



OBSTACLES OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION WORKERS IN IMPLEMENTING THE ACTIVITIES OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION AND TRAINING ORGANIZATION AND THE PROPOSED

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ABSTRACT

The research aims to identify the obstacles facing agricultural extension workers in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department, with proposed solutions. To achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire was designed to first identify these obstacles and then develop proposed solutions by collecting the opinions of agricultural consultants. This was based on relevant literature relating to subject matter experts. The research community included all agricultural consultants working at the headquarters of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department and its branches in the governorates of the central region. The total number of participants in the study was 118 agricultural extension workers.

Statistical data analysis was conducted, and the research results revealed major obstacles that agricultural extension faces in carrying out extension activities. These obstacles obtained average scores higher than the hypothesized average on the agreement scale used in the research. As for the results of the second objective, they indicated that the primary focus on the opinions of the participants was the best real solution to overcome the obstacles faced by agricultural extension workers in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department. The research recommended the need for relevant agricultural extension agencies to pay special attention to the challenges faced by agricultural extension workers, which hinder the implementation of extension programmers. This can be achieved by intensifying the training of agricultural extension workers in the field of extension activities and enhancing material and moral incentives for them with the aim of improving the quality of implementing extension programs and presenting them in the best possible way.

Keywords: Agricultural extension, Agricultural extension activities, Obstacles.

*The article is taken from the master's thesis of the first researcher.



معوقات المرشدين الزراعيين في تنفيذ أنشطة دائرة الإرشاد والتدريب الزراعي والحلول المقترحة

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الخلاصة

هدف البحث التعرف على المعوقات التي تواجه المرشدين الزراعيين في تنفيذ أنشطة دائرة الإرشاد والتدريب الزراعي فضلاً عن الحلول المقترحة، ولتحقيق ذلك صُممت استبانة لغرض تحديد تلك المعوقات أولاً ثم وضع الحلول المقترحة كهدف ثاني من خلال التعرف على آراء المرشدين الزراعيين معتمدين بذلك على الأدبيات ذات العلاقة بموضوع الخبراء المتخصصين. شمل مجتمع البحث جميع المرشدين الزراعيين العاملين في مقر دائرة الإرشاد والتدريب الزراعي وتشكيلاتها في محافظات المنطقة الوسطى، إذ بلغ عدد المشمولين بالبحث (118) مرشداً زراعياً، تمت معالجة البيانات احصائياً، وأظهرت نتائج البحث وجود معوقات كبيرة تواجه المرشدين الزراعيين في تنفيذ النشاطات الإرشادية إذ حصلت على وسط مرجح اكبر من الوسط الفرضي في مقياس درجات الموافقة المستخدم في البحث اما نتائج الهدف الثاني فبينت ان موضوع الاهتمام برؤود افعال المشاركين جاءت بالمرتبة الاولى كحلول حقيقية لمعوقات المرشدين الزراعيين في تنفيذ أنشطة دائرة الإرشاد والتدريب الزراعي، وقد اوصى البحث بضرورة أن تولي الجهات المعنية بالإرشاد الزراعي اهتماماً خاصاً للتحديات التي تواجه المرشدين الزراعيين والتي تعيق تنفيذ البرامج الإرشادية، والعمل على تذليل تلك التحديات وإيجاد الحلول المناسبة لها من خلال تكثيف تدريب المرشدين الزراعيين في مجال تنفيذ النشاطات الإرشادية وتعزيز التحفيز المادي والمعنوي للمرشدين الزراعيين وذلك بهدف تحسين مستوى تنفيذ البرامج الإرشادية وتقديمها بأفضل طريقة ممكنة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأنشطة الإرشادية، الإرشاد الزراعي، المعوقات.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is a system and lifestyle, a source of income, and a vital basis for food and social security, and it constitutes the largest sector in the economy (AL Khafaji & lafta, 2022), This makes it a basic source of lively hood for a large segment of the population and a major source of national income (Ali & Hassan, 2018) In general, the agricultural food sector provides available food energy to consumers, accounting for approximately 30% or more of the total (Al-Saffar, 2017). One of the most difficult problems facing developing countries in their continuous attempts to develop their societies in the economic and social aspect related to the human element necessary to ensure optimal utilization of the rest of the productive elements is the goal of development, which is considered the national wealth and hopes and prosperity in society are pinned on it, so the main supporter of the success of development in developing countries. It is the interest in agriculture and the advancement of it, and this requires the existence of an effective extension device that works to increase production, it is indisputable that the extension apparatus, in order to be able to achieve its goals, must invest all its capabilities, especially human resources, represented in extension workers, relying in the performance of its mission on a wide base of agricultural extension agents spread in various extension centers and departments, as they are the actual implementers at the local level of extension programmes. And the basis of the extension communication process that takes place with the farmers and peasants, and they are the ones leading the extension process and the guiding forces that are concerned with shaping and changing the behavior of peasants and farmers in living and production, because they are more aware of the conditions of farmers, and are responsible for providing extension service at the village level, and providing farmers with new agricultural information appropriate to their environmental, economic and social conditions, as they represent the main pillar in the success of extension work and the base of



the pyramid in it, (Sami & Mansour, 2014), and the main factor in using the available informational, material and human resources in a methods that achieves the highest results, as well as satisfying the needs and desires of agricultural extension workers, raising their morale, and observing their behavior and actions during work to judge the extent of their success and level of competence to carry out the tasks assigned to them, which thus represents the final result of their work and therefore represents the guide. Agricultural is the main pillar for the success of extension work in the extension organization as a link between two social systems, the extension organization to which it belongs and the external organization in which it works, which is represented by the peasants and farmers. The different counseling services, as good counselors possess characteristics, capabilities and skills appropriate to the required level of performance (Mithal *et al.*, 2015) Therefore, agricultural advisors need to express their opinions and ideas and respond to environmental challenges, which will lead to the quality of their professional life, represented by improving their job satisfaction and creating a safe and comfortable working environment, facilitating their training opportunities, developing their skills, (Areej, 2019) and enhancing their performance As the level of effectiveness of the extension apparatus in improving agricultural productivity is affected to some extent by the level of extension service provided by agricultural extension agents to farmers and farmers in organization, planning, implementation, follow-up and evaluation (Hussein & Sana, 2010). Agricultural extension is one of the developmental agencies that aims to develop Agricultural human resources through developing the knowledge and skills of farmers and encouraging them to adopt scientific methods based on research results related to agricultural work, in a way that contributes to increasing productive efficiency and income, improving their standard of living and improving their social and educational standards, using scientific methods and extension and development programs for farmers and workers in the agricultural sector (Bayan & Ihsan, 2015). Agricultural extension also has a major role in strengthening the link between farmers and the technical bodies of agriculture and the centers concerned with extension (Jalal *et al.*, 2022) , As the training extension centers are one of the important organizations affiliated with the Agricultural Extension and Training Department, which contribute significantly to achieving its goals as a cultural radiation center in the village that helps in strengthening the rural people in the various fields of rural development through the tasks and roles that these centers play, as they have a great role in identifying community resources and priorities, Planning agricultural development activities, and building extension programs from the bottom up to ensure the effective participation of farmers in those programs to achieve their goals and solve their problems (Bayan & Ihsan, 2015). Thus, it required the agricultural extension agents to be highly qualified in their work (lafta, *et al.*, 2007) and to perform their tasks in order to remove or reduce the pressures of agricultural work, and they must be trained successfully, to prepare human cadres capable of succeeding in implementing training programs and achieving their goals (Ridha *et al.*, 2020) The existence of a strong and effective national extension system is a key key to facing the current challenges and difficulties in agriculture in all countries. Therefore, agricultural extension must be subject to pressure to reform its basic joints in order to achieve a better response to the needs, challenges and pressures of farmers and agriculture (Hussein *et al.*, 2021). The Agricultural Extension Organization is considered the main pillar for developing the efficiency of workers, and for responding positively to their new ideas; They must be taught the best methods to apply new ideas or practices to their agricultural activities. On the other hand, the slow development of



Iraqi agriculture is due to the inability of agricultural extension agents to respond positively to new ideas or innovations (**Challob et al., 2020**)

Also, the environmental factors acquired and learned from the external environment affect the extension workers from one person to another, which is reflected in the implementation of the extension activities required of them (**lafta, 2011**). The researcher recommends a gesture of the need to raise the performance of agricultural extension workers in order to overcome On the problems that they face during the implementation of extension activities, and the issue of performance is affected by the material working conditions, where the motivation of agricultural extension workers towards their extension work in the field of implementing extension activities in light of the existence of good material working conditions that significantly affect the motivation of agricultural extension workers, so the weakness of the work capacity and the low level of Motivation will reduce the efficiency of agricultural extension agents, and thus will affect their performance in implementing extension activities that are transmitted to farmers (**lafta, 2007**). The human component of the extension institution, which is represented by the agricultural extension agents, is affected by several factors, the most important of which is the conditions and laws imposed by the administration on the workers, which may burden the extensionists with administrative burdens. Thus, any problem they face will affect directly or indirectly the efficiency of the services provided by them. Therefore, it was necessary to research on the obstacles of agricultural extension agents in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department and working on developing proposed solutions for them, and thus providing extension services to the targeted in a better way.

Research Aims

The aim of the research is to identify the obstacles of agricultural extension agents in the implementation of extension activities, which includes the following objectives:

- 1- Identifying the obstacles of agricultural extension agents in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department.
- 2- Determine the proposed solutions to the obstacles of agricultural extension agents in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

After completing the researcher's review of the reference review of the literature related to the subject of agricultural extension agents' obstacles in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department and standing on the scientific experiences of various countries of the world, and reviewing previous scientific studies that dealt with multiple research methodologies. Therefore, in order to achieve the main objective of this research, the descriptive approach was adopted to access detailed data and facts about the obstacles of agricultural extension agents in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department. From Kandalji's point of view, the descriptive approach is a very accurate approach that is adopted to study a phenomenon or obstacle related to a society, institution, or even organizations (**Al-Kandalji, 2012**) On the other hand, Elyan believes that the descriptive approach is considered one of the accurate and clear scientific approaches in the subject of tabulating and analyzing data in order to reach recommendations that would develop and improve reality and overcome obstacles (**Alian, 2009**).



Methodology

The research community included 50% of the governorates of the central region of Iraq, which are (Baghdad, Babylon, Wasit, Karbala). The agricultural extension agents in implementing the activities are the agricultural extension and training department, so the researcher decided to select all the agricultural extension agents in the agricultural extension and training departments in the aforementioned governorates.

Table (1): Number of agricultural extension agents in extension and training departments.

Province	Number
Baghdad	60
Babylon	33
Karbala	13
Wasit	12
Total	118

Data collection

A questionnaire was prepared and approved in data collection, and the questionnaire is a common and important method in data collection and its use is great in obtaining information and facts related to the attitudes and opinions of the respondents (Khamqani, 2017), (Attia, 2009). The questionnaire included two parts, the first of which was a measure of the agricultural extension workers' obstacles in carrying out the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department.

Questionnaire design

Preparing a questionnaire to collect data by looking at scientific sources, studies and research related to the subject, and consulting specialists in the subject, including researchers and university professors. Accordingly, (10) paragraphs were identified in the axis of agricultural extension workers' obstacles. To measure these constraints, a five-level scale was developed according to importance, which are (completely agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree, completely disagree) and weights were given to it (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), respectively. In order to determine which of the obstacles were more important to the Agricultural Extension and Training Department, they were arranged in descending order of importance and depending on the weighted mean for each problem, the process of collecting data from the (118) respondents during the period from 25/12/2022 to 4/6 2023. After collecting the data, it was coded and tabulated, and then that data was analyzed using manual analysis and the statistical program (SPSS), and statistical methods (weighted mean, percentage weight) were used to analyze that data.

Presentation and of results

The first objective: to identify the obstacles of agricultural extension workers in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department. In the light of presenting, analyzing and discussing the respondents' answer about the agricultural extension workers' obstacles that they face during the process of implementing the activities, which amounted to ten paragraphs distributed on two axes, namely the obstacles and the



proposed solutions, the results showed that there is a convergence in their views on these obstacles, as shown in the following table:

Obstacles to agricultural extension workers.

The sixth paragraph (lack of material and moral stimulation for agricultural extension agents when implementing extension activities) came from the agricultural extension agents' obstacles in the first place in the scale of the agricultural extension agents' obstacles in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department from the point of view of agricultural extension agents when analyzing their data. The seventh paragraph (the lack of presence of the agricultural guide in time to carry out the extension activities) came from the obstacles of the agricultural extension workers in the last rank in the measure of relative importance. The results of the research showed that the extension agents indicated that there are ten paragraphs of obstacles for the agricultural extension workers as real obstacles facing the implementation of the activities. Their answers, the weighted average, ranged between (2.79-55.8) with a weight percentile that ranged between (3.83-76.6%) and an average of (2.79) degrees with an average weight percentile of (76.6%) according to the approval scale. Its numerical values range between (1-5) and this average shows The agricultural extension workers' obstacles are at an important level, and the rest of the results are as shown in Table. (2).

Table (2): Distribution of the respondents according to their agreement on the paragraphs of the agricultural extension workers' obstacles.

No.	paragraphs	Weighted Averages	Weight percentage
1	Lack of training of agricultural extension agents in the implementation of extension activities.	3.11	62.2
2	Poor involvement of agricultural extension agents in planning extension programs to be implemented on the ground.	3.59	71.8
3	The large number of administrative roles played by the agricultural guide made him lose focus on implementation.	3.49	69.8
4	Lack of numbers of agricultural extension agents needed to carry out extension activities.	3.54	70.8
5	Poor communication between agricultural extension agents and local leaders to implement extension activities.	3.44	68.8
6	Lack of material and moral stimulation of agricultural extension workers when implementing extension activities	3.83	76.6
7	Failure to attend the agricultural guide in time to carry out extension activities.	2.79	55.8
8	Lack of agricultural extension agents' possession of persuasion skills and communication with the farmer to implement extension activities.	3.32	66.4
9	Constant pressure on agricultural extension agents to achieve rapid changes in a short time to implement extension activities.	3.48	69.6
10	The lack of female agricultural extension agents hinders the implementation of extension activities, especially those related to rural women.	3.59	71.8



The table above shows the reality of the obstacles in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department, as it is clear from the results that most of the respondents emphasized the paragraph (lack of material and moral stimulation for agricultural extension agents when implementing extension activities) as a real obstacle, which reinforces that it ranked first in terms of level Significance, as it achieved a weighted mean of (3.83) degrees and a weight percentage of (76.6%), which is higher than the weighted means of the other paragraphs. The agricultural guide in time to implement the extension activities.) ranked last, as it achieved a weighted average of (2.79) degrees and a percentage weight of (55.8%).

The second objective: identifying proposed solutions to the obstacles of agricultural extension agents in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department.

In light of presenting, analyzing and discussing the answers of the respondents about the solutions they face during the implementation of the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department, the results showed that there is a convergence in their views on these solutions, as shown in the following table:

Proposed solutions to the obstacles of agricultural extension workers.

The first paragraph (intensifying the training of agricultural extension agents in the field of implementing extension activities) came from the solutions to the obstacles of agricultural extension agents in the first place in the scale of solutions to the obstacles of agricultural extension agents in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department from the point of view of agricultural extension agents when analyzing their data.

The third paragraph (reducing the administrative roles played by the agricultural guide and focusing on the implementation of extension activities) came from the proposed solutions to the obstacles of the agricultural extension workers in the last rank of the scale of relative importance. The results of the research showed that the agricultural extension agents indicated that there are ten paragraphs as solutions to the agricultural extension agents' obstacles in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department, which are real solutions. According to the scale of approval, its numerical value ranges between (1-5) degrees, and this average indicates that the solutions to the agricultural extension workers' obstacles are at an important level, as shown in Table (3):



Table (3): Distribution of the respondents according to their agreement on the paragraphs of the proposed solutions to the obstacles of the agricultural extension agents.

No.	paragraphs	Weighted Averages	Weight percentage
1	Intensify the training of agricultural extension agents in the implementation of extension activities.	4.36	87.2
2	Increasing the involvement of agricultural extension agents in planning extension programs to be implemented on the ground	4.20	84
3	Reducing the administrative roles of the agricultural extension worker and focusing on implementing extension activities	3.96	79.2
4	Work to increase the number of agricultural extension agents required to carry out extension activities	3.96	79.2
5	Strengthening communication links between agricultural extension agents and local leaders to implement extension activities	4.16	83.2
6	Enhancing the material and moral stimulation of agricultural extension agents when implementing extension activities.	4.28	85.6
7	The commitment of the agricultural guide to attend at the specified time to carry out the extension activities	4.05	81
8	Enhancing the persuasion and communication skills of agricultural extension agents with the farmer to implement extension activities.	4.35	87
9	Reducing the constant pressure on agricultural extension workers in order to achieve rapid changes in a short time to implement extension activities	4.18	83.6
10	Increasing the number of female agricultural extension agents in order to implement extension activities, especially those related to rural women	4.22	84.4

It is clear from the data of the table above the realism of the solutions to the obstacles of the agricultural extension agents in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department, as it appears through the results that most of the respondents emphasized the paragraph (intensifying the training of agricultural extension agents in the field of implementing extension activities) as a real solution, which reinforces this by obtaining the first place In terms of the level of importance, it achieved a weighted mean of (4.36) degrees and a weight percentage of (87.2%), which is higher than the weighted means of the other paragraphs. desired goals. While the paragraph (reducing the administrative roles performed by the agricultural guide and focusing on the implementation of extension activities) ranked last, as it achieved a weighted mean of (3.96) degrees and a percentage weight of (79.2%). Performing his field work better, which requires reducing the administrative roles assigned to him, and this leads to greater involvement in the field and direct interaction with farmers and the local community.

CONCLUSION

1. The results showed that there are obstacles for agricultural extension workers in implementing the activities of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department.
2. The results showed that there is agreement by the respondents on the proposed solutions.



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