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Farmers' perspectives on the privatisation of agricultural extension services in Bhopal district, Madhya Pradesh, India

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Abstract

A farmer is a person who works in agriculture and grows living organisms for food or raw materials, which often includes animal husbandry and crop production. Today's farmer is not the same as yesterday's. Aside from food, he relies on agriculture to support his many expanding requirements as a result of industrialization. His views on extension are evolving. The performance of public sector extension has been under investigation for some time, and questions have been raised about its ability to deliver commodities in a constantly changing environment. The advent of new extension arrangements supplied by the private and voluntary sectors (e.g., input firms, NGOs, farmer groups, producer co-operatives, media, agro-processing corporations, consultants, etc.) has accelerated the process of government participation in extension. "Privatisation of agricultural extension service refers to the services rendered in the area of agriculture and allied aspects by extension personnel working in the private agencies or organisations for which farmers are expected to pay fee and it can be viewed as supplementary or alternative to public extension service". Private extension is thought to be more client-accountable, demand-driven, cost-effective, and efficient and quality service. India owes a lot to its scientists for making the country self-sufficient in terms of food grain production by leveraging the benefits of the green revolution. Given population increase, policymakers intend to double food production. With this in mind, planners and administrators have begun to criticise the public extension system on economic and efficiency grounds. The state funds the public agricultural extension service, which is often seen as supply driven. Privatisation of agricultural extension services appears to be the answer to the lofty goal of producing an exportable surplus. The main topic being debated in the state and around the country is the privatisation of the extension network. Keeping all of these things in mind, the current investigation was an attempt to know the Farmers' Perspectives on the Privatisation of Agricultural Extension Services in Bhopal District, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Keywords: Privatization, industrialization, agro-processing, demand-driven, green revolution, cost-effective

Introduction

Like India, Madhya Pradesh State is also primarily an agriculture State. About 73% of people in the state are either directly or indirectly employed in agriculture and reside in rural areas. About 44% of the state's GDP comes from agriculture and related services, and 78% of its labour force is employed in the sector either directly or indirectly. Consequently, it may be claimed that the state economy's main pillar is the agriculture industry. India owes a lot to its scientists and extension workers in making the country self-sufficient in case of food grains and other production. However, this places greater responsibility on the agricultural extension sector, since it is a vital channel for proper dissemination and adoption of new agricultural technologies to farmers as well as a channel back to researchers and policy makers regarding farmers' problems, needs and concerns. The transition from traditional and subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture has been witnessed as a result of improved extension services. There were attempts made to increase the production, productivity and to diversify the agriculture after organized agricultural extension came into operation. "Privatization" means transfer of ownership from state in to private hand. The term Privatization has been used in three ways: (i) Reliance of private sector institutions to fulfill peoples need, (ii) Reduction of the role of government and consequently increase the role of private sectors in an activity or in the ownership of assets, (iii) Transfer of government enterprises or assets to private sectors. Privatization is emerging as an important factor to cut down government expenses, to get rid of embarrassment to public extension system to increase in efficiency,

influence and involve farmers in extension activity and to increase competition among different extension service providers for quality services. Since independence till date public extension workers are not able to perform as effective diffusion agents and because of which modern technologies are not readily available for the use of the farmers. In the near future, privatization of agricultural extension service is an inviting proposition. Before effecting such changes, it was felt necessary to know farmers' perspective towards privatization of agricultural extension services.

Materials and Methods

The study has been conducted in Bhopal district of Madhya Pradesh. Bhopal city is the district as well as state head quarter. For administrative purposes the district is divided into 2 tehsil i.e. Huzur and Berasia and 2 blocks i.e. namely Berasia and Phanda. It has 512 villages. One block Phanda was selected randomly for the study. With the assistance of the village sarpanch, a list of the villages in the Phanda block was created for the second selection step. Ten villages were chosen at random from this group. At the third stage of selection, a list of farmers of the selected villages was prepared and 12 farmers were selected from each selected village by simple random sampling method. Thus, a total of 120 farmers have been selected for the study. Using a structured interview schedule, data were gathered by going door to door with the chosen farmers. There was no room for dispute or confusion among the farmers because the questions and statements in the schedule were clear, concise, and easy to grasp. Both open-ended and closed-ended questions using a method for measuring particular attributes were included in the schedule. Descriptive statistical approaches were used to analyse the household survey results. In order to protect respondent privacy, the replies to the raw quantitative data were coded and saved in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. They were summarised, while qualitative replies were counted and prioritised in order to identify trends and patterns in the data and draw conclusions. Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient test, frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and other statistical tests were examined in order to determine the logical conclusions and to keep the study's aims in mind.

Results and Discussion

The results of table-1 are shown below

Of all farmers, 40.00% were middle-aged or older, making up the largest percentage. The situation revealed that in study, higher number of middle age farmers is found to be more responsive. This results are consistent with those published by Saravanan (1999) [9], Hanchinal *et.al.* (2000) [2], Rabin and Sarmah (2000) [6], Singh *et al.* (2005) [14], Rakesh (2008) [7], Kumari (2012) [3], Parouha (2014) [5] and Nayak (2016) [4].

The highest percentage of farmers (40.00%) with "primary and middle education" out of all farmers. Educated persons are more logical and get more information from different extension media. But, the low educated persons (primary and middle education) have positive and favourable attitude (medium level) towards privatization in agricultural extension services. This results are consistent with those published by Hanchinal *et.al.* (2000) [2], Rout (2004) [8], Singh *et al.* (2005) [14], Parouha (2014) [5] and Gowda *et al.* (2015) [1].

Among all farmers, the share of farmers with a joint family was higher—61.67 percent. Study revealed with regards the type of family of farmers; it found that more farmers have joint family. In the joint family, farmers cannot get decision

on their own responsibility. They bear common decision on the fact. This could explain why the farmers' attitude was found to be moderate.

A larger percentage of farmers—38.34 percent—had medium-sized land holdings out of all farmers. The medium land holding owning with farmers may be lack off ancestral property, low economic status and increase in family size. This result is consistent with the results published by Rout (2004) [8] and Singh *et al.* (2005) [14].

Of the total number of farmers, 35.84 percent belonged to the category of those with high incomes. Study leads to fact with regards to the farmers would be related more by the higher income group. The study area is situated near by mega city where the opportunity for income generation is high. This might be reason for higher income group of farmers. This result is consistent with the findings that Kumari (2012) [3] presented.

Among all farmers, the group with the highest percentage (37.50%) is comprised of those with medium agricultural experience. In study the higher number of farmers would be related by the medium farming experience group. Now the serious problem is related with employment availability. The unemployed persons are generally attracted towards parental occupation that is farming. Hence, this might be the reason that higher number of farmers has medium farming experience. This result is consistent with the findings published by Kumari (2012) [3] and Rout (2004) [8].

Among all farmers, the group with the highest percentage (35.84%) is those who use mass media extensively. This situation pin point that, the farmers were high user of mass media which might be due to nearby mega city sand higher responsible for social work. This result is consistent with the results published by Parouha (2014) [5].

Of all farmers, the majority—35.84 percent—belong to the group that participates in high levels of extension. Study leads to the understanding that the phenomena with regards to the farmers would be related more by the high extension participation group. The situation might be due to nearby developed agriculture area that pin point to participate in extension activities. This result is consistent with the findings published by Nayak (2016) [4] and Gowda *et al.* (2015) [1].

The majority of farmers—41.67 percent—belong to the group of medium information sources out of all farmers. Study leads to the fact with regards to the farmers would be related more by the medium source of information group. This implies that medium exposure with various extension agencies and nominal interaction with extension personnel. This result is consistent with the research published by Gowda *et al.* (2015) [1] and Nayak (2016) [4].

The group with a medium risk orientation comprises a larger proportion of farmers overall, specifically 38.33%. This leads to the understanding that the phenomena with regards to the farmers would be related more by the medium risk orientation group. The medium risk orientation taking ability of farmers might be due to many constraints prevailing in farm innovation.

Of all farmers, the majority (41.67%) fall into the group of moderately accomplishment motivated farmers. This leads to the understanding that the phenomena with regards to the farmers would be related more by the medium achievement motivation group. This implies that the majority of farmers were not swayed by the available extension agency's profitability.

The results of table-2 are shown below

Due to variation in personal, socio-economic and psychological profile of the farmers, in study area farmers' nature and attitudes towards agricultural growth vary as well. If we look at the domain wise the values of favorableness of attitude of farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services, the "technological domain" showed that out of the total farmers, the higher proportion of the farmers 36.67 per cent held a favourable attitude followed by most favourable attitude held by 35.83 per cent of total farmers and least favourable attitude held by 27.50 per cent of total farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services. In respect to "input domain" study showed that out of the total farmers, the higher proportion of the farmers 40.83 per cent held favourable attitude followed by most favourable attitude held by 30.00 per cent of total farmers and least favourable attitude held by 29.17 per cent of total farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services. In respect to "credit domain" study showed that out of the total farmers, the higher proportion of the farmers 35.83 per cent held favourable attitude followed by most favourable attitude held by 35.00 per cent of total farmers and least favourable attitude held by 29.17 per cent of total farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services. In respect to

"marketing domain" study showed that out of the total farmers, the higher proportion of the farmers 36.66 per cent held most favourable attitude followed by favourable attitude held by 31.67 per cent of total farmers and least favourable attitude held by 31.67 per cent of total farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services. In respect to "general domain" study showed that out of the total farmers, the higher proportion of the farmers 36.67 per cent held favourable attitude followed by most favourable attitude held by 35.00 per cent of total farmers and least favourable attitude held by 31.67 per cent of total farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services.

The results of table-3 are shown below

According to the data presented in table 3, a significant percentage of farmers (36.67%) exhibited a positive attitude towards the privatization of agricultural extension services. Additionally, 34.17% of the total farmers surveyed had the most favorable attitude towards privatization, while 29.16% had the least favorable attitude. This leads to the understanding that the phenomena with regards to the attitude of farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services would be related more by the favourable statement.

Table 1: Socio-economic profile of the respondents

Sl.no.	Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents	Frequency	Percentage	
1.	Age	Young (20 -35 years)	33	27.50
		Middle (36-55 years)	48	40.00
		Old (Above 55 years)	39	32.50
2.	Education	Illiterate and formal education	37	30.83
		Primary and middle education	48	40.00
		Higher secondary	35	29.17
3.	Type of family	Nuclear family	46	38.33
		Joint family	74	61.67
4.	Land Holding	Small (0-5Acre)	43	35.83
		Medium (5-10 Acre)	46	38.34
		High (10 Above)	31	25.83
5.	Annual income	Low (5-8)	37	30.83
		Medium (9-11)	40	33.33
		High (11 Above)	43	35.84
6.	Farming experience	Low (5-8)	42	35.00
		Medium (9-11)	45	37.50
		High (11 Above)	33	27.50
7.	Mass media utilization	Low (10-13)	37	30.83
		Medium (14-16)	40	33.33
		High (16 Above)	43	35.84
8.	Extension participation	Low (11-13)	37	30.83
		Medium (13-16)	40	33.33
		High (16 Above)	43	35.84
9.	Source of information	Low	34	28.33
		Medium	50	41.67
		High	36	30.00
10.	Risk orientation	Low (10-13)	36	30.00
		Medium (14-16)	46	38.33
		High (16 Above)	38	31.67
11.	Achievement motivation	Low	36	30.00
		Medium	50	41.67
		High	34	28.33

Table 2: Attitude of farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services.

S. No.	Statements	Least favourable	Favourable	Most favourable
A.	Technological domain			
1.	PAES helps farmers to get need based technical service easily and quickly	41	40	39
2.	PAES agencies teach new techniques to farmers with interest	29	53	38
3.	PAES agencies demonstrate the worth of new technology under local conditions	23	45	52
4.	Farmers do not have faith in the technology provided by PASS agencies	23	50	47
5.	PAES agencies do conduct research systematically to solve problems of farming	49	34	37
	Average of technological domain	33 (27.50)	44 (36.67)	43 (35.83)
B.	Input domain			
1.	PAES helps farmers to get inputs at right time.	52	53	15
2.	PAES agencies supply inputs to the door step of farmers	15	51	54
3.	PAES agencies charge more on inputs they supply.	37	42	41
4.	Average of input domain	35 (29.17)	49 (40.83)	36 (30.00)
C.	Credit domain			
1.	PAES agency personnel help farmers to obtain credit for adoption of farm technologies	22	54	44
2.	PAES agencies help farmers in insuring their crops.	47	32	41
3.	Average of credit domain	35 (29.17)	43 (35.83)	42 (35.00)
D.	Marketing domain			
1.	PAES ensure better market facility to farmers	28	55	37
2.	PAES agencies purchase farms produce at the place of production	44	40	36
3.	PAES agencies help farmers in processing of their produce	43	18	59
4.	Average of marketing domain	38 (31.67)	38 (31.67)	44 (36.66)
E.	General domain			
1.	PAES provide better services to farmers than government extension services in all respect	40	42	38
2.	PAES is advantageous to all level of farmers	10	58	52
3.	PAES creates employment opportunities in villages	41	58	21
4.	PAES agencies establish close rapport with the farmers	53	11	56
5.	PAES agencies give more importance for follow up activities after each extension programme	28	53	39
6.	Average of general domain	34 (28.33)	44 (36.67)	42 (35.00)
F.	Overall average	35 (29.16)	44 (36.67)	41 (34.17)

Table 3: Overall distributions of respondents according to level of attitude towards privatization in agricultural extension services

Variable	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Attitude	Least favourable	35	29.16
	Favourable	44	36.67
	Most favourable	41	34.17
	Total	120	100.00

Table 4: Relationship between personal, socio-economic and psychological profile of the farmers and their attitude towards privatization in agricultural extension services

S. No.	Characteristics	'r' value
1.	Age	0.198*
2.	Education	0.217*
3.	Type of family	0.048 N.S.
4.	Land holding	0.177*
5.	Annual income	0.355**
6.	Farming experience	0.334**
7.	Mass media utilization	0.111 N.S.
8.	Extension participation	0.355**
9.	Source of information	0.599**
10.	Risk orientation	0.285**
11.	Achievement motivation	0.447**

* Significant at 5% level of probability

** Significant at 1% level of probability

NS = non significant

The above Table-4 indicates that, the relationship between personal, socio-economic and psychological profile of the farmers and their attitude towards privatization in agricultural extension services by applying Correlation Co-efficient. First, the correlation coefficient between respondents' attitudes

towards PAES and their personal, socioeconomic, and psychological profiles was calculated. The estimated values were then compared to the tabular co-efficient of correlation value.

The results show that selected characteristics of farmers i.e. Age, Education, Land holding had positive and highly significant relationship at 0.05 level of probability with attitude of farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services. Whereas, Annual income, farming experience, Extension participation, Source of information, Risk orientation and Achievement motivation had positive significant relationship at 0.01 percent level of probability and Type of family and mass media utilization had non-significant relationship with attitude of farmers towards privatization in agricultural extension services.

Conclusion

There is a positive association between attitude of the respondents and independent variables like Age, Education, Land holding, Annual income, Farming experience, Extension participation, Source of information, Risk orientation and Achievement motivation. The public extension system is overburdened with multiple activities, and some phase-wise transition to the private sector would be beneficial for the proper delivery of vital extension services. The investigation's findings serve as a foundation for future extension strategy planning. To maximise benefits from PAES and mitigate drawbacks, a well-rounded strategy is advised. The agricultural extension service should be privatised, but only after careful testing and gradual implementation. Privatisation of agricultural extension services will make it easier for the farming community to meet its current requirements and

tackle its upcoming difficulties.

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