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Profile characteristics of members of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in Gujarat state

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Abstract

Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have emerged as a vital institutional mechanism to address the challenges faced by small and marginal farmers in India, who constitute 86.08% of total agricultural holdings. The present study examined the profile characteristics of FPO members in Gujarat state, following an *ex post facto* research design. Five districts namely Ahmedabad, Anand, Banaskantha, Junagadh, and Rajkot were purposively selected based on the highest concentration of FPOs. From each district, six FPOs were selected, and ten members were randomly chosen from each FPO, yielding a total sample of 300 respondents. Data were collected through a structured interview schedule and analysed using appropriate statistical tools across thirteen personal, socio-economic, and communication variables.

The findings revealed that the majority of FPO members (59.33%) belonged to the middle age group, with male farmers dominating membership (83.67%), though women's participation (16.33%) reflects a gradual shift toward gender inclusion. Most respondents lived in nuclear families (69.33%) and had medium-level farming experience (70.33%). Small land holdings (1–2 ha) were predominant (50.34%), indicative of the smallholder character of FPO membership. Irrigated farming was practiced by 68% of respondents. In terms of socio-psychological traits, the majority exhibited medium levels of extension agency contact (73%), social participation (84.33%), cosmopolitanism (62.33%), mass media exposure (65.33%), risk preference (65.34%), and economic motivation (71.33%). The study underscores the importance of understanding member profiles for designing targeted interventions and strengthening FPO performance in Gujarat.

Keywords: Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), smallholder farmers, profile characteristics, agricultural collectives, Gujarat

Introduction

The 2015-16 Agricultural Census revealed that small and marginal farm holdings together constituted 86.08 percent of the total agricultural properties across India. Additionally, estimates indicate that approximately 1.5 to 2.0 million new small and marginal agricultural units are formed annually, primarily due to the ongoing subdivision of land. (Anonymous, 2014, Ratna. P. 2021) ^[2, 14].

These increase agriculture's profitability (income per unit of time and land) and employment to exist, but regular farming won't be able to keep farmers motivated. Small and marginal farmers are more susceptible to agricultural problems like smaller operational land holdings, natural disasters, a lack of a market connection, lower productivity, crop failures, a lack of information, a lack of agricultural credit, rising input costs, poor communication links with larger markets, and as a result, intermediaries' exploitation in the acquisition of inputs and the marketing of fresh produce, as well as the availability and cost of credit. However, agriculture can succeed in the competitive modern era if it becomes an active agricultural business (Dev, 2005) ^[8].

These constraints can be overcome by farmers, organizing themselves into Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). Farmers Producer organization is a legal entity form of a company which is hybrid between cooperative societies and private limited companies and it is formed and operated by farmers (Babu, 2021) ^[3].

In response to these difficulties, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have emerged as an effective solution. An FPO is a collaborative body of at least ten farmers who unite to conduct agricultural and associated business ventures, primarily to increase their members'

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earnings. These organizations facilitate members in pooling their agricultural output for collective sale, often under a shared brand. This strategy enhances their negotiation leverage in the market, lessens their reliance on middlemen, and provides access to capital for acquiring quality resources, transportation, and promotional services. In contrast to other farmer associations, FPOs are distinct as they are comprised solely of farmers (both men and women), with no upper limit on membership, even permitting multiple individuals from a single household to participate (Yadav *et al.*, 2022) ^[21]. An FPO is categorized as a type of Producer Organization (PO), designed to guarantee enhanced financial returns for producers through their self-managed entities. Individually, small-scale producers often lack the sufficient volume (in terms of both inputs and output) required to achieve economies of scale (Pai *et al.*, 2024) ^[11].

Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in India are formally constituted under a variety of legal frameworks. These encompass the State Cooperative Acts, the Cooperative Societies Act, the Companies Act, the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, the Indian Trusts Act, and the Societies Registration Act. Among these options, the primary organizational structures are generally established under the Companies Act and the Cooperative Societies Act (Vahoniya *et al.*, 2022; Shalini *et al.*, 2022, Goud S.D., *et al.*, 2020) ^[20, 18, 9]. Thus, the objective of the present study was as to study profile characteristics of members of Farmer Producer Organizations.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted by following *Ex post facto* research design. Six districts viz. Ahmedabad, Anand, Banaskantha, Junagadh, Rajkot were purposively selected based on highest number of FPOs. From each selected district 6 FPOs were selected on basis of following conditions: a. At least two years old FPOs was selected. b. The FPOs dealing with a minimum two commodities was selected; and c. Operations was considered from production to marketing. From each FPOs randomly 10 farmer member selected for study. Thus total sample size is 300 farmers. The data were collected through a structured comprehensive interview schedule and analysis was done with suitable statistical tools drawing meaningful interpretations.

Results

The FPO members were distributed into different categories based on their selected profile characteristics and the results were presented in the table 1.

1. Age

Age was classified into three categories. It is evident from Table 1, that one hundred seventy-eight of the respondents (59.33%) belonged to the middle age group, followed by (22.67%) of those who belonged to young age group and (18%) of the respondents belonged to old age group.

The results showed that majority of the farmer members were middle aged. It can be inferred that generally middle-

aged farmers have more sense of responsibility to increase their income which motivated them to join FPOs.

The findings of the present study are in line with the results reported by Babu *et al.* (2021) ^[3], Chopade (2019) ^[6], Singh *et al.* (2019) ^[19], Dechamma *et al.* (2020) ^[7], Prema and Manonmani (2022) ^[13], Sahoo *et al.* (2022) ^[17], Revanth and Kote (2024) ^[16], Patel *et al.* (2025) ^[12] and Malaisamy *et al.* (2025) ^[10].

2. Gender

The data in Table 1 provides the distribution of respondents according to their gender. A high proportion of respondents in Table 1 were male (83.67%) and nearly one-sixth (16.33%) of respondents were female.

The findings show that male farmers were the main members of the selected Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs). This could be because rural areas have their majority of farming activities, decision-making and active membership in farmer organizations being controlled by male members of the household. Nonetheless, the arrival of women members in FPOs tell us there is a gradual transition of them joining in the FPO related activities and making decisions related to agriculture.

Similar observations were also reported by Babu *et al.* (2021) ^[3], Dechamma *et al.* (2020) ^[7], Amitha *et al.* (2021) ^[1], Prema and Manonmani (2022) ^[13] and Revanth and Kote (2024) ^[16].

3. Family type

The distribution of respondents according to the family type show in Table 1. From the table, 69.33 per cent of the respondents are from the nuclear family and 30.67 per cent of respondents are from a joint family. This implies that more farmer members of the selected FPOs live in a nuclear family system as opposed to a joint family.

The majority of the farmers live in a nuclear family, since, over the years, rural areas' trend has been the shift from the once famous joint family system. This enables families to aim at discipline and total participation in making decisions over their farming activities and involve themselves in the FPO activities.

The results obtained in the present investigation corroborate the findings of Singh *et al.* (2019) ^[19], Sahoo *et al.* (2022) ^[17] and Revanth and Kote (2024) ^[16].

4. Farming experience

The results in Table 1, shows that two hundred eleven of the respondents i.e. (70.33%) had medium level farming experience, followed by (17%) of respondents with high level farming experience. Only (12.67%) of the respondents had low level farming experience.

The results revealed that majority of the farmers had medium level farming experience as most of the respondents were of middle age at the time of investigation. These findings are consistent with the earlier studies conducted by Babu *et al.* (2021) ^[3], Dechamma *et al.* (2020) ^[7], Amitha *et al.* (2021) ^[1], Prema and Manonmani (2022) ^[13] and Revanth and Kote (2024) ^[16].

Table 1: Distribution of FPO members according to their profile (n=300)

Sr. No.	Variables	category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)	Mean	S.D.
1.	Age	Young (<35)	68	22.67	-	-
		Middle (35 to 50)	178	59.33		
		Old(>50)	54	18.0		
2.	Gender	Male	251	83.67	-	-
		Female	49	16.33		
3.	Family type	Nuclear	208	69.33	-	-
		Joint	92	30.67		
4.	Farming experience	Low	38	12.67	7.90	1.75
		Medium	211	70.33		
		High	51	17.00		
5.	Land Holding	Marginal (less than 1 Ha)	43	14.33	-	-
		Small (Between 1-2 Ha)	151	50.34		
		Semi Medium (between 2-4 Ha)	58	19.33		
		Medium (Between 4-10 Ha)	30	10.00		
		Large (More than 10Ha)	18	06.00		
6.	Type of farming	Irrigated farming	204	68.00	-	-
		Dryland farming	96	32.00		
7.	Extension agency contact	Low	35	11.67	6.19	3.42
		Medium	219	73.00		
		High	46	15.33		
8.	Social Participation	Low	29	09.67	8.64	2.51
		Medium	253	84.33		
		High	18	06.00		
9.	Cosmopolitaness	Low	70	23.34	4.82	1.57
		Medium	187	62.33		
		High	43	14.33		
10.	Mass media exposure	Low	46	15.33	10.56	2.37
		Medium	196	65.33		
		High	58	19.34		
11.	Risk preference	Low	52	17.33	19.78	3.19
		Medium	196	65.34		
		High	52	17.33		
12.	Economic motivation	Low	40	13.33	19.43	3.49
		Medium	214	71.33		
		High	46	15.34		

5. Land holding

The data presented in Table 1 revealed that nearly half (50.34%) of the respondents had small size (1.01 to 2.00 ha) of land holding, followed by 19.33 per cent, 14.33 per cent and 10.00 per cent of the respondents who had semi medium (4.01 to 10.00 ha), marginal (Up to 1.00 ha) and medium (2.01 to 4.00 ha) respectively. Only 06.00 per cent of the respondent had large size (10.01 ha and above) of land holding.

Size of land holding is shrinking due to the pressure of increasing population and tendency to have nuclear families. This is resulting into growing number of semi medium, small and marginal farmers. Therefore, majority of them joined FPC.

The outcome of the present study is in conformity with the findings of Babu *et al.* (2021) ^[3], Dechamma *et al.* (2020) ^[7], Amitha *et al.* (2021) ^[1], Revanth and Kote (2024) ^[16] and Chopade (2019) ^[6].

6. Types of farming

As per Table 1 leads to this conclusion that a large majority of respondents (68.00%) were involved in irrigated farming while the remaining 32.00 per cent were carrying out dry land farming.

The analysis showed that most of the farmer members associated with the selected Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) were having access to irrigation facilities for more reliable and intensive cultivation. Consequently, quite a few

farmers were dependent on dry land farming; Agri. Production in this case fully depends on natural rainfall of that area. This indicates that both irrigated and rainfed farmers have been participating in FPO activities to enhance their production and marketing prospects.

The present results support the findings reported by Reddy (2021) ^[15].

7. Extension agency contact

Accordingly, extension contact was disaggregated into 3 categories, including low, medium and high extension contact. Table 1 shows how the respondents were distributed according to the extension contact scores. Table 1 reveals that most respondents (73.00 percent) had a medium extension contact, followed by 11.67 percent, who had low extension contact and 15.33 per cent, who had a high extension contact.

The majority of farmer members of selected Farmer Producer Organizations FPOs had a moderate contact level with the extension agents. This contact level may enhance farmers' access to improved agricultural technologies, production processes and market information. Nonetheless, the existence of low extension contact indicates the necessity of strengthening extension services and enhancing the linkage of farmers to the extension agencies.

A similar trend was also observed in the studies conducted by Babu *et al.* (2021) ^[3], Singh *et al.* (2019) ^[19], Dechamma *et al.* (2020) ^[7], Revanth and Kote (2024) ^[16] and Chopade

(2019) ^[6].

8. Social participation

Based on the level of participation, the respondents were grouped into three categories: low social participation, medium social participation and high social participation. Table 1 displays distribution of the respondents by social participation. The table shows that 84.33 per cent of the participants fall under the category, “medium social participation”; 09.67 per cent and 06.00 per cent are “low social participation” and “high social participation” respectfully.

The results showed that social integration among the FPOs farmer members is at a moderate stage where less than half but more third of the participants were actively involved in social and community activities. The interaction may be in deliberation and communication. On the other hand, the fourth of the participant that had low social participation needs more commitment to join the social participation in social organizations and community-driven institutions.

The findings of this study closely resemble the results reported by Chopade (2019) ^[6] and Reddy (2021) ^[15].

9. Cosmopoliteness

The respondents were divided into three categories based on their cosmopoliteness score, such as low, medium and high cosmopoliteness. The distribution of respondents based on their cosmopoliteness score is shown in Table 1. The data in table reveals that 62.33 per cent of the respondents had medium cosmopoliteness whereas 23.34 per cent of the respondents had the lowest and 14.33 percent of the respondents had the highest cosmopoliteness scores.

Therefore, it can be assumed that most of the respondents associated with the selected Farmer Producer Organizations worked on farmers’ moderate contact with external agencies and information sources. Such an output has the potential to expose the farmers to better agricultural practices, marketing opportunities and innovative technologies. However, the significance percentage of respondents with low cosmopoliteness levels does not adequately expose the farmers to outside agencies and agencies.

The present investigation confirms the results obtained by Babu *et al.* (2021) ^[3] and Chopade (2019) ^[6].

10. Mass media exposure

The table 1 clearly shows that 65.33 per cent of the respondents falls under medium category of mass media exposure score followed by 19.34 under high category and 15.33 under low mass media category.

Based on the below table, most of the respondents of the farmer members who are the part of the selected Farmer Producer Organizations are having a moderate exposure to mass media sources which supports them in getting essential information on agriculture, improved practices, market related information etc. even though presence of the second category in the above table cannot come into the conclusion but the low were exposed to mass media suggest the genuine need for improving farmers awareness activities in strengthening the mass media.

The findings of the present research are comparable with those reported by Babu *et al.* (2021) ^[3], Singh *et al.* (2019) ^[19] and Dechamma *et al.* (2020) ^[7].

11. Risk preference

According to their respective risk preference score, the farmer members were categorized into three groups: low, medium and high risk preference. The table provides the distribution of farmer members according to risk preference is as shown in Table 1. As indicated in Table1, the majority of the respondents, 65.34 per cent had a medium level of risk preference; however, relatively few percentages, 17.33 per cent, had a high level of category and equal had the low level of the risk category.

Furthermore, the majority of the farmer members from medium to high level are classified as risk preference because the business is considered a risky activity. The medium to high level of risk suggests that the selected FPO members were ready to use improved technologies and perform well by ensuring farm activity is not merely viewed as a traditional activity but to increase farm income by engaging inc business-like activity.

The results of the current study are supported by the findings of Babu *et al.* (2021) ^[3], Chopade (2019) ^[6], Barman *et al.* (2021) ^[5], Sahoo *et al.* (2022) ^[17] and Revanth and Kote (2024) ^[16].

12. Economic Motivation

From the score of economic motivation, the respondents were grouped into three categories; low, medium and high economic motivation. Table 1 shows the distribution of the level of economic motivation among the respondents. The demographic information of the economic motivation of the respondents is presented in Table 4.34. From the above demographic data in Table 1, 71.33 per cent of the respondent scored a medium level of economic motivation, 15.34 per cent had a higher level of economic motivation and 13.33 per cent had a low level of economic motivation.

This means that the majority of the farmer-members of the selected Farmer Producer Organizations had a moderate economic motivation level. This implies that while acquiring their source of livelihood through farming, most of the respondents in the cooperatives were motivated to engage in agricultural activities to earn a living. Hence, FPOs that ensure access to input and credit facilities, ensure collective marketing and higher returns promoted the member’s level of economic motivation to participate in income-generating activities.

The findings of the present study are in line with the results reported by Chopade (2019) ^[6], Singh *et al.* (2019) ^[19], Dechamma *et al.* (2020) ^[7], Barman *et al.* (2021) ^[5] and Sahoo *et al.* (2022) ^[17].

Conclusion

The 300 respondents were characterized along thirteen personal, social, and communication dimensions. The majority (59.33%) of members belonged to the middle age group (39–51 years), suggesting that middle-aged farmers, driven by a greater sense of economic responsibility, are more inclined to join FPOs. Male farmers dominated membership at 83.67%, though the presence of 16.33% women members indicates a gradual shift toward gender inclusion in agricultural collectives.

Most respondents (69.33%) belonged to nuclear families, and 70.33% had medium-level farming experience (6–9 years). Small farmers (1–2 ha) constituted 50.34% of

respondents, reflecting the predominantly small-holder character of FPO membership. Irrigated farming was practiced by 68% of the respondents, while 32% relied on dryland/rainfed cultivation.

In terms of communication traits, 73% of respondents had medium extension agency contact, 56.33% had medium social participation, and 62.33% showed medium cosmopolitanism. Television (91.67%) and mobile phones (85.67%) were the most commonly owned media devices. The majority of respondents had medium mass media exposure (65.33%), moderate risk preference (65.34%), and medium economic motivation (71.33%).

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No

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