3 |
| 7- | The need to transfer scientific recommendations in a simplified and interesting way to farmers | 7 | 6.3 |
| 8- | The importance of involving extension workers in making and implementing decisions | 7 | 6.3 |
| 9- | Attention to rural women and youth | 7 | 6.3 |

Table (7) shows when arranging the proposals according to their importance, where the proposal (Involvement of farmers in the execution of agricultural extension programs) ranked first and may be due to the occurrence of problems earlier for employees with local communities during the implementation of development programs. Thus, the respondents felt the importance of this proposal because farmers are the only and important segment for which the extension apparatus works, which aims to reach them and transfer new technologies and ideas to them, and by involving them in extension programs, there will be a great and strong motivation for farmers to participate in these programs, which causes the success of these programs.

While the proposal (attention to rural women and rural youth) came in last place, and perhaps the reason for this is that social customs and traditions somewhat hinder the interaction of employees with women in rural communities. However, the planning aspect includes attention to this aspect, but the implementation on the ground collides with the intellectual system of social values and customs prevailing in local communities.

Conclusions

- 1- Most of the employees perform the extension tasks entrusted to them, which indicates success in performance despite the momentum of the auditors faced by the directorate of Agriculture and its divisions in the districts.
- 2- Young employees have a job motivation to perform their tasks
- 3- Agricultural staff with educational advanced degrees tend to have better access to academia and research, giving them access to the latest research. Staff with advanced levels of education are often perceived as more credible by farmers, making it easier for them to accept and apply the agricultural advice and recommendations provided.
- 4- Employees seeking renewal may want to develop their skills and expertise to improve the efficacy of extension services provided to farmers. They may also be more adept at tackling local agricultural difficulties via the development of new tactics and solutions.
- 5- Agricultural personnel recognize the need to enhance awareness and agricultural knowledge among farmers, hence improving agricultural practices and augmenting output

Recommendations

- 1- provide a system of incentives and rewards by decision-makers in order to continue distinguished employees in their career motivation
- 2- involve young employees in management discussions and broad extension activities in order to prepare them for future leadership positions
- 3- Urging employees with low education to complete their studies to improve their cognitive development
- 4- The need for employees who desire to renew participation in external delegations to support the deployment of technologies and raise the level of adoption by farmers.

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واقع المهام الارشادية المقدمة من قبل الموظفين الزراعيين لتحسين العمل الارشادي في مديرية زراعة نينوى.

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الخلاصة

اجري البحث في محافظة نينوى، حيث هدفت الدراسة الى التعرف على واقع المهام الارشادية المقدمة للموظفين الزراعيين لتحسين العمل الارشادي في مديرية زراعة نينوى، وتحديد العلاقة الارتباطية بين واقع المهام الارشادية المقدمة للموظفين الزراعيين والمتغيرات المستقلة (العمر، مستوى التعليم، الخدمة الوظيفية، المشاركة بالدورات التدريبية، الرغبة بالتجديد). بالإضافة الى التعرف على اهم مقترحات الموظفين الزراعيين للتغلب على المعوقات الارشادية التي تواجههم اثناء تادية اعمالهم. شمل مجتمع البحث جميع العاملين في القطاع الزراعي في مديرية زراعة نينوى والشعب الزراعية التابعة لها، وعددهم (400) موظف، في مركز المدينة و الشعب الزراعية، والبالغة (28) شعبة، تم استخراج عينة بسيطة وبشكل عشوائي وبنسبة (25%) وبذلك بلغت عينة البحث النهائية (100) موظفا. تم استخدام استمارة استبيان لجمع البيانات تألفت من ثلاثة اجزاء الجزء الأول: تضمن بيانات والخصائص الشخصية والوظيفية للمبحوثين وهي (العمر، مستوى التعليم، الخدمة الوظيفية، المشاركة بالدورات التدريبية، الرغبة بالتجديد). اما الجزء الثاني فقد شمل مقياس لقياس واقع المهام الارشادية المقدمة للموظفين الزراعيين لتحسين العمل الارشادي والذي شمل (20) فقرة. والجزء الثالث تضمن ابرز المقترحات التي ابداهها العاملين انفسهم و لتحديد مقترحات الموظفين العاملين في القطاع. وقد اوضحت النتائج بان مستوى تطبيق الموظفين الزراعيين للمهام الارشادية هو متوسط ويميل الى الارتفاع، كما اوضحت النتائج بان هناك علاقة ارتباطية معنوية بين واقع المهام الارشادية المقدمة للموظفين الزراعيين والمتغيرات المستقلة الاتية (العمر، مستوى التعليم، الرغبة بالتجديد).

الكلمات المفتاحية: العمل الارشادي، المهام الارشادية، الواقع الارشادي، الموظفين الزراعيين، نينوى.