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Attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession

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Abstract

Rural youth form one of the most vibrant and influential segments of society. Their energy, adaptability, enthusiasm and openness to innovation make them valuable contributors to the agricultural sector. However, in recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in rural youth's interest and participation in agriculture, primarily due to factors such as unemployment, lack of modern exposure, insufficient institutional backing and a growing trend of relocating to cities for improved livelihoods. This disengagement poses a serious challenge to the sustainability and future of Indian agriculture. Keeping this in view, present study was undertaken to analyse the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession and explore the relationship between the selected characteristics and attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession.

An Ex-post facto research design was used for the present investigation. To carry out the research, three districts *viz.* Junagadh, Rajkot, and Gir Somnath of the Saurashtra region were purposefully chosen. From each district, two talukas and within each taluka, three villages were randomly selected for sampling. From each village, 10 rural youth were randomly selected. Thus, a total 180 rural youth were selected for the study. Data were gathered using a pre-tested interview schedule through personal interactions. For analysis, appropriate statistical tools such as frequency, mean, percentage, correlation analysis, standard deviation and arbitrary methods were used.

The result of the research study reflected that more than two-fifth (43.89 per cent) of the rural youth held a moderately favourable attitude, followed by 38.89 per cent of the rural youth, who had neutral attitude towards agriculture as profession.

Whereas, 10.00 per cent and 7.22 per cent of the rural youth had highly favourable attitude and moderately unfavourable attitude, respectively. While none of them were having highly unfavourable attitude.

Among the sixteen selected profile characteristics *viz.*, age, farming experience, land holding, annual income, socio-economic status, risk orientation and innovativeness had positive and highly significant relationship with their attitude towards agriculture as profession.

Whereas, family main occupation, economic motivation, achievement motivation, social participation and source of information had positive and significant relationship with their attitude towards agriculture as profession. Education has negative and highly significant, whereas size of family, livestock holding and marital status had non-significant relationship with their attitude towards agriculture as profession.

Keywords: Rural youth, attitude, agriculture, profession

Introduction

Agriculture is more a 'way of life' than a 'mode of business' in India. India is indeed a young country. The growth of a country is directly proportional to the capabilities of the rural youth. Agriculture sector in India can achieve the utmost heights if youth's potential is properly utilized. Agriculture is the basic occupation for majority of main-workers in India. In addition to providing food and raw material, agriculture also provides employment opportunities to a very large percentage of the population.

Rural youth are individuals aged between 18 and 35 years residing in rural areas, who are in the transitional phase from dependence to independence and are capable of participating in productive activities, particularly agriculture and allied sectors (Anon., 2015) ^[3].

According to the Census of India (Anon., 2011) ^[2], over 50.00 per cent of the population was below the age of 25 years and more than 65.00 per cent was below the age of 35

years, indicating a strong demographic advantage. The youth population in India has increased significantly from 168 million in 1971 to 422 million in 2011 (Anon., 2017) ^[4]. Furthermore, rural youth population increased from 30.60 per cent in 1971 to 34.80 per cent in 2011 (Anon., 2017) ^[4]. Such a shift highlights India's potential to benefit from its demographic dividend.

By 2025, it is projected that approximately 89.50 per cent of the world's youth will reside in developing countries, with rural youth constituting about 55.00 per cent of this demographic. These rural youth possess a distinct potential for innovation, distinguishing them from older generations. However, this potential can only be realized if young people remain engaged with agriculture.

Youth mean energy and enthusiasm as youth are more active, high-yielding and have an open mind to new things. Also, they have the willpower to take more risk. The farming population of India is growing older day by day and

young people are migrating from rural to urban areas in search of a job is a huge problem in the present situation. The global food supply begins to look much undetermined due to the poor involvement of young people.

Currently, youth are noted to run away from villages and turn a blind eye to agriculture as an income generating profession. The changing socio-economic landscape, mechanization, commercialization and shifts in aspirations have influenced how rural youth perceive agriculture.

Attitude towards agriculture reflects the extent to which rural youth view farming as a desirable, respectable and viable career option. Positive attitudes lead to greater involvement, while negative attitudes result in apathy or migration to non-agricultural sectors.

Amid concerns over the vulnerability of youth from agriculture as profession, this study was conducted. There is lack of empirical studies on attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession in the state of Gujarat, India. So, this study tries to investigate the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession in some districts of Gujarat. Analysing attitudes and perception of rural youth towards agriculture as profession, this investigation may unlock opportunities that ignite youth's interests, entrepreneurial skills and innovation, fostering rural development, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability.

Methodology

The study was conducted in the Rajkot, Junagadh, and Gir-Somnath districts of Saurashtra region, Gujarat. An ex-post facto research design was adopted for the investigation since it allows for a systematic empirical study where the researcher cannot directly manipulate the independent variables; instead, these variables exist naturally or cannot be altered due to practical limitations (Kerlinger, 1969) [10]. The dependent variables undertaken in this study was attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. A teacher made scale was used for measuring the attitude. The independent variables were measured by using suitable scales and procedures adopted by various researchers with suitable modifications.

The interview schedule was prepared in Gujarati language in light of the objectives of the study and was pre-tested. A combination of multistage, random and purposive sampling techniques were employed. Three districts namely Junagadh, Gir-Somnath, and Rajkot from the Saurashtra region were purposively selected due to easier accessibility from Junagadh Agricultural University. From each district, two talukas were chosen randomly using a random sampling method, resulting in a total of six talukas. From each taluka, three villages were selected and from each village, ten respondents were chosen at random. Altogether, 180 respondents were selected randomly from eighteen villages across the six talukas for this study. Suitable modifications on the basis of pre-testing were incorporated in the final schedule. The data of this study were collected by arranging personal interview with all 180 rural youth.

The data so collected were classified, tabulated and analysed in order to make the findings meaningful. The statistical

measures such as mean, percentage, standard deviation, arbitrary method and coefficient of correlation were used in the study.

Results and Discussion

A. Attitude of Rural Youth Towards Agriculture As profession

It is a universally acknowledged fact that an individual's attitude plays a crucial role in shaping their behaviour towards any psychological object. An attitude can be described as a state of mental readiness or a predisposition to respond in a particular way. Generally, a person's attitudes exist but remain inactive until stimulated. A person's attitude reflects the level of positive or negative feelings attached to an object or concept and therefore significantly influences their behaviour.

Attitude of the rural youth towards agriculture as profession under investigation is given in Table 1 and illustrated in Fig. 1.

Table 1: Distribution of the rural youth according to their level of attitude

Sr. No	Attitude	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Highly unfavourable (14.00-25.20 scores)	00	00.00
2.	Moderately unfavourable (25.20-36.40 scores)	13	07.22
3.	Neutral (36.40-47.60 scores)	70	38.89
4.	Moderately favourable (47.60-58.80 scores)	79	43.89
5.	Highly favourable (58.80-70.00 scores)	18	10.00
Total		180	100.00

The distribution of rural youth according to their attitude toward agriculture as profession and indicated that the more than two-fifth (43.89 per cent) of the rural youth held a moderately favourable attitude, followed by 38.89 per cent of the rural youth, who had neutral attitude towards agriculture as profession.

A smaller proportion (10.00 per cent) of the rural youth showed a highly favourable attitude, while 7.22 per cent of them were having moderately unfavourable attitude and none of them were having highly unfavourable attitude towards agriculture as profession.

It can be concluded that vast majority (82.78 per cent) of rural youth held a moderately favourable to neutral attitude toward agriculture, indicating that the vast majority perceive it as a positive and acceptable occupation choice.

The possible reason for having a moderately favourable attitude toward agriculture as profession may be due to their medium level of education, farming experience, socio-economic status and moderate experiences with farming. While many rural youths recognize agriculture as a traditional and accessible livelihood, they are also aware of the challenges associated with it such as low profitability, dependency on weather, limited market access and high input costs.

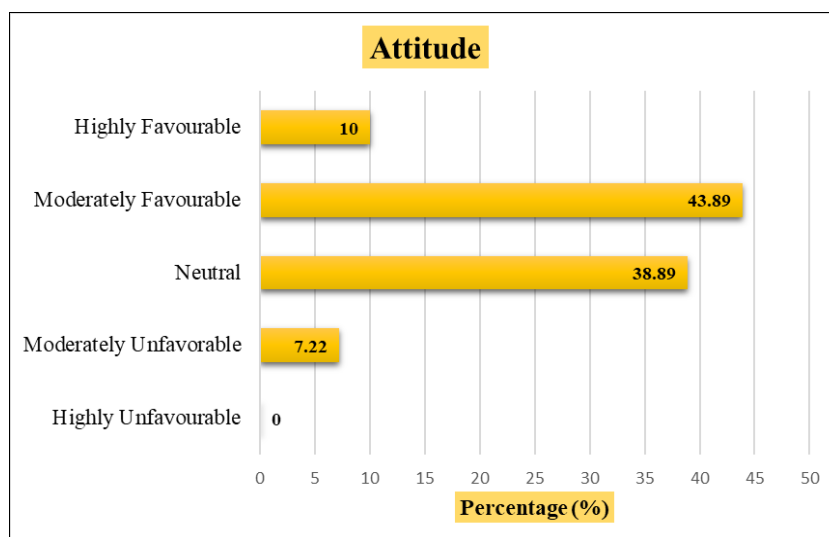


Fig 1: Distribution of the rural youth according to their level of attitude

Moreover, exposure to non-farm job opportunities, migration trends and lifestyle aspirations may reduce their enthusiasm for taking up agriculture as a full-time profession.

However, ongoing exposure to government schemes, extension activities and improved technologies could positively influence their outlook, keeping their attitude in the moderately favourable range.

This study is in line with Chinchmalatpure and Koshti (2021)^[8], Thakor and Pandya (2021)^[15] and Tikariha *et al.* (2023)^[16].

B. Association between Selected Characteristics of the Rural Youth and their Attitude Towards Agriculture as Profession

In order to ascertain the relationship between the effectiveness (dependent variable) of the farmers and their selected characteristics (independent variables), the co-efficient of correlation ('r') were calculated. The empirical hypotheses were stated for testing the relationship and its significance of correlation are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession and their profile (n=180)

Sr. No.	Name of the independent variables	'r' value
1.	Age	0.636**
2.	Education	-0.261**
3.	Farming experience	0.775**
4.	Size of family	-0.095 ^{NS}
5.	Livestock holding	0.135 ^{NS}
6.	Family main occupation	0.159*
7.	Land holding	0.444**
8.	Marital status	-0.140 ^{NS}
9.	Annual income	0.458**
10.	Socio-economic status	0.838**
11.	Risk orientation	0.410**
12.	Economic motivation	0.148*
13.	Achievement motivation	0.155*
14.	Innovativeness	0.273**
15.	Social participation	0.155*
16.	Source of information	0.153*

* = significant at 5% level, ** = significant at 1% level, NS = non-significant

1) Age and Attitude

Age was found to be had positive and highly significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This implies that as the age of the youth increases, their attitude towards agriculture becomes more favourable. In other words, older rural youth tend to have a more positive attitude towards agriculture compared to their younger counterparts.

Similar results were observed in the studies conducted by Buragohain *et al.* (2018)^[5], Tripathi *et al.* (2018)^[17] and Tikariha *et al.* (2023)^[16].

2) Education and Attitude

Education was found to be negative and highly significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This indicates a statistically significant inverse relationship between education and attitude. This suggests that as the level of education among rural youth increases, their attitude towards agriculture becomes less favourable. In other words, more educated youth tend to have a comparatively negative or indifferent attitude towards agriculture as profession.

This outcome aligns with the observations made by Tripathi *et al.* (2018)^[17] and Maurya *et al.* (2021)^[11].

3) Farming Experience and Attitude

Farming experience was found to be positive and highly significant with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession, indicating a strong and direct relationship between farming experience and attitude. These findings are in agreement with the results reported by Chakraborty (2023)^[17].

4) Size of Family and Attitude

Size of family was found to be negative and non-significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This indicates that the number of family members neither positively nor negatively influenced how youth perceive agriculture as a livelihood option. This result is consistent with the observations reported by Uddin *et al.* (2018)^[18] and Anarase *et al.* (2018)^[11].

5) Livestock Holding and Attitude

Livestock holding was found to be positive but non-significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession, indicating a very weak relationship between livestock holding and attitude. This is in line with the findings of Shaik and Chauhan (2022)^[13].

6) Family Main Occupation and Attitude

Family main occupation was found to be positive and significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This implies that youth belonging to families where agriculture is the main source of livelihood tend to have a more favourable attitude towards agriculture. These findings are in agreement with the observations of Gangwar and Kameswari (2016)^[9] and Maurya *et al.* (2021)^[11].

7) Land Holding and Attitude

Land holding was found to be had positive and highly significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This suggests that rural youth from families with larger land holdings tend to have a more favourable attitude towards agriculture. These findings are in agreement with the observations of Tripathi *et al.* (2018)^[17] and Chinchmalatpure and Koshti (2021)^[8].

8) Marital Status and Attitude

Marital status was found to be had negative and non-significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This implies that whether a rural youth is married or unmarried does not significantly affect how they perceive agriculture as a profession. These findings are supported by similar research conducted by Shireesha *et al.* (2016)^[14], Pakhmode *et al.* (2018)^[12] and Chinchmalatpure and Koshti (2021)^[8].

9) Annual Income and Attitude

Annual income was found to be had positive and highly significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This suggests that youth with higher annual incomes tend to have more favourable attitudes towards agriculture. These findings are supported by the observations of Chinchmalatpure and Koshti (2021)^[8].

10) Socio-Economic Status and Attitude

Socio-economic status was found to be had positive and highly significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This means that rural youth with higher socio-economic status are more likely to hold favourable attitudes towards agriculture.

11) Risk Orientation and Attitude

Risk orientation was found to be had positive and highly significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This implies that rural youth with a higher willingness to take risks tend to view agriculture more positively. These findings are supported by the research conducted by Chachere *et al.* (2018)^[6] and Pakhmode *et al.* (2018)^[12].

12) Economic Motivation and Attitude

Economic motivation showed a positive and significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This suggests that youth with higher economic motivation are more likely to hold positive attitudes towards agriculture.

13) Achievement Motivation and Attitude

Achievement motivation was found to be had positive and significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession.

This suggests that rural youth with higher achievement motivation tend to have a more positive attitude towards agriculture.

14) Innovativeness and Attitude

Innovativeness was found to be had positive and highly significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This suggests that rural youth with higher levels of innovativeness are more likely to hold a positive view of agriculture. These individuals are generally more open to adopting new technologies, practices and ideas. These findings align with the observations made by Chinchmalatpure and Koshti (2021)^[8].

15) Social Participation and Attitude

Social participation was found to be had positive and significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This suggests that rural youth who participate more in social activities tend to have a more favourable attitude towards agriculture. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Chakraborty (2023)^[7].

16) Source of Information and Attitude

Source of information was found to be had positive and significant relationship with the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as profession. This implies that rural youth who receive information from more reliable or diverse sources are more likely to have a positive attitude towards agriculture. These findings are consistent with the research conducted by Tikariha *et al.* (2023)^[16].

Conclusion

It can be concluded that vast majority (82.78 per cent) of rural youth held a moderately favourable to neutral attitude toward agriculture, indicating that the vast majority perceive it as a positive and acceptable occupation choice. The characteristics of the rural youth like; age, farming experience, land holding, annual income, socio-economic status, risk orientation and innovativeness had positive and highly significant relationship with their attitude towards agriculture as an occupation.

Whereas, family main occupation, economic motivation, achievement motivation, social participation and source of information had positive and significant relationship with their attitude towards agriculture as an occupation. Education has negative and highly significant relationship with their attitude towards agriculture as an occupation. In case of size of family, livestock holding and marital status

had non-significant relationship with their attitude towards agriculture as an occupation

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