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Perception of agricultural students towards farming as a profession

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Abstract

The prevailing situation of rising unemployment among agricultural graduates calls for a shift towards adopting agriculture as a profession to boost agricultural production and productivity. Thus, a study was conducted at Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University in Telangana state, to measure the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession. An ex post facto research design was employed, as the variables were examined without any form of experimental intervention. The sample consisted of 120 undergraduate students pursuing the final year of the B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture programme, who were selected randomly from the study population. data were collected using a pre-structured interview schedule administered through a Google Form, ensuring efficient data collection and minimizing response errors. The study revealed that most of the agricultural graduates had medium level of perception towards agriculture as a profession. Farming hands-on exposure, Mass media exposure and economic motivation has positive and highly significant relationship; Risk orientation showed a positive and significant relationship; Parental encouragement showed negative and highly significant; interest of students in farming as a profession has negative and significant; In contrast, variables such as age, gender, place of residency, family size, farm size, family occupation, family income, agriculture preference sector, and career preference did not show any significant relationship with perception.

Keywords: Perception, agricultural students, career preference, mass media exposure, Pearson's correlation coefficient

Introduction

India's socioeconomic development still heavily relies on agriculture, especially in states where a sizable section of the population makes their living from farming and related pursuits. The efficiency of institutional support systems, particularly agricultural extension, which makes it easier for farming communities to receive innovations, technology, and information, is directly related to the sustainability and performance of agriculture. An effective agricultural extension system not only enhances productivity but also plays a significant role in shaping the attitudes and perceptions of farming communities and youth towards agriculture as an occupation (Amungwa & Baye, 2014) [2].

Telangana is mostly an agrarian state, with agriculture serving as the foundation of the rural economy. Numerous small and marginal farmers, a variety of cropping patterns, and a growing reliance on agriculture-based livelihoods are characteristics of the state. Telangana farming still faces a number of difficulties, including unstable income, unpredictable weather, growing cultivation costs, and unclear markets, despite numerous government measures to revitalize the sector. Rural youth's interest in agriculture as a primary employment has gradually decreased as a result of these difficulties, which have affected their career goals.

Research on young people in rural areas has shown that negative attitudes about financial gains, social standing, and possibilities for the future deter them from pursuing a career

in agriculture (Bodake, 2016) [3]. In areas like Telangana, where agriculture is undergoing a shift impacted by technical advancements and changing socioeconomic situations, these opinions are especially pertinent.

Decisions about careers and occupations are heavily influenced by perception. Personal experiences, family history, resource availability, institutional backing, and exposure to prosperous farming practices all influence how rural children view agriculture. Research has demonstrated that a number of characteristics, including societal recognition, risk-taking capacity, land availability, and economic stability, have a substantial impact on how young people view agriculture (Bodake, 2016) [3]. Designing interventions that promote young involvement in agriculture requires an understanding of these views.

It is anticipated that agricultural education would serve as a catalyst for the advancement of agriculture as a respectable and successful career. The goal of agricultural universities is to provide competent graduates who can use farming, agripreneurship, extension, and related fields to support agricultural growth. Even agricultural students and graduates, however, frequently show a preference for non-farming occupations, according to study. In a comparison of agricultural undergraduates from PAU, Ludhiana, and PJTSAU, Hyderabad, Naik (2019) found that a sizable percentage of students favored salaried work over a career in agriculture. Since PJTSAU is the top agricultural

university serving Telangana's needs for agricultural education and people resources, this finding is especially pertinent to the state.

International situations have also shown similar trends. In their study of agriculture students at Makerere University in Uganda, Okiror and Otabong (2015) discovered that social prestige, job security, and predicted income all had an impact on career decisions. Despite being carried out in a diverse geographic setting, the results highlight a common issue facing the agriculture industry: educated youth's unfavourable opinions of agriculture. These observations offer a more comprehensive knowledge of the career decisions made by Telangana's agricultural graduates.

The characteristics of farming systems and related activities also have an impact on youth involvement in agriculture. Research on young farmers engaged in animal husbandry has shown that their effectiveness and persistence in farming-related careers are strongly influenced by their personal and socioeconomic traits. According to Shafi *et al.* (2021), young dairy farmers' workability and performance were significantly influenced by predictable traits. These results imply that youth involvement in agriculture and related fields can be increased in states like Telangana with the right support networks and favourable circumstances.

Agri graduates can greatly increase farm productivity and sustainability because of their technical expertise, scientific orientation, and professional competence. However, in addition to increased career aspirations established by their educational background, their employment decisions are influenced by perception-based factors similar to those impacting rural youth (Naik, 2019).

To close the gap between agricultural education and real farming participation, it is essential to comprehend agricultural graduates perception. Thus, the goal of this study is to examine how Telangana's agricultural graduates view farming as a career. In order to support the sustainable growth of agriculture in Telangana, policymakers, agricultural universities, and extension agencies are anticipated to gain important insights from the study's findings as they develop focused strategies to promote farming as a viable, respectable, and fulfilling career for agricultural graduates.

The objective of the study is to measure the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Telangana State, India, adopting a multistage random sampling approach. The research was undertaken at Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJTAU). An ex post facto research design was employed, as the variables were examined without any form of experimental intervention. The sample consisted of 120 undergraduate students pursuing the final year of the B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture programme, who were selected randomly from the study population. Final-year students were considered appropriate for the study due to their substantial academic exposure to agriculture, environment, and climate-related subjects. Primary data were collected using a pre-structured interview schedule administered through a Google Form, ensuring efficient data collection and minimizing response errors. The data obtained were systematically coded, classified, tabulated, analysed, and interpreted to derive meaningful results. For data analysis, descriptive statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean score, and standard deviation were used to summarise the data. In addition, Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied to assess the relationships between the selected independent variables and the dependent variable.

Results and Discussion

The perception of students towards farming as an occupation was assessed using twelve statements measured on a four-point continuum. The results are presented in Table 1, that a majority of respondents (76.67%) either Strongly Agreed (SA) or Agreed (A) that agriculture as a profession commands high respect in society, indicating a generally positive social image of farming. Conversely, the notion that one cannot earn profits through agriculture was largely rejected, as 66.67% of respondents Disagreed (D) or Strongly Disagreed (SD), suggesting confidence in agriculture's economic potential.

Similarly, nearly half of the respondents (49.17%) disagreed with the statement that agriculture lacks career development opportunities, highlighting optimism regarding professional growth in the sector. An overwhelming majority (90.83%) disagreed with the perception that farming is only meant for less educated individuals, clearly rejecting this traditional stereotype.

Table 1: Statement wise distribution of agricultural graduates according to their perception towards agriculture as a profession

S. No	Particulars	SA		A		DA		SDA	
		f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	Agriculture as a profession commands high respect in public	32	26.67	60	50.00	22	18.33	6	5.00
2.	Agriculture as a profession, one cannot earn profits	6	5.00	34	28.33	58	48.33	22	18.34
3.	There is no enough opportunity for career development in agriculture	19	15.83	29	24.17	59	49.17	13	10.83
4.	Farming is only for those of less educated people	2	1.67	9	7.50	52	43.33	57	47.50
5.	Farming doesn't bring stable income like other professional jobs	16	13.33	62	51.67	36	30.00	6	5.00
6.	It isolates one from the rest of the society	12	10.00	29	24.17	56	46.67	23	19.16
7.	Agriculture as a profession helps in promoting food security	71	59.17	49	40.83	0	0.00	0	0
8.	Agriculture as a profession doesn't guarantee, one's physical health and mental peace	7	5.83	35	29.17	49	40.83	29	24.17
9.	Agriculture profession requires high management skills	35	29.17	63	52.50	20	16.67	2	1.66
10.	It is a laborious type of work	26	21.67	77	64.17	15	12.5	2	1.67
11.	In this profession one has to work under pressure	7	5.83	40	33.33	65	54.17	8	6.67
12.	It is high uncertainty occupation	24	20.00	72	60.00	18	15.00	6	5.00

*SA - Strongly Agree, A - Agree, DA - Disagree, SDA - Strongly Disagree

f - frequency, % - percentage

Regarding income stability, 65.00% of respondents agreed that farming does not offer stable income comparable to other professions, reflecting realistic concerns about income variability in agriculture. However, social isolation associated with farming was largely disagreed upon by 65.83% of respondents, suggesting that students do not perceive agriculture as socially restrictive.

All respondents unanimously recognized the role of agriculture in promoting food security, with 100% agreement, emphasizing strong awareness of agriculture's societal importance. On the issue of physical health and mental peace, responses were mixed; while 40.83% disagreed that agriculture negatively affects wellbeing, a notable proportion expressed agreement, reflecting differing personal perceptions.

A substantial majority (81.67%) agreed that agriculture requires strong management skills, and 85.84% acknowledged farming as labour-intensive work. Furthermore, 60.84% disagreed with the view that farming requires working under constant pressure, indicating a balanced understanding of occupational stress.

Finally, 80.00% of respondents agreed that agriculture involves a high degree of uncertainty, reflecting awareness of risks related to climate, markets, and production. Overall, the findings indicate a moderately favourable perception of farming among students, as reflected by the predominance of respondents (67.50%) in the medium perception category. The present finding of the study was similar to the findings

reported by Naik (2019) and Devi and Bariya (2022) ^[4]. The relationship between selected independent variables and the perception of students towards farming as an occupation was analysed using correlation analysis. The findings indicate that while certain independent variables exhibited a significant association with perception, several socio-personal variables did not show any significant relationship. The data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between independent variables and students' perception towards farming as profession

S. No.	Independent Variable	'r' value
1.	Age	- 0.067
2.	Gender	- 0.035
3.	Place of Residency	- 0.046
4.	Family Size	0.071
5.	Farm Size	- 0.008
6.	Family Occupation	- 0.007
7.	Family Income	- 0.030
8.	Farming hands on Exposure	0.222**
9.	Interest of students on farming as profession	- 0.220*
10.	Parental Encouragement	- 0.327**
11.	Agriculture Preference Sector	- 0.123
12.	Career Preference	0.076
13.	Mass Media Exposure	0.276**
14.	Economic Motivation	0.564**
15.	Risk Orientation	0.193*

**= Significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed) * = Significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)

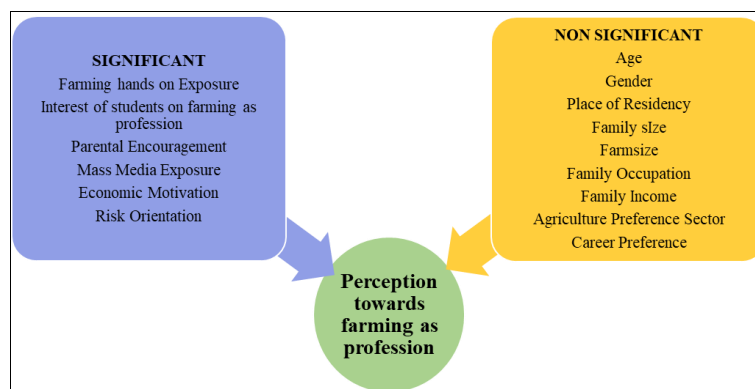


Fig 1: student's perception towards farming as profession

Among the independent variables studied, farming hands-on exposure exhibited a positive and highly significant relationship with perception towards farming as an occupation. This suggests that students who had greater practical exposure to farming activities tended to develop a more favourable perception. Direct involvement in agricultural practices enables students to gain realistic insights into farming operations, technological advancements, and income-generating opportunities, thereby enhancing their positive outlook towards farming. The interest of students in farming as a profession showed a negative but significant relationship with perception. This inverse relationship indicates that although students may express interest in farming, their perception may be influenced by perceived challenges such as income uncertainty, labour intensity, and market risks. This finding reflects a more pragmatic and cautious attitude among students who are interested in agriculture as a career.

Parental encouragement was found to have a negative and highly significant relationship with perception. This indicates that parental attitudes and advice play a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions. In many instances, parents may discourage farming due to concerns about economic instability, social status, and occupational risks, which in turn adversely affects students' perception of farming as a viable profession.

Mass media exposure demonstrated a positive and highly significant relationship with perception towards farming. Students with higher exposure to mass media sources such as television, social media, and agricultural programmes were found to have a more favourable perception. Mass media serves as an important source of information by highlighting success stories, modern farming technologies, and entrepreneurial opportunities, thereby improving students' awareness and attitudes towards agriculture.

The variable economic motivation recorded the strongest

positive and highly significant relationship with perception. This implies that students who possessed higher economic motivation perceived farming more positively, viewing it as a potential source of income and economic security. The desire for financial independence and profitability plays a dominant role in influencing favourable perceptions towards farming as an occupation.

Risk orientation showed a positive and significant relationship with perception. Students with a higher tendency to take risks were more likely to perceive farming positively, as agriculture involves inherent uncertainties related to climate variability, production, and market fluctuations. A higher risk-bearing capacity enables students to consider these uncertainties as manageable challenges rather than deterrents.

In contrast, variables such as age, gender, place of residency, family size, farm size, family occupation, family income, agriculture preference sector, and career preference did not show any significant relationship with perception. This indicates that socio-demographic characteristics alone do not substantially influence students' perception of farming as an occupation.

Overall, the results suggest that experiential, motivational, informational, and psychological factors play a more decisive role in shaping students' perception towards farming than socio-personal characteristics. Therefore, strategies aimed at enhancing practical exposure, strengthening economic incentives, promoting positive agricultural information through mass media, and encouraging risk-taking behaviour may contribute significantly to improving students' perception of farming as a viable and respectable occupation.

Conclusion

According to research findings, most agricultural graduates had a medium to high opinion of agriculture as a career. The results show that many people view agriculture as a significant and socially recognized profession, especially because of its contribution to society welfare and food security. The idea that farming is only appropriate for those with less education is refuted by agricultural graduates, who see farming as a knowledge and skill intensive career requiring excellent managerial qualities. However, concerns about labor intensity, income stability, and uncertainty related to agricultural activities continue despite this overall positive outlook. Graduates' perceptions are still influenced by these risk and economic issues, which may make them less inclined to pursue agriculture as a full-time career. The predominance of a medium rather than consistently high perception level can be explained by the coexistence of positive attitudes and practical limits. Overall, the study shows that agricultural graduates have the potential to engage in farming if supportive laws, risk-reduction strategies, and income-assurance programs are improved to make farming a more stable and alluring career option.

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