

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS AS AN IMPORTANT VARIABLE IN THE WORKING EFFICIENCY OF EXTENSION FIELD STAFF

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Evaluation is an essential process to determine the strength and weakness of any agriculture extension service and to suggest measures for its improvement. Keeping the said aspect in view, 150 farmer respondents of 10 randomly selected union councils of Jhang Tehsil were interviewed. The analysis of data revealed the awareness of majority of the respondents about the duties of Field Assistants and significant relationship between status of the respondent farmers and cooperation extended by the field staff.

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, though agriculture contributes 6.1% of gross domestic product, accounts for about 26% of foreign exchange earnings and exports and engages 51.5% of the entire labour force, yet the yield of various crops is much below their potential (Anonymous, 1988-89). It is a general consensus that low per hectare yield of various crops is attributed to a number of factors, including the lack of training of farmers in the use of improved agricultural techniques, use of poor quality seeds, ignorance of water management practices, etc. (Anonymous, 1978). While pointing out factors responsible for low yield, it would not be justified to omit the influence of socio-economic status of the farmers, who according to Afeef (1988) could get more benefits from the banks and other agricultural organizations by dint of their influence and resources.

In spite of much emphasis laid on agricultural extension service in the dissemination of improved agricultural practice, the farmers are still in search of satisfaction regarding the performance of extension field staff. The people expect them to act as a

solid and sound bridge between the field and research institutions and render equal services to all the farmers irrespective of clients' social status and land holdings. As a result small land holders would get satisfied and work enthusiastically to increase the production of various crops. As the opinions of people on the issue are diversified, so no one could pass a final verdict regarding the performance of extension field staff without conducting an unbiased, reliable and formal evaluation of extension service. This study, therefore, was planned to probe into the level of expectations and satisfaction of farming community towards the working of extension field staff with special reference to the impact of farmers' social status on their working efficiency.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to evaluate the present working efficiency of Agricultural Extension Field Staff (Agriculture Officers and Field Assistants) and seek suggestions, Tehsil Jhang comprising 40 union councils, was selected as the Universe. Of which, 5 union councils and then two villages from each

Table 1 a. Relationship between social status of the respondents and extent of cooperation by extension workers for the solution of agricultural problems as reported by 150 respondents

Social status	Field Assistants								
	Always			Sometimes			Never		
	Cooperative	Non-cooperative	Total	Cooperative	Non-cooperative	Total	Cooperative	Non-cooperative	Total
Numberdar	4	5	9	2	7	9	7	2	9
Councillor	2	12	14	2	12	14	10	4	14
Chairman union council	-	3	3	-	3	3	2	1	3
Chairman Ushar Committee	1	4	5	1	4	5	3	2	5
Chairman Cooperative Society	2	2	4	-	4	4	4		4
Common farmer	16	99	115	3	112	115	91	22	115
Total	25	125	150	8	142	150	117	33	150

Table 1 b.

Social status	Field Assistants								
	Always			Sometimes			Never		
	Cooperative	Non-cooperative	Total	Cooperative	Non-cooperative	Total	Cooperative	Non-cooperative	Total
Numberdar	6	3	9	5	4	9	3	6	9
Councillor	8	6	14	6	8	14	7	7	14
Chairman union council	2	1	3	2	1	3	1	2	3
Chairman Ushar Committee	3	2	5	3	2	5	4	1	5
Chairman Cooperative Society	1	3	4	2	2	4	2	2	4
Common farmer	35	80	115	24	91	115	36	79	115
Total	55	95	150	42	108	150	53	97	150

Table 2. Respondents' suggestions to make the agricultural extension service more effective

Suggestions	Number	Percentage
1. Extension field staff should perform their duties honestly.	150	100.00
2. Extension field staff must offer equal treatment to all the farmers irrespective of their socio-economic position.	113	75.33
3. Extension workers should be well acquainted with the latest agricultural recommendations.	113	75.33
4. Extension departments should organize demonstration plots frequently at farmers' farms.	125	83.33
5. Provision of printed materials to the farmers.	54	36.00
6. Extension personnel should help and guide farmers in getting inputs.	95	63.33
7. There should be more farm visits according to arranged programme.	101	67.33
8. Extension department should reduce the operational area of Agri. Officer and Field Assistant for easily conveying of information to all farmers in their jurisdiction.	101	67.33
9. Concerted efforts should be made for providing office-cum-residence facilities to all the extension field staff engaged in extension work at their duty headquarters.	139	92.66
10. Consolidation of scattered small land holdings should be enforced by law.	98	65.33

Note: Number of respondents exceeds the total number of respondents due to more than one response.

union council were randomly selected. By taking 15 farmers at random from each village, a total number of 150 farmer respon-

dents were interviewed. The data so collected were analysed and interpreted to draw conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data embodied in Table 1 (a & b) reveal that the relationship between social status of the respondents and the extent of cooperation extended by extension field staff was significant both in the case of Field Assistants and Agriculture Officers for the solution of farmers' problems. It means, the farmers with exceptionally high socio-economic status enjoyed full cooperation of the extension field staff, but the same was not applicable to small farmers or people having low socio-economic status. These results are in line with those of Ali (1988) who concluded that agricultural extension field staff extended full cooperation to the big landlords, 'Numberdars', members of union councils and other such people as compared to the common farmers.

Table 2 indicates that all the respondents (100%) expected extension field staff to perform their duties honestly and 99.66% of the farmer respondents desired impartial treatment to all of them, whereas a small majority of the respondents were of the opinion that the extension field staff should not only organize demonstration plots regularly but they should also be well acquainted with the latest recommendations, establish soil and water testing laboratories at tehsil level and pay frequent visits to the farmers' fields. Mosher (1978) also suggested that an agricultural agent was one who got intimately acquainted with what the farmers were doing and what was responsible for low productivity and then helped them to move forward.

A brief review of the results indicated that there existed significant relationship between the social status of the respondents and the cooperation extended by the field staff to them. In this respect, they presented a number of suggestions including honest and regular working, equal treatment to all the farmers, setting up soil testing laboratories at tehsil level, paying frequent visits to improve the effectiveness of the field staff.

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