

Group Performance of Tribal FIGs in Erode District of Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Small and marginal tribal farmers are facing the problem of a poor marketing system and lack of quality input and technical services. This problem can be addressed through group approaches like Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), Farmers Interest Group (FIG) and Self Help Group (SHG). Farmers Interest Group (FIG) is a self managed, independent group of farmers with a shared goal and interest. FIG is usually formed by 15 - 20 members. When the farmers are facilitated to organize groups, trained and guided properly, they can attain tremendous development goals which would eventually make the group self- reliant and self sufficient. This paper attempts to study the performance of Tribal FIGs which were formed by MYRADA KVK, to understand the functioning of FIGs. The study reveals that majority of the members of Tribal FIGs reported that the FIG had a medium level of group performance.

Keywords: Tribes, Farmers Interest Group (FIG), Group performance, Social interaction process

Introduction

Tribal communities are characterized by a lifestyle distinct from agrarian communities and with distinct agriculture practices. Today, the tribal majority areas are overlapped with the country's major forest areas which show the highest area of poverty. Tribal farmers are being transformed into wage labourers thus contributing between 70 to 80 per cent of the total labour. In spite of favourable resource conditions, tribal regions perform

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poorly in terms of infrastructure, returns from agriculture and almost all human development indicators (Catalyst Management Services, 2009). Tribes are blessed with ample opportunities like forest resources for improving their livelihood. However geographical isolation restricts tribes from making use of their opportunities. They are facing problems in getting quality inputs and good prices for their produce. Attempts are being made to address the challenges faced by the small and marginal tribal farmers through the concept of group approach that empowers them by economies of scale and access to information, agricultural services, technology, etc. SHGs, FIGs, co-operatives, producers associations, marketing associations etc. had bestowed in maximizing the input-output ratio and finally increasing the profit of producers (Nain et al. 2015). Farmers' confidence level was increased through the establishment of Farmers Interest Groups (FIGs) (Singh and Srinivasan, 1998).

A Farmer Interest Group (FIG) is a self managed, independent group of farmers with a shared goal and interest (Department of Agriculture & Cooperation, 2013). Patil et al. 2014 had analysed the impact of collective action of farmers through FIG and found that, there was reduction in cost of cultivation by sharing inputs and they gained additional returns. FIG is an innovative approach with an idea to develop a value chain for the produce, establish brand value and link the farmers with the market and consumers. It was promoted with a purpose of collectivizing production especially at small holder level and empowering them for better bargaining power.

Tribal FIGs would play a unique role in improving the economic status of tribal people through which they can get access to credit, market facilities and value added forest produce. The number of members in the FIG should be 15 to 20, the group should have an achievable goal and should focus on a single issue, the members must work together to achieve this goal by pooling their existing resources, gaining better access to other resources and share in the resulting benefits, which are the characteristics of FIG. Farmers groups also have the additional benefit of social cohesion and confidence. Thus effective functioning of tribal FIGs is very essential.

Therefore analysing the performance of existing tribal FIGs would result in formulating a strategy to improve the livelihood of tribal farmers through collective action. Hence the study has been attempted with an objective of studying the group performance of Tribal Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs).

Methodology

Ex-post-facto research design was adopted for this study. Erode district was purposively selected for conducting the study since Tribal FIGs were contained in Erode district. Dimbam Dhaniya Farmer Producer Company Limited (DDFPCL) comprises of 62 FIGs covering 27 villages. FIGs were federated into DDFPCL. Out of these 27 villages, nine villages were dominated by tribes namely Chilumaiedoddi, Devarnatham, Pudhukadu, Guliyada, Sujjalakare, Kottamalam, Bejjalatti, Galidimbam and Ittarai. A total of four Tribal FIGs were randomly selected from 16 Tribal FIGs belonging to Dhimbam Dhaniya Farmer Producer Company Limited (DDFPCL) which resulted in a sample size of 100 by employing whole sampling method. Table 1 shows the details of selected tribal FIGs.

Table 1. Details of selected tribal FIGs

S.No.	Name of the village	Name of FIG	No. of members
1	Guliyada	KadehattiMuniyappan FIG	15
2		Periyasamyaiyyan FIG	16
3	Sujjalakare	Sri Karppusamy FIG	25
4	Kottamalam	Sri Magaliamman FIG	24
5	Ittari	Ilandhalir FIG	20
	Total		100

A well-structured interview schedule was prepared to collect the data. Percentage analysis and Mean and Standard deviation were used to analyse the data.

Results and Discussion

Overall group performance of tribal FIGs

The overall group performance was carefully investigated through social interaction processes namely cooperation, competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. This helped to understand how the social interaction process would contribute to the overall group performance of Tribal FIGs. The distribution of respondents according to the overall Group Performance of Tribal FIGs is furnished in Table 2.

Table 2. Overall group performance of tribal FIGs (n=100)

S.No.	Category	No.	Per cent (%)
1.	Low	15	15.00
2.	Medium	73	73.00
3.	High	12	12.00
	Total	100	100.00

It is clear from Table 2 that nearly three fourth of the members (73.00 per cent) admitted that the tribal FIGs had medium level of overall group performance followed by about 15.00 per cent and 12.00 per cent of the members who reported low and high levels of group performance respectively. This result is due to their culture, lack of involvement and participation, domination by a few individuals that had inhibited the performance of tribal FIGs. The present findings are in line with Naveenkumar and Radhakrishnan (2017) and Karthick (2014).

Distribution of respondents according to social interaction processes

The distribution of respondents according to social interaction processes namely cooperation, competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation is presented in Table 3. Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to Social interaction process

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents according to Social interaction process (n=100)

S.No.	Category	Low		Medium		High		Total	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Cooperation	21	21.00	63	63.00	16	16.00	100	100.00
2	Competition	15	15.00	76	76.00	9	9.00	100	100.00
3	Conflict	17	17.00	71	71.00	12	12.00	100	100.00
4	Accommodation	10	10.00	76	76.00	14	14.00	100	100.00
5	Assimilation	12	12.00	68	68.00	20	20.00	100	100.00

It could be interpreted from Table 3 that three fifth of the members (63.00 per cent) expressed that FIG had medium level of cooperation followed by high (16.00 per cent) and low (21.00 per cent) levels of cooperation. The lack of involvement and interest results in medium level of cooperation. From Table 3 it could be also seen that more than three fourth of the members (76.00 per cent) reported that there was medium level of competition in Tribal FIG to ensure better group performance. About one fifth of the members (15.00 per cent) elucidated that there exists low level of competition because they felt competition might have led to disintegration of the group. Nearly three fourth of the respondents (71.00 per cent) inferred that there was medium level of conflict in the group followed by about one fifth of the members (17.00 per cent) who had reported low level of conflict while the remaining 12.00 per cent of the respondents conveyed that there was high conflict. The group members were not interested in conflicting activities.

The results also revealed that 76 per cent of the members admitted that there was medium level of accommodation followed by high (14.00 per cent) and low (10.00 per cent) levels of accommodation. Thus most of them require a smooth and peaceful relationship with their peer group members. It could be observed that about three fifth of the members (68.00 per cent) elucidated that FIG had medium level of assimilation followed by 12.00

per cent and 20.00 per cent of the members who reported that the group had high and low levels of assimilation respectively. In spite of cultural differences, members of tribal FIGs were ready to assimilate with other members for the welfare of the society. The present finding is in line with results of Karthick (2014) and contradictory with the findings of Sharma, Singh, and Padaria (2011).

Conclusion

The present study investigated the group performance through five sub components namely cooperation, competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. Majority of the FIG members inferred that the group had medium level of overall group performance, with reference to cooperation, competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. Cultural differences, lack of cooperation, participation and involvement were found to be the reasons for low level of group performance.

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