



Gender appraisal of technological and psychological dynamics of farmers' club

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ABSTRACT

Farmers' clubs are being promoted by NABARD since 1982 with a mission to develop rural areas through credit, farm technology and capacity building. A study was conducted to assess the women's participation vis a vis men in the farmers club in various farm activities and consequent impact on socio-economic and technological empowerment of both the genders. Nayagarh and Cuttack districts of Odisha were identified through random sampling. The sample for the study consisted of 52 members from farmers' club from each district with 12 females in Cuttack and 14 females in Nayagarh. Maximum respondents belonged to middle age (36-50 years) and had school education. Women were motivated to become members in order to avail the benefits of government schemes. But they remained as passive listeners in club meeting. Due to dominant behaviour of some male members, women preferred to involve in women headed/dominant farmers clubs. The present findings reveal a direction to make the agriculture inclusive and sustainable by facilitating women empowerment through village level gender sensitization programmes, need based training programmes and bringing genuinely interested farmers in farmers' club.

Key words: Farmers' club, Gender appraisal, Psychological dynamics

Agricultural extension services have for long, been targeted at men. However, with the increasing recognition of women's role in agriculture, special programmes have been initiated and targeted at women in agriculture. These programmes have demonstrated that women, when given better access to information and resources, could increase agricultural production significantly.

Studies from Bangladesh, India and Malawi showed that women's access to credit improves the nutrition of girls in the family (Hazarika and Guha-Khasnobis 2008). But, in order to achieve sustainable improvements in the livelihoods of rural women, their access to credit and opportunities for employment, enterprise development and income generation also need to be facilitated (Sudharani *et al.* 2000). Interventions that improve rural women's access to financial services can thus be beneficial by enhancing women's productive capacity as well as improving women's relative power in their households which would lead to efficient allocation of resources and better human capital outcomes such as improved health, nutrition and education in their families, all of which is expected to improve long-term production capabilities (Fletschner and Kenney 2011)

For transferring the latest agriculture technologies to both men and women in field, orienting them to establish better relationship with banks and enjoy the benefits of

collective bargaining power both for procuring inputs and marketing their products, the importance of group dynamics has been realized by both the farmers and development agencies which led to popularity of various groups such as self-help group, commodity groups, farmers' field school across the country. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) started *Vikas Volunteer Vahini* (VVV) in 1982, which was later rechristened as "Farmers' Club Programme" in 2005. Farmers' Clubs are grass root level informal forums organised by rural branches of banks, KVKs and NGOs with the support and financial assistance from NABARD for the mutual benefit of the banks and the rural people. The purpose of a Farmers' Club is, according to NABARD, to improve farmers' knowledge and cultivation skills; expand farmers' access to credit; enhance farmers' relationships with banks, suppliers, and other market actors; and facilitate joint processing, joint value addition and joint marketing of goods (Rosenberg 2013).

Given the fact that women are an important stakeholder in agriculture and empowering them in agriculture and addressing gender issues are becoming important because of prioritized action by national, international organizations and civil society for inclusive and sustainable agriculture, it would be highly useful to understand the benefits accrued to women due to their participation in farmers club. The present study was undertaken with following objectives: (i) To ascertain the women's participation vis-

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Table 1 Year-wise status of formation of Farmers' Club in Odisha vis-à-vis India

	FC formed during the year					Total no. of FC as on 31.3.14
	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	
Odisha	1 836	2 233	2 311	2 177	1 552	11 648
India	16 590	21 903	25 243	24 802	16 279	143 032

(Source: NABARD, FSDD, Head Office Mumbai)

à-vis men members of farmers club in various farm activities. (ii) To assess the impact of farmers club on socio-economic and technological dynamics of gender participation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Two districts, viz. Nayagarh and Cuttack in Odisha were selected randomly out of 30 districts in Odisha. The details of Year-wise status of formation of Farmers' Clubs (FC) in Odisha and India are given in Table 1.

Before selecting the farmers clubs for study, discussion was held with Assistant General Managers (AGM) of Cuttack and Nayagarh districts and NGOs promoting farmers' clubs were consulted to understand the women involvement in farmers' clubs which revealed that there was less than 10 per cent women participation in the farmers' clubs. Efforts were made to select 25 farmers' clubs from 25 villages where considerable women members were present. Then the members (both male and female) from each farmers club were selected (usually one farmers club from each village) of each district. The sample size for the proposed study has been limited to 52 members (both male and female) from each district totaling to 104. Farmers' club from each selected village (mostly found one Farmers club in one revenue village) from Nayagarh and Cuttack were contacted through NGOs involved in formation and patronizing them with the support of the Regional Office of NABARD, Odisha and with the co-operation of District Development Managers of NABARD in both the districts.

For the present study, triangulation method was adopted to explore both the quantitative and qualitative insight of gender issues in farmers club. For this a semi-structured interview schedule was prepared covering all possible issues in accordance with the objectives of the study. The findings were analysed by using SPSS.

For analysis of constraints 'Weighted Mean Score Percentage' for each constraint was calculated. The respondent who perceived the constraints as most severe was assigned 3 score and similarly, for moderately severe was assigned with 2 score and for least severe was assigned with 1 score. For each constraint, score obtained by respondents was multiplied by their respective choice scores and divided by the maximum possible scores. Then each of these values was multiplied by 100 to get 'Weighted Mean Score Percentage'.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

One-fourth of respondents comprised females in both

Cuttack (23.07%) and Nayagarh (26.93%) districts, whereas 76.93 percent of the respondents were male in Cuttack district and 73.07 percent in the Nayagarh district, respectively. However, this proportion is not true picture of overall representation of women in the farmers' clubs in each district. Close interaction revealed that females were not keen to be part of the clubs which are predominantly nurtured by males. Women who were members of Farmers' Clubs, had joined either at the prompting of an NGO or by an open invitation made by the founding members to all farmers in their villages (Rosenberg 2013).

Women showed interest to become members in women dominated clubs in Cuttack district. In contrast, women membership in the farmers' club of Nayagarh district was mainly instigated by their husbands. This was mainly to access more credit, benefit from schemes, by increasing the numbers from the same families. Women also felt secured with the presence of their husbands in the farmers clubs. However, the women perceived that their participation in a male dominated club was not heartily liked by the male members. At times, they felt to have been used as a trump card to access some specialized training, schemes and credit which were otherwise difficult to get.

Maximum number of members belonged to the middle age of 36-50 years irrespective of districts and sex. It was understood that women who had experience in SHG ventured into the farmers club. But male members of age above 50 years were significantly high (15%) in the Cuttack district in comparison to Nayagarh district (2.63%). It was

Table 2 Distribution of respondents based on socio-economic attributes

Characteristics	Category	Cuttack (%)	Nayagarh (%)
Family size	Upto 6 members	46.15	38.47
	> 6 members	53.85	61.53
Family type	Nuclear	45	40.00
	Joint	55	60.00
Annual income in Rs.	15000-30000	11.59	32.70
	30001-50000	23.07	51.92
	50001-100000	53.84	13.46
	>100000	11.59	1.92
Farm size	No Land	13.46	17.31
	<1 acre	23.07	32.07
	1-3 acre	42.31	46.15
	3-5 acre	15.39	3.84
Cattle (No)	>5 acre	5.77	0
	0	19.23	38.47
	<3	71.15	61.53
Goat/sheep (No)	>3	9.62	0
	0	80.77	90.38
	<3	19.23	9.62
Other enterprise	>3	0	0
	Floriculture	3.84	0
	Pisciculture	21.16	0
	Betel vine	48.08	0
	Oil making	0	13.4

found that, many members above 50 years were retired government servants who decided to involve themselves in agriculture to spend their time and energy fruitfully. Education of both male and female was higher in Cuttack district than Nayagarh. Close observation revealed it was scarce to find women in college level education in the targeted sample size in Nayagarh, whereas 16.67% of female population of Cuttack district had graduation from nearby colleges.

The Table 2 indicate that family structure in both the districts were predominantly of joint family type with 55% cent in Cuttack and 60% in Nayagarh district though there was clear distinction found in terms of size of the families. It was also interesting to observe that maximum number of respondents belonged to larger family size (>6 members), i.e 61.53% in Nayagarh against 53.85% in Cuttack district. Annual income of the families which is considered to be one of the significant parameter in determining eligibility for availing many government schemes was found to be better in Cuttack district than Nayagarh. The data in Table 2 also reflect the farm holding of maximum number of the population with the range from 1-3 acres followed by less than one acre in Cuttack and Nayagarh district. About 5.77 per cent of respondents in Cuttack owned more than 5 acres of land. People having “no land”, i.e 13.46 percent in Cuttack and 17.31 percent in Nayagarh were found to be engaged in farming especially through share cropping or lease. The cattle was commonly found in the households (80.77% in Cuttack and 61.53% in Nayagarh). More number of people was engaged in cattle business in Nayagarh district than Cuttack district which is very typical occupation prevalent in this district. Due to better irrigation facilities, the enterprises like floriculture, betel vine, pisciculture were commonly practised by the respondents of Cuttack. Being a rainfed district, respondents of Nayagarh could not take up such economically viable enterprises which require good resources, capital, market and support from government.

Table 3 indicates that out of 25 farmers' clubs in each district, the participation of women as office bearers was only 25 per cent and 14.28 per cent of total respondents in Cuttack and Nayagarh districts, respectively. This might be due to purposive selection of available women headed or women dominated farmers clubs and hence will not reflect overall picture of women as office bearers in Odisha or India. Further interaction indicated that two office bearers from total female population of each district belong to exclusive women farmers' club. Out of 25 farmers clubs approached for study, only one club was headed by woman as secretary.

This analysis suggests that gender plays an important role in distributing power relations in farmers' clubs. The data also showed that thrift was the prime attraction of participation among majority female members (91.67% of Cuttack and 92.86% of Nayagarh) which probably could be due to their prior experience in SHG, whereas male members expressed 'availing credit' for the agriculture

Table 3 Gender participation in Farmer's club

Characteristics	Category	Cuttack (%)		Nayagarh (%)	
		Male (N=40)	Female (N=12)	Male (N=38)	Female (N=14)
Position of membership	Member	52.5	75.00	39.47	85.72
	Office bearer	47.5	25.00	60.53	14.28
Reason for participation*	Thrift	30.00	91.67	42.10	92.86
	Credit facilities	92.50	83.33	92.10	85.71
	Sharing farming experience	67.5	41.67	84.21	35.71
	Knowing profitable technologies	15.00	25.00	7.89	14.28
	To discuss the scheme, technology	82.5	50.00	89.47	50.00
Involvement in meeting	Discussing family related issues	10.1	83.33	36.84	78.57
	Passive listening	12.5	66.67	15.79	71.43
	Active discussing	87.5	33.33	84.21	28.57

* Multiple responses

and allied activities were the prime reason of participation. Females mostly participated in farmers' clubs as passive listeners. Further, purpose of meeting also reflects some gender issues where majority of female members in both the districts prefer to discuss their 'family related issues' and get immense relief by sharing it with others.

The respondents could tremendously benefit due to the dynamics of their involvement in farmers club activities which ultimately resulted in adoption of scientific recommendations and enhancing their farm productivity (Fig 1).

Changes experienced by the members after joining the farmers club indicate traditional gender role came into play when members in farmers club experienced changes with time (Table 4). The majority of female members, i.e 71.42 percent of Nayagarh district and 91.67 percent of Cuttack district primarily wanted to 'explore beyond the confined four walls' and 'develop self-confidence (42.86% of

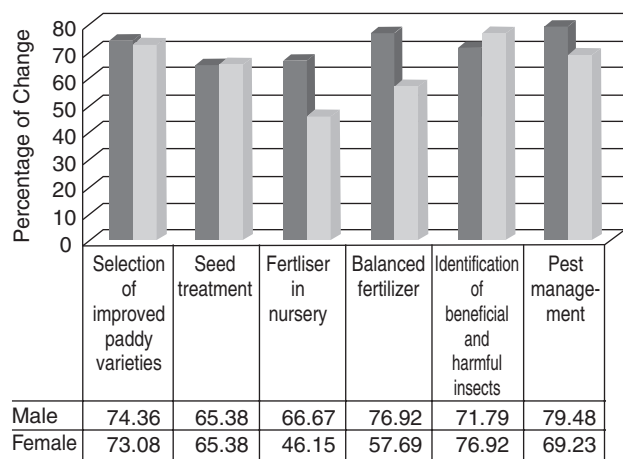


Fig 1 Change in technology adoption after joining farmers club

Table 4 Psychological changes due to joining in farmers club

Changes experienced after joining farmers club by the members	Cuttack (%)		Nayagarh (%)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Changing gender roles and responsibilities		91.67		71.42
Self-confidence		75.00		42.86
Attitude towards improved farm technologies	90.00	41.67	84.21	21.42
Sense of 'we' feeling	25.00	16.67	23.69	7.14
Aspiration for better life	62.50	25.00	57.90	7.14

Nayagarh district and 75% of Cuttack district) while maximum number of male members (84.21% of Nayagarh district and 90% of Cuttack district) developed positive attitude towards improved technologies. The male members of farmers clubs also showed immense enthusiasm to 'bring change' in the condition of villagers in group. Further interaction with the respondents indicated that female members were still struggling to go beyond their traditional domain and to establish their identity whereas male farmers took the advantage of already established superior status and were more concerned for adoption of new technology both individually and in group.

The Table 5 shows constraints experienced by respondents with regard to participation, group cohesion, and activities in the farmers' club. The constraints like 'lack of time to participate in club activities' and 'dominance of few members of the club' are commonly perceived by the female members in the club irrespective of the districts. In-depth interaction with the male members who are not financially better off and mostly engaged in share cropping also revealed dominance of few members of the club' was affecting the proper functioning of farmers clubs. Both male and female members expressed their dissatisfaction in getting support of Government on various schemes and timely availability of institutional credit. Cohesiveness is reflected to the extent of unity displayed by the group members and adherence to the group norms (Kondalkar 2007). Attraction, cohesion and conforming to norms are all intertwined (Sekaran 2010) which were absent in certain farmers' clubs and thereby affecting efficient functioning of clubs. Constraints were further compounded by lack of information about the latest technologies (Mary 2012), villagers criticism, shyness of the participants, difficulty in getting permission from husband (Sundarambal 2001),

Table 5 Gender wise constraints experienced by respondents in farmers club

Constraints	Weighted mean score percentage			Ranking according to overall score
	Male	Female	Overall	
Non-cooperation of members	41.45	50.00	43.59	6 th
Full participation of the members in meeting is very rare	43.59	50.00	45.19	5 th
Lack of time to participate in club activities	56.84	82.05	63.14	3 rd
Lack of support from government departments	92.31	89.74	91.67	2 nd
Dominance of few members of the club	42.54	83.33	52.94	4 th
Non-availability of timely credit	96.15	93.59	95.51	1 st
Not convening meeting regularly	35.04	37.18	35.58	7 th

domestic work and child care (Priyadarshini 2002), lack of marketing channels, loan delays from banks, lack of communication skills (Rao 2005), long distance of market (Asokhan 2006), small children and dependent in-laws (Mary 2012).

The suggestions in improving the functioning of farmers' club were based on an open-ended discussion with the respondents (Table 6). During formal interaction, it was revealed that irrespective of the districts, female members were more interested to avail timely credit facilities. Women were also keen to take training on farm level technological innovations and vocational activities so that they could start earning on their own. Male members suggested regular monitoring and good guidance for the farmers' club by NABARD. Few farmers suggested group led production and marketing approach so that poor farmers with small patch of lands would not be deprived of using farming equipments and practices in their land. Admitting genuine interested and neighbouring farmers in the club, bringing able persons to leadership position (Sunil 2000), sharing of domestic work and child care (Priyadarshini 2002) would further strengthen the group led agricultural development in the country.

Farmers' clubs played a proactive role in spearheading farm growth through group mobilization and thereby

Table 6 Suggestions in improving the functioning of Farmers' club

Suggestions	Nayagarh		Cuttack	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
More training on farm level innovations	26 (68.42%)	7 (50.00%)	25 (62.50%)	9 (75.00%)
Timely availability of adequate credit	38 (100.00%)	14 (100.00%)	37 (92.50%)	12 (100.00%)
Promotion of group led approach	2 (5.26%)		5 (12.50%)	
Strict monitoring of farmers club by NABARD	38 (100.00%)	4 (28.57%)	39 (97.50%)	3 (25.00%)
Linking farmers club with other development agencies	37 (97.37%)	4 (28.57%)	38 (95.00%)	4 (33.33%)

facilitating easy availability of credit, technology and extension services. The study brought out that there was negligible presence of women in farmers' clubs. Moreover, women as members have been completely marginalized due to dominance of male members and prevailing gender bias. The gender issues highlighted in the study has huge implications for facilitating inclusive farm growth and benefiting farmers in enhancing productivity and profitability of farm enterprises focusing on capacity building, credit facilities and dissemination of new technology among farmers. The present findings reveal a direction to make the agriculture inclusive and sustainable making women more aware about their potential and rights through village level gender sensitization programmes, need based training programmes and bringing genuinely interested farmers in farmers' club.

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