

Extent of Participation in Decision Making By Assistant Horticultural Officers

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ABSTRACT

The present study was carried out in Bangalore Rural, Chickballapur, Chitradurga, Mandya and Tumkur districts of Karnataka state during 2013-14 to analyze the extent of participation in decision making by Assistant Horticultural Officers (AHOs) of Karnataka State Department of Horticulture. A total of 80 AHOs were interviewed using a pre-tested interview schedule. It was found that a large number of AHOs (47.50%) were having high level of participation in decision making, Whereas, 27.50 and 25.00 per cent of AHOs were having low and medium level of participation in decision making, respectively. The mean score index of AHOs was higher in the area of decision making with respect to supervision and guidance (80.67) followed by conducting training and extension programmes (80.62), administration and organization (78.33), planning (75.33), supplies and services (75.33) and evaluation (74.67). Training undergone, mass media participation, organizational commitment and job involvement of AHOs had a positive and significant relationship with the extent of participation in decision making. Forty four per cent of the variation in participation of decision making could be explained by the fourteen personal, socio-economic, psychological and communication characteristics of AHOs.

THE Karnataka State Department of Horticulture (KSDH) was established during the year 1856 to promote the production of horticulture crops in the state. Karnataka is the first state in the country, to set up a separate Department for the Development of Horticulture. In the beginning, the activities of the Department were confined to establishment and maintenance of parks and gardens. Later on, a large number of schemes were sanctioned, many farms and nurseries were established and larger area under agriculture was diverted to horticultural crops. The Department of Horticulture is responsible for an overall development of Horticulture in the state. Assistant Horticulture Officers (AHOs) are the taluk-level extension workers in the KSDH, who are responsible to plan and implement the development programmes by educating the farmers and arranging supply and services. The effective execution of extension activities depends upon the performance of these change agents. Their performance can be enhanced if they actively participate in decision making process in the organization.

Delegating the authority for the employees to make decisions increases their control over the tasks for which they are held responsible. Participation tends to improve motivation because employees feel more accepted and involved in the situation with that of their

job performance, self-esteem and co-operation. Participation of Assistant Horticultural Officers in decision making is essential to motivate them to do efficient work leading to higher job performance. This participative process increases the capacity of AHOs in problem solving and commitment to the Department's success. With this background, the present study has been taken up with the following specific objectives:

1. To analyze the extent of participation in decision making by Assistant Horticultural Officers and
2. To find out the relationship between personal, socio-economic, psychological and communication characteristics of AHOs with their extent of participation in decision making.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in five districts of Karnataka State during 2013-2014. One hundred and twenty two AHOs were working in the selected five districts. Of which, 80 AHOs were selected from Bangalore Rural (8Nos) , Chickballapur (10 Nos), Chitradurga (19 Nos) , Mandya (18 Nos) and Tumkur (25 Nos) districts for the research study by applying proportionate sampling technique. Data was collected

using a pre-tested interview schedule from 80 AHOs sampled for the study.

In the present study, the participation was operationalised as the 'level of participation of AHOs in decision making with the degree of lower participation / higher participation in decision making pertaining to identified job activities viz., planning, conducting training and extension programmes, administration and organization, supervision and guidance, evaluation, supplies and services prevailing in Karnataka State Department of Horticulture'.

The job chart of the Assistant Horticultural Officers was studied to arrive at the six types of job activities viz., (1) Planning, (2) Conducting training and extension programmes, (3) Administration and organization, (4) Supervision and guidance, (5) Evaluation, and (6) Supply and services. The response from Assistant Horticultural Officers were collected for the above six items on a three point response category, viz., (i) Always I make the decisions, (ii) Occasionally I make the decisions, and (iii) Always my superiors make the decisions by assigning scores of 3, 2 and 1, respectively on each item. The scores for each job item under different job areas / activities were added to obtain the total score of the respondents. The respondents were then classified into three categories (levels) of participation in decision making based on mean (56.30) and half standard deviation (9.20) as a measure of check :

Categories of participation in decision making	Score
Low < (Mean - ½ SD)	Less than 51.70
Medium (Mean ± ½ SD)	51.70 to 60.90
High > (Mean + ½ SD)	More than 60.90

Information regarding 14 personal, socio-economic, psychological and communication characteristics were collected using a schedule with suitable scales. The collected data were scored, tabulated and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, zero order correlation test and multiple regression test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Levels of participation in decision making by AHOs : The levels of participation of Assistant Horticulture Officers in decision making are presented in Table I. It could be seen from Table I that a greater number of AHOs (47.50 %) were having high level of participation in decision making. While, 27.50 and 25.00 per cent of AHOs were having low and medium level of participation in decision making, respectively. The superiors of the AHOs have given timely guidance and training to the AHOs regarding : (1) planning the horticultural activities including supply and services, (2) conducting training and extension programmes, (3) organizational administration and supervision, and (4) evaluation of subordinates and extension programmes. Besides, AHOs are aware of their job responsibilities and have good co-ordination with their superiors. The above reasons have contributed for most of the AHOs (47.50 %) for having high level of participation in decision making process.

TABLE I
Levels of participation in decision making by AHOs

Category	Criteria (Score)	Assistant Horticultural Officers	
		Per cent	Number
Low	<51.70	22	27.50
Medium	51.70 to 60.90	20	25.00
High	>60.90	38	47.50
Total		80	100.00

Mean=56.30; SD=9.20

2. Participation of AHOs in decision making with respect to sub components of their job : The results in Table II indicates that the mean score index was higher in the area of decision making with respect to supervision and guidance (80.67) followed by conducting training and extension programmes (80.62), administration and organization (78.33), planning (75.33), supplies and services (75.33) and evaluation

TABLE II

Participation of AHO's in decision making with respect to sub components of their job

(n=80)

Job areas	No. of activities	Maximum obtainable scores	Mean scores	Mean score index
Planning	3	9	6.78	75.33
Conducting training and extension programmes	7	21	16.93	80.62
Administration and organization	4	12	9.40	78.33
Supervision and guidance	4	12	9.68	80.67
Evaluation	3	9	6.72	74.67
Supplies and services	3	9	6.78	75.33

(74.67). The possible reasons for higher mean score in the area of supervision and guidance (80.67) is that AHOs are responsible at the field level to visit the fields of beneficiaries to know the progress and suggest remedies, supervising and maintenance of the farms and nurseries, advising technical matters to the field staff and giving directions and instructions for effective functioning of the farm activities. Hence, AHOs are aware of their job responsibilities with respect to the supervision and guidance compared to other areas of decision making.

3. *Activity-wise participation of AHO's in decision making*: The data with respect to the activity-wise participation of AHOs in decision making is presented in Table III.

With regard to the planning, a larger number of AHOs were making *decisions on their own* with respect to the aspects such as : (a) providing necessary quality planting materials and inputs to the farmers (62.50 %), and (b) implementing the programs for next season / planning for the repair and upkeep of farm equipments for next season (42.50 %). As high as 46.25 per cent of the AHOs were *occasionally making decision on their own* regarding the publishing/ printing and distribution of printed materials (posters, charts, leaflets etc.) to the farmers.

In respect of conducting Training and extension programme, most of the AHOs were taking '*decisions on their own*' with respect to the aspects such as: (a) identification of beneficiaries and collecting information about them under various schemes and projects (88.75 %), (b) training the farmers on the essentials of practical horticulture (planting, cultivation aspects, fertilization) (71.25 %), (c) collecting field problems and conveying them to research institutes for investigations and to obtain solutions (57.50 %), (d) conducting demonstrations to impart skills to the farmers on horticultural technology (55.00 %), (e) training farmers about the methods of controlling pests and diseases (48.75 %), (f) conducting field days for the benefit of farmers (47.50%), and (g) imparting knowledge to the farmers through exhibitions, printed information and other audio-visual aids (33.75 %).

With regard to the administration and organization a greater number of AHOs were making *decisions on their own* with respect to aspects such as : (a) maintaining the daily memorandum register, stock registers, input and supply registers up to date (71.25 %), (b) attending the meetings with Thasildar / BDO for execution of special schemes relating to horticulture under various programmes etc. (36.25 %), and (c) ensuring full and effective utilization of funds allotted for horticulture in the taluk (35.00 %).

TABLE III
Activity- wise participation of AHO's in decision making

(n=80)

Job activities	Always I (Myself) make the decision		Occasionally I make the decisions		Always my superiors make the decision		Mean Score
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	
A. Planning							
Providing the necessary quality planting materials and inputs to the farmers	50	62.50	19	23.75	11	13.75	2.487
Publishing / printing and distribution of printed materials (posters, charts, leaflets etc.) to the farmers	27	33.75	37	46.25	16	20.00	2.137
Implementing the programs for next season / planning for the repair and upkeep of farm equipments for next season.	34	42.50	25	31.25	21	26.25	2.163
B. Conducting training and extension programmes							
Identification of beneficiaries and collecting information about them under various schemes and projects	71	88.75	07	8.75	02	2.50	2.863
Training the farmers on the essentials of practical horticulture (planting, cultivation aspects, fertilization etc.)	57	71.25	15	18.75	08	10.00	2.613
Conducting demonstrations to impart skills to the farmers on horticultural technology	44	55.00	23	28.75	13	16.25	2.387
Training farmers about the methods of controlling pests and diseases	39	48.75	29	36.25	12	15.00	2.337
Conducting field days for the benefit of farmers	38	47.50	21	26.25	21	26.25	2.213
Imparting knowledge to farmers through exhibitions, printed information and other audio-visual aids	27	33.75	26	32.50	27	33.75	2.00
Collecting field problems and conveying them to research institutes for investigations and to obtain solutions	46	57.50	29	36.25	05	6.25	2.513
C. Administration & organization							
Maintaining the daily memorandum register, stock registers, input and supply registers up to date	57	71.25	17	21.25	06	7.50	2.637
Attending the meetings with Thasildar, BDO for execution of special schemes relating to horticulture under various programmes etc	29	36.25	24	30.00	27	33.75	2.025
Ensuring full and effective utilization of funds allotted for horticulture in the taluk.	28	35.00	26	32.50	26	32.50	2.025

Table III (continued)

Job activities	Always I (Myself) make the decision		Occasionally I make the decisions		Always my superiors make the decision		Mean Score
	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	No.	Per cent	
D. Supervision and guidance							
Visiting the fields of beneficiaries to know the progress and to suggest remedies.	63	78.75	15	18.75	02	2.50	2.763
Giving directions and instructions for the effective functioning of the farm activities.	57	71.25	22	27.50	01	1.25	2.70
Supervising and maintenance of the farms and nurseries.	22	27.50	37	46.25	21	26.25	2.013
Advising technical matters to the field staff.	32	40.00	33	41.25	15	18.75	2.213
E. Evaluation							
Inspecting and evaluating the work of horticultural assistants in respect of various programmes taken up in the area.	30	37.50	30	37.50	20	25.00	2.125
Inspecting and evaluating the crop yield competitions, crop cutting experiments and reporting the same to higher authorities.	46	57.50	33	41.25	01	1.25	2.563
Evaluating the success of demonstrations, campaign, field days and other educational programmes for further improvement	27	33.75	28	35.00	25	31.25	2.025
F. Supplies and Services							
Supplying planting materials in time	42	52.50	23	28.75	15	18.75	2.337
Supplying plant protection equipment for the beneficiaries to control pests and diseases	40	50.00	22	27.50	18	22.50	2.275
Supplying necessary insecticides and pesticide in time	29	36.25	36	45.00	15	18.75	2.175

In respect of supervision and guidance, a majority of AHOs were taking *decisions on their own* with respect to aspects such as : (a) visiting the fields of beneficiaries to know the progress and to suggest remedies (78.75 %), and (b) giving directions and instructions for the effective functioning of the farm activities (71.25 %). It is also found that a greater proportion of AHOs were making *decisions occasionally on their own* with respect to aspects: (a) supervising and maintenance of the farms and nurseries (46.25 %), and (b) advising technical matters to the field staff (41.25 %).

With regard to evaluation, a majority of the AHOs (57.50%) were taking *decisions on their own* with

respect to inspecting and evaluating the crop yield competitions, crop cutting experiments and reporting the same to higher authorities. An equal percentage (37.50 % each) of the AHOs were taking *decisions on their own* and decision were taken *occasionally on their own* on inspecting and evaluating the work of horticultural assistants in respect of various programmes taken up in the area. Whereas, 35.00 per cent of the AHOs were taking decisions *occasionally on their own* on evaluating the success of demonstrations, campaign, field days and other educational programmes for further improvement.

In respect of supply and services, a majority of the AHOs (52.50 %) were taking *decision on their*

TABLE IV

Relationship and extent of contribution of personal, socio-economic psychological and communication characteristics with participation of AHOs in decision making (n=80)

Independent variables	Correlation Co-efficient (r)	Regression Co-efficient (b)	Std. Error	t-value
Age	0.034 ^{NS}	0.059	0.016	0.275 ^{NS}
Education	0.206 ^{NS}	1.307	1.530	0.663 ^{NS}
Rural-Urban Background	0.187 ^{NS}	0.855	0.471	0.790 ^{NS}
Total Experience	0.164 ^{NS}	0.544	0.306	1.334 ^{NS}
Experience as AHO	0.080 ^{NS}	0.614	0.460	1.156 ^{NS}
Training Undergone	0.484**	0.085	0.017	3.700**
Mass Media participation	0.496**	0.266	0.526	3.700**
Achievement Motivation	0.009 ^{NS}	0.608	0.504	1.099 ^{NS}
Perceived Work Load	0.66 ^{NS}	0.031	0.467	0.261 ^{NS}
Attitude towards Work	0.076 ^{NS}	0.031	0.003	0.108 ^{NS}
Organizational Climate	0.044 ^{NS}	0.101	0.035	0.350 ^{NS}
Organizational Commitment	0.252*	1.327	0.992	3.036**
Job Involvement	0.290**	0.394	0.788	0.875 ^{NS}
Job Stress	-0.280*	-0.196	0.226	1.156 ^{NS}

NS+Non significant ;

* Significant at 5% ;

** Significant at 1% ;

R²=0.441

own followed by regarding arranging for the supply of planting materials in time, supplying plant protection equipment for the beneficiaries to control pests and diseases (50%), whereas, 45.00 per cent of the AHOs were taking decision *occasionally on their own* regarding supplying necessary insecticides and pesticide in time.

It can be referred that most of the Assistant Horticultural Officers were taking *decision on their own* with respect to planning, conducting training and extension programmes, administration and organization, supervision and guidance, and supply and services. These results are supported by the findings of Dhankumar (1999), Lakshmi (2001) and Jyothi (2006)

4. *Relationship and extent of contribution of personal, socio-economic, psychological and communication characteristics with participation*

in decision making by AHOs : The results in Table IV reveals that age, education, rural urban background, total experience, experience as AHO, achievement motivation, perceived work load and attitude towards work and organization climate of AHOs had no significant relationship with the participation in decision making.

Organizational commitment of AHOs had a positive and significant relationship at five per cent with the participation in decision making. Whereas, training undergone, mass media participation and job involvement of AHOs had a positive significant relationship at one per cent level with the participation in decision making. Job stress of AHOs had a negative and significant relationship with the participation in decision making. Higher the organizational commitment, job involvement, mass media participation

and training will increase the participation of AHOs in decision making. While greater the job stress will lead to lesser participation in decision making.

Table IV also reveals that 44 per cent of the variation in the participation of AHOs in decision making could be attributed by the 14 personal, socio-economic, psychological and communication characteristics included in the study. It was also observed that training undergone, mass media participation organizational commitment and job involvement of AHOs were significant in multiple regression analysis in explaining the variation in the participation of AHOs in decision making. These three variables have synergic effect on one another helping each other to have a positive relation contributing for the participation of AHOs in decision making.

The study results revealed that a larger number of the Assistant Horticultural Officers (47.50%) in the Karnataka State Department of Horticulture are participating in decision making process. Their participation was highest in the area of supervision and

guidance followed by conducting training and extension programmes. The participation of AHOs in decision making was poor in the area of evaluation. Therefore, the AHOs must be provided adequate training and guidance by their superiors on how to monitor and evaluate the subordinates, crop experiments and extension programmes.

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