

OBSTACLES OF ADMINISTRATIVE CREATIVITY TO AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION MANAGERS IN IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to identify the obstacles to administrative creativity of agricultural extension managers in Iraq. To achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire was prepared through the literature and previous studies related to the subject and the opinions of specialized experts and their approval were taking, so the final consisting of (58) paragraphs distributed over (3) areas. The research community included all agricultural extension managers, numbering (223) respondents. The research results have shown the existence of several obstacles that limit the administrative creativity of agricultural extension managers in Iraq, including organizational and administrative obstacles, which has come in first place with a weighted average of (3.48) degrees, and a percentage weight of (69.55%) degrees, followed by obstacles related to external environmental conditions with a weighted average of (3.41) degrees, and a percentage weight of (68.23%), while personal obstacles has come in last place with a weighted average of (2.59) degrees, and a percentage weight of (51.8%). Accordingly, we recommend that the responsible authorities in the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Extension and Training Department adopt the research results and work to overcome and Treat these obstacles and focus more on organizational and administrative obstacles.

Key words: Creativity, external environment, personal obstacles, organizational and administrative.

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INTRODUCTION

Agricultural extension is the cornerstone of rural development and one of its basic requirements because it is a source of renewal and the tool through which the agricultural sector can progress by transferring new and appropriate knowledge and technologies and disseminating them among farmers. (Al-jubouri and Ridha, 2022) In addition, agricultural extension has an important role in achieving sustainable agricultural development. (Abdel-Hussein and Fayyadh, 2024) The existence of a strong and effective agricultural extension system is a key to the change required to face current challenges as it is the system that is concerned with facilitating farmers, their organizations and other

stakeholders' access to information, technologies and sources of knowledge in order to increase productivity and improve its quality. (Ahmed, 2023) and developing administrative, organizational and technical methods and skills of workers in the best possible ways to achieve agricultural and rural development and achieve food security. (Al-Hadrami and Al-Shawamin, 2017) In order for agricultural extension to play its role effectively, there must be different categories of workers to carry out various tasks related to it, especially administrators, as well as the presence of communication channels to facilitate the flow of information, knowledge and skills. (Ridha et al, 2020) The suitability of agricultural extension work is linked to the

efficiency of those who carry it out, in addition to their possession of a number of characteristics that play a fundamental role in achieving the required changes (Lafta and Al-Kafaji, 2022), as the manager is an important element in the administrative process and the first person responsible for the workflow, organizing and coordinating available resources, and organizing relations between employees. (Ridha et al, 2020) In addition to mobilizing the organization's resources and achieving the desired aims, they consider an effective and efficient model for resolving and managing crises. (Al-Arawani, 2024) There are many studies that have indicated the importance of the manager as one of the basic pillars of the organization and an important factor affecting its success or failure, in addition to being responsible for the progress of work in the organization, due to the characteristics, competencies and skills he possesses. (Ridha, et al, 2020; Al-jubouri and Ridha, 2022.) Despite the importance of the extension manager and his role in raising the efficiency of agricultural extension, the reality indicates that there is a weakness in their performance, in addition to the fact that most of the procedures carried out by agricultural extension managers are traditional routine procedures. (Al-jubouri and Ridha, 2022) So, if the managers want to perform their role effectively, they must have creative qualities, and extension agencies must have an effective role in encouraging creativity and providing the necessary facilities in order to overcome the difficulties and problems they face in their work (Al-Rubaie, 2022). And There is widespread recognition of the increasing importance of creativity in organizations. (Mabrouk, et al, 2022) Administrative creativity is one of the contemporary administrative methods that have proven successful in various organizations, through which the pinnacle of development and prosperity is reached. (Elias, 2017) has it is eliminating negative aspects, improving results and achieving creative performance.(Badi and Al-Zubaidi, 2024) This is done by thinking outside the blueprints and frameworks, approaching new fields, and achieving results capable of providing solutions to the problems

they face. (Antonis, 2021) Through which future changes can be predicted and quick decisions and constructive actions can be taken in order to adapt administrative creativity skills to the organization's performance. (Güven, et al, 2021) Therefore, the work of organizations must be linked to creativity and development in order to reach the peak of their development and maintain their sustainability through the development of thought, openness, integration of methods, and development of goals and ambitions. (Muhdiyanto and Fuad, 2021; Ahmed, 2022) as well as producing new or original ideas. (Al-Rubaie, 2022) In order to improve the performance of managers and the organization's performance in an efficient manner. And to bring about the real change required (Alwan and Khadr, 2024), there are many previous studies that have shown the importance of creativity in highlighting the talents and abilities of managers in making decisions in creative ways, moving away from traditional thinking, and producing new ideas. (Al-Hashash, 2014; Al-Zawaida and Al-Khasawneh, 2022) Given the importance of administrative creativity for agricultural extension managers and its role in developing and improving their performance and the performance of agricultural extension, there are many obstacles that limit the ability of managers to be creative in their work (Al-Hadrami and Al-Shawamin, 2017; Ahmed, 2023; Al-Arawani, 2024) so this research came to raise the following question:

What are the obstacles to administrative creativity for agricultural extension managers in Iraq?

This study aimed to Identify the obstacles to administrative creativity of agricultural extension managers in Iraq.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In order to achieve the research objectives, the descriptive approach was used, which is one of the methods of scientific interpretation and analysis, through which the phenomenon or problem to be measured is described by collecting data about the phenomenon, classifying and analyzing it to reach acceptable results . (Darwish, 2018).

Research community and sample: The research included all Iraqi governorates except

the Kurdistan region, and a random sample was selected from it at a rate of (50%) was chosen (8) governorates, and the research was conducted on all agricultural extension managers in the governorates included in the research, numbering (223) Managers. Represented by Managers of departments, divisions, centers and extension farms.

Data collection tool: The questionnaire and personal interview method were adopted as a tool for collecting data from the respondents. The questionnaire preparation went through a series of stages, which are:

1- Preparing the questionnaire in its initial form: In light of the literature and previous studies in administrative creativity and specialists in this field, the questionnaire was prepared, which consisted of (64) paragraphs distributed over (3) areas, which are personal obstacles, organizational and administrative obstacles, and obstacles related to external environmental conditions.

2- Developing the questionnaire: The questionnaire was presented to a group of experts in the field of agricultural extension , numbering (16) experts, and a group of experts in the field of management, numbering (14) experts, to indicate their degree of agreement with the areas and paragraphs of the questionnaire in light of an agreement scale consisting of three levels: agree, agree with modification, disagree.

3- Determining the experts' agreement criterion (cutoff threshold) on the components of the questionnaire: The cutoff threshold is the degree that the area or paragraph should achieve in the average degrees of experts' agreement on it to remain in the questionnaire, which is (75%) (Hamoud, 2023). So the cut-off threshold was set at (75%) or more of the experts' approval degree to keep the proposed questionnaire's Areas and paragraphs in their final form.

4- Calculating the averages of the experts' agreement degrees on the questionnaire components (Area and paragraphs): Estimated weights (numerical values) were given to the levels of agreement measures as follows: (agree = 2), (agree with modification = 1), (disagree = zero), and thus the scale's degree ranged between (0-2) degrees, and the

averages were calculated by calculating the sum of the obtained degrees on the number of experts.

5- Preparing the questionnaire in its final form: In light of comparing the averages of the experts' approval scores on the components of the questionnaire (Area and paragraphs) with the cut-off threshold for preparing the questionnaire in its final form, all the Areas and paragraphs achieved the cut-off threshold or more, and the cut-off threshold for administrative creativity obstacles reached (93%), as (6) paragraphs were deleted from the fields of obstacles, thus the number of paragraphs of the scale became (58) paragraphs distributed over (3) Areas .

6- Examining the reliability of the questionnaire: A preliminary test of the questionnaire was conducted in June 2024 on a sample of (20) respondents in Diyala Governorate, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure reliability, which reached a value of (0.95).

7- Data collection: The research data was collected using a questionnaire and personal interview method from a sample of (223) respondents during the period 4/7/2024 - 1/9/2024. The answers of (222) respondents were obtained in order to exclude one questionnaire due to the Director General of the Agricultural Extension and Training Department's refusal to answer it.

8- Data classification and analysis: The weights (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) were given to the scale of obstacles that limit the administrative creativity of agricultural extension managers in Iraq (very large, large, medium, small, very small) respectively, and to arrange the Areas and paragraphs in descending order according to their importance from the respondents' degree of view, the weighted mean and percentage weight were used.

Statistical methods: The statistical methods used in analyzing the research data are the Cronbach's alpha, the weighted mean and the percentage weight.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Identifying the obstacles to administrative creativity for agricultural extension managers in Iraq:

1- Personal obstacles:

The results of the research showed that the paragraphs related to the Area of (personal obstacles) and their number (20) paragraphs

obtained weighted averages of (2.14-3.22) degrees, and percentage weights of (%42.8- %64.4) degrees, as shown in Table (1)

Table 1. Weighted averages and percentage weights of the degrees of agreement of the respondents on the paragraphs related to the Area of personal obstacles

Paragraph number in the questionnaire	Paragraphs	Weighted average	Weight Percentage	Arrangement of paragraphs
10	Agricultural extension managers rely on their personal experiences in presenting new ideas and methods.	3.22	64.4	1
20	Agricultural extension managers feel frustrated due to the disproportion of the efforts they exert with the reward offered to them.	3.20	64	2
6	Excessive enthusiasm among agricultural extension managers and the quick desire to achieve success in their administrative work without study or planning.	2.93	58.6	3
3	Agricultural extension managers rely on the traditional method in managing extension work.	2.90	58	4
7	Fear of criticism directed at them by senior management or those working with them when they present new ideas and methods.	2.86	57.2	5
5	Fear of making mistakes or failing to adopt new ideas related to administrative extension work.	2.83	56.6	6
4	Reliance on intuition and guesswork in solving problems they face in their administrative work.	2.63	52.6	7
19	Low spirit of initiative and dependence on what is common in administrative extension work.	2.55	51	8
1	Lack of desire among agricultural extension managers that drives them to present new ideas or solutions in their administrative work.	2.54	50.8	9
17	Resistance of agricultural extension managers to new extension ideas and methods.	2.53	50.6	10
18	The lack of awareness of agricultural extension managers of the latest developments in their administrative extension work.	2.52	50.4	11
11	The lack of loyalty and belonging of agricultural extension managers to the agricultural extension organization.	2.5	50	12
16	The extreme rigidity of agricultural extension managers in dealing with problems or situations they face in their administrative work.	2.46	49.2	13
14	The fear of agricultural extension managers of the challenge and the unknown risks that result from it.	2.44	48.8	14
9	The lack of ability of agricultural extension managers to realize the difficult situations they face in their administrative work.	2.43	48.6	15
2	The lack of respect and appreciation of agricultural extension managers from others.	2.32	46.4	16
15	The inability to bear the responsibility of adopting new ideas and proposals in their administrative extension work.	2.31	46.2	17
8	The weakness or lack of confidence of agricultural extension managers in themselves in presenting new ideas.	2.27	45.4	18
13	Agricultural extension managers feel that extension work is not important or of little importance.	2.22	44.4	19
12	The feeling of agricultural extension managers that extension work is not important or of little importance.	2.14	42.8	20

As indicated in the table (1) that the paragraph (Agricultural Extension Managers' dependence on their personal experiences in presenting new ideas and methods) came in first place with a weighted average of (3.22) degree, and a percentage weight of (64.4) degree. This result may be explained by the lack or absence of implementing training courses and workshops for agricultural extension managers in the field of administrative creativity, which led to agricultural extension managers' reliance

on their personal experiences that they acquired during their administrative work. As for the paragraph (Agricultural Extension Managers' fear of appearing and confronting others), it came in last place with a weighted average of (2.14) degree and a percentage weight of (42.8) degree. This result may be explained by the fact that most agricultural extension managers have self-confidence, in addition to possessing communication skills

that enable them to confront others, so this paragraph came in last place.

2- Organizational and administrative obstacles: The research results showed that the paragraphs related to the field of

(organizational and administrative obstacles) and their number (23) paragraphs obtained weighted averages of (2.62 - 4.64) degrees, and percentage weights of (52.4% - 92.8%) degrees, as shown in Table (2).

Table 2. Weighted averages and percentage weights of the degrees of agreement of the respondents on the paragraphs related to the Area of organizational and administrative obstacles

Paragraph number in the questionnaire	Paragraphs	Weighted average	Weight Percentage	Arrangement of paragraphs
7	Lack of financial allocations allocated to develop and improve extension work.	4.64	92.8	1
11	Lack of Materialism and moral incentives to encourage creativity.	4.44	88.8	2
18	Lack of material, human and information requirements necessary for creativity.	4.32	86.2	3
5	Agricultural extension managers adhere to the systems and regulations issued by the responsible authorities in the Ministry of Agriculture.	4.28	85.6	4
2	Centralization in making decisions related to extension work.	4.14	82.8	5
20	Lack of opportunity for agricultural extension managers to attend agricultural conferences to learn about the latest developments in the field of extension work.	4.08	81.6	6
3	Lack of training programs allocated to agricultural extension managers to develop their creative abilities in their administrative work.	3.87	77.4	7
16	Lack of training programs allocated to agricultural extension managers to develop their creative abilities in their administrative work.	3.66	73.2	8
8	Promotion system based on seniority rather than efficiency in work performance.	3.54	70.8	9
13	Weak communication channels between the different administrative levels of agricultural extension, which limits the exchange of information and ideas between them.	3.47	69.4	10
4	Lack of objective standards for evaluating performance.	3.33	66.6	11
17	The ambiguity of some instructions and decisions issued by higher administrative authorities.	3.28	65.6	12
15	Resistance of higher administrative authorities to change and innovation in agricultural extension.	3.23	64.6	13
6	The organizational instability of agricultural extension, which negatively affects the creativity of those who hold administrative positions.	3.15	63	14
12	The duality in issuing instructions and administrative decisions by higher authorities, which hinders agricultural extension managers from being creative in their administrative work.	3.13	62.6	15
9	Failure to specify the roles played by agricultural extension managers in detail and within regulations and instructions.	3.11	62.2	16
21	Strict supervision of extension managers by senior management to discover any violations of regulations and instructions.	3.10	62	17
1	The lack or absence of the opportunity for agricultural guidance managers to complete postgraduate studies.	3.04	60.8	18
22	The lack of clarity of the aims and future plans for agricultural extension and the resulting decline in the spirit of creativity among agricultural extension managers.	3	60	19
23	Reliance on experts from outside the extension work and neglect of the creative ideas of workers within the extension work.	2.97	59.4	20
14	The confidentiality of some information and the difficulty of exchanging it between managers and workers in the extension work.	2.95	59	21
10	Frequent meetings are held, but without a real mechanism to address problems.	2.64	52.8	22
19	Weak coordination between the departments and organizational units of agricultural extension.	2.62	52.4	23

Table (2) shows that the paragraph (the lack of financial allocations allocated to developing and improving extension work) came in first place with a weighted average of (4.64) degree, and a percentage weight of (92.8) degree. This result may be explained by the existence of a deficit in the budget allocated to agricultural extension, which in turn affects the weakness of funding and spending on administrative creativity of agricultural extension managers, in addition to the lack of other funding sources to support agricultural extension managers to be creative in their field of work. As for the paragraph (weak cooperation and integration between the administrative levels of agricultural extension), it came in last place with a weighted average of (2.62) degree and a

percentage weight of (52.4) degree. This result may be explained by the lack and weakness of communication channels between administrative levels in agricultural extension, which allow the exchange of information and ideas and holding discussions to make these levels work as a single cohesive unit to address the problems that obstruct extension work and reach common aims .

3- Obstacles related to external environmental conditions: The research results showed that the paragraphs related to the Area (obstacles related to external environmental conditions) which numbered (15) paragraphs obtained weighted averages of (2.94 - 3.76) degrees, and percentage weights of (58.8% - 75.2%) degrees, as shown in Table (3).

Table 3. Weighted averages and percentage weights of the degrees of agreement of the respondents on the paragraphs related to the Area of obstacles related to external environmental conditions

Paragraph number in the questionnaire	Paragraphs	Weighted average	Weight Percentage	Arrangement of paragraphs
10	Weak government support for creativity and innovators.	3.76	75.2	1
1	The traditions and traditions prevailing in society limit the ability of agricultural extension managers to be creative.	3.64	72.8	2
13	Failure to obtain funding from local and international donor organizations reduces the creative capabilities of agricultural extension managers.	3.63	72.6	3
2	Weak legislation and government regulations related to the intellectual protection of creators.	3.59	71.8	4
9	Lack of funding from local and international donor organizations reduces the creative abilities of agricultural extension managers.	3.55	71	5
3	The lack of flexibility in laws and legislation limits the ability of agricultural extension managers to be creative.	3.50	70	6
5	Weak government legislation and regulations related to intellectual protection for innovators.	3.46	69.2	7
15	Weak competition between agricultural extension and international extension organizations	3.44	68.8	8
14	Weak role of governmental and non-governmental media in spreading the culture of creativity.	3.39	67.8	9
11	Lack of confidence among rural community members in agricultural extension workers to solve the problems they face	3.33	66.6	10
4	The inflexibility of laws and legislation limits the ability of agricultural extension managers to innovate.	3.31	66.2	11
8	The low outlook of agricultural extension by some community members.	3.28	65.6	12
6	Weak coordination and partnership between agricultural extension and relevant non-governmental organizations.	3.24	64.8	13
7	Weak cooperation between agricultural extension and rural society	3.11	62.2	14
12	The personal problems of agricultural extension managers negatively affect their level of creativity in their administrative work.	2.94	58.8	15

As indicated in the table (3) that the paragraph (weak government support for creativity and innovators) came in first place with a weighted average of (3.76) degree, and a percentage weight of (75.2) degree. This result may be explained by the lack of laws and regulations to care for innovators and support them materially, financially and morally, which result to a reduction in the creative abilities of agricultural extension managers. As for the paragraph (the personal problems of agricultural extension managers negatively affect their level of creativity in their

administrative work.) It came in last place with a weighted average of (2.94) degree and a percentage weight of (58.8) degree. This result may be explained by the fact that agricultural extension managers have the ability to achieve a balance between their personal lives and the administrative tasks they perform. To arrange the areas of obstacles administrative creativity for agricultural extension managers, which number (3) areas, the research results showed that these areas obtained weighted averages of (2.59 - 3.48) degrees, and percentage weights of (51.8% - 69.55%), as shown in Table (4).

Table 4. Weighted averages and percentage weights to the degrees of agreement of the respondents on the areas of obstacles to administrative creativity

Field number in the questionnaire	The field	Weighted average	Weight Percentage	Arrangement of field
2	Organizational and administrative obstacles	3.48	69.55	1
3	Obstacles related to external environmental conditions	3.41	68.23	2
1	Personal obstacles	2.59	51.8	3

As indicated in the table (4) that the organizational and administrative obstacles came in first place with a weighted average of (3.48) degrees, and a percentage weight of (69.55) degrees. This may be attributed to several reasons, including the use of routine methods in managing extension work, weak material and financial capabilities, as well as the lack of an appropriate organizational Context for extension work to encourage agricultural extension managers to put forward new ideas. As for personal obstacles, they came in last place with a weighted average of (2.59) degrees and a percentage weight of (51.8) degrees. The reason for this may be due to the belief of some of the respondents that personal obstacles do not constitute major obstacles to the administrative creativity of agricultural extension managers, as they are not the important factor in determining whether the extension manager is creative or not. In addition, the senior management of agricultural extension did not take into account the personal qualities that managers possess as a criterion for determining creative managers. We conclude from the current research the weakness of the support provided by the senior administrative bodies responsible for agricultural extension towards administrative

creativity in terms of organizational, administrative and personal aspects, in addition to aspects related to external environmental conditions.

CONCLUSION

The study identified three main categories of obstacles limiting the administrative creativity of agricultural extension managers in Iraq: organizational and administrative, external environmental, and personal. Findings revealed that organizational and administrative obstacles were the most significant (weighted mean 3.48; 69.55%), followed by external environmental obstacles (weighted mean 3.41; 68.23%), while personal obstacles ranked last (weighted mean 2.59; 51.8%). Accordingly, the research question has been answered, confirming that insufficient financial allocations, lack of incentives, centralized decision-making, and weak legislative frameworks constitute the most critical barriers to creativity. The study recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Extension and Training Department prioritize addressing these challenges by strengthening financial and human resources, expanding training opportunities, and updating supportive policies and regulations. Such measures are essential to

foster administrative creativity, enhance managerial performance, and achieve sustainable agricultural development.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

AUTHOR/S DECLARATION

We confirm that all Figures and Tables in the manuscript are original to us. Additionally, any Figures and images that do not belong to us have been incorporated with the required permissions for re-publication, which are included with the manuscript.

- Author/s signature on Ethical Approval Statement.
- Ethical Clearance and Animal welfare
- Funds.

AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

N. J. Merza: Conceptualization, data collection, statistical analysis, and drafting of the manuscript. **B.A. Ridha:** Supervision, guidance in methodology, critical review, and final approval of the manuscript.

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معوقات الأبداع الإداري لمدراء الإرشاد الزراعي في العراق

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المستخلص

استهدف البحث التعرف على معوقات الأبداع الإداري لمدراء الارشاد الزراعي في العراق. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث تم اعداد استمارة استبانة من خلال الادبيات والدراسات السابقة ذات العلاقة بالموضوع وأراء الخبراء الاختصاصيين وموافقهم عليها، وعليه تكونت الاستبانة النهائية من (58) فقرة موزعة على (3) محاور، وشمل مجتمع البحث جميع مدراء الإرشاد الزراعي البالغ عددهم (223) مبحوثاً وظهرت نتائج البحث وجود عدة معوقات تحد من الأبداع الإداري لمدراء الإرشاد الزراعي في العراق منها المعوقات التنظيمية والادارية التي جاءت بالترتيب الاول بمتوسط موزون (3.48) درجة ، ووزن مؤوي (69.55%) درجة ، تليها المعوقات المتعلقة بظروف البيئة الخارجية بمتوسط موزون (3.41) درجة ، ووزن مؤوي (68.23%) في حين جاءت المعوقات الشخصية بالترتيب الاخير بمتوسط موزون (2.59) درجة، ووزن مؤوي (51.8%). وعليه نوصي بضرورة قيام الجهات المسؤولة في وزارة الزراعة، ودائرة الارشاد والتدريب الزراعي بتبني نتائج البحث والعمل على تذليل ومعالجة هذه المعوقات والتركيز بدرجة اكبر على المعوقات التنظيمية والادارية.

كلمات مفتاحية: المعوقات الشخصية، التنظيمية والادارية، البيئة الخارجية.

*البحث مستل من أطروحة دكتوراه للباحث الاول