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Constraints faced by agriculture officers of the state department of agriculture, Rajasthan

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Abstract

The present study was conducted to identify the constraints faced by Agriculture Officers of the State Department of Agriculture, Rajasthan, in their job performance. The study covered all 33 districts of the state, with a sample of 172 officers having a minimum of two years of service experience. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed through frequency, percentage, and mean percent score. Findings revealed that administrative constraints were the most significant, followed by financial, technical, personal and operational constraints. The study underscores the need for institutional support, adequate resource allocation, and capacity-building measures to enhance the efficiency of Agriculture Officers and strengthen the agricultural extension system in Rajasthan.

Keywords: Agriculture Officers, constraints, job performance, extension service, Rajasthan

Introduction

In an information-driven era, the role of efficient agricultural extension services and effective human resource performance is of paramount importance. It is not sufficient to formulate agricultural policies and programs; their successful implementation largely depends on the effective functioning of field-level personnel. Agriculture Officers of the State Department of Agriculture play a crucial role in transferring technology, disseminating information, and ensuring that government schemes reach the farming community in a timely and efficient manner. These officers act as a vital link between research institutions and farmers, facilitating the adoption of improved agricultural practices and innovations. They are also responsible for providing advisory services, conducting field visits, organizing training programs, and addressing farmers' problems. However, the effectiveness of these activities depends on the working conditions, institutional support, and capabilities of the Agriculture Officers.

Despite their critical role, Agriculture Officers often face various constraints such as administrative burden, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of technical support, insufficient training opportunities, and resource limitations. These constraints affect their efficiency and reduce the overall impact of agricultural extension services.

For the effective functioning of the Department of Agriculture, it is essential to identify and address the problems faced by Agriculture Officers. Understanding these constraints will help improve their performance and strengthen the extension system in Rajasthan. Keeping this in view, the present study was undertaken to identify the constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers of the State Department of Agriculture, Rajasthan in their job performance.

Methods and Materials

The study was conducted in Rajasthan state, which comprises 10 agricultural divisions under the State Department of Agriculture. For the present investigation, all the 10 divisions of the state were included in the study. For selection of sample, a list of all Agriculture Officers currently working at district and sub-district level in all the 33 districts was obtained from headquarter, Jaipur. Thus, the sample for the present study comprised 172 Agriculture Officers with a minimum of two years of service experience, who were included for the investigation. Questionnaire technique was used for getting information from the respondents. Frequency distribution, percentage and mean percent score were used for analysis of data.

Results and Discussion

Background information of the respondents

The majority of the respondents (83.13%) belonged to the age group of 25–40 years. Male respondents constituted 68.02 per cent, while 31.98 per cent were female Agriculture Officers. With respect to caste, 36.05 per cent of the respondents belonged to the general category. Most of the respondents (86.05%) were from a rural background, and 70.35 per cent were married. In terms of educational qualification, a majority (80.81%) possessed a Master's degree, whereas 19.19 per cent held a Ph.D. degree. A considerable proportion of the respondents (61.63%) had less than 10 years of service experience. Regarding training exposure, 62.79 per cent of the respondents had attended fewer than 10 training programmes conducted by institutions such as SIAM, SAMETI, Krishi Pant Bhawan, and other government departments.

Constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers

1. Personal constraints

Personal constraints refer to the individual characteristics, skills or limitations that hinder them from performing their job effectively. Results regarding personal constraints are presented in Table 1, which clearly depict that 46.52 and 26.74 per cent of the respondents faced problem of societal isolation to some extent and to a great extent respectively, with an MPS of 50 and ranked as I. This indicate that a large proportion of Agriculture Officers experience a sense of detachment and lack of participation in societal events due to their hectic schedule and field tasks. Lack of stay

facilities during field visits in village was another major constraint and it was reported by 43.02 per cent of the respondents to some extent and more than one fourth (27.33%) of the respondents to a great extent with an MPS of 48.84 (ranked as II). The respondents reported that many a times during field visits they have to make a night stay and there is problem of accommodation especially in the remote areas. This highlights that government is not investing in practical needs of the Agriculture Officers such as rest houses, temporary accommodations which ensure their comfort, safety and efficiency during extended field work. Further, 65.12 per cent of the respondents reported problem of stress due to heavy workload to a great extent with an MPS of 43.60 and it was ranked as III. They expressed that a lack of clear delegation of responsibilities and no regular review of workloads resulted in stress. Findings of Bharamagoudar (2015) ^[1] also reported overburdened with job responsibilities. Around 40 per cent of the respondents stated lack of adequate sanitation facilities at workplace as a constraint with an MPS of 26.16 (ranked as IV). This reflects inadequacy of basic facilities like clean water supply and clean toilets at workplace which affects employee's health and hygiene and results in reduced morale, concentration and efficiency of employees due to frequent illness. Problem of work-life imbalance was another constraint faced by 46.51 per cent of the respondents to some extent with an MPS of 25 (ranked as V). Long working hours and frequent field visits were causing their work life imbalance leaving them with less time to spend with friends and family.

Table 1: Personal constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers in their job performance n= 172

S. No.	Personal constraints	Extent f (%)			MPS	Rank
		Great extent	Some extent	Nil		
1.	Social Isolation	46 (26.74)	80 (46.52)	46 (26.74)	50	I
2.	Lack of stay facilities during field visits	47 (27.33)	74 (43.02)	51 (29.65)	48.84	II
3.	Stress due to heavy workload	19 (11.05)	112 (65.12)	41 (23.83)	43.60	III
4.	Lack of adequate sanitation facilities at workplace	20 (11.63)	50 (29.07)	102 (59.30)	26.16	IV
5.	Work life imbalance	3 (1.74)	80 (46.51)	89 (51.75)	25	V

2. Administrative constraints

Administrative constraint refers to the organizational challenges which hinder the job performance of the Agriculture Officers. Data in Table 2 clearly reveal that problem of delayed release of inputs for farmers was reported by nearly half (48.26%) of the respondents to some extent with an MPS of 62.50 and ranked I. The respondents reported that many a times there is a delay in getting inputs by the government which results into delayed sowing of seeds and untimely application of fertilizer, insecticides, pesticides etc. in the field resulting thereby into less production. Diversified duties and assignments within the department were faced to a great extent and some extent by 35.47 and 48.84 per cent of the respondents respectively, with an MPS of 59.88 (ranked II). Agriculture Officers have diversified responsibilities like office work, field visits, organizing different extension activities, distribution of inputs etc. This multiplicity of roles deviates their time and focus, leaving limited attention to their core responsibilities such as planning, execution of extension activities etc. Also, lack of clear roles leads to work overload and reduces the efficiency of Agriculture Officers. Further, more than half

(57.56%) of the respondents reported organizational pressure to fulfill the target as a problem to some extent with MPS 56.10 and was ranked III. The respondents reported that as per the action plan they have to fulfill the specific targets within the stipulated time which includes multiple tasks like organizing training, registration of farmers under some schemes, distribution of minikits, demonstration conducted on the field, organization of field days, Kisan mela etc. along with the office work and documentation of the field activity etc. These targets prioritize number over quality, leading officers to focus on task completion rather than to address farmers needs which creates extra pressure on employee and diminishes the effectiveness of extension services.

Large number of vacant posts was reported as a constraint by more than one third (37.21%) of the respondents to a great extent and to some extent (32.56%) with an MPS of 53.49 ranked IV. Vacant position within the organization always hinders effective implementation of the activities on time. Problem in attending too many meetings organized online and offline was reported by less than half (47.09%) of the respondents to some extent with an MPS of 52.03 and

ranked V. Frequent meetings or unplanned online meetings consume their valuable time that they could spent on engaging in extension activities in villages. Likewise, problem of high political interference within the department was reported by 66.28 per cent of the respondents to some extent with an MPS of 50.58 (ranked as VI). Political interference in departmental activities lead to biasness in beneficiary selection and prioritization of the activities based on political interests rather than actual field needs. This ultimately affects transparency and demotivates Agriculture Officers. The problem of additional work

assigned from time to time such as election duties was reported by 62.79 per cent of the respondents to some extent with an MPS of 49.42 (ranked VII).

The findings are in consonance of Pandey (2020)^[2] who also reported organizational pressure to fulfill the targets, diversified duties and assignments, large number of vacant posts, lack of opportunity to take independent decisions and target oriented approach in transfer of technology as a constraint faced by extension personnel in carrying out their job roles.

Table 2: Administrative constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers in their job performance n=172

S. No.	Administrative constraints	Extent f (%)			MPS	Rank
		Great extent	Some extent	Nil		
1.	Delayed release of inputs for farmers	66 (38.37)	83 (48.26)	23 (13.37)	62.50	I
2.	Diversified duties and assignments	61 (35.47)	84 (48.84)	27 (15.70)	59.88	II
3.	Organizational pressure to fulfill the targets	47 (27.33)	99 (57.56)	26 (15.11)	56.10	III
4.	Large number of vacant posts	64 (37.21)	56 (32.56)	52 (30.23)	53.49	IV
5.	Too many meetings	49 (28.49)	81 (47.09)	42 (24.42)	52.03	V
6.	High political interference	30 (17.44)	114 (66.28)	28 (16.28)	50.58	VI
7.	Additional work assignments from time to time	31 (18.02)	108 (62.79)	33 (19.19)	49.42	VII

3. Financial constraints

Financial constraints refer to limitations arising from inadequate funds or budgetary support that hinder Agriculture Officers from performing their duties effectively. Perusal of Table 3 clearly indicates that among various financial constraints, more than one third (43.60%) of the respondents faced lack of timely release of funds to organize extension activities for farmers to a great extent having highest MPS of 62.50 (ranked as I). Extension activities like trainings, demonstrations, campaigns and field visits require funds for logistics and materials. When funds were delayed, officers faced difficulties in planning and executing these activities within the required timelines, results in limited reach of programs, poor participation of farmers and demotivation among employees. Followed by lack of incentives & reward for better performance was another major constraint reported by 31.98 per cent of the respondents to a great extent with an MPS of 53.49 and ranked as II. This highlights that respondents who

performed better in their job were not receiving any kind of monetary reward in terms of extra increment in incentives from their superior or organization, which lower down their morale and motivation for doing good job. Untimely financial sanction for different programs and activities was ranked III as a constraint with an MPS of 45.93. The delay in sanction from the government severely affects timely execution of field interventions and credibility of extension services. The findings are in line with the results of Pandey (2017)^[3] who reported delay in financial approval as the financial constraint experienced by the extension personnel. Problem of delayed disbursement of TA/DA was faced by more than one third (37.21%) of the respondents to some extent with an MPS of 37.21 (ranked as IV). Around 55 per cent of the respondents reported that organization takes too much time to reimburse the amount of TA/DA. So, this process of reimbursement needs to be accelerated. Similar findings of delayed disbursement of TA/DA was reported by Lego *et al.* (2018)^[4].

Table 3: Financial constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers in their job performance n=172

S. No.	Financial constraints	Extent f (%)			MPS	Rank
		Great extent	Some extent	Nil		
1.	Lack of timely release of funds	75 (43.60)	65 (37.80)	32 (18.60)	62.50	I
2.	Lack of incentives & reward for better performance	55 (31.98)	74 (43.02)	43 (25)	53.49	II
3.	Untimely financial sanction for programs and activities	24 (13.95)	110 (63.95)	38 (22.10)	45.93	III
4.	Delayed disbursement of TA/ DA	32 (18.60)	64 (37.21)	76 (44.19)	37.21	IV

4. Technical constraints

Technical constraints refer to limitations related to knowledge, skills, tools, or technology that hinder Agriculture Officers from performing their duties effectively. Technical constraints presented in Table 4 reveal that the most critical constraint, lack of opportunities for knowledge/skill upgradation was faced by nearly one third (30.82%) of the respondents to a great extent with an MPS of 52.33 and was ranked I. Respondents reported that there is a lack of strategic focus on continuous upskilling of the employees. They further reported that presently the

trainings which are being organized for the Agricultural Officers they are limited to the improved agricultural practices but there is a need for continuous upskilling of the knowledge in other areas like ICT usage, development of technical literature and agriculture innovations. So, they suggested that regular workshops, trainings and conferences should be organized to upgrade the knowledge of Agriculture Officers in different aspects. Also, whatever training is conducted for them it should be need based so that they show interest and participation in attending it. Followed by nearly three fourth (73.26%) of the respondents

reported lack of knowledge about latest technologies as another major constraint faced by the respondents with an MPS of 45.93 (ranked as II). A lot of upgradation is happening in the agriculture field day by day and it is important for the Agriculture Officers to be aware of them, so that in turn they can transfer the same to the farming community. But they expressed that there is a need of trainings in emerging technologies like precision agriculture, hydroponics, vertical farming, genetic modification, artificial intelligence etc.

The third major constraint reported by more than half (58.14%) of the respondents was lack of orientation training for newly recruited staff with an MPS of 43.60 (ranked as III). Similarly, two third (67.44%) of the respondents reported problem in lacking technical skills in operating various audio-visual aids to some extent with 43.02 MPS (ranked as IV). Employees who were unfamiliar with how to use projectors, smart boards, video conferencing tools or multimedia equipment often faced difficulties during

meetings, workshops and events. This not only led to delays and disruptions but also reduced the overall quality and impact of the information being shared. Further, problem of poor internet connection in the office was expressed by one third (34.30%) of the respondents to some extent with MPS of 36.92 and was ranked V. This leads to poor communication & delays in exchange of essential information either from the department and field staff.

This overall suggests that technical constraints especially those related to technology access, skill development and training, pose a serious challenge to the effectiveness of extension personnel. These issues should be addressed to empower personnel with the tools and knowledge necessary for delivering impactful extension services in a rapidly evolving agricultural environment. The findings are in line with the results of Misha *et al.* (2016) ^[5] who also reported lack of training and lack of information on latest technologies as a major technical constraint faced by extension personnel.

Table 4: Technical constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers in their job performance n=172

S. No.	Technical constraints	Extent f (%)			MPS	
		Great extent	Some extent	Nil		
1.	Lack of opportunities for knowledge/ skill upgradation related to job	53 (30.82)	74 (43.02)	45 (26.16)	52.33	I
2.	Lack of knowledge about latest technologies	16 (9.30)	126 (73.26)	30 (17.44)	45.93	II
3.	Lack of orientation training for newly recruited staff	25 (14.53)	100 (58.14)	47 (27.33)	43.60	III
4.	Lack of technical skills to operate various audio-visual aids	16 (9.30)	116(67.44)	40 (23.26)	43.02	IV
5.	Poor internet connection in the office	34 (19.77)	59 (34.30)	79 (45.93)	36.92	V

V Operational constraints

Operational constraints refer to limitations related to the day-to-day functioning and execution of assigned duties by Agriculture Officers. Information pertaining to operational constraints faced by the respondents is presented in Table 5. Data in the table clearly indicate that difficulty in getting feedback from the farmers was reported by 44.77 per cent of the respondents as a major constraint with an MPS of 35.76 and was ranked I. Many of the farmers have low level of literacy and digital literacy which makes it challenging for them to give structured and timely feedback through formal or informal way. Lack of trust on government officials can also be a reason for their hesitation to speak openly about the problems and services related to farms. Non-cooperation of farmers for conducting on farm testing was another major problem faced by more than half (54.07%) of the respondents to some extent with an MPS of 34.59 (ranked as II). This is because the farmers are not easily convinced and

have the doubt on the potentiality of new technology and lack of risk bearing capacity to conduct testing on their farm field. Further problem in getting results of soil testing in time was faced by 30.81 per cent of the respondents to some extent with an MPS of 28.20 (ranked as III). This results in weakening of credibility of Agriculture Officers among the farmers as well as discouragement and discontinuation of soil testing among the farmers.

More than one third (37.21%) of the respondents faced poor follow up of extension activities as a problem to some extent with an MPS of 27.33 and rank given was IV. Inadequate staff and heavy workload limits Agriculture Officers to revisit village regularly. Also, sometimes the area of operation under Assistant Agriculture Officers and Agriculture Supervisor is very large and it becomes very difficult for them to have the regular follow up of the multiple extension activities in the operational area.

Table 5: Operational constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers in their job performance n=172

S. No.	Operational constraints	Extent f (%)			MPS	Rank
		Great extent	Some extent	Nil		
1.	Difficulty in getting feedback from the farmers	23 (13.37)	77 (44.77)	72 (41.86)	35.76	I
2.	Non-cooperation of farmers for conducting on farm testing	13 (7.56)	93 (54.07)	66 (38.37)	34.59	II
3.	Delay in getting results of soil testing	22 (12.79)	53 (30.81)	97 (56.40)	28.20	III
4.	Poor follow up of extension activities	15 (8.72)	64 (37.21)	93 (54.07)	27.33	IV

Overall constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers

Analysis of overall constraints faced by Agriculture Officers was presented in the Table 6 clearly depict that administrative constraints were the most severe among all other constraints with MPS of 50.49 and ranked I this is because of tight deadlines, diversified duties, excessive

meetings and cumbersome documentation process which diminishes efficiency of officers in performing their tasks. Another constraints faced by the respondents were financial constraints with MPS 49.78 and was ranked II because of its delayed release of funds and untimely financial sanctions from the government which limits or disrupts programme

execution at fields. The other constraints technical, personal and operational with MPS of 42.54, 34.59 and 27.62 were ranked III, IV and V, respectively.

Table 6: Categorisation of overall constraints faced by the Agriculture Officers

S. No.	Categories	Overall MPS	Rank
1.	Personal Constraints	34.59	IV
2.	Administrative Constraints	50.49	I
3.	Financial Constraints	49.78	II
4.	Technical Constraints	42.54	III
5.	Operational Constraints	27.62	V

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that administrative constraints, such as delayed release of inputs for farmers, diversified duties, and organizational pressure to achieve targets, emerged as the most significant challenges faced by Agriculture Officers. Financial constraints, including delays in the release of funds and lack of incentives or rewards for better performance, were identified as the second major limitation. Technical constraints, including lack of opportunities for knowledge/skill upgradation related to job also affected the officers' efficiency. Personal constraints, such as social isolation and lack of stay facilities during field visits hindered effective implementation of extension activities. Operational constraints, such as difficulty in getting feedback from the farmers further impeded the smooth functioning of agricultural extension services.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest. All co-authors have read and approved the contents of the manuscript, and there is no financial interest to report. We certify that this submission is original work and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

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