

ROLE OF RURAL YOUTH IN AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Youth is a transitional period in the personality development of an individual and it bridges the years between childhood and adulthood. Youth play a decisive role in transforming the future of any country. Indian rural youth are a potential group which can be mobilized for augmenting agricultural production. But the role perception and role performance of rural youth in agricultural development are far from satisfactory. Hence a research study was undertaken to assess the perception and performance of rural youth club members and non-members with respect to selected roles in agricultural development. In this study role perception is empirically defined as a person's indication of what he feels important to do with reference to any idea or statement presented to him. The usage of the term in this study is unidirectional because it refers to one's own expectations. Davis (1949) defined role performance as how an individual actually performs a task in a given situation as distinct from how he is supposed to perform. In simpler terms role performance is what the actors do as positions occupants. In this study, role performance is empirically defined as the extension of participation of rural youth in agricultural development activities in a specific area.

The study was conducted at the N. E. S. Block, Pattambi, Palghat, Kerala selected purposively since this block had a number of viable rural youth clubs. Seventy five youth club members from the five registered youth clubs in this block and seventy five non-members from the villages where these youth clubs were located were selected randomly using Tippett's table of random numbers to constitute the sample for the study. The age group of respondents to delineate the role of youth for the study was fixed at 16-30 years as followed by Sinha and Pawar (1973). Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was computed to find out the extent of similarity in ranking the ten roles for agricultural development as perceived and performed by youth club members and non-members. Role perception of the respondents was measured by the "role perception scale" developed by the researcher which consisted of ten agricultural development roles. The respondents were asked to indicate their opinion regarding the degree of importance of these roles. The response to each role was obtained on a three point continuum, ranging from 'most important' to 'least important'. The role perception score of an individual was obtained by summing the scores of the corresponding responses for all the listed roles. Based on the mean role perception scores of the respondents with respect to each role, the roles were ranked in the descending order.

The computed Spearman's rank order correlation coefficient was found to be highly significant in case of both role perception and role performance. This indicates the high extent of similarity among rural youth in perceiving the

relative importance as well as their performance with reference to the ten roles, irrespective of being youth club members or non-members. The rank correlation coefficient and the ranking of the various identified roles based on their relative importance as perceived and performed respectively by youth club members and non-members are presented in Table 1 and 2. The role "helping in the non-formal education programmes organised for the farmers in the village" was perceived as the most important role by youth club members (Table 1).

Table 1

Differential ranking of roles in agricultural development as perceived by youth club members and non-members

| Sl. No. | Roles | Banking by youth club members | Banking by non-members |
|---------|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Helping in nonformal education programmes organised for the farmers in the village | 1 | 4 |
| 2 | Organising community nurseries, community irrigation projects, community markets, community warehouses, etc. for agricultural development | 2 | 5 |
| 3 | Helping farmers to obtain bank loans, supply and services and other facilities necessary for agricultural development | 3 | 1 |
| 4 | Active participation in the extension activities of the extension staff in agriculture | 4 | 6 |
| 5 | Running custom service units, establishing co-operative societies, etc. for the benefit of the farmers in the village | 5 | 2 |
| 6 | Increasing agricultural production through practical involvement in farming enterprises such as poultry/dairy/crop production, etc. | 6 | 3 |
| 7 | Creating local enthusiasm for agricultural development activities | 7 | 8 |
| 8 | Disseminating new agricultural technology among the farmers in the village through personal contacts | 8 | 1 |
| 9 | Participating in the preparation of agricultural development plans | 9 | 9 |
| 10 | Running agricultural information centres agricultural libraries, etc. for the farmers in the village | 10 | 10 |

* Significant at 0.05 level

$r_s = 0.721$ *

Education is a prerequisite for the success of any development programme. The youth club members might have clearly understood this phenomenon which might be the reason for their ranking of this role as the most important one. Being members of a group, i. e., the youth club, they might also have felt the need for group activity for mutual benefit which might have contributed to the ranking of "Organising community projects" as the next most important role.

Table 2
Differential ranking of roles in agricultural development as performed by youth club members and non-members

| Sl. No. | Roles | Ranking by youth club members | Ranking by non-members |
|---------|--|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 | Active participation in the extension activities of the extension staff in agriculture | 1 | 3 |
| 2 | Helping farmers to obtain bank loans, supply and services and other facilities necessary for agricultural development | 2 | 4 |
| 3 | Helping in nonformal education programmes organised for the farmers in the village | 3 | 6 |
| 4 | Increasing agricultural production through practical involvement in farming enterprises such as poultry/dairy/crop production, etc. | 4 | 1 |
| 5 | Disseminating new agricultural technology among the farmers in the village through personal contacts | 5 | 2 |
| 6 | Creating local enthusiasm for agricultural development activities | 6 | 5 |
| 7 | Organising community nurseries community irrigation projects community markets, community warehouses, etc. for the benefit of the farmers in the village | 7 | 7 |
| 8 | Running custom service units, establishing co-operative societies etc. for the benefit of the farmers in the village | 8 | 8 |
| 9 | Participating in the preparation of agricultural development plans | 9 | 9 |
| 10 | Running agricultural information centres agricultural libraries etc. for the farmers in the village | 10 | 10 |

*Significant at 0.05 level

$r_s = 0.782$

"Helping farmers to obtain bank loans, supply and services and other facilities necessary for agricultural development" was perceived as the most important role by the non-members (Table 1). Forming an integral part of the village folk, the rural youth might have often come across the difficulties felt by farmers in obtaining credit and other facilities essential for modern agriculture and hence they might have perceived this role as the most important one. The next role in the order of importance as perceived by the non-members was, "running custom service units, establishing co-operative societies, etc. for the benefit of the farmers in the village". The appreciation of the need for integrated supply and service system for the benefit of the farmers by the rural youth could be related in this context.

"Active participation in the extension activities organised by the extension staff in agriculture" was the most often performed role by youth club members (Table 2). Mostly extension activities are carried out in rural areas in collaboration with the village voluntary organisations. Youth clubs also serve as potential voluntary organisations complementing development activities and this might be the reason for the frequent performance of this role by youth club members.

On the contrary, the most often performed role by the non-members was "increasing agricultural production through practical involvement in farming enterprises such as poultry/dairy/crop production etc." (Table 2). It is a manifest and practical role that contributes directly to agricultural development and hence the high ranking assigned to this role by the non-members.

College of Agriculture
Trivandrum 695 522, India

Joy Mathew
A. G. G. Menon
C. Bhaskaran

References

- Davis, A. E. 1949, *The Human Group*, Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc. New York : 134.
- Sinha, P. R. R. and Pawar, S. S. 1973, Differential characteristics of successful—unsuccessful rural youth clubs. *Ben. Sci, Comm. Dev.* 7 (4) : 28—33.