



Psychological and leadership orientation of development officials in India - A diagnostic study of soil and water conservation training programme

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Received: 18 July 2016; Accepted: 11 September 2016

ABSTRACT

The working style of state line departments and their working climate which affect the behaviour of development officials is one of the important areas for comprehension and improvement for attaining the higher performance level in agriculture and allied fields. The study to know about the psychological orientation of the development functionaries working in the different state line departments of the country was conducted on 57 such participant officials who attended the training programme on soil and water conservation during 2014-16 at ICAR-IISWC, Dehradun including 10 scientists/technical officers. Results showed that nature of job, perceived influence and supervisory behaviour of the development functionaries was remarkably satisfactory. Relatively higher motivating-empowering style of leadership indicated that the development functionaries tend to motivate and enable their subordinates during working. Poor initiative and reflective behaviour with high self-esteem, inferred that development functionaries were psychologically not strongly oriented towards empowerment. The dimensions like 'number and target syndrome', 'centralization' and 'caste like rigidity' were quite high, which indicated that the development functionaries are favourably disposed to physical targets as against quality performance. The flexibility and keep themselves away and isolated and control all actions with absolute authority was missing whereas 'lack of community participation', 'rentier dole syndrome', 'tokenism' and 'paternalistic manipulation' were on higher side which reflected that they do not value more to the people's participation in the development activities. To create suitable working climate, the organization should organize need based capacity building programmes for positive psychological orientation among development functionaries.

Key words: Development functioning, Empowerment, Leadership style, Perceived work climate, Psychological orientation

Most of the organizations' performance is normally dependent on organization's leader behaviour and his working styles (Lee 2002). Organizational climate among researchers has been a long lasting concern for better research productivity and effectiveness. It may attract researchers mainly due to its hypothesized relationship to organizational attributes including job satisfaction, job performance, leader's behaviour and the quality of team work (Schnake 1983). Technical supervisors who perceived the work environment as favourable found higher job satisfaction, performance and organizational effectiveness and also showed that psycho-social environment in workplace exert more impact on employees' performance in their job (Srivastava 2008).

There is strong linkage between leadership and performance in any organization and performance depends on

competency and motivation of subordinates (Sagino 2006). Organizational climate, information seeking behaviour of employees and achievement motivation found the major factors for higher job satisfaction of extension officers (Mishra *et al.* 2011). Empowerment focuses on person's sense of competence and the perceived control ability/decision-making authority (Anderson and Huang 2006). Competency of individual is more important for enhancing the productivity and efficiency of any organization. Hence, it is important to ascertain the strength and weakness of the employee to improve their performance may be through individual performance appraisal, getting feedback from the concern persons and consulting their group leaders or managers or supervisors. Any organization's success is mainly dependent on the factors particularly working environment, employee's competency, team spirit and commitment to the organization's goals. Hence, performance is a major multidimensional construct aimed to achieve desired results and has a strong link to long-term goals of an organization (Mwita 2000). Therefore, it is very pertinent to empirically examine the working environment, amenities and leadership qualities of the employees/supervisors/development functionaries.

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Conservation (IISWC), Dehradun is mandated for organization of long duration training courses especially on soil and water conservation since 1954-55 for officers/development functionaries of different state line departments across the country. Two such courses are being organized regularly every year with focus on technical skill development. About 3 000 officers were trained in 113 batches till date. ICAR-IISWC is the organization which is pioneer in the field and fully devoted to develop the competency of development functionaries in the field of soil and water conservation and watershed management with modern tools and techniques.

With this context, a study was undertaken on psychological orientation of the development functionaries (officer trainees) working in different departments like soil and water conservation, watershed management, agriculture, agricultural engineering, etc. during 2014-16. The organizational forces, which are supposed to be facilitating or constraining the development functionaries performance, were specifically explored. The perceived climate of the organization, the development functioning style, empowerment and leadership styles of the development functionaries (officer trainees) were particularly studied.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in the HRD and Social Science division, ICAR-Indian Institute of Soil and Water Conservation, Dehradun during 2014-16. In this institute, four months certificate courses on 'Soil & Water Conservation and Watershed Management' are being organized on regular basis. Officer trainees from different state line departments across the country attended the programme. Data were collected from 57 officer trainees (development functionaries) who attended the trainings during 2014-16 including 10 scientists/technical officers with the help of a structured schedule and suitable scales. Following related research variables were used which are operationally defined along with their measurement procedure:

Perceived Condition of Work (PCOW): PCOW was operationalized as one's attitude towards his work and work place. It was measured with the help of an inventory developed for the purpose (Mehta 1989, 1997) which contains four dominant perceptions; Perceived influence, Perceived amenities, Perceived nature of job and Perceived supervisory behaviour, whereas Development functioning was operationalized as one's perception regarding functioning of state line departments and development programmes measured with the help of an inventory developed by Mehta, 1989 and 1997. The inventory reflected seven broad tendencies, which constitute the universe of development functioning in particular context of the functioning of public system and bureaucracy. Leadership style was operationalized as values preferred in responding to the given work and development situations. The scale consists of ten work and development situations (Mehta 1989, 1997). In each situation, four responses are provided

in the scale. One has to respond to only one of the given choices, which best represents his opinion and thought. The four given action choices represent the four styles or values in functioning i.e., directive, prescriptive, facilitating and enabling. Empowerment was operationalised as one's own dominant thoughts and tendencies towards self-efficacy while at work place, in the field or at home. Such thoughts or tendencies represent a continuum of sense of efficacy to sense of powerlessness. This empowerment powerlessness universe has three major dimensions: Autonomy vs. Dependence, Self-esteem vs. Self-depreciation, Reflective vs. Repetitive behaviour. It is measured with the help of an inventory consisting of 15 work/job related statements (Mehta 1989, 1997) and scored accordingly.

Based on the response of the official trainees, individual score as well as the average score of all the respondents were worked out for every statement in each of the above variables. Utilizing the mean and standard deviation (SD), categorization was done and the respondents were distributed accordingly. For analysis, simple statistics namely frequency, percentage, mean and range were utilized to draw meaningful conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study highlighted four organizational factors as perceived by the development functionaries of different state line departments. The results are described and presented in different sub heads as under.

Perceived work climate

The success of any development programme will depend on the extent to which the organization provides its field level functionaries an enriching and nurturing quality of working environment in the organization. The work life perceived by the development functionaries was rated on four dimensions: perceived influence, perceived amenities, nature of job and supervisory behaviour. The scores obtained on this scale are reported in Table 1.

The data in Table 1 revealed that the development functionaries' dissatisfaction with amenities and facilities provided to them by their organizations. Out of the maximum obtainable score of 30, the mean score of their perceived amenities was found to be 18.08. About two third of the respondents belong to medium category of the perceived work climate which shows reasonable perceived working climate. The next higher mean score (21.08) was obtained in case of perceived influence which is higher than the mid value of the scale and can be treated as medium level of satisfaction with the influence that they are able to exercise in decision making process in the organization. So far nature of job and supervisory behaviour are concerned the development functionaries' perception is remarkably satisfactory. They appear to be reasonably satisfied with the job they are doing and their dealings with the superiors. The overall condition of work as perceived by development functionaries, therefore, does not appear to be counter-productive and inhibitory in action.

Table 1 Perceived conditions of work life of development functionaries (N=57)

Dimensions	Frequency	Percentage	Major statistic
<i>Perceived influence</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	9	15.78	Mean = 21.08
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	42	73.68	SD = 3.65
High (>Mean + 1SD)	6	10.52	Range 13-26
<i>Perceived amenity</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	10	17.54	Mean = 18.08
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	39	68.42	SD = 3.92
High (>Mean + 1SD)	8	14.03	Range = 11-25
<i>Nature of Job</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	8	14.03	Mean = 22.88
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	40	70.17	SD = 3.19
High (>Mean + 1SD)	9	15.78	Range 15-28
<i>Supervisory behavior</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	8	14.03	Mean = 22.95
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	41	71.92	SD = 3.21
High (>Mean + 1SD)	8	14.03	Range 14-29
<i>Total</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	8	14.03	Mean = 85
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	39	68.42	SD = 11.174
High (>Mean + 1SD)	10	17.54	Range 54-103

Empowerment

The success of the development programme also depends on the extent to which the higher level development functionaries empower the development officials for their participation and involvement in the development activities.

The data in Table 2 reveal that the mean scores of development functionaries on initiative and reflective behaviour were poor. However, the mean score on self-esteem was relatively better. The total obtained scores ranged from 15.88 to 17.42 out of an obtainable score of 25. The mean scores were towards the central level, indicating thereby that the development functionaries were psychologically not strongly oriented towards empowerment. The distribution of development functionaries on the scores of these three components as well as on the overall score revealed that the tendency was towards the negative end of the continuum. It refers that the development functionaries are not charged with initiative and self-esteem rather they tend to pursue routine behaviour and thus were more inclined to create powerlessness and dependency in people.

A comparison of the scores on development functioning also revealed that the same tendencies of the development functionaries support the behavioral tendencies prevalent among them. Development functionaries do not value people's participation in the development activities and programmes. They treat development activities as dole for the people and have tendency to achieve self-gratification by projecting self-image as '*mai-baap*' to the development beneficiaries. This attitude of the development functionaries would only dis-empower people and would not enable to

Table 2 Empowerment of the development functionaries (N=57)

Dimensions	Frequency	Percentage	Major statistic
<i>Initiative vs dependence</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	4	07.07	Mean = 15.95
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	48	84.21	SD = 2.17
High (>Mean + 1SD)	5	08.77	Range = 10-20
<i>Self-esteem vs self-depreciation</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	6	10.52	Mean = 17.42
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	45	78.94	SD = 1.99
High (>Mean + 1SD)	6	10.52	Range = 13-22
<i>Reflective vs repetitive behavior</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	4	07.07	Mean = 15.88
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	40	70.17	SD = 1.58
High (>Mean + 1SD)	13	22.80	Range = 12-19
<i>Efficacy vs powerlessness</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	7	12.28	Mean = 49.24
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	46	80.91	SD = 4.3980
High (>Mean + 1SD)	4	07.07	Range = 39-58

help them realize that they are capable of making difference in their own social life.

Leadership style

The success of any programme will depend on the extent to which the development functionaries lead the people in achieving the goals of the programme through people's participation.

The data in Table 3 revealed that the mean score of development functionaries on dominative style is very high (2.74 out of an obtainable score of 10 for all the three styles taken together). This indicates that they are dominating in nature when they work with people in the field situation. Dominative style increases with decrease in the scores on patronizing-educative and motivating -empowering style since the total score on all the three dimensions is limited to 10. The mean score on patronizing-educative style of leadership is the lowest (1.74) indicating that the

Table 3 Leadership styles of the development functionaries (N=57)

Dimension	Frequency	Percentage	Major statistic
<i>Dominative</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	7	12.28	Mean = 2.74
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	47	82.45	SD = 2.03
High (>Mean + 1SD)	3	05.26	Range 0-10
<i>Patronizing-Educative</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	8	14.03	Mean = 1.74
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	48	84.21	SD = 1.02
High (>mean + 1SD)	1	01.75	Range = 0-4
<i>Motivating-Empowering</i>			
Low (<Mean - 1SD)	8	14.03	Mean = 5.53
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	40	70.17	SD = 1.89
High (>Mean + 1SD)	9	15.78	Range 0-9

Table 4 Development functioning of the officers trainees (N=57)

Dimension	Frequency	Percentage	Major statistic
<i>Caste like rigidity</i>			
Low (<Mean – 1SD)	3	5.26	Mean = 8.87
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	46	80.70	SD = 1.52
High (>Mean + 1SD)	8	14.03	Range 4-12
<i>Centralization</i>			
Low (<Mean – 1SD)	5	8.77	Mean = 8.33
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	44	77.19	SD = 1.09
High (>Mean + 1SD)	8	14.03	Range = 6-11
<i>Number and target syndrome</i>			
Low (<Mean – 1SD)	10	17.54	Mean = 8.12
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	37	64.91	SD = 1.55
High (>Mean + 1SD)	10	17.54	Range 6 -12
<i>Lack of community participation</i>			
Low (<Mean – 1SD)	7	12.28	Mean = 7.16
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	43	75.43	SD = 1.61
High (>Mean + 1SD)	7	12.28	Range 4 -11
<i>Rentier dole syndrome</i>			
Low (<Mean – 1SD)	7	12.28	Mean = 7.89
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	46	80.70	SD = 1.94
High (>Mean + 1SD)	5	8.77	Range 4 -11
<i>Tokenism</i>			
Low (<Mean – 1SD)	4	7.07	Mean = 7.84
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	47	82.45	SD = 1.47
High (>Mean + 1SD)	6	10.52	Range 5 -11
<i>Paternalistic manipulation</i>			
Low (<Mean – 1SD)	2	3.50	Mean = 7.70
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	48	84.21	SD = 1.52
High (>Mean + 1SD)	7	12.28	Range 4 -11
<i>Total</i>			
Low (<Mean – 1SD)	8	14.03	Mean = 55.93
Medium (Mean ± 1SD)	39	68.42	SD = 8.19
High (>Mean + 1SD)	10	17.54	Range 42-71

development functionaries were not seriously trying to educate the field level officials on the significance of the development goals and were not patronizing the efforts of people in achieving the goals. But the mean score on motivating-empowering style of leadership was relatively higher (5.53) indicating thereby that the development functionaries were tend to motivate and enable the field functionaries during interaction with them. These findings are in similar line with Singh *et al.* (2008), as the majority of agricultural scientists did not seem to believe in dominative type of leadership style at least cognitive level and they cited that leadership style helps to achieve the organizational goals and utilize energies for their personal growth and development.

Development functioning

The seven dimensions of development functioning were studied.

The data reported in Table 4 appear to be quite interesting and shows that the average agreement level of the respondents with the dimensions like ‘number and target syndrome’, ‘centralization’, and ‘caste like rigidity’ is quite high (obtained score is above 8 out of the total obtainable score of 12). This clearly indicates that the development functionaries are favourably disposed to physical targets as against quality performance. They have no flexibility and keep themselves away and isolated and control all actions with absolute authority. The average score on dimensions like ‘lack of community participation’, ‘rentier dole syndrome’, ‘tokenism’ and ‘paternalistic manipulation’ is also high (obtained score is above 7 out of total obtainable score of 12). It shows that they do not value more to the people's participation in the development activities. They treat development actions as dole for the villagers and have a tendency to achieve self-gratification by projecting self-image as ‘*mai-baap*’ to the villagers. These findings are in similar line with Singh and Sinha (2002).

Finally, development functionaries need to be reoriented through trainings so that they learn to empower people and take initiative in creating power in the people and help them to realize their fullest potential. The development functionaries’ weaknesses like lack of taking initiative, low self esteem causes repetitive routine behaviour, which require to be taken care of by the development departments. This psychological state of being, particularly, for change agents like the development functionaries, is seriously counter-productive and is certainly not tuned to promote people’s participation in the development activities for community well being. Organization has to provide an enriching work climate, so that it builds greater faith among development functionaries for their effective performance. Dimensions like ‘caste like rigidity’, ‘centralization’ and ‘tokenism’ should be discouraged among development officials for favourable psychological and development orientation. Motivating-empowering style of leadership should be created among development functionaries for better performance and creating favourable working environment. The psychological orientation among development functionaries can be improved by well designed need based capacity building programmes by different training institutes.

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