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Correlation between the profile of experiential learning programme (ELP) students and their entrepreneurial orientation

[1]Keerthana Vijayan, [2]Pallavi D Suryawanshi, [3]MV Ajotikar and [4]Awale Payal Suresh

[1]PG Scholar, Department of Agriculture. Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Pune, Maharashtra, India

[2]Assistant Professor of Agriculture. Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Pune, Maharashtra, India

[3]Assistant Professor of Agriculture. Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Pune, Maharashtra, India

[4]PG Scholar, Department of Agriculture. Extension Education, College of Agriculture, Pune, Maharashtra, India

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Corresponding Author: Keerthana Vijayan

Abstract

This study examines the entrepreneurial orientation of final-year B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture students enrolled in the Experiential Learning Programme (ELP) across three leading agricultural colleges under Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth, Maharashtra. Based on data from 250 students, the research analyzed how demographic factors and personal traits—such as economic motivation, risk orientation, decision-making ability, and techno-savviness—influence their entrepreneurial mindset. Most students were aged 21-24, with rural, low-income backgrounds and limited exposure to vocational training. The results indicated that traits like vocational training (r = 0.116), economic motivation (r = 0.162), risk orientation (r = 0.145), decision-making ability (r = 0.166), and techno-savviness (r = 0.297) were significantly and positively correlated with entrepreneurial orientation.

Despite moderate entrepreneurial traits, students faced challenges such as inadequate financial support, lack of mentorship, limited training, and complex legal procedures. The study suggests that improving access to government grants, microfinance, entrepreneurial education, and simplifying business processes can enhance students' entrepreneurial potential. Addressing these issues will help transform agricultural graduates into innovators and job creators, contributing to rural development and economic growth.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial orientation, experiential learning programme, vocational training, techno-savviness

Introduction

Agriculture is deeply rooted in India's economy and culture, providing livelihood, food security, and employment to a significant portion of the population. The sector includes a wide range of activities such as crop farming, dairy, poultry, piggery, sericulture, apiculture, and goat rearing. The importance of scientific and technological advancements in agriculture was acknowledged in the early 20th century, leading to the Royal Commission in 1926. After independence, efforts to strengthen rural and agricultural development intensified. The establishment of G.B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology in Pantnagar in 1960 marked a milestone as India's first agricultural university, setting a model for others. Today, India has 63 State Agricultural Universities (SAUs). These institutions aim to prepare graduates to effectively support farming communities and contribute to allied sectors. Entrepreneurship is a vital part of this mission. Entrepreneurs not only create employment but also drive innovation and improve the use of available resources. They assist others by sharing technical knowledge and promoting awareness about business opportunities and government schemes.To encourage practical learning and entrepreneurial skills, the Experiential Learning Program (ELP) is integrated into the final year of the B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture curriculum, as suggested by the Fifth Deans' Committee of ICAR. The program, fully practical and worth 20 credits, engages students in real-world tasks like production, marketing, and record-keeping. It enhances problem-solving skills, decision-making, and business planning. ELP builds confidence and nurtures a mindset focused on entrepreneurship, enabling students to transition from job seekers to future job creators.

Methodology

Maharashtra is a state where a maximum amount agriculture students get graduated each year. Mahatma Phule Krishi Vidyapeeth (MPKV) is Maharashtra's first State Agriculture University, overseeing ten districts in Western Maharashtra. Among all the agriculture colleges three main colleges at three different districts were selected for the study. These are; College of Agriculture, Pune (1907), College of Agriculture, Dhule (1960) and College of Agriculture, Kolhapur (1963). The main criteria for selection of these universities is that these colleges are the oldest and well established colleges of Maharashtra. The total intake capacity of students every year at College of Agriculture, Pune and College of Agriculture, Kolhapur are 190 each and

for College of Agriculture, Dhule it accounts for 120 seats. Thus, from a total of 500 students 250 respondents were selected for the study. In the present study, the data was collected from B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture graduating students of VIII semester studying in these three constituent colleges during 2024-2025 who were interviewed with the help of a well prepared questionnaire. The statistical tools used were percentage, frequency, and Karl Pearson's Coefficient of Correlation.

Results and Discussion

1. Profile of ELP students

The profile of Experiential Learning Programme (ELP) students were studied which made up of variables like gender, education, residential background of the students, vocational training attended, sources of information, economic motivation, risk orientation, decision making ability and techno-savviness. Thereby, the general picture of students were obtained. The results were then tabulated, calculated, organized and arranged as mentioned below:

1.1 Gender

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their gender

Sl. No.	Category	Respondents (n=250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Male	125	50.00
2.	Female	125	50.00
Total		250	100.00

The data showed in table 1 reveals that out of total respondents 125 male and 125 female each were opted for the research. It was also noted that all the respondents were between the age of 20 and 24 thus with an average age of 21.8.

1.2 Education

Table 2: Distribution of ELP students according to their Education

Sl. No.	Education	Respondents (n=250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC)	250	100.00
2.	Agriculture diploma	00	00.00
Total		250	100.00

Under the study it was observed that all (100.00 percent) the respondents passed the Higher Secondary Education with various grades and opted B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture as their graduate programme and none of the respondents had completed diploma programme.

1.3 Residential background of students

Table 3: Distribution of ELP students according to their residential background

Sl. No.	Residential Background	Respondents (n=250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Rural	146	58.40
2.	Urban	104	41.60
Total		250	100.00

According to the results, 41.60 percent of students come from urban backgrounds, while more than half (58.40 percent) come from rural backgrounds. It can also be seen that farming community still have affinity towards their occupation and thus they stay at rural areas and this is the reason their children seek admission in agriculture related degree programmes.

1.4 Vocational Training Attended

Table 4: Distribution of ELP students according to their participation in vocational training

Sl. No.	Category	Respondents (n=250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Vocational training attended	57	22.80
2.	Vocational training not attended	193	77.20
Total		250	100.00

The above table show the frequency and percentage of students, with almost three-fourths (77.20 percent) of the respondents not attempting or having the option to pursue any entrepreneurship-related vocational training. Almost one-fourth (22.80 percent) of respondents has undergone training related to various aspects of entrepreneurship.

In Maharashtra there are different kinds of training programmes particularly for entrepreneurship. There are respondents who had attended the Scheduled Caste Scheduled Tribe Sub Plan (SCSP) programme along with National SC-ST Hub that are designed to promote capacity building and skill development that are specifically for marginalized communities. Maharashtra Centre for Entrepreneurship Development (MCED) is an autonomous body through which the respondents got the training as they conduct various short training programmes and short duration courses related to entrepreneurship. Along with this respondents also prioritized on some of the interventions like Pune start-up fest 2025 and boot camp on precision viticulture, KVK training for protected cultivation in which the participants took part.

1.5 Source of Information

Table 1.5: Overall distribution of ELP students according to their information sources

Sl. No.	Source of Information	Respondents (n =250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (Up to 8)	48	19.20
2.	Medium (9 to 11)	123	49.20
3.	High (12 and above)	79	31.60
Total		250	100.00

According to table 8 and figure 8, nearly half of the respondents (49.20 percent) used medium sources of information, followed by 31.60 percent of high information source, and just 19.20 percent of low sources of information.

The majority of respondents sought information through social media. This is because information may be obtained directly through mobile phones. One can check the information at convenient time whenever necessary. Thus, quick gathering of information is assured if good internet connectivity is provided.

1.6 Economic Motivation

Table 1.6: Distribution of ELP students according to their economic motivation

Sl. No	Economic Motivation	Respondents (n =250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (Up to 13)	23	9.20
2.	Medium (14 to 21)	163	65.20
3.	High (22 and above)	64	25.60
Total		250	100.00

The preceding table clearly shows that nearly two-third (65.20 percent) of respondents have medium economic motivation, one-fourth (25.60 percent) have high economic motivation, and 9.20 percent have poor motivation.
Financial stability is vital, according to the respondents, but it is not the only driver of entrepreneurship. Respondents are more likely to operate their own businesses, although they may also rely on family or part-time jobs for initial cash. Availability to other career options can be another reason for medium economic motivation. The families are majorly from farming background so respondents do not prefer to take high risk for financial stability.

1.7 Risk Orientation

Table 1.7: Distribution of ELP students according to their overall risk orientation

Sl. No.	Risk bearing ability	Respondents (n =250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (Up to 25)	47	18.80
2.	Medium (26 to 31)	164	65.60
3.	High (32 and above)	39	15.60
Total		250	100.00

As regarded to the risk orientation, a little near to two third (65.60 percent) of the respondents had medium level of risk orientation whereas 18.80 percent of the respondents belonged to low category of risk orientation and lastly 15.60 percent of the respondents opted a high category of risk orientation.

1.8 Decision Making Ability

Table 1.8: Distribution of ELP students according to their overall decision making ability.

Sl. No.	Decision Making Ability	Respondents (n =250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (Up to 29)	43	17.20
2.	Medium (30 to 39)	169	67.60
3.	High (40 and above)	38	15.20
Total		250	100.00

The data can be viewed in the following way that more than two-third (67.60 percent) of the respondents had medium level of decision making ability and nearly same number of respondents had low (17.20 percent) and high (15.20 percent) decision making ability.
The study's respondents are undergraduate students who had not completed their degrees at the time the survey was done. As a result, it is clear that these respondents' exposure to the actual world is limited, and they lack experience.

1.9 Techno-savviness

Table 1.9: Distribution of ELP students according to their overall extent of techno-savviness

Sl. No.	Techno-savviness	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (Up to 25)	46	18.40
2.	Medium (26 to 31)	164	65.60
3.	High (32 and above)	39	15.60
Total		250.00	100.00

The data reveals that 65.60 percent of respondents have medium level of techno-savviness followed by low level of techno-savviness of 18.40 percent of the respondents and 15.60 percent of the respondents was of high techno-savviness. Techno-savviness is not just knowing about the technology but should actually be so prompt in operating each and every actions incorporated in the digital tools. Through this new technology trends can be adopted, and be able to use computer, internet or mobile apps easily.

1.10 Entrepreneurial Orientation

Table 1.10: Distribution of profile of the ELP students according to their overall entrepreneurial Orientation

Sl. No.	Entrepreneurial Orientation	Respondents (n=250)	
		Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (Up to 78)	13	5.20
2.	Medium (79 to 93)	218	87.20
3.	High (Above 94)	19	7.60
Total		250	100

The above table shows that the majority of respondents (87.20 percent) have a medium level of entrepreneurial orientation, with 7.60 percent having a high level and 5.20 percent having a low level. This reveals that the majority of students exhibit medium-level behaviour when it comes to coordinating entrepreneurial efforts. Entrepreneurship development consists of three major phases that are: Initiation phase, supporting phase and sustaining phase. Young entrepreneurs would have to develop entrepreneurial traits in order to get into the first phase of entrepreneurship development. As the students were undergoing the degree programme, they didn't have practical exposure of the outside real world like networking, branding, marketing and so on. Similarly, most of the aspiring entrepreneurs were on the current scenario concentrate only on academics. There can be influence of family and peer groups towards the respondents. These all reasons causes medium level of entrepreneurial orientation.

Table 1.11: Correlation between profile of students and entrepreneurial orientation of ELP students

Sl. No.	Independent Variable	Correlation Coefficient
1.	Gender	0.002^{NS}
2.	Residential Background	0.008^{NS}
3.	Source of Information	0.060^{NS}
4.	Vocational Training	0.116**
5.	Economic Motivation	0.162**
6.	Risk Orientation	0.145*
7.	Decision Making Ability	0.166**
8.	Techno-savviness	0.297**

NS = non-significant at 0.005 level
** = Significant at .01 level
* = Significant at 0.05 level

Gender shows a weak and non-significant correlation with students' entrepreneurial orientation (r = 0.002), indicating minimal influence. Entrepreneurial behavior is driven more by skills, attitude, and motivation than by gender. Government initiatives for women empowerment have significantly boosted women's confidence to start their own businesses. Today, women are actively involved in ventures such as food processing (e.g., amla candy, vegetable drying, pickles), mushroom farming, handmade crafts, agri-tourism, and more.

The study revealed a weak and non-significant correlation between students' residential background and entrepreneurial orientation (r = 0.008), indicating no link between rural or urban origin and enterprise participation. Entrepreneurial outlook depends on students' mindset to overcome challenges, not their background.

Sources of information show no significant relationship with entrepreneurial orientation, though the correlation is positive (r = 0.060). This suggests students have a moderate understanding of using information sources but lack awareness of start-up-related websites, portals, and apps, explaining the non-significant link.

Vocational training shows a positive and significant correlation with ELP students' entrepreneurial orientation (r = 0.116), indicating its key role in business initiation. It enhances behavioral traits like motivation, risk-taking, and leadership, essential for starting a venture. As students lack prior business experience, training by government or private organizations greatly influences them.

Statistics show a significant positive correlation between risk orientation and entrepreneurial inclination (r = 0.145), indicating that risk orientation strongly influences students' entrepreneurial mindset. Taking calculated risks is beneficial when there's a high chance of profit or success.

Decision-making ability shows a strong positive correlation with entrepreneurial orientation among ELP students (r = 0.166). Since traits like innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking are key to entrepreneurship, the ability to choose among alternatives is crucial. Quick decision-making is essential for handling challenges effectively.

Techno-savviness shows a relatively strong correlation with entrepreneurial attitude (r = 0.297). In today's tech-driven world, students recognize the importance of using technology for marketing and operations. Tech-savvy individuals can generate ideas, take smart risks, and respond quickly—key traits of successful entrepreneurs—explaining the strong link between technical skills and an entrepreneurial mindset.

Conclusion

The study on ELP students revealed key findings based on their demographic and entrepreneurial characteristics. Most participants were aged 21-24 and enrolled in B.Sc. (Hons.) Agriculture after clearing the CET. Being undergraduates, they had limited exposure to vocational training, highlighting the need for training and capacity-building programs within educational institutions. A majority came from rural farming families, limiting their ability to invest in enterprises.

A significant number of students demonstrated a moderate level of economic motivation, risk orientation, decision making ability and techno-savviness which finally moulded the entrepreneurial attitude of the ELP students. These traits were vital in helping a person in starting and running and thereby expansion of a business venture. In addition to fostering entrepreneurship, these attributes will aid in the development of their personalities, which greatly influences how a young entrepreneur behaves.

To strengthen entrepreneurial orientation, the study recommends promoting access to government grants, microfinance, crowd funding, mentorship platforms, entrepreneurship education, and simplifying business registration. Implementing these steps could help Maharashtra's youth turn innovative ideas into successful ventures.

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