



ANALYSIS OF SOME INTERNAL VARIABLES OF THE AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SYSTEM IN IRAQ ACCORDING TO THE SWOT MODEL

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ABSTRACT

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The research aimed to analyze both the organizational structure and the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system environment in Iraq. To achieve the research objectives, a questionnaire was prepared, consisting of 32 paragraphs. The research community included all agricultural extension managers, totaling 220, representing 100% of the targeted research community. The research results for analyzing the organizational structure showed that (delegating some powers to other officials to ensure the flow and continuity of extension work) which ranked first in terms of importance, with a weighted rate of (2.14) degrees, while (lack of diversity of agricultural extension approaches) came in first place in the weaknesses, with a weighted rate of (2.96) degrees, as for the analysis of the organizational climate, (Adopting teamwork methods among the formations of the extension organization) came in first place, with a weighted rate of (2.21) degrees, as for the weaknesses, while the paragraph (agricultural extension feel that they are under constant supervision to perform extension work according to the rules and instructions) came in first place in terms of importance or the respondents, with a weighted rate of (2.58) degrees. Accordingly, we recommend that the responsible authorities in the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricultural Extension and Training Department adopt the results of the research and work to take into consideration the necessity of focusing on strengths as much as possible and exploiting them correctly, and eliminating weaknesses.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the world has witnessed vast changes at the global and local levels as a result of the massive revolution in information and communications technology, that is easy to obtain at any time and from multiple sources through the international information network and in all fields, Among them is agricultural extension (Khatri *et al.*, 2024), which suffers from many defects that have affected its performance and effectiveness in providing extension services (Ayim *et al.*, 2022), the most important of these is the existence of dual supervision at the governorate, (Davis *et al.*, 2020), the lack of effective and influential management of agricultural extension work, a conflict and duplication of duties, the lack of cooperation and coordination between agricultural extension and subject specialists, the low academic level of workers, and describing agricultural extension systems as ineffective and inefficient to address the challenges of the agricultural sector (Al-Zarkani, 2018; Bani and Hassan, 2017), Maredia, highlights that institutional fragmentation and weak HR policies limit the effectiveness of agricultural extension (Zahran *et al.*, 2021), A gap exists between extension goals and society due

to poor adaptation to changing factors, like economy, technology, politics, and resources (Al-Khawili, 2019), Extension systems must adopt flexible, innovative strategies to meet changing needs (FAO, 2019), have a profound impact on political and economic stability, (Sadeq *et al.* 2023), and Dynamic adaptation to these changes is essential for effective extension services (Smith and Johnson, 2021).

Accordingly, traditional agricultural extension is no longer an appropriate option for facing challenges. Rather, it needs to reconsider its general policies, conduct organizational development (Hameed, and Sawicka, 2023), agricultural extension must be identifying these problems and challenges (Hameed *et al.*, 2025), and provide administrative and organizational conditions to achieve the strategic goals of the agricultural sector (FAO, 2019), investing in agriculture is a key strategy to reduce poverty effectively (Fan and Rue, 2020), Modernizing extension services via policy reforms and capacity building is vital to tackle current agricultural challenges (Davis, 2008).

SWOT is essential for strategic planning in extension services (Shallal *et al.*, 2022), SWOT analysis helps by aligning internal strengths and external opportunities and threats (Badarin and Khreis, 2023), This technique aids extension reform by analyzing factors; thus, countries like Iraq improve services and livelihoods (Al-Khawili, 2019), (Al-Taie, *et al.*, 2021) Highlight that is, the biggest challenges facing the agricultural extension system in Iraq, Accordingly, developing countries, including Iraq, have taken on new dimensions to reform extension systems (Omar and Crowder, 2005), The organizational structure is a vital means of helping systems achieve their goals efficiently and effectively. It is thus the organizational structure that determines the internal structure of the system (Al-Taie and Kassar, 2015).

As for the organizational climate, it is the main driver of the extension system, it is one of the most important variables within it due to its connection to its success or failure (Al-Salmi, 2012), which together form the organizational climate resulting from the interaction of policies (Al-Karim, 2018), administrative practices, organizational structure, work technology, relations between workers and leadership, (Issa, 2014), Therefore, the current research seeks to shed light on this topic by answering the following question:

- 1- What is the analysis of the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq according to the SWOT model?
- 2- What is the analysis of the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq according to the SWOT model?

*** Research objective**

- 1- Analysis of the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq according to the SWOT model.
- 2- Analysis of the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq according to the SWOT model.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The descriptive method is considered one of the organized scientific approaches for analyzing and interpreting a specific phenomenon or problem. Accordingly, this method is deemed appropriate for obtaining detailed data and facts about this study.

Operational Definitions of Variables

In this study, several key variables were operationally defined as follows:

- 1- Strength: The internal advantages possessed by the agricultural extension system in Iraq are positive factors that help it achieve its goals in providing extension services to the targets in an effective manner.
- 2- Weakness: Internal factors that hinder the ability of the agricultural extension system in Iraq to achieve its goals efficiently and negatively affect its performance in providing extension services to the targets.

Research Community and Sample

The research community included all Iraqi provinces except the Kurdistan Region, and a random sample of (50%) was selected from it, with (8) province, namely (Baghdad, Diyala, Wasit, Karbala, Najaf, Kirkuk, Dhi Qar and Basra), The research was conducted on all agricultural extension directors in the provinces included in the research, totaling (220) respondents.

Data collection tool

The questionnaire was adopted, it, consisting of (36) paragraphs distributed over (2) fields (organizational structure and organizational climate), each field contains (2) topic (strength and weakness), and each topic has (8) paragraphs, according to a graded scale (agree to a very great extent, agree to a great extent).

Extent, agree to a moderate degree, agree to a little degree, do not agree at all) and weights were given to it (0, 1, 2, 3, 4) respectively, the questionnaire preparation went through a series of stages, which are:

- 1- The questionnaire was presented to a group of experts numbering 15, to indicate their degree of agreement on it.
- 2- Determining the experts' agreement criterion (cutoff threshold) on the components of the questionnaire, which is (75%) (Veen *et al.*,2018) (Aliyan,2024).
- 3- Calculating the averages of the experts' approval degrees on the questionnaire components. Estimated weights (numerical values) were given to the levels of the approval scales (agree = 2), (agree with modification = 1), (disagree = zero) .
- 4- Comparing the averages of the experts' approval degrees with the cut-off threshold (Veen *et al.*,2018), and (Economic and Technological) variables reached (82%) (89.5%).
- 5- A preliminary test of the questionnaire was conducted on 9/14/2023 on a sample of 15) respondents in Ramadi, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to measure stability, which reached a value of 0.89 for the organizational structure and (0.84) for the organizational climate. These values are acceptable (Aliyan,2024).
- 6- The research data was collected During the period between (9/24/2023-6/12/2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq according to the SWOT model.

Determining the strengths of the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq

The results of the research showed that the researchers confirmed the existence of strengths that characterize the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq, which weighted means ranged between (1.56-2.19) degrees and a percentage weight ranged between (39-54.75). The paragraphs were arranged in descending order according to the weighted mean as shown in Table (1), as the table indicates that the paragraph (Delegating some powers to other officials to ensure the flow and continuity of the extension work) ranked first in terms of importance with a weighted average of (2.14) degrees, a percentage weight of (53.5), and a percentage of (31.4%) within the low degree of the respondents. This may be attributed to the development of the organizational view of the agricultural extension system and the adoption of delegation processes to ensure smooth work and deepen the democratic thought of the extension process., while the paragraph (Providing extension centers at the provinces level in a manner that The scope of work of the agricultural guide) is in last place in terms of importance in the strengths of the organizational structure topics, with a weighted mean of (1.86) degrees and a percentage weight of (46.50), and a percentage of (40.9%) within the average degree, and this is attributed to the fact that the availability of extension centers at the provinces level does not suit the scope of work of the agricultural guide, but rather does not cover the scope of his extension work.

Table (1): Distribution of respondents according to strengths in the topics of the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq

Sort by importance	Paragraphs	found to a very large extent		found to a large extent		found to a moderate extent		found to a small extent		not found		Weighted mean	Percentage weight
		numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%		
1	Delegating some powers to other officials to ensure the flow and continuity of extension work	55	25.0	27	12.3	56	25.5	69	31.4	13	5.9	2.14	53.5
2	The organizational structure is flexible, i.e. it can be modified to meet emergency changes.	16	7.3	62	28.2	81	36.8	58	26.4	3	1.4	2.13	53.25
3	The existence of an official organizational structure that defines the administrative levels, departments and sections in the extension organization	22	10.0	54	24.5	73	33.2	62	28.2	9	4.1	2.08	52
4	The link between the extension organization and the external environment and the surrounding organizations.	53	24.1	33	15.0	23	10.5	96	43.6	15	6.8	2.05	51.25
5	Determining the scope of supervision in light of the nature of the work, the administrative and organizational level, the ability of the extension manager, and the efficiency of agricultural extension workers.	17	7.72	34	15.5	103	46.8	53	24.1	13	5.9	1.95	48.75
6	Determining the scope of supervision in light of the nature of the work, the administrative and organizational level, the ability of the extension manager, and the efficiency of agricultural extension workers.	17	7.7	63	28.6	61	27.7	39	17.7	40	18.1	1.90	47.50
7	The existence of a hierarchical hierarchy that helps divide the extension work for all organizational units according to specific foundations.	10	4.5	32	14.5	106	48.2	64	29.1	8	3.63	1.87	46.75

Sort by importance	Paragraphs	found to a very large extent		found to a large extent		found to a moderate extent		found to a small extent		not found		Weighted mean	Percentage weight
		numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%		
8	The flow of information and decisions within the extension organization with ease and freedom.	16	7.3	40	18.2	90	40.9	47	21.4	27	12.3	1.86	46.50
Average												1.99	49.93

Identifying the weaknesses associated with the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq

The results of the research showed that the researchers confirmed the existence of weaknesses associated with the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq, as the weighted means ranged between (1.71 - 2.96) degrees, and a percentage weight ranged between (42.75 - 74). The paragraphs were arranged in descending order according to the weighted mean as shown Table (2).

The table indicates that the paragraph (lack of diversity in agricultural extension approaches) came in first place in terms of weaknesses with a weighted average of (2.96) points, a percentage weight of (74), and a percentage of (50%) of the respondents within the large degree. This may be attributed to the use of the traditional linear approach to agricultural extension so far, and not taking into consideration the development of new strategies and methods that are compatible with the growth that has occurred, while the paragraph (lack of a precise written job description that specifies the tasks and duties of agricultural extension workers) came in last place. With a weighted average of (2) degrees, and a percentage weight of (50) and a percentage of (36.8%) of the respondents within the low degree, this is attributed to the existence of a written document specifying the job description of the agricultural extension profession.

Table (2): Distribution of the respondents according to the weaknesses in the topics of the organizational structure of the agricultural extension system in Iraq

Sort by importance	Paragraphs	found to a very large extent		found to a large extent		found to a moderate extent		found to a small extent		not found		Weighted mean	Percentage weight
		numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%		
1	Lack of diversity of agricultural extension approaches.	63	28.6	110	50.0	26	11.8	18	8.2	3	1.4	2.96	74
2	Assigning agricultural extension workers with non-extension tasks.	55	25.0	78	35.5	76	34.5	9	4.1	2	0.9	2.79	69.75
3	Weak role of agricultural organizations in extension work.	29	13.2	118	53.6	64	29.1	7	3.2	2	0.9	2.75	68.75
4	Lack of a system that relies on sound extension decision-making, and in most cases decisions are made randomly.	40	18.2	84	38.2	82	37.3	12	5.5	2	0.9	2.67	66.75
5	Lack of clarity of the organization's vision, mission and goals.	29	13.2	101	24.9	75	34.1	13	5.9	2	0.9	2.64	66

Sort by importance	Paragraphs	found to a very large extent		found to a large extent		found to a moderate extent		found to a small extent		not found		Weighted mean	Percentage weight
		numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%		
6	Weak coordination, cooperation and integration between the departments working in agricultural extension within the Ministry of Agriculture.	25	11.4	108	49.1	63	28.6	23	10.5	1	0.5	2.60	65
7	Administrative subordination is to more than one head, which makes agricultural extension workers more dispersed while providing extension services.	62	28.2	50	22.7	52	23.6	7	3.2	49	22.3	2.31	57.75
8	Lack of a precise written job description that defines the tasks and duties of agricultural extension workers.	42	19.1	15	6.8	73	33.2	81	36.8	9	4.1	2	50
Average												2.59	64.75

Analysis of the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq according to the SWOT model?

Identifying the strengths associated with the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq

The results of the research showed that the researchers confirmed the existence of strengths associated with the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq, as the weighted means ranged between (1.06-2.21) degrees and a percentage weight ranged between (26.5-55.25). The paragraphs were arranged in descending order by weighted average, as shown in Table 3.

The table above indicates that the paragraph (Adopting teamwork methods among the formations of the extension organization) came in first place, as it obtained a weighted average of (2.21) degrees, and a percentage weight of (55.25), and this was confirmed by (35.9) of the researchers within the intermediate level, and this is attributed to the trend towards escalating the spirit of teamwork and interest in that to distribute responsibilities and ensure obtaining the best results such as forming committees and dividing work, While (The extension management takes into consideration the opinions and ideas put forward by employees to improve the quality of extension services provided. The existence of clear values, standards, and perceptions among employees about the philosophy of providing extension services to the targeted groups.) came in last place in the strengths with a weighted average of (1.06) degrees, and a percentage weight of (26.5), and this was confirmed by (57.7) of the respondents within the low degree, and this is attributed to the lack of clarity of values, standards and perceptions about the philosophy of providing advisory services due to the lack of clarity of the agricultural advisory role of workers in a good way.

Table (3): Distribution of respondents according to the strengths in the topics of the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq

Sort by importance	Paragraphs	found to a very large extent		found to a large extent		found to a moderate extent		found to a small extent		not found		Weighted mean	Percentage weight
		numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%		
1	Adopting teamwork methods among the formations of the extension organization.	52	23.63	20	9.1	79	35.90	61	27.72	8	3.63	2.21	55.25
2	The extension organization provides the necessary support for workers to carry out the tasks and duties assigned to them	5	2.3	50	22.72	112	50.9	43	19.5	10	4.54	1.98	49.5
3	The existence of a balance between the official aspects and personal considerations of agricultural extension workers.	19	8.63	31	14.1	115	52.3	35	15.90	20	9.1	1.97	49.25
4	The readiness of agricultural extension workers to take the initiative and bear risks to ensure the success of providing extension services to the targeted people	4	1.81	66	30	75	34.1	61	27.72	14	6.4	1.93	48.25
5	There is a willingness for agricultural extension workers to commit and be disciplined in accordance with the regulations and interests of extension work	11	5.0	19	8.6	148	67.3	23	10.5	19	8.6	1.90	47.5
6	The existence of a readiness of agricultural extension workers to commit and discipline according to the regulations and interests of extension work	3	1.4	30	30	145	65.9	19	8.6	23	10.5	1.86	46.5
7	The extension management takes into consideration the opinions and ideas put forward by employees to improve the quality of extension services provided. The existence of clear values, standards and perceptions among employees about the philosophy of providing extension services to the targeted groups.	9	4.1	44	20.0	76	34.5	66	30	25	11.4	1.75	43.75
8	The extension management takes into consideration the opinions and ideas put forward by employees to improve the quality of extension services provided. The existence of clear values, standards and perceptions among employees about the philosophy of providing extension services to the targeted groups.	3	1.4	18	8.2	21	9.5	127	57.7	51	23.2	1.06	26.5
Average												1.83	45.81

Identifying the weaknesses associated with the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq

The results of the research showed that the researchers confirmed the existence of weaknesses associated with the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq, as the weighted means ranged between (1.43-2.58) degrees and a percentage weight ranged between (35.75-64.50), and the paragraphs were arranged in descending order according to the weighted mean as shown in the Table (4).

The table indicates that the paragraph (Agricultural extension feel that they are under constant supervision to perform the extension work according to the rules and instructions) came in first place in terms of importance or the respondents' approval of it, which is reinforced by its obtaining a weighted average of (2.85) degrees, and a percentage weight of (71.25), as it indicates that the percentage of (41.8%) of the respondents is within the very high degree, and this is attributed to the negative view of supervision and its role being limited to the supervisory process, i.e. catching the mistakes of the agricultural guide and not supervising and correcting the course of work and directing the agricultural guide towards better performance, while the paragraph (Incompatibility between the requirements and capabilities of extension work and the needs, problems and circumstances of the targets), came in last place in terms of importance or the level of approval of the respondents, which is reinforced by its obtaining a weighted average of (1.43) degrees, and a percentage weight of (35.75), and this was confirmed by a percentage of (34.5%) of the respondents within the average degree, and this may be attributed to the failure of agricultural extension workers to adapt properly to the conditions of agricultural extension work or their personal circumstances or both, which makes them dissatisfied with providing the extension service to the targeted people in a satisfactory manner.

Table (4): Distribution of the respondents according to the weaknesses in the topics of the organizational climate of the agricultural extension system in Iraq

Sort by importance	Paragraphs	found to a very large extent		found to a large extent		found to a moderate extent		found to a small extent		not found		Weighted mean	Percentage weight
		numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%		
1	Agricultural extension feel that they are under constant supervision to perform the extension work according to the rules and instructions.	92	41.8	24	10.9	37	16.8	55	25.0	12	5.5	2.58	64.50
2	The lack of ambition among the majority of agricultural extension due to the lack of satisfaction of psychological motivations, which creates a state of dissatisfaction.	67	30.4	38	17.3	63	28.6	27	12.3	25	11.4	2.43	60.75
3	The stability of the organizational climate and its traditionalism despite the developments and changes in the external	53	24.1	57	25.9	59	26.8	32	14.5	19	8.6	2.42	60.50

Sort by importance	Paragraphs	found to a very large extent		found to a large extent		found to a moderate extent		found to a small extent		not found		Weighted mean	Percentage weight
		numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%	numbers	%		
	environment, which makes it unsuitable for agricultural extension workers.												
4	The extension management style does not encourage personal and self-control among workers in the extension organization.	52	23.9	66	30	47	21.4	31	14.1	24	10.9	2.41	60.25
5	The absence of objective foundations for reward and punishment, but rather the performance of agricultural extension is based on personal relationships and favoritism.	68	30.9	43	19.5	33	15.0	50	22.7	26	11.8	2.35	58.75
6	Focusing on implementing regulations, laws and instructions only without paying attention to the opinions of workers in developing agricultural extension work	53	24.1	49	22.3	46	20.9	60	27.3	12	5.5	2.32	58
7	. Job instability for agricultural extension workers	69	31.4	35	15.9	30	13.6	58	26.4	28	12.7	2.26	56.50
8	Incompatibility between the requirements and capabilities of extension work and the needs, problems and circumstances of the targets.	12	5.5	23	10.5	76	34.5	47	21.4	62	28.2	1.43	35.75
Average												2.27	56.87

CONCLUSIONS

The research results for analyzing the organizational structure showed that there is a strength enjoyed by it, which is (delegating some powers to other officials to ensure the flow and continuity of extension work) which ranked first in terms of importance. At the same time, the weaknesses are (lack of diversity of agricultural extension approaches) came in first place in the failings, as for the analysis of the organizational climate, there were several points of strength, as the paragraph (following teamwork methods among the formations of the extension organization) came in first place, as for the weaknesses, the paragraph (agricultural extension feel that they are under constant supervision to perform extension work according to the rules and instructions) came in first place in terms of importance. The study recommends that the Ministry of Agriculture and the Directorate of Agricultural Extension and Training focus on strengthening the existing strengths of the agricultural extension system, particularly by promoting decentralization through delegating authority to local officials to ensure workflow efficiency and continuity, It is also important to improve the organizational structure by providing an appropriate distribution of extension centers across provinces and diversifying extension approaches by adopting modern and varied methods, Furthermore, the

study emphasizes the need to develop clear and written job descriptions for extension personnel to enhance organizational performance. Promoting a culture of teamwork and establishing clear values and shared understanding among staff regarding the philosophy of extension services are also essential. Finally, the study highlights the importance of improving the organizational climate by adopting supportive rather than restrictive supervisory methods and aligning extension programs with the real needs and conditions of target beneficiaries to ensure the effectiveness of services provided.

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With utmost respect and appreciation, I wish you continued success and excellence in your professional and national endeavors.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

تحليل بعض العوامل الداخلية لنظام الارشاد الزراعي في العراق وفق نموذج SWOT

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الخلاصة

استهدف البحث تحليل كل من الهيكل التنظيمي والمناخ التنظيمي لبيئة نظام الارشاد الزراعي في العراق ولتحقيق أهداف البحث تم اعداد استمارة استبيان والمكونة من (32) فقرة ، وشمل مجتمع البحث جميع المدراء الارشاديين الزراعيين وعددهم (220) مديرا، أي بنسبة 100% من المجتمع البحثي المستهدف ، وظهرت نتائج البحث لتحليل الهيكل التنظيمي الى ان فقرة (تحويل بعض الصلاحيات الى المسؤولين الآخرين بما يضمن انسياب واستمرارية العمل الارشادي) احتلت المرتبة الاولى من حيث الاهمية او مستوى موافقة المبحوثين ، وبوسط مرجح قدره (2.14) درجة ، اما نقاط الضعف فهي (عدم تنوع مداخل الارشاد الزراعي) جاءت بالمرتبة الاولى بنقاط الضعف ، من حيث الاهمية او مستوى موافقة المبحوثين ، وبوسط مرجح قدره (2.96) درجة اما بالنسبة لتحليل المناخ التنظيمي فكانت هناك عدة نقاط للقوة، اذ جاءت فقرة (اتباع اساليب العمل الجماعي بين تشكيلات المنظمة الارشادية) بالمرتبة الاولى، من حيث الاهمية او مستوى موافقة المبحوثين ، وبوسط مرجح قدره (2.21) درجة اما بالنسبة لنقاط الضعف ، فقد جاءت فقرة (يشعر المرشدين الزراعيين بانهم تحت رقابة دائمة لإداء العمل الارشادي وفق القواعد والتعليمات)، جاءت بالمرتبة الاولى من حيث الاهمية ، او مستوى

موافقة المبحوثين ، وبوسط مرجح قدره (2.58) درجة وعليه نوصي بضرورة قيام الجهات المسؤولة في وزارة الزراعة ، ودائرة الارشاد والتدريب الزراعي بتبني نتائج البحث والعمل على الاخذ بنظر الاعتبار بضرورة اهمية التركيز على نقاط القوة قدر الامكان واستغلالها بالشكل الصحيح ، والقضاء على نقاط الضعف. الكلمات المفتاحية: الهيكل التنظيمي، المناخ التنظيمي، بيئة الارشاد الزراعي.

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