

Work Motivation Factors of Development Agents and Econometric Model Results: A Case Study in Selected Districts of Ethiopia

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Abstract

The study set out to investigate the work motivation level of Development Agents in Agarfa and Sinana Districts, Bale Zone, Oromia Regional State, Ethiopia and the factors that influence their motivation to work. For this study all the Development Agents of the two Districts with a total size of 135 development agents were included as the sample respondents. The ordinal logistic regression model was employed to determine the most significant variables influencing development agent's motivation to work. The study found that a large majority of development agents (46.7%) belonged to medium level of work motivation, followed by 28.1% and 25.2% belonging to low and high level of work motivation, respectively. Results of the model showed, of the total eighteen variables considered in the model nine predictor variables were found to be of significance in explaining work motivation level of development agents. Accordingly, demographic factors (sex, marital status), work related environmental factors (promotion avenue), institutional factors (quality of work life, dependable supervisors, work incentive, recognition, policy environment of extension organization) and psychological factors (attitude of development agents towards their job) influenced work motivation at different significant level. It is therefore recommended that concerned agricultural extension managers, process owners, extension officers and supervisors should conduct periodic assessments to determine the level of work motivation of Development Agent's and have to plan for improvement.

Keywords: Work motivation; Development Agents

Introduction

Agriculture remains as the mainstay of the economy contributing on average about 45% of (Gross Domestic Product) GDP and 85%-90% of export earnings of Ethiopia. The dynamics of population growth, low productivity, compounded with some other factors have remained major bottle necks to economic growth and poverty reduction for the country. In general, the livelihood of more than 85% of the work force in the country is based on agriculture. Although the main source of the national earnings is obtained from this sector, the sector is dominated by traditional, subsistence and fragmented type small holder farmers [1]. In this regard, improving the performance of agricultural sector is crucial for fast development of country's economy.

Among many problems that confront human kind today, hunger is the greatest of all problems. Now with the changing agricultural scenario and perspectives in the world, the time is ripe for making the need based appropriate extension strategy by which information on agricultural production technology may be transmitted to all the potential users who can adopt those and produce food for their consumption and make available for others [2]. For national progress to occur, change in agriculture is essential. Substantial change in agriculture is needed if diets are to be improved, if a surplus is to be produced for sale and if agriculture is to enter a phase of self sustained growth. A great deal of responsibility for bringing about this change rests on the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) and thereby on the shoulders of Development Agents (DAs), who are at the front-line of the struggle for progressive change in agriculture in Ethiopia [3].

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Development Agents (DAs) are implementers of these policies and strategies with well defined and pre determinant roles. So, they are expected to hear the heart beats of the farmers in terms of agriculture and rural development. They are major implementers of the policies and strategies at the proximity for the farmers above all other actors. DAs will effectively and efficiently discharge these responsibilities if and only if, they are motivated in their job. In the same way, the awaking of humanism and humanization all over the world has enlarged the scope of applying principles of human resource management in any organization. More and more attention is being paid to motivational aspects of human resource, particularly the need for self-esteem, group belonging and self-actualization [4].

In order to make employees motivated and committed to their jobs in agricultural and rural development activities, there is a need for strong and effective motivation at the grass root level, sphere head workers in the front line who are DAs [5]. Generally in agricultural organizations, especially at lower levels, administration and management skill, if acquired at all, are learned by trial and error. As it is seen in different firms they train managers for different position of authorities, in addition to the subject of management that has been taught in colleges and universities. An important objective of management should be to motivate staff to make the effort necessary for the achievement of the goals of the organization or to put it another way, it is their job to make it rational for staff to do what is required of them. Managers have to devote considerable attention to the understanding of the motivation process. Employees work harder and perform better if motivated with their jobs [6,7].

But, extension officials at the District level of the MOARD office in the study area lack or ignore management techniques and practices which heighten or improve the work environment. In addition, they are unable to utilize those inspiration tools to keep employees motivational level constantly at a higher level, high productivity and moral among the employees. Under such circumstances rural communities may not get an appropriate advice and technical assistance in case of building their capacity to solve the challenges they face in their effort, to raise their income and improve their lives by using their resources with their own will and to develop local management skills. Farmers may not also get an appropriate technical assistance to enable them to increase their agricultural production and productivity and to contribute for the growth of economy of the county.

The objectives of this paper are, therefore, to determine the level of work motivation of development agents and to identify factors influencing work motivation of development agents in the study area.

Research Methodology

Sample Size and Sampling Procedure

The data needed for the study were collected from Agarfa and Sinana Districts and they were selected purposely. The Districts were purposely selected as per the interest of the research sponsor, existence of DAs motivational problem and accessibility of the two districts. All the development agents of the two districts with a total size of 135 DAs were included as the sample respondents for the study.

Types and Sources of Data

The data collected for this research were both quantitative and qualitative in nature. For this purpose, both primary and secondary sources of data were used to answer the objectives of the study. Primary data were collected from different category of respondents; development agents, management body, extension officers, supervisors, development agent's representatives and farmers in the study area by using questionnaire, discussions and key informant interview data collection instruments. To collect other relevant background information, secondary data were obtained from various sources.

Methods of Data Collection

The instruments used in this research for data collection were questionnaire, discussions and key informant interview. The questionnaire was prepared and pre-tested with the non-sampled respondents with matching characteristics before they were distributed and used for data collection. Based on the result of pre-test, necessary modifications/adjustments were made and finally, the modified questionnaire had been distributed to all DAs in the sample districts to be filled.

Methods of Data Analysis

For the purpose of this study, Ordered Logit model was used to analyze factors affecting motivation of development agents at work. The development agents here have three categories namely low, medium and high in terms of their motivation in increasing order. To determine the level of work motivation of development agents in the study area, eleven items/questions (appendix 1) were constructed for general work motivation aspects, development agent’s intensity, direction and persistence of efforts towards better performance to attaining organizational goals. Thus, weighted scores of the responses were summed up and used to calculate the actual mean and standard deviations. Hence, development agents were classified in to low, medium and high work motivation categories based on their deviation from the actual mean (Actual mean ± Standard deviation).

Results and Discussion

Work Motivation Level of DAs

Objective one was sought to determine DAs work motivational levels. In order to reveal the level of work motivation of DAs; aspects as DAs intensity, direction and persistence of efforts towards better performance to attaining organizational goals have been emphasized. Hence eleven items were used to construct general work motivation aspects. Each items/questions had a five point Likert scale [8]: 1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree. These items/questions were given weighted scores as per the responses/answers given by DAs and summed up, that gave score of the dependent variable. The distribution of DA respondents by level of work motivation categories are presented in Table 1.

Work Motivation Category	Score	Frequency	Percent	Actual Mean Score	Actual SD
Lower work motivation	14-20	38	28.1		
Medium work motivation	21-37	63	46.7		
Higher work motivation	38-49	34	25.2		
Total		135	100	28.63	8.34

Table 1: The Level of Work Motivation among DAs in the Study Area.

Source: Survey Data, 2013.

As indicated in Table 1, the obtained score of work motivation ranges from 14 to 49. The actual mean score of work motivation is 28.63 with the standard deviation of 8.34 with the minimum and the maximum scores of 14 and 49.

The data obtained categorized DAs into low, medium and high work motivation levels. The categorization of the DAs into these levels reflects the base for their deviations from the actual mean score distribution (that is, Actual mean ± Standard deviation= 28.63 ± 8.34). The result of this study shows that 28.1% (n= 38), 46.7% (n= 63) and 25.2% (n= 34) of DAs were low, medium and highly motivated, respectively. A large majority of the DAs who were identified to be below the desired higher level of work motivation, 74.8% (n= 101).

In addition to the survey among the DAs using structured questionnaire, FGDs and informal discussions with DAs and supervisors were conducted regarding the work motivation of DAs in the study area. The information obtained in these qualitative data collection process confirmed that lower salary, lack of professional development and training, asked to work long and irregular hours that include nights and weekends without appropriate incentive mechanism, absence of “carrier structure” where by employees can be benefited from the promotion and salary increments based on the living situation in different agro-ecological zones, less recognition from supervisors and farming community for the good work done, challenging working condition, inadequate technical support of SMS, large workloads, irrelevant duties and responsibilities to the profession, shortage of work independence, poor infrastructural facilities such as residential house and transport have influenced the job dissatisfaction, low work motivation and more frequent turnover of DAs.

Econometric Model Results of Influential Explanatory Variables on Work Motivation Level of DAs

The results of the ordered logit model can be used to identify the effects of changes in explanatory variables on the level of work motivation of DAs. In this section, all the explanatory variables were used to estimate the ordinal logistic regression model to determine the

most significant variables affecting DAs work motivation. The ordered logit regression model was also fitted to estimate the effects of a unit change in the individual hypothesized explanatory variable towards the variance of work motivation level of DAs. Thus, the results of the marginal changes in significant explanatory variables on work motivation level categories of DAs are presented in Table 2.

Variables	Co efficient	Standard Error	Z	P> z	Marginal effect		
					Low	Medium	High
Age	-0.04372	0.060073	-0.73	0.467	0.0034	-0.0006	-0.0028
Sex	1.39757	0.5560639	2.51	0.012**	-0.1518	0.084	0.0678
Marital Status	1.40931	0.7778161	1.81	0.070*	-0.1294	0.046	0.0833
Family Back Ground	-0.36102	0.7729562	-0.47	0.64	0.0269	-0.0025	-0.0244
Work Location	0.19029	0.2149796	0.89	0.376	-0.0148	0.0025	0.0123
Perceived Pay Structure	0.17642	0.24612	0.72	0.473	-0.0137	0.0023	0.0114
Quality Of Work Life	0.37438	0.1997039	1.87	0.061*	-0.029	0.0049	0.0242
Promoton Avenue	0.42914	0.2120421	2.02	0.043**	-0.0333	0.0056	0.0277
Dependable Supervisors	0.6517	0.1914777	3.4	0.001***	-0.0505	0.0084	0.0421
Work Incentives	0.43447	0.2200927	1.97	0.048**	-0.0337	0.0056	0.0281
Recognition	0.29918	0.1807349	1.66	0.098*	-0.0232	0.0039	0.0193
Job Security	0.02463	0.2184093	0.11	0.91	-0.0019	0.0003	0.0016
Supervision	-0.27333	0.2655187	-1.03	0.303	0.0212	-0.0035	-0.0176
Job Description	0.34562	0.2136942	1.62	0.106	-0.0268	0.0045	0.0223
Policy Environment	1.03044	0.2281795	4.52	0.000***	-0.0799	0.0134	0.0665
Performance Appraisal	0.23188	0.2008629	1.15	0.248	-0.018	0.003	0.015
Attitude Of Das Towards Their Job	0.76122	0.2105331	3.62	0.000***	-0.059	0.0099	0.0491
Achivement Motivation	-0.04742	0.1674166	-0.28	0.777	0.0037	-0.0006	-0.0031

Table 2: Maximum Likelihood Estimation of Ordered Logit Model for Variables Influencing Work Motivation of the DA's.

Source: Model output from survey data (2013).

***, **, * Significant at 1%, 5% and 10% probability level respectively

Maximum likelihood estimate

Log likelihood = -73.962541

Number of obs = 135

LR chi² (18) = 138.22

Prob. > chi² = 0.0000

Pseudo R² = 0.4830

Determinants of DAs Work Motivation from Model Results

Sex of the DAs: It was hypothesized to have relationship with work motivation of DAs in favor of men. The result of ordered logit model reveals that male DAs are positively related with motivation at work place than women counter parts at 5% level of significance. The marginal effect result also shows that while the number of male DAs in extension work increased at one unit, the work motivation at low category level decreased by 15.18% where as for medium and high category of motivation increased by 8.4% and 6.78% respectively. The FGD and key informant information confirmed that many of female DAs in the study area were perceived to be below the expected level of work motivation than their male counter parts. The reason could be of difficult working condition, social and cultural factors, leaving in accessible areas and away from family and frustration due to placement of remote areas.

Marital status of the DAs: Married DAs were hypothesized to have relationship with work motivation in favor of unmarried DAs. The model result shows that married DAs are positively related with motivation at work place than unmarried counter parts at 10% level of

significance. The marginal effect result shows that while the number of married DAs in extension work increased at one unit, the work motivation at low category level decreased by 12.94% where as for medium and high category of motivation increased by 4.6% and 8.33% respectively. FGD and informal discussion with respondents indicate that due to the demand and expansion of extension work, the work load in extension organization increased as compared to the last three-four years back. This demand and expansion of extension work in one way helped the DAs to enter to the newly created jobs and on other hand the one who do not have interest in doing this work by giving all his/her effort and the time tried to leave the job since it makes them busy. So that, among DAs who have tried to leave their jobs in relation to the current extension work load are more in the unmarried category of DAs than their married counter parts who are more responsible and committed to extension work.

Quality of work life: The model result revealed the availability of appropriate quality of work life in extension organizations has a positive impact on work motivation of DAs at 10% level of significance. The marginal effect on the availability of appropriate quality of work life in an extension organization implies that, other things remaining constant, an increase of a unit of quality of work life the probability of work motivation of low category decreases by 2.9% whereas, the probability of work motivation for medium and high work motivation category increases by about 0.49% and 2.42% respectively. Therefore, the extension organization should make their employee's job more interesting through job enrichment, job design and role interventions. This is because; it improves the work processes and the environment that the DAs work in.

Promotion avenues: It was hypothesized that the respondent's perception on promotion avenues is expected to have positive relationship with work motivation for the DAs. The model result also shows that the independent variable promotion avenue has influenced work motivation of DAs positively at 5% level of significance. Promotion system of extension organization more of subjective and considering employee's service years than individual performance based promotion criterion so that it harms motivation level of DAs.

As the DAs expressed in FGD, the problem related with promotion system was high since there is inconsistent provision of learning opportunities for the employees to upgrade their knowledge, lack of desired promotion or transfer opportunities to urban based offices, unable to continue higher education in distance program by him/her self. Transfer to other offices and promotion are also made through political appointment even made based on political activities participation that DAs took part. This implies that one approach to enhance work motivation of DAs is giving promotion by using appropriate promotion system. DAs motivation may also be increased by providing proper promotion opportunities, making reasonable placement showing concern both for their productivity and welfare. All of these could be fulfilled if and only if promotion system of an extension organization gave attention for their effort.

Dependable supervisors: Visionary extension organization had dependable supervisors which help them accomplish their mandates and achieve their goal with the excellent performance. It was hypothesized that supervisors who were worthy of being trusted to provide motivational performance and other work related support for the DAs were basic for an organizational mission how they motivated for more performance.

The model result emphasized that the availability of dependable supervisors in an extension organization affects work motivation of DAs positively at 1% level of significance. Thus it is accepted by DAs that equal treatment, understand their needs, provide necessary resources, facilitate the process, guiding and coaching of them in an extension organization improves the work motivation of the DAs.

Work incentives: The lack of adequate incentive system within the extension system is the most observed and over-emphasized reason given by DAs for the low motivation in their work. The model result revealed that the availability of adequate work incentive in extension organizations has a positive impact on work motivation of DAs at 5% level of significance. The marginal effect on the availability of appropriate incentive system implies that, other things remaining constant, an increase of a unit of work incentive the probability of work motivation of low category decreases by 3.37% whereas, the probability of work motivation for medium and high work motivation categories increases by about 0.56% and 2.81% respectively.

The current study has revealed that work incentives/rewards caused the satisfaction of DAs to be affected, which directly influenced the work motivation of DAs. It was also found out that work incentives depends on the amount received and the amount the DA feel he or she should receive. Furthermore, it was recognized that agents differ widely in the rewards they desire and the value they attached to it.

Recognition: The ordered logit regression analysis output indicates that availability of appropriate recognition system in an extension organization affects work motivation of DAs positively at 10% level of significance. The finding of this research reveals that recognition was among the influential factors that affect work motivation of DAs. The marginal effect also implies that, other things being constant, an increase of a unit of recognition system, the probability of work motivation of the low category decreases by 2.32% whereas, the probability of work motivation for the medium and high work motivation category increases by about 0.39% and 1.93% respectively.

This implies that one approach of enhancing work motivation is recognizing and appreciating the DAs for good performance. DAs recognition can be in the form of formal and informal rewards in which an extension organization acknowledges and praises for whom well performed their own task according to the organization's values and principles.

Perceived policy environment: Policy environment of extension organization in the study area was found to have positive and significant impact on work motivation of DAs at 1% significant level. The marginal effect on the availability of favorable and clearly defined policies in extension organizations implies that, other things being constant, an increase of a unit of favorable policy environment, the probability of work motivation of low category decreases by 7.99% whereas, the probability of work motivation for medium and high work motivation category increases by about 1.34 and 6.65% respectively.

Thus, organizational policy or management style that put so much pressure on their employees are not encouraged as it can create negative acceptance of the policy among the employees. Consequently, it could lessen their work motivation, increase turnover possibility and resulting the employee opting for other organization as their new employer. It is generally accepted that every organization has a distinct role or purpose that is manifested in its goals and objectives. Hence, employees who are working towards meeting these organizations objectives should have clear knowledge of roles to be played in achieving organizational goals.

Attitude of the DAs towards their job: DAs overall work motivation was found to be influenced positively and significantly by their attitudes toward their job at 1% level. The marginal effect shows that, as the dissatisfiers in extension organizations of the study area decreases, the probability of work motivation for the medium and high work motivation category increases by 0.99% and 4.91% respectively while the work motivation of the low category decreases by 5.9%. In other words as the dissatisfiers in extension organizations increase by a unit, DAs were steadily growing unhappier with their work. As a result they develop a negative attitude towards their job.

This research also observed from FGD and key informants that the working condition of extension organizations in the study area requires DAs to work for long hours, travel long distances away from home or family, serve large number of farming household with a limited number of DAs (in most cases, remote kebele's of the district are vacant), work inaccessible areas which needs big labor and areas of having poor transportation facility while serving farmers on their own farm land etc. Even though the current extension principle says that each kebele's should have three DAs who have been trained in crop production, animal husbandry and natural resources, in addition, one cooperative worker and animal health technician have been also assigned two-three kebele, the practical situation shows that most of the district kebele's have inadequate numbers of DAs. Hence, currently the inadequate number of DAs, poor transportation facilities and other issues discussed above in the study area could collectively explain the inequitable access of farmers to extension services.

Thus the current study pointed out that, DAs negative attitude towards extension work is critical since it is positively associated with their personal negative habits such as; lateness to work, absenteeism, low commitment, turnover, which in turn, have implications for overall organizational low performance. It is generally accepted that, the consequence of having a negative attitude of DAs towards their job is that the pleasant and harmonious atmosphere which exists in the work environment of the extension agency will be in danger. Furthermore, they show high insubordination and grievance.

Therefore, the extension organization of the study area has to work to improve the negative attitude of DAs on their work to make them motivated. In general, improving the condition of all these factors creates motivation of DAs to perform their duties and responsibilities in effective and efficient way.

Conclusion

The effects of DAs motivation do not stop with performance. In the group of motivated extension agents there are fewer rates of ethical problems, less turnover and lower levels of absenteeism. Motivated agents feel less stress, enjoy their work and as a result have better physical and mental strength. Furthermore, motivated agents are more committed to their extension organizations and show less insubordination and grievance. They are also more creative, innovative and responsive to the farming community, thus indirectly contributing to the long-term success of the extension organization. In short, motivated agents are the greatest asset of extension organization.

For the above reason, knowledge of motivational factors need to be important for extension managers, process owners, extension officers, supervisors and other sectors that use DAs for their work to be accomplished in creating conducive work environment in extension organizations of the study area. Therefore, the researcher concludes from the above summary that results of this study have shown that DAs demographic, work related environments, institutional and psychological factors in extension organization of the study area were equally responsible for the existing undesirable consequences of lower work motivation level of DAs. The key to motivate DAs in their work is having the knowledge of "What is motivation?", "How does one get motivated?", "What should be done to increase motivation?". Thus, every concerned organization and personnel has to design motivational program that improves the work motivation of DAs and form participatory management style.

Recommendations

A large majority of the DAs in the study districts expressed that besides the less payment, harsh working conditions, in accessible leaving condition and very high work load, agricultural extension work is not considered as a socially prestigious profession. For such reason the DAs are not willing to work as an agent for a long period time in an extension organization. Therefore, this issue calls for considerable efforts to be made by extension managers, process owners, extension officers and supervisors, so as to bring to focus how an appropriate motivational package can gear up or influence the DAs to develop positive attitude towards their job and thereby increase their productivity. Thus, the feasible recommendation in this regard would be: [1] Prepare a carrier structure where by employees can be benefited from promotion and salary increments, based on the living situation in different agro-ecological zones; [5] Supply DAs with all the necessary materials like raincoats, umbrella, shoes and other durable and non-durable required materials; [6] Provide DAs with uniform work closing and transportation facility. This is because whenever they visit urban based offices for official work their transportation facility or clothing can easily identified by the rural as well as urban community and the DAs will also respect their work close; in such a way the DAs as well as their work will be known and respected; [3] Materials given to the DAs for the purpose of their work annually should be good, like rather than giving boots since they work in rural area, it is better to give special shoes.

Recognition that shows appreciation and provides praise for the extra work and fulfillment of job tasks was also found to be significantly affecting the DAs work motivation. In FGDs, it was pointed out that the working hours of the DAs are more compared to other civil servants at grass root level, even with an average of more than eight hours per a day and sometimes on weekends. Therefore, the extension organization in the study area has to; [1] Design additional incentive mechanism for the extra working hours and weekend tasks and [5] Prepare a system whereby superior performance could be rewarded and motivated. These will attract, retain and motivate extension agents.

The current promotional system in the study area is not suitable or poor in terms of selection criteria, availability and implementation of promotional systems and further training opportunities, such a low quality of promotional system in the study area makes the DAs unproductive in their work. Therefore, the extension organization in the study area has to; [1] Prepare and implement a comfortable promotional system whereby the DAs become benefited like DAs become a supervisor, subject matter specialist (SMS) and office worker; [5] Prepare a suitable promotion criteria which relates or considers individual performance than years of service; and [6] Involve extra trainings (long and short term) as a promotional system.

Logistics and facilities would create favorable working conditions for the DAs to be more motivated in their work. In relation to this, the current study confirmed that there is poor transport facility, poor and inadequate housing condition, in adequate availability of equipments in each field of profession. Thus, extension managers, process owners, extension officers and supervisors should make sure DAs has adequate housing condition, tools, transportation facility (motor cycle, bicycle, horse or mule depending on the existing situation of the area) and materials they need for the job.

Adequacy of supervision was found to be one of the factors affecting work motivation of DAs. The study also indicated that there is poor scheduled supervisory visits, scheduled evaluation feedback, provision of current information on their profession through the supply of current bulletins, treatment as a colleague, partner and friend from supervisors in extension organizations of the study area. In this regard, extension organizations should be reminded that if their main engines, DAs, are affected by the above issues, their work motivation would be affected consequently it lessen the quality of their productivity. Therefore, [1] DAs should get relevant, adequate and regular supervision from extension organizations; [5] Supervisors are required to be fair and accessible to DAs; [6] Their technical capabilities were also important in helping DAs on practical aspects of their work and; [3] Supervision should not only focus on monitoring the DAs, but also to support and guide them to discharge their duties smoothly and effectively.

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