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Agri-preneurship readiness and competency of agricultural graduates of Rajasthan state

[*1]Sher Singh Bochalya, [2]Shobhana Gupta, [3]Vikas Kumar, [4]SC Shrivastava and [5]MS Kakran

[1]Research Scholar, Department of Agricultural Extension Education, CoA, RVSKVV, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India

[2]Associate Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension Education, CoA, RVSKVV, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India

[3]Assistant Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension Education, CoA, RVSKVV, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India

[4]Senior Technical Officer, Department of Agricultural Economics, KVK, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India

[5]Retd. Professor, Department of Agricultural Statistics, CoA, RVSKVV, Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh, India

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Corresponding Author: Sher Singh Bochalya

Abstract

This study explores readiness and competency of agricultural graduates of covering main college of all five Agricultural Universities of the Rajasthan state, *i.e.* Swami Keshwanand Rajasthan Agricultural University, Bikaner, MPUAT Udaipur, SKN Agriculture University, Jobner, Agriculture University, Kota, and Agriculture University, Jodhpur during their participation in the Experiential Learning Programme (ELP). By analyzing responses from 224 undergraduate students, the research highlights key areas such as entrepreneurial readiness and competency, major constraints in establishing agri-enterprises, and emerging entrepreneurial prospects. The study indicates that agricultural graduates largely exhibit a medium level of agri-preneurship readiness and competency, with strengths in planning, initiative, and confidence but gaps in risk-taking and practical exposure. With proper training, policy support, and incubation opportunities, their potential can be harnessed for sustainable agri-business development.

Keywords: Agri-preneurship, ELP, entrepreneurial readiness and competency, agriculture students

Introduction

Entrepreneurship in agriculture is vital for fostering innovation, creating jobs, and ensuring sustainable growth. Integrating entrepreneurship education and training into agricultural curricula equips students with the skills and confidence to manage enterprises, reduce unemployment, and contribute to economic development at both national and global levels.

The Student READY Programme (Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana) is an initiative launched by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to enhance the employability and entrepreneurial skills of agriculture and allied sector students Sharma (2018) [7]. It aims to provide hands-on experience through internships, village attachment, experiential learning, and skill development. By integrating practical exposure with classroom knowledge, the program prepares students to face real-world agricultural challenges, promotes rural entrepreneurship, and fosters innovation. Ultimately, it bridges the gap between academic learning and industry needs, making graduates more competent and self-reliant. The current study is planned to determine whether or not the Experiential Learning Programme goals have been reached in theory and to pinpoint the elements that made the programme easier to execute (Patil *et al*., 2021) [5] and Chaithrashree *et al*., 2019) [1]. The study's conclusions is highlight important issues so that decision-makers can understand the programme accomplishments to date and the steps that must be taken by the agencies implementing it to ensure the success of its entrepreneurship development initiative. Keeping in view the above discussed facts of sufficient information and sparce related research, the present investigation was undertaken to find out the "Agri-preneurship Readiness and Competency of Agricultural Graduates of Rajasthan State" during the academic session of 2022 and 2023.

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted in Rajasthan state, covering all five Agricultural Universities of the state, *i.e.* Swami Keshwanand Rajasthan Agricultural University, Bikaner, MPUAT Udaipur, SKN Agriculture University, Jobner, Agriculture University, Kota, and Agriculture University, Jodhpur. The research design stands as the cornerstone of the research methodology, representing the comprehensive process of research planning and execution. To address the research questions at hand, the survey research design was chosen for this investigation, as it facilitates a systematic data collection approach with robust interpretative capabilities. This design succinctly elucidates the characteristics of the specific group or individuals within the context of the study, with a clear focus on identifying the relevant variables. The multistage sampling techniques were used for study.

Sampling procedure

Selection of Colleges: Two common ELP modules; *i.e.* Organic Production Technology and Poultry Production Technology running all the college were selected and therefore all the students enrolled in these two modules during the academic year 2022-2023 were selected for the study.

Table 1: Selected UG students of five Agricultural University's for study

S. No.	Name of University	Name of college	Modules	
			Organic Production Technology	Poultry Production Technology
1	MPUAT, Udaipur	RCA, Udaipur	25	30
2	SKRAU, Bikaner	COA, Bikaner	24	25
3	SKNAU, Jobner	SKNCOA, Jobner	25	20
4	AU, Jodhpur	COA, Jodhpur	20	16
5	AU, Kota	COA, Kota	17	22
Total			111	113
			n=224	

Thus, a total of 111 and 113 students were enrolled in organic production technology and poultry production technology respectively in all the five selected college during the ELP.

Selection criteria: The selection of these students depends on variables like independents variables viz. family background and personal attributes of ELP students as well as dependent variable of entrepreneurial competency among the students.

A structured questionnaire was developed covering four main entrepreneurial traits innovativeness, risk orientation, general skills, and persistence which are widely acknowledged in literature as vital components of entrepreneurial competency. Additionally, students were asked about the perceived challenges and opportunities they encountered or envisioned during their ELP experience. The quantitative data were classified, tabulated and analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and other appropriate statistical tools.

Measurements of Agri-preneurship readiness

Readiness operationalized as mental preparedness, state of mind and intuition of agriculture students for accepting entrepreneurship in agriculture and allied sector as career option. Twenty readiness statements were framed based on review of literature and by consulting the concerned specialists in Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia Krishi Vishwa Vidyalaya. Responses were pooled out from the agriculture students like yes and no. The score pattern was followed as one score was given for yes and zero score was given for no. Based on total score, agriculture students were categorised into three categories as low, medium and high using mean and standard deviation.

Table 2: Agri-preneurship readiness score pattern

S. No.	Readiness Categories	Score range
1	Low	Up to (Mean - SD)
2	Medium	Between (Mean ± SD)
3	High	Above (Mean + SD)

Measurements of Agri-preneurship competency

Agri-preneurship competencies are the skills, knowledge, and abilities that entrepreneurs use to start, manage, and grow an agribusiness. They are a combination of technical and nontechnical skills that can help entrepreneurs differentiate themselves from competitors and improve business performance. It was measured by using structured schedule for this study.

Table 3: The schedule consisted 30 statements and are rated on a five-point continuum

Statements Score	Response				
	Very well	Well	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all
	5	4	3	2	1

Results and Discussions

Agri-preneurship readiness among agricultural graduates: Table 4 represents the responder's distribution as per Agri-preneurship readiness. The results shows that majority i.e. 60.71 per cent responder had medium level of per Agri-preneurship readiness, followed by 25.89 per cent responder were having high agri-preneurship readiness and only 13.39 per cent of the responders had low level of agri-preneurship readiness among themselves, respectively. It can be deduced from the study that majority of respondents (60.71%) had medium level of Agri preneurship. A medium level of agri-preneurship means that individuals or groups have moderate readiness and engagement in agricultural entrepreneurship. They possess some knowledge, skills, and resources to start and manage agribusiness activities but may not yet be at the advanced stage of innovation, investment, or risk-taking. Farmers or youth at this level are open to adopting improved practices and small-scale innovations. They are able to generate income through farming or allied enterprises (like dairy, poultry, or processing) but on a limited scale. Rathore *et al.* (2024) [6] was found similar findings.

Distribution of responder's as per their Agri - preneurship readiness: Data represent that Agri-preneurship readiness statement wise distribution on the basic of mean per cent score and rank wise. Table 5 represent that Agri-preneurship readiness statement the present that "Are you ready to take up entrepreneurship, agri preneurship and startups as a future career option?" were secured with first rank with overall MPS 89.29, "Have you conceptualized new idea for your future enterprise" were stand that second rank with 79.02 MPS, "Have you conducted market survey, base line survey and review of successful cases related to your future enterprise" were stand that third rank with 78.58 MPS. Further analysis that

"Are you ready to accept challenges coming in the way of becoming an entrepreneur" faced fourth rank within overall MPS 77.23, "Is it your parents ready to support your venture" were faced by fifth rank with 76.79MPS, "Have you assessed financial requirements to take up new ventures" secured sixth rank with overall MPS 76.34, "Are you ready to take the risk in investing the new ventures or startups" were stand seventh rank with 75.89MPS, "Are you aware of the new schemes related to establishing enterprise/new ventures" were faced eighth position with 75.00MPS, "Are you ready to take training related to your future enterprise" were ninth position with 74.55 MPS," Have you visited any successful enterprises to obtain first-hand knowledge" were stand that tenth rank with overall 74.11 MPS.

Again, that data analysis that "Are you willing to take up joint ventures with your friends & family" and "Are you prepared enough to face hurdles come in the way of establishing the enterprise" and "Are you physically and mentally ready to take up enterprise" and "Are you self-confident about entrepreneurship" were secured similarly eleventh position with same 73.66 MPS. After that analysis that "Have you enquired about incubation opportunities for your planned enterprise" secured fifteen ranked with overall 72.32 MPS, "Are you keep yourself up to date about new agri preneurship opportunities"," Do you have enough knowledge about the entrepreneurial process" and "Are you ready to take up agri-preneurship by giving up higher studies" were similar position faced sixteen positions with 70.54 MPS. Further data were represented that "Did you have any past experience about your future venture" were secured nineteen ranked with 65.18 MPS and lastly "Have you registered for any online courses related to entrepreneurship" were faced twenty ranked with overall 64.29 MPS.

Agri-preneurship competency of agricultural graduates:

The results in Table 6 shows the agri-preneurship competency of agricultural graduates. The results clearly defined that among the total responders, majority of the responders i.e. 69.20 per cent had medium level of agri-preneurship competency, this is followed by 16.52 per cent of the responders were having high level of agri-preneurship competency and only 14.29 per cent had low level of agri-preneurship competency, respectively. A medium level of agri-preneurship competency means that an individual possesses moderate knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for managing an agricultural enterprise. At this stage, the person is neither a beginner nor an expert, but is capable of running small to medium-scale agribusiness activities with reasonable efficiency. Patel and Sharma (2016) [4], Gaikwad (2019) [2], Verma and Singh (2020) [8], Rathore *et al.* (2024) [6] were found similar findings.

Table 7 represented that statement "Initiativeness" according to "I actively seek out new agri-business opportunities" were secured first ranked with 80.33 MPS followed by "I take the initiative to implement innovative agricultural practices" were secured by second ranked with 77.05 MPS and "I proactively solve problems in agricultural settings" were stand third rank with 75.09, respectively. Followed by data represented that statement "Activism" according to "I advocate for improvements in the agricultural sector" were secured first ranked with 77.77 MPS followed by "I participate in community-based agricultural initiatives" were secured by second ranked with 74.38 MPS and I raise awareness about sustainable farming practices" were stand third rank with 73.48, respectively. Further that data represented that statement "Persistence" according to "I continue working on agricultural tasks even when they are challenging" were secured first ranked with 76.34 MPS followed by "I don't give up easily when facing setbacks in farming ventures" were secured by second ranked with 75.00 MPS and "I follow through with agricultural projects despite difficulties" were stand third rank with 73.75, respectively.

Again, data represented that statement "Job Excellence" according to "I strive for high-quality results in my agricultural work" were secured first ranked with 78.75 MPS followed by "I pay attention to detail in every agricultural task I perform" were secured by second ranked with 77.23 MPS and "I keep improving my farming skills and techniques" were stand third rank with 76.43, respectively. After that data represented that statement "Self-Confidence" according to "I believe in my ability to run a successful agri-business" were secured first ranked with 79.11 MPS followed by "I feel confident when making decisions related to farming" were secured by second ranked with 78.04 MPS and "I trust my knowledge and skills in agricultural entrepreneurship" were stand third rank with 77.77, respectively. Further that data represented that statement "Commitment to Work" according to "I dedicate myself fully to completing agricultural responsibilities" were secured first ranked with 79.73 MPS followed by "I willingly work extra hours to finish agricultural tasks" were secured by second ranked with 75.36 MPS and "I prioritize my agri-business goals above personal leisure" were stand third rank with 75.36, respectively. Again that data represented that statement "Persuasion" according to "I effectively promote my agricultural products or services" were secured first ranked with 76.61 MPS followed by "I can convince others to adopt new farming techniques" were secured by second ranked with 75.25 MPS and "I am persuasive when negotiating deals with agri-business partners" were stand third rank with 74.46, respectively. Further that data represented that statement "Planning Orientation" according to "I create detailed plans before starting agricultural projects" were secured first ranked with 79.38 MPS followed by "I effectively allocate resources in my farming operations" were secured by second ranked with 76.61 MPS and "I set specific goals for my agri-business" were stand third rank with 76.16, respectively.

Followed by the data represented that statement "Leadership Ability" according to "I can lead a team in agricultural activities" were secured first ranked with 77.14 MPS followed by I motivate others to work towards common farming goals" were secured by second ranked with 73.75 MPS and I delegate agricultural tasks effectively to others" were stand third rank with 73.13, respectively. Further that data represented that statement "Efficiency Orientation" according to "I strive to reduce waste in agricultural processes" were secured first ranked with 78.57 MPS followed by I use time and resources efficiently in my agri-business" were secured by second ranked with 77.59 MPS and I evaluate outcomes to improve farming efficiency" were stand third rank with 76.79, respectively.

Relationship between attributes of Agricultural graduates with their Agri-preneurship competency

Table 8 represents the relationship between attributes of agricultural graduates with their agri- preneurship competency data showed that Govt. Policies Related to Agribusiness, Leadership Ability, Innovativeness and Family occupation (Father) was 5% level of significant. Further classified that Agricultural Enterprises, Communication Technology, Extra-Curricular activities, Risk orientation, Academic Performance, Awareness about ELP programme and Family Annual income 1% level of significant with attributes of agricultural graduates with their agri-preneurship competency. Family occupation Mother, Area of residence, Family size and Gender is non-significant with attributes of agricultural graduates with their agri-preneurship competency. The results are agreed with the findings of Naik and Reddy (2018) [3], Patel and Sharma (2016) [4].

Conclusion

On the basis of this study it is to be concluded that among the parameters chosen for entrepreneurial competency of ELP, revealed that the higher proportion of respondents, had a medium level of agri-preneurship readiness and competency. The study revealed that a majority of agricultural graduates possessed a medium level of agri-preneurship readiness (60.71%) and medium level of agri-preneurship competency (69.20%), indicating that while they have the foundational knowledge, skills, and motivation to engage in agribusiness, further support and capacity-building are required to transform them into high-level agri-preneurs. Statement-wise analysis highlighted that most respondents showed strong interest in entrepreneurship as a future career option, conceptualizing new ideas, and accepting challenges, though relatively fewer had practical exposure such as incubation opportunities, online courses, or prior entrepreneurial experience. Similarly, competency-wise analysis showed strengths in initiatives, planning orientation, self-confidence, job excellence, and commitment to work, but comparatively lower performance in areas such as persuasion, exposure to enterprises, and risk-taking abilities. The relationship analysis further emphasized that factors such as government policies, leadership ability, innovativeness, communication technology, risk orientation, academic performance, and family background play a significant role in shaping the entrepreneurial competencies of graduates. Overall, the findings suggest that agricultural graduates have a promising base for developing into successful agri-preneurs but need greater institutional support, entrepreneurial training, mentorship, financial guidance, and exposure to incubation and market opportunities. Strengthening these areas will not only enhance their entrepreneurial readiness and competencies but also contribute to sustainable agricultural development and rural employment generation.

Table 4: Responder's distribution as per Agri-preneurship readiness among agricultural graduates (n=224)

S. No.	Categories	Frequency	Per cent
1.	Low (<9.76)	30	13.39
2.	Medium (9.76-19.94)	136	60.71
3.	High (>19.94)	58	25.89
Total		224	100

Mean=14.85 SD=5.09

Table 5: Distribution of responders as per their Agri-preneurship readiness

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		MPS	RANK
1	Are you ready to take up entrepreneurship, agri preneurship and startups as a future career option?	89.29	I
2	Are you ready to take up agri-preneurship by giving up higher studies?	70.54	XVI
3	Have you conceptualized new idea for your future enterprise?	79.02	II
4	Do you have enough knowledge about the entrepreneurial process?	70.54	XVI
5	Are you ready to accept challenges coming in the way of becoming an entrepreneur	77.23	IV
6	Are you self-confident about entrepreneurship	73.66	XI
7	Are you physically and mentally ready to take up enterprise?	73.66	XI
8	Are you keep yourself up to date about new agri preneurship opportunities?	70.54	XVI
9	Have you visited any successful enterprises to obtain first-hand knowledge?	74.11	X
10	Are you aware of the new schemes related to establishing enterprise/new ventures?	75.00	VIII
11	Are you prepared enough to face hurdles come in the way of establishing the enterprise?	73.66	XI
12	Is it your parents ready to support your venture?	76.79	V
13	Have you conducted market survey, base line survey and review of successful cases related to your future enterprise?	78.57	III
14	Did you have any past experience about your future venture?	65.18	XIX
15	Have you enquired about incubation opportunities for your planned enterprise?	72.32	XV
16	Are you ready to take the risk in investing the new ventures or startups?	75.89	VII
17	Are you willing to take up joint ventures with your friends & family?	73.66	XI
18	Have you assessed financial requirements to take up new ventures?	76.34	VI
19	Are you ready to take training related to your future enterprise?	74.55	IX
20	Have you registered for any online courses related to entrepreneurship?	64.29	XX

Table 6: Responder's distribution as per Agri-preneurship competency of agricultural graduates (n=224)

S. No.	Categories	Frequency	Per cent
1	Low (<92.04)	32	14.29
2	Medium (92.04- 137.72)	155	69.20
3	High (>137.72)	37	16.52
Total		224	100

Mean=114.88 SD=22.84

Table 7: Distribution of responder's as per their Agri -preneurship competency

S. No.	Categories	Respondents	
		MPS	RANK
Initiativeness			
1.	I actively seek out new agri-business opportunities	80.63	I
2.	I take the initiative to implement innovative agricultural practices	77.05	II
3.	I proactively solve problems in agricultural settings	75.09	III
Activism			
4.	I advocate for improvements in the agricultural sector	77.77	I
5.	I participate in community-based agricultural initiatives	74.38	II
6.	I raise awareness about sustainable farming practices	73.48	III
Persistence			
7.	I continue working on agricultural tasks even when they are challenging	76.34	I
8.	I don't give up easily when facing setbacks in farming ventures	75.00	II
9.	I follow through with agricultural projects despite difficulties	73.75	III
Job Excellence			
10.	I strive for high-quality results in my agricultural work	78.75	I
11.	I keep improving my farming skills and techniques	76.43	III
12.	I pay attention to detail in every agricultural task I perform	77.23	II
Self-Confidence			
13.	I believe in my ability to run a successful agri-business	79.11	I
14.	I feel confident when making decisions related to farming	78.04	II
15.	I trust my knowledge and skills in agricultural entrepreneurship	77.77	III
Commitment to Work			
16.	I dedicate myself fully to completing agricultural responsibilities	79.73	I
17.	I willingly work extra hours to finish agricultural tasks	75.36	II
18.	I prioritize my agri-business goals above personal leisure	75.36	II
Persuasion			
19.	I can convince others to adopt new farming techniques	76.25	II
20.	I effectively promote my agricultural products or services	76.61	I
21.	I am persuasive when negotiating deals with agri-business partners	74.46	III
Planning Orientation			
22.	I create detailed plans before starting agricultural projects	79.38	I
23.	I set specific goals for my agri-business	76.16	III
24.	I effectively allocate resources in my farming operations	76.61	II
Leadership Ability			
25.	I can lead a team in agricultural activities	77.14	I
26.	I motivate others to work towards common farming goals	73.75	II
27.	I delegate agricultural tasks effectively to others	73.13	III
Efficiency Orientation			
28.	I strive to reduce waste in agricultural processes	78.57	I
29.	I use time and resources efficiently in my agri-business	77.59	II
30.	I evaluate outcomes to improve farming efficiency	76.79	III

Table 8: Relationship between attributes of Agricultural graduates with their Agri-preneurship competency (n=224)

Independent Variable's	Respondents Relationship
Family occupation (Father)	0.168*
Family occupation (Mother)	0.075NS
Family Annual Income	0.202**
Area of residence	0.023NS
Family Size	0.113NS
Gender	0.087NS
Awareness about ELP programmes	0.289**
Innovativeness	0.162*
Academica performance	0.329**
Goal orientation	0.172**
Leadership ability	0.161*
Risk orientation	0.174**
Knowledge of Government policies and programmes related to Agribusiness	0.145*
Participation in extra-curricular activity	0.390**
Basic knowledge of communication technology	0.236**
Exposure to various Agricultural Enterprises	0.206**

*5 per cent level of significant
** 1 per cent level of significant

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