

Impact of Group Counseling Intervention Programme on Farmers

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ABSTRACT

Every individual in the society belongs to many groups. Most of the personal and social needs are fulfilled through groups. The groups are most natural and effective tool for learning. The members of groups have common goal to find solution to their problem. Group counseling has noticeable effects in various fields. The purpose of this paper is to explain how farmers are benefitted by group counseling intervention programme. It is actually field study of 10 groups of rice growing farmers in 10 villages of Sindhudurg district of Maharashtra. Rice is a basic crop in Sindhudurg district for livelihood of farmers but due to the lack of knowledge about improved cultivation practices of rice. The production of rice was less and input cost was more. Farmers were getting less income. On this background, Non Government Organization working for rural development supported the farmers by giving group counseling based on improved technology of 'System of Rice Intensification (SRI)'. It is the innovative experiment of application of group counseling for farmer community which has resulted into observable, measurable and sustainable impact.

Keywords: *Group Counseling, Intervention Programme, farmers*

Each day every one of us spends some time in group activities. According to Nims (1998) group are "valuable because they allow members to experience a sense of belonging, to share common problems to observe behaviors and consequences of behaviors in others, and to find support during self exploration and change." Group interaction helps to change some attitudes, beliefs feelings needs and lives of individuals in a social setting. Asch & Witkin and others have shown that individual perceptions change significantly in response to group pressure in addition to that it is possible to achieve the goal of resolving the problems by adopting group approach. Posthuma (2002) stated that participating in a group people developed social relationships and emotional bonds and often become enlightened. Groups have remarkable contribution in the field of counseling.

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A Boston physician Joseph Hersey Pratt has introduced the counseling group in 1905. Group counseling is dynamic inter-personal process through which individual with the normal range of adjustment work within a peer group and with a professionally trained counselor, exploring problems and feelings in an attempt to modify their own attitudes so that they are better able to deal with developmental problems (Cohn et al, 1963). As revealed from this definition counseling is problem centered and feeling oriented process through which promotion of growth motives is accelerated. In another definition of group counseling it is referred to routine adjustment or developmental experiences provided in a group setting. (Robert L. Gibson Marianne H. Mitchell, 2008). The counseling group is homogeneous group in a sense that they have a similar problem, common goal to find out solution to their problem with limited members up to 6 or 10. Sometimes counseling group is known as inter-personal problem solving groups.

The purpose of this study is to explain how group counseling is beneficial in agricultural field to improve the economic condition of farmers with the intervention of system of rice intensification application. This study has been conducted in 10 villages of Sindhudurg district in Konkan region. Rice growing farmers were selected as subjects. The study was conducted by Non Government Organization Dilasa working since 24 years in the field of rural development. Before the study it had come to the notice of field staff of Dilasa that most of the farmers were cultivating rice as main crop of livelihood by traditional method. But due to the lack of knowledge about improved cultivation practices of rice, over utilization of chemical fertilizers, less use of organic fertilizers, faulty water management system and use of pesticide on large scale per acre production was less and input cost was more. Farmers were getting only 12-16 quintals yield by spending Rs.20000 to 22000 for per acre production.

Taking into consideration, the situation of rice growing farmers Dilasa implemented the project of rising the rice production. To fulfill this objective, Dilasa supported the farmers by giving group counseling about the methodology of '**System of Rice Intensification (SRI)**' with rigorous theoretical and practical training. SRI is smart, environment friendly method which has the potential to sustain in climate change and save many lives of poor's. It is a set of modified practices for managing rice plants, soil, water and nutrients. Benefits of SRI management practices proved in various studies all over the world as increase in per acre yield, low water requirement, minimal seed requirement, more dependence on organic fertilizers, reduction in use of chemical fertilizer and pesticides, improved grain quality, reduced input cost and increase in production responsible to achieve more income.

This study is a small effort to present here the impact of application of group counseling principles for economic empowerment of farmers.

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Objectives

- To study the impact of group counseling intervention programme on rice production of farmers.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Different studies have been conducted regarding groups and group counseling. The importance of group counseling has been described by Mahler (1969)⁴. 1) Learn to understand other people and their view points, ii) develop a deeper respect for other people, particularly those who are different in many ways from one self, iii) gain greater social skills in dealing with peers, iv) learn to share with other people a sense of belonging by participating in group activities, v) clarify once own concerns, problems, values and ideas through discussions with others having similar problems in like areas.

Various advantages of group counseling have been explained as in the group environment others serve as mirrors who reflect aspects of yourself which you can recognize and then choose the change or accept as they are. A natural process of enhance acceptance of self and others occurs as one learns to relate on deeper, more personal levels with others in the group. The group provides an opportunity for personal experimentation. It is a safe place to risk learning more about yourself and new ways of interacting. <http://www.nmu.edu/counseling> and [consultation /group-counseling](http://www.nmu.edu/counseling).

Stages of group counseling have been stated i.e. i) the formation of group, ii) the involvement stage, iii) transition stage, iv) working stage and v) the ending stage. (Rao S. Narayana, 2010) Jacob Etl, (2006) has described suitable techniques, suitable for mass population which includes i) fish bowl, ii) small group interaction, iii) guided fantasy.

According to Corey (1981) group counseling needs to follow pattern at various stages at transition. The group counseling is effective in management of psychological trauma created by psunami disaster, bomb disaster (Nidhi Maheshwari, Ravindar Yadav, Nirenderpal Singh, 2010)

It was revealed in the study (Babatunde, Joseph, Ojo, (2013) that group career counseling was more effective to improve student's career maturity behavior.

All these studies have described the potential of group counseling in various fields. The present study differs from previous studies as it focuses the effectiveness of group counseling for farmer community.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

60 rice growing farmers in 10 villages of Sindhudurg district were selected by NGO Dilasa.

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After the selection of participants in the study following steps were followed:

1. **Training of Trainer (ToT)** of NGO staff regarding community counseling was conducted.
2. **Identification of problems of rice growing farmers:** To identify the existing problems small meetings of farmers were conducted in selected villages by NGO field staff. Situation analysis was done. Information was collected by informal interviews and discussion with farmer.
3. **Formation of farmer groups:** After analyzing the situation of farmers they were organized in 10 groups involving 6 farmers in each group. The data related to traditional rice cultivation method was collected from them.
4. **Group counseling sessions:** Farmers were given support by organizing systematic counseling sessions as follows:
 - a. **First Session:** This was the interactive session to sensitize the farmers regarding current declining situation of rice crop and inefficient methods of rice cultivation. This session ended with conclusion that some improvement in rice cultivation technology is necessary to solve the problem. Systematic rapport was established with farmers to adopt new technology and to change the stereotyped mental set about rice cultivation practices. The preliminary information regarding System of Rice Intensification was disseminated to them.
 - b. **Second Session:** In this session detail information regarding methodology and principles of SRI, cultivation practices, benefits of SRI, etc. was given to participants. Audio-visual aids were used for awareness creation. IEC material was developed and distributed to the beneficiaries. Confidence was created among them that this improved technology will be helpful to them. Doubts in their minds were removed.
 - c. **Third Session:** Before the sowing season of rice, demonstration along with hands on training regarding SRI was organized for groups of farmer. Counseling was provided regarding nursery establishment, transplantation technology, fertigation, water management, etc.
 - d. **Fourth Session:** After the demonstration activity, group has got clear-cut idea about the cultivation practices. Group leader in each group started the implementation of SRI practices for the group.
 - e. **Fifth Session:** After completing the transplantation activity, session was organized to create awareness regarding inter-cultural practices i.e. weeding of grass and its use in green manure, etc. Counseling was given regarding the possible pest attack and its remedies.
 - f. **Sixth Session:** This final session was organized before harvesting of rice crop. In this session, information was given regarding the proper harvesting techniques, avoidance of wastage, etc.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to find out impact of group counseling by applying SRI method on farmers. Data before & after SRI intervention was collected. The results of the study indicate the group counseling impact on various factors.

Statistical Analysis and Discussion

Mean Standard Deviation and *t* value of Traditional method of rice cultivation and SRI method of rice cultivation among Farmers.

Table No-1

Factors	Traditional method of rice cultivation		SRI method of rice cultivation		df	t
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
1) Nursery Preparation (No of days)	23.08	7.42	12.17	1.29	118	11.22**
2) Seed used for nursery (Kg/farmer)	37.10	21.96	5.72	3.39	118	10.94**
3) No of plants per farmer	457423.33	277467.80	91093.33	54176.10	118	10.03**
4) Inorganic Fertilizer Used (Kg/farmer)	177.92	105.81	28.46	16.93	118	10.80**
5) Organic Fertilizer Used (Kg/farmer)	355.83	211.62	427.00	253.95	118	1.67
6) Crop Duration (in days)	133.37	21.71	121.12	15.69	118	3.54**
7) No of Tillers per plant	15.77	1.91	31.38	3.60	118	29.70**
8) No. of Grains / Panicle [^]	118.35	6.25	126.42	7.97	118	6.17**
9) Filled grains per panicle (%) [^]	82.67	2.52	93.92	2.08	118	26.71**
10) Weight of 100 grain (gm) [^]	1.23	0.25	3.05	0.28	118	36.89**
11) Grain Yield with husk and bran (Kg/ Farmer) [#]	3439.86	2182.77	4356.86	2706.31	118	2.04*
12) Straw Yield (Kg/ Farmer) [#]	11129.65	7199.53	13101.15	8374.09	118	1.38
13) Straw Length (cm)	104.43	7.82	106.40	8.14	118	1.35
14) Finished Rice Yield in kg/farmer	1850.30	1208.63	3602.32	2150.19	118	5.50**
15) Labor requirement per farmer	8.00	0.00	4.00	0.00	118	240.00**
16) Working hours of farmer in the field	8.00	0.00	6.00	0.00	118	120.00**
17) Production cost per farmer	20725.83	12215.14	11386.67	6772.01	118	5.18**
18) Production cost per acre	13817.22	8143.40	7591.05	4514.70	118	5.17**
19) Income in Rs per farmer	25904.08	16920.83	50432.08	30102.92	118	5.50**
20) Income in Rs per acre	17803.33	3104.83	35443.33	2355.26	118	35.06**
21) Saving per acre	3986.12	8065.13	27852.28	5108.70	118	19.36**

* 0.05 = 1.98 and ** 0.01 = 2.63

The main purpose of the present study was to evaluate the impact of group counseling intervention programme on farmers. To examine the effect, data of traditional rice cultivation method of farmer and SRI Rice cultivation method of farmer was compared by considering 21 factors. Above table gives the mean score, SD and T value for traditional rice cultivation and SRI Rice cultivation. It clearly reveals that there is a significant difference between traditional method and SRI method because of intervention of group counseling based on SRI method. T values related to Nursery Preparation (No of days), Seed used for nursery (Kg/farmer), No of

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plants per acre, Inorganic Fertilizer Used (Kg/farmer), Crop Duration (in days), No of Tillers per plant, No. of Grains / Panicle, Filled grains per panicle, Weight of 100 gm rice, Grain Yield with husk and bran(Kg/ Farmer), Straw Yield (Kg/ Farmer), Finished Rice Yield in kg/farmer, Labor requirement per farmer, working hours of farmer in the field, Production cost per farmer, Production cost per acre, Income in Rs per farmer, Income in Rs per acre, Saving per acre, etc. are found statistically significant at both level (0.05 and 0.01 level) but the T value of organic fertilizer used (kg/farmer), Straw length (cm) are not found statistically significant. It is concluded that SRI Rice cultivation method has significantly better results in comparison with traditional rice cultivation method.

CONCLUSION

Group counseling intervention programme for farmers proved as an effective tool for better production of rice.

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