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Knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers regarding the administrative and organizational factors of the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq

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Abstract

The research aimed to identify the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers regarding the administrative and organizational factors related to the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq. Four sub-objectives emerge from it according to the research areas, which are: the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to types of communication, and the level of knowledge of workers in extension centers. agricultural organizational factors related to the goals and policy of the organization, and the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers with organizational factors related to organizational structure and decision-making, the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers on the organizational factors related to organized economics. The sample was randomly selected by 50% of the research community consisting of three governorates in central Iraq, namely Baghdad, Salah al-Din, and Anbar, and their number reached (240) agricultural employees. A random sample of 50% was drawn from them to conduct the research, so the research sample became (120) employees. Agriculturally. The questionnaire form was used to collect data from the respondents after presenting it to the specialists. The validity and reliability of the form were verified to achieve the research objectives. Appropriate statistical tools were used to analyze the data and the SPSS statistical program. Field data was collected through personal interviews with workers in the Baghdad Agriculture Directorate during August 2023.

The results of the research showed that the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the administrative and organizational factors of the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq indicates average, and there is weakness in the field of organization and management of the extension organization, and this is due to several reasons, including related to the types of communication between the levels of the organization with regard to the extension centers affiliated with it. As well as a weakness in the ability to make decisions, a lack of clarity in the organizational structure of the extension centers, ambiguity affecting the goals and policies of the agricultural extension centers, and a lack of financial support for those centers. The overall average score was 97.93, with an overall weighted average of 2.96, and a standard deviation of 9.77. The research recommended the need for the relevant authorities in the Ministry of Agriculture to support organization and management in agricultural extension, especially extension centers, because of their great importance in developing farmers in the agricultural sector, communicating modern recommendations to them, developing their skills in organization, and improving the organizational structure of agricultural extension centers.

Keywords: Agricultural extension centers, administrative and organizational factors, communication function

Introduction

The agricultural sector is one of the most important productive sectors in the economy of the majority of countries in general, and developing countries in particular, including Arab countries. Agriculture plays an essential role in raising the living and social standard of the population and constitutes a basic source of national income and a field of work for the vast majority of the population of Arab countries.

Research and extension organizations play a pivotal role in providing improved technology and information to farmers to increase agricultural production, formulating public policy and planning research and extension services in all countries, and ensuring broad coverage of farmers' needs for technology, information, and developing methods used (Pareek & Rao, 1992: p63) ^[1]. There is a need for a new role for agricultural extension workers. One of the basic functions required is that the agricultural extension agent is an information broker and not a technology transmitter. He solves problems more than being a transmitter of a ready-made recipe for solutions. He possesses the skills required for effective communication, and this requires providing technical and financial incentives (Ramirez, 1997: p6) ^[2]. As a result of developments that prevailed in the world during the last two decades of the twentieth century, agricultural extension systems have faced major challenges at various levels. At the global level, we find that rapid technical progress in transportation, electronic communication networks, and biotechnology, and the development of global communication networks have led to the creation of a tremendous capacity to exchange information and ideas (Swanson *et al.* 1997: p204) ^[3]. The guide needs to be an effective facilitator and teacher, to contribute to the discovery of local knowledge and techniques, benefit from this knowledge and draw the attention of members of the rural community to its importance, and have the ability to get to know people, analyze their problems, and suggest solutions to them, so the new extension worker needs to be Management specialist, communication specialist, and technical specialist (Naji, 2002: p. 151) ^[4]. Regarding the level of agricultural extension systems themselves, we find a set of challenges that include the loss of accountability mechanisms to clients, and the dangers facing the sustainability of agricultural systems, such as the excessive use of external inputs and the fragility of the ecosystems of small farms among many poor people, the use of participatory approaches, the difficult working conditions of extensionists and carrying out additional tasks, and difficulties Financing and delivery of the extension service and loss of political support (Anderson, 2003:p16) ^[5].

In general, agricultural extension fully fulfilling its assigned role depends on the presence of a good agricultural extension worker, as the agricultural extension worker is the main pillar in the success of extension work and represents the base of the pyramid and the front line in agricultural extension agencies. Therefore, one of the most important things is to build a close relationship between the researcher, the extensions, and the farmer, as the objectives of extension include transferring knowledge from researchers to farmers, providing them with advice, teaching them how to make the best decisions, supporting them to clarify their capabilities and goals, and encouraging desired agricultural developments.

The concept of knowledge is awareness, awareness, and understanding of facts, and the acquisition of information through experience, through contemplation of the nature of things, or through reviewing the experiences of others and reading their conclusions. Thus, it emphasizes that knowledge is linked to intuition and research to develop oneself and discover the unknown (Al-Sayed, 2011: p. 5) ^[8]. Knowledge is an integrated framework that works to design and organize strategies, organizational structures, and processes to invest all the knowledge the organization

possesses to achieve the best service to its customers and the best economic value (Omotayo, 2015: p2) ^[9]. Decision-making is the focus of the administrative process because it is an intertwined process in all administration functions and activities. When the administration exercises the planning function, it makes specific decisions at every stage of developing the plan, when setting the goal, drawing policies, or preparing programs, and when the administration establishes the appropriate organization. Due to its multiple tasks and activities, it makes decisions regarding the organizational structure, its type, size, and the basis for dividing departments and divisions (Abdullah, 2012: p. 64) ^[10]. Functional communication is the basic foundation of the work of administration and organization, and it is what connects the joints of the organization, whether the communication is oral or written. It is embodied in communication between the boss and subordinates, or between co-workers, as well as communication with farmers in implementing the guidance aspect of a modern recommendation in agriculture, which is the exchange of information at management levels (Al-Hamdany, 2013: p. 78) ^[11]. Functional communication of all kinds has a great impact on management, organization, and movement of the organization and determining the organization's relationship with the inputs as well as the processes and outputs of any organization, especially the agricultural extension organization and its administrative levels, and to achieve this at the level of goals as well as decision-making and financial economic matters at the level of the organization to achieve the requirements of management and organization (Hammad, 2016:p35) ^[12]. Communication is an important function in administrative and organizational work at the level of the organizational structure, as we find the flow of information at the levels of the organization through the structure of authority relationships. This means that information is provided through a chain of formal hierarchy, and some of it is in the form of decisions and directives, it is considered a driving force for integration between the various levels of the organization to achieve Objectives and stability and integration between the levels of the organization on the one hand, and the beneficiaries on the other hand (Maher, 2004: p. 58) ^[13].

During the researcher's readings on the work of the administrative organizations existing in Iraq and at the level of the Ministry of Agriculture, the connection of administrative decisions to the organizational structures and the type of decisions, as well as the lines of communication and communication between the administrative levels, their impact on the organization and their future effects, and the researcher's acquaintance with the agricultural organization and its affiliated extension centers, there is weakness and lack of clarity in the function of communication between These centers while carrying out the work required to develop the agricultural aspect and the organization's performance, found it necessary to raise an important question, which is: What is the knowledge of the workers in the agricultural extension centers about the administrative and organizational factors of the communication function in some of the central governorates of Iraq?

Research aims

1. The research seeks to achieve a main goal, which is to identify the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers regarding the

administrative and organizational factors in the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq, and four sub-objectives emerge from it according to the areas of research, which are: The first area: is the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to types of communication.

The second area is the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors that include the goals and policy of the organization. The third area is the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about organizational factors related to organizational structure and decision-making. The fourth area is the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to organized economics.

- Determining the relationship between the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers regarding administrative and organizational factors in the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq and the variables studied, which

are (age, educational level, experience, years of service, readiness for change, job satisfaction, and employees' attitude toward organization).

Research Methodology

This research comes within the framework of research that falls within the descriptive approach, as this approach describes what exists in the current situation and interprets it by collecting data on the level of opinions, positions, and reactions regarding the subject of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers regarding administrative and organizational factors (Al-Sammak, 2019: 189) ^[14].

Research community and sample

The research community included three governorates of central Iraq: Baghdad, Salah al-Din, and Anbar, an area to conduct the research because of its great importance in agricultural extension. Among all employees of agricultural extension centers in those governorates, who numbered (240) agricultural employees, a random sample of 50% was drawn. Of them to conduct the research, the research sample became (120) agricultural employees, as shown in Table No. 1.

Table 1: Distribution of employees according to extension centers in the research governorates, and the research sample

S.	The center in the governorate	The number	The sample is 50%
1.	Extension Center in Baghdad	110	55
2.	Extension Center in Salah al-Din	80	40
3.	Extension Center in Anbar	50	25
The total		240	120

Research method

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part contained the farmers' personal information, such as (age, educational level, experience, years of service, readiness for change, job satisfaction, and employees' attitude), while the second part consisted of (33) items distributed over four areas to measure the knowledge of workers in the centers. Agricultural guidance: The field of organizational factors that relate to types of communication consists of (8) paragraphs, the field of organizational factors that relate to the goals and policy of the organization consists of (10) paragraphs, and the field of organizational factors that relate to organizational structure and decision-making consists of (9) paragraphs, The field of organizational factors related to organized economics consists of (7) paragraphs) after presenting it to specialists in the field of agricultural extension to verify the apparent validity and content of the questionnaire form. It was deleted, added, and modified to stabilize the form in its final form.

Data collection process

The process of collecting research data was done through a questionnaire form using a personal interview with the respondents, and the data collection process took from 7/1/2023 to 8/20/2023.

Data tabulation and analysis process

After completing the data collection process, it was transcribed through the Excel and SPSS programs used to analyze and process the data statistically. After that, the data was organized into tables in order for the results to be presented and interpreted. The process of tabulating and analyzing the data was as follows:

Measuring the dependent variable

A five-point Likert scale was adopted to measure the knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers for the respondents. The scale consisted of the following levels. The scale will consist of five alternatives (I know strongly, I know, neutral, I do not know, I do not know strongly), and grades will be given to them respectively (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), thus the range of the theoretical scale becomes (33-165) degrees, with a hypothesized average of (82.5) degrees, and about the fields, the scales ranged as follows (organizational factors that relate to types of communication consist of (8-40) degrees, The range of organizational factors that relate to the goals and policy of the organization consists of (10-50) scores, The field of organizational factors that relate to organizational structure and decision making consists of (9-45) scores, and the field of organizational factors that relate to organized economics consists of (7-35) scores. The initial test of the scale was conducted on 6/15/2023 on an exploratory sample consisting of A group of agricultural employees numbered 25 employees from the research community outside the research sample. To calculate reliability, the Alfacornpach equation was used, as the value of the reliability coefficient reached 0.88 the validity coefficient reached 0.93, and the scale was characterized by high validity and stability.

Measuring independent variables

- Age:** Measured by the number of years studied.
- Educational level:** It was measured through levels (bachelor's, institute, master's, doctorate) and was given (4, 3, 2, 1) respectively. Thus, the measure of educational level ranged between (1 - 4) degrees.

3. **Number of years of service:** Measured by the number of years.
4. **Readiness for change:** It was measured by three alternatives (high, medium, low) and weights were given to them (3, 2, 1) respectively.
5. **Degree of job satisfaction:** It was measured through the levels (satisfied, neutral, dissatisfied) and was given (2, 1, and zero) respectively.
6. **Employees' attitude:** It was measured by three alternatives (negative, neutral, positive) and weights were given to them (3, 2, 1) respectively.

Results

1. Identifying the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers regarding administrative

and organizational factors regarding the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq in general.

The results of the research showed that 61.66% of the respondents were at the level of knowledge of the respondents in the agricultural extension centers regarding the administrative and organizational factors in the communication function and that the minimum score obtained by the respondents was 33 and the highest score was 165 degrees, with an overall average of 97.93 on the scale of its theoretical limits (1-165) degrees. With an overall weighted average of 2.96 degrees and a standard deviation of 9.77 degrees, the respondents were divided into three levels according to the law of range, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Respondents were divided into three levels according to the law of range

Knowledge category	The number	%	Arithmetic average of knowledge	Relative arithmetic mean
Low (33-76)	20	16.67	54.40	9.07
Medium (77-120)	74	61.66	97.15	59.91
High (121-164)	26	21.67	142.25	30.82
the total	120	100	98.5	100

The results of Table 2 show that the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the administrative and organizational factors of the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq is generally average and tends to decline. This is due to several reasons, including related to the types of communication between the levels of the organization about the extension centers affiliated with it, as well as weaknesses. In the ability to make decisions, the lack of clarity in the organizational structure of extension centers, the ambiguity affecting the goals and policies of agricultural

extension centers, and the lack of financial support for those centers.

The first area is the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to types of communication

The research results showed that 60.63% of the respondents were at the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to types of communication, with a weighted average of 2.96 degrees, and a standard deviation of 2.61 degrees, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Distribution of respondents according to their level of knowledge of administrative and organizational factors related to types of communication

S.	Paragraphs	Knowledge categories and relative weight								
		Low		Weighted mean	Medium		Weighted mean	High		Weighted mean
		n	%		n	%		n	%	
1.	Internal communication	23	19.17	2.34	69	57.50	3.55	28	23.33	3.99
2.	Downlink communications	20	16.67	1.96	74	61.67	3.75	26	21.66	3.80
3.	Upward communications	19	15.83	1.89	74	61.67	3.75	27	22.50	3.85
3.	Horizontal communications	17	14.17	1.67	78	65.00	3.80	25	20.83	3.78
4.	External connection	23	19.17	2.34	67	55.83	3.50	30	25.00	4.00
5.	Communication is a dynamic process	22	18.33	1.98	71	59.17	3.60	27	22.50	3.85
6.	Communication is an ongoing process	19	15.83	1.95	73	60.84	3.70	28	23.33	3.99
7.	Communication is a circular process	24	20.00	2.37	76	63.33	3.77	20	16.67	3.67
8.	Internal communication	23	19.17	2.34	69	57.50	3.55	28	23.33	3.99

It appears from the results of Table 3. The level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the administrative and organizational factors of the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq is generally described as average and tends to decline. This is due to several reasons, including related to the types of communication between levels of the organization, such as upward communication and continuity of communication within and between centers. Agricultural extension.

The second area is the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about organizational factors related to the goals and policies of the organization

The results of the research showed that 61.09% of the respondents the knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to the goals and policy of the organization, with a weighted average of 2.94 degrees, and a standard deviation of 2.35 degrees, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Distribution of respondents according to their level of knowledge of administrative and organizational factors related to the goals and policy of the organization

S.	Paragraphs	Knowledge categories and relative weight								
		Low		Weighted mean	Medium		Weighted mean	High		Weighted mean
		n	%		n	%		n	%	
1.	The objectives of the extension center help determine the work ceiling for each organizational level.	23	19.17	2.34	70	58.33		27	22.50	3.85
2.	Systems and management policies help in developing the organizational structure.	20	16.67	1.96	75	62.50	3.76	25	20.83	3.78
3.	The center's higher objectives help implement strategic work at various administrative levels.	20	16.67	1.96	74	61.67	3.75	26	21.66	3.80
4.	The center's objectives help determine and draw the organizational structure of the guidance center	16	13.33	1.64	79	65.83	3.99	25	20.83	3.78
5.	Directing individuals' behavior towards achieving goals.	24	20.00	2.37	68	56.67	3.50	28	23.33	3.99
6.	Directing individuals in performing their tasks and informing them of their duties.	21	17.50	1.97	72	60.00	3.64	27	22.50	3.85
7.	Informing individuals of the results of their performance	19	15.83	1.89	73	60.84	3.70	28	23.33	3.99
8.	Communication leads to the support of human relations within the organization	23	19.17	2.34	77	64.17	3.78	20	16.66	3.67
9.	The communication process also plays an important and vital role in the stage of implementing and following up on the implementation of the decisions taken	23	19.17	2.34	70	58.33	3.58	27	22.50	3.85
10.	Changes in the organizational structure are made in accordance with the objectives of the extension Center.	20	16.67	1.96	75	62.50	3.76	25	20.83	3.78

It appears from the results of Table 4. The knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to the goals and policies of the organization is described as average and tends to decline. This is due to several reasons, including the weakness of helping the center's objectives to define and draw the organizational structure of the extension center, as well as informing the working individuals of the results of their performance in the center's Guidance.

The third area is the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about organizational factors related to organizational structure and decision-making: The research results showed that a percentage of 61.76% of respondents the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about organizational factors related to organizational structure and decision-making, with a weighted average of 2.95 degrees, and a standard deviation of 2.40 degrees, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Distribution of respondents according to their level of knowledge of administrative and organizational factors related to organizational structure and decision-making

S	Paragraphs	Knowledge categories and relative weight								
		Low		Weighted mean	Medium		Weighted mean	High		Weighted mean
		n	%		n	%		n	%	
1.	The current organization contributes to the ease of communication within and between extension Centres.	22	18.33	1.98	71	59.17	3.60	27	22.50	3.85
2.	Changes in the organizational structure are based on the reality of internal rather than external conditions.	19	15.83	1.89	76	63.33	3.77	25	20.83	3.78
3.	The guidance center's strategy is developed in accordance with the general strategy of the Ministry and the government.	19	15.83	1.89	75	62.50	3.76	26	21.66	3.80
4.	The authority to make liberal decisions and implement communications policy is concentrated	15	12.50	1.60	80	66.67	4.00	25	20.83	3.78
5.	In the hands of the center director	23	19.17	2.34	69	57.50	3.55	28	23.33	3.99
6.	The organizational structure in the Ministry is being reviewed and developed in accordance with the strategic plan for the extension centers.	23	19.17	2.34	73	60.84	3.70	24	20.00	2.37
7.	Powers are granted to those under responsibility and decisions are made in a clear and specific manner. in the center	19	15.83	1.89	74	61.67	3.75	27	22.50	3.85
8.	The amount of information available to management is sufficient to make the right decisions without referring to anyone at the appropriate time.	20	16.67	1.96	78	65.00	3.80	22	18.33	3.70
9.	Personal experience is relied upon in making administrative decisions.	22	18.33	1.98	71	59.17	3.60	27	22.50	3.85

It appears from the results of Table 5. The level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about organizational factors related to organizational structure and decision-making is described as average and tends to decline. This is due to several reasons, including the weakness of the authority to make liberal decisions and implement policy. Correspondence is concentrated in the hands of the center director, as well as weakness in changes in the organizational structure is based on the reality of internal rather than external conditions.

The fourth area is the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to organized economics. The results of the research showed that 62.50% of the respondents showed the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the organizational factors related to organized economics, with a weighted average of 2.99 degrees, and a standard deviation of 2.41 degrees, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Distribution of respondents according to their level of knowledge of administrative and organizational factors related to organized economies

S.	Paragraphs	Knowledge categories and relative weight								
		Low		Weighted mean	Medium		Weighted mean	High		Weighted mean
		n	%		n	%		n	%	
1.	Estimate the required capital.	19	15.83	1.89	73	60.84	3.70	28	23.33	3.99
2.	Determine capital structure.	18	15.00	1.90	77	64.17	3.78	25	20.83	3.78
3.	Choose the source of funds.	17	14.17	1.67	76	63.33	3.77	27	22.50	3.85
4.	Issuing disbursement of guidance bulletins and issuing disbursement orders pertaining to the department by managers.	20	16.67	1.96	79	65.83	3.99	21	17.50	3.69
5.	Financial control and use of funds Managers determine financial performance.	20	16.67	1.96	71	59.17	3.60	29	24.17	3.99
6.	Disposal of surplus funds or profits.	20	16.67	1.96	74	61.67	3.75	26	21.66	3.80
7.	Payment of salaries and the value of services provided.	19	15.83	1.89	75	62.50	62.50	26	21.66	3.80

The results of Table 6 show that the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about organizational factors related to organized economics is described as average and tends to decline. This is due to several reasons, including how the capital structure is determined, as well as estimating the required capital, as well as choosing the source of funds for the extension center.

2. Determining the relationship between the level of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers regarding administrative and organizational factors in the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq and the variables studied, which are (age, educational level, experience, years of service, readiness for change, job satisfaction, and workers' attitude).

The results of the research showed that the respondents were distributed according to each scale, that the age variable ranged between (24-62) years, and the percentage of educational level was 45% at the bachelor's level, and the years of experience for the number of years of experience variable ranged from (28) years, and with regard to the job satisfaction variable The percentage of (69%) was in the neutral category, the willingness to change was 54% agreeable, and the workers' attitude towards change was 45% negative towards organization and guidance management. The categories of independent variables were divided according to the law of range, as shown in Table (7).

Table 7: Results of simple correlation analysis between independent variables and respondents' knowledge of administrative and organizational factors in the communication function

Independent variables	Correlation coefficient value
Age	0.06
Educational level	0.02
Years of Experience	0.25**
Job Satisfaction	0.18*
Readiness for change	0.26**
Employees' orientation toward the organization	0.31**

Table 7 shows the correlation between the level of knowledge and the independent variables. Pearson's

correlation coefficient was used for the variables (age, number of years of experience, job satisfaction, readiness for change, and direction), and there was a positive correlation with regard to the variables (number of years of experience, job satisfaction, readiness). For change and trend), as shown in Table 7. With regard to age, there is no relationship between it and the dependent variable.

As for the educational level variable, Spearman's law was used, which had a value of (0.02) and there was no relationship between it and the dependent variable. To test the significance of the relationship, the (t) test was used for all variables, and to find the relationship, the calculated (t) was compared to the tabular one, and the results appeared in Table No. 7. The statistical hypothesis was accepted for all variables except for the variable (age and educational level). The statistical hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Conclusions

1. It is concluded from the research that the knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers about the administrative and organizational factors of the communication function in some central governorates of Iraq is described as average, tending to be weak, with an overall average of 97.93 degrees, an overall weighted average of 2.96 degrees, and a standard deviation of 9.77 degrees.
2. The organization and management of extension centers with a communication function needs to be developed in the areas of knowledge of workers in agricultural extension centers with the organizational factors that relate to types of communication, and with the organizational factors that relate to the goals and policy of the organization, as well as with the organizational factors related to the organizational structure and decision-making, as well as with the organizational factors that relate to organized economics.
3. It is concluded that there is no relationship between the variable of age and educational level and the dependent variable, and this is not a good thing because the educational level necessarily has a major impact on the development of workers in the organization and management of counseling centers, and administrative experience also has a role in the communication process.

Recommendations

1. The need for the concerned authorities in the Ministry of Agriculture to support the organization and management of agricultural extension, especially the extension Centre, as they are of great importance in developing farmers in the agricultural sector and communicating modern recommendations to them.
2. The necessity of introducing modern technology into agricultural organizations, training workers on modern communication functions, and developing their communication skills within the organization.
3. Involving degree holders in the management of the organization because of their modern scientific capabilities to develop the organizational structure of the organization.

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