

GROUP COHENSIVENESS AND INFORMATION FLOW THROUGH INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION IN RICE GROUP FARMING

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Abstract: A study on the interpersonal communication behaviour efficiency (IPCBE) of the members of rice group farming committee was carried out using 240 respondents selected from four highest paddy growing districts of Kerala state. The perceived group cohesiveness of the members of group farming committee and the extent of information flow for adopting the rice production technology through interpersonal means were quantified. The results showed that majority of respondents in the high category of perceived group cohesiveness and a positive and significant influence of interpersonal communication behaviour efficiency on perceived group cohesiveness. Similarly assessment of extent of information flow for adopting rice production technology through interpersonal means showed that out of the eight critical operations of group farming the highest percentage of information flow from the fellow farmers took place with regard to "Plant protection" and the least with regard to "Seed treatment".

1. Introduction

Group Farming approach which has been accepted as a new extension model in Kerala, has proved to be successful in significantly reducing the cost of cultivation in rice along with increasing the production and productivity of our fields. This model has an added advantage of helping the marginal farmers to adopt improved cultivation practices which were not easily feasible for them on individual basis. All the rice cultivators in a contiguous area became the members of the Group Farming Committee, which brought about a demand group for the adoption of appropriate production technologies. Experiences and observations indicated that the informal interpersonal communication network that is existing among the members of Group Farming committee is significantly contributing to the diffusion of location specific and problem oriented improved agricultural technology, which helps to make the decisions more collective and democratic. This in turn may result in the cohesiveness of the group also. Moreover, the critical messages which need personal convictions and urgent attention many times flow through interpersonal means. In this background, a study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of Interper-

sonal Communication Behaviour of Group Farming committee members in the group cohesiveness and extent of information flow in relation to the farming practices.

2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted in four districts in Kerala having maximum area under paddy with Intensive Programme for Rice Development (IPRD) was in operation. The districts were Palakkad, Thrissur, Ernakulam and Alappuzha.

From each of these districts one block each with maximum area under rice cultivation was identified. From each of the selected blocks, two Group Farming Committees were randomly selected and from each committee, 30 members were identified as respondents using simple random sampling procedures. Thus in total 240 respondents from among the members of Group Farming committees were selected as sample for the study.

The data were collected using a Pre-tested structured interview schedule by personal interviews. IPCBE was measured using an Index developed and standardised for the study. The index contained nine sub-dimensions such as Communication

skills, Competence, Empathy, Authenticity, Interpersonal trust, Consistency, Positiveness, Reciprocity and Rationality.

The perceived group cohesiveness was measured using a scale developed with eight statements reflecting the evaluative perceptual judgements of the respondents on a three point continuum.

In the case of extent of information flow, the quantification was made by listing eight critical farm operations in rice cultivation and identifying the extent of information available to the individual respondent for each of these operations through interpersonal communication networks.

Appropriate statistical tools were used for the analysis of the data thus gathered.

3. Results and discussion

(a.) Perceived group; cohesiveness as influenced by IPCBE

The Cohesiveness of the Group Farming Committees according to the member's perception was quantified and the results obtained are furnished in Table 1.

Table 1. Perceived group cohesiveness of Group Farming Committee Members (n = 240)

Sl No.	Characteristic	Category	Range	Frequency	Per cent	Correlation co-efficient with IPCBE
1	Perceived group Cohesiveness	Low	<9.9	87	36.25	0.386*
		High & above	9.9 & above	153	63.75	

* Significant at 1% level of significance

From the table it was obvious that 63.75 per cent of the respondents were in the high category with regard to the per-

ceived group cohesiveness. Another important point was that in the simple correlation analysis, the perceived group cohesiveness was positively and significantly related with IPCBE of the Group Farming Committee members.

After the implementation of Group Farming in paddy, the farmers became fully conscious about the necessity of co-operation and co-ordination with fellow farmers to undertake different operations in Group Farming which resulted in considerable group cohesion. As a result of the improvement in the IPCBE and thus the dynamics of Group Farming committee also showed substantial improvement in leadership development and group cohesiveness. These might be the probable reasons, why the cohesion of Group Farming committee as perceived by the committee members had a better frequency in the category and is only natural to have a positive and significant relationship with IPCBE.

This finding was also in accordance with the 'exchange theory' put forth by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) and it intended to explain interpersonal behaviour and group process. The theory assumed that the existence of the group is based solely upon the participation and satisfaction of individuals in the group. Therefore the analysis of group processes must be in terms of adjustments that individuals make in attempting to solve the problems of interdependency, so as to bring about greater cohesiveness and good interpersonal relations.

(b.) Extent of information flow for adopting rice production technology through interpersonal means

The extent of information flow in different operations of Group Farming was quantified and the results are shown in Table 2 close examination of the table revealed that the highest percentage of information flow from the fellow farmers took place with regard to the operation 'Plant protection'.

Table 2. Extent of information flow for adopting rice production technology (n = 240)

Stages	All information			Some information			No information			Total score	Total percentage
	No. of respondents	Percentage	Score	No. of respondents	Percentage	Score	No. of respondents	Percentage	Score		
Seed variety	114	47.50	228	115	47.92	115	11	4.58	0	343	71.46
Land preparation and organic manure application	17	7.08	34	175	72.92	175	48	20.00	0	209	43.54
Seed treatment	1	0.42	2	12	5.00	12	227	94.58	0	14	12.92
Nursery management	44	18.33	88	170	70.83	170	26	10.84	0	258	53.75
Transplanting	23	9.58	46	167	69.58	167	50	20.84	0	213	44.38
Fertilizer application	111	46.25	222	121	50.42	121	8	3.33	0	343	71.46
Plant protection	116	48.33	232	117	48.75	117	7	2.92	0	349	72.71
Irrigation	60	25.00	120	161	67.08	161	19	7.92	0	281	58.54