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Constraints faced by agricultural officers in delivering agricultural extension services in Kalaburagi district of Kalyana Karnataka region

¹Manjunath, ²Supriya GN, ³D Shashikalabai, ⁴K Amaresh Kumar, ⁵Mahesh and ⁶SB Goudappa

^{1, 5}Assistant Professor, University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Raichur, Karnataka, India

²Ph.D. Scholar, B.A. College of Agriculture, Anand Agricultural University, Anand, Gujarat, India

³Associate Professor, University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore, Karnataka, India

⁴Professor, University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Bangalore, Karnataka, India

⁶Professor, University of Agricultural Sciences (UAS), Raichur, Karnataka, India

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Corresponding Author: Manjunath

Abstract

Agricultural Officers (AOs) play a vital role in transferring agricultural technologies and implementing various developmental programmes at the grassroots level. However, their effectiveness is often influenced by several technical, administrative, infrastructural and field-level constraints. The present study was conducted during 2021-22 in Kalaburagi district of Kalyana Karnataka region to identify the constraints faced by Agricultural Officers in performing their job. A total of 60 Agricultural Officers working in 27 Raitha Samparka Kendras were selected using an ex-post facto research design. The data were collected through a pre-tested structured interview schedule and analyzed using frequency and percentage. The findings revealed that lack of transport facility for field visits (100.00%), engagement in duties of other government departments (95.00%), large number of vacant posts (91.66%), additional charge of another village/office (86.66%), shortage of supporting staff (85.00%), political interference (85.00%), non-availability of latest literature on improved technologies (81.66%) and inadequate audio-visual aids and training materials (75.00%) were the major constraints perceived by Agricultural Officers. The study suggests that strengthening manpower, improving infrastructure, ensuring timely technical support and minimizing non-extension assignments would considerably enhance the effectiveness of Agricultural Officers in technology dissemination and agricultural development.

Keywords: Agricultural officers, constraints, extension services, technology transfer, Kalyana Karnataka

Introduction

Agriculture occupies a place of pride in the economic development of the nation and welfare of people. With increases in population, the pressure on agriculture production is also increasing day by day. There is need to increase production and productivity of agriculture crops to feed the growing population. It is also widely recognized fact that transfer of technology from research station to farmer's field is essential for increasing agricultural production. Raitha Samparka Kendras established under Raitha Mithra Yojane during 2000 are the hobli level organization providing agricultural extension services to the farming community at the hobli level. The staffing pattern of RSKs consists of Assistant Agricultural Officers (AAO's) and Agricultural Officer (AO's). Agricultural Officers are extension personnel and the most important technical personnel at the hobli level, who are entrusted with the vital role of inducing the farmers to take up improved agricultural technology to the farming community.

Over the years, the responsibilities of Agricultural Officers have expanded considerably due to the implementation of multiple centrally and state-sponsored schemes, climate-related contingencies, digital reporting systems and increasing expectations from farming communities. Besides

extension activities, they are frequently assigned several administrative and non-agricultural duties, which adversely affect their field performance. The implementation of programmes such as the Agricultural Technology Management Agency (ATMA) has further broadened the scope of responsibilities of extension personnel, demanding greater technical competence, effective coordination and efficient resource management (Kudari *et al.*, 2023) [5]. Therefore, the present investigation was undertaken to identify the major constraints faced by Agricultural Officers while performing their official duties in Kalaburagi district of Kalyana Karnataka region.

Methodology

The study was conducted in seven taluks of Kalaburagi district of Kalyana Karnataka region during the year 2021-22. A total of 60 Agricultural Officers working in 27 Raitha Samparka Kendras were selected as respondents. An ex-post facto research design was employed for the investigation. The required information was collected through a structured and pre-tested interview schedule. The respondents were asked to indicate whether each identified constraint was experienced to a greater extent or lesser extent. The collected data were analyzed using frequency and percentage and presented in tabular form.

Results and discussion

Constraints faced by agricultural officers in performing their job

The constraints perceived by Agricultural Officers were

classified into four categories, namely technical constraints, input & material constraints, administrative & financial constraints and general constraints. The findings are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Constraints faced by Agricultural Officers in performing their job ($n = 60$)

S.N.	Constraints	Extent of problems	
		Greater extent	Lesser extent
A) Technical aspects			
1.	Non-availability of latest literature regarding improved technology	49(81.66%)	11(18.33%)
2.	Non-availability of proper knowledge /information on improved technologies within time	28(46.66%)	32(53.33%)
3.	Lack of practical agricultural training in improved technology	22(36.66%)	48(80.00)
4.	Lack of proper training related to job	12(20.00%)	22(36.66)
5.	Never received any training in respect of crop production and allied activities	00(00.00)	05(08.33%)
B) Input/other material constraints			
1.	Inadequate audio-visual aids and lack of demonstration / Training materials	45(75.00%)	15(25.00%)
2.	Insufficient supply of the inputs	26(43.33%)	34(56.66%)
3.	Untimely supply of various inputs or budget	07(11.66%)	53(83.33%)
4.	Lack of proper internet connectivity at office	27(45.00%)	33(55.00%)
5.	Non-availability of electronic equipments (computer, printer, laptops etc.)	11(18.33%)	49(81.66%)
C) Administrative / Financial Constraints			
1.	Large number of vacant posts /Delay in recruitment of vacant posts,	55(91.6%6)	05(08.33%)
2.	Additional charge of another village / office	52(86.66%)	08(13.33%)
3.	Posts of supporting staff are less	51(85.00%)	09(15.00%)
4.	Poor quality of buildings and No separate facility of office	47(78.33%)	13(21.66%)
5.	Slow rate of promotion compare to other govt. job / Difficulties of getting promotion	46(76.66%)	14(23.33%)
6.	No compensation or incentives for additional work	34(56.66%)	26(43.33%)
7.	Diversified duties and assignments	25(41.66%)	35(58.33%)
8.	No compensation or incentives / awards for excellent work	23(38.33)%	37(61.66%)
9.	Delayed disbursement of salary and other allowances (Untimely salary)	22(36.66%)	38(63.33%)
10.	Too much reporting work /Too much official work in addition to field work	21(35.00)%	39(65.00%)
11.	Delay in sanction of programme / activities	12(20.00%)	48(80.00%)
12.	Limited financial budget to conduct extension program/ activities	11(18.33%)	49(81.66%)
13.	Lack of cooperation from subordinates, office staff and colleagues	09(13.33%)	51(13.33%)
14.	Frequent transfers of staff	08(13.33%)	52(13.33%)
D) General constraints			
1.	Lack of transport facility / vehicle for field visits	60(100.00%)	00(00.00)
2.	Alloted to other departments / govt works apart from their respective department work	57(95.00%)	03(03.33%)
3.	Political interference in day to day activity / Interfere of the local leaders	51(85.00%)	09(15.00%)
4.	In natural calamities extra / additional work load which affect the routine work	42(70.00%)	18(30.00%)
5.	Large area has to be covered by an AO /AAO	33(55.00%)	27(45.00%)
6.	Always under tension due hectic work schedule	29(48.33%)	31(51.66%)
7.	Misuse of Right for information Act (RTI)	27(45.00%)	33(55.00)%
8.	Lack of need based schemes and its implementation in different localities	24(40.00%)	36(60.00%)
9.	Heavy loads of implementation of various schemes / projects	21(35.00%)	39(65.00%)
10.	Non-availability of residential quarters	18(30.00%)	38(63.33%)
11.	Farmers are not agreed to make model demonstration plots	13(21.66%)	47(78.33%)
12.	More farm and home visits	07(11.66%)	53(88.33%)
13.	Children education suffered due to the stay in working area	05(08.33%)	15(25.00%)

Technical constraints

Among the technical constraints, the majority (81.66%) of Agricultural Officers reported non-availability of latest literature regarding improved agricultural technologies as the most serious problem. Nearly half (46.66%) expressed that timely availability of information on improved technologies was inadequate. About one-third perceived lack of practical agricultural training in improved technologies (36.66%) and lack of job-related training programmes (20.00%) as important constraints. These findings indicate the necessity of strengthening continuous professional development programmes and ensuring timely dissemination of updated technical information to extension personnel. Similar findings were reported by Kshatriya & Deshmukh (2019), Farooq *et al.* (2010) ^[1, 3].

Input and material constraints

Among infrastructural constraints, inadequate availability of audio-visual aids, demonstration materials and training resources was reported by three-fourths (75.00%) of the respondents. Nearly half (45.00%) experienced poor internet connectivity in offices, while 43.33 per cent indicated insufficient supply of agricultural inputs. These deficiencies restrict effective communication, demonstrations and advisory services to farmers. Availability of modern communication facilities and extension teaching materials would significantly improve extension efficiency. Similar observations were made by Kshatriya *et al.* (2023), Kudari *et al.* (2023) ^[4, 5].

Administrative and financial constraints

Administrative constraints emerged as one of the major impediments affecting job performance. An overwhelming majority (91.66%) reported a large number of vacant posts and delay in recruitment as the most serious constraint. Additional charge of another village or office (86.66%), shortage of supporting staff (85.00%), poor office infrastructure (78.33%) and slow promotional opportunities (76.66%) were also perceived as major problems. More than half (56.66%) reported lack of compensation for additional work. These findings indicate that inadequate manpower and excessive administrative responsibilities considerably increase the workload of Agricultural Officers, thereby reducing the time available for field extension activities. These findings were in the line with the findings of Kshatriya *et al.* (2023), Gogi Reddy *et al.* (2022)^[2, 4].

General constraints

General constraints were found to have the greatest influence on job performance. Every respondent (100.00%) reported lack of transport facilities for field visits as the most severe constraint. Similarly, 95.00 per cent indicated that they were frequently assigned duties of other government departments apart from agricultural work. Political interference in day-to-day activities (85.00%), additional workload during natural calamities (70.00%), larger operational area (55.00%) and continuous work-related stress (48.33%) were also reported as major problems. These findings clearly demonstrate that extension personnel are burdened with multiple non-extension responsibilities, which substantially affect effective technology transfer and farmer advisory services. Similar findings were reported by Kshatriya and Deshmukh (2019), Kudari *et al.* (2023), Farooq *et al.* (2010)^[3, 5].

Conclusion

The study revealed that Agricultural Officers encounter numerous technical, infrastructural, administrative and field-level constraints while performing their official duties. Lack of transport facilities, engagement in non-departmental assignments, shortage of staff, vacant posts, inadequate extension infrastructure and limited access to updated technical information were the most critical constraints affecting their efficiency. Strengthening human resources, improving office infrastructure, providing transport facilities, ensuring timely technical updates and reducing non-extension duties would greatly enhance the effectiveness of Agricultural Officers in delivering quality extension services and promoting agricultural development.

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