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Influence of Personal and Socio-Psychological Characteristics on the Interpersonal Communication Behaviour Efficiency

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Being predominantly agricultural in nature, Kerala economy cannot anticipate a bright future, unless significant breakthrough is achieved in agricultural production. One of the major reasons which made the modern scientific methods uneconomical is the marginalisation of holdings. So, as a viable solution, Group Farming approach for rice cultivation was introduced in 1989 through the Krishi Bhavans of every panchayats in the State.

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. 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 technologies, which help to make the decisions more collective and democratic. It was therefore decided to make a study on the Interpersonal Communication Behaviour Efficiency (IPCBE) of Group Farming Committee members to get a useful insight on the feasibility of using the interpersonal communication network in the transfer of technology process.

Katz and Lazarsfeld (1955) were the pioneers who introduced the concept of personal influence in the communication as Rogers (1973) suggested is the very natural tendency to judge, to evaluate, to approve or disapprove the statement of other persons or groups. Murthy and Singh (1974) opined that interpersonal relations depend upon the efficiency of communication. The detailed study of interpersonal communication pattern in the client system conducted by Ambastha and Singh (1978) revealed the operationalisation of concepts and measurements of technology in terms of information input pattern, information processing pattern and information output pattern.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Most of the past studies focussed on the need to assess the personality traits that are relevant to interpersonal relations to IPCBE. The purpose of the present study based on the review of

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previous work and discussions with experts, nine dimensions related to interpersonal communication behaviour were identified such as communication skill, competence, empathy, authenticity, interpersonal, trust, consistency, positiveness, reciprocity and rationality. The quantification of the dependent variable "Interpersonal Communication Behaviour Efficiency" was done by developing an index for the same.

The interpersonal communication is a multivariate phenomenon explained by a wide spectrum of personal and socio-psychological factors. These factors are so intricately associated with each other that they should not be viewed as separate entitles for the study. Hence, a wholistic view of all these contributing factors only would give a clear picture of the interactional implication of the process of interpersonal communication behaviour. The selected personal and socio-psychological factors included age, education, occupation, socio-economic status, extension orientation, scientific orientation, mass media participation, social participation, cosmopoliteness, knowledge, attitude towards Group Farming, attitude towards other farmers, information source use pattern, farm size and farming experience.

The study was conducted in four districts in Kerala having maximum area under paddy with Intensive Programme for Rice Development (IPRD) 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. They were Alathur (Palakkad), Cherpu (Thrissur), Chengamandu (Ernakulam) and Nedumudi (Alappuzha) blocks. The unit of analysis for the study was the member of a Rice Group Farming Committee. 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 the sample for the study.

The categorisation of respondents based on IPCBE into two strata was done by the mean value as the criterion for dividing the sample. The effect of personal and socio-psychological characteristics on interpersonal communication behaviour was assessed by appropriate statistical tests such as simple correlation analysis, multiple regression analysis and multivariate path coefficient analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of respondents based on the Interpersonal Communication Behaviour Efficiency showed distinctly that 59.58 per cent of the respondents were in the high category for the dependent variable, "Interpersonal Communication Behaviour Efficiency". Since the observed value of the normal deviate ($z=4.608$) is being significant, it led to the conclusion that there is significant variation in the interpersonal communication behaviour efficiency among the two categories of

members of Group Farming Committees. This finding could be explained with the "Trait factor theory of personality" put forth by Allport (1937). The theory postulates that the traits are common to many individuals and vary in absolute amounts between individuals. They are relatively stable and exert fairly universal effects on behaviour regardless of environmental situations. IPCBE is a trait of personality, as it is an accumulation of skills and orientations acquired from the past life experiences which varies from person to person, place to place, time to time and from situation to situation.

Tabel 1.

Influence of Personal and Socio-psychological Characteristics on Interpersonal Communication Behaviour Efficiency

(n=240)

Variable No.	Characteristic	Correlation Coefficient	Regression Coefficient
1.	Age	0.070	- 0.0524
2.	Education	0.443**	- 0.3175
3.	Occupation	0.055	1.5188
4.	Socio-Economic status	0.619**	0.4557*
5.	Extension orientation	0.527**	0.4865*
6.	Scientific orientation	0.439**	0.8700
7.	Mass media participation	0.361**	0.3077
8.	Social participation	0.361**	0.3829
9.	Cosmopoliteness	0.257**	- 0.2084
10.	Knowledge	0.603**	0.9062
11.	Attitude towards group farming	0.527**	0.5435*
12.	Attitude towards other farmers	0.673**	2.0725*
13.	Information source use pattern	0.602**	0.0122
14.	Farm size	0.360**	0.0571
15.	Farming experience	0.100	0.0832

* Significant at 0.05 level ** Significant at 0.01 level

Intercept - 18.7429 $R^2 = 0.619$ F = 24.26

The relationship of personal and socio-psychological characteristics on interpersonal communication was established in this study first by simple correlation and then by multiple linear regression analysis and the findings are presented in Table 1.

It was found that out of the fifteen independent variables, education, socio-economic status, extension orientation, scientific orientation, mass media participation, social participation, cosmopoliteness, knowledge, attitude towards Group Farming, attitude towards other farmers, information source use pattern and farm size were positively and significantly related with their interpersonal communication

Table 2.
Path Analysis of Selected Personal and Socio-Psychological Characteristics of Respondents with their IPCBE

(n=240)

Variable No.	Characteristics	Direct Effect		Total Indirect Effect		Largest Indirect Effect	
		Effect	Rank	Effect	Rank	Effect	Through
2.	Education	- 0.0500	12	0.493	3	0.1397	12
4.	Socio-Economic status	0.1821	2	0.4369	4	0.1701	12
5.	Extension orientation	0.1668	3	0.3602	9	0.1514	12
6.	Scientific orientation	0.0760	7	0.363	8	0.1256	12
7.	Mass media participation	0.0972	6	0.4278	5	0.1410	12
8.	Social participation	0.0537	8	0.3070	11	0.0965	12
9.	Cosmopoliteness	- 0.0172	10	0.2742	12	0.0975	12
10.	Knowledge	0.0975	5	0.5055	2	0.1728	12
11.	Attitude towards group farming	0.1203	4	0.4067	6	0.1600	12
12.	Attitude towards other farmers	0.3065	1	0.3665	7	0.1011	4
13.	Information source use pattern	- 0.0245	11	0.6265	1	0.1811	12
14.	Farm size	0.0428	9	0.3172	10	0.0938	4

Residual Effect = 0.393*

behaviour efficiency at one per cent level of significance. However, it was further observed that three variables such as age, occupation and farming experience of the respondents did not have any relationship with their IPCBE.

The multiple linear regression analysis revealed that the F value (24.26) obtained was significant indicating that all the fifteen variables contributed significantly in the variation of interpersonal communication behaviour of the members of Group Farming Committees. The coefficient of determination R^2 indicated that 61.9 per cent of the variation in the IPCBE was explained by these fifteen variables. Out of these fifteen variables, only four were found to be significant in multiple regression analysis and those were attitude towards other farmers, extension orientation, socio-economic status and attitude towards Group Farming.

Path Analysis

The simple correlation coefficients indicated the degree and nature of relationship of each personal and socio-psychological characteristic with IPCBE ignoring the possible influence of other personal and socio-psychological characteristics while multiple regression analysis revealed the joint influence of all the selected personal and socio-

psychological characteristics on IPCBE. It could be of interest to split the amount of relationship that a particular characteristic had with the IPCBE into

1) Its direct influence on IPCBE and
2) Possible indirect effect on IPCBE through the influence of other personal and socio-psychological characteristics

Since this information was not available in the earlier analysis, the data were subjected to the multi-variate path analysis in order to get the desired information.

From Table 2 it was interesting to note that attitude towards other farmers had the highest direct effect on interpersonal communication behaviour efficiency, followed by socio-economic status. Similarly extension orientation and attitude towards Group Farming are the other two important variables with substantial direct effect.

One interesting thing to be noted from the table was that all the variables excluding farm size had their largest indirect effect through the variable attitude towards other farmers where as attitude towards other farmers had its indirect effect through socio-economic status. The variable farm size also exerted its largest indirect effect through socio-economic status.

Based on these findings it is revealed that the most important variable significantly affecting the interpersonal communication behaviour efficiency was "attitude towards other farmers" The theory of Fundamental Interpersonal Relationship Orientation (FIRO) put forth by Schutz (1958) emphasised the attitudinal disposition of an individual towards the other to affect the interaction patterns. He indicated that these dispositions would be manifested with expressed and wanted dimensions of inclusion, control and affection needs. The interchange compatibility is based on the mutual expression of these needs and hence is very much influenced by the orientation towards the other individuals.

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