

Leadership of a Rice Farmer's Group in the Salt Intrusion Area, Takhria Sub-District, Ranot District, Songkhla Province

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were to 1) analyze the leadership characteristics and behaviors of the leaders of a rice farming groups in the salt intrusion area, and 2) analyze the relationship between leadership characteristics and behaviors of the leaders. The data collection tool used in this research was a structured questionnaire. Its purpose was to allow members of rice farming group and local citizens who were aware of the work of the group leader to evaluate the leader in terms of leadership characteristics and behaviors. Questionnaires were analyzed, with responses arranged into 5 levels according to Likert scale, and behaviors were analyzed according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid. Results found that, 1) overall leadership characteristics were at a high level ($\bar{x} = 4.13$) with the average highest leadership characteristics being the ability to perform tasks ($\bar{x} = 4.30$). Physical characteristics came next ($\bar{x} = 4.24$), followed by personality characteristics ($\bar{x} = 4.17$). An examination of the characteristics showed that the rice farming group leaders possess good human relations skills, with strong effort and patience at the highest level ($\bar{x} = 4.50$), and 2) analysis of leader behaviors found that the leaders of the rice farming groups had an average task-oriented behavior score of 5.93, and an averaged relationship-oriented behavior score of 7.47. When comparing these scores with the Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid, leaders of rice farming groups have behaviors that emphasized teamwork (6,8). Aside from this, testing the relationship between the characteristics of leaders and behaviors of leaders using Pearson Correlation statistics found that personality characteristics, knowledge and skills, social characteristics, physical characteristics, social background, and characteristics of performing tasks are factors that correlate positively with behaviors of leaders both in terms of task-oriented and relationship-oriented, with a statistical significance of 0.01. This encourages the leader to enhance knowledge and abilities, which might be lacking or are insufficiently developed. Enhancing these characteristics makes management of agricultural group effective and successful, and facilitates helping the members into the future.

Keywords: Leadership, Behaviors of leader, Rice farming groups, Salt intrusion

INTRODUCTION

Leadership qualities are important for leaders of groups and organizations. Members of groups and organizations whose leaders possess these qualities experience the least conflict (Sila, 2017). For a farmer group to be strong, the leader must be able to administer well, through supervising, encouraging, and coordinating. Forming farming groups enhances their ability to negotiate prices and compete in markets (Somboonsarn, n.d.).

Songkhla Province has the highest rice production yield in Southern Thailand (Office of Agricultural Economics et al, 2016; Office of Agricultural Economics, 2014). Ranot District grows more in-season rice and off-season rice than any other districts in the province. Some areas of the district experience salt intrusion because of high salinity of the irrigated water from Songkhla Lake, resulting in rice damage and alkaline soil. Despite the problems arising from the saline water, farmers choose to grow rice twice a year (MRG Online, 2013). Takhria Sub-District is the third rank of the high rice production areas with salt intrusion, and the fourth rank of rice production of all of the districts, at 29.57 % and 17.79 %, respectively. Takhria sub-district has only one farmer group (Ranot District Agricultural Extension Office, 2017). Therefore, this research investigated this rice farmer group leader's leadership and behaviors in managing the group to survive and meet with success despite the difficulties associated with salt intrusion. It is hoped that the group members are able to continue growing rice, and be a model for other areas experiencing similar problems.

METHODOLOGY

This research used Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid to determine the qualities of the characteristics of the leader's behaviors, divided into 2 characteristics: task-oriented, and relationship-oriented, both of which are composed of behaviors which were further divided into 5 management styles. The styles are as follows: 1) 1,1 is an impoverished management 2) 9,9 is a team management 3) 1,9 is a country club 4) 9,1 is a Task management 5) 5,5 is a middle-of-the-road. The population for this study was the rice farmer group in Takhria Sub-District, Ranot District. Purposive sampling was used to select the sampled group of 30 members, with the criteria that the group was registered, it was convenient for the group to join the research, and that the residents who joined the research and had experience of the leader carrying out his duties. The sample group filled out a questionnaire for the purpose of gathering data regarding the leader's characteristics and behaviors. The employed statistical methods are average, standard deviation, frequency analysis, and Pearson

correlation test of the relation of leadership characteristics with behaviors of the leader.

RESULTS

1. Results of analysis of leadership characteristics

The following 6 leadership characteristics were analyzed: personality characteristics, knowledge and skills, social characteristics, physical characteristics, social background, and characteristics of performing tasks (Table 1).

Table 1 Averages, standard deviations, and overall mark of leadership characteristics

Leadership Characteristics	\bar{x}	S.D.	Mark
personality characteristics	4.17	0.73	High
knowledge and skills	3.88	0.87	High
social characteristics	4.00	0.63	High
physical characteristics	4.24	0.59	High
social background	4.16	0.70	High
characteristics of performing tasks	4.30	0.70	High
Cumulative average	4.13	0.62	High

Note: $\bar{x} = 4.50-5.00 =$ highest, $\bar{x} = 3.50-4.49 =$ high, $\bar{x} = 2.50-3.49 =$ moderate, $\bar{x} = 1.50-2.49 =$ low, $\bar{x} = 1.00-1.49 =$ lowest

Table 1 shows that members of the groups, and with local citizens who were aware of the work of the group's leader gave high marks ($\bar{x} = 4.13$). Following are the averages, from highest to lowest: characteristics of performing tasks was $\bar{x} = 4.30$, physical characteristics was $\bar{x} = 4.24$, Personality characteristics was $\bar{x} = 4.17$, social background was $\bar{x} = 4.16$, social characteristics was $\bar{x} = 4.00$, and knowledge and skills was $\bar{x} = 3.88$.

2. Results of analysis of behaviors of the leaders

Analysis of the behaviors of the leaders was divided into 2 main categories, according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid: task-oriented and relationship-oriented (Table 2).

Table 2 Averages and standard deviations of the behaviors of the leaders

behaviors of the leaders	\bar{x}	S.D.
task-oriented	5.93	0.90
relationship-oriented	7.47	1.62

Table 2 shows members of the group, and local citizens who were aware of the work of the leader held views of the behaviors of the leader as follows: the averages were derived at by comparing the values that the researcher specified with the defined meanings on Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid, with the result that the leader has a managerial style emphasized teamwork (6,8).

3. Relation of leadership characteristics and behaviors of the leaders

This analysis reveals correlation between the six leadership and characteristics of performing tasks and the following 2 behaviors: task-oriented and relationship-oriented using Pearson Correlation (Table 3).

Table 3 Relation leadership characteristics with behaviors task-oriented and relationship-oriented

Leadership characteristics	Variable	
	characteristics of performing tasks	relationship-oriented
personality characteristics	.742 ^{**}	.679 ^{**}
knowledge and skills	.705 ^{**}	.565 ^{**}
social characteristics	.742 ^{**}	.596 ^{**}
physical characteristics	.648 ^{**}	.474 ^{**}
social background	.554 ^{**}	.533 ^{**}
characteristics of performing tasks	.704 ^{**}	.619 ^{**}

Note: ^{**} Significantly different at 0.01

Table 3 reveals that the relation of the task-oriented and relationship-oriented had a positive correlation, at a statistical significance of 0.01 with all of the 6 leadership characteristics. This may be understood as the six characteristics influence the leader to behave in ways that evoke the two behaviors while administering and managing the group and taking care of members.

CONCLUSION

The leader of the rice farming group has overall leadership qualities at the high level. Qualities associated with work have the highest average marks because the leader continually develops the work activities of the group. For instance, seeking new markets in order to increase the sale of the groups' products at the Prince of Songkla University market, Siam Nakharin market, and selling at booths at various fairs and exhibitions. The leader is invariably one of the actual vendors of the products. The results of the analysis of the behaviors of the group leader, as analyzed according to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid, show an emphasis on teamwork. This means that, for example, during meetings, the leader listened to members' opinions, and improved upon their suggestions and cooperatively created development plants as a regular matter. Analysis of the relation between leadership characteristics and leadership behaviors using Pearson Correlation revealed that personality characteristics and social characteristics were mostly related to task-oriented behaviors, and that relationship-oriented behaviors were mostly related to personality characteristics, both with statistically significant positive correlations at 0.01. Personality characteristics are an important component of work and of supervising members, thus contribute to the leader's task-orientation and relationship-orientation successes.

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