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Socio-economic profile of rural youth in chrysanthemum cultivation

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Abstract

Chrysanthemum cultivation has emerged as a viable livelihood option for rural youth in Tamil Nadu, particularly in Salem district, due to its short cropping cycle, income-generating potential, and compatibility with small landholdings. This study investigates the socio-economic profile of 120 rural youth engaged in chrysanthemum farming across three major blocks—Omalur, Kadayampatti, and Mecheri. An ex post facto research design and purposive sampling method were employed to collect data through structured interviews. Results reveal that a majority (90.83%) of the youth fall within the 21-30 age group, with 40.83% holding graduate degrees and 100% being literate. The majority are involved in farming either solely or in combination with studies, business, or other employment. Family annual income for 80.83% of respondents exceeds ₹1 lakh, indicating the crop's economic potential. Most respondents are marginal or small landholders, and 45% report moderate farming experience (4-8 years). Social participation, mass media exposure, and extension agency contact are predominantly at medium levels, indicating moderate integration with institutional and informational networks. Furthermore, the youth display medium levels of economic motivation, scientific orientation, and risk-taking ability, reflecting an openness to innovation and sustainable engagement in agriculture. The study concludes that chrysanthemum cultivation offers promising employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for rural youth and recommends targeted policy support, training, and market access to further enhance youth participation in floriculture.

Keywords: Chrysanthemum cultivation, rural youth, socio-economic profile and Tamil Nadu

Introduction

Chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum indicum*) is one of the most popular and commercially significant flowers grown across India, known for its vibrant colors, long vase life and wide use in religious, decorative, and medicinal purposes. India ranks among the top producers of flowers globally, with floriculture cultivated over 309 thousand hectares and contributing around 2.3 million tonnes of loose flowers and 870 thousand tonnes of cut flowers (National Horticulture Board, 2023) ^[7]. Among these, chrysanthemum holds a vital share, especially in states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and West Bengal, where it is cultivated both under open and protected conditions. In Tamil Nadu, chrysanthemum cultivation occupies a significant portion of the floriculture sector, particularly in districts such as Dindigul, Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, and Nilgiris where favorable climatic conditions and market access have encouraged youth participation. The increasing demand for flowers during festivals, weddings, and export opportunities has led to a steady rise in the area and production of chrysanthemum.

In Salem district, chrysanthemum cultivation has gained significant momentum over the past two decades and continues to be a leading floricultural enterprise. By 2009-10, Salem ranked first among Tamil Nadu districts with approximately 804 hectares under chrysanthemum cultivation, reflecting a sustained 175 % increase since

2001-02. More recent data for 2021-22 show that Salem maintained robust production, with 1,272 hectares dedicated to chrysanthemum closely following Dharmapuri (2,362 ha) and Krishnagiri (1,335 ha). Overall, the district boasts a broad 67,800 ha under horticulture encompassing key crops like chrysanthemum, mango, jasmine, and coffee. This consistent expansion underscores Salem's vital role in Tamil Nadu's floriculture sector, providing both economic opportunity and agricultural diversification for its rural youth.

With the agriculture sector facing challenges like labor shortages, land fragmentation and migration of youth to urban areas, chrysanthemum cultivation offers an attractive livelihood option for rural youth due to its relatively short cropping cycle (around 3-4 months), regular income potential, and suitability for small and marginal landholders. However, the socio-economic background of these youth including education level, access to finance, market knowledge and training exposure plays a significant role in determining the success and sustainability of their ventures. This study aims to analyze the socio-economic profile of rural youth engaged in chrysanthemum cultivation providing insights into their motivations, constraints and future potential in floriculture-based rural entrepreneurship.

Materials and Methods

The present study was conducted to examine the socio-

economic profile of rural youth involved in chrysanthemum cultivation in Salem district of Tamil Nadu, one of the major chrysanthemum-producing regions in the state.

Research Design

An ex post facto research design was adopted, as the variables under investigation had already occurred and could not be manipulated by the researcher. This design is appropriate for studying characteristics, behaviors, and outcomes that are already in existence.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in the Salem district, where chrysanthemum cultivation is practiced extensively. Based on secondary data, three blocks with the highest area under chrysanthemum cultivation namely Omalur, Kadayampatti, and Mecheri were purposively selected.

Sampling Procedure

A total of 12 villages (four from each selected block) were chosen purposively based on the area under chrysanthemum cultivation. From each village, 10 farm youth engaged in chrysanthemum cultivation were selected, resulting in a

total sample size of 120 respondents. The snowball sampling technique was used to identify and reach the youth actively involved in floriculture, especially chrysanthemum farming.

Data Collection

Data were collected using a well-structured and pre-tested interview schedule, which included questions on various socio-economic parameters such as age, education, landholding, farming experience, income sources, access to extension services and training received. Face-to-face interviews were conducted to ensure clarity and accuracy in responses.

Data Analysis

The collected data were coded, tabulated and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation to draw meaningful conclusions about the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents.

Results and Discussion

The socio - economic profile of rural youth engaged in Chrysanthemum cultivation is given in the Table 1.

Table 1: Profile of Rural Youth in Chrysanthemum cultivation

S. No.	Category	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Age	16-20	09.17
		21-25	55.00
		26-30	35.83
2.	Educational status	Up to secondary level education	07
		Higher secondary	31
		Diploma	31
		Graduate	49
		Post graduate	02
		Up to secondary level education	07
3.	Occupation Status	Higher secondary	31
		Wage earner	03
		Services	01
		Farming alone	00.83
		Farming + Studying	30
		Farming + Wage earner	25.00
		Farming + Services	33
		Farming + Business	14
4.	Family Annual Income (in Rs)	Wage earner	11.67
		Up to 50,000	16
		50,001 to 1 Lakh	20
5.	Farm Size (in ha)	Above 1 Lakh	97
		Marginal (Upto 1)	40.83
		Small (1.01 to 2)	43
		Medium (2.01 to 5)	35.83
6.	Farming experience (in years)	Large (Above 5)	20
		Low (up to 3)	16.67
		Medium (4-8)	08
7.	Social Participation	High (above 8)	06.67
		Low (less than 2.43)	43
		Medium (2.43-13.20)	35.83
8.	Mass Media Exposure	High (more than 13.20)	14
		Low (less than 10.82)	18
		Medium (10.82-15.21)	15.00
9.	Extension Agency Contact	High (more than 15.21)	86
		Low (less than 10.22)	71.67
		Medium (10.22-16.83)	16
10.	Economic Motivation	High (more than 16.83)	23
		Low (less than 26.02)	19.17
		Medium (26.02-34.33)	76

		High (more than 34.33)	15	12.50
11.	Scientific orientation	Low (less than 26.26)	25	20.83
		Medium (26.26-33.78)	72	60.00
		High (more than 33.78)	23	19.17
12.	Risk orientation	Low (less than 25.59)	19	15.83
		Medium (25.59-33.40)	86	71.67
		High (more than 33.40)	15	12.50

Age

From the Table 1., More than half of the farm youth (55.00 per cent) belonged to the age group 21-25 years, more than one third (35.83 per cent) belonged to the age group of 26-30 years and 9.20 per cent belonged to the age group of 16-20 years. Thus, it is concluded that majority of the farm youth (90.83 per cent) participating in Chrysanthemum cultivation belonged to the age group of 21 to 30 years. The age group 16 to 20 years were mostly involved in education and not in farming. The unemployment induced by the COVID lockdown, as well as the need to look after their own land and cultivation are the most likely reasons for farm youth in the age groups 21-25 years and 26-30 years to participate in Chrysanthemum cultivation. The results derived support from the study conducted by Kavinila (2020)^[5].

Educational Status

Two-fifth of the farm youth (40.83 per cent) were graduates followed by equal quantity of respondents who have completed up to higher secondary and diploma courses (25.83 per cent). Meagre number of the farm youth (05.83 per cent) have completed up to secondary education, only 01.68 per cent have completed post-graduate education and none were illiterate. The results clearly indicate that cent per cent of the farm youth were educated, which may be attributed to the availability of appropriate educational institutions in the area and their access to education being ensured by the state and district authorities. The results derive support from the study conducted by Chinchmalatpure *et al.*, (2019)^[2] who also reported that more than one third of the Rural Youth had education up to college level.

Occupation Status

More than one-fourth (27.50 per cent) of the respondents were doing farming along with their studies, one-fourth of the respondents (25.00 per cent) were engaged in farming alone followed by those engaged in farming + business (19.17 per cent), farming + services (13.33 per cent), farming + wage earner (11.67 per cent), wage earners (02.50 per cent) and services (00.83 per cent) respectively. The findings were in conformity with those reported by Anamica (2013)^[1] and Nagar (2018)^[6].

Family Annual Income

Majority of the farm youth (80.83 per cent) possessed family annual income of more than one lakh followed by those with family annual income of fifty thousand to one lakh (16.67 per cent) and those with family annual income of less than fifty thousand (02.50 per cent). Lower farm family earnings could be connected with factors such as weather, climate, market and price uncertainties. Though the income sources from other sectors were hampered due to the lockdown, agricultural income steadied the ship in most of the respondents' families. The results were in line with the

results of Shivaji (2019)^[13] and Pakhmode *et al.*, (2018)^[8].

Farm Size

Two-fifth of the farm youth (40.83 per cent) possessed marginal level of land holding (up to 1 ha) followed by little more than one-third of the respondents (35.83 per cent) with small landholding, 16.67 per cent of the respondents with medium landholding and only one sixth of the respondents (06.67 per cent) possessed large landholding. More than three-fourth of the respondents (76.66 per cent) possessed small and marginal landholding, the reason might be due to fragmentation of the land holdings and nuclear family types. The findings draw support from the findings of Pakhmode *et al.*, (2018)^[8] and Vihari (2018)^[15] who found that a majority of the rural youth had marginal and small land holdings.

Farming experience

More than two-fifth of the respondents (45.00 per cent) had medium level of farming experience followed by low (35.83 per cent) and high level of farming experience (19.17 per cent). In general, majority of the respondents (80.83 per cent) had less than eight years of experience. The study considered youth category with maximum age of 30 years and hence it might be the reason for low to medium level of farming experience. The findings were in conformity with those findings reported by Chouhan (2018) and Rani *et al.*, (2016)^[10].

Social Participation

More than two-third of the farm youth (68.33 per cent) had medium level social participation followed by low (20.00 per cent) and high level social participation (11.67 per cent). Majority of the farm youth (88.33 per cent) had medium to low level of social participation. The reason for limited social participation could be attributed to their age group, which is often regarded as inexperienced, as well as differences in their thoughts and objectives when compared to other older and experienced farmers. The findings were in line with the findings of Gedam (2019)^[3].

Mass Media Exposure

Nearly three-fourth of the farm youth (71.67 per cent) had medium level of mass media exposure followed by nearly an equal number of farm youth with low (15.00 per cent) and high level of mass media exposure (13.33 per cent). All the respondents were literates and more than two-thirds were collegiate. The results derived support from the study conducted by Chinchmalatpure *et al.*, (2019)^[2] whose findings also revealed that nearly three-fourth of the rural youth had medium level of mass media exposure.

Extension Agency Contact

Nearly two-third of respondents (63.33 per cent) had medium level of extension agency contact, 19.17 per cent had high level of extension agency contact and 17.50 per

cent had low level of extension agency contact. Majority of the farm youth (82.50 per cent) possessed medium to high level of extension agency contact. This may be attributed to the educational background of the farm youth and the active functioning of the extension agencies in the study area. The results of the study were in line with those results reported by Shireesha (2016) ^[12], Jayapuria (2015) ^[4] and Verma (2019) ^[14].

Economic Motivation

More than two-third of the farm youth (69.17 per cent) had medium level of economic motivation, 18.33 per cent had low level of economic motivation and 12.50 per cent had high level of economic motivation. Unemployment, uncertainty, instability, economic contraction, price fluctuations and supply restrictions caused by the lockdown might have resulted in farm youth having a medium to high degree of economic motivation. The findings of the study were in concordance with the study of Sharath (2018) ^[11] who reported that a majority of the rural youth has medium to high level of economic motivation

Scientific Orientation

Three-fifth of farm youth (60.0 per cent) had medium level of scientific orientation followed by low (20.8 per cent) and high level of scientific orientation (19.2 per cent). The results show that more than three-fourth of the respondents (79.17 per cent) possess medium to high level of scientific orientation. This results are in concordance with the findings of Shivaji (2019) ^[13] who reported that nearly two-third of the rural youth had medium level of scientific orientation.

Risk Orientation

Nearly three-fourth of the farm youth (71.67 per cent) had medium level of risk orientation, whereas 15.83 per cent had low level of risk orientation and 12.50 per cent with high level of risk orientation. Farming activities are strongly related with risk, including crop failure and market failure. Chrysanthemum is a cash crop and taking risks is always worth the money. The respondents were young aged considered to be filled with enthusiasm. This might be the possible reason for the medium to high level of risk taking behavior among the respondents. This finding was in accordance with Preethi *et al.*, (2014) ^[9] who reported that more than two-third of the rural youth had medium level of risk orientation.

Conclusion

The study highlights that chrysanthemum cultivation has emerged as a promising and economically viable occupation for rural youth in Salem district, Tamil Nadu. The majority of respondents are in the age group of 21-30 years, reflecting a significant shift of younger generations toward floriculture-based livelihoods. High educational attainment among these youth, particularly at graduate and diploma levels, underscores their capacity to adopt modern agricultural practices and adapt to dynamic market conditions.

Despite predominantly marginal and small landholdings, the engagement in chrysanthemum farming appears sustainable and profitable, as indicated by the relatively high family income levels. The youth also exhibit medium to high levels of farming experience, mass media exposure, economic

motivation, scientific orientation, and risk-taking ability. These attributes position them well to embrace innovations and participate in value-added agricultural activities. The moderate levels of extension agency contact and social participation suggest potential areas for strengthening institutional support and community engagement. Interventions that enhance training, market access, and entrepreneurship development could further empower these youth and drive growth in the floriculture sector.

In conclusion, the socio-economic profile of rural youth engaged in chrysanthemum cultivation reveals a dynamic and adaptable group with the potential to lead sustainable agricultural transformation, provided that enabling ecosystems are strengthened and youth-centric policies are implemented effectively.

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