



Short communication

## Determinants of the effectiveness of 'agriclinics and agribusiness centres scheme' in Kerala

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### Abstract

To identify the socio-psychological characteristics of graduate trainees in agriculture contributing to the effectiveness of 'Agriclinics and Agribusiness Scheme', a survey of 60 trainees from the agriclinics and agribusiness training programme of Kerala Agricultural University for the period from May 2002 to October 2003 was conducted. Results show that the most important factors influencing establishment of agribusiness units are attitude towards self-employment, entrepreneurial ability, and self-confidence. Gender-related variations were also significant with regard to attitude towards self-employment, decision-making ability, and information seeking behaviour. Agribusiness training programmes should, therefore, focus on changes in attitude towards self-employment, develop entrepreneurial ability, and enhance self-confidence of the trainees, which in turn, will promote successful agribusiness ventures.

**Keywords:** Entrepreneurship development, Socio-psychological variables, Training.

With the transformation of Indian agriculture from subsistence to industrial mode and its globalization, the challenges facing agricultural extension in the country are unprecedented. The relative proportion of agricultural graduates finding employment in the public sector in India is also shrinking gradually. More jobs should, therefore, be created in the private sector (George and Bhaskaran, 2004), besides increasing avenues for self-employment. This, however, necessitates fine-tuning the entrepreneurial skills of the agricultural graduates. With this objective, the Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India, in association with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Small Farmers Agribusiness Consortium (SFAC), and the National Institute of Agricultural Extension Management (MANAGE), Hyderabad, launched a programme called "Agriclinics and Agribusiness Centres Scheme". The objectives are to supplement the efforts of the government

extension system in making available inputs and services to the farmers and to provide gainful employment to the agricultural graduates. The training of agricultural graduates to instil the spirit of entrepreneurship is an integral part of this. To evaluate the effectiveness of the 'Agriclinics and Agribusiness Centres Scheme' among the graduate trainees of Kerala, a survey was conducted.

Sixty graduate trainees of the 'agriclinics and agribusiness training' at the Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) during the period from May 2002 to October 2003 were selected from three batches of 87 trainees (20 persons per batch randomly). Forty-four socio-psychological parameters that influence the trainees in establishing agriclinics and agribusiness were chosen. To evaluate the relevance of each variable, they were subjected to judges' rating with the help of 30 domain experts. The responses were collated on a five point continuum *viz.*,

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most relevant, relevant, undecided, slightly relevant, and not relevant with a weightage of 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively. Kendall's coefficient of concordance was used to assess the agreement among judges' ranking of the variables. Six statistically significant socio-psychological characteristics *viz.*, attitude towards self-employment, entrepreneurial ability, managerial ability, self-confidence, decision-making ability, and information seeking behaviour were selected for further analysis. Association between these socio-psychological characteristics and perception of the trainees about the training programme was analysed using  $\chi^2$  statistic, and the factors contributing to the establishment of agriclincs/agribusiness and the difference between the male and female trainees were evaluated using 't' test.

A comparison of the data in Table 1 indicates that the association among the socio-psychological variables such as entrepreneurial and decision-making abilities with perception of the trainees about utility of the content of the training programme and trainer effectiveness was significant.  $\chi^2$  was also significant for the inter-relationship between attitude towards self-employment and perception of the trainees about effectiveness of the training methods. Other socio-psychological variables were, however, not significant. Based on these results, it is reasonable to assume that trainees with a favourable

disposition towards self-employment, high entrepreneurial ability, and decision-making capacity have perceived the agriclincs and agribusiness-training programme as an effective process, compared to respondents devoid of such traits. Therefore, if selection of the trainees were based on these socio-psychological characteristics, the training programme would be most successful. This would also motivate the trainees to start agriclincs and agribusiness centres. Self-confidence might further stimulate the inner potentials and leadership qualities, without which starting and running an enterprise successfully would be impossible. Jyothi (2003) also expressed similar views previously. Hence, in any entrepreneurship development training, emphasis should be to create a favourable attitude towards self-employment, develop entrepreneurial ability, and enhance the self-confidence levels of trainees, which in turn, would encourage the trainees to establish enterprises or business ventures.

There were perceptible gender-related differences in the trainee attitudes towards self-employment, decision-making potential, and information seeking behaviour (Table 1). Although the female respondents had a relatively low decision-making ability and information seeking behaviour, they had a more positive attitude towards self-employment than their male counterparts.

Table 1. Influence of selected socio-psychological variables on the trainees

Variables	$\chi^2$ values for			Mean scores and t values for different categories					
	Trainer effectiveness	Utility of training content	Effectiveness of training methods	Started	Not started	t value	Male	Female	t value
Attitude towards self-employment	0.41	0.14	4.27*	5.65	5.49	2.13**	5.49	5.64	2.45**
Entrepreneurial ability	5.12*	6.33*	1.04	20.89	18.96	2.60**	19.29	19	0.46
Managerial ability	2.07	2.88	0.02	19.11	18.43	0.76	18.66	17.77	1.06
Self-confidence	0.88	1.45	0.16	26.22	23.94	1.89*	24.58	22.56	1.31
Decision making ability	9.66**	11.26**	3.72	14.89	14.09	1.05	14.31	13.62	1.74*
Information seeking behaviour	0.01	0.03	2.23	37.22	37.18	0.01	42	36.33	2.37**

\* Significant at 5% level; \*\* significant at 1% level.

Thus, the female trainees should be encouraged to make their own decisions, and their information seeking behaviour should be enhanced further during the training. The male trainees, however, should be enabled to develop a more positive outlook towards self-employment, which is essential for the establishment of agriclinics, and agribusiness centres, mainly by providing more opportunities to get acquainted with successful entrepreneurs and enterprises.

Overall, the trainees having a favourable attitude towards self-employment, high entrepreneurial ability, and decision-making ability have utilized the training programme more effectively. Hence, preference should be given to such candidates in the selection process, which will enable them to launch agribusiness initiatives.

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