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Profile of village agriculture assistants of east Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh

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Abstract

The present study was undertaken to investigate the profile of Village Agriculture Assistants (VAAs) of RBKs in East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. *Ex-post facto* research design was adopted in this study. A total of 90 respondents were randomly selected and the data were collected by conducting personal interview of each of the respondent with the help of structured interview schedule. Careful analysis, tabulation and classification of the data were done. The results of the study indicated that majority of the Village Agriculture Assistants were male, had educational qualification of diploma (55.55%), low job experience (86.66%), were married (51.11%), belonged to rural background (38.89%), received medium number of trainings (63.33%), perceived organizational climate as average (78.89%), had medium job involvement (66.67%), medium level of aspiration (67.78%), medium achievement motivation (67.77%) and medium organizational commitment (77.78%). The analysis of these personal, socio-economic and psychological characteristics could be crucial in understanding the performance of VAAs. It could be crucial for policymakers in preparing appropriate interventions to enhance the performance of VAAs through training programs and other career advancement strategies.

Keywords: Rythu Bharosa Kendras, village agriculture assistants, profile

Introduction

Andhra Pradesh is one of the states that is primarily based on agriculture, devoting 37.35 per cent of its land to agriculture and 62.17 per cent of its working population still depends on agri-based industries. The government primarily focuses on agriculture and allied sectors with emphasis on farmers welfare. To meet the demands of the farmers and to offer hassle-free services at the village level the government of Andhra Pradesh has developed a novel approach and an integrated platform called Rythu Bharosa Kendram (Farmer Assurance Centre). Each RBK functions at a revenue village level, providing customized products and services based on local requirements. The functionaries of RBKs include Village Agriculture Assistants, Village Horticulture Assistants, Village Sericulture Assistants, Village Animal Husbandry Assistants, and Village Fisheries Assistants in the respective RBKs.

The Government of Andhra Pradesh established 10,641 Rythu Bharosa Kendras (RBKs) on 30th May 2020, with an expenditure of 200 crores in all Gram panchayats. The RBK services include an Agri Input Shop aimed at providing quality inputs available at the right price and time in villages, supported by integrated advisory through a Farmer Knowledge Centre, which acts as a training centre. The RBK concept is one of the six initiatives that were

nominated by the Centre for the UN Award. The initiative has revolutionised the agriculture sector by meeting farmers' needs from seed to sale (Anuhya et.al, 2022)^[1].

The state department of agriculture in Andhra Pradesh is currently implementing various programs, including Polambadi and the Seed Village Program, aimed at benefiting farmers. The success of these programs hinges on effective planning, implementation, and outreach to farmers. Extension personnel like Village Agriculture Assistants (VAAs), who work closely with farmers, play a crucial role in achieving successful outcomes. It not only depends on the number of VAAs but as well as their personal, socio-economic, and psychological characteristics. Keeping in view of the above the present study was taken up to investigate profile characteristics of Village Agriculture Assistants of Rythu Bharosa Kendras in Andhra Pradesh.

Material and Methods

Ex-post facto research design was followed for conducting the study. According to Kerlinger (1964)^[7] Ex-post facto research design is any systematic empirical enquiry in which the independent variables have not been directly manipulated because they have already occurred or they are inherently not manipulable. Andhra Pradesh state was selected purposively for the study as the RBKs were

established exclusively in the state by the government. East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh was selected purposively for the study as the highest number of RBKs were present in the erstwhile district. Out of 19 mandals in the district, nine mandals namely, Anaparthi, Kadiam, Gokavaram, Nidadavole, Rajanagaram, Biccavolu, Devarapalli, Korukonda and Gopalapuram were selected randomly and from each selected mandal ten respondents were selected randomly using simple random sampling procedure, thus making a sample of 90 respondents. Pre - tested interview schedule was used to collect the primary data and statistical techniques like Arithmetic mean, Standard deviation, frequency and percentage were used.

Results and Discussion

The data collected during the study was analyzed and the results were presented in Table 1.

Gender

It was visualized from the results presented in Table 1 that majority (58.88%) of the VAAs were male while rest of the VAAs (41.12%) were female. The research findings were in line with the findings of Kshatriya (2020)^[8] and Panda and Amardeep (2021)^[15].

Educational Qualification

It was observed from table 1 that half of the Village Agriculture Assistants (55.55%) had education level upto diploma followed by graduation (41.12%), post-graduation and above (3.33%). The reason for the above trend might be due to the entry qualification required for the post was agricultural diploma. The findings were similar to the findings of Tayade *et al.* (2022)^[18] and Kshatriya (2020)^[8].

Job experience

Results furnished in table 1 depicted that more than four-fifth of the Village Agriculture Assistants (86.66%) had low job experience followed by medium (11.11%) and high (2.23%) job experience. The reason for most of the VAAs under low job experience (3 to 6 years) might be due to the fact that RBKs were newly started by state government and the VAAs were mass recruited few years back and there were also few VAAs who worked as MPEOs in the department of agriculture. The results were supported by the finding of Deepika (2017)^[2].

Marital status

It was evident from table 1 that more than half of the VAAs

(51.12%) were married while rest of the VAAs (48.88%) were unmarried. The above results can be attributed to the fact that in Indian tradition, customs dictate that young people, be married as soon as their education is completed especially girls. The results were in line with Shama (2021)^[16].

Rural Urban Background

It was visualised from table 1 that more than one-third of the VAAs (38.89%) belonged to rural area followed by semi-urban (32.23%) and urban (28.88) areas. The possible reason for the above trend might be that the VAAs were from the rural areas having more knowledge in agriculture related practices and might be more interested to serve the farming community. This finding was in conformity with the findings of Jaryal *et al.* (2022)^[6], Sharma *et al.* (2016)^[17] and Nongtdu *et al.* (2012)^[14].

Mass media exposure

It was projected from table 1 that more than half of the VAAs (52.23%) had medium mass media exposure followed by high (24.44%) and low (23.33%) mass media exposure. The findings were in line with the results of Gupta (2022)^[5] and Gopika (2014)^[4].

Trainings received

The data from table 1 depicted that more than three-fifth of the VAAs (63.33%) received medium number of trainings followed by low (25.55%) and high (11.12%) number of trainings received. The possible reason for this trend might be due to the fact that the VAAs received induction training from the department followed by polambadi trainings, capacity building and seasonal trainings with respect to the job duties to be performed as per their job chart. The results were supported by the findings of Panda and Amardeep (2021)^[15] and Shama (2021)^[16].

Organizational climate

It was evident from table 1 that more than three-fourth of the VAAs (78.89%) perceived average organizational climate followed by good (12.22%) and poor (8.89%) organizational climate. The probable reason for this trend might be due to prevailing congenial environment in the organization which facilitated and motivated the VAAs to achieve the organisational and personal goals. The research findings were in line with the results of Nemanwar *et al.* (2023)^[13], Mohanapriya (2020)^[12] and Misha (2015)^[11].

S. No.	Variables	Category	VAAs (n=90)	
			F	%
1	Gender	Male	53	58.88
		Female	37	41.12
2	Educational Qualification	Diploma	50	55.55
		Graduation	37	41.12
		Postgraduation and above	3	3.33
3	Job experience	Low experience (3-6 years)	78	86.66
		Medium experience (7-10 years)	10	11.11
		High experience (11-14 years)	2	2.23
4	Marital status	Married	46	51.12
		Unmarried	44	48.88
5	Rural Urban Background	Rural (<5.01)	35	38.89
		Semi-urban (5.01-7.75)	29	32.23

		Urban (>7.75)	26	28.88
6	Mass media exposure	Low mass media exposure (<19.27)	21	23.33
		Medium mass media exposure (19.27-25.59)	47	52.23
		High mass media exposure (>25.59)	22	24.44
7	Trainings received	Less number of trainings (7-9)	23	25.55
		Medium number of trainings (10-12)	57	63.33
		High number of trainings (13-15)	10	11.12
8	Organizational climate	Poor organizational climate (<26.68)	8	8.89
		Average organizational climate (26.68-34.24)	71	78.89
		Good organizational climate (>34.24)	11	12.22
9	Job involvement	Low job involvement (<29.93)	14	15.55
		Medium job involvement (29.93-40.37)	60	66.67
		High job involvement (>40.37)	16	17.78
10	Level of aspiration	Low level of aspiration (<15.81)	13	14.44
		Medium level of aspiration (15.81-24.05)	61	67.78
		High level of aspiration (>24.05)	16	17.78
11	Achievement motivation	Low achievement motivation (<18.74)	11	12.22
		Medium achievement motivation (18.74-25.88)	61	67.78
		High achievement motivation (>25.88)	18	20
12	Organizational commitment	Low organizational commitment (>21.97)	13	14.44
		Medium organizational commitment (21.97-28.17)	70	77.78
		High organizational commitment (>28.17)	7	7.78

Job involvement

A panoramic view of table 1 depicted that two-third of the VAAs (66.67%) had medium job involvement followed by high (17.78%) and low (15.55%) job involvement. Their genuine interest and commitment in helping the farming community was a crucial factor in this trend. It can be implied that the VAAs who possessed medium job involvement were contended with their jobs and workplaces. VAAs with high job involvement had a drive for excellence and positive sentiments toward the system they operate in. Job involvement contributes importantly to organizational effectiveness, productivity, and morale by engaging employees deeply in their work and making it a meaningful and fulfilling experience. The findings were similar to those of Gupta (2022) ^[5] and Mamatha *et al.* (2022) ^[10].

Level of aspiration

Taking the long view of table 1 represented that majority of the VAAs (67.78%) had medium level of aspiration followed by high (17.78%) and low (14.44%) level of aspiration. The results could be attributed to their personal ambition for improvement by their involvement in their work. It might also be due to the fact that most of the VAAs had proactive mindset to pursue higher goals. The findings were in conformity with Gangrade (2009) ^[3] and Vijaibabu (2005) ^[19].

Achievement motivation

It was evident from table 1 that more than two-third (67.78%) of the VAAs had medium achievement motivation followed by high (20.00%) and low (12.22%) achievement motivation. The possible reason might be due to the situational factors being surrounded by motivating peers, internal drive to achieve goals and moderate challenges placed on them that put majority of the VAAs fall under medium achievement motivation. The findings were similar to the results of Maina (2018) ^[9] and Gupta (2022) ^[5].

Organizational commitment

It was observed from table 1 that more than three-fourth of the VAAs (77.78%) had medium organizational commitment followed by low (14.44%) and high organizational commitment (7.78%). The reason could be that the VAAs had accepted strong identification towards the value system and membership of that organization and also agreed with its objectives and were prepared to work as a strong team on behalf of the organization and in line with organizational goal and meet the perceived goals. The findings were in accordance with the result of Maina (2018) ^[9].

Conclusion

The profile of the Village Agriculture Assistants plays an immense role in the effective functioning of RBKs. Majority of the Village Agriculture Assistants had trainings received, organizational climate, job involvement, achievement motivation, organizational commitment at a medium level. These findings provide a way out for administration to bring improvement in these pivotal factors that would amplify the overall performance. The findings revealed that majority of the VAAs had educational qualification of diploma in agriculture. This highlights the need for augmenting their skill sets through capacity building initiatives and by providing career advancement opportunities. This study would help the administrators to strengthen the role of VAAs in effective implementation of RBKs.

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