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Educational and cultural reasons for farmers' reluctance to attend agricultural extension activities of the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate: A field study in Nineveh Governorate, Iraq

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Abstract

This study aimed to analyze the educational and cultural reasons that contribute to farmers' reluctance to participate in agricultural extension activities organized by the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its affiliated agricultural divisions. Data were collected from a stratified random sample of (377) farmers from the study population of (21,450) farmers. A questionnaire was used, prepared for this purpose, and its validity and reliability were verified using Cronbach's alpha coefficient (0.82), which reflects a high degree of reliability. The results showed that the most prominent educational and cultural reasons were the weak interaction between farmers and extension activities as a result of adopting traditional presentation methods, little use of modern educational methods, and the inappropriateness of the extension content to the needs and level of education of farmers. The results also indicated that the lack of interactive training and weak communication skills of some agricultural extension workers are influential factors, requiring the development of methods for delivering extension activities using interactive methods and non-traditional education. There is a clear lack of engagement with activities due to poor education or a weak agricultural culture. The knowledge gap also prevents farmers from understanding the importance of extension messages.

Keywords: Agricultural extension, farmer education, farmer reluctance, Nineveh, Iraq

Introduction

Agricultural extension represents a link between scientific research and farmers, and aims to transfer the latest agricultural practices and support rural development. Despite the importance of extension activities, some farmers are reluctant to attend them, prompting the researcher to examine the reasons, particularly in the educational and cultural fields, that hinder effective participation in these urgent activities (Al-Layla, 1988: 10) ^[2]. The main tasks of agricultural extension workers are to achieve positive changes in individual behavior by communicating the results of modern agricultural research and practices to the guides in a smooth and clear manner, and implementing them on the ground. The agricultural extension agency, with all its cadres, deals with a wide and diverse segment of farmers, who differ in their social, economic, psychological, and cognitive characteristics. Therefore, it is necessary to use methods and means to communicate this information and knowledge to all segments of farmers (Al-Sabbagh, 1998, p. 28) ^[3]. Agricultural extension plays a significant role in interacting with the rural family as a unit of production and consumption, and as a fundamental link in agricultural extension as a basic structure for society and a starting point for any change that occurs within it. Therefore, extension works with the core members of the

family: the man, the pillar of production; the woman, as a partner to the man and manager of consumption; and rural youth, who play a role in production and development (Al-Rawi and Abdel-Baqir, 12). Agricultural guidance also has an important role in establishing agricultural activities to educate and inform farmers through training courses, meetings and seminars, providing them with the necessary knowledge for each agricultural specialty according to their request and need, in order to fill the gap in their knowledge. Therefore, training courses are held, the most important of which are field visits, experimental fields, meetings and lectures, work and training courses, awareness publications, media, agricultural exhibitions, open field days, agricultural competitions, personal consultations, cooperation with educational institutions, and community participation but some farmers refrain from attending some of these activities for many reasons, including a lack of knowledge, which in turn leads to a lack of experience and a decline in the cultivation of economic crops, all of which leads to their reluctance. Agricultural extension represents a fundamental pillar in developing rural communities by transferring modern knowledge and technologies to farmers and improving their production practices (Al-Jazzar *et al.*, 2021) ^[4]. However, agricultural extension programs in many regions, including Nineveh Governorate, suffer from weak

active farmer participation, which limits the achievement of their development goals. Studies indicate that educational and cultural factors play a pivotal role in this. Weak teaching methods, limited use of interactive tools, and content unsuitable for farmers' knowledge levels all reduce the effectiveness of extension programs.

Study Objectives

- To identify the reasons why farmers refrain from attending the extension activities organized by the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its affiliated branches in general.
- To identify the reasons why farmers refrain from attending the extension activities organized by the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its affiliated branches in each area of study (educational and cultural reasons).
- Finding the correlation between the degrees of reasons for farmers' reluctance to attend the extension activities held by the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its affiliated departments in general, and each of the following independent variables (standard of living, desire to learn everything new, type of agricultural work, health status).

Research Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive approach, one of the most effective and widespread approaches, as it analyzes the phenomenon as it appears in reality. This approach accurately describes the phenomenon, fully highlights its characteristics, and provides numerical information that illustrates its true magnitude (Abbas, 2012: 74). This approach aims to study and interpret the current situation by collecting information related to the level of opinions, attitudes, or reactions related to a specific topic or phenomenon (Mulham, 2000: 333) ^[7]. This approach is the primary tool for arriving at facts in the social sciences, using rules that guide thinking toward the correct path to achieve accurate results.

Study Area: The study area was defined in Nineveh Governorate, which includes the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its divisions, with a total of (31) agricultural divisions.

Study Population and Sample

The study population consists of farmers registered with the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate, numbering (21,450*). The appropriate sample size for the study population was selected using the (jotform) tool, which is a Google sample size calculator. The (sekaran) table was also used, yielding the same results (Al-Abbasi, 2018: 153-154) ^[1]. The sample type selected from the population was (stratified random sample), based on the types of agricultural activity they practice in their fields. It was extracted using the stratified sample law after determining the study sample size.

Study Tool

An appropriate tool was chosen to collect study data from participants, as it is an effective means of contributing to achieving the research objectives (Malham, 2000: 317) ^[7]. It included a set of questions directed by the researcher to the farmers targeted in the study through a personal interview, in order to document their answers accurately and directly from them (Al-Sharif, 1996: 123) ^[9]. The questionnaire was.

Results and Discussion

First Objective: To identify the reasons for farmers' reluctance to attend extension activities organized by the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its affiliated branches.

The study results showed that the highest score for the reasons farmers attributed to their reluctance to attend extension activities organized by the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its affiliated branches in general was (171), and the lowest score was (100), with an arithmetic mean of (134) and a standard deviation of (14.06) on a theoretical scale ranging from (58-174). The respondents were divided into three categories using the range law, as shown in Table (1).

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to the degrees of reasons for abstention in general

Categories Average	%	frg	Categories
115.68	24.14	91	Low category (100-123)
135.69	57.82	218	Medium category (124-147)
154.70	18.04	68	High category (148-17)
	100%	377	Total
$\bar{X} = 134$			sd = 14.06

The results of the study showed that the highest percentage was in the medium category (58.62%), followed by the low category (24.14%), which indicates that from the farmers' point of view, the level of reasons for abstention is described as medium tending to decline. This can be explained by the fact that farmers do not see the reasons for abstention from attending extension activities as major or fundamental obstacles that prevent their participation, but rather as reasons of relatively limited influence, which may be related to simple organizational factors such as the timing of the activity, or their lack of prior knowledge of its date, or weak advertising of it. This does not prevent the existence of a future opportunity to raise the level of

agricultural participation in extension activities if some technical and administrative aspects related to planning and implementation are improved.

Educational and cultural reasons for reluctance:

The results showed that the actual scores expressing the reasons for farmers' reluctance related to the third area (educational and cultural reasons) to attend the extension activities organized by the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its affiliated branches ranged between (23-54), with an arithmetic mean of (40.11) and a standard deviation of (6.89) on a theoretical scale ranging from (18-54). The respondents were divided into three categories using the range law, as shown in Table No. (2).

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to the scores of the third field (reasons for educational and cultural reluctance)

Categories Average	%	Number	Categories
30.54	24.14	91	Low Category (34-23)
40.19	58.62	221	Medium Category (46-35)
50.70	17.24	65	High Category (54-47)
	%100	377	Total
$\bar{X}=40.11$		sd=6.89	

The study results, as shown in Table (7) above, indicate that the highest percentage of respondents who did not attend counseling activities was for educational and cultural reasons, and that the majority of them fell into the "medium" category, amounting to 58.62%, followed by the "low" category, at 24.14%. This indicates that the reasons for abstention are moderate and tend to decrease. This indicates that a large percentage of respondents believe that the reasons for abstention are educational and cultural. This may be due to the lack of culture and education among the majority of farmers or lecturers, which may be the reason for their limited understanding of the importance of agricultural extension activities, and thus lead to their lack of interest or participation and absence from them, and perhaps embarrassment in front of their colleagues, or the lack of significant interest in the scientific and objective extension content, due to the lack of educational skills or unattractive presentation methods, which in turn limits the

interaction of the respondents with the lecture, in addition to the weak effectiveness of educational and media campaigns and the lack of communication between the concerned parties to qualify farmers cognitively and inform them of the importance of the lectures and activities provided to them.

The third objective: to find the correlation between the degrees of reasons for farmers' reluctance to attend the extension activities held by the Nineveh Agriculture Directorate and its affiliated branches in general, and each of the following independent variables (standard of living, desire to learn everything new, type of agricultural work, health status).

1. Standard of living

The respondents were distributed according to the standard of living into three hierarchical levels (low, medium, high) Table (3).

Table 3: Shows the distribution of respondents according to the standard of living.

Decision	(rc) value	χ^2	total		high Category (148-271)		medium Category (124-147)		Low Category (100-123)		dependent variable
			%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	Standard of living
acceptance H0	0.530	1.052	21.49	81	17.65	12	23.08	48	23.08	21	Low
			70.82	267	75	51	68.13	154	68.13	62	Medium
			7.69	29	7.35	5	68.13	16	8.79	8	High
			100%	377	100%	68	%100	218	%100	91	Total
0= 0.012326			54 = 0.05160						t table value		

The study showed, as shown in Table (13), that the majority of the respondents fall into the (medium) category, with a percentage of (70.82%), followed by the high category, with a percentage of (21.49%). To find the correlation between the degrees of reasons for abstention and the standard of living variable, the compatibility correlation coefficient

(RC) was used, and its calculated value was (0.053), which is an apparent relationship that may be due to chance.

Desire to learn everything new: The respondents were divided according to the variable of desire to learn everything new into two nominal levels (desire, not desire), as shown in Table (4).

Table 4: Shows the distribution of respondents according to the desire to learn everything new.

Decision	(rc) value	χ^2	total		high Category (148-271)		medium Category (124-147)		Low Category (100-123)		dependent variable
			%	frequence	%	frequence	%	frequence	%	frequence	Variable desire to learn everything new
acceptance H0	0.013	0.060	16.18	61	16.18	11	16.51	36	15.38	14	I want
			83.82	316	83.82	57	83.49	182	84.62	77	I don't want
			%100	377	100%	68	%100	218	%100	91	Total
0.01= .2326 0			0.970		0.05= 5416.0				(t) table value		

The study showed, as shown in Table (4), that most of the respondents do not want to learn everything new, and their percentage was (83.82%), followed by the category of those who are not willing, with a percentage of (16.18%). To find the correlation between the degrees of reasons for reluctance and the variable of desire to learn everything new, the compatibility correlation coefficient (RC) was used, and its

value was (0.013), which is an apparent relationship.

2. Type of agricultural work

The respondents were distributed according to the type of agricultural work into four nominal levels (animal husbandry, fruit orchards, vegetable crops, grain crops) as shown in Table (5).

Table 5: Shows the distribution of respondents according to the type of agricultural work

Decision	(rc) value	X ²	total		high Category (148-271)		medium Category (124-147)		Low Category (100-123)		dependent variable
			%	Frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	Frequency	Agricultural work type variable
acceptance H0	1460	8.171	26.78	101	23.53	16	29.82	65	21.98	20	Animal husbandry
			29.71	112	39.71	27	24.31	53	35.16	32	Fruit orchards
			28.92	109	25	17	30.27	66	28.57	26	Vegetable crops
			14.59	55	11.76	8	15.6	34	14.29	13	grains crops
			%100	377	100%	68	%100	218	%100	91	Total
0.01= .2326 0		0.05= 5416.0							)t) table value		

The study showed, as shown in Table (5), that the majority of the respondents own fruit orchards, with a percentage of (29.71%), followed by vegetable crop farmers, with a percentage of (28.92%). To find the correlation between the degrees of reasons for abstention and the variable of the type of agricultural work, the consistency correlation coefficient (RC) was used, and its value was (0.146), which is a weak relationship. When compared with the tabular form, it was found to be less than the tabular value at a

significance level of (0.05). Thus, we accept the null hypothesis, i.e., there is no correlation between the degrees of reasons for abstention and the degrees of the variable of the type of agricultural work. This means that the type of agricultural work does not significantly affect the reasons for not attending extension activities, which is an unreal correlation, and may be due to other reasons, a type II error, or bias in selecting the sample.

Table 6: shows the distribution of respondents according to the health status variable.

Decision	(rc) value	X ²	total		high Category (148-271)		medium Category (124-147)		Low Category 123-100		Dedendent variable
			%	frequency	%	frequency	%	frequency	%	Frequency	Age Variable
acceptance H0	0.730	2.032	18.30	69	13.24	9	18.35	40	21.98	20	Bad
			33.69	127	36.76	25	33.49	73	31.87	29	Medium
			48.01	181	50	34	48.16	105	46.15	42	Good
			%100	377	100%	68	%100	218	%100	91	Total
0.01 = 2326. 0			0.05= 5416.0						)t) table value		

The study showed, as shown in Table (), that the majority of the respondents are illiterate and can read and write, at a rate of (77.2%), followed by primary education level at a rate of (13%). To find the correlation between the degrees of reasons for abstention and the health status variable, the consistency correlation coefficient (RC) was used, and its value was (0.228), which is a weak relationship. When compared with the tabular form, it was found to be less than the tabular value at a significance level of (0.05), and thus we accept the null hypothesis, i.e. there is no correlation between the degrees of reasons for abstention and the degrees of the health status variable.

Conclusion

The results showed that educational and cultural aspects constitute a fundamental factor behind the low participation in extension activities. The results also indicated that the lack of educational or cultural background among the majority of farmers may limit their understanding of the importance of agricultural extension activities, thus leading to a lack of interest or participation. The majority of farmers do not attend extension activities due to a feeling of futility or difficulty in understanding. There is a need to build confidence and motivate farmers to pursue continuous education. The results also indicated that mini-extension centers are needed.

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