Analysis of issues related to organizational commitment of extension personnel of Oyo and Ogun States agricultural development programs

J.O. Ladebo

Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta. P.O. box 2316, Sapon, Abeokuta. E-mail: ladebo@unaab.edu.ng.

Abstract

Organizational commitment of extension personnel in Oyo and Ogun States Agricultural Development Programmes was studied. Organizational commitment is the degree to which the organization members identify with the values and goals of their organization. A census of the extension personnel in both OYSADEP (312) and OGADEP (136) was performed. Usable questionnaires analyzed were 47% for OYSADEP and OGADEP 62.5%. Ninety-five percent of the respondents exhibited low levels of commitment. Identified factors influencing commitment among the extension personnel include technical subject matter ($B=0.179$; $P<0.001$), job involvement ($B=0.509$; $P<0.001$), educational qualification ($B=0.156$; $P<0.001$) and realization of expectations ($B=0.140$; $P<0.019$). For the studied ADPs to motivate their extension workers so as to exhibit committed behaviours, the sustainability of the ADPs need be addressed.

Keywords: Organization, commitment, extension personnel, AP

Introduction

Agricultural extension workers are strategic stakeholders in the agricultural extension service organizations. Their commitment to work and the organization is essential for the achievement of organizational goals and indeed sustainable agricultural development. Organizational commitment is conceptualized as having three components (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals, (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization, and (c) a desire to maintain organization membership. Thus, organizational commitment reflects employees loyalty to their organization and is an ongoing process through which organizational members express their concern for the organization and its continued

performance. (Mowday, *et al.*, 1982; Keller, 1997). Similarly, Etzioni (1975) regards organizational commitment as positive involvement, and March and Simon (1958) suggests it is the decision to participate in the organization after the decision is made to stay or leave. It is different from mere attachment or tenureship in the organization.

Studies have suggested both bases and foci of commitment (Becker, *et al.*, 1996). But the studies relating to bases of commitment have been equivocal. However, foci of commitment could be organization or supervisor (Becker, *et al.*, 1996); while Hersey and Blanchard (1993) identified five foci viz. commitment to the customers, organization, self, people, and task.

Extension personnel are expected to show commitment to their farmers, organisation, productivity. However, there are certain factors which promote or impede commitment among employees. These factors need to be identified and addressed so as to derive approaches for eliciting commitments of workers so as to enhance innovative and spontaneous behaviour among extension personnel. This study was therefore conducted to identify those personal and workplace factors responsible for the variance in commitment level among extension personnel of Oyo and Ogun States Agricultural Development Programmes.

Materials and methods

The study population included all the extension personnel (men and women) of both Oyo and Ogun States Agricultural Development Programme (about 312 and 136 respectively). Perceptual data were collected through a census of the extension personnel by questionnaire administration. The response rate was 62.5% for OGADEP while 47% was recorded for OYSADEP.

Dependent variable: Due to its proven psychometric properties, the Organization Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) (Mowday, *et al.*, 1979; Angle and Perry, 1981; Keller, 1997) was employed for eliciting information on organization commitment. Estimated internal consistency reliability for the scale was (Cronbach alpha) 0.73. Independent variables are technical subject matter, communication ability, relationship with clientele, participation in review meetings, need satisfaction, kinship responsibility, skill variety, job autonomy, task identity, feedback, role clarity, co-worker relationship, job challenge, personal importance, work overload, job involvement and realization of expectations. These perceptual variables were measured using five-point Likert rating of strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). Other variables measured included age, marital status, years of service, educational status, in-service training, and social group membership.

self, task and organisation members in order to attain 'excellence' which is higher Data analytical tools used for the study were absolute and relative frequencies, means, t-test analysis and multiple regression analysis to predict those factors that have the most influence on organization commitment of extension personnel.

Results and discussion

Demographic information

Mean age of the respondents was 32 years, 59% were married while 40.52% were either single or divorced. Sixty-eighty per cent of the respondents had been with the organizations for up to three years. Majority of the extension personnel (57.32%) were B.Sc. or M.Sc. degree or higher national diploma certificate holders. Only 42.68% possessed either NCE or OND certificates. About 68.53% respondents had attended one or more in-service trainings. Social group membership included philanthropic organizations, religious and cooperative societies. Significant difference existed only in the educational ($t=5.4886$; $p<0.05$) and social group membership status ($t=1.9739$; $p<0.05$) of the two states' extension personnel.

Determining the organizational commitment of extension personnel involved summing their responses on the 15-item commitment scale. Maximum scores was 75 and the minimum scores attainable being 15. Respondents' scores were summed and the mean determined. Mean commitment scores was 38.69 for the respondents. Majority of the respondents 95.25% scored below the mean. The implication of this is that these extension personnel are less committed to their jobs. This does not portend well for an extension service that is to promote improved technologies among farmers to bring about the much expected sustainable agricultural development. A major reason for the observed low level of commitment among the extension personnel might be connected with the constant threat to job security, often manifested in pervasive uncertainty, frequent retrenchment, and nonpayment of salaries

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starring at them in face. Since the World Bank withdrew funding support from the ADP's, the organizations have been finding it difficult meeting their functional obligations. Thus, the future of the ADP's looks uncertain.

Regression analysis

Factors identified to have strong predictive influence on the commitment of the respondents include technical subject matter ($B=0.165$; $P<0.003$); kinship responsibility ($B=0.509$; $P<0.000$); educational qualification

($B=0.156$; $P<0.001$); realisation of expectation ($B=0.140$; $P<0.019$). These six factors accounted for 59% of the variance in the commitment of sampled extension workers. The F-values of the regression analysis was 15.87 ($P<0.000$). Multiple regression (R) coefficient was 0.798 which is a further proof that the research instrument actually measured identified concepts. (Table 1).

Table 1 *Results of regression analysis*

Variables	Regression Coefficients	Student t-value	Probability
Technical subject matter	0.165	3.001	0.003**
Communication ability	-0.029	-0.525	0.600
Relationship with clientele	-0.114	-1.849	0.066
Participation in review meetings	0.109	1.729	0.085
Need satisfaction	0.049	0.995	0.321
Kinship responsibility	0.108	2.213	0.028**
Skill variety	0.088	1.636	0.103
Job autonomy	-0.002	-0.055	0.956
Task identity	0.050	1.072	0.285
Feedback	-0.015	-0.302	0.739
Role clarity	0.014	0.302	0.763
Co-worker relationship	0.046	1.019	0.309
Job challenge	0.077	1.366	0.173
Personal importance	0.179	3.806	0.000*
Work overload	0.037	0.781	0.436
Job involvement	0.509	10.331	0.000*
Age	-0.011	-0.218	0.827
Marital status	0.015	0.279	0.780
Years of service	-0.053	-1.023	0.307
Educational status	0.156	3.371	0.001**
In-service training	-0.046	-1.045	0.297
Social group	-0.614	-1.336	0.183
Realisation of expectation	0.140	2.356	0.019**

* $P<0.05$; ** $P<0.01$.

Intercept	0.785986
R-square	0.637
Adjusted R-sq	0.597
Multiple R	0.798
Standard error of est.	0.162
F-ratio	15.87
Significance	0.000

Kinship responsibility (Beta=0.108; $P<0.028$) an employee with financial obligations to his spouse, children, and relatives, is likely to develop a favourable affectivity to his employing organization and work towards the realisation of the objectives of the organization. This is because the continued well-being of the organization is the only guarantee for his financial security and ability to meet all his kinship responsibilities. This situation may have been responsible for the significant relationship between kinship responsibility and commitment of sampled extension agents.

Job involvement (Beta =0.509; $P<0.000$): studies have indicated that there is positive relationship between job involvement and commitment of employees (Keller, 1997). The positive relationship between commitment and job involvement may be due to the high level of involvement of extension agents in the planning and scheduling of work being performed.

Educational qualification (Beta=0.156; $P<0.001$) and Technical subject matter (Beta 0.165; $P<0.003$): Observed positive relationship between commitment and educational qualification of respondents is indicative that respondents with higher commitment levels are those with higher educational qualifications. This situation explains the relationship between technical subject matter and commitment. Highly qualified staff are expected to be competent and knowledgeable in their field of specialization. Since the majority of the study sample possessed HND, B. Sc. or M. Sc. Degrees this may have accounted for the positive relationships between commitment and educational qualification and also technical subject matter. Those agents having NCE and OND certificates may only be interested in serving the extension organization pending when they would be able to secure admission into higher institutions for higher degrees.

Conclusion

The extension workers of the ADPs exhibited low level of commitment which could be detrimental to the actualization of the ADP's goals of providing educational and information support to small scale farmers in the country. Without adequate and timely educational and information delivery to farmers, their productivity may be negatively affected.

Factors having significant effect on commitment include kinship responsibility, technical subject matter, personal importance, job involvement, educational status and realisation of expectation. The ADPs should continue to pursue with vigour their policy of recruiting only well qualified personnel since higher educational attainment predisposes a worker to have a strong attachment to his job. Extension workers knowledge should be regularly updated through in-service trainings, workshops and conferences. Finally, the ADPs would benefit more by emphasizing and involving their extension personnel in the content and scheduling of work. This is likely to promote self esteem among the workers.

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