

Relational Analysis between Profile Characteristics and Extent of Conflict among Agricultural Officers

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Abstract

This study was taken up to analyse the relationship of profile characteristics of Agricultural Officers with the extent of conflict and to know the profile characteristics which influence the extent of conflict faced by Agricultural Officers. The study revealed that perception of work load and span of control were positively and significantly related with extent of conflict. The other variables that were negatively and significantly related include coordination, decision-making ability, attitude towards the organization, empathy and job experience. All the variables taken for the study together explained a significant 45.16 per cent of variation in the extent of conflict faced by Agricultural Officers.

Conflict is a normal part of human existence and is a basic fact of life in groups and organizations. People with divergent personalities, perceptions, attitudes and values occupy different positions in organisations. These positions often have differing or contrasting job charts, different levels of status attached to them and also foster competition among employees. People of different divisions in an organization have to compete for scarce resources in order to achieve their targets. As a result, in every human endeavor conflict exists. As an organization, the Agriculture Department of Andhra Pradesh is no exception. For effective functioning of the department there is a need to know the causes of conflict, particularly personal, psychological and organizational factors, and its relation with the extent of conflict. With this in view, the present study was undertaken with an objective to analyse the relationship of profile characteristics of Agricultural Officers with the extent of conflict and to know the profile characteristics which influence the extent of conflict faced by Agricultural Officers.

Methodology

The study was conducted among the Agricultural Officers of Andhra Pradesh using ex post-facto research design.

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The data were collected from 93 Agricultural Officers through a questionnaire. The officers were selected using Proportionate Random sampling method from three randomly selected districts namely West Godavari, Kurnool and Ranga Reddy.

The profile of Agricultural Officers was studied in terms of 17 selected variables, namely: age, educational qualifications, job experience, cadre experience, attitude towards organization, achievement motivation, job satisfaction, perception of work load, empathy, self-confidence, self-esteem, decision-making ability, coordination, communication with superiors, communication with colleagues, communication with subordinates and span of control.

Extent of conflict is operationalised as the degree of incompatibility/disagreement with the working environment of Agricultural officers with their own major interest in terms of roles, goals and interpersonal, inter group and interdepartmental relations as perceived by themselves. Extent of conflict was measured with the scale developed for the study using Likert Summated Rating method. Extent of conflict was categorized into low, medium and high by using mean and standard deviation. To explore the relational analysis of profile with extent of conflict, correlation, multiple linear regression and path analysis were used.

Results and Discussion

Extent of Conflict

From Table 1 it can be seen that majority (68.8 per cent) of the Agricultural Officers had extent of conflict in the medium category followed by low (19.4%) and high (11.8%) categories with the mean score of 79.4 and standard deviation of 17.0.

Table 1. Distribution of Agricultural Officers according to their extent of conflict

Sl. No.	Category of extent of conflict	Frequency	Percentage
a	Low	18	19.4
b	Medium	64	68.8
c	High	11	11.8
Mean		79.4	SD 17.0 Range: 43-119

The reason may be simultaneous execution of important programmes with work plan rice scheme, on-farm demonstration, farm mechanization, input supply, field visits and formation of farmers into rythu mitra groups. Similarly role conflict was high due to assignment of different roles related to quality control, election duty and as Coordinator for projects. Integration of certain incompatible ideas and policies lead to conflict among departments. Inter-personal conflict in the department might be due

to differences when dealing with highly specialized subjects like integrated pest management, soil testing analysis and soil and water conservation where all personnel are treated as equal even when they possess higher qualification. Inter personal conflict might also be due to highly experienced and senior subordinates working under the jurisdiction of less experienced and recently recruited Agricultural Officers.

Relational Analysis

Relational analysis of profile of Agricultural Officers with extent of conflict was explored using correlation, regression analysis and path analysis.

Correlation Analysis

Table 2. Correlation analysis of Profile Characteristics of Agricultural Officers with the extent of conflict

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Correlation Coefficient
X ₁	Age	0.17
X ₂	Educational Qualification	-0.12
X ₃	Job experience	-0.23*
X ₄	Cadre experience	-0.23*
X ₅	Attitude towards organization	-0.24*
X ₆	Achievement motivation	0.06
X ₇	Job satisfaction	-0.30**
X ₈	Perception of work load	0.33**
X ₉	Empathy	-0.24*
X ₁₀	Self-confidence	0.03
X ₁₁	Self esteem	0.08
X ₁₂	Decision making ability	-0.36**
X ₁₃	Coordination	-0.39**
X ₁₄	Communication with superiors	0.04
X ₁₅	Communication with colleagues	-0.05
X ₁₆	Communication with subordinates	0.05
X ₁₇	Span of control	0.26*

*significant at 0.05% $r > 0.205$ **significant at 0.01 % $r > 0.267$

From table 2 it can be inferred that only two variables namely: perception of work load and span of control were positively and significantly related with the extent of conflict. The other variables that were negatively and significantly related include coordination, decision-making ability, attitude towards organization, empathy, job experience and job satisfaction.

Perception of work load is a crucial factor for extent of conflict particularly role conflict of Agricultural Officers. It might be due to assignment of different roles to the Agricultural Officers who might have unrealized expectations, change of job environment and modern technologies. Span of control was positively and significantly related with the extent of conflict. The more the number of subordinates, the more the differences may occur. It leads to inter personal conflicts. Superiors and subordinates may conflict because superiors try to control subordinates and the subordinates tend to resist, as they believe that the control by superiors infringes on their personal autonomy. These power and status differences result in more inter-personal conflicts.

Coordination was negatively and significantly related to the extent of conflict of Agricultural Officers. Coordination is a mutual working relationship developed between the line departments so as to bring about harmonious and joint action to carry out the activities of planning, organizing and execution of agriculture department programmes. This is particularly important because there is so much interdependence among farmer training centres, soil testing laboratories, fertilizer control laboratories and ANTWA programme officers etc. Decision making ability had negative and significant relationship with the extent of conflict. Making routine decisions could promote disagreement among subordinates themselves. However during decision making,, it is possible that the Agricultural Officers may have involved the subordinates and colleagues for the field activities. Thus the higher decision making ability (participative) resulted in lower extent of conflict. The significant negative association of attitude towards the organization with extent of conflict of Agricultural Officers could be attributed to interrelations of cognition (favourable/unfavourable) and action tendencies associated in the negative direction. Empathy is negatively correlated with the extent of conflict. It is understandable as lower empathy leads to lesser understanding of others and more differences in opinion thereby resulting in existence of conflicts in the department. Empathy is basically a tendency to respond to another's emotional state with vicarious feeling, resembling the emotions of the other.

Job experience is generally believed to have an effect on gaining skills and perfection. The significant negative relationship of experience with the extent of conflict suggests that the Agricultural Officers with less experience are likely to have more conflicts. This could probably be due to the fact that the more experienced Agricultural Officers might have acquired the necessary skills to perform new assignments and face new situations with more understanding. Secondly, they might have adjusted with the culture by harmonizing their perceptions with the real situations prevailing in the department. Job satisfaction was negatively and

significantly related with the extent of conflict. It indicates that the Agricultural Officers had discontent in their job which subsequently led to goal conflict and interpersonal conflict.

These findings gain support from results reported in studies by Corwin (1969), Pandey (1979) and Rao et al. (1999).

Predicting the Contribution of respondent Profile to the extent of Conflict

The results of multi linear regression analysis in Table 3 for the prediction of profile characteristics that contribute to the variation in the extent of conflict of Agricultural Officers indicate that job experience and job satisfaction had significant negative regression coefficient, whereas attitude towards the organization, perception of workload, decision making ability and coordination had significant positive regression coefficient. The value of coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.45 indicating that about 45.00 per cent variation in the extent of conflict could be explained by the 17 selected profile characteristics.

Table 3. Multiple regression analysis of Profile of Agricultural Officers with the extent of Conflict

Sl. No.	Profile of Agricultural officer	Regression Coefficient -b	Standard Error	t-value
1	Age	-0.60	0.57	-1.05
2	Educational Qualification	6.51	4.08	0.16
3	Job experience	-0.21*	0.09	2.42
4	Cadre experience	-0.45	0.77	-1.05
5	Attitude towards the organization	2.78*	1.14	2.45
6	Achievement motivation	0.13	0.49	0.26
7	Job satisfaction	-6.33*	2.29	2.76
8	Perception of work load	1.44**	0.53	2.70
9	Empathy	-0.20	0.36	0.56
10	Self-confidence	-0.02	0.81	-0.03
11	Self esteem	0.22	0.79	-0.28
12	Decision making ability	0.41**	0.14	2.75
13	Coordination	2.05**	0.51	3.99
14	Communication with superiors	1.11	1.27	0.87
15	Communication with colleagues	0.86	1.23	0.70
16	Communication with subordinates	0.78	1.35	0.58
17	Span of control	1.19	1.19	1.07

Multiple R = 0.67
 R^2 = 0.45
 F (17,75) = 3.63** The F value 3.634 for R^2 was significant at 0.01 level of probability.

Path analysis

Table 4. Path analysis of Profile Characteristics of Agricultural Officers with the extent of Conflict

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Correlation Coefficient	Direct effect	Indirect Effect	Substantial Indirect Effect
X ₁	Age	0.17	0.75	-0.58	-0.05 X ₃
X ₂	Educational Qualification	-0.12	0.19	-0.31	0.13 X ₆
X ₃	Job experience	-0.23*	-0.14	-0.09	0.08 X ₁
X ₄	Cadre experience	-0.23*	-0.14	-0.09	-0.08 X ₃
X ₅	Attitude towards the organization	-0.24*	0.15	-0.09	0.07 X ₁₃
X ₆	Achievement motivation	0.06	-0.03	0.03	0.01 X ₁₂
X ₇	Job satisfaction	-0.30**	-0.18	-0.11	0.05 X ₁₃
X ₈	Perception of work load	0.33**	0.20	0.12	0.03 X ₆
X ₉	Empathy	-0.24*	-0.15	-0.10	-0.04 X ₃
X ₁₀	Self-confidence	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.02 X ₂
X ₁₁	Self esteem	0.08	0.10	0.02	0.02 X ₄
X ₁₂	Decision making ability	-0.36**	-0.22	-0.14	-0.09 X ₃
X ₁₃	Coordination	-0.39**	-0.24	-0.15	0.15 X ₅
X ₁₄	Communication with superiors	0.04	0.15	-0.11	0.06 X ₁₀
X ₁₅	Communication with colleagues	-0.05	0.16	-0.21	-0.18 X ₉
X ₁₆	Communication with subordinates	0.05	0.23	-0.19	0.10 X ₁₇
X ₁₇	Span of control	0.26*	0.16	0.10	0.07 X ₄

As may be seen in Table 4, Path analysis revealed that maximum negative effects were due to coordination, decision making ability, job satisfaction, attitude towards the organisation and maximum direct positive effect was due to perception of work load and span of control. All these factors attributed to the extent of conflict faced by Agricultural Officers in the Department of Agriculture. Coordination improves common agreement on objectives, procedures and responsibilities, willingness to work together and faith in the Agricultural Department which could reduce the occurrence of conflict. The positive and negative indirect effects indicate that communication pattern (communication with superiors, colleagues and subordinates) is the most important factor for extent of conflict. Poor communication with superiors and subordinates often cause conflict particularly inter-personal conflict due to differences in power and status during execution of programmes and assignment of targets. Communication with colleagues indicates that the higher the

communication with colleagues the lower the existence of conflict. This might be due to the discussion on the subject and other issues discussed in an empathetic way and clarification of their doubts with the senior Agricultural Officers. It is interesting to note that job experience was found to be a crucial variable. This was borne by the fact that the four variables - age, cadre experience, empathy and decision making ability were channeling their substantial additive indirect effect on extent of conflict through job experience. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Ramkumar (1982).

Conclusion and Implications

Majority of the Agricultural Officers had medium category of extent of conflict and relational analysis indicated that coordination, empathy, decision-making ability, perception of work load and span of control were very important antecedent factors in existence of conflict. The department should use hierarchical decision-making, redesigning of organization, super ordinate the goals and expansion of resources, and reduce the work load to tackle the existence of conflict. Extension personnel also should know the importance of proper communication, participative decision making and coordination, which provide imponderable quality and favourable environment to work. The Department of Agriculture may organize training programmes with specialists on communication skills, decision making process, team building and coordination and reduce the number of roles by recruiting new personnel.

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