



Performance of sub-assistant agricultural officer as a professional leader

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of the study was to determine and describe the performance of SAAO as a professional leader based on selected characteristics of SAAO and to determine the relationship between performance of SAAO as a professional leader and their selected characteristics. The selected characteristics were age, level of education and academic achievement, family size, service length, training home and abroad, mass contact, farmer's problem awareness, job facilities, job satisfaction, leadership style performance of SAAO as a professional leader. Data were collected from Mirshari, Daudkandi and other Upazila of Chittagong division, Bangladesh. The study provided that age, service length, job facilities and job satisfaction had significant ($p \leq 0.05$) positive and family sized had significant negative correlation with the performance of SAAO as a professional leader. Whereas level of education and academic achievements, training home and abroad, media contact, farmers problems awareness and leadership style did not have significant correlation with the performance of SAAO as professional leader. However, SAAO having medium to high level performance serve as a professional leader. Further studies are needed considering the other factors associated with the evaluation of performance of SAAO as professional leader in Bangladesh.

Key words: sub- assistant agriculture officer, professional leader

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INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is an agro based country with an area of 147,570 square kilometer and 14.1 million hectares of crop land with 184% cropping intensity (DAE, Bangladesh). About 21.20% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) comes from agriculture sector (BBS, 2008). Agricultural research all over the world has developed useful innovations, which are promising to increase agricultural production. However, farmers who are the backbone of the nation, are mostly illiterate and traditional, they are often skeptical towards new ideas and practices in agriculture, they often become frustrated with new practices in agriculture due to lack of proper understanding of the relevant factors.

Rural development depends not only on technology generation but also on dissemination of technology as per the needs of the target groups in a particular farming system (Mettric, 1993). Effective dissemination of generated innovation, the combined effort of extension personnel as a professional leader along with the farmers is a mandatory. Sub-ssistant Agricultural Officers (SAAO) are the field level professional leader of DAE (Department of Agricultural Extension) and play a vital role in disseminating agricultural innovations or practices among the farmers. SAAO is generally working in a particular area (block for average 900 farm families) at Union under Upazila Agricultural Office (UAO). They are the responsible person in the Block level for information dissemination related to agriculture and their performance lead the agricultural

development of that locality. In fact, performance of SAAO in Bangladesh is an essential element for the development of agriculture of Bangladesh.

To increase agricultural production it is necessary to get information by the farmers related to new technology (Kashem et al., 1992). Now considerable effort is being made through research and extension delivery system to increase agricultural production in our country. But the actual increase in production will depend on the performance of SAAO as a professional leader because they lead the process of information dissemination. The performance of SAAO as a professional leader is influenced by then- personal, economic, social and psychological characteristics. As SAAO are trying to bring about changes in the behavior of farmers through motivation and communication, their own performance as a professional leader towards a practice is a vital determinant for its smooth diffusion. Several studies showed that the performance of SAAO enhances the acceptance of innovation by the farmers. But very few researches have been conducted regarding the performance of SAAO as a professional leader. Considering the above facts in view and the practical usefulness of it the present study was undertaken to evaluate the performance of SAAO as a professional leader based on selected characteristics. The findings are expected to be helpful to the field workers of different nation building departments and organizations to develop appropriate extension strategies for development of the leadership of SAAO for collecting information of modern agricultural technology and proper way of dissemination. The findings of the study would be of special interest to the policy makers and planners in formulating and redesigning the extension programs especially for SAAO.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area

SAAO all over Chittagong division of Bangladesh were constituted to be the study area. Most of information collected from the Mirshari Upazila and Daudkandi Upazila under Chittagong division. One set of questionnaire was sent to each SAAO.

Out of 325 set of questionnaire only 105 were considered for analysis.

Research instrument

A well structured interview schedule was developed based on objectives of the study. Appropriate scales were developed to measure both independent and dependent variables. The interview schedule was pre-tested with ten SAAO in actual situation before finalized it. Necessary corrections, additions, alternations, rearrangements and adjustments were made in the final interview schedule based on pretest experience (supplementary materials).

Characteristics of SAAO

The age, level of education and academic achievements, family size, service length, training home and abroad, media contact, farmers problems awareness, job facilities, job satisfaction, leadership style and leadership performance were considered as characteristics of SAAO for determining the performance of the SAAO as a professional leader. The statements and assigned score against each characteristic were indicated in table 1 and supplementary materials.

Age

Age of respondent SAAO was measured by the period of time from their birth to interview. A score of one (1) was assigned for each year age.

Level of education and academic achievements

Level of education and academic achievement of SAAO was measured by considering his/her performance in examinations of schools/college/technical institutions of Bangladesh. An academic achievement score of an individual was computed on the basis of name of examinations and results of examinations. The result was categorized as 1st class/Division /A+/A and 2nd class/Division /B+/B with assigned score 3 and 2 respectively.

Family size

The family size of a respondent was measured in terms of actual number of members in his/her family including himself/herself, spouse, children, brothers, sisters, parents and other person who jointly live and ate together during the period of interviewing.

Service length

Service length of respondent SAAO was measured by the period of time from their starting of service to interview. A score of one (1) was assigned for each year service length.

Training home and abroad

Training home and aboard of SAAO was measured in terms of total number of days participated in all of the in-service training. Score one (1) was assigned for each day of in-service training whether it is at home or in aboard. Score of training exposure were added together.

Media contact

Media contact of SAAO was measured by computing media contact score. Here 17 media were found and a total of 6 groups related to media contact statements were used for the calculation of media contact. Each SAAO was asked to indicate his/her degree of media contact. Extent of media contact was categorized with continuative degree as regularly, oftenly, occasionally, rarely and never with assigned score 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0, respectively. Media contact score of SAAO was determined by summing the weights for their 17 media under 6 groups. Thus, media contact to 68, where 0 score indicated no media contact and 68 indicates very high media contact.

Farmer's problem awareness

Farmer's problem awareness of SAAO was measured by computing farmer's problem awareness score. A total of 16 items related to farmer's problem awareness statements were used for the calculation of farmer's problem awareness. Each SAAO was asked to indicate his/her extent of problem awareness. Extent of problem awareness was categorized with continuative

degree as very high, high, medium, little and not at all aware with assigned score 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0, respectively. Farmer's problem aware score of SAAO was determined by summing the weights for their responses to all the 16 statements. Thus, awarness could range from 0 to 64, where 0 score indicated no farmers problem aware and 64 indicates very farmers problem aware.

Job facilities

A total of 15 job facilities were listed to measure the extent of fob facilities. The score were assigned on the basis of job facilities were not all available, available with difficulties and easily available with assigned score 0, 1 and 2 respectively. Job facilities score of SAAO was determined by summing up the weights for their responses to all the 15 items. Thus, job facilities scores could range from 0 to 30, where 0 score indicates no job facilities and 30 indicates high job facilities.

Job satisfaction

A total of 11 job items were listed to measure the extent of job satisfaction. The score were assigned on the basis of degree of job satisfaction of highly, satisfied, fairly satisfied, dis-satisfied and highly dis-satisfied with assigned score 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively. Job satisfaction score of SAAO was determined by summing up the weights for their responses to all the 11 items. Thus, job satisfaction scores could range from 0 to 44, where 0 score indicates no job satisfaction and 44 indicates high lob satisfaction.

Leadership style

Leadership style of SAAO was measured on the basis of 6 statements. Each statement was constructed with assigned score 1 for one positive options. The highest leadership style is 06 where as the lowest score is 01.

Leadership performance

Performance of SAAO as a professional leader was measured by computing extent of performance score. A total of 2 dimension related

to performance i.e. job and personality related statements were used for the calculation of performance as professional leader. Each SAAO was asked to indicate his/her extent of performance as professional leader. Each statement labeled as degree very high, high, medium, low and no performance with assigned score 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively. Addition of both job and personality scores were the performance of SAAO as a professional leader. The performance score zero (0) indicating no performance as a professional leader, below 30 indicate low performance as a professional leader, 30-60 indicate medium performance as a professional leader and above 60 indicate high performance as a professional leader.

Data analysis

Data collected from the respondents were compiled, coded, tabulated and analyzed in accordance with the objectives of the study. Various statistical measures such as frequency counts, percentage distribution, average, and standard deviation were used in describing data. SPSS (version 11.5) computer program were used for analyzing the data.

For determining the association of the selected characteristics of the SAAO with the performance as professional leader Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used. In order to find out the relationship between the selected dependent and independent variables correlation co-efficient was done. To measure the significance 0.05 and 0.01 level was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of SAAO

Table 1
Characteristics of SAAO according to different categorical score

Characteristics	Category (score)	Percent Respondent
Age	Young aged (below 35)	41.90
	Middle aged (35-50)	43.81

Education	Old aged (above 50)	14.29
	Highly educated (above 6)	19.05
	Moderate educated (4-6)	63.81
Family Size	Educated (below 4)	17.14
	Small family (below 5)	45.71
	Medium family (5-7)	43.81
Service length	Large family (above 7)	10.48
	Short duration (below 8)	24.76
	Medium duration (8-16)	57.14
Training exposure	Long duration (above 16)	18.10
	Low training (below 5)	39.05
	Medium training (5-8)	51.43
Media contact	High training (above 8)	9.52
	Low media contact (below 20)	5.71
	Medium media contact (20-30)	75.24
Farmer's problems awareness	High media contact (above 30)	19.05
	Low aware (below 20)	42.86
	Medium aware (20-25)	38.10
Job facilities	High aware (above 30)	19.05
	Low facilities (below 7)	51.43
	Medium facilities (7-14)	31.43
Job satisfaction	High facilities (Above 14)	17.14
	Low satisfied (below 10)	24.76
	Medium satisfied (10-15)	46.67
Leadership style	High satisfied (Above 15)	28.57
	Autocratic (below 3)	20.95
	Laissez-faire	64.76

	(below 3-5)	
	Democratic (above 6)	14.29
Leadership performance	Low performance (below 30)	24.76
	Medium performance (30-60)	54.29
	High performance (above 60)	20.95

Age

It was observed that the middle aged group of respondents constituted the highest proportion (43.81%) followed by young (41.90%) and adult (14.29%) (table 1). The young and middle aged respondents constitute an overwhelming majority (85.71%) of the respondents indicating that these group generally tend to be involved with different types of innovations than the oldest group.

Level of education and academic achievement

Moderately educated (63.81%) SAAOs responded well followed by highly educated (19.05%) and educated (17.14%) (table 1). SAAOs having more education can serve well as a professional leader.

Family Size

The study showed that small size family constitute the highest proportion (45.71%) followed by the medium family (43.81%) and large family size (10.48%) (table 1) indicating that with increasing the family size the performance of SAAO decreased.

Service length

The medium duration of service length constitutes the highest proportion (57.14%) followed by short duration (24.76%) and long duration (18.10%) (table 1). The maximum percentage of respondents was in the category of the group of short to medium duration of service length (81.90%).

Training Exposure

The medium training exposure group constitutes the highest proportion (51.43%) followed by low (39.05%) and high training group (9.52%).

Overwhelming majority (90.48%) of the respondents had low to medium training exposure group (table 1). It is interesting that high training group did not respond well as a professional leader suggesting to revise the training categories for the SAAO.

Media contact

About three fourth (75.24%) of the respondents have medium level media contact, while 19.05% have high media contact and 5.71% have low media contact (table 1). Indicating that a good number of SAAO had media contact.

Farmer's problems awareness

About (42.86%) of the respondents had low farmers problem awareness group, while 38.10% had medium farmers problem awareness and 19.05% had high farmers problem awareness (table 1). The data suggesting to increase the percentage of SAAO with farmers problem awareness.

Job facilities

The study indicated that the SAAO have low job facilities constitute the highest proportion (51.43%) followed by medium job facilities (31.43%) and high job facilities (17.14%). The maximum percentage (82.86%) is the category of the group of low to medium job facilities group (table 1). The study suggests that job facilities should be increased in order to increase the SAAO performance as professional leader.

Job satisfaction

The SAAO have medium job satisfaction category constitute the highest proportion (46.67%) followed by high job satisfaction (28.57%) and low job satisfaction category (24.76%). The maximum percentage is the category of the group of medium to high job satisfaction group (table 1).

Leadership style

The majority (64.76%) of the respondents felt in Laissez-faire leadership style category followed by

20.95% in Autocratic leadership style category and only 14.29% in Democratic leadership style category.

Leadership performance

SAAO belong to the group of medium level showed highest (54.29%) performance as a professional leader followed by 24.76% in low level and 20.95% in high level. However, medium to high level group of respondent constituent the majority (85.72%) as a professional leader.

Relationship of characteristics with the performance of SAAO as a professional leader

Table 2

Relationship between the selected characteristics and the performance of SAAO as a professional leader

Dependent variable	Independent variable	Value of coefficient of correlation
Performance of SAAO as a professional leader	Age	0.221**
	Level of education and academic achievements	0.118 ^{NS}
	Family size	-0.206*
	Service length	0.217*
	Training home and abroad	0.043 ^{NS}
	Media contact	0.078 ^{NS}
	Farmers problems awareness	0.075 ^{NS}
	Job facilities	0.229*
	Job satisfaction	0.419**
	Leadership style	0.105 ^{NS}

NS= Not significant;

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

The correlation coefficient showed that some of the selected characteristics of SAAO had significant relationship with their performance as professional leader. Age, service length, job facilities and job satisfaction had significant ($p \leq 0.05$) positive and family sized had significant

negative correlation with the performance of SAAO as professional leader. Whereas level of education and academic achievements, training home and abroad, media contact, farmers problems awareness and leadership style did not have significant correlation with the performance of SAAO as professional leader.

Age had significant positive relationships with the performance of SAAO as a professional leader. In this study the young to middle aged group constituted the highest proportion as respondents. Middle aged SAAO showed better performance than young and with increasing the age the performance had been decreased. This might be due to decreasing the physical ability to perform the SAAO as professional leader with increasing the age of them.

Service length and job satisfaction had significant positive relationships with the performance of SAAO as a professional leader. With increasing duration of service length and job satisfaction the performance of SAAO as professional leader was also increased. The increased duration of job might increase the job satisfaction level as well as job security thus increases the capability to gain professional leadership. Although job facilities had significant positive relationships with the performance of SAAO as a professional leader, the low job facilities respondents constitute the highest proportion followed by medium job facilities and high job facilities in this study. It is observed that SAAO having medium to high level performance serve as a professional leader. Further studies are needed considering the other factors associated with the evaluation of performance of SAAO as professional leader in Bangladesh.

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