

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This Chapter summarizes the significant empirical findings, the conclusions of the study drawn based on the major findings, and some recommendations for policy action to enhance the quality of work design and job performance of the SAAOs. This Chapter finally also recommends probable research endeavors which can be carried out in the future by the respective sectors.

5.1 Summary

The present study was undertaken with the specific objectives of determining the existing work design of the SAAOs, assessing their job performance under their existing work design, determining the effects of the work design on their job performance, determining and describing the selected characteristics of the SAAOs, exploring the contributions and channel effects of the selected characteristics of the SAAOs on their job performance, and finally, identifying the challenges faced by them in improving the existing work design and job performance under the well-spread super umbrella of the largest agro-extension-organization: the DAE, Ministry of Agriculture, GoB. Seven Upazilas of Dinajpur district viz. Birganj, Bochaganj, Biral, Chirirbandar, Kaharol, Khansama, and Sadar were selected randomly for data collection. A total of 71 SAAOs were selected as the sample following the simple random sampling method. Moreover, 71 respective authorities and 142 farmers were also selected purposively to determine the job performance of those SAAOs. Data were collected through the face-to-face interviews of the respondents from 01st October to 31st December, 2020 using a well-structured interview schedule. The summary of the major findings following its objectives is cited here under different sub-headings:

5.1.1 Work design of the SAAOs

Overall work design of the SAAOs

The mean score of work design of the SAAOs was 68.70, with the standard deviation of 23.64. The highest proportion of the respondents (52.1%) belonged to the ‘good work design’ category, while 33.8% to the ‘excellent work design’ category, and only 14.1% to the ‘poor work design’ category.

Dimension-wise work design of the SAAOs

Based on the Work Design Dimension Indices (WDDIs) of the four dimensions of the work design, perceived colleagues’ support was the top-ranked (WDDI = 140.40) followed by perceived organizational support (WDDI = 122.00), job demands (WDDI = 118.00), and job control (WDDI = 112.31).

Rank orders of the items of job demands

Considering the Job Demands' Indices (JDIs) of the 15 selected items of the job demands under the existing work design, the top-ranked three items were “feels good to be busy at work” (JDI = 148) followed by the “work requires constant attention” (JDI = 139) and “requires forecasting to prevent crop damage” (JDI = 135).

Rank orders of the items of job control

In link with the Job Control Indices (JCIs) of the 16 selected items of the job control under the existing work design, the top-ranked three items were “the authorities were functional towards my decisions” (JCI = 137) followed by “decisions were made in accordance with the rules” (JCI = 127) and “need high skill for the changing nature of the job” (JCI = 125).

Rank orders of the items of perceived organizational support

According to the Perceived Organizational Support Indices (POSIs) for the organizational support of the five selected items under the existing work design, the top-ranked two items were “evaluate work regularly” (POSI = 131) and “cares about opinions” (POSI = 126).

Rank orders of the items of perceived colleagues' support

As per the Perceived Colleagues' Support Indices (PCSI) for colleagues' support of the five selected items under the existing work design, the top-ranked two items were “felt a friendly working atmosphere with colleagues” (PCSI = 161) and “provided helpful information or advice” (PCSI = 144).

5.1.2 Job performance of the SAAOs

The summary of the findings regarding the overall job performance and item-wise ranking of the extent of the job performance of the SAAOs are given here:

Overall job performance of the SAAOs

The mean score of the job performance of the SAAOs was 75.67 with the standard deviation of 19.05. The highest (43.7%) portion of the SAAOs belonged to the ‘moderate job performance’ category while around one-third (32.4%) of them had low job performance but only 23.9% had high job performance.

Item-wise ranking of the extent of the job performance of the SAAOs

The Overall Performance Indices (OPIs) of the 10 selected items of the job performance revealed that the top-ranked three items of the job performance were “assist farmers through mobile phone conversations” (OPI = 195.66), “routine field visit” (OPI = 194.5) and “timely suggestions about crop production (in all steps such as irrigation, seedling, drainage, disease control, pest control, IPM, etc.)” (OPI = 192.66).

5.1.3 Effect of work design on job performance of the SAAOs

Measures of association

It was found that the work design had a positive effect on the job performance of the respondents. The Chi-square test also signifies that difference. Moreover, the Cramer's V-validate that positive significant association between the work design and the job performance of the respondents.

Linear fitted line in the scattered plot

The fitted line indicates a linear positive association between the work design and job performance. The R^2 value of the fitted line indicates the work design explains 94.95% of the variation in the job performance of the respondents.

5.1.4 Selected characteristics of the SAAOs

The mean age of the SAAOs was 41.83 years with the standard deviation of 10.6. The majority (38%) of the SAAOs were young compared to 33.8% being old and 28.2% being middle-aged. The greatest proportion (62%) of the SAAOs had the education levels of SSC and Diploma followed by 25.4% having an education level of HSC and Diploma. Only 12.7% SAAOs were graduates. The average family size of the SAAOs was 4.66 with the standard deviation of 1.47. Most of the respondents (54.9%) had small-sized families followed by 36.6% having medium but only 8.5% had large-sized families. The mean annual family income of the SAAOs was BDT 4,46,370. The highest proportion of the SAAOs (67.6%) was in the medium-income category, while 16.9 and 15.5 percent of them were in the high and low-income categories, in that sequence. Their average number of years of service was 18.92. The highest portion (38%) had one decade of service, while 35.2% had over two decades and 26.8% had two decades of service. The average job facilities score in their existing work design was 8.62. The majority (90.2%) of them had low to medium facilities in their workplace while only 9.9% had high job facilities. The majority of them (83.1%) had medium to high needs for professional training while only 16.9% had low professional training needs. The mean managerial orientation score was 30 with the standard deviation of 7.48. Nearly half of them (45.1%) had high managerial orientation followed by 38% having medium and 16.9% with low managerial orientation. The mean psychological strain score was 12.24. Most (91.6%) of them had medium to high psychological strain. Only 8.5% had low psychological strain. The mean affective commitment score was 10.41 with the standard deviation of 3.67. The greatest portion (60.6%) of them had high affective commitment towards their work while 25.4% had medium and 14.1% had low affective commitment. The mean self-efficacy score of the SAAOs was 25.08 with the standard deviation of 7.73. The greatest portion (45.1%) of them had medium self-efficacy while 29.6

and 25.4 percentages had low and high self-efficacy, respectively. The mean job satisfaction score was 24.49 with the standard deviation of 9.04. The highest portion (39.4%) had low job satisfaction while 35.2% had high, and 25.4 had medium job satisfaction.

5.1.5 Influence of the selected characteristics of the SAAOs on their job performance

The summary of the findings of the relationships, contributions, and channel effects of the selected characteristics on their job performance is presented here:

Correlation between the selected characteristics of the SAAOs and their job performance

The correlation analyses indicate that six out of the 13 characteristics of them, viz., additional education (X_2), job facilities (X_6), managerial orientation (X_8), self-efficacy (X_{11}), job satisfaction (X_{12}), and work design (X_{13}) had significant positive relationships with their job performance at the 1% level of significance.

Contribution of the selected characteristics of the SAAOs on their job performance

The results of the multiple regression analyses reveal that the whole model explained 63.1 percent of the total variation in their job performance. However, the modified version of R^2 (adjusted R^2) which calculates R^2 using only the significant independent variables indicates that 59.6% variance in the dependent variable occurred by the six significant independent variables obtained through the correlation analysis. Moreover, the standardized regression coefficients (Beta weight) of the four variables, i.e., additional education (X_2), job facilities (X_6), job satisfaction (X_{12}), and the work design (X_{13}), formed the regression equation and were significant. Thus, it was assumed that whatever contribution was there, it was due to those four variables. The stepwise multiple regression analysis indicates that, among those four highest contributing variables, the work design (X_{13}) had the highest contribution (51.8%) in predicting their job performance. In addition, the job facilities (X_6) had 3.5% contribution, and the rest two variables, viz., additional education (X_2), and job satisfaction (X_{12}) had 3.0% contribution in predicting the dependent variable.

Direct and indirect effects of the selected characteristics of the SAAOs on their job performance

The path analysis indicates that, among the independent variables, the work design (X_{13}) had the highest direct effect (0.305) on the job performance in the positive direction followed by job satisfaction (X_{12}), job facilities (X_6), and additional education (X_2), which had the direct effect of 0.258, 0.211 and 0.209, respectively. In addition, the variable work design (X_{13}) had the highest total indirect effect (0.414) on the job performance followed by job satisfaction (X_{12}), additional education (X_2), and job facilities (X_6) with the total indirect effect of 0.390, 0.338, and 0.314, in that sequence.

5.1.6 Challenges for improving the work design and job performance

The summary of the findings of the challenges faced by the SAAOs in improving their work design and job performance is presented below:

Rank orders of the challenges for improving work design

Based on the Challenges in the Work Design Indices (CWDIs), the top-ranked three to improve the work design were ‘Needs training for sustainable agriculture’ (CWDI = 206), ‘More focus on the crop production to market economy’ (CWDI = 192), and the ‘Enhancement of communication with farmers and dealers’ (CWDI = 189).

Rank orders of the challenges for improving the job performance

Based on the Challenges in the Job Performance Indices (CJPIs), the top-ranked three to improve job performance were ‘Necessity of financial support for extra work’ (CJPI = 198), ‘Vehicle support to work in the remote areas’ (CJPI = 194) and ‘Needs training from abroad on updated technologies’ (CJPI = 190).

5.2 Conclusions

The in-depth analyses of the data coupled with their logical interpretations in relation to the objectives of the present study anonymously pave the path to draw these notable conclusions:

- ❖ More than 80% of the SAAOs’ responded that their existing work design belonged to the good to excellent categories. Thus, the level of work design was found quite satisfactory as per the present job context and it is thus expected to have resulted in better job performance for them. However, 14.1% of them still responded that their work design was poor, which calls for immediate action from the concerned authorities.
- ❖ Based on the Work Design Dimension Index (WDDI), most of the SAAOs thought that they got more cooperation from colleagues. But it is to be noted that the two vital dimensions of the work design: job demands and job control ranked lowest. The low scores of these two can result in negative effects on motivation, job satisfaction, emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficiency as well as on the employees’ health and performance.
- ❖ More than three-fourths (76.1%) of them had low to moderate performance in their job. It is quite unsatisfactory giving the emphasis on the current state of existing work conditions. The existing work design was found in a good to the excellent state. In line with that, the job performance was expected to be better than what it is now. Low job performance creates a ripple effect in any organization causing turnover and decreasing customers’ satisfaction. Poor performers impact negatively the time and productivity of management.

In this case, the farmers will be the most impacted if due initiatives are not taken in the given timeframe to improve the overall job performance.

- ❖ The work design had a significant positive effect on the job performance of the respondents. An effective work design is crucial in optimizing job performance and should consider the strengths and interests of employees and organizational goals. Overall, the way work is designed can greatly impact job performance.
- ❖ The work design was the most important characteristic which strongly and positively influenced their job performance. According to regression analysis, work design had the highest contribution (51.8%) in predicting SAAOs' job performance. Path analysis also confirmed that the work design had the highest positive direct and indirect effect on the SAAOs' job performance than other variables. This reflects the superiority of the impact of efficient work design on the employees' job performance in any organization. Therefore, in this study's context, it can be concluded that the better the work design level, the better the performance is the SAAOs in their respective jobs.
- ❖ Job facilities strongly and positively influenced the SAAOs' job performance. Regression and path analyses showed this variable's contribution and direct and indirect effects on job performance. Thus, it could be concluded that the higher is the access to job facilities, the better is the performance of the SAAOs in their jobs. According to the present study, most (90.2%) of the SAAOs had low to medium access to facilities in their workplace. Job facilities, i.e., workplace, work instruments, the work itself, organization policy, and organizational rules make the job favorable. An improper and unfavorable environment in the workplace with inadequate facilities leads to work stress. There has been the chance of employees committing errors as well. Also, an unfavorable work environment results in the under-utilization of the capabilities available to the employees. Given the emphasis on the SAAOs' poor job facilities found in the present study, it is needless to conclude the importance of attention being given to improving the present status of job facilities in the SAAOs' workplace.
- ❖ Additional education of the SAAOs had a notable positive influence and contribution to their job performance. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents who received more education obviously performed better in their jobs. However, in the present study, the majority (62%) of them had the education of SSC and Diploma levels, which was only the basic level of education required to qualify for this job. With the global technological revolution, farmers need to incorporate the latest scientific advances and technologies into their daily operations, causing less environmental harm. So, the SAAOs have to play the role of the most important facilitators between agricultural advancement and farmers.

Thus, to impart efficient technological know-how, it is very much indispensable for the SAAOs to have a higher level of additional education than what it is now.

- ❖ Regression and path analyses revealed the significance of job satisfaction through contribution and direct and indirect positive effects on the SAAOs' job performance. But the majority (39.4%) of the respondents had low job satisfaction. So, it is needless to opine that job dissatisfaction not only decreases job performance and morale but can also negatively impact employees' bottom line. It is thus, indeed alarming, if SAAOs are not engaged in their work with satisfaction, they are less likely to have the motivation to be productive and carry out quality services toward farmers for the betterment of the national agriculture. Therefore, it is deemed obligatory to enhance the SAAOs' satisfaction in their jobs to improve their overall performance.
- ❖ An overwhelming majority (83.1%) of the SAAOs had a medium to high need for professional training. Due to a lack of professional training, they are unable to provide satisfactory extension services to the farmers. With the advancement of agricultural technology, they are falling behind. Thus, it is vital to take a look at this sector to enhance the skills and capacities of the SAAOs in accordance with modern agro-technologies.
- ❖ SAAOs had identified various challenges in improving their work design and job performance. It could result in an overall negative contribution to the overall job performance of SAAOs if not mitigated properly.

5.3 Recommendations

5.3.1 Recommendations for policy implication

From the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations could be made:

- ❖ The DAE and other concerned organizations need to assess the skills, needs, abilities, and motivations of their employees as well as the organization itself. They could design the work integrating the five vital job characteristics: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback, to meet those needs, abilities, and motivations. Then they can implement the new work design and audit the success of the newly introduced work design and begin with step one periodically when new problems/challenges could have been identified.
- ❖ Authorities should focus on each dimension individually emphasizing the specific items. Right at the beginning, the authorities could recruit individuals with practical field-level knowledge, critical problem-solving and decision-making capacities. Individuals having multitasking abilities and those who can work under extreme pressure should be

prioritized. Moreover, they should be capable to take immediate action on problems arising. Authorities should facilitate and give the necessary attention to the SAAOs' rights from planning to execution of each program. The programs executed by the SAAOs should be periodically monitored and evaluated. Authorities should also make sure that the SAAOs are gaining the necessary skills regarding agricultural production and farmers' assistance. They should also be functional towards the decisions taken by the SAAOs in various work situations.

- ❖ To improve the job performance of the SAAOs, the DAE/other concerned authorities should first emphasize improving/renovating/altering the existing work design to meet the SAAOs. They should ensure the SAAOs understand their jobs, duties, and purpose. Thus, they will be more likely to reach their goals. One of the best methods for improving their performance is through encouraging them to be more efficient by offering rewards and other benefits. Authorities should instill different incentive programs like a public appraisal, accolades, or actual monetary bonuses, which may inspire the SAAOs to take more initiative in their roles. In addition, offering flexible work schedules and telecommuting options to the SAAOs can further help them to be more productive and foster a sense of trust among themselves. Moreover, building feedback opportunities for the SAAOs can help them understand how their performance is stacking up to the organization's expectations. These feedback opportunities should occur at regular intervals and be reciprocal as well.
- ❖ The authorities need to enforce the work environment of the SAAOs with adequate job facilities as it was insufficient in the study area. Providing adequate office equipment, as well as technological and ICT facilities should be ensured by the government. Sometimes, the SAAOs have to travel very long/remote distances. So, providing them with good transport means or giving them vehicle support could go a long way. Giving travel allowance in this regard could help as well. Providing the necessary funds for training materials/posters/leaflets/booklets for farmers is also important. The DAE should also facilitate the SAAOs' provision for agricultural publication and promotion/upgradation.
- ❖ Ample education opportunities should be provided for the SAAOs. They should be encouraged and counseled to pursue higher studies in order to uplift their educational qualities. The authorities could facilitate the provision for study leave/deputation. At present, the minimum educational requirement for this job is an agricultural diploma. But thoughts could be given on upgrading this requirement as this job is entitled to critical tasks with modern agricultural advancement. In addition, the provision of various non-

formal educational opportunities could also be formulated and implemented as per the situation.

- ❖ A dedicated effort from the authorities could shift the SAAOs' satisfaction and attitudes. Salary could be a good starting point for the SAAOs' retention and satisfaction. Offering them promotions or other benefits like incentives, subsidies, travel allowances, and pensions could also boost their satisfaction.
- ❖ When employees receive the requisite training for them to understand their roles and foster their skills, it is more likely that they will perform their jobs with precision. Therefore, authorities should try to implement robust training programs for the SAAOs, which will prepare them to succeed, and in turn, they can train the farmers to make them more skilled in every sector of agro-production practices. Both government and non-government organizations should encourage the SAAOs through supplemental training programs, professional retreats, conferences, and workshops. Instead of repeating the same training, a combination of a variety of training programs might be found more effective as the situation demands.
- ❖ The SAAOs identified a number of challenges in improving their work design and job performance. The authorities should emphasize each challenge individually and develop sustainable solutions. According to the identified challenges, the DAE/MoA needs to arrange different training regimes on different aspects of sustainable agriculture and updated technologies. The SAAOs should also get assistance in helping farmers balance the cost of crop production, the market price of the crop, and profit as well. The authorities should also focus on building dynamism and trust among the SAAOs in increasing communication with farmers and dealers.

5.3.2 Recommendations for further research

The researcher had a small piece of study that could not make available all the information for the proper understanding of the effects of the work design on the job performance of the SAAOs. Therefore, the following recommendations could be made for further research works:

- ❖ The present study was conducted in only seven Upazilas of Dinajpur district. So, similar studies may be conducted in other districts as well.
- ❖ In this study, the existing work design and job performance of the SAAOs of the DAE have been investigated. So, further research could be conducted in other public and private organizations to assess and improve the job performance of other employees by coordinating the work design and other facilities.

- ❖ The present study was exclusively confined to determining the existing work design and job performance of the SAAOs. Thus, further studies should be conducted to determine other aspects of the work design (i.e., skill variety, task significance, feedback, job rotation, job enlargement, job enrichment, and job simplification. etc.) and job performance (e.g., in-role performance/IRP), organizational citizenship behavior towards the organization (OCBO), organizational citizenship behavior towards individuals /OCBI, etc.). Thrusts should also be placed on administrative structures and farmers'/ beneficiaries' needs and requirements.
- ❖ This study investigated the relationship of only 13 selected characteristics of the SAAOs with their job performance. Therefore, further research could be conducted to assess the relationships of other important characteristics (i.e., job autonomy, turnover intentions, professional efficiency, employee motivation, employee attendance, etc.) of the SAAOs/other employees with the same.
- ❖ This study identified only a few challenges for improving the work design and job performance of the SAAOs. Hence, further research is needed to identify more challenges in the same/other organizations and also come-up with possible solutions/policy implications to enhance the efficiency of the work designs to improve employee performance.

5.4 Message from the Study

After ultimate analyses of the findings, the researcher is convinced to make the following messages for the ultimate users:

The work design has significant positive effects on the SAAO's job performance: So, to make it more effective, emphasis should be given to improvising the existing work design from time to time keeping in mind their needs. There is ample opportunity for improvement in their job performance. It calls for improving job-related aspects and core characteristics of the job: job facilities, job satisfaction, motivation, innovation capacities, communication skills, etc. Extension authorities should create provisions for their skill development by arranging training and imparting non-formal education too. The organization should provide work benefits, accolades, appreciation, etc. to make their content with their jobs. Challenges should be identified, and proper measures should be taken to improve the overall level of the work design and performance of the SAAOs, the grassroots message conveyers of agro-technologies for the sustainable development of agriculture- the backbone of the national economy of Bangladesh.