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Demographic and economic profile of rural youth engaged in agriculture and allied sectors in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

The socio-economic characteristics, communication behaviour, and psychological attributes of rural youth engaged in agriculture and allied sectors. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents (51.25%) belong to the young adult age group, with Hindus (51.25%) and OBC category (52.51%) being predominant. Most respondents have attained secondary to intermediate education (64.37%), are married (57.51%), and live in medium-sized (56.87%) nuclear families (56.25%). Agriculture is the primary occupation for 45% of families, with marginal farmers (53.13%) forming the largest group, and a majority (63.33%) falling under the low-income category. The study further reveals that digital media sources such as mobile phones and the internet (MPS 3.00 each) are the most preferred channels for information, surpassing traditional sources like television (MPS 2.53) and newspapers (MPS 1.81). Respondents exhibit a moderate level of economic motivation (67.50%) and risk orientation (61.25%), indicating balanced decision-making behaviour. Organizational participation is moderate, with 31.25% involved in multiple organizations, though leadership roles remain limited. Moreover, informal sources of information (mean score 2.59), particularly neighbours and friends, are more influential than formal extension services (mean score 1.40). The study highlights the dominance of small-scale farming, moderate socio-economic aspirations, and increasing dependence on digital and informal communication channels among rural youth, providing important implications for extension strategies.

Keywords: Rural youth, agricultural entrepreneurship, socio-economic profile, mass media exposure, information sources, economic motivation, risk orientation

Introduction

Agriculture remains the backbone of the Indian economy, sustaining a large proportion of the rural population and contributing significantly to national income and employment. In states like Uttar Pradesh, agriculture and allied sectors continue to be the primary source of livelihood, particularly in districts with predominantly rural demographics such as Ghazipur. However, the sector is increasingly confronted with challenges such as declining farm profitability, small and fragmented landholdings, climate variability, and limited access to modern technologies. These constraints have led to a gradual decline in the interest of rural youth in agriculture, resulting in migration towards urban areas in search of better opportunities (Singh *et al.*, 2019) ^[11].

Rural youth, defined as individuals in the age group of 15–35 years, constitute a vital human resource with immense potential to transform agriculture into a more productive and sustainable enterprise. Their involvement in agriculture not only ensures continuity in farming but also introduces

innovation, risk-taking ability, and entrepreneurial orientation. The concept of entrepreneurial behaviour in agriculture has gained importance in recent years, emphasizing the need for youth to adopt agriculture as a business rather than a subsistence activity (Kumar & Kumar, 2021) ^[5]. However, the extent to which rural youth engage in agricultural entrepreneurship is largely influenced by their socio-economic background.

The socio-economic profile of respondents including variables such as age, education, caste, family type, landholding, income, and occupation plays a crucial role in shaping their knowledge, attitudes, and decision-making behaviour. This studies consistently highlighted that factors like education, landholding size, income level, and extension contact significantly influence the entrepreneurial behaviour and adoption of improved agricultural practices among rural youth (Yadav & Sharma, 2020) ^[12]. Understanding these characteristics is therefore essential for designing targeted interventions to promote youth participation in agriculture and allied sectors.

The Government of India has initiated several programmes aimed at enhancing youth engagement in agriculture, including skill development, entrepreneurship promotion, and capacity-building initiatives. Despite these efforts, the success of such programmes largely depends on the existing socio-economic conditions and the level of awareness among rural youth (Government of India, 2022; NABARD, 2021) [3, 7].

Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh provides a relevant setting to examine the socio-economic profile and entrepreneurial behaviour of rural youth engaged in agriculture and allied sectors. Therefore, the present study aims to analyse the socio-economic characteristics of respondents and assess their influence on entrepreneurial behaviour, thereby contributing to the development of effective strategies for promoting Agri-entrepreneurship among rural youth.

Research Methodology

The present study was conducted in the Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh, India. The state was purposively selected owing to the researcher's familiarity with the local language, cultural context, and geographical conditions, which facilitated efficient data collection and enhanced the reliability of the information obtained. Ghazipur district, located in the eastern part of the Varanasi division, was selected due to its diverse socio-economic and demographic characteristics.

An ex-post facto research design was adopted, as the variables under study had already occurred and were beyond the control of the researcher (Kumar & Ratnakar, 2011) [4]. A multistage sampling technique was used for the selection of respondents. In the first stage, four blocks Manihari, Jakhania, Ghazipur, and Mardah were selected randomly from the total blocks in the district. In the second stage, four villages from each selected block were chosen through simple random sampling, resulting in a total of 16 villages. From each village, 10 rural youth engaged in agriculture and allied sectors were selected, constituting a total sample size of 160 respondents. The sample size was considered adequate to obtain reliable and representative results (Yadav & Sharma, 2020) [12].

Data were collected through personal interviews using a pre-tested and structured interview schedule. The schedule was designed to obtain detailed information on socio-economic characteristics of the respondents. Field observations were also conducted to supplement the primary data. The collected data were analysed using appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and correlation coefficient for meaningful interpretation (Garrett & Woodworth, 1969) [2].

Results and Discussion

1. Youth age

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their Youth age
n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Adolescents (up to 20)	44	27.50
2.	Young adults (21-31)	82	51.25
3.	Adults (32 and above)	34	21.25

Table 1 shows that most respondents (51.25%) are aged 22–31 years, followed by adolescents (27.50%) and adults (21.25%), with a mean age of 25.89 years.

2. Religion

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their religion
n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Hindu	82	51.25
2.	Muslim	42	26.25
3.	Christian	09	5.64
4.	Sikhs	11	6.87
5.	Buddhists	08	5.00
6.	Jain	05	3.18
7.	Parsi	03	1.81
	Total	160	100.00

Table 2 shows that most respondents are Hindu (51.25%), followed by Muslim (26.25%), while other religions constitute smaller proportions.

3. Caste

Table 3: Distribution of the respondent according to their caste
n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	General caste	45	28.12
2.	Other backward caste (OBC)	84	52.51
3.	Scheduled caste (SC)	29	18.12
4.	Scheduled tribe (ST)	02	1.25
	Total	160	100.00

Table 3 indicates that most respondents belong to the Other Backward Class (52.51%), followed by General (28.12%) and Scheduled Caste (18.12%), while Scheduled Tribe has the lowest share (1.25%).

4. Education

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents according to their education n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Illiterate	05	3.12
2.	Literate	155	96.88
a.	Read and write	04	2.50
b.	Primary	04	2.50
c.	Middle school	33	20.64
d.	High school	48	30.0
e.	Inter medium	55	34.37
f.	Graduate	11	6.87
	Total	160	100.00

Table 4 shows that most respondents have intermediate education (34.37%), followed by high school (30.00%) and middle school (20.62%), while other categories have smaller proportions.

5. Marital statuses

Table 5: Distribution of the respondents according to their marital status n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Married	92	57.51
2.	Unmarried	63	39.37
3.	Widow	03	1.87
4.	Divorced	02	1.25
	Total	160	100.00

Table 5 shows that most respondents are married (57.51%), followed by unmarried (39.37%), with very few widowed (1.87%) and divorced (1.25%).

6. Family size

Table 6: Distribution of the respondents according to their family size n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Small family (up to 4 members)	49	30.62
2.	Medium family (5 to 9members)	91	56.87
3.	Large family (above 10 members)	20	12.51
	Total	160	100.00

Table 6 shows that most respondents belong to medium-sized families (56.87%), followed by small (30.62%) and large families (12.51%).

7. Family type

Table 7: Distribution of the respondents according to their family type n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Joint family	70	43.75
2.	Nuclear family	90	56.25
	Total	160	100.00

The table 7 shows that the majority of respondents (56.25%) belong to nuclear families, while a significant proportion (43.75%) come from joint families.

8. Occupation

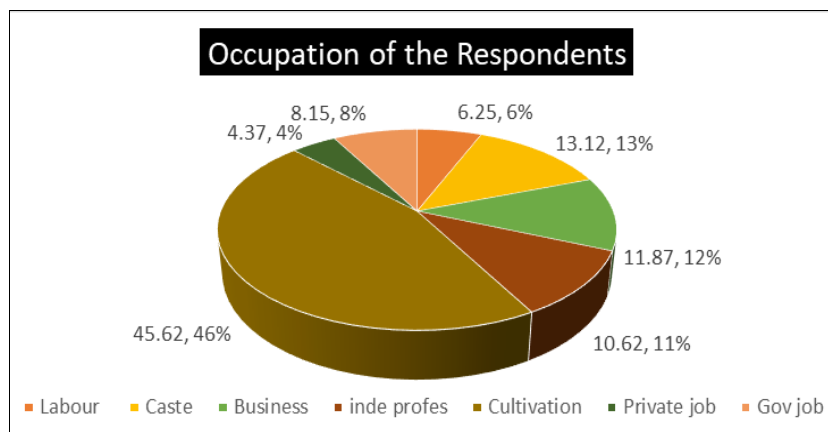


Fig 8: Occupation-wise distribution of the respondents

Table 8 shows that most respondents' families are engaged in cultivation (45.62%), followed by caste-based occupations (13.12%), business (11.87%), and independent professions (10.62%), with smaller shares in labour,

government, and private services.

9. Land holding

Table 9: Distribution of the respondents according to their land holding n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Marginal farmers (below 1.0 hectare)	85	53.13
2.	Small Farmers (1.01-2.0 hectare)	40	25.00
3.	Semi-medium farmers (2.01-4.0 hectare)	27	16.87
4.	Medium farmers (4.01-10.0 hectare)	08	5.00
	Total	160	100.00

Table 9 shows that most respondents are marginal farmers (53.12%), followed by small (25.00%), semi-medium

(16.87%), and medium farmers (5.00%).

10. Annual income

Table 10: Distribution of the respondents according to their annual income n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Low income (below to Rs 46,000)	86	63.33
2.	Medium income (Rs46,001 to Rs1,88,000)	45	29.16
3.	High income (above to Rs1,88,001)	29	7.51
	Total	160	100.00

The table shows that most respondents fall in the low-income group (63.33%), followed by medium (29.16%) and high income (7.51%).

11. Mass media exposure

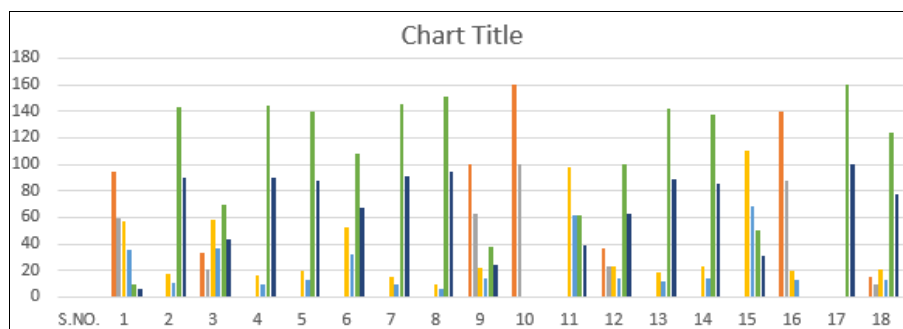


Fig 11: Mass media exposure-wise distribution of the respondents

Table 11 shows that mobile phones (100%) and internet (87.5%) are the most widely used mass media sources among respondents. Television (58.75%) and posters (62.5%) also have good reach, while most other sources like

radio, farm magazines, books, and desktops show very low.

12. Economic Motivation

Table 12: Distribution of the respondents according to their economic motivation n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Low economic motivation (below 16.76)	46	28.75
2.	Medium economic motivation (16.77 to 21)	108	67.50
3.	High economic motivation (above 21.01)	06	3.75
	Total	160	100.00

Table 12 shows that most respondents have medium economic motivation (67.5%), followed by low (28.75%), while very few have high motivation (3.75%).

13. Social participations

Table 13: Distribution of the respondents according to their social participation n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Without membership in any organization	22	13.75
2.	Member in one organization	41	25.62
3.	Membership in more than one organization	50	31.25
4.	Financial contribution to common fund for common work	34	21.25
5.	Office bearer in any one organization	06	3.75
6.	Involvement in community work	07	4.38
	Total	160	100.00

Table 13 shows that most respondents have membership in more than one organization (31.25%), followed by one organization (25.62%), while smaller proportions are

involved in contributions, community work, or hold no membership.

14. Risk Orientation

Table 14: Distribution of the respondents according to their risk orientation n=160

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		<i>f</i>	%
1.	Low risk orientation (up to 19)	37	23.12
2.	Medium risk orientation (20-24)	98	61.25
3.	High risk orientation (25 above)	25	15.62
	Total	160	100.00

Table 14 shows that most respondents have medium risk orientation (61.25%), followed by low (23.12%) and high risk (15.62%).

15. Extension contacts

Table 15: Distribution of the respondents according to their extension contacts n=160

S. No.	Categories	MPS	Rank
A.	Formal Sources		
1.	Agriculture Scientists	1.12	VIII
2.	Agricultural Extension Officer	1.15	VI
3.	Technical Assistant (TA)	1.13	VII
4.	Agriculture College/University	1.99	II
5.	Senior Technical Assistant (STA)	1.18	V
6.	Panchayat Secretary	1.64	IV
7.	Krishi Vigyan Kendra	1.09	IX
8.	Co-operative	1.95	III
9.	Gram-Pradhan	2.17	I
	Average	1.40	
B.	Informal sources		
1.	Friends & Relatives	3.00	I
2.	Progressive Farmers	2.26	III
3.	Input Dealers	2.58	II
4.	Agri – Clinics	2.12	IV
5.	Neighbour	3.00	I
	Average	2.59	
	Overall average	3.99	

Table 15 shows that among formal sources, Gram-Pradhan ranks first (MPS 2.17), followed by Agriculture College/University (1.99) and Co-operative (1.95). Among informal sources, friends & relatives and neighbours rank highest (MPS 3.00 each), followed by input dealers (2.58), indicating greater reliance on informal sources (overall average 3.99).

Conclusion

The findings on the socio-economic profile of rural youth indicate that the respondents were predominantly young adults belonging to OBC categories, with moderate levels of education and a high proportion of married individuals. Agriculture emerged as the principal occupation, supported by small and marginal landholdings and low-income levels. The study further highlights a transition toward nuclear family systems while maintaining elements of joint family structures. Information-seeking behaviour reveals a strong inclination toward digital media, particularly mobile phones and the internet, over traditional sources. Moderate levels of economic motivation, risk orientation, and organizational participation were observed, with greater reliance on informal sources than formal extension services. These

patterns reflect the evolving socio-economic dynamics of rural youth and emphasize the need to strengthen extension systems and digital outreach for effective agricultural development (Singh & Sharma, 2020; Kumar *et al.*, 2019) [10, 6].

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