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Job competence of women agriculture extension functionaries

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Abstract

Agricultural extension services and extension personnel must be able to work with farmers to transform the agriculture sector positively. Efficient extension system is not only depending on number of extension workers rather their competence level towards job. This study was conducted in the year 2023-2024. In this purview the present study was conducted to assess the job competence of Women Agriculture Extension Functionaries (WAEF) in Shivamogga and Chikkamagalur districts of Karnataka. Ex-post facto research design was employed. A total of 120 respondents were interviewed using a questionnaire and google forms. Frequency, Percentage, Mean and Standard Deviation were used for data analysis. Seven components were identified to assess job competence. The majority of WAEF have a medium level of job competence (73.33%), followed by those with high (14.17%) and low (12.50%) levels. Communication ability (70.83%), self-development (69.17%), empathy (84.17%), initiative (69.17%), supervision (70.00%), technical knowledge (79.17%) and Creativity (75.83%). Study reveals that most essential aspects for increasing job competence is imparting training, communication, developing knowledge and skills for improving Women Agriculture Extension Functionaries. It shows that there is a need to improve the working environment and organizational climate by inclusion of suitable and efficient HRD practices. This would certainly improve the effectiveness of extension and advisory services in the region.

Keywords: Job competence, women agriculture extension functionaries and human resource development

Introduction

Agriculture is an important sector in the economy of India, as it contributes to 18.5 per cent of national Gross Domestic Product. With the increase in population, the pressure on agriculture production is also increasing day by day. This calls for a greater co-ordination between research and extension. It is well known fact that extension functionaries play a critical role in any extension service. They provide information to farmers with new technology that should be adopted to improve production, income and standards of living. The problems associated with such change require increasing competency and ability in working in the field to educate the farming community.

Competence is the degree of ability for performing certain kind of tasks. Competencies of an individual underline his performance at work. Draganidis and Mentzas (2006) [5] describe in their article competency as being “a combination of tacit and explicit knowledge, behaviour and skills that gives someone the potential for effectiveness in task performance”. Anisha (2012) [1] reported that competency is a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform a job effectively and efficiently. A Competency is something that describes how a job might be done excellently; a

competence only describes what has to be done, not how. Organizations can take advantage of these competencies of an individual in improving their productivity.

Objective of the study

To assess the level of job competence of women agriculture extension functionaries.

Methodology

The present research investigation was confined in the purposively selected Shivamogga and Chikkamagalur districts of Karnataka State. In context to the objectives planned under the study and in view of methodology adopted an ‘Ex-post-facto’ of Social Research has been used in the present study. All the talukas of Shivamogga and Chikkamagalur districts were selected. All the women agriculture extension functionaries working in the public and private agricultural fields level of Shivamogga and Chikkamagalur districts i.e. 60 public women agriculture extension functionaries and 60 private women agricultural extension functionaries were selected for the present study. Purposive sampling technique was adopted for the study. The data was collected by personal interview method and e-

mail by using structured schedule. Total score was calculated for each item of the women agriculture extension functionaries score range from 120 to 360 formed the lowest and highest scores possible.

Results and Discussion

Job competence of the women agricultural extension functionaries were examined in terms of job competence the components is Communication ability, self-development, empathy, initiativeness, supervision, technical knowledge and Creativity.

1. Communicative ability

It can be seen in the Table 1 that, WAEF had expressed high competence in 'I use simple language while writing for

farmers in a clear and convincing manner' (343), followed by 'I allow others to voice their ideas in extension activities' (or) 'I possess good listening skills and listen to all clients and stakeholders' (312), 'I can speak in an understandable way with the farmers' (or) 'I can demonstrate good public speaking skills' (308), 'I give importance to have feedback from the farmers for better services' (302), 'I sustain interest all through the extension task' (289) and 'I give importance to have feedback from the farmers for better services' (281) received low score. The probable reason might be practical challenges, like time constraints or difficulties in collecting feedback, also contribute. Additionally, a lack of awareness or training on the value of farmer feedback might lead to its undervaluation.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to communicative ability

Sl. No.	Statements	Total score	Per cent
1	I use simple language while writing for farmers in an clear and convincing manner	343	95.28
2	I can speak in an understandable way with the farmers (or) I can demonstrate good public speaking skills	308	85.56
3	I allow others to voice their ideas in extension activities (or) I Possess good listening skills and listen to all clients and stakeholders	312	86.67
4	I give importance to have feedback from the farmers for better services	302	83.89
5	I sustain interest all through the extension task	289	80.72
6	I give importance to have feedback from the farmers for better services	281	78.06

2. Self development

Data furnished in the Table 2 indicated that, the women agriculture extension functionaries had expressed high accede towards 'I am willing to undergo in-service training to refresh my knowledge' (297), followed by 'I am keen to know solutions to field problems' (295), 'I regularly refer to and make use of publications - journals, research reports, etc' (287), 'I show commitment to career advancement' (286), 'I am always keen on acquiring new skills to serve the farmers in the best way' (285) and 'I am interested in

higher studies to improve upon my knowledge and skills' (201) low score with respect to self-development of job competence of respondents. The probable reason suggests that, while many individuals value and utilize these resources, there may be barriers such as limited access, time constraints and competing priorities that prevent consistent use. This balance reflects an acknowledgment of the importance of publications without fully integrating them into daily practices

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according toSelf-development

Sl. No.	Statements	Total score	Per cent
1	I am always keen on acquiring new skills to serve the farmers in the best way	285	79.17
2	I am willing to undergo in-service training to refresh my knowledge	297	82.50
3	I am interested in higher studies to improve upon my knowledge and skills	201	55.83
4	I regularly refer to and make use of publications - journals, research reports, etc	287	79.72
5	I am keen to know solutions to field problems	295	81.94
6	I show commitment to career advancement (participate in lifelong-learning, in service training programs, professional meeting and conferences)	286	79.44

3. Empathy

The data from the Table 3 shows that, majority (290) of the respondents accede for the item 'I understand the reasons for others failure', followed by the 'I appreciate good qualities in others' (289), 'I am patient and interested in understanding others' (283) and 'I can appreciate difference

of opinion' (280), respectively reported low score. The probable reason might be likely reflecting a strong sense of empathy among staff. This empathy enables them to appreciate the challenges faced by others, leading to a more supportive and collaborative work environment.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to Empathy

Sl. No.	Statements	Total score	Per cent
1	I appreciate good qualities in others	289	80.28
2	I am patient and interested in understanding others	283	78.61
3	I can appreciate difference of opinion	280	77.78
4	I understand the reasons for others failure	290	80.56

4. Initiativeness

It was found from the Table 4 reveals that, high majority (321) of respondents accede to the item 'I enthuse subordinates to do work', followed by 'I encourage farmers to cooperate in planning and implementing the extension programmes' (309), 'I will be first person to accept the work entrusted to me by the superiors' (299) and (285) of the respondents accede for the item 'I volunteer to shoulder responsibility' and receive low score. This enthusiasm likely stems from a proactive approach to leadership, where individuals actively engage with and encourage their subordinates, fostering a positive work environment and driving productivity. Their willingness to take initiative in motivating others contributes to higher overall team performance and morale.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to Initiativeness

Sl. No.	Statements	Total score	Per cent
1	I volunteer to shoulder responsibility	285	79.17
2	I enthuse subordinates to do work	321	89.17
3	I encourage farmers to cooperate in planning and implementing the extension programmes	309	85.83
4	I will be first person to accept the work entrusted to me by the superiors	299	83.06

5. Supervision

It was evident from the Table 5 that, majority (313) of WAEF accede to the item 'Frequently interact with farmers to the continuous adoption of recommended practices', followed by 'I give clear-cut guidance and directions to those involved in work' (304), 'I orient subordinates to pick up work in a suitable way when lagging behind' (288) and 'I ensure that farmers are receiving suitable technical recommendation' (284) documented low score, respectively. The results indicate that, the interest of women agriculture extension functionaries in frequently interacting with farmers to promote the continuous adoption of recommended practices. They are keen to ensure that farmers receive timely and suitable technical recommendations. Additionally, these functionaries provide clear guidance, directions to those involved in agricultural work and rectify the performance of subordinates through regular monitoring. This proactive approach demonstrates the dedication of women agriculture extension functionaries to the success and sustainability of agricultural practices.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to Supervision

Sl. No.	Statements	Total score	Per cent
1	I give clear-cut guidance and directions to those involved in work	304	84.44
2	I orient subordinates to pick up work in a suitable way when lagging behind	288	80.00
3	Frequently interact with farmers to the continuous adoption of recommended practices	313	86.94
4	I ensure that farmers are receiving suitable technical recommendation	284	78.89

6. Technical knowledge

The results depicted in the Table 6. revealed that, majority of respondents perceived on technical knowledge indicator of the job competence variable ranged from 330 to

302. Highest score was on 'I know the procedure of crop insurance' (330), followed by 'I know latest and recent crop harvest /post harvesting technologies' (327), 'I know the trends in marketing' (318), 'I know the emergency measures of protecting growing crops during natural disasters' (308) and 'I know better crop variety selection' (302) recorded low score, respectively. The reason might be that, knowledge helps people do difficult tasks well and makes them more confident in handling tough situations. Therefore, it is important to update and improve the technical knowledge of women agriculture extension functionaries. Giving them regular learning opportunities will not only boost their skills but also help them to solve new farming problems better. This will lead to better and more efficient farming practices, benefiting the whole farming community.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to Technical knowledge

Sl. No.	Statement	Total score	Per cent
1	I know about location specific package of practices of major crops	307	85.28
2	I possess adequate know-how on dry farming and irrigation farming technology	306	85.00
3	I know better crop variety selection	302	83.89
4	I know latest and recent crop harvest /post harvesting technologies	327	90.83
5	I know the emergency measures of protecting growing crops during natural disasters	308	85.56
6	I know the procedure of crop (short/long duration) insurance	330	91.67
7	I know the trends in marketing	318	88.33

7. Creativity

The creativity component (table 7) of the variable job competence reveals that, majority (314) of respondents agreed for the statement 'I can develop alternative ways of doing work for the best output', followed by 'I always think of new ways of solving problems' (304), 'I can visualize unforeseen deviations in planned course of action' (286) and 'I can visualize unforeseen deviations in planned course of action' (276) low score, respectively. The finding indicates the ability of women agriculture extension functionaries to develop alternative ways of doing work for optimal output and new methods of solving problems. This quality can be best utilized by the agriculture department to strengthen extension advisory services. By leveraging their creativity, the department can improve the effectiveness of its programs and better address the diverse needs of farmers, ultimately leading to enhanced agricultural productivity and sustainability.

Table 7: Distribution of respondents according to Creativity

Sl. No.	Statements	Total score	Per cent
1	I always think of new ways of solving problems	304	84.44
2	I can develop alternative ways of doing work for the best output.	314	87.22
3	I use sense of humor to get out of difficult situations	276	76.67
4	I can visualize unforeseen deviations in planned course of action	286	79.44

Overall Job competence

Results depicted in Table 8 reveals that, majority (73.33%) of the WAEF were found to in medium job competence, followed by high level (14.17%) and low level (12.50%) of job competence. The reason for such results is due to majority of the of women agriculture extension functionaries, same work environment with same organizational climate, different facilities and resources. Mostly extension personnel had medium level of achievement motivation, job experience and perceived workload etc. which have also influenced the medium level of job competence level of women agriculture extension functionaries.

Table 13: Distribution of respondents according to Overall job competence N = 120

Sl. No.	Category	Criteria	Frequency	Per cent
1	Low (Mean - SD)	Less than 81.00	15	12.50
2	Medium (Mean \pm SD)	81.00 to 90.00	88	73.33
3	High (Mean + SD)	More than 90.00	17	14.17
Mean = 85.63		SD = 4.85		

Conclusion

The study shows that women agricultural extension functionaries generally possess a medium level of job competence, which could be linked to a lack of extensive training and experience. Addressing this through extended training programs would enhance their proficiency in modern agricultural practices. Despite this, the officers exhibit strong communication skills and initiative, which are key strengths in their role. However, a significant weakness identified is in self-development, with officers showing limited engagement in continuous learning.

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