Assessment Of Job Performance Of Field Extension Workers

South Eastern Zone Nigeria

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***Abstract*—Purposive, stratified and convenience sampling technique was used to select 132 extension agents to ascertain the level of job performance in the South Eastern Nigeria. Data were collected using structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency distribution, percentages, means and Logit Regression Model. The results show that majority of the extension agents were males (55.6%) with mean age of 45.7 years and married (93.7). 60.3% of the extension agents had degree/HND as their educational qualification and a mean of 16.7 years of working experience. The result revealed that the extension agents performed best in organisation of Forth-Nightly Trainings (1.98), followed by establishment of Small Plot Adoption Techniques (1.94) and organisation of block extension meetings (1.91). The logit regression showed that education (-3.314) had negative effect on job performance whereas income (0.000) had positive significant effect. It was concluded that the extension agents performed better in areas been monitored. It was recommended that the extension agents be given necessary motivation so they can perform their duties effectively.**

Keywords— Assessment, Job performance, Extension agents, Nigeria

I. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural development is hinged on extension services by helping farmers to identify and link with research on their production problems. They provide awareness on opportunities for improvement of farm yields leading to increased income and better standard of living (van den Ban and Hawkins, 1998; Agbamu, 2002). Long and Sworzel (2007) noted that the mission of extension services is to provide research-based information, educational programmes and technologies on farmers' needs and enabling them to make informed decisions about their economic, social and cultural well-being. Agricultural Development Programmes (ADPs) are currently responsible for carrying out the bulk of agricultural extension activities in Nigeria. They are designed to improve the agricultural productivity, income, and general well being of small scale farmer, who is the centre-piece of all agricultural development efforts in Nigeria (Asiabaka, 1991; Madukwe and Obibuaku, 1991; Federal Government of Nigeria, 1997). The success of agricultural extension work depends on performance of the extension workers saddled with this responsibility. Vijayaragavan and Singh (1997) pointed out that performance evaluation is a process of evaluating employees in carrying out given tasks in order to guide and develop the employee's potential. It comprises both action (behaviour) and outcome aspect (Roe, 1999). The behavioural aspect refers to what an individual does in the work situation. The outcome aspect refers to the consequences or result of the individual behaviour. Thus, performance is not defined by action itself but by judgemental and evaluative processes (Motowildo, Borman and Schmit, 1997). Moreover, only actions which can be measured are considered performance (Campbell, McCloy, Oppler, and Sager 1993).

The extension agents are the most important factor in the planning and execution of extension programmes. However, they experience decrease in performance due to a number of factors which are either related to the agent himself or his work environment. Most studies generally focus on evaluation of extension system rather than personnel who are responsible for meeting the goals of extension system. There has been less data on the performance evaluation of personnel in Nigeria. Although a lot of scholars had conducted research on job performance evaluation of extension workers in some States of the Federation. For instance, Okwoche and Asogwa (2012) worked on "Analysis of Determinants of Job Performance of Agricultural Extension Worker as a Leader to Farmers in Nigeria", Ekumankama and Anyanwu (2007) worked on "Assessment of the Job Performance of Extension Staff in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria". Studies concerning the performance evaluation of extension agents in South Eastern Nigeria are still limited.

The performance of Block Extension Supervisors (BESs) depends partly on effective supervision from the Zonal Extension Officer (ZEO). The performance of Extension Agents (EAs) and Block Extension Agents (BEAs) depends partly on effective supervision from Block Extension Supervisors (BESs). Poor performance of the ZEO can result in performance failure of BESs. Poor performance on the part of the BES will largely lead to poor performance of EAs and BEAs (Ekumankama, 2000; Okwoche and Asogwa, 2012). The broad objective of this study was to assess the job performance of the field extension agents in South Eastern Nigeria. Specifically the study was designed to describe the socioeconomic characteristics of extension agents and determine the level of job performance of extension agents.

Hypothesis (H0), Socio-economic characteristics of extension agents have no significant effect on the level of job performance.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Abia State, Nigeria. The State was created on 27th August 1991, from Imo State. The State derives its name from Aba, Bende, Isiukwuato and Afikpo which constituted the major groups in the State at its creation. The State is located in the South-Eastern region in Nigeria. The State is made up of 17 Local Government Area with 3 Agricultural zone namely Abia North, Abia Central and Abia South and covers an area of about 5,243.7 sq. km which is approximately 5.8 percent of the total land area of Nigeria. (Abia State Wikipedia, 2006).

The State lies between latitude 4040′ and 6014′ North and longitude 7010′ and 80 East (National Population Commission, 2006). Farming is the major occupation of the people especially in the rural areas. In Abia Central and Abia South agricultural zones, cash crops such as oil palm, cocoa and rubber are produced, while food crops such as yam, cassava, rice, plantain, banana, maize and cocoyam are produced in large quantities. The Abia North agricultural zone is a major producer of yam (ADP Newsletter, 2009).

The population of this study comprised all the Agricultural Extension workers in Abia State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP). Respondents were selected using purposive, stratified and convenience sampling techniques. Three Agricultural Zones in Abia State were purposively selected. A sample frame was developed for each of the zones and using proportional allocation of 100% (1.0) across board, the total sample size of 132 was obtained. Data were collected using a well-structured questionnaire and analysed using frequency distribution, percentages, means and Logit Regression Model.

TABLE I. SAMPLE SIZE SELECTION AND PROCEDURE

Zones	Sample frame for BEAs	Sample size (100%)	Sample frame for EAs	Sample size (100%)	Total sample size
Abia North	9	9	16	16	25
Abia Central	13	13	47	47	60
Abia South	7	7	40	40	47
	29	**29**	**103**	**103**	**132**

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

A. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 2 reveals that 33.3% of the respondents were in the age range of 45-50 while 30.2% of them were between 39-44 years. This implies that the respondents in the study area were mostly middle aged showing that extension is dominated by those still in their most productive years and mature enough to carry out extension work. This agrees with Ukeju (2011) that the youths and middle ages dominate extension work. 55.6% of the respondents were males while 44.4% were females. The implication is that the extension agents were predominantly males. This agrees with the submissions of Unamma (2001) that extension work is male dominated. Majority (93.7%) of the respondents were married. This implies that majority of the extension agents were married and responsible. This is in agreement with Oladele (1999). A high proportion (60.3 %) of the respondents had Higher National Diploma (HND)/ degree followed by 23% of them with Ordinary National Diploma (OND) in various specialties of agriculture. This implies that the respondents were qualified for their job. This will aid effective performance of their duties. This agrees with Ekumankama and Anyanwu (2007) that level of formal education was a strong predictor of job performance. 67.6% of the respondents had between 11-20 years of work experience. This indicates that most of the extension agents had considerably worked for a long period to be able to know their job description better and perform appreciably well. This agrees with Ani (2006) that years of working experience is a very important factor affecting the performance of extension workers in the execution of their duties. 59.0% of the respondents had 4-7 persons in their households. It is likely that additional responsibilities from the family could affect their performance negatively. 36.6% of the respondents earned about N703,000 - 803,000. This implies that extension agents do not earn enough to keep them comfortable at work. Enhanced incentive is an important motivator to the average individual (Okereke and Onu, 2007). This is in agreement with Ngadiukwu (1999) who reported that adequate motivation is important for sustained staff morale.

TABLE II. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF FIELD EXTENSION AGENTS IN ABIA STATE

Socio-economic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage(%)	Mean
Age (Years)			
27 – 32	6	4.8	
33 – 38	11	8.8	
39 – 44	38	30.2	
45 – 50	42	33.3	
51 – 56	28	22.2	
≥57	1	0 .8	
Sub-total (a)	**126**	**100**	45.69
Sex			
Male	70	55.6	
Female	56	44.4	
Sub-total (b)	**126**	**100**	1.44
Marital status			
Married	118	93.7	
Single	8	6.3	
Sub-total (c)	**126**	**100**	1.06
Highest educational qualification (years)			
OND	29	23	
NCE	1	0.8	
Degree/HND	76	60.3	
PGD	3	2.4	

M.sc.	17	13.5	
Sub-total (d)	**126**	**100**	15.83
Work experience (years)			
1 – 10	14	11.2	
11 – 20	85	67.6	
21 – 30	8	6.4	
≥31	19	15	
Sub-total (e)	**126**	**100**	16.73
Household size (number)			
1 – 3	12	9.5	
4 – 7	86	68.3	
≥8	19	15.1	
Sub-total (f)	**126**	**100**	5.44
Income (Naira) (Per annum)			
400,000 – 500,000	5	4	
501,000 – 601,000	3	2.4	
602,000 – 702,000	26	20.7	
703,000 – 803,000	46	36.6	
804,000 – 904,000	16	12.8	
≥905,000	10	8	
Sub-total (h)	126	100	37

[a.] Field survey, 2015

B. Level of Performance of Extension Agent

Table 3 shows the means of the job performance variables for the extension agents in Abia State. The grand mean for job performance of the extension agents was 24.85 while average performance level was 1.77. Any mean response less than 1.77 implies low performance while mean score above 1.77 implies high performance. Table shows that eight (8) items received a mean score above the performance level with Organisation of Forth-Nightly Trainings ($\overline{X}$ =1.98) as the highest. This was followed by establishing Small Plot Adoption Technique ($\overline{X}$ =1.94), organising block extension meetings ($\overline{X}$ =1.91). The remaining 6 items had mean scores less than 1.77. This implies that the extension agents performed better on those that are formally organised and supervised from the block. This agrees with Ekumankama and Anyanwu (2007) that performance of BEAs and EAs depend partly on effective supervision from BESs.

TABLE III. LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE OF EXTENSION AGENTS

Variab+A1:C30les+A8+A+A1:C30	**Mean**	**Remarks**
Organisation of forth-nightly trainings (FNT)	1.98	High
Test research findings in pilot trials	1.68	Low
Selecting site for On-farm Adaptive Research (OFAR)	1.87	High
Organisation of block extension Meeting	1.91	High
Help farmers locate farm supplies and equipments	1.64	Low
Planning and organising extension programmes and activities	1.78	High
Link farmers to sources of credit	1.64	Low
Provision of advisory services to farmers and solve their production problems	1.75	High
Select target/contact Farmers	1.88	High
Establishing Small Plot Adoption Technique (SPAT)	1.94	High
Organise field days	1.66	Low
Carry out field demonstrations	1.66	Low
Farm visit	1.71	High
Training of farmers	1.75	High
Grand mean	24.85	
Average performance level	1.77	

C. Effects of Socio-economic Characteristics of Field Extension Agents on Level of Job Performance

The result on Table 4 shows that education significantly (P < 0.05) reduced probability of high performance. This implies that the extension agents with lower qualification performed better than those who had acquired more education. This may be because they need to work harder to enable them rise and get promotion. This contradicts the findings of Ekumankama and Anyanwu (2007) that level of formal education was a strong predictor of job performance by extension agents in Abia State.

Income significantly (P < 0.05) increased the probability of high performance. The implication of this findings is that the higher the income of the extension agents the higher the level of performance. This is because income is a good motivator. According to the findings of Ngadiukwu (1999), adequate motivation is important for sustained staff morale.

From the result, Nagelkerke R2 = 0.604. This means that the independent variables accounted for 60.4% of the variations in the level of performance of the respondents. The result confirmed that socio-economic characteristics have significant effect on the level of performance of the extension agents. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected.

TABLE IV. REGRESSION ANALYSES OF THE EFFECTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF EXTENSION AGENTS ON LEVEL OF JOB PERFORMANCE

Variables	**B**	**S.E**	**Wald**	**P-vale**
Age	-0.112	0.104	1.156	0.282
Sex	1.710	1.049	2.655	0.103

Education	-3.314	0.861	14.815*	0.000
Work experience	-0.169	0.119	2.021	0.155
Household size	1.130	0.483	5.477	0.019
Income	0.000	0.000	7.672*	0.006
Constant * significant at 0.05 Nagelkerke R square=0.604 Chi-square =59.338*	25.207	9.044	7.768	0.005

CONCLUSION

The study showed that socio-economic variables like education and income had significant effect on level of performance. It also showed that extension agents performed better in areas that are been monitored. This calls for attention of stakeholders. Based on this, it was recommended that the extension agents be given necessary motivation so they can perform their duties effectively.

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