

Administrative Problems Faced by Agricultural Extension Workers in Salah al-Din Governorate from Their Perspective

1Abdul hamaid Ahmed Arhaim Aftan*, 2Majeed Hadi Saleh Al-Hamdany.

2+1Tikrit University/ College of Agriculture/ Department of Economics and Agricultural Extension,
Iraq.

*Corresponding author's email: seedfory@gmail.com.

E-mail addresses of co-authors: Dr.majeed@tu.edu.iq

Abstract

The research aims to identify the administrative problems of agricultural employees working in agricultural extension from their point of view in Salah al-Din Governorate. The research community included the employees working in Salah al-Din Governorate, numbering (375) employees and officially registered, namely (the Directorate of Agriculture and its affiliated divisions, the Agricultural Extension Center, the Department of Seed Inspection and Certification, the Department of Agricultural Equipment, and the Department of Agricultural Research). A simple random sample of (40%) was drawn, and its size amounted to (150) respondents. The questionnaire was used as a tool to collect data from the respondents. The questionnaire consisted of (21) questions, and a five-point Likert scale was used. To ensure stability, a survey sample was chosen from the research community outside the sample, numbering (25) respondents. The Cronbach's alpha equation was used for this, and its value reached (0.911). The data were collected through a personal interview in November 2024. The SPSS program was used to analyze the data and some statistical methods. The research results showed that the level of administrative problems for agricultural employees in organizing agricultural extension is high at a rate of 69.3%, and that the scores of the respondents ranged between (21-105) points, with an arithmetic mean of (60.52) points. The research results recommended the necessity of providing effective contributions to employees working in agricultural extension in determining the objectives of extension programs, as well as increasing the number of agricultural extension workers in the departments.

Keywords: Administrative problems, agricultural extension, Salah al-Din Governorate, Iraq.

Introduction and research problem

It is now known to everyone that there is a major global crisis facing most countries of the world, including Iraq, which is the food crisis. This crisis is in direct contact with human life and directly threatens to cause famine. It has also become certain that all countries seek to secure the food needs of their populations, by all methods and means available to them, and without relying on importing these basic agricultural materials from other sources, which causes a strain on

their budgets [1]. In Iraq, the agricultural sector suffers from a miserable and dangerously deteriorating situation, requiring government agencies to pay attention to its seriousness and quickly study it in a precise scientific manner, determine the reasons that led to this deterioration, and develop effective solutions that attempt to rescue it and bring it to safety. Agriculture constitutes an important element in the revival of the Iraqi economy, which is suffering from a recession. It was not

as it was supposed to be. The current economy is individual-oriented and relies mainly on oil, and other elements were neglected and were not activated to be a strong support case for the revival of the economy. The agricultural reality has entered into mazes and narrow corridors as a result of the complex circumstances that Iraq has gone through, which placed it in a dark corner, and as a result, the country was transformed from an agricultural country to an importer of all agricultural products. This burdens the Iraqi economy and makes the situation based on this framework, and the government must provide the capabilities that contribute to the revival of agriculture [2]. Agricultural extension seeks to improve the livelihoods of farmers and their families by bringing about behavioral changes that equip farmers with new knowledge and experience about agricultural technology, as well as skills to handle these innovations in a way that ensures optimal and best use and the formation of positive attitudes towards agricultural work [3]. Agricultural extension is an activity that depends on the level of preparedness of workers and their understanding of extension situations, their effort, self-reliance, and genuine participation in understanding, absorbing, and applying agricultural innovations with confidence and conviction, and transferring them to farmers [4]. There are problems facing the agricultural extension organization in the agricultural departments of Salah al-Din Governorate. From this absolute necessity, we must address the problem, which [5] defined as a deviation and imbalance between what is and what could be, which indicates a negative, non-positive outcome among them. [6] believes that the problem is a realistic situation in

which the system depicts its functions to achieve goals, as it requires knowledge, analysis, diagnosis, treatment of the deficiency, and finding a solution. [7] also sees a problem related to management functions that is manifested in the malfunction of the administrative system or its failure to perform its functions and achieve its goals, or that the state of the administrative system does not conform to the desired state at present or in the future, or when there is any need to change the objectives of the system's activities. While [8] believes that administrative problems increase as responsibilities increase. At the lower administrative levels, there are fewer problems compared to administrative problems at the middle levels of the organization, which are relatively less than administrative problems at the higher levels of the organization, and all of them need an appropriate solution. [9] focused on the risks of administrative behavioral problems in organizations. He believes that the introduction of behavioral sciences into management fields is because management deals primarily with the individual, whose work and production are affected by physical factors in the work environment as well as personal factors of the worker himself. Literature indicates that there is no room to overcome or evade problems, so it is better to deal with them as if they exist or are inevitable. By coexisting with them in order to reduce or mitigate their severity, we prevent administrative chaos and prevent administrative destruction, even if we cannot eliminate them. The truth is that the problem is a natural state. If its goals and logical methods take a positive state that indicates the presence of sense, thinking, competition, seriousness,

and different ambitions, then it is evidence that things are going in the right direction. In contrast, if you do not find disagreement or conflict, then it is a negative state and a strong indicator of the suppression and death of energies and the destruction of wills and ambitions [10]. The study [11] showed the existence of organizational problems to a high and medium degree from the point of view of agricultural extension workers in light of the contemporary changes and technological developments that have swept through society and changed the methods and techniques of agricultural extension, which confirms the necessity of appointing agricultural extension workers and training them in extension work and local planning of extension programs to work on solving the problems of agricultural extension workers and activating their extension role in the rural community. The study [12] also showed that all the administrative problems identified in the study are real problems facing the Agricultural Extension and Training Department, and that the subject of interest in the participants' reactions to the organizational and administrative problems was a real treatment of the administrative problems facing the Agricultural Extension and Training Department in implementing the extension activities. The study also indicated improving the administrative process and dealing with the principle of flexibility when formulating management policies in general, as well as working on the subject of delegating powers to workers in agricultural extension during implementation processes with the aim of increasing the effectiveness of the implemented extension activities. The study [13] indicates that the Agricultural Extension

Organization today faces a set of challenges and obstacles that effectively affect the workflow and implementation of agricultural extension programs and activities. Agricultural extension workers in the field of work suffer from a number of problems and obstacles that affect the efficiency of performing extension tasks. The extension approach and method adopted by the Agricultural Extension Organization is not compatible with the requirements of the current stage, and the organizational structure of the current extension organization includes many work problems and obstacles. There is a clear deficiency in the delegation of powers, as it was found that there is a weakness in the level of use of information and communications technology, as well as a weakness in the strength of the connection with the relevant parties. The study included some recommendations that would work to improve and develop the performance of the extension organization.

The research problem lies in the shortage of extension staff, weak planning and programming in the field of agricultural extension work, a decline in the performance of agricultural extension staff, the presence of further organizational and administrative obstacles and problems, the failure of extension instructions to reach agricultural extension staff promptly, the excessive administrative work carried out by agricultural extension staff, the lack of coordination between agricultural extension staff and local organizations, and the poor management of meetings, which in turn leads to poor communication between participants, insufficient training and qualification for agricultural extension staff, in addition to the

presence of biases in the decision-making process based on personal interests, and the lack of an effective evaluation system in agricultural extension in the area of distribution of powers and responsibilities. The research problem is represented in answering the research question: What are the administrative problems faced by agricultural extension staff, from their perspectives, in Salah al-Din Governorate in general?

Study Objectives

-1To identify the administrative problems faced by agricultural extension staff, from their perspectives, in Salah al-Din Governorate in general.

-2Identify the administrative problems faced by agricultural extension staff in Salah al-Din Governorate, from their perspectives, according to their importance.

-3Identify the administrative problems faced by agricultural extension staff in Salah al-Din Governorate, from their perspectives, according to the problem categories.

Study Methodology

This study used the descriptive-analytical approach and the quantitative method to verify the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable in the field study. The study aims to provide a detailed and comprehensive description and explanation of the phenomena or topics being studied. Qualitative and quantitative data related to the studied phenomena are collected through various study methods and techniques, such as questionnaires and data analysis. The final report presents these data in detail [14] [15]. This approach is most appropriate for studying and uncovering problems in the management of agricultural extension organizations across certain organizational areas from the

perspective of agricultural workers in Salah al-Din Governorate .

Study region

Salah al-Din Governorate was chosen as the study area due to the presence of large agricultural areas famous for growing vegetables and orchards, estimated at (9,743,521 dunums), in addition to the presence of a large number of employees working in the field of agricultural departments. The governorate contains (7) districts, (17) administrative units, and approximately (27) agricultural departments, in addition to some departments active in agricultural work, such as the extension Center, the Seed Inspection and Certification Department, and the Agricultural Equipment Department. This leads to field work for workers in Salah al-Din Governorate.

Study population and sample

The study population included all the agricultural employees working in the agricultural departments of Salah al-Din Governorate who are officially registered, namely (the Directorate of Agriculture and its affiliated divisions, the Agricultural Extension Center, the Seed Inspection and Certification Department, the Agricultural Equipment Department, and the Agricultural Research Department), with a total number of (575) agricultural employees. A proportional random sample of (40%) of the total number of employees working in those departments was drawn, thus, the total sample size for the study reached (150) respondents.

Data Collection Tool

A questionnaire was prepared in its initial form after reviewing scientific sources, previous studies, and research related to agricultural extension and administrative

problems, and consulting university professors and specialists in the subject. In light of this, the questionnaire consisted of (21) items representing administrative problems in agricultural organizations. A five-level Likert scale was used according to the degree of agreement (completely agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, and completely disagree) to measure agricultural knowledge management. The following weights were given to the items (5, 4, 3, 2, 1), respectively, with a hypothetical average of 3 points. Thus, the agricultural knowledge management scale became, with its highest score being 105 points and its lowest score being 21 points.

Results and Discussion

-1To identify the administrative problems faced by agricultural extension staff, from

their perspectives, in Salah al-Din Governorate in general.

The results of the study of the level of organizational problems of agricultural employees working in agricultural extension from their perspectives in Salah al-Din Governorate in general showed that the respondents' scores ranged between (21-105) points, with an arithmetic mean of (60.52) points and a standard deviation of (6.07) points, according to a knowledge management level scale with a maximum score of 105 points and a minimum score of 21 points. 30.7% of the respondents fell into the Low problems category, 50.7% fell into the medium problems category, and 18.6% fell into the major problems category. The categories were divided according to the range law into three categories, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to administrative problem categories, frequency, and percentage.

Categories	Frequencies	%	Arithmetic Mean
Low (21-49)	46	30.7	35
Medium (50-78)	76	50.7	64
Large (79-And more)	28	18.6	93
Total	150	%100	Sd=6.07

The results of Table 1 showed that the level of administrative problems of agricultural employees working in agricultural extension in Salah al-Din Governorate, from their point of view, was Medium average. This can be attributed to several reasons, including major problems in the financial aspect and the allocations allocated to the extension aspect, especially extension campaigns, advertising and media on television and radio, and the

lack of incentives and rewards for workers in the departments and divisions that specialize in the extension aspect, as well as the amounts allocated for research experiments and model farms. There are also administrative problems, such as the small number of agricultural extension workers at the local level, as well as the lack of understanding of the heads of local organizations of the work of agricultural

extension and its role in developing agricultural work.

-2Identify the administrative problems faced by agricultural extension staff in Salah al-Din Governorate, from their perspectives, according to their importance.

The results showed that the weighted mean for administrative problems in the low category

was 2.67, in the medium category 3.49, and the large category 4.52. Regarding the percentage weights, it was 53.4% in the low category, 69.8% in the medium category, and 90.4% in the large category, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Categories of organizational problems according to their importance, based on the weighted mean and percentage weight.

Categories	Frequencies	%	Arithmetic Mean	Weighted mean	relative weight
Low (21-49)	46	30.7	35	2.67	53.4
Medium (50-78)	76	50.7	64	3.49	69.8
Large (79-And more)	28	18.6	93	4.52	90.4
Total	150	%100	60.52	3.56	71.2

It can be concluded from Table 2 that the level of organizational problems faced by agricultural extension staff in Salah al-Din Governorate, from their perspective, is generally considered high. This is due to several reasons, including the negative aspects and indifference of some agricultural extension staff toward the work of the extension organization, and the lack of coordination between the Agricultural Extension Department and local organizations operating in the governorate. These problems have had an impact on the level of agricultural extension organization in the agricultural departments studied, as well as on how employees deal with and overcome these problems. This has had a clear impact on the

performance of agricultural extension and the achievement of its objectives.

-3Identify the administrative problems faced by agricultural extension staff in Salah al-Din Governorate, from their perspectives, according to the problem categories.

To demonstrate the importance of the problems in detail, they were presented according to paragraphs, as follows:

The study results showed that the respondents' scores in the area of administrative problems ranged from (3.07-4.11) points, with an average weighted mean of (3.56) points, with percentage weights ranging from (61.4-82.2%), and an average percentage weight of (71.2%). It was found that the average weighted means exceeded the hypothetical mean for the study scale of (3) points, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Arrangement of paragraphs according to percentage weight and weighted mean in the area of administrative problems

S	Paragraphs	Paragraphs Degree of Problem Existence						
		Very important	Kind of important	Medium importance	little importance	Not important	weighted average	Weight percent
1	The number of agricultural extension workers at the local level is not commensurate with the extension work.	50	59	23	16	2	3.93	78.6
2	The frequent objections within the extension organization regarding the work mechanism delay the organization's work.	30	61	41	15	3	3.61	72.2
3	The multiplicity of bodies supervising agricultural work in the governorate.	32	59	31	19	9	3.57	71.4
4	There are negative aspects and indifference on the part of some agricultural extension workers toward the work of the extension organization.	39	46	35	25	5	3.94	78.8
5	The heads of local organizations lack understanding of	31	51	34	25	9	3.68	73.6

	agricultural extension work and its role in developing agricultural work.							
7	The organization does not encourage cooperation and teamwork among workers, which increases tensions within the extension work.	31	44	36	30	9	3.79	75.8
8	The administrative work performed by agricultural employees is preferred over extension work.	36	45	35	27	7	3.88	77.6
9	The lack of coordination between the Agricultural Extension Department and local organizations operating in the governorate.	35	41	36	28	10	3.90	78.0
10	The lack of participation of agricultural extension workers in defining the objectives of extension programs.	42	43	47	11	7	4.11	82.2
11	Continuous changes in legislation, policies, and administrative	36	44	44	19	7	3.55	71.0

	laws impact agricultural extension work.							
12	Low monthly salaries for agricultural extension employees.	34	46	36	26	8	3.51	70.2
13	Delays in completing promotions and bonuses for agricultural extension employees.	36	52	34	25	3	3.62	72.4
14	Long working hours for agricultural extension employees.	39	42	35	27	7	3.53	70.6
15	The lack of clarity in the organizational structure of the agricultural institution does not contribute to reducing overlaps in agricultural extension work.	38	37	37	30	8	3.45	69.0
16	Haphazard and unfair distribution of tasks and the lack of work organization and role allocation increase the incidence of conflicts among agricultural extension employees.	32	36	38	37	7	3.33	66.6
17	The lack of a mechanism to resolve disputes	31	48	26	34	11	3.36	67.2

	and disagreements among agricultural extension employees.							
18	The lack of appropriate training programs that guide them on how to perform their work effectively and safely.	26	36	40	36	12	3.17	63.4
19	The lack of involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process in agricultural extension.	25	37	29	42	17	3.07	61.4
20	The presence of biases in management based on personal interests by the agricultural extension administration.	33	40	37	24	16	3.33	66.6
21	Organizational decisions are not transparent, leading to anxiety among employees working within the organization.	36	28	39	29	18	3.23	64.6

It is concluded from Table 3 that the level of administrative problems in the departments studied through administrative problems was found to be large, and this may be due to several reasons, including the lack of

contribution of employees working in agricultural extension in determining the objectives of extension programs, which came in first place in terms of the size of the problem, as it obtained a weighted average of (4.11) points, and a percentage weight of

(82.2%). Likewise as part, the paragraph on the part "There are negatives and indifference by some agricultural extension workers towards the work of the extension organization" came in second place in terms of the size of administrative problems, as it obtained a weighted average of (3.94) points, and a percentage weight of (78.8%), which is a weakness that encourages the administration

Conclusions

The study results indicate that 50.7% of respondents reported experiencing significant administrative problems in the agricultural departments of Salah al-Din Governorate. This indicates that agricultural management is not addressing challenges due to a lack of clarity and neglect regarding the overall objectives of the "system's" performance, structural gaps in information transfer, and the dynamics operating within the agricultural sector at various levels within agricultural extension. These implementation barriers have hindered the ability of agricultural organization management to promote innovation and development in agriculture.

Recommendations

-The researcher recommends the importance of coordination between the Agricultural Extension Department and local organizations operating in the governorate, eliminating the lack of clarity in the organizational structure of the agricultural institution, and contributing to reducing interference in agricultural extension work by other parties.

-The need to avoid biases in management based on personal interests by the Agricultural Extension Department, as well as the establishment of a mechanism for resolving

to innovate knowledge through the system of incentives and rewards, and this may be due to the existence of weakness in government support for workers in agricultural extension, in addition to weakness in the administration's diagnosis of the knowledge needs of its workers related to agricultural activities, and this paragraph came in sixth place in terms of ranking.

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.2The study concludes that agricultural administrative problems represent the effective aspect that drives the organization's success. Given the significant problems, this leads to failure in the agricultural extension organization. Continuous changes in legislation, policies, and administrative laws impact agricultural extension work, and the lack of involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process within agricultural extension.

.3The study results showed that the number of agricultural extension workers at the local level is not commensurate with the extent of extension work .

conflicts and disputes among agricultural extension workers.

-The need to provide material and moral incentives for extension workers to encourage them to contribute their knowledge to the development of the extension organization.

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