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Cause and Effect Analysis of Functional Position Preferences of Social Extension Workers After Serving at the Social Service, Community Empowerment and Villages of Jepara Regency

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Abstract.

This study aims to examine the preferences of Social Counselors from the perspectives of potential, motivation, competence, and job satisfaction after they have assumed the Functional Position of Social Extension Officer at the Department of Social Affairs, Community Empowerment, and Village Administration of Jepara Regency. Job preferences often change after an individual assumes a particular position. Preferences may shift over time as the role is carried out, with the misalignment between initial expectations and the realities of the position underlying an individual's tendency to choose, remain in, or even leave the position as a form of career preference. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach, with data collected through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. Data analysis is conducted using the fishbone diagram to identify the root causes of changes in job preferences. The findings indicate that preferences for the functional position of Social Extension Officer, viewed from the perspectives of potential, motivation, competence, and job satisfaction, reflect an individual's inclination to choose and remain in the position despite facing significant challenges. The study provides three improvement recommendations: strengthening competencies through independent and collaborative training, developing a more comprehensive evaluation system, and conducting internal advocacy for the provision of budgets and facilities to support extension activities.

Keywords: Job Preference; Functional Position; Fishbone Diagram.

INTRODUCTION

This research stems from the emergence of a phenomenon related to the varying preferences of social extension workers after they assumed the functional position of Social (Hauser et al., 2016). Extension Worker at the Social, Community, and Village Empowerment Service of Jepara Regency. These preferences, initially based on expectations for the position, shifted after they entered the position due to both individual and work environment factors (William & Sundiman, 2025; Trysantika, 2023). The discrepancy between initial expectations and the reality of the position underlies individuals' tendencies to choose, maintain, or even leave the position as a form of career preference (Ardi Artopo & Wahyuni, 2025; Putranto, 2023). In particular, person-job fit and person-organization fit have been shown to mediate how well initial expectations align with actual experiences, influencing job satisfaction and turnover intention (Gaffar, Amang, & Dewi, 2024).

Most research on functional position preferences in Indonesia has been conducted in the education, health, or public service sectors, while the social empowerment sector remains very limited. This creates a significant research gap, particularly within the district government, where studies on functional position preferences of social extension workers are rare (Syafrina & Wulansari, 2025). Functional position preferences at the Social, Community, and Village Empowerment Service of Jepara Regency have their own characteristics and challenges, particularly because Social Extension Workers work with vulnerable groups, including the poor and marginalized (Wardiyanto, 2025; Surtiari, 2024). Most research focuses only on the

technical aspects of service delivery, so little has explored personal factors such as potential, motivation, and competence that drive someone to choose this position (Search0 & Sektoral Analisis; also internal turnover intention studies indicating influence of personal/job fit; Artopo, 2024).

This potential perspective encompasses an individual's ability to develop themselves and adapt to existing job demands. Unoptimized individual potential often leads to job mismatches and reduced performance. The motivational perspective is the drive that originates within an individual to achieve specific goals or needs. Motivation for work can stem from various sources and typically depends on individual preferences, goals, and the work environment. Motivation is crucial because it impacts employee performance and satisfaction (Apriani & Iskandar, 2024).

The competency perspective encompasses not only the ability to perform assigned tasks but also interpersonal and adaptability skills, which are essential for jobs involving direct interaction with the public. Competence for Civil Servants, particularly in Functional Positions, plays a crucial role in ensuring efficiency, effectiveness, and professionalism in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Continuously improving competencies will help ensure ASN can adapt to changes in the work environment, technology, and community needs (Adelia et al., 2024). Job satisfaction is an important factor that needs to be analyzed in understanding the development of individual preferences for the Social Counselor Functional Position. According to Hasibuan (in Nida et al., 2024), job satisfaction refers to the feelings of satisfaction or dissatisfaction felt by individuals with the work they perform. This satisfaction is closely related to how individuals respond to various aspects of their work, such as responsibility, recognition, the work environment, and relationships with colleagues and superiors.

In addition to the challenges of understanding social extension workers' functional job preferences, external factors can also influence these preferences, such as work environment conditions, agency policies, and public perception of the position. A conducive work environment, for example, can increase motivation and job satisfaction. Research in the government sector shows that a supportive work environment can influence job satisfaction and increase employee commitment to their duties and responsibilities (Herdiana & Yuniasih, 2020). At the Jepara Regency Social Services, Community Empowerment, and Village Office, where Social Extension Workers work directly with the community, a work environment that supports effective interaction with the community is also an important factor in determining comfort and preference for this position.

Previous research on functional position preferences has mostly focused on sectors such as education and health, with limited attention to the social empowerment sector. Herdiana and Yuniasih (2020), for example, demonstrated that a supportive work environment significantly influences job satisfaction and employee commitment in public institutions; however, their study concentrated on structural positions in education and did not explore functional roles like social extension workers. Similarly, Apriani and Iskandar (2024) emphasized the importance of motivation in determining job satisfaction and performance among civil servants, but their analysis did not include the unique challenges faced by social extension workers who engage directly with vulnerable groups.

The objective is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the determinants of functional position preferences, while the benefit lies in offering theoretical enrichment on

public sector human resource management and practical recommendations for local governments to design policies that foster supportive environments, enhance competencies, and align individual motivations with institutional goals.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This research was conducted using a qualitative research approach. Data collection techniques used in this study included in-depth interviews, observation, and document review. Informants in this study included social extension workers, the Head of the Social Empowerment and Poverty Division, and implementers working with social extension workers at the Jepara Regency Social, Community, and Village Empowerment Service.

The data validity check used in this study was triangulation. The data analysis technique used was a fishbone diagram. The fishbone diagram allows for the identification and grouping of various factors contributing to job preferences and serves as an analytical tool for identifying and grouping supporting and inhibiting factors that influence job preferences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preferences of Social Extension Workers

Before officially starting their careers, Social Extension Workers have various initial preferences that reflect their expectations, needs, and motivations for carrying out their duties. These preferences are influenced by the work environment, responsibilities, and conditions in the areas where they work. The following are the initial preferences of Social Extension Workers:

a. Facilities and Work Support

Social extension workers need adequate facilities and work equipment, such as operational vehicles, communication devices, computers, and other supporting equipment. These facilities are necessary to support mobility and the effectiveness of extension services. As a functional position focused on mentoring, education, and community empowerment, social extension workers rely heavily on the availability of adequate work facilities to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of social program implementation.

b. Opportunities for Self-Development

Social extension workers expect to have opportunities to improve their competencies through training, workshops, seminars, or other development activities. These opportunities are essential for honing the technical and interpersonal skills needed to carry out extension services professionally. Training and competency development are essential to address everevolving social dynamics, such as changing community needs and developments in social policy.

c. Supportive Work Environment

Social extension workers expect a conducive work environment, one where there is good collaboration between colleagues and support from superiors. A supportive work environment includes open communication, harmonious working relationships, and a productive work culture. A positive work environment can increase job satisfaction and motivation among social extension workers. Conversely, an unsupportive work environment can lead to internal conflict and decrease productivity.

d. Work-Life Balance

Social extension workers expect a balance between work and personal life. This includes flexible work schedules and policies that allow extension workers to maintain physical and mental health and fulfill personal responsibilities outside of work.

e. Adequate Compensation and Incentives

Social Extension Workers expect to receive an additional employee salary (TPP) commensurate with their responsibilities and workload. Social Extension Workers also expect clarity and consistency in policies related to TPP, including regular increases in accordance with performance evaluations and regional budget increases. Another equally important expectation is that TPPs do not decrease, as this can lead to dissatisfaction and affect work motivation.

f. Providing Benefits to the Community

Social Extension Workers hope that their work will have a tangible impact on society, such as helping alleviate poverty, empowering local communities, and improving the quality of life in Jepara Regency. The primary goal of Social Extension Workers' work is to bring about positive change in society. The success of social programs depends not only on the abilities of the extension workers, but also on policy support and community participation.

After the Social Counselors carried out their duties and functions, it turned out that not all of the initial preferences listed above could be met. Only a few were met, while several others remain unfulfilled. The following are the Social Counselors' preferences that have been met:

a. Work-Life Balance

Social workers find their workload manageable and do not interfere too much with their personal life. They have a work schedule that allows them to complete tasks efficiently without sacrificing family time, hobbies, or mental health.

b. Adequate Compensation and Incentives

The compensation received by social workers complies with government standards, including a base salary, allowances, and other incentives. While not lavish, this level of compensation is considered adequate to meet basic needs. This has the positive impact of providing financial stability for social workers.

c. Providing Benefits to the Community

Social workers feel their work has a direct impact on the community. Through tasks such as social assistance, data verification, or providing assistance, they feel they have made a real contribution to improving the community's quality of life.

d. Supportive Work Environment (in terms of relationships with colleagues)

Good relationships with colleagues create a supportive, collaborative environment. Coworkers help each other complete operational tasks, fostering a sense of community.

Not all of the initial preferences of Social Extension Workers can be met, resulting in differences between their initial preferences and their post-employment preferences. The following are some of the Social Extension Workers' preferences that have not been met:

a. Facilities and Work Support

Many facilities needed by social extension workers are unavailable or inadequate, such as transportation, work tools (computers, internet), or other supporting infrastructure. This makes it difficult for them to carry out their duties optimally.

b. Opportunities for Self-Development

So far, social extension workers have not received relevant training or workshops to support their competencies. The lack of self-development programs creates a sense of stagnation among extension workers.

c. Supportive Work Environment (Work System)

Organizational policies are often perceived as less than supportive. Social extension workers feel that open communication is not fully achieved, and freedom of expression is also very limited. Extension workers feel their voices are not heard, especially regarding obstacles in the field and decision-making that directly involve them.

Cause-Effect Analysis Using a Fishbone Diagram

The discussion in this section relates to the analysis of the relationship between the causes of problems occurring in the field and the consequences or impacts arising from these problems, viewed from four perspectives: potential, motivation, competence, and job satisfaction. The results of this analysis will reveal the true preferences of Social Extension Workers after carrying out their primary duties and functions as Social Extension Workers.

Based on the results of the Fishbone diagram analysis above, the following is a Fishbone diagram analysis of the four perspectives used: Potential, Motivation, Competence, and Job Satisfaction:

a. Potential

The potential of social extension workers is a crucial factor influencing their effectiveness in carrying out their duties. This potential can be divided into physical and non-physical. Physically, health problems, disabilities, and illnesses can present obstacles to carrying out extension work, especially for those who require high mobility to reach the community.

Meanwhile, non-physically, communication skills, emotional intelligence (EQ), and spiritual intelligence (SQ) play a crucial role in the success of extension work. Lack of development in these areas can lead to ineffective delivery of extension materials and suboptimal interactions with the community. Therefore, strategies are needed to enhance the potential of social extension workers, such as communication training and EQ/SQ development.

Furthermore, health support for extension workers with physical limitations also needs to be considered so they can continue to carry out their duties effectively. From a potential perspective, physical potential is crucial because it impacts their work as a Social Extension Worker. If they are physically deficient, they will struggle when carrying out field work. In fact, Social Extension Workers should be doing a lot of outreach in the field. As a result, these Social Extension Workers become dependent on other Extension Workers when they go out into the field. Because of this constraint, these Extension Workers spend most of their time in the office doing administrative work. This is incompatible with the duties of Social Extension Workers, who should be conducting outreach. Administrative tasks should be assigned to other staff members, not Social Extension Workers.

Non-physical potential is an important aspect, but not as crucial as physical potential. Non-physical potential, such as communication skills, emotional intelligence, spirituality, and social skills, can be trained and developed over time. This depends on the individual

Social Extension Worker's willingness to develop these non-physical potential abilities. A willingness to develop these abilities means the Social Extension Worker is willing to grow to serve the community and advance public services.

b. Motivation

The motivation of social extension workers is influenced by various factors, ranging from meeting basic needs to psychological factors related to job expectations. Social extension workers often experience a discrepancy between their ideal expectations and the reality on the ground. Reward and self-actualization factors also influence their motivation levels. If they feel unappreciated or lack opportunities for development, their work enthusiasm can decline. Furthermore, perceptions of rewards and incentives can also increase or decrease motivation. When extension workers feel that their efforts are not commensurate with the rewards they receive, they tend to lose their enthusiasm. To increase motivation, policies are needed that recognize extension workers' performance, such as providing incentives, awards, and involvement in decision-making related to social programs. This way, social extension workers will feel more appreciated and motivated in carrying out their duties.

From a motivational perspective, motivation is a less crucial aspect, but it's still important to consider. Even though social workers experience a decline in motivation due to existing problems, they continue to work as usual due to the demands of life. However, they at least strive to stay motivated and strive for improvements to increase their motivation.

A key aspect of motivational perspectives is instrumentality. According to Tarumingkeng (2024), instrumentality refers to an individual's perception of the extent to which good work results will be followed by appropriate rewards or compensation. This describes the relationship between performance and results. This instrumentality is not consistent with the reality of bureaucratic life. Any effort expended is not directly proportional to the results received. This is because awards, promotions, and excellent performance ratings are not based solely on effort. Other factors may be unknowable; for example, the promotion indicators are unknown. Excellent performance ratings cannot be achieved despite significant effort and exceeding targets. Awards are also not given because the reward system is not functioning properly.

c. Competence

The competencies of social extension workers encompass the technical and managerial skills needed to carry out their duties effectively. One emerging issue is the persistent competency gap, both in strategic decision-making and technical extension skills. Some extension workers struggle to develop innovative and sustainable programs due to limited training and a lack of support for skill development.

Furthermore, the lack of practice-based training also hinders their competency development. Therefore, there is a need for increased technical training oriented toward direct field practice and the use of technology to support effective extension work. Furthermore, extension workers should be provided with opportunities to participate in external training that can enhance their social and managerial competencies.

From a competency perspective, there has been no training, but Social Extension Workers should not remain idle. Social sciences can still be studied, including counseling

methods, how to collect data on community problems, how to build relationships with the community, and social sciences. Improving communication skills, building interpersonal relationships, and building leadership can all be practiced and learned. It all depends on the willingness of the Social Extension Worker. Social Extension Workers also rarely go out into the field for outreach, rarely even meeting with the community. Most stay in the office, waiting for instructions from their superiors or simply carrying out activities that are already underway. If they want to go out into the field due to financial or transportation constraints, they should speak to their superiors, not just remain silent. Social Extension Workers have been confined to the office for a long time, not establishing much communication with their superiors to request assistance, whether financial or other support. The point is, don't wait too much for others..

d. Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction among social extension workers is influenced by various individual and social factors, as well as aspects of the job itself. From an individual perspective, differences in age, health, and job expectations can impact their level of comfort in the workplace. Meanwhile, from a social perspective, less harmonious interpersonal relationships, a lack of freedom of expression, and an unsupportive work environment can lead to decreased job satisfaction.

Furthermore, key job factors such as salary, incentives, promotion opportunities, and working conditions are also important factors in determining the extent to which extension workers feel satisfied with their jobs. If these conditions are not addressed, they can lead to low productivity and an increased desire to leave their jobs. Therefore, strategies for improvement include improving the incentive and welfare system for extension workers, creating a more comfortable and supportive work environment, and providing clear promotion paths to motivate them to develop their careers.

From a job satisfaction perspective, several aspects of job satisfaction are crucial to job performance, such as salary, incentives, health care, and career development. These factors support Social Extension Workers' commitment to and desire to pursue their careers as Social Extension Workers. If individual needs are met, they will work to their full potential, especially if supported by adequate facilities. While freedom of expression and discomfort from colleagues are not particularly crucial, they still need to be addressed as they can hinder future work. The issue of age does not significantly impact public service, as many older Dinsospermasdes partners actively participate in social activities.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors in Social Extension Worker Functional Position Preferences

Based on the results of the Fishbone diagram analysis, the following supporting and inhibiting factors are directly related to social extension worker preferences:

- a. Supporting Factors
 - 1) Social extension workers receive a sufficient base salary and employee supplementary income (TPP);
 - 2) Social extension workers are physically fit to carry out their duties and functions;
 - 3) Several social extension workers have extensive networks within government and the community;

- 4) Social extension workers have work experience in bureaucracy, government, and social administration:
- 5) Social extension workers have a strong intrinsic drive to help the community;
- 6) Job security provides social extension workers with a comfortable work environment;
- 7) Superiors and colleagues support smooth work;
- 8) External training or education can be conducted online without having to rely on agency policies..

b. Inhibiting Factors

- 1) There are no dedicated operational costs for social outreach, which often hinders funding for field activities.
- 2) The lack of awards and incentives for social outreach workers can dampen their enthusiasm for personal development.
- 3) Only two social outreach workers have a background in social welfare education, so their understanding of professional theory and practice remains limited.
- 4) Only one social outreach worker has participated in specialized training, resulting in diverse and uneven competencies.
- 5) Social outreach workers are limited in conveying opinions or suggestions to management, resulting in policies that often do not adequately address their needs.
- 6) Their interpersonal skills, time management skills, and quick decision-making skills are still suboptimal.
- 7) The absence of a regular performance evaluation system for social outreach workers results in a lack of feedback that can be used to improve work strategies.
- 8) The available facilities are inadequate to support optimal performance of social outreach workers.
- 9) Access to formal training and certification remains limited because they have not been prioritized in the human resource development policy for social outreach workers.

Recommendations for Improving Social Extension Worker Functional Position Preferences

Based on the results of the Fishbone diagram data analysis, the following are several recommendations for improvement aimed at addressing the functional position preferences of Social Extension Workers at the Jepara Regency Social Services, Community Empowerment, and Village Office:

- 1. Alternative Solution 1: Strengthening Competencies Through Independent and Collaborative Training (Realistic & Based on Individual Potential)
 - a) Objective: Improve technical, interpersonal, and decision-making skills through independent and collaborative training.
 - b) Based on:
 - 1) Supporting Factors: Extension workers have intrinsic motivation, extensive networks, are in good physical condition, and can participate in online training;
 - 2) Barriers: Lack of social education background, limited access to formal training, and minimal technical and interpersonal competencies.

- c) Implementation Steps:
 - 1) Conduct competency mapping of social extension workers to identify skills that need improvement;
 - 2) Encourage extension workers to participate in relevant online training (free or certified);
 - 3) Initiate regular sharing sessions among extension workers to share best practices;
 - 4) Propose an internal policy requiring each extension worker to participate in at least one training session per year;
 - 5) Establish collaborations with official training institutions, universities, and social organizations that can provide certification.
- 2. Alternative Solution 2: Develop a More Comprehensive Evaluation System (strategic impact)
 - a) Objective: Increase motivation and job preference by providing feedback and rewards.
 - b) Based on:
 - 1) Supporters: Supportive superiors and colleagues, high job security;
 - 2) Barriers: Lack of rewards, ineffective evaluation system, decreased motivation.
 - c) Implementation Steps:
 - 1) Develop more objective and measurable performance indicators for social workers;
 - 2) Require periodic evaluations (e.g., every 3 months);
 - 3) Analyze evaluation results to identify areas for improvement;
 - 4) Integrate this evaluation into the Employee Performance Goals assessment mechanism at the Social Services Agency;
 - 5) If employees receive high scores, they may receive an Above Expectations rating from their superiors, which can be useful for accelerating promotion.
- 3. Alternative Solution 3: Internal Advocacy for the Provision of Extension Budgets and Facilities (Structural & Long-Term Impact)
 - a) Objective: Reduce operational obstacles in the field and increase the effectiveness of task implementation.
 - b) Based on:
 - 1) Supporters: Extensive relationships among several extension workers in government.
 - 2) Obstacles: No dedicated operational budget, inadequate facilities, policies that do not accommodate extension workers' needs.
 - c) Implementation Steps:
 - 1) Calculate operational budget requirements based on the duties and work areas of social extension workers;
 - 2) Propose basic facility requirements (communication equipment, operational vehicles, activity funds);
 - 3) Involve direct superiors and relationships in finance or planning in budget advocacy;
 - 4) Establish communication with Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) Experts and propose activities that can be budgeted by the DPRD;
 - 5) Submit concrete extension worker performance reports as a basis for logistical needs.

CONCLUSION

Most social extension workers showed a strong preference for their functional position driven by intrinsic motivations like community commitment and belief in social benefits, alongside extrinsic factors such as job stability and career opportunities. However, a gap existed between their initial expectations and the reality of limited facilities, insufficient training, and poor work environment conditions, which reduced satisfaction, motivation, and performance. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies including tailored training programs, robust evaluation systems, internal advocacy for better budgets and facilities, ongoing professional development in IT, community engagement, and soft skills, as well as stronger support systems to boost job satisfaction. Policy-level collaboration among local government leaders, *Dinsospermasdes*, and legislative bodies like the DPRD is essential to secure adequate funding and institutional backing. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these interventions on social extension workers' performance and community outcomes to guide sustainable policy and practice improvements in Jepara Regency.

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