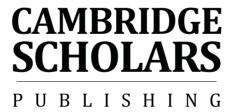# Achievement Motivation in the Leadership Role of Extension Agents

Achievement Motivation in the Leadership Role of Extension Agents

By

Roya Karami and Maimunah Ismail

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS

P U B L I S H I N G

We would like to dedicate our humble efforts in bringing out this significant publication for the benefit of all people particularly the scholars, professionals, public policy makers, our dear students, and all others who will use this book in their personal and professional lives in the area of Extension Education and beyond.

We also dedicate this book to:
Our parents, spouses, children, friends, and well-wishers who have encouraged us and provided support in many different ways, for making this effort a great success!

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—Maimunah Ismail

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INTRODUCTION

This book is set out to illustrate factors influencing achievement motivation in the leadership role of extension agents. The book is structured in two parts consisting of eight chapters. The first part includes chapter one to five, and aims to theoretically discuss the achievement motivation in the leadership role of extension agents and its associated factors. The second part includes chapter six to eight, and aims to present an original study conducted in Iran using the theoretical considerations that are presented in the first part of the book. The second part of the book is established to show the reliability and applicability of constructs presented in the earlier chapters.

Chapter 1 introduces extension agents who are personnel of an extension organization (traditionally associated with agriculture) having roles in encouraging clients in the community to bring about their development and the development of society following a democratic approach. The role of extension is consistent with the leadership definition as a process, whereby an individual influences a group of individuals in the community to improve job performance and standards of living.

The importance of leadership role is also covered in the first chapter. The leadership role is analysed from three perspectives including that of extension agents, extension organization, and extension clients. The importance of leadership role to the extension agents is obvious in many ways. First, it is related to external and internal changes in response to the rapid development of global economy and complex social, economic, and environmental conditions. In such an environment, skills and knowledge quickly become obsolete and new skills and practices have to replace the old ones. Thus, the roles of extension agents are also transformed into a more complex and interconnected role, which needs different mindsets and ways of thinking. Their roles evolve from someone who merely delivers the contents of technological information in to a facilitator who facilitates progress, creates a vision, and builds capacities and teamwork, which are all undeniable roles in leadership. Second, the agricultural extension organizations are currently experiencing rapid changes and transition from functional hierarchy to being more customer-driven with a cost-effective approach that requires fast and flexible methods to meet the changing customer needs. It is the characteristic of learning organization that

requires the concept of leadership to be expanded beyond the individual to the group functions in order to face any emergent challenge. Third, when agricultural extension agents are responsible for clients' empowerment, they must be empowered first before they can empower their clients. Empowerment of extension's clients would enable them to make their own decisions and solve their own problems, becoming less dependent on agricultural extension agents to manage their enterprises.

Chapter 2 covers the historical background of both motivation and achievement motivation theories. It is then followed by two theories related to achievement motivation that the authors believed are comprehensive and appropriate in explaining the concept and associated factors, namely, Bandura's social cognitive theory and Farmer's achievement motivation model. Bandura's theory tries to recognize the thinking processes that individuals go through in decision making for their behaviour by considering the reciprocal relationship of environmental factors on a person's cognition. Farmer's model further extended Bandura's theory by considering the pre-influence of background.

People's experiences in the workplace differ in many ways due to many personal characteristics, some of which are changeable, others that are less amenable to change. Chapter 3 delineates the background factors which are considered as primary dimensions of diversity and are less amenable to change, exerting significant impacts and shaping our basic self-image, sense of identity, and early learning experiences. Researchers often ignore the interdependence of these with other (secondary) dimensions of diversity, in which the latter are changeable personal characteristics that are acquired and may be modified or abandoned throughout life, which is discussed in Chapter 4. Although the secondary dimensions of diversity are more controllable, they will be affected by other people's decisions, which in this book we see as environmental factors, as covered in Chapter 5.

The reliability and applicability of the above-mentioned theoretical discussion have been tested in an original study conducted in Iran; its results are presented in the second part of the book. The second part of the book provides empirical evidence of factors influencing achievement motivation in the leadership role of extension agents. Past studies have indicated that there were variations in the results regarding extension agents' level of leadership role attainment, and little is known about the level of achievement motivation in leadership role among extension agents in Iran, a country location which had been chosen for the study. In Iran, extension system is the foundation of agricultural development. The agricultural sector is an important component of the Iranian economy,

contributing 27% to GDP, 23.8% to employment opportunities, 82% to food supply, and 35% to non-oil exports. Extension agents in Iran are responsible for leading the clients, which, in 2009, consisted of 32 percent of Iran's total population of 66.5 million. This group of the population lived in rural areas and engaged in various types of farming. Chapter 6 covers the methodological perspectives of the study. Chapter 7 presents the results of factors influencing achievement motivation in the leadership role of extension agents. The interpretation of the study results, along with the conclusion, implications, and recommendations are presented in Chapter 8. This study is useful in designing a framework that improves our knowledge about achievement motivation in the leadership role of extension agents as the full mediation model of this study explained 78% of its variance. The study is a substantiation of Bandura's social cognitive theory by incorporating the pre-influence of background factors on personal and environmental factors that, according to Bandura, influence human behaviour. One of such a behaviour is achievement motivation. The practical contribution of this study comes from the fact that background factors' influences could be capitalized on in future learning of extension agents regarding how negotiation and support are made to reduce stereotypical assumptions on the leadership role. The influence of personal factors could assist extension organizations to develop appropriate training programs and could be used as a criterion in recruitment. Having employees who possess relevant personal attributes may not be sufficient to motivate them in leadership achievement if the environmental supports do not co-exist. Insights generated from this study would certainly be useful to improve performance of organizations, agents, and clients in the country's extension system.

The paragraphs that follow are set up to differentiate the originality of the present book in the area of achievement motivation studies and theories:

Literature on achievement motivation can be divided into three main groups of studies. The most frequent group is related to students and academic achievement motivation, which has some theoretical similarities but is different from the context of the present research. The second group is about predicting the career achievement motivation of students, such as the studies of Farmer (1985; 1997). The last group focuses on achievement motivation of higher positions and assigned role, such as achievement motivation of leadership role in managerial positions (London, 1997). A new insight, introduced in this book, is a specific focus on achievement motivation of leadership role which is an emergent role (discussed in Chapter 1) in extension context. Leadership role of extension agents is an

emergent role which is achievable not because of the formal position in an organization, but because of the way clients respond to them. Emergent leadership appears over a period of time through communication and under the influence of different factors such as group member characteristics but the focus of this research is on the factors that motivate extension agents themselves to achieve and carry out the emergent leadership role. Achieving a leadership role would improve the individual and organizational performance of extension systems, and as a result would benefit clients as the target group of the extensions program.

Investigation of motivation and achievement motivation research and theories showed that most of the researchers and theorizers consider only one dimension of achievement motivation in defining and measuring achievement motivation. For example, status attainment theory just considers desire level of attainment (aspiration) to find how people achieve a status. The McClelland theory of achievement motivation mostly discusses mastery and desire to choose a challengeable but accessible task as achievement motivation. While according to Farmer, aspiration, mastery and salience all together cause achievement motivation (see Chapter 2). Thus, Farmer's model is given priority in defining achievement motivation due to the comprehensive point of view. Although Farmer worked on young subjects; the present book will adapt the multidimensional model of Farmer for the extension agents.

A particular aspect that had remained neglected when investigating achievement motivation, was considering the background factor that has pre-influence on personal and environmental factors, and most of the theories and researches are silent on this point (see Chapter 3). The background factors are considered as primary dimensions that shape our basic self-image, sense of identity, and early learning experiences. These dimensions fall into different categories whether it is regarded as not easily changeable or not changeable depending on society's belief and situations. Researchers often ignore the interdependence of them with secondary dimensions of diversity, which are personal factors.

Previous studies have integrated different variables within personal factors that motivate a person to achieve, for example, Leal (2006) investigated self-efficacy, work orientation, competitiveness, and personal unconcern. However, in extension context, the available research of motivation mostly investigated the demographic characteristics of extension personnel, such as age, gender, race, marital status, and education, as the personal factors (Ladebo, Olaoye, & Adamu, 2008). Therefore, a substantiation on the personal factors affecting achievement motivation of the agricultural extension is presented in Chapter 4.

The underlying assumption of environmental factors is derived from path-goal theory in leadership as the departure point of this factor. This theory emphasizes enhancement of employees' performance by focusing on their motivational sets and providing rewards in the work environment, though subjective types of support are neglected. The evaluation criteria for the environmental factor as incentives to achieve differ among the research contexts. For instance, the study of Okorley, Gray, and Reid (2009) highlighted the importance of fostering an open environment where extension staff feel comfortable to meet, interact, share information and ideas and are motivated to work through a participatory approach. Farmer argued for the importance of supportive environment, and Powell and Graves added the importance of supportive environment in terms of work and family friendly policies. Thus, in Chapter 5 a combination of Farmer and Powell and Graves' ideas are considered as criteria of determining environmental factor variables.

The book would be of interest to extension agents, extension service organizations, extension education students, extension scholars, and of course Iranian scholars. The discussion of background, personal, and environmental factors make the book interesting to any scholar of gender studies, psychology, and organizational behaviour as well.

PART I

ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION IN THE LEADERSHIP ROLE: A THEORETICAL CONSIDERATION

CHAPTER ONE

THE LEADERSHIP ROLE IN EXTENSION CONTEXT

This book is concerned with the achievement motivation of the leadership role among extension agents. The extension agent is someone who encourages clients in the community to bring about their development, as well as that of the society, following an appropriate approach in a democratic way, which is all about leading the clients using the leadership role. Thus, this chapter discusses the overview of the history of extension systems worldwide, including Malaysia as well as Iran, in which the latter is the context of the study. Further, this chapter discusses the changing demand being put on the public sector extension, globally and in particular in Iran, and suggests that these changes require extension agents to develop a leadership role of supporting and encouraging changes at farms and households. The importance of understanding achievement motivation in the leadership role of extension agents is in its relation to the increasing personal achievement which could further enhance organizational achievement by providing higher productivity, efficiency, and satisfaction. The achievement motivation in the leadership role of extension agents is also influential in extension's client achievement by empowering them in a leadership role through having a good role model as an extension agent who possesses the required leadership qualities.

History of Extension Systems Worldwide

The extension education originated in British universities around 1873, when Cambridge University started to do it, and the second was in Japan in 1893 who followed the concept and began to implement it (Ismail, 1990; Md.Sail, 2009). In general, agricultural extension worldwide has its roots as far back as 1955-1980, and aims to develop national agriculture extension systems, build new agriculture universities, and train indigenous extension workers (Thompson, 2002). The shift of the developmental program from agriculture to manufacturing and services in the middle of

the 1980s to some extent renders the extension education work less important as a discipline that is traditionally associated with agriculture. In 1997 and 1998 Asian economic crises revived the interest in extension and the agricultural sector (Md.Sail, 2009). In the early years of the nineteenth century, extension services were in their formative stage in which they were relatively small in scale and limited in the scope of their work, only focussing on contact with farmers. They were organized by governments, and two main concerns at that time were fiscal stringency and relationship between research and extension. At the beginning of the twentieth century, extension organizations began to aim at broad national and farming system coverage of economic and social aspects (Ponniah, Puskur, Workneh, & Hoekstra, 2008). Thus, extension systems around the world are no longer a unified public sector aiming at only technical activities, but are a network of country institutions with multi-activity in multiple locations whose objectives and goals are derived from indigenous policy choices to support rural people (Rivera & Alex, 2004).

To revitalize agricultural extension for supporting people engaged in agricultural production and improving their livelihoods and well-being, international efforts during the past decade have provided a variety of institutional reform options. The term 'pluralistic' has been coined to capture this emerging diversity (Birner et al., 2009). The reforms were things such as decentralization, commercialization, privatization, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), farmer-to-farmer extension, participatory extension, group approaches, and gender specific extension (Van den Ban, 2009). While pluralism is still the subject of debate, the "pluralistic partnerships" appear as a viable and meaningful result of pluralism reforms, which are more likely to promote participatory approaches (Rivera, 2001). Participatory development in the world is essential due to its ability in empowering groups, communities and organizations by negotiating with institutions and bureaucracies (Rivera &Alex, 2004).

Extension systems in Asian countries (such as Malaysia and Iran) have a large number of similarities in which agricultural development and extension is under the responsibility of the ministry of agriculture. Transfer of technology is understood as the public funding for extension, the need for extension to engage with a wide range of issues beyond transfer of technology, and agricultural extension used to play an important role in promoting Green Revolution (Zhou, 2009). The extension systems in Malaysia and Iran will each be further clarified in the next sections.

History of Extension Systems in Malaysia

According to Md.Sail (2009), the extension work of Malaysia began in 1946 with the establishment of the Department of Agriculture (DOA) by the Colonial British government which focused on regulatory activities as providing agricultural input, and the advisory function in extension work was started from the middle of the 1970s. By shifting the focus of development in the middle of the 1980s from agriculture to manufacturing and services, the interests in the extension work were reduced. However, it was revived in 1997 and 1998 after the Asian economic crises and agriculture was introduced as the third engine of growth, and subsequently extension again became the focus of attention. Further, extension work was felt necessary in industrializing Malaysia, as well as for smallholders (Md.Sail, 2005; 2009).

The extension education was introduced as an academic subject in 1967 in the College of Agriculture Malaya. The Department of Extension and Home Economics was established in 1971 in the same year with the establishment of University of Agriculture Malaysia (UPM). To respond to the need for linking research, extension and clients in technology dissemination and adoption, UPM formed the Center for Extension and Continuing Education with two academic departments, one of which was the Department of Extension Education. In 1996 the department was relocated to the current Faculty of Educational Studies. The department of Extension and Education, in addition to serving national and international students in Master and PhD degrees, provides extension services to farmers, fishermen and other rural populations, as well as on the job training services to extension staff (Md.Sail, 2009).

The agricultural extension services in Malaysia are placed under the jurisdiction of separate organizations (Md.Sail, 2002, 2005) such as the Department of Agriculture (DOA), the Rubber Industry Smallholders Development Authority (RISDA), the Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), the Federal Land Consolidation and Rehabilitation Authority (FELCRA), some regional development agencies, and the state land development agencies. The Malaysian extension system is based on the commodity approach, providing specific services to rubber, oil palm, or livestock sectors. Further, there are divisions according to the functional activities such as research, marketing, farmers, and according to specific areas and commodities such as Malaysian Agriculture Research and Development Institute (MARDI), Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB), and Muda Agriculture Development Authority (MADA). The specialization has its advantage in providing a more efficient system, while the disadvantages

are in providing services to the same group of clients who have livestock and other cash crops, duplication, and wastage of resources (Md.Sail, 2005).

The concept of extension in Malaysia includes two traditions of transfer of technology (ToT) and human resource development (HRD). The ToT process, which is the primary focus of extension in Malaysia, starts from researchers who generate and develop appropriate technology for a specific location as mature technology, then passing it down to extension agents to repackage it to a simpler form, and disseminate to clients using teaching and learning methods. The HRD tradition is related to the adult education model and focuses on the analyses of client needs, problems, and situations (Md.Sail, 2002).

History of Extension Systems in Iran

The non-formal extension work in Iran dates back to two centenaries ago, and was started by writing a book about what today is entitled as research, extension, and education. Further, there had been some newsletters attempting to disseminate new technologies to increase farmers' productivity (MalekMohammadi, 2000). But the formal extension services actually began more than 50 years ago (Karbasioun & Mulder, 2004).

The Ministry of Agriculture in Iran has been established since 1941, and the staff of the Provincial Agricultural Headquarters handled the rural development affairs. After World War II, the predominant conditions drew the attention of the world in general and Iran in particular, to the agricultural extension activities. Thus, the Agricultural Extension Department was established in 1948 as a department under the Ministry of Agriculture. In 1953, agricultural extension was located within the framework of an independent instructional organization with the support of the Ministry of Agriculture. Although the Agricultural Extension Department in the first decade of its activities merely worked on educational matters, in 1962 it concentrated on the implementation of the Land Reforms Program and in 1973 the main focus was the implementation of projects to increase agricultural production. During these three decades the main activities of the extension department were provision of loans and credit, preparation and arrangement of works, handling and distribution of seeds (Ghareyazie, Aghajani, & Ranjbar, 2003). One could argue that from the initial launching of extension to the end of the nineties, extension workers played the role of experts in the transfer of technology, and the role of extension agents as the ones who develop human resources, was neglected. Further, Fami (2006) felt the

lack of an actual linkage between farmers and scientists to develop human resources (farmers) at that time.

Afterwards for developing meaningful relations between research, extension and farmers (both in quality and quantity), the Agricultural Research, Education and Extension Organization (AREEO) emerged in 1993 as one of the dependent organizations of Jihad-e-Agriculture Ministry. Then, the main functions of extension are defined as: First, functioning on the basis of public extension attending the target groups (rural women, rural youth, etc.). Second, focusing on agricultural projects aimed at strengthening the provision of credits. Third, focusing on technical/professional extension and transfer of research findings (Ghareyazie et al., 2003). At this time, the importance of extension agents' leadership role with consideration of similarity between leader and client emerged as a main competency to perform the extension function, especially for the various target groups of rural men and women.

Overall, Iran's agricultural extension services in the current decade have been going forward with a noticeable rate in all enclosure roles including transfer of technology and human resource development; however, the human resource development role of extension agents have not been considered satisfactorily (Karbasioun & Mulder, 2004). Furthermore, farmers accepted the agricultural extension service as the most-used source of information, and extension services as a non-formal education provides advisory services to the clients, followed by a combined approach with a focus on the ministry-based extension system. Other approaches are commodity-based for strategic crops such as wheat, project-based such as watershed management extension, client-based such as women or youth income-generating projects, university-based, training and visit (T&V), participatory, and privatized extension as a more recent approach (Karbasioun, Biemans, & Mulder, 2007).

Role of Extension Agents in Iran

Iran's extension agents are responsible for providing the knowledge and information that will enable a farmer to understand and make a decision about a particular innovation. The knowledge provided for a farmer is mostly technical knowledge based on the structured programs of Ministry and government policies for rural development. The main concern of mentioned responsibility is the transfer of technology that creates the role of technical leader for extension agents to the clients. MalekMohammadi (2000) also discussed the role of Iran's extension agents as technical leaders. He believed that the achievement of a technical

leader role of extension agents takes time and needs an increasing effort to create a trustful situation in which rural people accept the extension agents as technical leaders. Rural people accept someone as their technical leader only when they see his or her technical excellence, along with seeing their local leader following that person. Thus, extension agents, in order to confirm their role as technical leader in addition to possessing the appropriate amount of technical knowledge and skills, need local leaders' support. Giving deep respect to the local leaders, which vary in rural areas such as a religious leader as the predominant one, would increase the respect of extension agents as technical leaders. It is consistent with the reviewed literature on the principle of early extension work (Franco, 1960) with emphasis on using a local leader.

Due to current emphasis of scholars and extension organizations on a participatory approach of extension, the extension agents should act as facilitators to help and encourage farmers to develop their own initiatives and to begin to tackle their own problems, and consequently farmers' personal development (Shirzad, 2006). It is consistent with the recent literature on the principle of extension on leadership development (Nisha, 2006) and definition of leadership (Northouse, 2007) which is all about clients' empowerment. Thus, recently there are more emphases on human resource development rather than the transfer of technology that brings the significance of the role of extension agents as holistic leaders, not only technical leaders. In agreement with Morse, Brown, and Warning (2006), the role of extension agents was to improve the practices on the farm, in the home, and in the community. According to a study conducted in Iran by Karbasioun, Biemans, and Mulder (2007), the farmers claimed that agricultural extension services have supported them to some extent on animal husbandry and veterinary matters, agricultural input and enhancement of the fertility and size of the farms, while for the future they expressed the need for greater support regarding socialization competencies, emotional aspects, and making an agricultural career more satisfactory. While the global environments have evolved, the roles of extension agents have also become more complex and interconnected, in which the "programming" approach, which is one of the predominant approaches of extension system in Iran, is not sufficient. For the extension agents to work effectively in the future, they need a different way of thinking in order to act as a facilitator to make a difference.

Iran's extension agents could hold different organizational positions, from technician to a top manager, in order for them to play the different roles. The first organizational position of extension agents is being a technician who has a technical educational qualification. The second level