

Job Satisfaction of Field Extension Functionaries within the Dairy Development Department, Kerala

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Abstract

The research undertaken in Kerala between 2021 and 2022, had the objective of examining the job satisfaction level of field extension functionaries (FEFs) working in the Dairy Development Department (DDD). Utilizing an exploratory research approach, a sample of 120 participants, consisting of 60 Dairy Extension Officers (DEOs) and 60 Dairy Farm Instructors (DFIs), was chosen using non-proportionate stratified random sampling. Information was gathered through structured interviews, offering a thorough insight into the experiences and viewpoints of FEFs within the DDD. 36.70% of FEFs reported medium job satisfaction, whereas 34.20% and 29.20% reported low and high job satisfaction, respectively. The most satisfying aspect of their jobs, was the 'nature of work' (mean score of 2.600), followed by communication (2.573), pay (2.491), contingent rewards (2.478), fringe benefits (2.379), supervision (2.353), promotion (2.136), operating conditions (2.113) and co-workers (2.104). The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions to address job stressors and improve job satisfaction, focusing on areas such as work-life balance, workload management, and organizational support that can enhance employee well-being and overall organizational effectiveness. Additionally, fostering a positive organizational climate, effective leadership, and strong teamwork can contribute to a more conducive and productive work environment for FEFs.

Keywords: Dairy Development Department, Dairy Farm Instructors, Dairy Extension Officers, Field Extension Functionaries, Job Satisfaction, Kerala.

Introduction

Dairying in Kerala stands as a cornerstone of the state's rural economy, playing a pivotal role in its economic growth and agricultural landscape. According to Anonymous (2021), dairy cooperatives in the region procured a substantial 6.75 lakh metric tonnes, making a significant impact on the sector's vibrancy and representing about 26.5% of the state's total milk production. However, behind this impressive growth lie the invaluable contributions of FEFs within the DDD. FEFs have been crucial in propelling the dairy cooperative sector forward through their diverse roles and responsibilities. Their competence and performance are key factors in shaping the success trajectory of dairy organizations.

Nevertheless, the dynamic nature of their work environment often results in varying levels of job satisfaction among FEFs. This highlights the importance of implementing effective stress management programs, which can significantly improve employee well-being, job satisfaction, and overall productivity among FEFs. These efforts collectively contribute to enhancing the department's effectiveness and its ability to achieve its overarching goals of promoting economic growth and sustainable development within Kerala's dairy sector.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Kerala during 2021-2022, which included 120 randomly selected FEFs from the DDD using an exploratory research design. A non-proportionate stratified random sampling method was employed, with 60 DEOs and 60 DFIs chosen from four strata A, B C & D based on block panchayats' milk production (KDFWFEAS, 2021). An interview schedule, pre-tested with 30 respondents, was delivered in person during monthly conferences and workplace visits, supplemented by Google forms and telephone interviews. Secondary data from credible sources and appropriate statistical analyses were used for data analysis.

Job Satisfaction

The level of job satisfaction of the FEFs was operationalised as the degree to which the respondents were satisfied or unsatisfied with various aspects of their jobs. The variable was measured using the scale developed by Spector (1994). The scale comprised of 36 statements that were grouped under nine facets viz. pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, operating conditions, co-workers, nature of work and communication. The respondents were requested to rate each statement on a five point continuum viz. strongly agrees, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree with scores 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively for positive statements. For negative statements the scoring pattern was reversed. The maximum and minimum scores a respondent could obtain were 216 and 36, respectively. The overall job satisfaction score for each respondent was calculated by adding up the scores he or she obtained for each statement. Using the Dalenius and Hodges cumulative square root of frequency method (Ratnayake, 2012), the respondents were further classified into three groups according to their level of job satisfaction i.e., low, medium and high. Further, the mean scores of each item were calculated by using the formula,

$$\text{Mean score of the item} = \frac{\text{Score of the item}}{\text{Number of respondents}}$$

The mean scores of the facets were calculated using the formula,

$$\text{Mean score of the facet} = \frac{\text{Sum of scores of all the items under the facet}}{\text{Number of items in the facet}}$$

Subsequently, the facets were ranked based on the mean scores.

Results and Discussion

It is evident from Table 1 that 36.70 per cent of the FEFs had medium level of job satisfaction while 34.20 per cent and 29.20 per cent of the FEFs reported a medium to low level of job satisfaction, respectively. Manobharathi *et al*

(2020) in a study on the job satisfaction of Agricultural Extension Functionaries (AEFs) for information dissemination in district Baramulla of Jammu & Kashmir concluded that, the majority (48.20 per cent) of AEFs had a medium level of job satisfaction whereas, 38.13 per cent and 13.67 per cent of the AEFs had a low and high level of job satisfaction, respectively. Reddy *et al* (2020) found that most of the veterinarians (42.5 per cent) had a moderate level of job satisfaction. Followed by, a high level (33.20 per cent) and a low level (24.20 per cent) of job satisfaction. This indicated a mixed landscape of job satisfaction among FEFs. A notable portion falls into the medium to low level, indicated room for improvement and areas of concern and also warrants attention to identify factors contributing to dissatisfaction and strategies for improvement.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on job satisfaction (n =120)

Sl. No.	Category	Frequency (f)	Per cent (%)
1	Low (< 111)	41	34.20
2	Medium (111-124)	44	36.70
3	High (> 124)	35	29.10
	Total	120	100.00
Mean: 116.93 SD: 7.87			

Table 2: Facet wise perception of job satisfaction (n =120)

Sl. No.	Dimensions	Mean score	Rank
1	Nature of work	2.600	1
2	Communication	2.573	2
3	Pay	2.491	3
4	Contingent rewards	2.478	4
5	Fringe benefits	2.379	5
6	Supervision	2.353	6
7	Promotion	2.136	7
8	Operating conditions	2.113	8
9	Co-workers	2.104	9

Among the different facet wise perception of job satisfaction among FEFs, 'nature of work' was ranked first with a mean score of 2.600, followed by communication (2.573), pay (2.491), contingent rewards (2.478), fringe benefits (2.379), supervision (2.353), promotion (2.136), operating conditions (2.113) and co-workers (2.104) as shown in table 2. Oladele and Mabe (2010) in the study on the socio-economic characteristics of job satisfaction among extension officers in the North West province of South Africa reported that extension officers were only satisfied with four out of 34 indicators of job satisfaction. These were research policies, work exposure, identifying farmer's problems and opportunities to advance education. However, EOs was highly dissatisfied with the availability of the experimental land rewarding system, budgeting and sanctions. The author observed that a greater number of dissatisfying items on the scale was an indication for the need to intervene and improve the satisfaction of EOs to stimulate improved performance. Nwosu *et al* (2015) in a study on the analysis of the role and level of job performance among extension agents in the transfer of technology in Imo state, Nigeria opined that the extension agents perceived a high level of satisfaction with their job content; moderate level of satisfaction with their conditions of service; high level of satisfaction with interpersonal interactions in their establishment; low level of satisfaction with their working environment; and a moderate level of satisfaction with their organizational policies.

Employees are likely to be more satisfied if they find their tasks challenging, meaningful, and aligned with their skills and interests. If the work is monotonous or overly stressful, it can lead to dissatisfaction. We can interpret that the work of dairy field extension functionaries were challenging and meaningful. Effective communication channels foster a positive work environment and clear and open communication between management and employees can lead to better understanding, reduced conflicts, and increased job satisfaction, this comes in the second position. Employees who feel they are fairly compensated for their work are more likely to be satisfied. Disparities between perceived contribution and pay can lead to dissatisfaction. Employees appreciate being rewarded for their

contributions and feel motivated to perform better. Fringe benefits like health insurance, retirement plans, and flexible work arrangements can enhance job satisfaction by improving work-life balance and overall well-being.

Supportive and competent supervision plays a vital role in job satisfaction. Opportunities for career growth and advancement are important for job satisfaction. Employees who see a clear path for development within the organization are more likely to be satisfied and motivated. Factors such as a safe and comfortable work environment, adequate resources, and modern equipment contribute to job satisfaction by reducing stress and improving productivity. Positive relationships with colleagues can enhance job satisfaction. A supportive and collaborative work culture where employees feel valued and respected can lead to higher levels of satisfaction.

Conclusion

The present study highlighted a nuanced picture of job satisfaction among FEFs of DDD, Kerala. With 36.70% reporting medium satisfaction, 34.20% indicating low satisfaction, and 29.20% expressing high satisfaction, it's evident that job satisfaction levels vary within this group. This mixed landscape signals both areas of strength and areas for improvement, necessitating a closer look at factors contributing to dissatisfaction. Among the facet-wise perceptions of job satisfaction among FEFs, the "nature of work" emerges as the top-ranking facet, emphasizing the importance of challenging, meaningful tasks aligned with employees' skills and interests. Effective communication closely follows, underlining its role in fostering a positive work environment and reducing conflicts. Additionally, fair compensation, contingent rewards, and fringe benefits contribute significantly to job satisfaction. Supportive supervision, opportunities for growth and conducive operating conditions also play pivotal roles. Positive relationships with co-workers further enhance satisfaction levels, reflecting the impact of a collaborative work culture. The department higher officials have to necessitate a holistic approach that addresses various facets, from 'meaningful work' to 'supportive environments' and 'fair compensation' to enhance overall job satisfaction and thereby organizational performance.

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Contribution by Authors

All the authors contributed equally to writing the manuscript. The final manuscript was read by all authors and consented to publication.

Conflict of Interests

There is no conflict of interest.

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