

Farmers Characteristics in Association with Attitude Towards Privatisation of Agricultural Extension Service

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ABSTRACT

Characteristics of individuals are important determinant factors in attitude formation. The study was conducted in Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu. Farmers aware and utilising private agricultural extension service (PAES) were greatly differed with respect of farming experience, occupation, annual income, farm size, socio-economic status, level of aspiration and extension agency contact. Psychological characteristics of farmers aware of PAES had significant association with attitude, it is not so in farmers utilising PAES.

CHARACTERISTICS of individual is an important determinants of psychological natural tendencies like attitude. Eventually, characteristics of farmer could influence his favourableness or unfavourableness towards privatisation of agricultural extension service. So, study was designed with the objective to study the personal, socio-economic, psychological and communication characteristics of farmers and their association with attitude towards privatisation of agricultural extension service.

Operational definition of Privatisation of Agricultural Extension Service : Privatisation of agricultural extension service refers to the services rendered in the area of agriculture and allied aspects of extension personnel working in the private agencies or organizations for which farmers are expected to pay fee and it can be viewed as supplementary or alternative to public extension service.

METHODOLOGY

Considering the newness and complication in understanding the

privatisation issue, the study was planned to involve only progressive farmers. Any farmer who is responsive to the developments taking place around in general and privatisation being a recent development, farmers who are aware and utilising PAES were considered as progressive farmers. Other two criteria like minimum level of education eighth standard pass and the awareness about the public extension service have been added to give additional weightage to progressive farmer status.

Progressive farmers from each village were selected purposively from the list of farmers who fulfilled the following criteria such as, minimum level of education eighth standard pass, those who are aware of public extension service and those who are aware or utilising (private consultancy service) privatised agricultural extension service.

It was decided to study attitude of progressive farmers towards PAES in two sub-categories viz.,

- i. Progressive farmers who are aware of Privatised Agricultural Extension Service (PF-A-PAES) (n = 60)

ii. Progressive farmers who were utilising Privatised Agricultural Extension Service (PF-U-PAES) (n = 30)

In Coimbatore district of Tamil Nadu, two taluks were randomly selected, viz., Avinasi and Pollachi. From each taluk 2 blocks and totally 4 blocks were randomly selected. They are Annur, Avinasi, Anaimalai and Pollachi. From each block, 3 villages were selected. Totally 12 villages randomly selected for the investigation.

From selected 12 villages, a list of progressive farmers aware of PAES prepared and 5 progressive farmers aware of PAES in village is randomly selected, which came to final 60 respondents. Progressive farmers utilising PAES is not many, so two or three respondents from each village were included which came to final 30 respondents.

Measurement of attitude: A summated rating scale was developed (as suggested by Likert, 1932; Devellis, 1991 and Spector, 1992) through identification of dimensions, collection of items, relevancy test item analysis and scale was tested the reliability and validity. Standardised scale consisting of 21 statements (10 positive and 11 negative) were administered to know the attitude of farmers, extension personnels and scientists. The response was obtained on five point continuum viz., 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'undecided', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' with weightage of 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 for positive and reverse scoring system was employed for negative statements. The total attitude score for each respondent was calculated.

The possible total score of the scale ranged from 21 to 105. Based on the scores obtained, the respondents were categorized into three categories [Low: upto $\bar{X} - \frac{1}{2}$ SD (upto 64.84), Medium: $\bar{X} \pm \frac{1}{2}$ SD (64.84 to 78.22), High: above $\bar{X} + \frac{1}{2}$ SD (above 78.22)] taking mean attitude score and half standard deviation as a measure of check.

Measurement and categorization of independent variables: To quantify the independent variables, standard measurement tools such as scales, schedules, formulas and procedures used for collection of data and the respondents were categorised into three categories (Low: upto $\bar{X} - \frac{1}{2}$ SD, Medium: $\bar{X} \pm \frac{1}{2}$ SD, High: above $\bar{X} + \frac{1}{2}$ SD) taking mean score and half standard deviation as measures of check.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With respect to personal, socio-economic, psychological and communication characteristics, progressive farmers utilising PAES had less farming experience, most of them had their main occupation in non-agricultural sector, high annual income, bigger farm size, high socio-economic status, high level of aspiration and low extension agency contact than the progressive farmers aware of PAES and other characteristics such as education, risk orientation, decision making ability, achievement motivation, management orientation, economic orientation, scientific orientation, innovation proneness, mass media participation, cosmopolitaness and extension participation are also significantly differed among the both categories of farmers as explained by Chi-Square (χ^2) test.

TABLE I

Personal, Socio-economic, psychological and communication characteristics of progressive farmers aware of PAES and progressive farmers utilising PAES

Characteristics / Category	Score	PF-A-PAES (n=60)		PF-U-PAES (n=30)		χ^2 value
		Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Age						
Young	upto 30 years	6	10.0	5	16.67	3.67
Middle	31 to 55 years	49	81.67	25	83.33	
Old	above 55 years	5	8.33	0	0.00	
Education						
Low	upto 8th std.	9	15.00	4	13.33	7.24*
Medium	8th to 12th std / diploma	30	50.00	10	33.33	
High	degree	21	35.00	16	53.33	
Farming experience						
Low	up to 12.01	11	18.33	21	70.00	67.73**
Medium	12.01 to 22.21	22	36.66	8	26.67	
High	above 22.21	27	45.00	1	3.33	
Occupation						
Agriculture		45	75.00	9	30.00	40.60**
Non-agriculture		15	25.00	21	70.00	
Annual income						
Low	< 43.44	36	60.00	1	3.33	79.99**
Medium	43.44 to 199.44	15	25.00	11	36.67	
High	> 199.44	9	15.00	18	60.00	
Farm size						
Small farmers	< 5.00 ac	21	35.00	2	6.67	68.25**
Medium farmer	5.00 to 10.00 ac	19	31.67	1	3.33	
Big farmer	> 10.00 ac	20	33.33	27	90.00	
Socio-economic status						
Low	< 32.44	32	53.33	2	6.67	56.71**
Medium	32.44 to 43.76	10	16.67	5	16.67	
High	> 43.76	18	30.00	23	76.67	
Cropping intensity						
Low	< 96.06	6	10.00	3	10.00	1.29
Medium	97.07 to 117.66	38	63.33	21	70.00	
High	> 117.67	16	26.67	6	20.00	
Irrigation intensity						
Low	< 77.46	21	35.00	7	23.33	15.43**
Medium	77.46 to 109.18	24	40.00	20	66.67	
High	> 109.18	15	25.00	3	10.00	
Risk orientation						
Low	< 18.15	34	56.67	6	20.00	32.02**
Medium	18.15 to 23.11	11	18.33	6	20.00	
High	> 23.11	15	25.00	18	60.00	

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Decision making ability							
Low	< 5.15		23	38.33	4	13.33	20.76**
Meidum	5.15 to 6.83		19	31.67	9	30.00	
High	> 6.83		18	30.00	17	56.67	
Level of aspiration							
Low	< 15.10		23	48.33	2	6.67	
Medium	5.10 to 6.83		19	33.33	8	26.67	59.79**
High	> 6.83		18	18.33	20	66.67	
Achievement motivation							
Low	< 21.34		28	46.67	6	20.00	17.63**
Medium	21.34 to 25.84		17	28.33	10	33.33	
High	> 25.84		15	25.00	14	46.67	
Management orientation							
Low	< 6.97		22	36.67	4	13.33	35.60*
Meidum	6.97 to 10.00		24	40.00	9	30.00	
High	> 10.00		14	23.33	17	56.67	
Economic motivation							
Low	< 21.74		21	35.00	3	10.00	
Meidum	21.74 to 25.18		25	41.67	11	36.67	25.95**
High	> 25.18		14	23.33	16	53.33	
Scientific orientation							
Low	< 6.97		22	36.67	4	13.33	
Meidum	6.97 to 10.00		24	40.00	9	30.00	26.22**
High	> 10.00		14	23.33	17	56.67	
Innovation proneness							
Low	< 18.30		27	45.00	4	13.33	28.47**
Meidum	18.30 to 21.52		14	23.33	7	23.33	
High	> 21.52		19	31.67	19	63.33	
Mass media participation							
Low	< 8.73		19	31.67	0	0.00	18.96**
Midium	8.73 to 11.49		23	38.33	15	50.00	
High	> 11.49		18	30.00	15	50.00	
Cosmopoliteness							
Low	< 5.30		25	41.67	5	16.67	
Medium	5.30 to 6.62		17	28.33	8	26.67	38.03**
High	> 6.62		18	30.00	17	56.67	
Extension participation							
Low	< 0.60		22	36.67	5	16.67	28.02**
Meidum	0.60 to 1.92		14	23.33	18	60.00	
High	> 1.92		24	40.00	7	23.33	
Extension agency contact							
Low	< 1.49		22	36.67	22	73.33	54.39**
Meidum	1.49 to 3.93		13	21.67	8	26.67	
High	> 3.93		25	41.67	0	0.00	

* Significant at 5 % level

** Significant at 1 % level

A close observation in Table I gives an account of the profile of the farmer respondents. Progressive farmers utilising the private extension services were mostly representing the high and medium categories except for characteristics like farming experience and extension agency contact, where majority of them were in low category. Many non-agricultural background people are entering the farming sector and are likely to depend on somebody in initial years for agricultural information guidance. In their effort to overcome their less farming experience, these farmers must have turned towards private agencies for the timely guidance. The resultant dependancy on private services must have also led to very limited or no contact with public extension system. Bigger the farm size may need diversification, in turn it requires more information to make productive farm diversification. It might be leads to bigger farm holders to approach the private consultancies for farm advisory services. Private extension personnel likely to charge for each visit, so, it reduces the frequency of contact between clientele. It is natural that they seek the services only whenever needed.

Farmers who are aware of PAES but not utilising this service are well distributed among the three categories for most of the characteristics. However, the skewness in distribution was noticed for farming experience where majority of them being grouped in medium and high categories, annual income where majority were in low income category and in their occupation where majority had agriculture as their primary occupation. All these three characteristics are strongly interconnected.

Non-agricultural occupations are known to generate better income and the lack of which is an hindrance to approach private services. In addition to these factors their abundant experience in farming must have given them the confidence to manage on their own, thereby not enlisting the services of the private agencies.

Attitude of farmers towards PAES : More than one-third of progressive farmers aware of PAES (38.33 %) and another nearly one-third proportion of progressive farmers aware of PAES (30 %) had favourable attitude and most favourable attitude towards PAES, respectively. The remaining one-third proportion of progressive farmers aware of PAES (31.67 %) had least favourable attitude towards PAES.

More than one-third of progressive farmers utilising PAES (36.67 %) and another nearly one-third proportion of progressive farmers utilising privatised agricultural extension service (33.33 %) had favourable attitude and most favourable attitude towards PAES respectively. The remaining one-third proportion of progressive farmers utilising PAES (30 %) had least favourable attitude towards PAES.

Results from Table II reveals that, in case of progressive farmers aware of PAES characteristics like, age, annual income, farm size, socio-economic status, irrigation intensity, risk orientation, decision making ability, level of aspiration, achievement motivation, management orientation, economic motivation, scientific orientation,

TABLE II

Association between independent variables and attitude of progressive farmers aware and utilising privatised agricultural extension service towards PAES

Independent variables	PF-A-PAES (n=60)		PF-U-PAES (n=30)	
	x ²	C	x ²	C
Age	19.56**	0.37	20.77**	0.51
Education	1.68	0.12	2.50	0.20
Farming experience	3.21	0.16	16.03**	0.46
Occupation	0.66	0.07	0.80	0.12
Annual Income	36.16**	0.48	0.63	0.10
Farm size	12.70**	0.31	15.03**	0.45
Socio-economic status	30.42**	0.45	6.28*	0.31
Cropping intensity	3.62	0.17	6.26*	0.31
Irrigation intensity	13.28**	0.32	13.56**	0.43
Risk orientation	32.62**	0.46	7.04*	0.32
Decision making ability	15.12**	0.34	3.01	0.22
Level of aspiration	24.68**	0.41	3.01	0.22
Achievement motivation	19.52**	0.37	2.14	0.19
Management orientation	24.06**	0.41	5.71	0.30
Economic motivation	17.26**	0.36	1.39	0.15
Scientific orientation	14.78**	0.33	3.01	0.22
Innovation proneness	21.44**	0.39	4.60	0.27
Cosmopoliteness	17.93**	0.36	4.43	0.26
Mass media participation	10.31**	0.28	1.03	0.13
Extension participation	16.02**	0.34	6.08*	0.30
Extension agency contact	16.81*	0.35	32.08**	0.59

** Significant at 1% level

* Significant 5% level

innovation proneness, cosmopolitanness, mass media participation, extension participation and extension agency contact had significant association with attitude towards PAES, whereas, in case of progressive farmers utilising PAES only, age, farming experience, farm size, socio-economic status, cropping intensity, irrigation intensity, risk orientation, extension participation and extension agency contact had significant association.

From the above findings, it is evident that the attitude of the farmers who are using the private extension services are influenced more by the physical resources like farm size, socio-economic status, cropping intensity, irrigation intensity than psychological

characteristics. In the absence of above resources among the other category of farmers who are only aware but not utilising the private services, it is expected that attitude towards PAES has been closely associated with psychological characteristics.

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