GOOD GOVERNANCE PERCEPTION BY OFFICERS OF SRI LANKA AGRICULTURE SERVICE WORKING IN THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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A B S T R A C T

Department of Agriculture (DoA) is the main technical organization responsible for the development of agriculture sector in Sri Lanka. Further, main functionaries of the DoA are SLAgS and their job involvement is significant toward the progress of the agriculture sector. Research Officers (ROs), Agriculture Officers (AOs), Lectures (LCs) and Subject Matter Specialists (SMSs) are the main categories belonged to SLAgS. It is a timely important requirement to practice good governance (GG) concept in the DoA as a public sector organization because empirical evidence shows that GG practices in the public sector organizations ensures the effective service delivery system. This study therefore attempts to recognize good governance perception by officers of SLAgS working in the Department of Agriculture. Pre tested questionnaire was used to collect the data from the SLAgS officers. Results of the study revealed that SLAgS officers' awareness on good governance (GG) concepts were very poor. High majority of SLAgS officers were unaware about key dimensions of GG. Majority of the respondents perceived the GG in the DOA favourably, while 27 percent and 04 percent of them perceived it as most favourable and less favourable respectively. However, majority of SLAgS officers were in the favourable level in respect to the participation, follows the rule of law, equitability, consensus oriented, accountability, and inclusiveness while other dimensions were not favourable.

Keywords: SLAgS officers, good governance and perception.

INTRODUCTION

The Government of Sri Lanka (GoSL) with the view of achieving national food security and improving the livelihood of the farm families has formulated a policy on agriculture sector with a theme 'A country free of poisonous substances". On this background, the GoSL allocates large share in its budgets for subsidy on fertilizers, seed and planting materials for efficient production, research and development, farmers' training, farm advisory program, agriculture loans, introduction of new technologies and farm related equipment. Department of Agriculture (DoA) Sri Lanka is the leading technical organization responsible for the development of agriculture sector across the country. It is one of the oldest departments in country established

during 1912 and currently under direct control of the Ministry of Agriculture. Head of the DoA is Director General (DG) and nine directors are responsible for the different disciplines such as Rice Research and Development, Field Crops Research and Development, Horticulture Crop Research and Development, Extension and Training Centre, Seed Certification and Plant Protection Centre, Seed and Planting Material Development Centre, Socio Economics and Planning, Administration and Finance in the DoA. However, service delivery of DoA as well as its responsibilities are questioned by several stakeholders because food prices in the country are raising continuously, (Rajasingham, 2012). Further, National Committee on Socio-Economics and Policy Analysis (2014) indicated that agriculture is partially able alleviate poverty and vulnerability of farming communities to natural calamities as well as to global and localized economic strife. Main functionaries

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of the DoA are Sri Lanka Agricultural Service (SLAgS) and their job involvement significantly affect the progress of the agriculture sector. SLAg Service is an important all island service as Sri Lanka Administrative Service. Research Officers (ROs), Agriculture Officers (AOs), Lectures (LCs) in the agriculture schools and Subject Matter Specialist (SMSs) are the main categories belonged to SLAgS.

Mohd Sidek, (2007) & Siddiquee, (2009) showed that public sector organizations have to improve and strengthen the values of good governance regularly in order to perform their excellent service delivery to general public. In human resource perspective, the employees are considered to be the source of good successful governance. Shahin (2016) unveiled a significant positive relationship between good governance and job satisfaction. With the implementation of good governance in the organization, job satisfaction and performance can be improved in order to satisfy the stakeholders. On this background, this study attempts to recognize good governance as perceived by the officers of SLAgS working in the Department of Agriculture. Study further ought to assess that how personal and job related characteristics of SLAgS officers in DoA are influencing the perception of good governance and bottle necks and appropriate measures to improve the good governance of SLAgS in DoA.

METHODOLOGY

Department of Agriculture (DoA) was the study organization. Both primary and secondary data were collected for the study. Primary data were directly collected from the field. Further, secondary data were collected from published and unpublished sources such as Administration Reports, Annual Reports Research Papers and Circulars. A draft questionnaire was initially structured based upon objectives and information requirements for this study. Afterward, pre tested questionnaire was used to collect the data from the respondents. Eighty three ROs, thirty three AOs and twenty Lectures and four SMSs were selected randomly to form a sample of 140. However, data of the lecturers and SMSs were merged together due to insufficient number of questionnaires received from the SMS. Further, two questionnaires was filtered out due to improper filling of the information by the respondents. Therefore, final sample size was 138. Good governance, age, education, gender, job experience, training and visits, information seeking behaviour, satisfaction about job title, job description, perceived workload, job involvement, job stress, job freedom, facilities and resources at work and health condition were taken as the variables.

MIF (2007) shown that good governance has eight major characteristics such as participation, consensus oriented, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency, equitability and inclusiveness and follows the rule of law. Shahin (2016) has used above indicators and aspects of good governance more carefully to investigate and evaluate organizational level as smaller level. Albritton & Bureekul (2009) have developed a scale to measure the attitudes on "good governance" by conceptualization above indicated eight dimensions of good governance. By following the same procedure, good governance perception of SLAgS officers was measured by using the scale especially developed for this study with 28 items representing eight dimensions. This scale was a five-point Likert-scale with weightage of +2, +1, 0, -1 and -2 respectively for most favourable, favourable, neutral, unfavourable and most unfavourable responses for the statements. Principle component analysis (PCA) was employed to select the suitable statement. Before analyzing data, validity and reliability of the questionnaire was measured. To enhance validity of the instrument, as Muindi (2014) for his study, a pre-testing was conducted on a population similar to the target population. Coefficient alpha also known as Cronbach alpha was used to assess the reliability of a multiple item variable (Zebal, 2003). Descriptive methods such as frequencies and percentages were used at the beginning of the analysis. Further, statistical tools such as chi-square, t test, simple correlation and multiple linear regressions were used to test the statistical significance.

Cronbach's alpha value related to reliability test for the Likert scale of Good Governance (GG) perception was 0.936 which means the reliability of scale is excellent. Principle Component Analysis (PCA) was performed to identify the major components of statements which were suitable to measure the GG in the DOA. According to the KMO and Bartlett's Test, value of the sampling adequacy determined as 0.884. This was very high value. Further, variables with coefficient of 0.45 or more were regarded to have high loading and also all the statements were selected for further analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

An attempt was made to identify the SLAgS officers' awareness about GG concepts. Result of the study revealed that SLAgS officers' awareness about GG concepts was very poor. High majority of SLAgS officers (95%) were unaware about key dimensions of GG. Therefore, initially, it is necessary to make suitable arrangement to improve their awareness toward Good Governance.

As explained in the methodology, good governance perception of the respondents was measured by using the five-point Likert-scale with weightage of +2, +1, 0, -1 and -2 respectively for most favourable, favourable, neutral, unfavourable and most unfavourable responses for the statements. According to the scale, it can be considered that respondents are in the favourable level regarding the relevant statement when its mean value is positive. So, Table 1 clearly illustrate that mean value related to participation, followed the rule of law, Responsiveness, equitability and inclusiveness and accountability is high as compared to the other dimensions like transparency, effectiveness and efficiency and equitability and inclusiveness.

Table 1. Mean values related to the responses of different dimensions of GG

GG dimensions	Mean value	SD
Participation	0.69	0.83
Followed the rule of law	0.21	1.00
Transparency	-0.10	1.04
Responsiveness	0.46	0.86
Consensus orientation	0.12	1.10
Effectiveness and efficiency	0.11	1.00
Equitability and inclusiveness	0.39	1.01
Accountability	0.41	0.41

According to the below mentioned result depicted in Table 1, majority of (69%) SLAgS officers were in the favourable level in respect to the perception on GG of DOA by SLAgS. The data on overall perception on GG of the SLAgS officers is mentioned in the Table 1. The data depicted pointed out that about 69 %of the total respondents perceived the GG in the DOA as favourable, while 27 percent and 04 percent of them perceived it as most favourable and less favourable respectively. It was further observed that majority of ROs (64%), AOs (70%) and LCs (86%) perceived the GG as favourable, whereas the most favourable perception was observed with 31 percent of ROs and 27 percent of AOs and 09 percent of lecturers. On the contrary, less favourable perception was noticed with more number of ROs and LCs (5%) as compared to AOs (03%). It brings home the fact that near majority of SLAgS functionaries viz., ROs, AOs and LCs were favourable and highly favourable with GG in the Department of Agriculture. It is the GG has a great bearing on the job performance of the personnel which is also justified by the present study. Agriculture service being a most noble profession, the present finding provided an impetus for ROs AOs and LCs to provide better service for sector.

Table 2. Good Governance perception of ROs, AOs and LCs.

Categories	ROs	AOs	Lecturers	Total
	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)	No. (%)
Less favourable	4 (5%)	01 (3%)	01 (5%)	6 (04%)
Favourable	53 (64%)	23 (70%)	19 (86%)	95 (69%)
Most favourable	26 (31%)	09 (27%)	02 (09%)	37 (27%)
Total	83 (100%)	33 (100%)	22 (100%)	138 (100%)
X^2	10.3**			

* Significant at 5 % level.   ** Significant at 1 % level.   NS=Non-significant

According to the results documented in the Table 1, majority of the personnel indicated that the existence of congenial atmosphere with regard to participatory, follows the rule of law, transparent, responsive, consensus oriented, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and accountable in DOA. With respect to the participatory decision making process in the department, majority of respondents satisfied about assigned work and duties which based upon the adequate in relation to their capabilities and resources

at their disposal, providing adequate authority for carrying out their job related duties and clearness about the authority and responsibilities in the department. DOA belongs to the government and it should follow the rule of law in the administration process. Most instances, many of the government departments fail to achieve high level of GG as rule of law is not considered. Results in Table 1 proved that DOA follows the rule and regulation clearly and it has a clear delegation system.

Transparency means that way of decisions making, their enforcement and communication system within the department. However, results in the Table 1 proved that decisions taken by the higher authorities are always not transparent. Moreover, majority of respondents were not satisfied with advance communication of information relevant to their work, receiving of correct information about their work and use of ICT based effective communication system in department DOA.

Based upon the perception of respondents, department always tries to serve all stakeholders. Further, respondents' suggestions and even constructive criticisms were valued and considered by superior and they have opportunities for making routing decision relating to your day-to-day work. Further, majority of respondents were in the favourable level with targets assigned by the development to implementation. However, majority were in unfavourable level with available facilities for carrying out the assigned duties and responsibilities. With regard to the effectiveness of the DOA, respondents were in the favourable level with the ways and means of supervision followed, approval and appreciation of work related decisions made by respondents, guiding them by their superiors and helping them through problematic situation. However, majority of the respondents were not in the favourable level with the general ways of making decisions pertaining to policies and programs of the department.

Further, respondents have pointed out that department has adequate number of field level functionaries. And also, they have mentioned that respondents receive work allotted instructions from sources other than the superiors and utilization of human and physical resources effectively to achieve the goal of the department were in the satisfactory level.

SLAgS officers were in the favourable level with respect to the procedures being followed for developing programs to fulfill the goals and objectives of the department, officers involvement in the process of planning and development of program and handling and expending the public money for the planning and implementing the programs.

There was a positive and significant relationship between job satisfaction and Good Governance perception of SLAgS officers, (r= 0.673, n = 0.00). It reveals that the favourable Good Governance perception of the employees increased their job satisfaction. Therefore, it is very much necessary to maintain the principle of Good Governance in the DOA not only in Department but also in every government as well as private organization to increase the job satisfaction.

Table 3 illustrates that ISB, Job title, TOR, Awareness of Data described in the Table 3 further indicated that TOR, satisfaction about TOR, relates of TOR with job expectation, job involvement, job freedom, facilities and resources available for carrying out job exhibited positive and significant relationship with Good Governance perception of ROs, whereas, age, present job experience, trainings, health perception, similarity TOR and duties and job stress showed negative significant relationship with Good Governance perception of the ROs. Gender, distance from home to workplace, transport mode, SLAgS class, education, job experience, and perceived workload did not show any relationship with the Good Governance perception of ROs.

Table 3. Association of independent variables of ROs, AOs and Lecturers with Good Governance perception.

Independent variables	Correlation of coefficients		
	ROs	AOs	Lecturers
Age	-0.240*	0.240*	-0.079 NS
Gender	-0.166 NS	-0.106NS	-0.014 NS
Distance	0.144 NS	-0.054 NS	-0.255 NS
Transport Mode	-0.093 NS	0.085NS	0.026 NS
SLAgS Class	0.160 NS	-0.160 NS	0.261 NS
Education	0.035 NS	0.028NS	-0.066 NS
Job experience	-0.268*	0.360*	-0.200 NS

Training	-0.328**	0.328*	-0.329 NS
Information seeking behaviour	0.347**	0.347**	0.406*
Health	-0.233*	0.312 NS	0.142 NS
Job Title	0.315**	-0.064 NS	-0.109 NS
TOR	0.307**	-0.087 NS	-0.201 NS
Awareness about TOR	0.303**	-0169 NS	-0.200 NS
Satisfaction about TOR	0.355**	0.005 NS	0.238 NS
Relates of TOR with job expectation	0.414**	0.129 NS	0.145 NS
Similarity TOR and duties	-0.236*	0.234 NS	0.030 NS
Perceived workload	0.253*	0.020 NS	0.090 NS
Job involvement	0.296**	-0.107 NS	-0.559**
Job stress	-0.425**	0.351*	0.414 NS
Job freedom	0.455**	0.320**	0. 251 NS
Facilities and resources	0.552**	0.468**	0.434**

* Significant at 5.00% level.   ** Significant at I .00% level. [NS] Non-significant

Seven variables namely age, job experience, training, ISB, job stress, job freedom and facilities and resources available for carrying out job exhibited significant relationship with Good Governance perception among AOs. Out of them, age, job experience, training received and job stress were shown negative significant relationship with Good Governance perception. Further, other variables such as gender, transport mode, education, information seeking behaviour, health, Job title, TOR, awareness of TOR, satisfaction about TOR, workload, job stress and job involvement did not show any relationship with the Good Governance perception of AOs. Only three variables namely ISB, and facilities and resources available for carrying out job were shown positive and significant relationship while job involvement were illustrated negative relationship with the Good Governance perception of lecturers.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

SLAgS officers' awareness about GG concepts was very poor. High majority of SLAgS officers were unaware about key dimensions of GG. Though the respondents were unaware about the concept of GG, majority of SLAgS officers were in the favourable level in respect to the participation, follows the rule of law, equitability, consensus oriented, accountability, and inclusiveness and while other dimensions were belonged to neutral level. Majority of the total respondents perceived the GG in the DOA as favourable, while 27 and 04% of them perceived it as most favourable and less favourable respectively. Further, majority of ROs, AOs and LCs perceived the GG as favourable, whereas the most favourable perception was observed with 31% of ROs and 27% of AOs and 09% of lecturers.

Suggestions for future research: It can be suggested that to identify the way of improving the awareness on good governance practices can be done as a research. Consequently, institutional arrangements, financial and human resources capacities, public-private sector collaborations, and appropriate oversight mechanisms are very crucial in achieving objectives of the DoA, These points can be taken into consideration for future research. In terms of good governance, it was noted in this study that there were many issues such as leadership style, public participation, financial and human resources management, government policy changes and the impact of decentralization etc. that have an influence on good governance practices and service delivery, some of which need further research in order to provide answers and contribute to constant public administration growing body of knowledge. There is also the urgent need to consider experimental or longitudinal studies to reveal the actual cause of the connection or long-term effect of good governance.

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