

Gender Disparity in Job Motivation among Agricultural Extension Agents in the Cross River Agricultural Development Project (CR-ADP)

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Abstract:

This study examined the gender differences in job motivation among agricultural extension agents in the Cross River State Agricultural Development Project, (CR-ADP). The objectives were to identify and compare key motivators among male and female extension agents in the Cross River Agricultural Development Project (CR-ADP). A total of 70 extension agents (35 male and 35 female) participated in the study, with data collected through a structured questionnaire using a 3-point Likert type scale. Descriptive statistics, particularly the mean, were used to analyze the responses, categorizing the motivational factors into highly significant, moderately significant, and less significant levels. The results revealed that both male and female agents were strongly motivated by financial incentives, personal growth, and job satisfaction. However, male agents placed more importance on career advancement and political relevance, while female agents emphasized community impact and job fulfillment. The study highlights gender differences in motivations and recommended that extension organizations should develop gender-sensitive motivation strategies that address the unique needs of male and female extension agents.

Keywords: Agricultural Extension, Motivation, Male and Female Agents,

Introduction:

The Cross River State Agricultural Development Programme (ADP) is part of Nigeria's broader initiative to enhance agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. Established under the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development with World Bank support, it focuses on providing extension services, subsidized inputs, rural infrastructure, and capacity-building programs to farmers (Etim, Aboh, Idiku, and Obu, (2021) and

Etim, Obu, Mohammed, and Effiong (2023)). Key activities include organizing farmers into cooperatives, setting up demonstration farms, and promoting value chains for crops like cocoa, cassava, maize, and oil palm. Agricultural extension services play a crucial role in the development of the agricultural sector, particularly in rural areas, by improving the skills and knowledge of farmers through education and

advisory services. Extension agents, as intermediaries between farmers and research institutions, are instrumental in disseminating agricultural technologies, practices, and innovations. However, the effectiveness of extension services often depends on the motivations of the extension agents themselves. Understanding the factors that motivate these agents is essential for improving the delivery of services and achieving agricultural development goals. According to Sulaiman et al. (2010), extension workers are the backbone of agricultural development programs, and their motivation directly affects the success of these initiatives. Motivation is a key factor influencing the performance and effectiveness of extension agents. Researchers have identified various intrinsic and extrinsic motivators that drive extension workers. Intrinsic motivation includes factors such as job satisfaction, personal growth, and the desire to make a positive impact on the community, while extrinsic motivation typically involves financial rewards, career advancement opportunities, and job security (Chikwendu & Okpala, 2019). A study by Sulaiman et al. (2007) revealed that extension agents' motivation is often linked to the availability of resources, training opportunities, and the recognition they receive for their contributions. Moreover, the work environment and organizational support play significant roles in shaping the motivations of extension agents (Babu & Das, 2012); Etim, Obu, Effiong, and Akiba (2022), Etim, *et al.*, (2021); Etim, *et al.*, (2023).

Gender plays an important role in determining the motivations of extension agents. Men and women may be motivated by different factors, with variations in how they perceive the importance of financial incentives, career advancement, and job satisfaction. Sulaiman et al. (2010) noted that male extension agents often place a higher value on career advancement opportunities and financial incentives, while female agents may prioritize community engagement, job fulfillment, and the opportunity to contribute to social change. Gender differences in motivation have implications for the

design of extension programs, as they suggest that interventions tailored to the specific needs and motivations of male and female agents could enhance their performance and job satisfaction (Babu & Das, 2012). In Cross River State, Southern Nigeria, the role of agricultural extension agents is critical for improving the livelihoods of farmers and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. The Southern Agricultural Zone, which encompasses diverse agricultural activities such as crop farming, livestock production, and aquaculture, depends heavily on extension services for the dissemination of improved farming practices. However, little research has been conducted on the specific motivational factors that drive extension agents in this region. Understanding these motivations can provide valuable insights for policy-makers and organizations to improve the working conditions and incentives for extension agents, ensuring that they remain committed to their roles and effectively serve the farming community (Mogea & Hossain, 2020).

Several studies have examined the motivations of extension agents in different contexts, but studies focusing on gender-specific motivations in the Nigerian context are limited (Etim, Obu, and Obhiokhenan (2022); Ntui, and Etim (2024); and Etim, Ogar, Aya, Obono, and Asghar, (2024)). A study by Sulaiman et al. (2007) on extension agents in Nigeria emphasized that motivational factors vary by region and gender, with financial rewards being a significant motivator for male agents and a sense of community development being more important for female agents. Similarly, Babu and Das (2012) noted that effective agricultural extension systems need to address both the personal and professional motivations of agents, particularly in rural and developing countries where socio-cultural factors often influence job satisfaction and performance. This study aims to fill the gap in the literature by exploring the motivational factors for both male and female agricultural extension agents in the Cross River Agricultural Development Project. (CR-ADP). It seeks to identify and compare key

motivators among male and female extension agents in the Cross River Agricultural Development Project (CR-ADP).

Research Methodology:

This research was conducted within the Cross River State Agricultural Development Project (CR-ADP), which comprises extension staff distributed across eighteen blocks within the three agricultural zones of the state: Northern, Central, and Southern. A total of 70 extension agents (35 male and 35 female) participated in the study. To ensure equal representation, the purposive sampling technique was employed to select 35 female and 35 male extension workers, totaling 70

respondents out of 92. A descriptive research design was adopted for this study. The primary data collection tool was a structured questionnaire developed using a 3-point Likert-type scale. The questionnaire included a series of motivational factors related to the extension agents' work, and respondents were asked to rate each item based on their level of agreement which was coded as: 3 = Strongly Agree, 2 = Agree, and 1 = Disagree. The questionnaire was designed to assess a wide range of motivational factors, including financial incentives, job satisfaction, professional recognition, community development, career advancement, and sense of responsibility, among others.

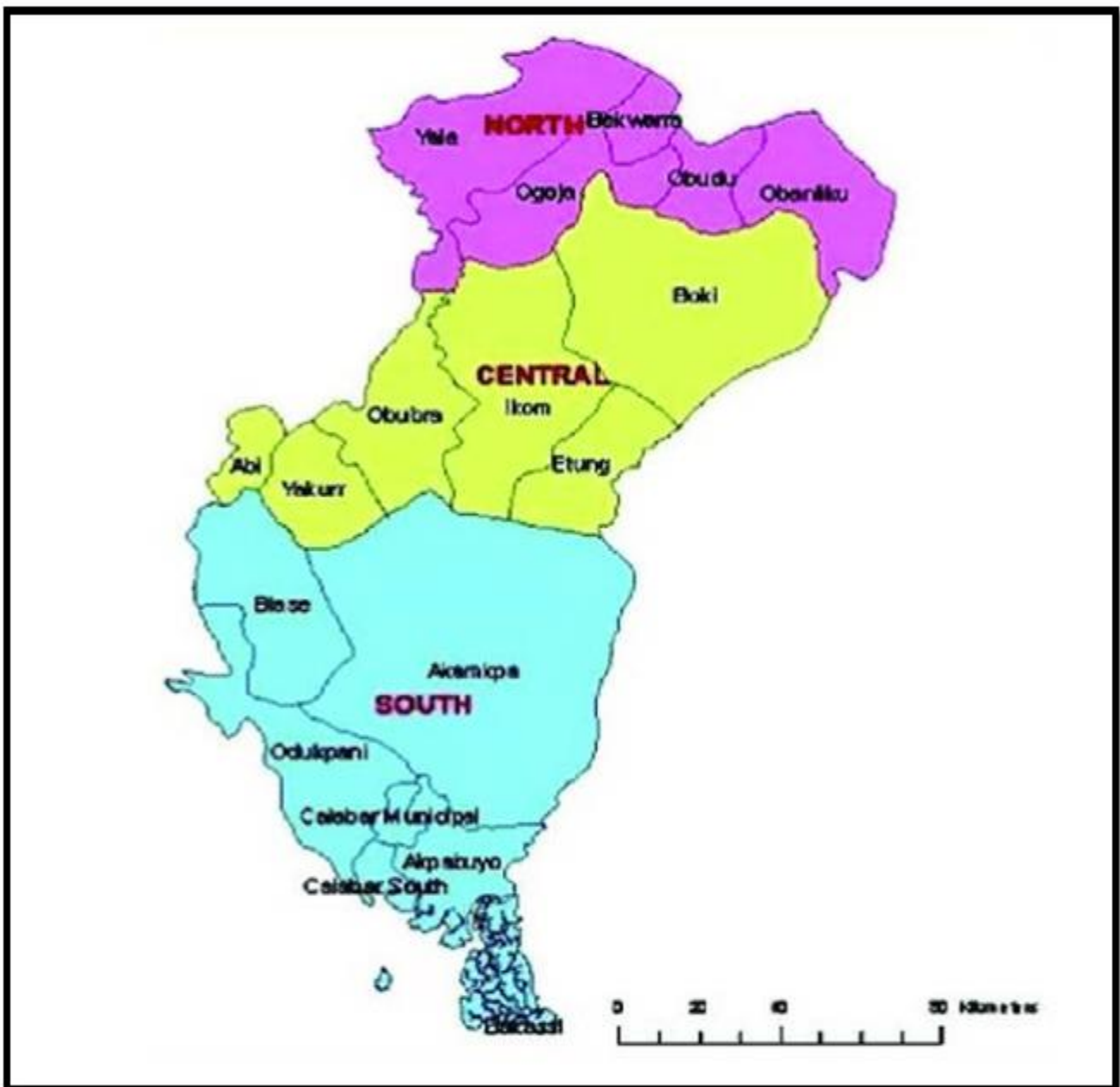


Figure 1. Map of Cross River State showing the blocks.

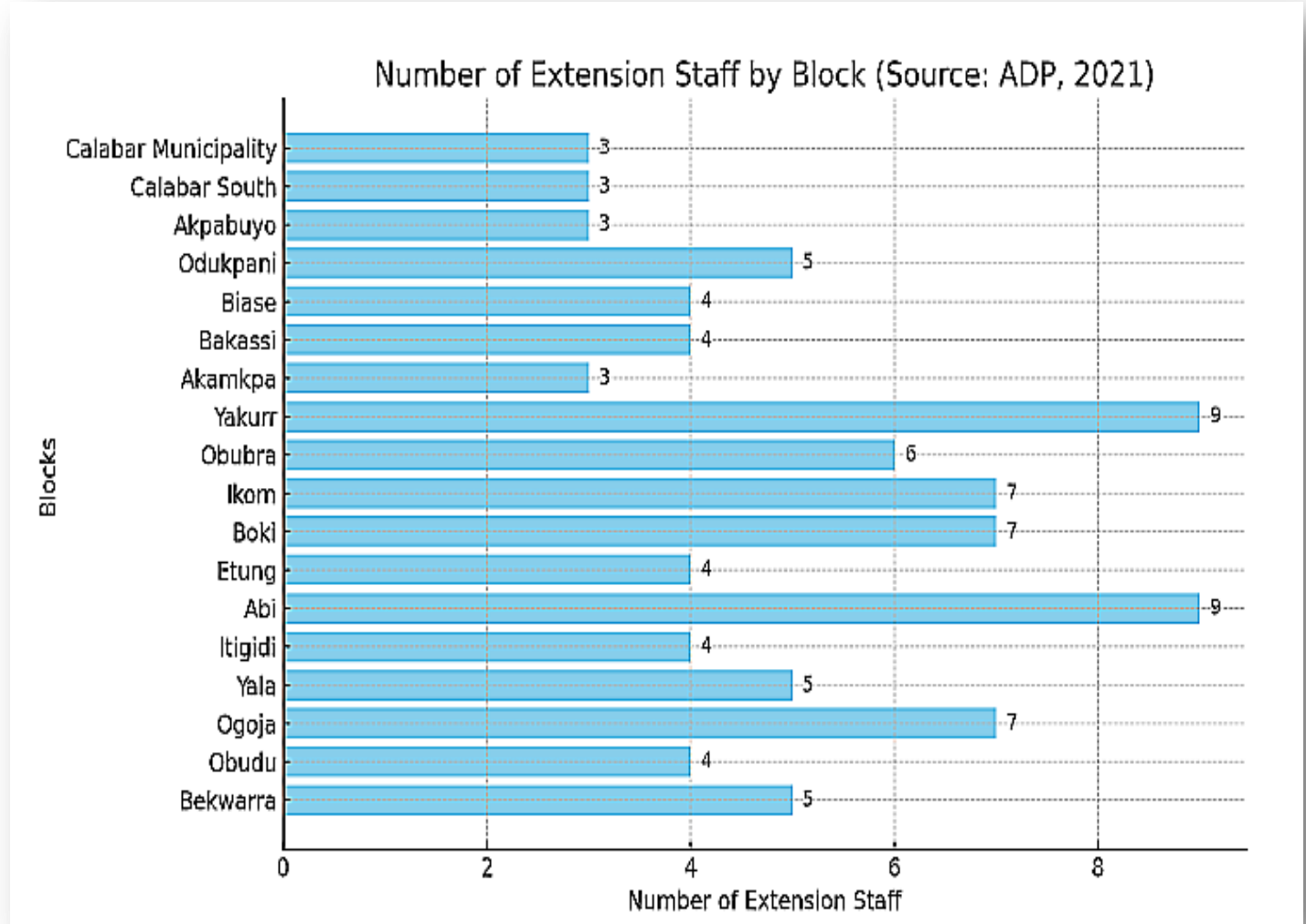


Figure 2. Number of extension agents in the Cross River Agricultural Programme

Results and Discussion:

1. Factors That Motivates Male Extension Agents In The CR-ADP

The analysis of mean figures in Table 1 reveals that male agricultural extension agents in the Calabar Agricultural Zone of Cross River State are predominantly motivated by factors linked to career advancement, personal growth, and leadership roles. High mean scores for Leadership and Community Influence (\bar{x} = 2.91), Long-Term Career Goals (\bar{x} = 2.89), and Adaptability and Problem-Solving Skills (\bar{x} = 2.89) which were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively, indicate that agents have a strong drive toward roles that provide stability, growth, and influence within their communities. These findings suggest that adaptability is essential, as it enables agents to tackle diverse agricultural challenges. Similarly, their focus on career progression and leadership highlights a desire for recognition and impactful roles that offer long-term prospects in the sector.

Moderate scores for Professional Recognition (\bar{x} = 2.57) and Sense of Responsibility and Duty (\bar{x} = 2.60) suggest that while agents value these aspects, they do not carry the same weight as community impact or career-oriented motivations. The factor Aiming for a Unique Position in the ADP (\bar{x} = 2.83) also underscores the importance of professional identity, as agents seem motivated to stand out in the Agricultural Development Program (ADP). Factors with mean scores below 2.5 reflect lesser motivational significance. Empowerment and Capacity Building (\bar{x} = 2.14) and Sense of Belonging to a Supportive Network (\bar{x} = 2.03) scored low, indicating that organizational support structures may not strongly impact motivation. Promoting Access to Credit and Financial Literacy (\bar{x} = 2.03) and Personal Reputation and Accountability (\bar{x} = 2.26) are also in this category, suggesting these are viewed as peripheral to their main roles. In summary, male extension agents in this region are most driven by career progression, community influence, and a

commitment to positive outcomes, while financial and organizational factors play a secondary role in shaping their motivation. The implications of these findings align with established research in agricultural extension, which highlights the importance of career growth, intrinsic motivation, and community impact as primary drivers for extension workers. For example, Chowa, *et al.* (2012) found that career progression opportunities, such as leadership roles and professional recognition, are significant motivators for agricultural extension agents, as they directly contribute to job satisfaction and long-term commitment. Studies suggest that when agencies create clear pathways for career advancement and skill enhancement, agents are more likely to stay engaged and committed to their work (Kelsey & Mariger, 2003). The strong

intrinsic motivation rooted in community development and positive feedback echoes findings by Davis, *et al.* (2011), who emphasized that extension workers often feel a strong sense of purpose when they can see tangible benefits for the communities they serve. This sense of purpose is a key driver of motivation, and it has been found to increase when agents receive acknowledgment and see their work positively impacting local farmers. By publicly recognizing the achievements of extension agents, agricultural programs can boost morale and foster an environment that values community-focused outcomes, as observed in a study by Swanson & Rajalahti (2010), which found that agents who feel appreciated for their community contributions tend to demonstrate higher levels of commitment.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on the ratings of factors that motivates male extension agents in the CR-ADP

MALE EXTENSION AGENT MOTIVATION	SA	A	D	MEAN	RANKING
Passion for Community Development	30	5	0	2.86	5th
Personal Growth and Skill Development	28	7	0	2.80	8th
Job Satisfaction and Fulfillment	22	8	5	2.49	18th
Financial Incentives	19	6	10	2.26	21st
Professional Recognition	25	5	5	2.57	16th
Passion for Education and Knowledge Sharing	22	8	5	2.49	18th
Desire for Positive Impact	28	7	0	2.80	8th
Adaptability and Problem-Solving Skills	31	4	0	2.89	2nd
Sense of Responsibility and Duty	23	10	2	2.60	13th
Building Relationships with Farmers	26	4	5	2.60	13th
Curiosity and Interest in Innovation	24	8	3	2.60	13th
Long-Term Career Goals	31	4	0	2.89	2nd
Leadership and Community Influence	32	3	0	2.91	1st
Empowerment and Capacity Building	17	6	12	2.14	23rd
Social Responsibility and Ethics	22	6	7	2.43	20th
Positive Feedback and Success Stories	30	5	0	2.86	5th
Continuous Learning and Development	27	7	1	2.74	11th
Sense of Belonging to a Supportive Network	15	6	14	2.03	24th
Personal Reputation and Accountability	16	12	7	2.26	21st
Peer Influence and Mentorship	28	7	0	2.80	8th
Building Local Capacity for Farm Management	26	9	0	2.74	11th
Aiming for a unique position in the ADP	29	6	0	2.83	7th
Need for job promotion	31	4	0	2.89	2nd
Promoting Access to Credit and Financial Literacy	12	12	11	2.03	24th
Gain political relevance	26	2	7	2.54	17th
Field Survey, 2024					
SA=strongly agree, A=agree, D=Disagree					

2. Factors That Motivates Female Extension Agents In The CR-ADP

The findings in Table 2 reveal distinct motivational factors among female extension agents in the Agricultural Development Project (ADP) of Cross River State, categorized by their mean ratings. Highly rated motivators (means greater than 2.7) indicate that female extension agents are strongly motivated by Financial Incentives (\bar{x} = 2.89), Personal Growth and Skill Development (\bar{x} = 2.86), and Positive Feedback and Success Stories (\bar{x} = 2.80). These were ranked 1st, 2nd and 3rd respectively. These factors highlight a focus on career advancement, skill development, and the intrinsic satisfaction derived from job-related achievements. Financial incentives, in particular, underscore the importance of fair compensation as a primary motivator, while growth opportunities and feedback recognition foster a sense of accomplishment and encourage commitment to their roles. Moderately significant motivators, with means between 2.5 and 2.7, include Continuous Learning and Development (\bar{x} = 2.69), Need for promotion (\bar{x} = 2.69), Peer Influence and Mentorship (\bar{x} = 2.66), Job Satisfaction and Fulfillment (\bar{x} = 2.60), Sense of Belonging to a Supportive Network (\bar{x} = 2.57), and Passion for Education and Knowledge Sharing (\bar{x} = 2.57). These factors suggest that female agents also value ongoing education, mentorship, and a sense of community within their organization. These motivations reflect the agents' desire to stay updated with agricultural knowledge, learn from peers, and feel part of a supportive work environment, which collectively fosters professional and personal satisfaction. Less significant motivators, with means below 2.5, indicate that certain factors, though relevant, do not drive female agents as strongly in their work. For instance, Curiosity and Interest in Innovation (\bar{x} = 2.40), Desire for Positive Impact (\bar{x} = 2.43), and Passion for Community Development (\bar{x} = 2.37) reflect that, while female agents appreciate contributing to their community, these aspects do not hold as much weight as personal growth and

financial compensation. Similarly, Adaptability and Problem-Solving Skills (\bar{x} = 2.37) and Building Relationships with Farmers (\bar{x} = 2.09) suggest that female agents prioritize other aspects of their roles more than specific relational or problem-solving attributes. Factors with the lowest mean scores, such as Gain Political Relevance (\bar{x} = 2.00) and Aiming for a Unique Position in the ADP (\bar{x} = 2.03), reveal minimal motivation for roles linked to political aspirations or hierarchical positioning within the organization. These findings suggest that female agents in Cross River State's ADP are driven more by tangible career growth and recognition than by gaining political influence or achieving unique organizational positions, pointing to a focus on personal development and financial stability as the core of their motivation in extension services.

The findings have several important implications for the management and enhancement of agricultural extension services, particularly in the ADP of Cross River State. First, the high motivation for Financial Incentives and Personal Growth and Skill Development suggests that extension programs need to ensure competitive compensation packages and continuous professional development opportunities. As found by Swanson and Rajalahti (2010), adequate financial incentives and skill development programs are crucial for retaining qualified and motivated extension workers. Ensuring that agents have access to career advancement opportunities can increase job satisfaction, enhance motivation, and improve the overall quality of extension services. Moreover, the significance of Positive Feedback and Success Stories emphasizes the need for recognition and reinforcement within extension organizations. According to Davis, *et al.* (2012), recognition of extension agents' successes not only boosts morale but also encourages higher performance and continued commitment. This suggests that extension programs should establish systems for regular feedback and recognition, celebrating achievements publicly to foster a positive work culture. On the other hand, the

lower motivation levels for Political Relevance and Aiming for a Unique Position in the ADP suggest that female extension agents in this region may not prioritize political or hierarchical aspirations in their work. Instead, they seem to value practical and personal development factors

more. This aligns with findings from Chowa, *et al.*, (2013), who suggested that while some extension workers may pursue higher ranks for career progression, many are more motivated by personal growth and direct community impact.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on the ratings of factors that motivates female extension agents in the CR-ADP

FEMALE EXTENSION AGENT MOTIVATION	SA	A	D	MEAN	RANKING
Passion for Community Development	19	10	6	2.37	13 th
Personal Growth and Skill Development	30	5	0	2.86	2 nd
Job Satisfaction and Fulfillment	26	4	5	2.60	7 th
Financial Incentives	31	4	0	2.89	16 th
Professional Recognition	19	7	9	2.29	16 th
Passion for Education and Knowledge Sharing	25	5	5	2.57	8 th
Desire for Positive Impact	21	8	6	2.43	11 th
Adaptability and Problem-Solving Skills	19	10	6	2.37	13 th
Sense of Responsibility and Duty	19	8	8	2.31	13 th
Building Relationships with Farmers	17	4	14	2.09	22 nd
Curiosity and Interest in Innovation	21	7	7	2.40	12 th
Long-Term Career Goals	23	8	4	2.54	10 th
Leadership and Community Influence	18	7	10	2.23	19 th
Empowerment and Capacity Building	13	14	8	2.14	20 th
Social Responsibility and Ethics	19	6	10	2.26	17 th
Positive Feedback and Success Stories	28	7	0	2.80	3 rd
Continuous Learning and Development	25	8	3	2.69	4 th
Sense of Belonging to a Supportive Network	25	5	5	2.57	8 th
Personal Reputation and Accountability	16	12	7	2.26	17 th
Peer Influence and Mentorship	29	0	6	2.66	6 th
Building Local Capacity for Farm Management	18	10	7	2.31	14 th
Aiming for a unique position in the ADP	16	4	15	2.03	23 rd
Need for job promotion	28	3	4	2.69	4 th
Promoting Access to Credit and Financial Literacy	19	1	15	2.11	21 st
Gain political relevance	15	5	15	2.00	24 th
<i>Field Survey, 2024</i>	SA=strongly agree, A=agree, D=Disagree				

3. Comparison on factors that motivates male and female extension agents in the CR-ADP

On Table 3, results for both male and female extension agents revealed that, Financial Incentives emerged as a highly significant

motivator, though the mean for males (\bar{x} = 2.26) is slightly higher than for females (\bar{x} = 2.89). Both groups place high value on compensation, indicating that fair remuneration plays a crucial role in motivating extension agents. This suggests

that both male and female agents are driven by the need for financial stability and rewards for their work. Similarly, Personal Growth and Skill Development is another highly motivating factor for both genders, with male agents scoring slightly higher ($\bar{x}= 2.69$) than females ($\bar{x}= 2.86$), indicating that both groups are similarly motivated by opportunities for career advancement and skill enhancement. Positive Feedback and Success Stories is also highly significant for both genders, with male agents scoring 2.69, while females scored slightly lower at 2.80. This suggests that both groups value recognition and appreciation for their efforts, but males may feel a stronger need for acknowledgment, which aligns with previous research showing that recognition is particularly important for male extension agents (Davis, *et al.*, 2012).

There are notable differences when it comes to less significant motivators (mean scores below 2.5). For instance, Aiming for a Unique Position in the ADP and Gain Political Relevance are more significant for male agents (means of 2.83 and 2.54, respectively) than for females (means of 2.03 and 2.00). This indicates that male extension agents might be more driven by aspirations related to political influence and achieving higher organizational ranks than their female counterparts. Building Relationships with Farmers, Adaptability and Problem-Solving Skills, and Curiosity and Interest in Innovation all received lower mean scores, with female agents showing slightly less motivation in these areas compared to male agents. For instance, Building

Relationships with Farmers scored significantly lower for females ($\bar{x}= 2.09$) than males ($\bar{x}= 2.60$), reflecting a potential difference in how much personal relationships with farmers influence their motivation. Similarly, Adaptability and Problem-Solving Skills were scored lower for females ($\bar{x}= 2.37$) compared to males ($\bar{x}= 2.89$), suggesting that males may feel more motivated by the challenges of problem-solving and adaptability in their work.

This finding aligns with research by Swanson and Rajalahti (2010), who emphasized that competitive remuneration and career development are essential for ensuring the motivation and retention of extension staff. Also, these findings align with the work of Moge and Hossain (2020), who argue that both intrinsic and extrinsic factors, including financial rewards and professional development, are essential for maintaining motivated and effective extension agents. To enhance agent performance in Cross River State, extension programs should focus on competitive salaries and skill development workshops to create an environment where agents feel valued and have opportunities for career progression. According to Babu and Das (2012), recognition plays a critical role in motivating extension agents. The establishment of regular performance reviews, awards, or public acknowledgment of achievements could foster a more appreciative and encouraging work environment for both male and female agents, which has been shown to increase their commitment and satisfaction in their roles (Chikwendu & Okpala, 2019).

Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on the comparison on factors that motivates male and female extension agents in the CR-ADP

MOTIVATIONAL FACTOR	MALE EXTENSION AGENTS	FEMALE EXTENSION AGENTS	IMPLICATION
Financial Incentives	Highly significant; strong motivation	Highly significant; strong motivation	Both genders value financial rewards, highlighting the importance of competitive salaries and incentives.
Personal Growth and Skill Development	Highly significant; career growth and skill development valued	Highly significant; strong emphasis on development	Both groups emphasize skill development. Programs focusing on training and career development are essential.
Job Satisfaction	Moderately significant;	Moderately significant;	Job satisfaction is crucial for retention

and Fulfillment	satisfaction in work valued	satisfaction important	in both genders. Enhancing job fulfillment can improve agent motivation.
Professional Recognition	Significant; recognition highly motivating	Moderately significant; recognition still important	Recognition through feedback is essential. Developing systems of acknowledgment could boost motivation for both genders.
Desire for Positive Impact	Highly significant; passion for community impact	Highly significant; passion for community impact	Both genders prioritize the positive impact of their work on communities, suggesting that extension programs should emphasize social benefits in their roles.
Adaptability and Problem-Solving Skills	Moderately significant; importance of problem-solving skills	Moderately significant; less focus on problem-solving skills	Both genders value adaptability, though more training in these skills could be beneficial for female agents.
Sense of Responsibility and Duty	Moderately significant; sense of duty recognized	Moderately significant; sense of duty present	Sense of responsibility plays a role in both genders' motivation. Programs that strengthen this sense can enhance commitment and performance.
Building Relationships with Farmers	Moderately significant; relationships valued	Less significant; less emphasis on relationship-building	Males are more motivated by relationships with farmers. Female agents may need additional training in relational and communication skills.
Need for Job Promotion	Highly significant; strong desire for career advancement	Moderately significant; still important	Career advancement is important for both, though male agents emphasize promotion more. Gender-sensitive career advancement programs are needed.
Political Relevance and Organizational Positioning	Highly significant; strong drive for political relevance	Less significant; less interest in political positioning	Male agents are more motivated by political relevance. Focusing on career progression for females, particularly in non-political contexts, could help balance these motivations.
Continuous Learning and Development	Highly significant; ongoing learning valued	Highly significant; emphasis on learning	Both genders value continuous learning. Providing consistent opportunities for further education is key to maintaining motivation.

Field Survey, 2024

Conclusion:

The results study suggest that gender significantly influences job motivation among agricultural extension agents, shaped by factors such as community acceptance, access to professional development, and work-life balance challenges. These findings underscore the importance of designing targeted support systems that address the specific needs of both male and female agents. By fostering a work environment that prioritizes inclusivity, career growth, and gender-sensitive training, agricultural organizations can better support agents' motivation and retention, ultimately leading to more effective extension services and greater positive impacts on the communities they serve and improved efficiency within the agency of the Cross River Agricultural Development Project.

Recommendations:

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Male agents were more motivated by career advancement opportunities and financial incentives. Extension agencies should focus on providing better organizational support, including peer mentorship and regular recognition of agents' contributions. This will boost both intrinsic motivation, such as job satisfaction and the sense of professional fulfillment, and extrinsic motivation, such as financial incentives and career progression.
2. Given that many female extension agents are motivated by the desire for positive community impact, extension programs should focus on fostering community involvement in decision-making processes. Ensuring that agents feel they are making a tangible difference in the lives of farmers can enhance their job satisfaction and commitment to the role.
3. Extension organizations should develop gender-sensitive motivation strategies that address the unique needs of male and female extension agents. For example, male agents could be more motivated by career

advancement opportunities and financial incentives, while female agents may be more driven by job satisfaction and community impact. Offering targeted incentives can help improve job performance and satisfaction for both genders.

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