

Motivational Factors Influencing the Formation of Rythu Mitra Groups

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ABSTRACT

Farmer participation is critical to improve the agricultural extension services. Little is known about factors that influence the formation of Rythu Mitra Groups. This paper reports the results of a study in Andhra Pradesh, in which, motivational factors affecting the formation of Rythu Mitra Groups were friends and relatives inspiration, financial problems and influence of extension agents. The study also found that factors inhibiting the formation of Rythu Mitra Groups were lack of information, biases of officials and lack of time.

It is realized that 60 per cent farmers do not access any source of information for advanced agricultural technologies resulting in adoption gap (Planning Commission, 2007). Farmers' organizations can play a key role in agricultural innovation, since they have the capacity to pool, aggregate and disseminate knowledge and information (Collion and Rondot, 1998). The challenge before extension agency today is how to involve and motivate more than 74 per cent of the resource poor farmers with a holding size below one hectare to take command of their situation and reduce the innovation adoption period. In order to respond more truly to the micro level real ties of agriculture, the Govt. of Andhra Pradesh (Dept.of Agriculture) has taken the lead of organizing farmers into 2,00,000 Rythu Mitra Groups (RMGs) in 2003. Rythu Mitra Group consists of tenant, small and marginal (men and women) farmers.

Several studies reveal that some factors influence the formation of farmer's groups. FAO (1999) observed in India, the reasons for forming small farmer group associations (SFGAs) varied from area to area and from one social category to another. Among the scheduled castes/dalits, they were formed primarily to establish social identity and to work against untouchability, and, secondarily, to obtain governmental assistance for undertaking income-generation activities. SFGAs among the scheduled tribes were formed primarily to protect the

tribal land and counter exploitation of tribal by non-tribal moneylenders and petty businessmen. Farmer groups among the backward castes were formed primarily to cater for agricultural credit needs. Similarly, another study conducted by World Bank, (2007) found that farmers join farmers' organizations to gain access to markets, inputs or credit facilities and in order to gain political clout. Hence, this study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study the socio-psychological characteristics of the RMG members.
2. To identify the motivational factors of the members and non-members to form and not to form Rythu Mitra Groups.
3. To elicit the suggestions of RMG members and Agricultural extension workers for effective implementation of Rythu Mitra Groups activities.

METHODOLOGY

One Rythu Mitra Group from each of the 16 villages was selected through random sampling from four mandals of two purposively selected districts of Andhra Pradesh. From each of the selected RMG, 10 members were chosen by simple random method with total sample being 160 respondents. Also from each district, 20 non-members of RMGs and 15 Extension workers were

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randomly selected, thus constituting of 40 non-members of RMGs and 30 Extension workers as another set of sample for the study. The motivational factors of the RMG members and non-members were measured with help of 3-point rating scale (Most needed - 3, Needed - 2 and Least Needed - 1) developed especially for this study. The frequencies of each response categories were found out and respective frequencies were multiplied by the score allotted to it, then they were added and divided by the number of the respondents which gave the mean score for different motivational factors. The mean scores and Garrets rank values were used to rank them as expressed by members and non-members of RMGs. Suggestions of the respondents were sought through multiple-choice questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data presented in Table 1 shows that nearly half (43.10 per cent) of the respondents were in the high category for credit orientation and 33.10 per cent of the respondents had medium credit orientation. These farmers who belonged to low income group, were motivated by multipurpose extension workers (MPEOs) by showing them the benefits of self help group activities like saving and thrift activities. Moreover, through RMGs they can

avail crop loans easily from banks without showing any security which otherwise very difficult' one for small, marginal and tenant farmers to get crop loans from banks. Thus, it was natural to observe majority of the respondents in high category of credit orientation. These results are in line with the results of Swamidasan (1994).

It could also be noted from the table 1 that 61.30 per cent of the respondents showed favourable (medium) attitude towards collectivism and 18.10 per cent showed highly favourable attitude towards RMG. Generally for undertaking the activities of RMG harmoniously, each and every member of the RMG should have a positive attitude towards the RMG activities. Moreover, the efforts put in by the multipurpose extension workers (MPEOs) to create awareness among these groups regarding benefits of being in group, is worth mentioning. Therefore, it was only natural that majority of the respondents had a favourable attitude towards collectivism and also towards programme. This positive attitude also arose in them on inner drive to work harder and achieve through collective action. This also might be the possible reason that majority of the respondents also had medium level of achievement motivation. These results are in line with the results of Purnima (2004).

Table 1. Distribution of RMG members according to their socio- psychological characteristics (N=60)

Characters	Categories	Number	Per cent
1. Credit orientation	Low (<8.396)	38	23.80
	Medium (8.396 to 9.99)	53	33.10
	High (>9.99)	69	43.10
	Mean = 9.193, SD =0.797		
2. Attitude towards collectivism	Less favourable (<5.258)	33	20.60
	Favourable (5.258to 10.816)	98	61.30
	More favourable (> 10.816)	29	18.10
	Mean = 8.037, SD = 2.779		
3. Self reliance	Always (4)	42	26.30
	Sometimes (3)	85	53.10
	Rarely (2)	33	20.60
	Never (1)	0	0.00
4. Locus of control	High internal (1-2)	21	31.10
	Moderate internal (3-4)	76	47.50
	Mixed (5)	49	30.60
	Moderate external (6-7)	14	8.80
	High external (8-10)	0	0.00

As clearly seen in Table 1, only 26.30 per cent of the respondents indicated always reliance on themselves. The percentage of respondents who gave the response as sometimes reliant and rarely reliant was 53.10 per cent and 20.60 per cent respectively. None of the respondent went for never reliant option. This finding was in conformity with findings of Sajesh (2006).

It evident from the Table 1 that majority the respondents (47.50 per cent) had moderate internal LOC. The respondents with high internal LOC were found to be 31.10 per cent of respondents with mixed LOC found to be 30.60 per cent and 8.80 per cent had moderate external LOC. It clearly indicates that group mobilization have impact on the orientation of rural resource poor farmers, by helping them to realize that they had some control over their destinies. The above finding was in conformity with finding of Sajesh (2006).

Motivational factors affecting the formation of Rythu Mitra Groups

Motivational factors of the members and non-members to form and not to form Rythu Mitra Groups were analyzed and presented below.

Motivational factors of the members to form Rythu Mitra Groups

From Table 2, it could be observed that “friends and relatives inspiration” was found to be the major factor affecting the formation of Rythu Mitra Groups. The respondents ranked this factor as the first one with a mean of 2.72 and Garrets Rank Value of 20.17. Also majority (72.50 per cent) of the respondents considered this factor as most important. The next important factor which affected the RMG formation was their “financial problems”. The respondents ranked this factor as second,

Table 2. Distribution of RMG members according to their motivational factor Rythu mitra Groups (N=60)

Sr. No.	Motivational factor	Most Important		Important		Less important		Mean	Garrets rank value	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
A. Social factors										
1.	Friends and relatives Inspiration	116	72.50	43	26.90	1	0.60	2.72	20.17	1
2.	Influence of extension agents	101	63.10	45	28.10	14	8.80	2.54	18.52	3
3.	Social security	24	15.00	112	70.00	24	15.00	2.00	13.64	6
4.	Social status	17	10.60	114	71.30	29	18.10	1.93	12.96	7
5.	Personal ambition to come up in life	11	6.90	108	67.50	41	25.60	1.81	11.93	8
6.	Close relationship with extension agents	30	18.80	67	41.90	63	39.40	1.79	11.76	9
7.	Technical competencies through training and study tours	7	4.40	33	20.60	120	75.00	1.29	7.22	10
B. Economic factors:										
8.	Financial problems	105	65.60	47	29.40	8	5.00	2.61	19.15	2
9.	Subsidies and other financial benefits	87	54.40	70	43.80	3	1.90	2.53	18.41	4
10.	Reduce daily hassles of cultivation	28	17.50	111	69.40	21	13.10	2.04	14.03	5
C. Political factors:										
11.	Participation in political institutions	1	0.60	10	6.30	149	93.10	1.06	5.17	11

with a mean score of 2.61 and Garrets Rank Value of 19.50. Also it was found that more than half (65.60 per cent) of the respondents considered this factor as most important. This clearly shows that by forming groups, financial problems could be mitigated through self help group activities and availing credit from banks and other financial institutions.

The other factor influencing RMG formation was “influence of extension personnel”. It was ranked as third with a Garrets Rank Value of 18.52. This might be due to the influence of agricultural extension personnel in creating awareness among the groups regarding benefits of being in group. Their cooperation with support for and understanding of life skill, education and training is crucial for farmers development.

As can be seen from the table 2, respondents ranked “subsidies and other financial benefits” as fourth one with a mean score of 2.53. This indicates that farmers perceive that through RMGs they can avail subsidies and other financial benefits provided by government for farmers. “Reduce daily hassles of cultivation” ranked as the fifth one affecting the formation of RMGs. More than half (69.40 per cent) of the respondents viewed this factor as important with a mean score of 2.04. It was seen that RMGs would improve the cooperation among members by involving in various group activities which helps in reducing their daily hassles of cultivation.

The other factor important in RMG formation was “social security” was ranked sixth with mean score of 2.00 and garrets rank value of 13.64. This reveals that respondents feel they are socially secured by joining

groups because it may increase the feeling of belongingness by participating in RMG activities. “Social status” was ranked as the seventh factor influencing the RMG formation. Even though this factor is not a major factor, but it suggests that since status in society is given higher importance in rural areas, small, marginal and tenant farmers often participate to seek status in society (Table 2).

The other motivational factors influencing the formation of RMGs were “personal ambition to come up in life” (8th rank) followed by close relationship with extension agents (9th rank), technical competencies through training and study tours no” rank) and participation in political institutions (11th rank) (Table 2).

Motivational factors of the non-members for non forming Rythu Mitra Groups

The data given in the Table 3 indicated that “lack of information” was the factor found to be the major inhibition in RMG formation. Respondents ranked this factor as first one with a Garrets Rank Value of 28.21 and also 60 per cent of respondents indicated this factor as most important. Majority of the small and marginal farmers were not aware of the RMG programmes and the proper communication channels to access the recent information about the programmes.

From the Table 3, it was observed that “biases of officials” was another important factor hindering the RMG formation. This factor was ranked with Garrets Rank Value of 21.07. It was found that farmers, who were close to the agricultural extension personnel, got the maximum benefit and opportunities to be selected for any programmes. The other factor ranked third by the

Table 3. Distribution of non members of RMGs according to their motivational factors for non- forming Rythu Groups (N=40)

S. No	Motivational Factors	Most important		Important		Less Important		Mean score value	Garrets ranking	Rank
		F	%	F	%	F	%			
1	Lack of information	24	60.00	11	27.50	5	12.50	2.48	28.21	1
2	Biases of officials	10	25.00	19	47.50	11	27.50	1.98	21.07	2
3	Lack of time	6	15.00	18	45.00	16	40.00	1.75	17.86	3
4	Group influence	4	10.00	4	10.00	32	80.00	1.30	11.43	4
5	Lack of elders encouragement	3	7.50	5	12.50	32	80.00	1.28	11.07	5
6	Overlapping of schedules	0	0.00	6	15.00	34	85.00	1.15	9.29	6
7	Lack of need based Programmes	1	2.50	1	2.50	38	95.00	1.08	8.21	7

respondents was “lack of time” with a garrets rank value of 17.86. It can be attributed to the fact that the poorest farmers in particular can find the costs of participation (of time, for example) too high at times of seasonal stress or greatest need. Care is also needed to sort out situations where collective effort by groups is effective and where individual activity structured or accessed through group membership is more effective and efficient.

“Group influence” was another important factor hindering RMG formation. This factor was ranked fourth with Garrets Rank Value of 11.43. In rural areas, dominance of particular group in any activity used to be commonly seen and RMGs were not exception. Poor participation of the Scheduled caste/scheduled tribe and minority in RMG programme may be attributed to group influence (Table 3).

It was also observed from the Table 3 that respondents were given fifth rank to the “lack of elders’ encouragement” followed by overlapping of schedules (6th rank) and “lack of need based programmes” (7th rank).

Suggestions of the RMG members and agriculture extension workers for improving performance of RMGs

The data presented in Table 4 indicated that the nature of suggestions given by the respondents for improvement of RMGs. Majority of the RMG members (92.50 per cent) suggested for reducing the interest rate, the reason for this was that the now RMGs availing loans for 12 per cent interest per annum, this interest rate is comparatively higher than the rate of self help groups. I~ is also interesting suggestion that even industries

were availing loans at cheaper interest rates than this rate.

The next suggestion given by 88.80 per cent of the respondents was the increase of loan amount and quick release of loan by 43.10 per cent of the respondents, separately. The loan amount releasing by the banks to the RMGs was not enough to meet even their input costs in farming and release of loan was too time taking i.e. after sowings were over in the field. This conditions may be influenced the RMG members to felt accordingly. Nearly 50.00 per cent of respondents suggested improving the marketing facilities.

The other important suggestions expressed by RMG were transport facilities to be improved for better marketing, increase the repayment period, procedure to avail loan to be made easy, some more activities to be included and opportunity to select the activities to the beneficiaries (Table 4).

It can be inferred from Table 4 that some of the suggestions elicited from the extension workers (96.70 per cent) for improving performance of RMGs were quick release of loan, increase the loan amount and marketing facilities to be improved. About 90.0 per cent of the respondents favoured the reduction of interest rate. The probable reason might be due to the farmers were not getting credit timely, amount of credit released by banks was insufficient and no proper marketing facilities in the study area. Overcoming all these problems is not in the hands of a single agency, it will be the task of multiple agencies. If various agencies come forward to help the RMGs, it can certainly take a lead role in the development of tenant, small and marginal farmers. The above finding was in agreement with the findings of Devalatha (2005) and FAO (2006).

Table 4. Distribution of RMG members and Agricultural extension workers according to their suggestions for improving performance of RMGs

Sr. No.	Suggestions	RMG members (N=160)		Extension workers (N=30)	
		F	%	F	%
1	Quick release of loan	69	43.10	29	96.70
2	Increase the loan amount	142	88.80	29	96.70
3	Increase the repayment period	50	31.30	19	63.30
4	Reduce the interest rate	148	92.50	27	90.00
5	Procedure to avail loan them to be made easy	26	16.30	18	60.00
6	Marketing facilities to be improved	79	49.40	29	96.70
7	Transport facilities to be improved for better marketing	54	33.80	22	73.30
8	Some more activities to be included	19	11.90	3	10.00
9	Opportunity to select the activities to the beneficiaries	4	2.50	6	20.00

CONCLUSION

Besides friends and relatives inspiration, the RMG members had rated the financial problems as an important motivational factor affecting RMG formation. The lack of information and biases of officials were the main constraints for RMG formation. It was felt necessary that the extension workers should strengthen their extension organization and provide guidance and assist the small and marginal farmers in formation of RMGs. This will help in reaching the small and marginal farmers who tend to remain isolated from development. Extension workers should empower the tenant, small and marginal farmers by organizing them in groups to achieve greater economies of scale.

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