A Study of Organizational Structure of an NGO Working in Remote Hills of Uttarakhand

Netrapal Malik

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (CS Azad University of Agriculture and Technology, Kanpur)
Aligarh-202 122 (U.P.)

ABSTRACT

Organizational structure of Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG), a non government organization (NGO) working in hills of Uttarakhand was studied. Data were collected from 132 employees of the organization. It was found that majority of the employees were of middle age and married, having rural background, working at low salary with little career and salary progression. Most of them got the job at young age and have not changed any organization in spite of not getting even a single promotion while having high experience. Medium level of participation was found in decision making about the allocation of resources and organizational polices by majority of the employees of the organization. According to maximum number of employees, CHIRAG was slightly authoritative as far as hierarchy of authority is concerned, complete job description and rule manual existed in the organization and their work is specified. Almost half of the respondents found variety in their work. Majority of the employees of the organization were fulfilling all the qualifications, trainings, experience and expertise required for the position at which they were working.

Key words: Organizational structure, Centralization, Formalization, Routine technology, NGO

INTRODUCTION

An organization is a structured group of interacting people equipped with skills, material, resources, working together with the objectives to fulfill certain need of the society or to provide any service to the society. Every organization has simple or complex structure. Organizational structure can be perceived as the practices being undertaken in an organization with regard to policies, procedures and rules. Two important features of organizational structure are formalization and centralization, which can further be subdivided into four sub-dimensions: decision-making, hierarchy of authority, job codification, and rule observation (Hall, 1991). Under the formalization construct, job codification has been defined as the level to which an organization precisely spells out rules and procedures related to jobs in different situations while rule observation refers to the extent to which an organization rigidly adheres to the rules and procedures. In other words, this construct measures how far employees are supervised to ensure that they are not committing any offense against the organization's rules and regulations.

Additionally, centralization deals with the amount of power distributed among employees of various positions. This variable can be perceived in terms of hierarchy of authority and centralized decision-making. According to Hage and Aiken (1967), the former examines the level subordinates are reliant upon their supervisors in decision-making while the latter identifies the level of employees' involvement in decisions on resource allocation and policy formation.

The role of organizational structure as a determinant of various workplace outcomes is evident in many empirical findings. Aizzat *et al.* (2006) found that formalization has a positive influence on job stress. Tata and Prasad (2004) found stronger relationship between self-management and team effectiveness in the organizations that have a lower level of formalization. Pandey and Welch (2005) reported that a high level of job codification and rule observation had resulted in a high level of work alienation among public servants. Sarros *et al.* (2002) found that hierarchy of authority exacerbates higher levels of leadership behaviours, which subsequently leads to work alienation.

Corresponding author e-mail: netrapalmalik@rediffmail.com

It is thus, evident that organizational structure affects significantly the efficiency and progress of the organizational personnel. Despite a rapid growth in academic literature on NGOs and its management, the organizational structure of NGOs remains largely unexplored, while in the present rural development scenario NGOs are playing a vital role. The NGOs with their advantage of non-rigid, locality specific, felt need-based, beneficiary oriented and committed nature of service have established multitude of roles which can affect rural development (Bhaskar and Geethakutty, 2001). Keeping in the view the importance of organizational structure in outcomes and efficiency of its personnel, a study was undertaken on an NGO working in the remote hills of Uttarakhand.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The non-government organization 'Central Himalayan Rural Action Group (CHIRAG)' working in Nainital district of Uttarakhand was selected for the study on the basis of its large size, penetration at grass-root level and existence of well-defined hierarchy in the organization. 102 employees working in this organization were interviewed for this study. Different variables selected were age, sex, educational level, background (rural/urban), marital status, age at first job, gross salary of first job, present gross salary, change in organizations, promotions, experience in the organization, total experience, career progression and salary progression. Career progression was calculated by dividing the number of promotions of an employee by the total years of his/her work experience and multiplying by 100. Salary progression was calculated by subtracting the first salary from present salary of an employee and dividing by total years of his/her work experience.

Dimensions of organizational structure taken in study were centralization, formalization, complexity and routine technology. All these dimensions were measured with the help of scale developed by Hage and Aiken (1967).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

General profile of the employees:
There were total 102 full time employees working in the organization, out of which sixty were permanent and forty-two were project based. In addition to full time staff, 128 villagers were working as part time staff in the organization as forest caretakers, *balwadi* workers, environmental education teachers, librarians, community workers, community technicians, community health workers and village *dais* (mid wives) etc. Amongst the full time staff, beside Executive Director, CHIRAG has adopted four levels of hierarchy viz., team leaders, development associates, development assistants and extension workers.

Majority of the employees were of middle age and married. Male: female ratio was 4:1. Overwhelming majority of employees was from rural background working at low salary with low career and salary progression in spite of having high experience. Only few respondents were found to have negative salary progression. One forth employees were educated up to 8th standard and almost similar proportion of employees was under-graduate. Employees with education up to high school and post-graduation were 18.9 and 17.4 per cent, respectively (Table1).

Part- time workers of the organization were having less educational level . Employees at middle hierarchy were either graduate or postgraduate. Most of the personnel at upper hierarchy were from urban background and having professional post-graduate qualifications. It was revealed that majority of the employees got their first job at young age (19 to 43 yr.) and they did not change the organization in spite of getting not even single promotion (Table 1) probably due to the reason that most of them were from local villages. Initially, youth from local villages were kept on contract basis without any professional qualification but CHIRAG continued to work with them. Due to long experience in the organization and continuous task specific in-service trainings, these local people became proficient in development work and thus made permanent employees of the organization. It was worth to mention that few of them had been promoted up to the cadre of policy planner.

It was thus evident that the strategy of recruiting non-professional local youth and making them proficient in development work through continuous in-service trainings was helpful in employment generation at local level.

Table 1. General profile of organizational personnel.

S. No.	Parameter		Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	**Age**			
	Young	(below 23)	8	6.1
	Middle	(24 to 43)	84	63.6
	Old	(above 44)	40	30.3
2.	**Background**			
	Rural		117	88.6
	Urban		15	11.4
3.	**Marital status**			
	Married		90	68.2
	Unmarried		42	31.8
4.	**Educational level**			
	Upto 8th		34	25.8
	High School		25	18.9
	Intermediate		17	12.9
	Graduate		32	24.2
	Post Graduate		23	17.4
	Doctorate		1	0.8
5.	**Age at first job**			
	Very young (below 23)		21	15.9
	Young (24 to 43)		97	73.5
	Old (above 44)		14	10.6
6.	**Change in organization**			
	No change		109	82.6
	One time change		14	10.6
	Two time change		7	5.3
	Three time change		1	0.8
	Four time change		-	-
	Five time change		1	0.8
7.	**Number of Promotions**			
	No promotion		87	65.9
	One promotion		18	13.6
	Two promotions		16	12.1
	Three promotions		8	6.1
	Four promotions		3	2.3
8.	**First salary**			
	Low		127	96.2
	Medium		3	2.3
	High		2	1.5
9.	**Present salary**			
	Low		112	84.8
	Medium		18	13.6
	High		2	1.5
10.	**Career progression**			
	Low		98	74.2
	Medium		29	22.0
	High		5	3.8
11.	**Salary progression**			
	Low		110	83.3
	Medium		14	10.6
	High		8	6.1
12.	**Total experience**			
	Low		50	37.9
	Medium		28	21.2
	High		54	40.9

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to different aspects of the organization.

S. No.	Parameter	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1.	**Extent of participation in decision making**		
	Low	46	34.8
	Medium	62	47.0
	High	24	18.2
2.	**Hierarchy of authority**		
	Highly authoritative	28	21.2
	Slightly authoritative	72	54.5
	Democratic	32	24.2
3.	**Presence of job description**		
	Complete	82	62.1
	Partially complete	40	30.3
	Just started	9	6.8
	Non existent	1	0.8
4.	**Presence of rule manual**		
	Complete	88	66.7
	Partially complete	26	19.7
	Just started	12	9.1
	Non-existence	6	4.5
5.	**Job codification**		
	Specified	94	71.2
	Not specified	38	28.8
6.	**Rule observation**		
	Definitely true	44	33.3
	Often true	70	53.0
	Often false	8	6.1
	Definitely false	10	7.6
7.	**Routine technology**		
	Routine work	14	10.6
	Work with little variety	56	42.4
	Work with variety	62	47.0
8.	**Complexity**		
	Fulfilling all requirements	94	71.2
	Fulfilling qualifications, trainings and experiences but not expertise	10	7.6
	Fulfilling qualifications and trainings	10	7.6
	Fulfilling only qualifications	8	6.1
	Not fulfilling anything	10	7.6

NGOs mostly depend on time bound projects. Sometimes, NGOs might have been running many projects but may face crisis due to non availability of appropriate projects. During this crisis period if a NGO have not sufficient corpus fund to sustain their potential employees, they might switchover to other organizations. It was found that CHIRAG was recruiting employees at low salary but was sustaining them even after completion of project duration and thus have created a feeling of job security among its employees.

Organizational Structure:

Centralization

Centralization is taken to be a measure of how the power is distributed amongst position. Two features of centralization were taken for the study.

a.   Participation in decision-making:

It refers to the degree to which occupants on various positions participate in decision making about the allocation of resources and organizational polices. Employees were asked to indicate their extent of participation in decision making. It was found that there was medium (47.0%), low (34.8%) and high (18.2%) participation of employees in decision-making.

b.   Hierarchy of authority:

It refers to the extent to which members of the organization are assigned tasks and provided with the freedom to implement them without interruption from superiors. It was observed that the organization was slightly authoritative. Democratic nature of organization was revealed by 24.2 per cent of the respondents followed by highly authoritative (21.2%).

c.   Formalization:

Formalization refers to the degree to which tasks and work processes are uniform and the digression allowed from this constancy. This dimension was further broken up into four sub dimensions namely presence of job description, presence of rule manual, job codification and rule observation. It is a measure of closeness of supervision.

It can be concluded from the data (Table 2) that 62.1 per cent respondents reported complete presence of job description, 30.3 per cent described partially complete, 6.8 per cent just started and only 0.8 per cent respondents reported non-existence of job description. Presence of complete rule manual was reported by 66.7 per cent, partially complete by 19.7 per cent, just started by 9.1 per cent and non-existence of rule manual was reported by 4.5 per cent of respondents. It was observed that 71.2 per cent respondents reported that their work was specified whereas 28.8 per cent informed unspecified work. When respondents were asked to report the degree of closeness of supervision, majority of the respondents (53.0%) responded that it is 'often true' that the staff works according to rules manual , Definitely True was responded by 33.3 per cent followed by 'definitely false' (7.6%) and 'often false' (6.1%).

Routine technology:

Routine technology is interpreted as routine of daily work activities. Data indicated that 47.0 per cent respondents reported variety in their work, 42.4 per cent reported little variety and 10.6 per cent indicated that their work was routine work. Complexity was taken as an aspect of specialization with emphasis on expertise gained by trainings as opposed to the division and systematization of daily routine task. It was analyzed by matching the required qualifications, trainings, experiences and expertise for each position in each project. It was found that the majority of the employees (71.2%) possessed all the required qualifications, trainings, experiences and expertise. There were equal number of employees (7.6%) who were 'fulfilling qualifications, trainings and experiences but not expertise,' 'fulfilling qualifications and trainings', and 'not fulfilling anything'. Employees who were 'fulfilling only qualifications' was 6.1 per cent.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that majority of the employees were of middle age followed by young and old age and got education only up to 8th standard followed by graduate employees. Employees at team leader position were post graduate. Most of the employees were from rural background, married and got job in young age with low salary. Present salary of majority of the employees was also low. Maximum number of the employees did not change any organization and did not get even a single promotion, gained low career and salary progression, while they were with high total experience. Medium level of participation was found in decision making about the allocation of resources and organizational polices of the organization. According to maximum number of employees, CHIRAG was slightly authoritative as far as hierarchy of authority is concerned, complete job description and rule manual existed in the organization and their work was specified. Almost half of the respondents found variety in their work. Majority

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of the employees were fulfilling all the qualifications, trainings, experience and expertise required for the position at that they were working.

There is scarcity of researches on organizational structure of NGOs working in the country. The present study was an attempt to explore the organizational structure of an NGO. Since NGOs have flexibility in changing their organizational structure to cope with dynamic social, cultural, political, economic and technological dimensions of the stakeholders. Hence, there is a need to conduct more studies in Indian context to address the issue of NGOs' organizational structure.

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