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Job stress and constraints of subject matter specialist's (SMSS) of Krishi Vigyan Kendras

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Abstract

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) a feather in the National Agricultural System is playing a major role in development and dissemination of location specific technologies in agriculture and its allied enterprises to achieve sustainable growth. In Karnataka there are 31 such KVKs catering to the needs of the farmers, where transfer of technologies is by the Subject Matter Specialist (SMS). The present investigation was undertaken to evaluate the job stress, work load and constraints faced by the SMSs in performing their job. All 31 KVKs of Karnataka state were considered for the study. A pre-structured questionnaire was mailed to all the SMS, out of which 120 SMSs responded. Collected data was subjected to appropriate statistical analysis. It was observed from the study that majority (75.83%) of the SMSs had medium level of job stress. The overall job stress index was 65.37, this indicates the SMSs were having job stress to the extent of 65.37 percent. The workload as perceived by the SMSs was heavy. The major constraints faced by the SMSs are too many reports to be written (67.50%), difficulty in disseminating complex technology (61.66%), unavailability of timely budget (61.66%), lack of freedom of expression (57.50%), lack of interest among farmers (51.66%).

Keywords: job stress, work load, constraints, subject matter specialist's, krishi vigyan kendra

Introduction

Stress is the spice of the life and one has to live with stress all through life. Stress is common in the present fast paced. Lifestyle and all aspects of human behaviour including our job. Job stress is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of a job do not match the capabilities, resources or needs of the employee. The SMSs with a technical background are crucial grass root extension functionaries working at village level. The SMS conduct on farm testing (OFTs), frontline demonstration (FLDs), production of inputs and training of farmers as well as rural youth. In addition they have to deal with different type of people like farmers, administrative staff, supporting staff, subordinates and so on. Often, the expectations people have on SMSs are unclear or too high for the SMSs to meet within the time and other resources available. Therefore the present study was undertaken to study whether job stress, perceived workload and constraints faced affect the job performance of the SMSs.

Material and Methods

The study was conducted in 31 KVKs of Karnataka state. These are under different host organizations namely SAUs (24), ICAR (2) and NGO (5). The SMSs of all these KVKs were considered for the study. Descriptive and diagnostic research design was formulated to conduct the investigation. Total number of sanctioned post were 186 out of which 163 post were filled. The pre-structured questionnaire was set to all the SMS through mail, out of which 120 SMS responded. Collected data was subjected to appropriate statistical analysis.

The job stress was measured using the scale developed by Mattenson and Ivancevich (1982). The scale consisted of 19 statements. The respondents were asked to indicate their degree of stress on a five point continuum as strongly agrees, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with scores of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. Based on the sum of the total scores for all items obtained by each respondent, they were grouped into three categories following the equal distribution method based on class intervals.

Constraints were studied by open ended questionnaire with multiple responses. The constraints faced by KVK SMS are classified under five major categories viz., technological constraints, administrative constraints, socio- economic constraints of farmers while working with them, input/other material constraints and personal constraints (Classification by Kumar and Kaur (2015) [4])

To know how SMS perceived the workload, they were asked to respond as a five point continuum as; very light, light, average, heavy and very heavy. Frequency and percentage were calculated to classify the respondents.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Profile subject matter specialists of KVK n=120

Sl. No		Frequency	Percentage
1	Age	Young (<37)	28 23.33
		Middle (38-50)	85 70.83
		Old (51-62)	7 5.83
2	Education	MSc	76 63.33
		Ph.D.	44 36.66
		Any other	- -
3	Gender	Male	86 71.66
		Female	34 28.33
4	Experience	Total Experience	
		<11	89 74.16
		12 – 20	25 20.83
		>20	6 5.00
		Experience in present post	
		<10 years	110 83.30
11 – 19 years	6 4.50		
>19 years	3 2.50		
5	Classification of SMSs as per Host organization	SAUs	90 75.00
		NGOs	19 15.83
		ICAR Research Institutes	11 9.16

Table 1 reveals that 70.83 percent of the respondents belonged to middle age group i.e., (38-50 years), 63.33 percent of the SMSs were master's degree holders and majority of them (71.66%) were male. With regard to experience 74.16 percent of the respondents had less than 11 years of total experience on the job with majority of them (83.30%) were having less than 10 years of experience in the present post. Majority (75.00%) of the SMSs were working under SAUs.

Table 2: Level of Job Performance of Subject Matter Specialists of KVK N=120

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Low (<16)	2	1.66
Medium (17-25)	25	20.84
High (>25)	93	77.51

The results of table 2 revealed that almost all SMSs were having medium to high (98.34%) level of job performance, where as, only 1.66 percent were having low level of job performance. The reason for good job performance might be the compulsion to perform well, commitment to the organization as well as to the farming community

Table 3: Level of Job stress of Subject Matter Specialists of KVK N=120

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Low (<44)	3	2.50
Medium (45-69)	91	75.83
High (>69)	26	15.83

The results in the Table 3 shows that majority (75.83%) of the SMSs had medium level of job stress. It is always said that a little stress is good for better performance. So medium level of stress in this study need not be considered negative. The stress has also not affected the positive feelings about the job. The reasons as mentioned by the SMS are KVKs are, over burdened with non-mandatory activities like contact scientists for Raitha Samparka Kendra (RSK), online reporting system (OLRs) for submission of reports, teaching and other work assigned by the host organizations. These reasons could be

some of the sources of stress.

These findings are in accordance to the results found by Lakshmi and Venkataramaiah (2006) [5] and Padmaja and Prabhakar (2011) [7] where they found job stress at medium level by the extension functionaries.

Table 4: Perceived work load by the subject matter specialists N=120

Sl. No		Frequency	Percentage
1	Very light	-	-
2	Light	-	-
3	Average	28	23.33
4	Heavy	85	70.83
5	Very Heavy	7	5.83

Table 4 showed that Majority (70.83%) of the SMSs perceived their workload as heavy. The reasons for workload being heavy is that, there is too much of reporting. There are targets set by ICAR and Scientific Advisory Committees at the local level which are to be met. Farmers are not available on their farms during office hours and they have to be visited only in the evenings. Number of Staff are limited and there are mandatory activities to be carried out. Some SMSs are also involved in teaching and research as they are also required for career advancement. It adds extra burden to their workload.

Constraints faced by the SMSs

Krishi Vigyan Kendra, as an emerging extension model ultimately aims to the socialization of agro-technology with a view to uplift the socio-economic condition of the people with the help of eco-friendly agro-technology in a sustainable manner along with a system approach. Although SMSs of KVKs work hard, for the benefit of the farming communities and authorities, there are many constraints which affect their work adversely.

The constraints faced by KVK SMS are have been categorized as; technological constraints, administrative constraints, socio- economic constraints of farmers, input/other material constraints and personal constraints.

Table 5: Technological constraints faced by the respondents
N=120

SL. No	Technological Constraints	F	%
1	Difficulty in disseminating complex technology	74	61.66
2	Lack of response from the farmers to adopt technologies	68	56.66
3	Lack of location specific technologies	52	43.33

*Note – Multiple answers possible.

The major technological constraints expressed by SMSs (Table 5) are related with the improved technologies in agriculture and allied fields. They felt that highly sophisticated technologies were not only difficult to disseminate to the farmers, but are also not adopted by the farmers. Since most farmers in the country own less than five acres of land, the SMS suggested that the research system should invent and popularize simple, feasible and adoptive technologies. Further they also suggested that it is important to take into consideration the indigenous and prevalent technologies which are better understood by the farmers. Technologies should also be area and region specific for better adoption. These findings are in conformity with the findings of Kumar and Kaur (2015)^[4].

Table 6: Administrative constraints faced by the respondents
N=120

SL. No	Administrative Constraints	F	%
1	Lack of support from other line departments	47	39.16
2	Posts of supporting staff are less	64	53.33
3	Lack of incentives for excellent work	26	21.66
4	Lack of opportunities for updating knowledge	34	28.33
5	Lack of encouragement from superiors	20	16.66
6	Lack of cooperation from subordinates, office staff and colleagues	72	60.00
7	Shortage of transport facility	78	65.00
8	Too much report writing	81	67.50
9	Pressure from the local politician to fetch more benefits from KVK schemes to their own jurisdiction	15	12.50
10	Discrimination in rewards	08	6.66

*Note – Multiple answers possible.

Table 6 showed the administrative problems of SMSs. The major administrative constraints quoted were; too many reports to be written (67.50%). The SMS have to compile at least two monthly reports, four quarterly reports, two six monthly reports and two annual reports. The reports are also to be sent in different formats including online reporting system (OLRs). At such time times there could be network problem, lack of computer skills etc. Apart from these routine reports they had to submit miscellaneous reports like FLDs reports, survey reports, project reports, impact analysis reports, stock reports etc. Due to engagement in reporting the SMSs are not able to concentrate on publishing research papers which are important for their career advancement. They do not even have time to write extension articles for the farming community.

Shortage of transport facility was also a constraint reported by a substantial percentage of SMSs (65.00%). There was no proper vehicle facility for field visits in the different SMSs may be simultaneously wanting to move to different villages. At that time transport facility is a major constraint. Very often villages are remote where there is no public transport. Public transport also wastes a lot of time of the scientists.

Lack of cooperation from subordinates, office staff and colleagues was 60.00 percent reported by the respondents. Posts of supporting staff are less and very often lying vacant. The co-operation among subordinates is very much essential because KVKs works on an integrated approach to solve the farmer's problem. As has already been said earlier when supporting staff are less in number or not there at all, the scientists, instead of going to the fields has to spend time even in typing and filing jobs. These findings are in line with the findings of Kumar and Kaur (2015)^[4].

Table 7: Socio-economic constraints faced by the respondents
N=120

SL. No	Socio-economic Constraints in relation to farmers	F	%
1	Lack of decision making ability among farmers	42	35.00
2	Lack of interest among farmers	62	51.66
3	Lack of communication between the farmers	38	31.66
4	Lack of support from the farmers during FLD and OFT's	48	40.00
5	Rivalries in the villages	25	20.83

*Note – Multiple answers possible.

India is a land of small farmers with little no other sources of income. The socio-economic condition of the farmers being poor creates hurdles in the effective running of programme. Data in Table 7 highlights such constraints which are faced by SMSs while working with poor farmers.

The biggest problem in this category is the lack of interest among farmers (51.66%) who hesitate from experimenting with new technologies. Lack of support from the farmers during FLDs and OFTs was quoted by 40 percent respondents. The SMSs need to carryout FLDs and OFTs in the farmers field and at such times if the farmers do not co-operative it becomes difficult for them to carry out the mandate of KVK. And many time weak decision making ability among farmers (35.00%) also came in the way in making them to adopt new technology. These results are in line with Kumar and Kaur (2015)^[4].

Table 8: Input or other materials constraints faced by the respondents n=120

SL. No	Input/Other Material Constraints	F	%
1	Untimely supply of budget	74	61.66
2	Insufficient supply of inputs	68	56.66
3	Lack of regular supply of electricity	36	30.00
4	Insufficient infrastructure	43	35.83
5	Lack of internet connectivity at KVK	19	15.83

*Note – Multiple answers possible.

As far as the input/other material constraints concerned are (Table 8). The SMSs expressed delayed supply of budget (61.66%) and insufficient supply of inputs (56.66%) as the biggest constraints. Very often the budget and inputs for various FLDs are received after the end of sowing season. When the budget is received at the end of season, it is too late for extension activities likes field day, trainings etc. When inputs are not received on time, SMSs had to purchase inputs on loan basis by requesting input dealers. Another constraint quoted was insufficient infrastructure (35.83%) which includes computers, training hall and laboratory facilities. Some of the SMSs also faced problems like lack of regular supply of electricity (30.00%), and lack of internet connectivity (15.83%). These problems may be because of the

remote location of the because of the remote location of the KVKs in rural areas.

Table 9: Personal constraints faced by the respondents n=120

SL. No	Personal Constraints	F	%
1	Lack of freedom of expression	69	57.50
2	Lack of co-operation from colleagues	34	28.33
3	Lack of time for frequent field visits	28	23.33
4	Lack of freedom to disagree with decisions taken by superiors	57	47.50
5	Workload affecting other activities	48	40.00

*Note – Multiple answers possible.

The major personal constraints expressed by the SMSs is lack of freedom of expression (57.50%), and lack of freedom to disagree with decisions taken by superiors (47.50%). They felt that the decisions of superiors was final they did not get a chance to express their opinion about the assigned work. Very often KVK staff work over time and after office hours this also affects family and social life (40.00%). The workload may be due to less staff/vacant post, going to farmers field and farmers are available only during evening hours and such others (Table 9).

Conclusion

Thus we can see that the overall levels of stress experienced by SMSs were to a moderate extent and they perceived their workload as heavy. A number of constraints affect the performance of the performance of the SMSs and also the activities of KVK. These constraints are needed to be addressed seriously for effective functioning of KVKs. The SMSs are grass root level extension functionaries who primarily deal with group formation and dissemination of technologies. If the constraints faced by them are not addressed in due course of time it will affect the overall growth of KVK. Most of the constraints are related to the technological and administrative aspect and this need to be solved for smooth functioning of the mandatory activities.

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