

From members to momentum: Socio-personal catalysts of FPO growth in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The effectiveness and sustainability of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) are significantly influenced by the socio-personal characteristics of their members. This study was conducted in Andhra Pradesh to examine how key socio-personal factor, namely age, education, duration of FPO membership and training exposure, affect the performance and functioning of FPOs. A total of 240 respondents were selected from 24 FPOs across three purposively chosen districts: Visakhapatnam, Guntur and Anantapur. The findings revealed that the majority of members belonged to the middle-age group and had attained at least high school education. Most were relatively new entrants into FPOs, reflecting growing institutional trust, and had undergone a moderate level of training. The study highlights the important role of socio-personal traits in shaping participation, leadership, knowledge application and overall organizational performance. These insights emphasize the need for tailored capacity-building interventions and engagement strategies that align with the diverse profiles of FPO members.

Keywords: *Andhra Pradesh, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), FPO performance, Member participation, Socio-personal characteristics and Training exposure*

Indian agriculture is predominantly characterized by small and marginal holdings, where the majority of farmers face persistent challenges such as declining productivity, inefficient resource utilization, and reduced farm income. These issues hinder the sustainability and profitability of farming as a livelihood. In response to these constraints, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) have emerged as institutional mechanisms aimed at addressing these challenges through collective action and economies of scale (Srinithi *et al.*, 2021). By enabling farmers to aggregate production, access markets more effectively, and enhance their bargaining power, FPOs hold significant potential for transforming the rural agricultural landscape (Rondot, 2001).

However, the success and long-term viability of FPOs are largely influenced by the socio-personal characteristics of their members. Attributes such as age, education, duration of membership, and training exposure play a critical role in determining the level of participation, leadership emergence, and adoption of innovations within these organizations. Despite their

importance, there is limited empirical understanding of how these socio-personal factors affect the performance of FPOs in varying agro-climatic and institutional contexts.

This study, therefore, aims to examine how selected socio-personal traits of FPO members influence the overall performance of FPOs in Andhra Pradesh. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing targeted, member-centric strategies to enhance organizational efficiency, ensure inclusive participation, and support the sustainable growth of FPOs across rural India.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

An *Ex-post facto* research design was employed to assess the performance of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), as the phenomenon under study had already occurred. This design was considered appropriate given the non-manipulable nature of variables and the requirement for observational assessment without researcher intervention (Kerlinger, 1973).

The study was conducted in the state of Andhra Pradesh, purposively selected due to the researcher's familiarity with the regional language and socio-cultural context. To ensure representation across diverse agro-climatic and institutional conditions, three districts were purposively chosen based on the highest number of operational FPOs: Visakhapatnam (North Coastal Region), Guntur (Coastal Region), and Anantapur (Rayalaseema Region). From each selected district, eight mandals were randomly selected, yielding a total of 24 mandals. One FPO was randomly chosen from each mandal, resulting in 24 FPOs for the study. From each FPO, 10 farmer members were randomly sampled, making a total of 240 respondents. The data for the study were collected from members of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) using a pre-tested structured interview schedule. To analyse the socio-personal characteristics of FPO members, statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation were employed for categorization, while frequency and percentage analysis were used to quantify the distribution of respondents across different characteristics.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The socio-personal characteristics of Farmer Producer Organization (FPO) members were assessed and presented in Table 1, focusing on four key variables: age, education, duration of membership in FPOs and training undergone. **Age:** As shown in Table 1, a majority (50.42%) of the FPO members belonged to the middle-age group (36 to 55 years), followed by 27.92 per cent in the young age group (up to 35 years), and 21.67 per cent in the old age category (above 56 years). This suggests that middle-aged individuals form the backbone of FPOs, possibly due to a balanced mix of physical strength, farming experience and willingness to engage in organized ventures. Their participation could positively influence leadership roles and decision-making capacity within the FPOs. The notable participation of younger members reflects a shift towards youth involvement in structured agricultural collectives, while the lower representation of older members may be due to reduced physical engagement or resistance to new institutional frameworks.

Education: Table 1 reveals that 21.25 per cent of respondents had completed high school, making it the

most common educational level among FPO members. This was followed by 18.33 per cent who were illiterate and 17.08 per cent who had completed only primary schooling. Members with degrees and postgraduate qualifications comprised 14.58 per cent and 12.50 per cent, respectively. This distribution indicates that while a significant portion of the membership has foundational literacy that supports their participation in group activities, documentation, and training, a considerable number still lack formal education. The presence of highly educated members, though moderate, introduces potential for innovation, better coordination, and leadership. However, for the larger group with lower education levels, training programs must adopt inclusive strategies using visual aids, vernacular content, and hands-on learning.

Membership in FPO: According to Table 1, a majority of the respondents were recent members of FPOs, with 30.00 per cent having joined within the last year, and an additional 27.92 per cent and 27.08 per cent having been part of the organization for two and three years respectively. Only a small fraction (14.00%) had over four years of membership. This indicates a growing interest and trust in the FPO model, likely influenced by government support, successful case examples, or community mobilization. However, the dominance of newer members also points to the need for systematic orientation programs, handholding support, and knowledge-sharing practices to ensure their effective integration. The small number of long-term members suggests the importance of retention strategies and utilizing their experience to mentor new entrants.

Training Undergone: As per Table 1, More than half of respondents (59.17%) had undergone a medium number of trainings, followed by 22.08 per cent with fewer trainings, and 18.75 per cent who had received more extensive training. This reflects a moderately active training ecosystem within the FPOs. While medium training exposure may support basic functional understanding and participation, greater emphasis is needed on practical, need-based training that equips members with managerial, marketing, and technological skills. Members who had undergone more trainings are likely better positioned to contribute to strategic decision-making and FPO growth. Enhancing training outreach and adopting follow-up

Table. 1. Distribution of FPO members according to their socio-personal characteristics

S. No.	Characteristics	Mean	S.D.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Age			Young Age (Up to 35 years)	67	27.92
				Middle Age (36 to 55 years)	121	50.42
				Old Age (Above 56 years)	52	21.67
2	Education			Illiterate	44	18.33
				Primary school	41	17.08
				Middle school	15	6.25
				High school	51	21.25
				Pre-university Course	24	10
				Degree	35	14.58
				Post Graduate and Above	30	12.5
3	Membership in FPO			Up to 1 year	72	30
				2 years	67	27.92
				3 years	65	27.08
				4 years	9	3.75
				5 years	16	6.67
				6 years & above	11	4.58
4	Training Undergone	6.73	4.5	Less training undergone	53	22.08
				Medium training undergone	142	59.17
				More training undergone	45	18.75

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the vital role of socio-personal characteristics namely age, education, membership duration and training exposure, in influencing the performance of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) in Andhra Pradesh. The dominance of middle-aged members provides a strong base for leadership and active participation, while the involvement of youth signals rising interest in collective farming. Educational diversity among members points to the need for inclusive communication and training methods. The recent surge in FPO memberships reflects growing trust but also emphasizes the need for structured onboarding and continuous engagement. With most members having moderate training exposure, strengthening capacity-building through practical and skill-based modules is essential. These insights suggest that targeted, member-focused strategies are key to enhancing FPO

effectiveness, sustainability and their role in improving rural livelihoods.

LITERATURE CITED

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