

International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development

Volume 7; Issue 7; July 2024; Page No. 603-606

Received: 27-05-2024
Accepted: 30-06-2024

Indexed Journal
Peer Reviewed Journal

Correlates of socio-economic profiles and farmers' attitudes towards RBK services: An analytical study

MD. Saifuddin^{*1}, M Rama Devy², K Suseela³, Keesam Manasa¹ and Sidharth S¹

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, Dairy Extension Division, ICAR- National Dairy Research Institute, Karnal, Haryana, India

²Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension Education, Agricultural College, Bapatla, ANGRAU, Andhra Pradesh, India

³Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Economics, Agricultural College, Bapatla, ANGRAU, Andhra Pradesh, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33545/26180723.2024.v7.i7h.1141>

Corresponding Author: MD. Saifuddin

Abstract

Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs), an innovative initiative in Andhra Pradesh aimed at addressing systemic challenges in agriculture such as inadequate infrastructure and volatile market prices. RBKs are designed to provide comprehensive support to farmers by offering essential inputs, expert advice and procurement of farmers' produce. This study explores how various socio-economic factors, including age, education, farming experience, and land holding, influence farmers' attitudes towards these services. Data was collected from 120 farmers in East Godavari district through structured interviews and analyzed using SPSS. The findings indicate that socio-economic variables like age, education, farming experience, and land holding do not significantly impact attitudes toward RBKs. In contrast, significant positive correlations were found with extension contact, mass media utilization, and training participation. Increased interaction with extension services and greater exposure to mass media were associated with more favourable attitudes, while training programs enhanced farmers' understanding and confidence in using RBK services. The results emphasize the importance of effective extension services, mass media communication, and training programs in optimizing the impact of RBK services. Overall, RBK services are perceived as broadly beneficial across various income levels, with recommendations for further research to investigate additional factors influencing farmers' engagement with agricultural support systems.

Keywords: Farmers, socio-economic profiles, attitudes, correlation analysis, RBK service

Introduction

Agriculture, often heralded as the bedrock of human sustenance and economic development, remains a critical sector in many economies, including India. It not only provides food security but also serves as a primary source of livelihood for millions of people. However, despite its importance, Indian agriculture faces a host of systemic challenges that undermine its efficiency and sustainability. Farmers contend with issues ranging from inadequate infrastructure and limited access to modern technology, to volatile market prices and insufficient support systems. These obstacles significantly impact their productivity and financial stability, thereby affecting the overall agricultural output of the nation (Anuhya *et al.*, 2022) ^[1]. In response to these pervasive challenges, the government of Andhra Pradesh has introduced the Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs), a strategic initiative aimed at revolutionizing the agricultural support system. RBKs are envisioned as a comprehensive solution to the myriad problems faced by farmers. These centers are designed to serve as a one-stop hub at village level for a range of agricultural services (Saifuddin *et al.*, 2024; Nikhitha *et al.*, 2024) ^[11, 7]. They provide access to essential inputs such as high-quality seeds and fertilizers, offer expert advice on crop management, facilitate real-time

information through digital platforms and market linkage through procurement of farmers' produce (Saifuddin *et al.*, 2023; Chowdary *et al.*, 2022) ^[13, 3]. By consolidating these services, RBKs aim to address the critical gaps in the agricultural support system, making it more accessible and responsive to the needs of farmers.

The innovative features of RBKs mark a significant departure from traditional agricultural support mechanisms. They leverage technology to offer tailored support based on regional agricultural conditions and farmers' specific needs. The integration of digital tools into RBK services enables farmers to receive timely information on weather forecasts, pest outbreaks, and market prices, thereby enhancing their decision-making capabilities. Additionally, RBKs focus on providing personalized assistance, which helps in addressing the unique challenges faced by different segments of the farming community. Given the pivotal role of RBKs in addressing the shortcomings of traditional agricultural support systems, understanding how farmers' socio-economic profiles correlate with their attitudes towards these services becomes essential. The objective of this study is to explore this relationship in depth, examining how various socio-economic factors such as income level, education, and land ownership influence farmers'

perceptions and utilization of RBK services. This investigation is crucial for several reasons. Firstly, it aims to uncover potential disparities in how different socio-economic groups interact with and benefit from RBK services. Such insights can identify barriers to effective service delivery and highlight areas where RBKs may need to be adapted to better serve diverse farmer populations.

Furthermore, this research has the potential to provide actionable recommendations for enhancing the design and implementation of RBK services. By understanding the specific needs and attitudes of various farmer demographics, policymakers can tailor interventions to ensure more equitable and effective support. The findings are expected to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the alignment between socio-economic factors and agricultural support systems, ultimately leading to more targeted and impactful agricultural policies. The anticipated outcomes of this study will not only provide valuable insights into the current effectiveness of RBK services but will also lay the groundwork for future research. The findings will inform the development of strategies to optimize RBK operations and improve their outreach. Additionally, they will contribute to the broader discourse on agricultural support systems, offering a framework for evaluating and enhancing similar initiatives in other regions. In essence, this study aims to bridge the gap between socio-economic realities and agricultural support services, fostering a more resilient and inclusive agricultural sector for the future.

Methodology

The study was carried out during the year 2022, employing an exploratory research approach to investigate the effectiveness of the Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) in

Andhra Pradesh. The selection of Andhra Pradesh was purposive, given the state's implementation of RBKs - an innovative initiative designed to deliver agricultural support directly to farmers at village level. Established on May 30, 2020, RBKs comprised a network of 10,641 centers spread across all village secretariats within the state (Saifuddin *et al.*, 2022; Reddy *et al.*, 2022; Babu *et al.*, 2021) [12, 4, 2]. A multi-stage sampling method was utilized to ensure a comprehensive and representative collection of data. Initially, East Godavari district was purposively chosen from the thirteen districts of Andhra Pradesh due to its comparatively high number of RBKs. In the subsequent stage, four mandals within East Godavari were selected based on their RBK coverage. Following this, three villages from each chosen mandal were randomly sampled. In the final stage, ten farmers from each village were selected through random sampling techniques. This structured approach resulted in a final sample size of 120 farmers. Prior to the commencement of data collection, it was confirmed that RBKs were operational in all the selected villages, ensuring the validity and relevance of the study findings. Empirical data for the study were gathered through personal interviews conducted using a structured interview schedule. The structured format ensured consistency and comprehensiveness in the data collection process. Data analysis was carried out using the 26th version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This software facilitated a range of statistical computations, including frequency distributions, percentage calculations, mean values, and correlation analysis. The use of SPSS enabled a detailed and systematic examination of the data, allowing for robust statistical inferences and insights into the relationships between variables.

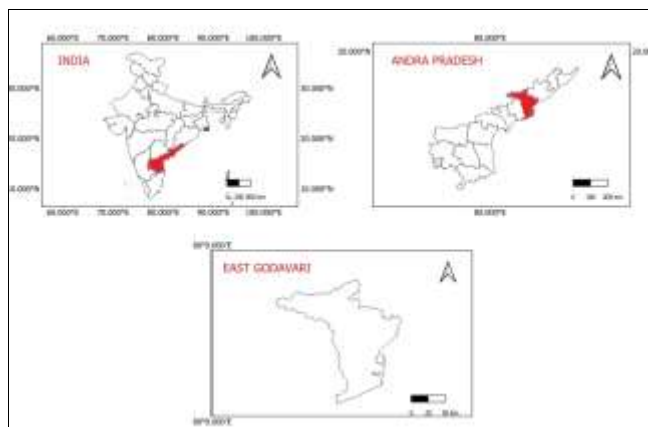


Fig 1: Locale of the study (East Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh)

Results and Discussion

The correlation analysis, presented in Table 1, reveals several insights into how socio-economic profiles relate to farmers' attitudes towards Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs). The analysis shows that age and farming experience have negative correlations with attitudes towards RBK services, with Pearson correlation coefficients of -0.029 and -0.010, respectively, and p-values of 0.752 and 0.910. These results suggest that neither age nor the length of farming experience significantly influences farmers' perceptions of RBK services. This could be because RBK services are designed to be applicable and beneficial for all age groups and

irrespective of farming experience, making age and experience less critical factors in determining attitudes. Similarly, the variable education has a weak positive correlation of 0.124 with a p-value of 0.176, indicating that educational attainment only marginally affects attitudes towards RBK services. This minor influence might arise because RBK services are likely structured to be easily accessible and understandable, reducing the impact of educational background on their utilization and attitude. Land holding shows a slightly negative correlation of -0.166 with a p-value of 0.070, approaching but not reaching conventional levels of statistical significance. The findings

were in accordance with similar studies conducted by Rebecca (2012); Meethal and Seema (2023) ^[9, 5]. This marginally negative correlation might suggest that farmers with larger land holdings could perceive RBK services as less critical compared to those with smaller land holdings. Larger landholders might have alternative resources or support systems, leading to a reduced reliance on RBK services. The correlation for cropping patterns is -0.066 with

a p-value of 0.477, indicating no significant relationship with attitudes towards RBK services. This lack of significant correlation implies that the diversity in cropping patterns does not substantially affect how farmers view or engage with RBK services. The universal nature of RBK services, which are designed to support a range of cropping systems, likely minimizes the influence of cropping patterns on attitudes.

Table 1: Correlation analysis for the socio-economic profiles and their attitude towards RBK services (n =120)

S.no	Variables	Correlation coefficient (r)	
		Pearson correlation	Significant(2-tailed)
1	Age (X ₁)	-0.029	0.752
2	Education (X ₂)	0.124	0.176
3	Farming experience (X ₃)	-0.010	0.910
4	Land holding (X ₄)	-0.166	0.070
5	Cropping pattern (X ₅)	-0.066	0.477
6	Extension contact (X ₆)	0.316**	0.000
7	Mass media utilization (X ₇)	0.298**	0.001
8	Annual income (X ₈)	0.029	0.750
9	Trainings undergone (X ₉)	0.254**	0.005

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

In contrast, extension contact and mass media utilization exhibit significant positive correlations with attitudes towards RBKs. The Pearson correlation coefficient for extension contact is 0.316 ($p = 0.000$), while mass media utilization has a coefficient of 0.298 ($p = 0.001$). These significant correlations suggest that increased interaction with extension contacts and higher exposure to mass media are strongly associated with more favourable attitudes towards RBK services. This positive relationship can be attributed to the role of extension contacts in providing tailored advice and support, which likely enhances farmers' perceptions of RBK services. Mass media, on the other hand, helps in spreading information and raising awareness about RBKs, which can positively influence farmers' attitudes. In the contemporary era, social media has proven to be a highly effective tool for raising awareness. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance efforts in promoting the services of RBKs among the farming community. To achieve this, a multifaceted approach should be employed, utilizing Extension Agents, Agriculture Department Officers, and Mass Media, as recommended by Raina *et al.*, (2011) ^[8] and Nain *et al.*, (2015) ^[6]. Additionally, the government should adopt strategies similar to those of the corporate sector, leveraging social media platforms for impactful awareness campaigns, given the significant rise in social media usage in recent years (Sardesai, 2021) ^[13]. The correlation with annual income is minimal, with a coefficient of 0.029 and a p-value of 0.750, indicating no significant relationship with attitudes towards RBK services. This result suggests that variations in income levels do not substantially impact how farmers perceive RBK services,

possibly due to the comprehensive nature of the services, which are accessible to all sections of the farming community. Finally, the variable trainings undergone demonstrates a significant positive correlation with a coefficient of 0.254 ($p = 0.005$). This suggests that farmers who have participated in training programs offered by the RBKs generally exhibit more favourable attitudes towards these services. The beneficial effect of training likely arises from an enhanced understanding and increased confidence in utilizing RBK services, which in turn improves overall attitudes.

Conclusion

The analysis of socio-economic profiles and attitudes towards Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) reveals that factors such as age, farming experience, education, and land holding show negative or no significant impact on farmers' attitude of RBK services. In contrast, extension contact, mass media utilization, and training undergone exhibit significant positive correlations with attitudes towards RBK services. Specifically, increased interaction with extension contacts and higher mass media exposure are strongly associated with more favourable attitudes, likely due to enhanced information dissemination and support. Training programs also play a crucial role in improving perceptions, as they boost farmers' understanding and confidence in using RBK services. The lack of significant influence from annual income suggests that RBK services are universally accessible and beneficial across different income levels. These findings underscore the importance of effective extension services, mass media engagement, and training

programs in shaping positive attitudes towards RBK services. By focusing on these areas, it is possible to improve farmers' attitude and utilization of agricultural support services. Further research could explore these dynamics in greater detail and investigate additional factors that may influence farmers' attitudes and interactions with RBK services.

References

1. Anuhya P, Khare NK, Bisht K, Nahatkar SB. Extent of adoption of Rythu Bharosa Kendra's technologies and services in Ananthapuram district of Andhra Pradesh. *Asian J Agric Ext Educ Sociol*. 2022;40(10):51-55.
2. Babu GP, Jayalakshmi M, Chaithanya BH, Mahadevaiah M, Srinivas T. Effectiveness of season long training programme on knowledge levels in Kurnool district of Andhra Pradesh. *Indian J Ext Educ*. 2021;57(4):44-48.
3. Chowdary KR, Jyotsna MK, Jyothi I. A study on perception and utilization of services of Rythu Bharosa Kendra's (RBKs) by the farmers in Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh, India. *Curr J Appl Sci Technol*. 2022;41(27):40-47.
4. Damodara Reddy AK, Bala Hussain Reddy P, Sailaja V, Nafeez Umar Sk. Awareness of farmers towards Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) products and services in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. *J Res ANGRAU*. 2022;50(3):144-148.
5. Meethal SVK, Seema B. Attitude of beneficiary farmers towards the service delivery system of agro service centres in Kerala, India. *J Ext Educ*. 2022;34(1):6759-6765.
6. Nain MS, Singh R, Mishra JR, Sharma JP. Utilization and linkage with agricultural information sources: a study of Palwal district of Haryana state. *J Community Mobil Sustain Dev*. 2015;10(2):152-156.
7. Nikhitha A, Ganesh Kumar P, Arun Kumar S, Sailaja V, Subramanyam D, Ramana Murthy B. A study on profile characteristics of stakeholders of Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs). *J Exp Agric Int*. 2024;46(9):142-153.
8. Raina V, Nain MS, Hansra BS, Singh D. Marketing behaviour and information sources utilization pattern of flower growers. *J Community Mobil Sustain Dev*. 2011;6(2):180-184.
9. Rebecca AA. Attitude of women farmers towards agricultural extension services in Ifelodun local government area, Osun State. *Am J Soc Manag Sci*. 2012;3(4):125-131.
10. Saifuddin MD, Rama Devy M, Suseela K. Scale construction and assessing farmers' attitude towards the functioning of Rythu Bharosa Kendras. *Gujarat J Ext Educ*. 2024;36(2):1-6.
11. Saifuddin MD, Rama Devy M, Rao MS, Suseela K. Profile of the beneficiary farmers of Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs). *Andhra Agric J*. 2022;69(2):288-294.
12. Saifuddin MD, Rama Devy M, Rao MS, Suseela K. Effectiveness of Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) services as perceived by farmers in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. *Asian J Agric Ext Educ Sociol*. 2023;41(4):34-41.
13. Sardesai S. Trends in use of social media in India since 2014: growth across platforms, user profile. *The Indian Express*; c2021. Available from: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/trends-in-use-of-social-media-in-india-since-2014-growth-across-platforms-user-profile-7369588/>.