

# Socio-economic Determinants of Job Satisfaction among Extension Officers in North West Province South Africa

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**Abstract:** This paper examines the socio-economic determinants of job satisfaction among extension officers in North West Province South Africa. This is predicated on the fact that the current implementation of the Extension Recovery Plan (ERP) in all the nine provinces in the South Africa to bring about agricultural improvement through effective extension services delivery is among other things dependent on job satisfaction among extension officers. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 40 extension officers and data were collected with a structured questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages and multiple regression analysis. The results show that most of extension officers (82.5%) were males, between 40 to 45 years, married (85%) and 87.5% had Diploma as educational qualification. Also, 54% had between 4 to 6 persons as household size, while 75% were Christians. Majority of the extension officers live in their job area (82.5), while 80% covered at least 3 communities and 3 farmers group. In terms of number of farmers covered, only 40% of the extension officer covered more than 500 farmers and 45% travelled more than 40 km to reach their farmers. Prominent areas of satisfaction among extension officers were research policies (3.77) work exposure (3.37) identifying farmers' problems (3.02) and opportunities to advance education (3.00). Significant determinants of job satisfaction were gender ( $t = 2.31$ ), marital status ( $t = -2.27$ ), working experience ( $t = 2.60$ ), living in job area ( $t = -3.05$ ), number of farmers covered ( $t = 2.00$ ) and distance to farmers ( $t = -2.11$ ). The study therefore recommends that policy makers and extension managers should pay attention to the items indicated for satisfaction and dissatisfaction by the extension officers with a view of boosting their morale for a higher level of performance. [Life Science Journal 2010;7(3):99-104]. (ISSN: 1097-8135).

**Key words:** Job satisfaction; job performance; motivation; extension officers; South Africa

## 1. Introduction

In many developing countries agricultural development is hinged on extension services by helping farmers to identify and link with research on their production problems. They also provide awareness on opportunities for improvement of farm yields leading to increased income and better standard of living (Van den Ban and Hawkins, 1998, Agabmu, 2002). Long and Sworzel (2007) noted that the mission of extension services is to provide research based information, educational programs and technology on farmers' needs and enabling them to make informed decisions about their economic, social and cultural well-being. Santucci (2002) noted that most farmers in African countries depend on public extension workers for information. Sadique (1981) described the extension agent as a professionally trained social worker, an organizer, a planner, a facilitator and a consultant. Adams (1982) referred extension agents as advisers, middlemen and managers at the cell or circle level. They are thus (a) analyst – interpreting situation for his clients (b) Advocator-choosing the best method among alternatives (c) Innovator-creating new ideals to satisfy a particular need of client (d) Advisor-making available alternative to a given situation. The role of the village extension agent is frequently stressed since of all

extension staff functions to farmers, critical teaching and persuading farmers to adopt production recommendations and feeding back to the extension and research services, information on actual-farm production conditions and constraints and farmers reactions to recommended practices (Benor and Baxter, 1984).

The effectiveness of extension is dependent upon the motivation of its employees (Chesney, 1992). Knowing what motivates employees and incorporating this knowledge into the reward system will help extension managers identify, recruit, employ, train, and retain a productive workforce. At one time, employees were considered just another input in production process until the Hawthorne studies, which began the human relations approach to management, whereby the needs and motivation of employees become the primary focus of managers (Bedeian, 1993).

The extension workforce has attracted individuals of diverse and different characteristics such as age, gender, working experience, educational qualification and marital status among other characteristics which have been found to be associated with job satisfaction either positively or negatively. Schermerhorn et al (1995) defined job satisfaction as the degree to which an individual feels

positively about various facets of the job task, the work setting and relationship with co-workers. Employer should build into employees' characteristics that create satisfying conditions. However because people respond differently to the same job, employers must take into consideration both job characteristics and the work context of the job itself. Scott et al (2005) reported that significant relationship exist between job satisfaction and gender. Nestor and Leary (2000) found no relationship between gender and job satisfaction. Riggs and Beus (1993) found that as the number of areas of responsibility increased for female agents, job satisfaction increased as well. Also female agents who had fewer areas of responsibility and fewer areas of responsibility and fewer children living at home were more satisfied. Employees work harder and perform better if satisfied with their jobs, knowing the factors related to agents' job satisfaction can help prevent staff frustration and low job satisfaction (Watanabe, 1991). The extent to which people are satisfied with their work has been of enduring research interest. An increasing concern with the meaning of work and the belief that the degree of satisfaction at work is related to aspects of work behavior such as productivity, absenteeism, turnover rates and intention to quit, have prompted the growth of a vast research literature on job satisfaction. The most important information to have regarding employees in organizations is a validated measure of their level of job satisfaction. Although job satisfaction has been viewed in a number of different ways, most definitions agree that it is a multidimensional concept (Koustelios, 2001). Dawis and Lofquist (1984) defined job satisfaction as the result of the worker's appraisal of the degree to which the work environment fulfills the individual's needs. These definitions are similar to others viewing satisfaction as the degree of an employee's affective orientation toward the work role occupied in the organization.

Department of Agriculture, (2009) reported that currently, the Extension Recovery Plan (ERP) is being implemented in all the nine provinces in the South Africa. This is predicated on the fact that agricultural improvement in South Africa, especially among small scale and resource-poor farmers, requires a major effort to improve the quality of extension services available to farmers. The implementation of ERP was based on 5 pillars namely ensuring the accountability and visibility of extension, promotion of professionalism and improvement of image, re-skilling and reorientation of extension, provision of ICT infrastructure and other resources and recruitment of extension personnel. The foregoing has several implications on extension delivery s and consequently requires that extension officers are sufficiently satisfied and motivated for effective job performance. The purpose of this study was to identify socio-economic determinants of job satisfaction among extension officers in North West Province South Africa.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in North West province, South Africa. The study population included all extension officers (200) in the province. A simple random sampling technique was used to select 40 extension officers from which data were collected. A structured questionnaire consisting of 34 job satisfaction and 10 personal characteristic items was administered to extension officers. Job satisfaction was measured on a 5-point Likert type scale of not satisfied (1), least satisfied (2), fairly satisfied (3), almost satisfied (4), and most satisfied (5). The questionnaire was face validated by lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Extension of the North West University and extension professionals from the Department of Agriculture, South Africa. The reliability coefficient for the questionnaire was 0.85. Data collected were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), with frequency counts, percentages, means, standard deviation and multiple regression analysis.

## 3. Results

Table 1 shows demographic characteristics of extension officers in North West Province South Africa.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of extension officer

Variables	Frequency	Percentages
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	33	82.5
Female	7	17.5
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 40	5	12.5
40-45	19	47.5
45-50	16	40.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	34	85.0
Divorced	3	7.5
Single	3	7.5
<b>Household size* n= 37</b>		
1-3	10	27
4-6	20	54.05
Above 6	7	18.95

<b>Religion</b>			Above 6	17	42.5
Christianity	30	75.0	<b>Number of farmers covered</b>		
Free thinkers	10	25.0	Less than 200	5	12.5
<b>Educational level</b>			200 - 500	19	47.5
Diploma	35	87.5	Above 500	16	40.0
B.Sc	5	12.5	<b>Distance to farmers</b>		
<b>Studying for higher degree</b>			Less than 40 km	5	12.5
Yes	35	87.5	40-100 km	17	42.5
No	5	12.5	Above 100 km	18	45.0
<b>Working Experience</b>					
Less than 10 years	3	7.5			
10-20 years	27	67.5			
Above 20 years	10	25.0			
<b>Living in job area</b>					
Yes	33	82.5			
No	7	17.5			
<b>Job Designation</b>					
Agricultural Technician	18	45.0			
Senior Agricultural Technicians	3	7.5			
Extension officers	4	10.0			
Chief Agricultural Technicians	10	25.0			
Senior Extension officers	5	12.5			
<b>Number of communities covered</b>					
1-3	8	20.0			
4-6	19	47.5			
Above 6	13	32.5			
<b>Number of farmers groups covered</b>					
1-3	8	20.0			
4-6	15	37.5			

Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation of 34 items on job satisfaction by extension officers which were rated on a 5-point Likert type scale of not satisfied (1), least satisfied (2), fairly satisfied (3), almost satisfied (4) and most satisfied (5). The actual mean was 3 due to the rating scale and a mean of greater than 3 denoted satisfaction, while a mean less than 3 denoted dissatisfaction.

Table 2. Job satisfaction index among extension officers

Items	Mean	SD
Qualification for job	2.90	1.19
In-service training	2.77	1.29
Work exposure	3.37	1.05
Lack of motivation	2.32	1.18
Direction by supervisors	2.33	1.14
Research policies	3.77	0.89
Political problems	2.10	0.95
Identifying farmers' problems	3.02	1.29
Feeding back farmers' problems to research	2.52	0.96
Communicating recommended practices	2.65	1.27
Liaison with other agencies	2.60	0.84
Job specialization	2.07	1.04

Financial support for self and family	2.15	1.00
Job security	2.60	0.95
Job autonomy	2.40	1.27
Operating supplies and materials	2.22	1.34
Transportation	2.70	1.22
Availability of experimental land	1.90	1.05
Work equipment and tools	2.10	0.87
Availability of labour/technical help	2.45	0.95
Quality of labour/technical help	2.37	1.00
Library facilities	2.15	1.12
Opportunities to advance education	3.00	1.26
Opportunities to gain professional recognition	2.95	1.15
Opportunities to publish findings	2.00	1.01
Management reputation for professional achievement	2.30	0.99
Management control of operations	2.32	0.85
Flexibility and initiative	2.67	1.07
Rewarding system	1.97	1.09
Relationship among professionals and administrative staff	2.45	0.90
Continuity of programme	2.07	1.02
Clear statement of project embarked upon	2.10	1.25
Budgeting	1.90	1.00
Sanctions	1.90	1.12

Table 3: Multiple regression analysis of determinants of job satisfaction among extension officers

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p
(Constant)	24.20	100.74		.24	<b>0.008</b>
Gender	31.14	13.43	0.65	2.31	<b>0.03</b>
Age	-.44	1.43	-	-0.31	0.76
Marital status	-8.51	3.74	0.53	-2.27	<b>0.03</b>
No of children	-6.08	5.56	-	-1.09	0.28
Religion	-6.51	4.25	-	-1.53	0.14
Educational level	13.80	10.49	0.32	1.31	0.20
Studying for higher degree	7.07	17.51	0.13	0.40	0.69
Level of study	6.25	17.99	0.12	0.34	0.73
Household size	1.10	2.18	0.14	0.50	0.62
Working experience	2.66	1.02	0.82	2.60	<b>0.01</b>
Living in job area	-	11.17	-	-3.05	<b>0.007</b>
Rural-urban background	34.15	9.02	0.72	-	0.70
Place of residence	-3.44	4.88	-	-0.38	0.80
Job designation	1.22	4.88	0.06	0.25	0.80
No of communities covered	-3.33	3.11	-	-1.07	0.29
No of farmers groups covered	0.92	1.54	0.16	0.59	0.55
No of farmers covered	1.06	0.75	0.36	1.40	0.17
Means of mobility	-	0.01	0.57	-2.00	<b>0.01</b>
Distance to farmers	3.4E-02	1.13	13.15	0.02	.087
Information sources	1.13	13.15	0.02	.087	0.93
R	0.84				
R square	0.71				
Adjusted R	0.35				
F	2.98				
P	0.008				

The result of multiple regression analysis of relationships between extension officers' socio-economic characteristics and job satisfaction were presented in Table 4.

#### 4. Discussions

From Table 1 most of the respondents (82.5%) were males, between 40 to 45 years, 85% were married and 87.5% had Diploma as educational qualification. The trend of the results agrees with Saito, and Weidemen (1990) that extension profession is male dominated in Africa and officers have level low of educational. Also, 54% had between 4 to 6 persons as household size, while 75% were Christians. The most prominent category of extension officers was agricultural technician, and 92.5% had working experience of at least 10 years. Majority of the extension officers live in their job area (82.5), while 80% covered at least 3 communities and 3 farmers group. In terms of number of farmers covered, only 40% of the extension officer covered more than 500 farmers and 45% travelled more than 40 km to reach their farmers.

In Table 2, the result revealed that extension officers were only satisfied with 4 out of 34 indicators of job satisfaction. These were research policies (3.77) work exposure (3.37) identifying farmers' problems (3.02) and opportunities to advance education (3.00). Oladele (2004), Banmeke and Ajayi (2005), and Akinsorotan (2007) reported that in, Nigeria, determinants of extension agents' job satisfaction included ability to identify farmers' problems, opportunity to further education and work exposure. However, extension officers were very dissatisfied with availability of experimental land (1.90) rewarding system (1.97), budgeting (1.90) and sanctions (1.90). The high number of dissatisfying items on the scale is an indicator that there is need for intervention to improve the satisfaction of extension officers in order to stimulate improved performance as expected in the new ERP.

From Table 3, the independent variables were significantly related to job satisfaction with F value of 2.98,  $p < 0.05$ . Also, R value of 0.84 showed that there was a strong correlation between independent variables and job satisfaction. The result further predicted 71 percent of the variation in job satisfaction by extension officers. Significant determinants were gender ( $t = 2.31$ ), marital status ( $t = -2.27$ ), working experience ( $t = 2.60$ ), living in job area ( $t = -3.05$ ), number of farmers covered ( $t = 2.00$ ) and distance to farmers ( $t = -2.11$ ). It implies that as there are more male extension officers, with long years of working experience their job satisfaction would increase. However as more extension officers are married, do not live in their job area and number and distance to farmers covered increases job satisfaction would decrease.

There was a high level of job dissatisfaction among extension officers in the study area. The items on the dissatisfaction list are areas requiring policy intervention for the improvement of extension delivery to farmers in the study area. There was also the dominance of married males in the extension delivery profession. The educational level of most extension officers was low. Prominent

areas of satisfaction among extension officers were research policies, work exposure, identifying farmers' problems and opportunities to advance education. Significant determinants of job satisfaction were gender, marital status, working experience, living in job area, number of farmers covered and distance to farmers. The study therefore recommend that policy makers and extension managers should pay attention to the items indicated for satisfaction and dissatisfaction by the extension officers with a view of boosting their morale for a higher level of performance.

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