

Evaluation of Village Stay Module (VSM) of Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme (RAWEP) of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), India

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the effectiveness of the village stay module (VSM) of the Rural Agricultural Work Experience Programme (RAWEP) of Kerala Agricultural University (KAU), India. VSM as part of RAWEP is intended to give direct exposure to the Agricultural students in the socio-cultural settings and the life of the farming community. The study was conducted as ex post facto design in the five locations where VSM of RAWEP of KAU was conducted for five consecutive years from 2012-2017. All categories of respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Data was collected through a structured and pretested Interview Schedule. Perception index, RBQ, factor analysis, and weighed mean were the statistical tools. The result revealed that 58.66% of the respondents had a high level of perception toward VSM and out of the five components, the exhibition had more impact on VSM. Five Independent variables were significantly and positively correlated with the perception of farmers. The development plan was successful in projecting the entrepreneurial scope of crops/commodities unique to that village...

HIGHLIGHTS

- Enhancing the duration of VSM, active participation of scientists, proper publicity, providing solutions to farmers' problems, and providing soil test results at the location is to be considered for fine-tuning of VSM.
- Agricultural Universities is to impart support to the farming community through agricultural education, research, and extension.

Keywords: Evaluation, Rural Agricultural Work Experience programme (RAWEP), Village stay Module (VSM), perception of farmers

One of the most outstanding educationists of India, Dr. Radhakrishnan noted that, bookishness has greatly limited the value of agricultural education. This applies not only to extension staff but to agricultural professionals in general. So, agricultural education should be given a rural setting such that it includes direct participation and experience with agricultural life and practice Richardson (1997), Rogers (1996). The Rural Agricultural Work Experience program (RAWEP)

is a compulsory course offered by the agricultural universities of the country, generally in the final year of an undergraduate degree program. The course on Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWEP) has been designed primarily to address the issue of meeting the

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new challenges that the under-graduate students of agricultural universities in India face while they set out to work in the villages right in the midst of the farmers. It includes 16 modules, one of which is the village stay module. The main objective of the village stay module is to equip the students to plan and organize appropriate extension programs based on the local farming problems in the village and to prepare an integrated agricultural development plan of a village/ *Panchayath*. The village stay module as part of the RAWEP has been implemented by Kerala Agricultural University since 1995.

The village stay module has different components, including Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), Agri clinic, field and home visits, Method demonstrations, the Training program for the farmers, seminars and exhibitions..At the end of the module, a comprehensive 'Development plan' aimed at the holistic development of the respective *Panchayaths* based on the village stay module were also handed over to all the five *grama panchayats*. The present research study is conducted to identify the perception of farmers towards village stay program and identify the contribution of each of the components, to study the extent of the utility of development plans submitted to the respective *panchayaths* as perceived by the peoples' representatives, constraints felt by the students and to suggestions suitable modifications.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research design for the study is Ex-post facto study. The basic units of administration in India are called *garama panchayths*. Five *grama panchayaths* of Kerala where VSM as the part of RAWEP was implemented by KAU were identified by purposive sampling. Seventy-five farmers, 30 Peoples' representatives, and 50 students who were involved in the implementation of the VSM were purposefully selected, forming a total sample size of 155. Perception of farmers towards the VSM was the dependent variable, and the independent variables included age, educational qualification, total land holding, experience in farming, entrepreneurial behavior, innovativeness, mass media contact, number of training, extension agency contact, and economic motivation, progressiveness and social

participation. The independent variables were selected after judges' rating and relevancy scoring. Data were collected through a structured interview schedule, and observations were made by the researcher through Focus group discussions. The perception of farmers towards the village stay module was measured using the perception index developed by Kotte (2014). Factor analysis was performed to analyze the contribution of each of the components of the village stay module to the perception of farmers towards the village stay module.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perception of farmer respondents towards the village stay programme

Table 1: Distribution of farmers based on their perception towards the village stay programme (n= 75)

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low (40- 67)	04	5.33
Medium (68- 94)	27	36.00
High (95- 120)	44	58.66
Total	75	100

It is evident from table 1 that more than half of the farmers (58.66 %) had a high level of perception towards the village stay program followed by 36.00 per cent 5.33 percent with a medium and low levels of perception towards the village stay module.

Factor loadings of sub components of village stay module

Factor analysis was performed to understand the contribution of each component to the perception of farmers towards the village stay module. It is a statistical method used to describe variability among observed, correlated variables in terms of potentially fewer unobserved variables called factors.

Results of factor analysis showed that Factor 1 explained 33.600 percent of total variation (table 2) in the perception of farmers towards the village stay module, followed by factor 2 with 21.703 percent of the total variation. The first two factors together accounted for 55.303 percent of the total variation, and the influence of sub-components

was identified based on loadings of the component on factors and communality.

Table 2: Distribution of farmers based on factor loadings of subcomponents of village stay programme (n=75)

Components	Total score	Loading on factor 1	Loading on factor 2 (%)	Communality (%)
PRA	1428	0.308	0.139	11.4
Agriclinic	1436	0.406	0.590	51.3
Training	1421	-0.003	0.111	1.2
Exhibition	1445	0.752	-0.333	67.6
Method demonstration	1420	0.473	0.206	26.6
Variance explained (%)		33.600	21.703	
Cumulative variance (%)		33.600	55.303	

From table 2 it could be inferred that exhibition had a factor loading of 0.75 on factor 1 with a commonality of 67.6 percent and agri clinic had a factor loading of 0.59 on factor 2 with a commonality 51.3 percent. Thus, it could be concluded that exhibition and Agri clinic were the components that contributed highest to the perception of farmers towards the village stay module.

Relationship between independent variables and perception of farmers towards the village stay program

Table 3 reveals that out of the twelve independent variables selected, age, experience in farming, mass media contact, extension agency contact, and economic motivation were significantly and positively correlated with farmers' perception of the village stay module of RAWEP.

The location of the village stay module was usually identified in consultation with officials of the department of agriculture development and farmers' welfare as well as the department of Local self-government at the state and district level. The primary objective of the program is to give good exposure to the students about the farming situation as well as the farmer's situation. In all five locations, the farmers cooperated extremely well with the students and teachers of Kerala Agricultural University, and the farmers were provided with the latest

agricultural innovations and technologies available with KAU. The scientists of the KAU visited the farmers' field, and through Agriclincs, they were given advice at their own places. The exhibitions conducted were based on local problems, and planting materials and seeds were available for sale. Moreover, -based training was conducted at convenient venues both by the scientists of KAU and the students Helen *et al.* (2000).

Table 3: Correlation of perception of farmers towards the content and conduct of village stay programme with profile characteristics (N=75)

Sl. No.	Independent variables	Correlation coefficient 'r' value
1	Age	.234*
2	Educational qualification	-.029
3	Total land holding	-.106
4	Experience in farming	.301**
5	Innovativeness	.207
6	Entrepreneurial behavior	.045
7	Mass media contact	.303**
8	Number of trainings	.080
9	Extension agency contact	.248*
10	Economic motivation	.311**
11	Progressiveness	.088
12	Social participation	.104

*Significant at 5% level **Significant at 1% level.

The policy of Kerala Agricultural University is to convert agriculture into agribusiness. In this direction, KAU has started new courses on agribusiness management and new start-ups have also been initiated. The same mandate was reflected while designing the village stay module also, wherein crop/commodity-wise emphasis was given significance. This might be the reason for the high perception of farmers towards the village stay module of RAWEP.

Though all the components of the village stay module were conducted with maximum sincerity, the result revealed that the exhibition had a major impact among all the five components, followed by Agriclinic. The exhibition is one of the most effective methods to deliver the innovation in agriculture to the farmer. By creating awareness, interest can be aroused, leading to action and adoption. In all the exhibitions conducted as part of the

village stay module, locally significant problems were addressed where seeds and planting materials of KAU were available for sale. Moreover, in all the exhibitions, value-added products were properly displayed with their recipes, and seminars were also conducted as part of those exhibitions.

Obviously, as the mass media contact of individuals increases, they become more aware of technology and its development in and around the world and try to build their perceptions. Wide publicity given through different mass media might have persuaded the farmers to actively participate in various activities of the village stay program, which might be the reason for the positive correlation between mass media exposure and the perception of farmers towards the village stay program.

Extension agency contact and economic motivation were also found to be positively and significantly related to the perception of farmers (Rubeena and Sreedaya, 2014). Farmers had regular contact with the extension personnel, mainly agricultural officers. Hence, they could actively participate in different programs under the village stay module, where their agricultural officer and other higher officials discussed with them their problems. This might have resulted in their better perception of the village stay module.

The village stay module prioritized value addition techniques developed by KAU, and many value-added products were exhibited and available for sale. Training and method demonstrations were conducted on income generation avenues like mushroom cultivation, apiculture, post-harvest handling, and processing of vegetables and fruits, including under exploited fruits which the farmers highly appreciated because it provided a source of subsidiary income for them which might have resulted in the positive and significant relationship between economic motivation and perception of farmers towards the village stay module. The curricula of agricultural universities in developing countries need to be adjusted in such a way that it must be able to meet the immediate practical demands of farmers. They must be able to fulfill the current and future employment needs of graduates (Crowder, L.V. 1998).

Kerala agricultural university is always in the far front in imparting skill training to the undergraduate students right from the very beginning of the first year itself. The method demonstration, result demonstration classes, along with regular practical exercise might have helped the students to for effective technology transfer during the village stay module.

CONCLUSION

This particular research study clearly evaluated the village stay module of RAWEP of Kerala Agricultural University, College of Agriculture, Vellayani. The perception of farmers, students, and people representatives who were the primary stakeholders of Village stay module aided in critically analyzing the module. The module can be further streamlined in all colleges of KAU after incorporating the suggestions from these three categories of respondents. It is expected that the results of this study will facilitate the agricultural universities to identify the lacunae present in the system of the Village stay module of RAWEP. It will also help to reorient the program in order to help students for better learn and reshape them to the needs of the modern-day agriculture sector.

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Ethical approval: This is research involving human subjects, and we do now declare that the research study has prior approval by a technical committee of scientists of Kerala Agricultural University

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