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Unveiling the dynamics of information management behaviour: A comprehensive study of farmer producer organizations in Mahabubnagar District, Telangana

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Abstract

In today's world, Information management has become a key strategy for enhancing organizational development and sustainability. It's also crucial for ensuring the competitive advantage of any organization. The main objective of information management is to ensure that an organization makes the most out of its information resources. This process involves activities such as acquiring, utilization, accessing, and dissemination of information. However, it's still unclear whether the way information acquired is shared to improve the work behavior of members of organization. This study aims to explore how information management behavior works by examining three specific aspects: Information Acquisition Behavior (IAB), Information Processing Behavior (IPB), and Information Dissemination Behavior (IDB) within Farmer Producer Organizations in Mahabubnagar District, Telangana. An ex-post facto research design was used, and data was collected through a structured questionnaire with 100 participants. The results show that the majority of respondents exhibited a high level of Information Acquisition Behavior (64%), followed by Information Processing Behavior (58%) and Information Dissemination Behavior (51%). The study found that the most effective methods for acquiring agricultural and allied information were through personal and local channels, such as discussions with fellow FPO members, and impersonal or broader channels like cluster meetings. For processing information, the most important factors were evaluating the economic and local feasibility of the information. In terms of disseminating information, discussions with NGO or private organization officials were the most valued approach.

Keywords: Farmer producer organization, information management behaviour, information acquisition, information processing and information dissemination behaviour

Introduction

The Farmer producer organizations (FPOs) are formal rural organizations whose members are small and marginal land holder, who organize themselves with the objective of increasing farm income through improved production, marketing and local processing activities. (Rondot, 2001) [6]. According to 2011 census, in India about 92.8 million farmers has marginal land holdings and 24.8 million are small holders (Census, 2011) i.e., about 85% of the of total holdings are small and marginal and their share in total operated area is 44.6 percent. Due to which farming was found economically unviable by Small and Marginal farmers because of fragmented farm lands and to adopt latest technology or use of high-yielding seed varieties and inputs (Deepa S *et al*. 2018) [2].

In this scenario to make farming more viable, it is appropriate to development and promote Farmer Producer Organizations in India. Small and marginal farmers can co-operate with each other to establish a farmers group known as the Farmer Producer Organization (FPO). The lack of collectivization, not only limits the bargaining power of farmers and increases input cost required in farm activities, but also leads to adoption of poor agronomic practices, leads to poor farm infrastructure, which adversely affects the productivity and farm income. On the other hand, these days, reaching out to individual farmers through the outreach extension activities by the institutes comes at a high cost. However, country with 85% of small and marginal farmers cannot be ignored, but the public extension system is unable to reach them due its limitation like overburdened manpower, poor infrastructure and inadequate resources and many other challenges.

In such a situation FPOs could be a great solution in transfer the technological information from both public and/ or private institutions and organizations. Besides, the field of agriculture and can be any other allied sector are constantly evolving and very dynamic. It is nearly difficult for a single farmer to have access to the vast reservoir of information that is generated from different sources. When farmer join in as group, it is simpler and effective to access and handle the information, besides every farmer possess native knowledge of their own as a result of his field experiences can also be shared. FPOs can play a role in being the most effective information management platforms by exchange the need based technical information developed by public and private sources and also sharing the member's personal experiences from their respective sector (Deepa S *et al*. 2018) [2].

Pertaining to the present study, the Information Management Behaviour (IMB) which is operationally defined as the exercises executed by FPO directors and Members for acquisition, processing and dissemination of scientific agriculture and allied information with respect to strengthening of FPO activities. Strengthening and sustaining of FPOs is possible by large extent on diffusion of required information at right time. It performs as a tool for taking righteous decisions at the proper time. Hence, this study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of how information is communicated within the various parts of the FPO information system.

Methodology

An Ex-post facto research design was used for this study. The research was conducted in the erstwhile Mahabubnagar district, which is part of the Southern Telangana Zone in the state of Telangana, during the year 2022-23. Data was collected from four mandals of Kothakota, Pebbair, Wanaparthy and Jogulamba Gadwal using a simple random sampling technique. A total of 05 FPO (Kashimnagar Farmer producer company ltd, Madanapuram Farmer producer Company ltd, Pebbair farmer producer company ltd, Palamuru Farmer producer company ltd and Maldakal Farmer producer Company LTD.) from these mentioned mandals were selected purposely based on the age of the FPO (FPOs with experience of at least 03 years). For this study, 10 Board of Directors (BODs) from each Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) were selected purposively. These BODs are responsible for to assign or to govern the affairs of the Producer Company under Section 581(C) of Indian Companies Act, 1956, as amended in 2013 (Farmer Producer Organisations - FAQs, NABARD 2015). Additionally, 10 active shareholders from each FPO, who were influenced by the BODs, were randomly chosen. These shareholders were selected from 30 villages across 5 FPO Mandals. Thus, in total, the sample comprised 100 respondents.

Based on the Pre-test conducted for sample of 30 members from non-selected area to non-selected FPOs and discuss with extension experts. Information Management Behaviour was analysed is combined form of Information Acquisition Behaviour(IAM), Information Processing behaviour (IPM) and Information Dissemination Behaviour (IDM), The frequency of contact of different information sources was considered on a four point continuum of 'regular', 'occasional', 'rare' and 'never' with a scoring of 3, 2,1 and 0, respectively with included the communication channels *viz*. personal – cosmopolite, localite channels and Impersonal cosmopolite, localite channels. Besides IPM include Information Evaluation, treatment and storage followed by IDM were comprehensively listed under different headings *viz*., individual contact, group contact and mass contact. The required data were collected by personal interview utilizing a well-structured and pretested interview. The collected data were tabulated and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools.

Data was collected using structured interview schedule developed for the study. Based on obtained scores the respondents were grouped into low, medium and high behaviour categories according to equal interval method. The collected data was analyzed using appropriate statistical tools like frequency and percentage, class interval, arithmetic mean and standard deviation.

Results and Discussion

Information Acquisition behaviour

The information Acquisition behavior has been delineated from the Fig.1. Wherein about 64% of the FPO respondents perceived high level of information acquisition behavior overall, followed by 32% and 17% of the respondents who had medium and low magnitude of information acquisition behaviour.

Information processing behaviour

The information Processing behaviour has been delineated from the Fig.1., wherein about 58% of the FPO respondents perceived high level of information processing behavior overall, followed by 28% and 14% of the respondents who had medium and low magnitude of information processing behaviour respectively.

Information dissemination behaviour

The information Dissemination behaviour has been delineated from the Fig.1. Wherein about 51% of the FPO respondents perceived high level of information dissemination behavior overall, followed by 25% and 11% of the respondents who had medium and low magnitude of information dissemination behaviour discretely.

The finding derives support from that of Jagan Mohan Reddy M *et al*. (2020) [4] who also reported that similar findings in his research study of Dynamics of Information Sharing Behavior of the Innovative Farmers of Telangana State.

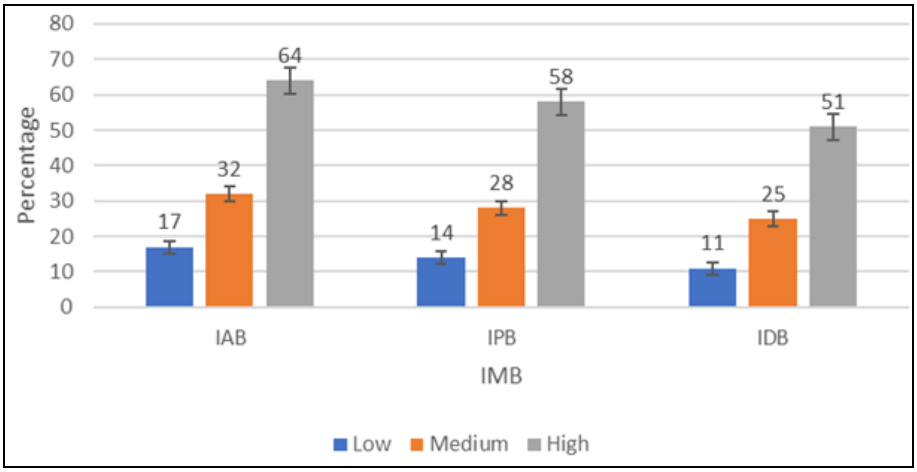

Fig 1: Information Acquisition Behaviour (IAB)

Table 1: Distribution of respondents based on their information Acquisition through different channels according to nature of personnel involved (n=100)

S. No.	Source/Channel	Regularity in Contact (Frequency &Percentage)				Total weightage	Mean Weightage	Rank
		Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never			
A.	**Personal-Cosmopolite Channel**							
1	Discussion with NGOs/Voluntary organizations	32 (32%)	45 (45%)	12 (12%)	11 (11%)	198	1.98	II
2	Discussions with RARS/University Scientists	43 (43%)	23 (23%)	21 (21%)	13 (13%)	196	1.96	III
3	Discussions with officials of Dept. of Agriculture/KVKs	48 (48%)	22 (22%)	18 (18%)	12 (12%)	206	2.06	I
4	Discussions with financial institutes	11 (11%)	22 (22%)	56 (56%)	11 (11%)	133	1.33	V
5	Discussion with Private companies'/Input agencies officials	22 (22%)	15(15%)	42(42%)	21 (21%)	138	1.38	IV
B.	**Personal-Localite channels**							
1	Discussion with family members	32 (32%)	36 (36%)	21 (21%)	11 (11%)	189	1.89	IV
2	Discussion with Friends	48 (48%)	25 (25%)	16 (16%)	11 (11%)	210	2.10	III
3	Discussion with fellow FPOs and their members	59 (59%)	14 (14%)	21 (21%)	6 (6%)	226	2.26	I
4	Progressive or/and experienced personalities of the selected villages under respected FPO	45 (45%)	32 (32%)	12 (12%)	11 (11%)	211	2.11	II
C.	**Impersonal- cosmopolite channels**							
1	Attending and participating in webinars and Workshops	22 (22%)	15 (15%)	31 (31%)	32 (32%)	127	1.27	VI
2	Exposure visits and field trips	28 (28%)	18 (18%)	38 (38%)	16 (16%)	158	1.58	V
3	Reading publications/information material and farm magazines	47 (47%)	22 (22%)	11 (11%)	20 (20%)	196	1.96	II
4	Agriculture and agribusiness news articles in news papers	39 (39%)	27 (27%)	18 (18%)	16 (16%)	189	1.89	IV
5	Cluster meetings/Workshops	53 (53%)	28 (28%)	11 (11%)	08 (08%)	226	2.26	I
6	Agricultural exhibitions/Melas	44 (44%)	22 (22%)	16 (16%)	18 (18%)	192	1.92	III

Item analysis of Information Acquisition Behaviour

According to Table 1, the majority (48%) of respondents regularly keep discussions with officials from the Department of Agriculture or KVKs (Krishi Vigyan Kendra), followed by conversations with NGOs or voluntary organizations, and interactions with university scientists under personal- cosmopolite channel

Similarly, when it came to personal-localite channels, 59 percent of the FPO farmers regularly discussions with fellow FPO members for acquisition of information, followed by conversations with progressive farmers and experienced individuals from the selected villages, and then discussions with friends.

In the category of impersonal-cosmopolite channels, the most favored sources were cluster meetings or workshops, followed by reading publications, information materials, and farm magazines, and then attending agricultural exhibitions or melas.

Information Processing Behaviour (IPB)

Table 2: Distribution of respondents based on their Information Processing Behaviour (IPB) (n=100)

S. No.	Source/Channel	Regularity in Contact				Total weightage	Mean Weightage	Rank
		Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never			
A.	**Information Evaluation**							
	Weighing the messages with past experience	46 (46%)	32 (32%)	12 (12%)	10 (10%)	214	2.14	III
	Economic and local feasibility of the message	74 (74%)	12 (12%)	8 (8%)	6 (6%)	254	2.54	I
	Consider the degree of complexity of the message	46 (46%)	23 (23%)	15 (15%)	16 (16%)	199	1.99	V
	Consider the degree of compatibility of the message	66 (66%)	10 (10%)	11 (11%)	13 (13%)	229	2.29	II
	Consider the degree of trialability of the message	45 (45%)	32 (32%)	12 (12%)	11 (11%)	211	2.11	IV
B.	**Information treatment**							
	Consult the resource person of the selective message	45 (45%)	31 (31%)	13 (13%)	11 (11%)	210	2.10	II
	Discuss with progressive neighboring farmers/ fellow shareholders	58 (58%)	18 (18%)	12 (12%)	12 (12%)	222	2.22	I
	Discussion with government officials	49 (49%)	22 (22%)	13 (13%)	16 (16%)	204	2.04	III
	Involving in field trials/demonstrations	31 (31%)	35 (35%)	21 (13%)	13 (13%)	184	1.84	IV
C.	**Information storage**							
	Take notes	21 (21%)	51 (51%)	16 (16%)	12 (12%)	181	1.81	III
	Preserving the booklets or folders	56 (56%)	21 (21%)	11 (11%)	12 (12%)	221	2.21	I
	Make minutes or record	18 (18%)	54(54%)	13 (13%)	15 (15%)	175	1.75	IV
	Taking photo-copy of the resource material	47 (47%)	30 (30%)	11 (11%)	12 (12)	212	2.12	II

Item analysis of Information Processing Behaviour

From Table 2 reveals the following insights about information processing behavior:

Information Evaluation: On receiving information, respondents most frequently considered the economic and local feasibility of the message first. This was followed by assessing the compatibility of the message with their needs and weighing the messages against past experiences.

Information Treatment: it was indicated that, through information treatment, the top approach was discussing the information with progressive neighboring farmers or fellow shareholders. This was followed by consulting with a resource person related to the specific message, and then discussing the information with agriculture government officials.

Information Storage: In terms of storing information, respondents primarily preserved information by keeping booklets or folders. This was followed by making photocopies of the resource material and taking notes.

These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Kasidurai S and Vengatesan D (2017) [5], which also reported similar patterns in information management behavior among maize growers.

Information Dissemination Behaviour (IDB)

Table 3: Distribution of respondents based on their Information Dissemination Behaviour (IPB) according to nature of contact (n=100)

S. No.	Source/Channel	Regularity in Contact				Total weightage	Mean Weightage	Rank
		Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely	Never			
A.	**Individual contact**							
	Through telephone calls/ Mobile phones	43 (43%)	31 (31%)	12 (12%)	14 (14%)	203	2.03	III
	Farm and home visits	12 (12%)	17 (17%)	28 (28%)	43 (43%)	98	0.98	IV
	Discussion with scientists and extension workers	51 (51%)	25 (25%)	13 (13%)	11 (11%)	216	2.16	II
	Discussion with fellow farmers/progressive farmers of the village or farmers from the same FPO or other FPOs	64 (64%)	13 (13%)	11 (11%)	12 (12%)	229	2.29	I
B.	**Group contact**							
	Participation in training programmes awareness programmes	34 (34%)	24 (24%)	31 (31%)	11 (11%)	181	1.81	III
	Taking part in group discussions	54 (54%)	21 (21%)	14 (14%)	11(11%)	218	2.18	I
	Participating in visits and trips	42 (42%)	18 (18%)	10 (10%)	30 (30%)	172	1.72	IV
	Participation in lectured meeting	33 (33%)	17 (17%)	22 (22%)	28 (28%)	155	1.55	V
	Participation in demonstrations	38 (38%)	31 (31%)	17 (17%)	14 (14%)	193	1.93	II
C.	**Mass contact**							
	Agriculture exhibitions	43 (43%)	22 (22%)	24 (24%)	11 (11%)	197	1.97	II
	TV or radio programmes	39 (39%)	26 (26%)	14 (14%)	21(21%)	183	1.83	III
	Kisan melas	62 (62%)	13 (13%)	11 (11%)	14 (14%)	223	2.23	I
	Farmers day	22 (22%)	39 (39%)	18 (18%)	21 (21%)	162	1.62	V
	Publications distribution	26(26%)	42 (42%)	18(18%)	14 (14%)	180	1.80	IV

Item analysis of Information Dissemination Behaviour (IDB)

Table 3 presents the findings on Information Dissemination Behavior (IDB):

Individual Level: For disseminating information individually, the most common method was discussing with fellow farmers or progressive farmers within the village or from the same or other FPOs. This was followed by discussions with scientists and extension workers, and then using mobile phones.

Group Level: At the group level, the top methods for information dissemination included participating in group discussions, followed by involvement in demonstrations, and then attending training and awareness programs.

Mass Level: For mass-level dissemination, the most preferred methods were attending Kisan Melas, followed by agricultural exhibitions, and then TV and radio programs.

These preferences highlight the various ways in which information is disseminated across different levels of interaction.

Conclusion

Discussions with fellow FPOs and their members followed by discussions with officials of Dept. of Agriculture/KVKs was regularly used as their major channel for information acquisition. It is therefore, necessitates that FPOs and their members and department officers/KVK scientist should be with the upto date information on agri and allied sector. Who can be the great asses for the quick and effective dissemination behaviour. Additionally, farm telecast programs and knowledge material should be developed in collaboration with scientists and extension personnel, using simple local language and tailored to the specific agro-climatic conditions, commodity based, and need based activities of the FPOs. Increasing awareness programs and focused discussions, along with training, will help FPO farmers stay informed and gain the necessary knowledge and skills were suggested.

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