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Profile characteristics of beneficiary farmers of Rythu Vedikas

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Abstract

Telangana, an agrarian state in India, has made significant strides in enhancing agricultural practices through innovative initiatives. Among these, the establishment of Rythu Vedikas stands out as a ground-breaking effort aimed at transforming agricultural support and farmer engagement. Launched as part of a broader strategy to improve agricultural productivity and farmer welfare, Rythu Vedikas represent a novel approach to addressing the challenges faced by the farming community. The present research study was conducted during 2023-24. *Ex-post-facto* research design was followed for the study and a sample of 120 respondents was drawn. The profile of beneficiary farmers includes various socio-economic and behavioral aspects such as age, education, landholding, annual income, awareness on Rythu Vedika activities, information-seeking behavior, knowledge sharing, extension contact, extension participation, achievement motivation, decision-making ability and market intelligence. Results revealed that the majority of respondents were middle-aged (53.33%) and with 47.50 per cent having small landholdings. Regarding education, most respondents (30.00%) had secondary schooling, followed by 17.50 per cent with intermediate education, and 15.83 per cent who were illiterate. In terms of annual income, 50.83 per cent fell into the lower-middle-income group. When it came to awareness on Rythu Vedika activities, 51.67 per cent had high awareness and 48.33 per cent had medium awareness. In terms of information-seeking behavior, the majority of respondents (47.50%) exhibited a medium level, while 40.83 per cent showed a medium level of knowledge sharing. Most farmers (48.33%) had medium extension contact, with 27.50 per cent having high contact. Similarly, extension participation, achievement motivation and decision-making ability were predominantly at medium levels, with 36.67 per cent, 43.33 per cent and 42.50 per cent of farmers in these categories, respectively. For market intelligence, 45.00 per cent of respondents showed a medium level.

Keywords: Rythu Vedikas, modern agricultural technologies, awareness on Rythu Vedikas, knowledge sharing

1. Introduction

Telangana, the youngest state in the Indian Republic, has a deep-rooted agrarian tradition that profoundly influences its socio-economic fabric. Agriculture in Telangana is not merely a livelihood but a cultural cornerstone that drives both economic and social dynamics. Recognizing agriculture's pivotal role in the state's development, the Government of Telangana has introduced several innovative measures to address the sector's challenges and enhance its performance. Among these measures, the establishment of Rythu Vedikas stands out as a groundbreaking initiative. These centers, inaugurated by former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekhar Rao on October 31, 2020, represent the first of their kind in India. The Rythu Vedikas are designed to provide a comprehensive support system for farmers, aiming to transform them into "Rythe Raju" by offering essential resources, advanced technology, and effective extension services (Lavanya 2022) [10].

The Rythu Vedikas, a total of 2,601 centers strategically positioned across Telangana, are funded through a combination of state and MNREGS resources, with each center costing Rs. 22 lakhs, including Rs. 12 lakhs from the Department of Agriculture and Rs. 10 lakhs from MNREGS. These centers serve multiple purposes: they act as hubs for modern agricultural training, offer financial guidance, and function as offices for Agriculture Extension Officers (AEOs). This dual role enhances service delivery and ensures that farmers receive localized support. Furthermore, the Rythu Vedikas facilitate government-farmer interactions, helping to address on-ground issues and develop targeted strategies. They also host skill development programs, awareness campaigns, and legal aid clinics, underscoring their comprehensive role in advancing Telangana's agricultural sector and supporting its farming community.

2. Methodology

The study was conducted in the Mahabubabad district of Telangana State during the year 2023-24. *Ex-post-facto* research design was followed for the study. Three mandals

and two villages from each mandal were selected *viz*., Kambalapalli, Bethole, from Mahabubabad mandal; Rajole, Mogilicherla from Kuravi mandal and Madanathurthy, Aleru from Nellikuduru mandal were selected by using simple random method a total of 20 farmers from each village were selected using the simple random method, constituting a total sample of 120 farmers. Pre-tested interview schedule was used to collect the primary data and statistical techniques like Arithmetic mean, Standard deviation, frequency and percentage were used.

3. Results and Discussion

In this study, 12 socio-personal characters of farmers in the Mahabubabad region was studied. The findings are outlined below with appropriate categorizations (Table 1).

3.1 Age

Age was operationalized as the chronological age of the respondent in terms of the total number of years completed at the time of conducting the study. The results presented in Table 1 revealed that the majority (53.33%) of respondents belong to the middle age group, followed by 29.17 per cent in the old age group and 17.50 per cent in the young age group. This trend could be attributed to the fact that middle-aged and older farmers in rural areas are more likely to depend on agriculture as their primary livelihood, while younger individuals often seek other, more lucrative and less risky job opportunities outside agriculture. These findings align with those of Raju (2022) [12] and Babu (2023) [2], who observed a similar trend in rural farming populations.

3.2 Education

Education was operationally defined as the extent of formal educational level possessed by respondents at the time of investigation. The data in Table 1 indicated that 30.00 per cent of respondents had completed secondary schooling, followed by 17.50 per cent with intermediate education, 15.83 per cent who were illiterate, and the rest with various levels of schooling or higher education. The significant number of illiterate farmers and those with only primary education points to socio-economic barriers, such as the prioritization of agricultural work over formal schooling and the rural location of these communities. The relatively low levels of higher education (graduate and postgraduate) further suggest limited access to educational institutions in these areas. These findings are consistent with Kavad (2015) [9] and Tyngkan (2018) [17].

3.3 Land Holding

Land Holding was operationally defined as the number of standard acres of land possessed by the respondents at the time of conducting the study. The findings illustrated in Table 1 revealed that 47.50 per cent of respondents had small land holdings, followed by 30.00 per cent with semi medium, 8.33 per cent with marginal, 7.50 per cent with medium and 6.67 per cent with large land holdings. The high percentage of small and medium landholders is likely due to the subdivision and fragmentation of land over time. This pattern is similar to that observed by Dhruw (2018) [17] and Chavhan (2019) [3], who noted a similar trend in rural farming communities.

3.4 Annual income

Annual income was operationalised as the total income earned by the respondents from different sources of agriculture, allied occupations like farming, dairy and poultry etc., and other sources. The data in Table 1 revealed that the majority (50.83%) of respondents belonged to the lower-middle income group, followed by 25.00 per cent in the low-income group, 16.17 per cent in the upper-middle income group, and only 7.50 per cent in the high-income category. This income distribution highlights financial constraints among farmers, limiting their ability to invest in advanced technologies or inputs. On the other hand, farmers with higher income levels are better positioned to adopt innovative farming techniques. The findings are in line with those of Sahu (2016) [13] Saifuddin (2022) [14].

3.5 Awareness on Rythu Vedika activities

Awareness on Rythu Vedikas was operationalized as the extent to which the respondents were in the state of being aware (or) having knowledge of the activities of Rythu Vedikas. The data in Table 1 showed that 51.67 per cent of respondents had high awareness on Rythu Vedikas activities, with 48.33 per cent having medium awareness. There were no respondents unaware of Rythu Vedikas. This high awareness can be attributed to the government's effective outreach and engagement programs, which have made Rythu Vedikas a well-known platform among farmers.

3.6 Information Seeking Behavior

Information seeking behavior is defined as the frequency of seeking agricultural information among varied different categories. Table 1 illustrated that majority (47.50%) of the respondents had medium level of information seeking behavior followed by low (28.33%) and high (24.17%) information seeking behavior respectively. The medium level of information-seeking behavior among 47.50 per cent of farmers suggests that while some farmers are proactive in seeking out new agricultural information, a significant portion may lack the motivation, resources, or confidence to do so. This could be due to factors like limited literacy, low access to information sources, or a traditional mindset that prefers sticking to familiar practices. The lower levels of information-seeking behavior among others may also stem from a lack of awareness about the benefits of modern agricultural practices or from being overwhelmed by the complexity of new information. This trend is consistent with the findings of Guthriya (2015) [7] and Deepa (2019) [4].

3.7 Knowledge sharing

Knowledge sharing was operationally defined as the exchange of information and expertise among farming community towards the enhancement of agricultural productivity and profitability. Table 1 revealed that the majority (40.83%) of respondents exhibit a medium level of knowledge sharing, followed closely by those with low (35.83%) and high (33.34%) levels of knowledge sharing. The distribution of knowledge-sharing levels in relation to Rythu Vedikas likely reflects varying engagement with the platform. Respondents with medium knowledge sharing may participate moderately in Rythu Vedika activities, balancing personal understanding with community

exchanges. Those with low levels might face barriers such as limited access to the platform or lack of confidence in the information provided. High levels of knowledge sharing could stem from strong trust in Rythu Vedikas and active involvement in disseminating information to others.

3.8 Extension contact

Extension contact was operationalized as the degree to which the farmers maintained contact with the researchers and extension personnel of different organizations like agricultural and allied sectors. Table 1 showed that majority (48.33%) of the respondents had medium extension contact followed by high (27.50%) and low (24.17%) extension contact respectively. From the above results, it could be concluded that majority of the respondents had medium extension contact. This trend could be because most of the respondents were often in contact with extension functionaries of department of agriculture, veterinary and financial institutions but were occasionally in contact with horticulture, marketing officials, NGO's and never in contact with SAU scientists. The high extension contact observed among some respondents could be attributed to their proactive approach in seeking out advice and support, particularly from agricultural officers, which enabled them to stay informed and up-to-date with the latest practices. The findings were in accordance with those of Nagesh (2019) [11] and Saifuddin (2022) [14].

3.9 Extension participation

Extension participation was operationally defined as extension activities attended by the respondents organized by the scientists and extension officials. Table 1 revealed that respondents were fairly distributed across levels of extension participation, with (36.67%) at a medium level, (32.50%) at a low level, and (30.83%) at a high levels of extension participation. From the above results, it could be concluded that the distribution of extension participation levels may be influenced by varying awareness of Rythu Vedikas benefits, accessibility to extension services, and individual motivation. Medium participation might result from time constraints or moderate interest, while low participation could be due to personal interest and skeptical nature of the farmers. High participation likely reflects strong motivation or a high perceived value in the extension services, although fewer respondents are fully engaged at this level. The findings were in accordance with those of Jat (2016) [8].

3.10 Achievement motivation

Achievement motivation was operationally defined as the degree to which farmers strive for excellence in order to feel a sense of personal achievement. Table 1 depicted that majority (43.33%) of the respondents had medium level of achievement motivation followed by the respondents with high level (29.17%) and low level (27.50%) of achievement motivation respectively. The medium level of achievement motivation among 43.33 per cent of farmers suggests that many are driven to improve their farming outcomes but may be constrained by external factors such as limited resources, risk aversion, or a lack of confidence in their ability to succeed. Farmers with lower motivation might feel overwhelmed by the challenges of adopting new practices or fear potential losses, while those with higher motivation are likely more confident and proactive in pursuing better farming practices. The varying levels of motivation could be influenced by past experiences, peer influence, or the perceived reliability of the support provided by Rythu Vedikas. The results were in accordance with the findings of Shashikanth (2020) [16].

3.11 Decision making ability

Decision making ability was operationally defined as the skill of making informed and rational decisions by assessing facts, understanding the situation, and choosing the best course of action in agricultural production. Table 1 revealed that 42.50 per cent of the respondents had medium decision making ability followed by 30.83 per cent had low and 26.67 per cent had high decision making ability. The medium decision-making ability among 42.50 per cent of farmers likely reflects a balance between their experience and the challenges they face in managing their farms. Farmers with lower decision-making ability may lack confidence due to limited knowledge or previous negative experiences, while those with higher ability may benefit from greater access to information, better education or more robust support networks. The findings were in accordance with those of Aruna (2020) [1] and Sanjay (2023) [15].

3.12 Market intelligence

Market intelligence was the degree to which the systematic gathering, analysis, and dissemination of market-related information by the respondents. The findings from Table 1 revealed that the majority (45.00%) of respondents exhibit a medium level of market intelligence, followed by high (30.83%) and low (24.17%) levels of market intelligence. The medium level of market intelligence among 45.00 per cent of farmers suggests that while many farmers have a basic understanding of market trends, there is still a significant portion who may struggle with market-related decisions. This could be due to limited access to market information, a lack of formal education, or insufficient experience in dealing with market dynamics. The lower levels of market intelligence among some farmers may result from a reliance on traditional practices, a lack of exposure to broader market opportunities, or difficulties in interpreting and applying market data to their farming decisions. Conversely, those with higher market intelligence can effectively leverage market insights to maximize profitability and optimize crop selection strategies. The findings were in accordance with those of Dhara (2010) [5].

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents according to their profile characteristics

S. No.	Profile characteristics	Respondents (n=120)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	**Age (Years)**		
	Young age (Up to 35 years)	21	17.50
	Middle age (35-50 years)	64	53.33
	Old age (Above 50 years)	35	29.17
2	**Education**		
	Illiterate	19	15.83
	Primary schooling (upto 5th class)	15	12.50
	Upper Primary (upto 8th class)	17	14.17
	Secondary schooling (upto 10th class)	36	30.00
	Intermediate	21	17.50
	Graduation	10	8.33
	Post-graduation	2	1.67
	Others	0	0.00
3	**Land holding**		
	Marginal farmers (< 1 ha)	10	8.33
	Small farmers (1-2 ha)	57	47.50
	Semi Medium farmers (2-4 ha)	36	30.00
	Medium farmers (4-10 ha)	9	7.50
	Large farmers (>10ha)	8	6.67
4	**Annual Income**		
	Low income (<Rs.70,069)	30	25.00
	Lower Middle income (Rs.70,070 -Rs.2,73,099)	61	50.83
	Upper Middle income (Rs. 2,73,100 - Rs.8,45,955)	20	16.17
	High income (>Rs.8,45,956)	9	7.50
5	**Awareness on Rythu Vedikas**		
	Not aware	0	0.00
	Slightly aware	58	48.33
	Aware	62	51.67
6	**Information seeking behaviour**		
	Low	34	28.33
	Medium	57	47.50
	High	29	24.17
7	**Knowledge sharing**		
	Low	43	35.83
	Medium	49	40.83
	High	28	23.34
8	**Extension contact**		
	Low	29	24.17
	Medium	58	48.33
	High	33	27.50
9	**Extension participation**		
	Low	39	32.50
	Medium	44	36.67
	High	37	30.83
10	**Achievement motivation**		
	Low	33	27.50
	Medium	52	43.33
	High	35	29.17
11	**Decision making ability**		
	Low	37	30.83
	Medium	51	42.50
	High	32	26.67
12	**Market intelligence**		
	Low	29	24.17
	Medium	54	45.00
	High	37	30.83

4. Conclusion

The study on the profile characteristics of beneficiary farmers of Rythu Vedikas in Telangana provides insightful observations on the socio-economic and behavioral traits of the farming community. The majority of farmers are middle-aged with primary to secondary education and small landholdings, reflecting socio-economic constraints and a reliance on traditional agricultural practices. Despite high awareness on Rythu Vedikas activities, there is a medium level of information-seeking behavior and knowledge

sharing among farmers, indicating varying degrees of engagement with the platform. The results highlight the need for enhanced training programs and capacity-building initiatives to improve farmers proficiency in using ICT tools and accessing extension services. The findings also underscore the importance of transparency and credibility among extension personnel to foster trust and effectiveness. Moreover, the study points to a medium level of market intelligence and decision-making ability, suggesting that while many farmers are motivated to improve, they face challenges related to resource constraints and limited access to advanced agricultural practices. Addressing these issues through targeted support and improved training can significantly enhance the impact of Rythu Vedikas and contribute to the overall betterment of the agricultural sector in Telangana.

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