

PERCEPTION OF AGRICULTURAL GRADUATES TOWARDS AGRICULTURE AS A PROFESSION

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ABSTRACT

The present scenario of rising unemployment among the agricultural graduates must be replaced by taking up agriculture as their profession and also to increase the production and productivity in agriculture. Thus, a study was conducted in all the four State Agricultural Universities of Gujarat, to know the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession and to find out the characteristics that influence their perception. One college from each university was selected randomly. From each selected college thirty agricultural graduates were selected randomly. Thus, the total sample size was 120 agricultural graduates. The study was conducted using a questionnaire in the form of a google form. The study revealed that most of the agricultural graduates had medium level of perception towards agriculture as a profession. Age, academic performance, parental occupation, size of land holding, annual income, mass media exposure, achievement motivation, economic motivation, risk orientation and self-confidence had a positive and highly significant relationship; place of residence and agricultural business anxiety had a positive and significant relationship and family type and family size had a positive and non-significant relationship with the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession.

Keywords: perception, agricultural graduates, agriculture, profession

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is the engine of growth for most developing countries and agricultural development is one of the most effective ways to alleviate hunger and poverty (Amungwa and Baye, 2014). Skilled agricultural human resources are the most important means of improvement in agriculture sector whose development is undertaken by various agricultural universities by training and educating the students by teaching them various activities in a scientific manner and thereby enhance the production and productivity. However, the current scenario of technology revolution and specialization coming in, the employment opportunities of agricultural graduates have greatly reduced (Vinaya *et al.*, 2019). Further, the number of students entering the field of agriculture has been increasing. In such case, agricultural graduates should be willing to take up agriculture as a profession (Shafi *et al.*, 2021). But the issue of 'farm readiness', *i.e.*, the interest among agricultural graduates in taking up farming as an occupation after their graduation, continues to be a major question. This is largely because most people still regard agriculture as non-professional and less profitable career option for a young graduate and returning to farming after university would be regarded as failure (Okiror and Otabong, 2015). Therefore, the present study was intended to measure the perception of agricultural graduates

towards agriculture as a profession and the characteristics that influence their perception as a step towards bringing out the 'farm readiness' among the students.

OBJECTIVES

- (1) To measure the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession
- (2) To ascertain relationship between characteristics of agricultural graduates with the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession

METHODOLOGY

The present study was carried out in Gujarat state. For drawing the sample for the study multistage random sampling technique was used. The study was conducted in all the four State Agricultural Universities of Gujarat state *viz.*, Anand Agricultural University (AAU), Navsari Agricultural University (NAU), Junagadh Agricultural University (JAU) and Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University (SDAU). One agricultural college under each State Agricultural University was selected randomly for the study. Thus, the four agricultural colleges that were selected randomly were College of Agriculture, Vaso, AAU; College of Agriculture, Waghai, NAU; College of Agriculture, Junagadh, JAU and C. P. College of Agriculture, Dantiwada,

SDAU. A total of 120 fresh graduates, *i.e.*, only those who have graduated in the past two years from their respective colleges, were selected randomly for the study. Thirty respondents were selected randomly from each agricultural college. Thus, a total of 120 respondents were selected for the study. Ex-post facto research design was used for the study. The data was collected using a pre-structured interview schedule in the form of a google form. The collected data was classified, tabulated, analyzed and interpreted in order to make the findings meaningful. The statistical measures such as frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation and coefficient of correlation were used in the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Perception can be operationally defined as the act of interpretation of some object, fact or idea. The perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession was understood in terms of their interpretation of the proposed benefits derived by practising agriculture as a profession. The data regarding the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of agricultural graduates according to their perception towards agriculture as a profession (n=120)

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	Low level of perception (less than 80.80)	15	12.50
2	Medium level of perception (80.80 to 93.25)	86	71.67
3	High level of perception (above 93.25)	19	15.83
Mean = 87.78		S. D. = 6.11	

It is evident from Table 1 that more than two-third of the agricultural graduates (71.67 per cent) had a medium level of perception towards agriculture as a profession, followed by 15.83 per cent had a high level of perception and 12.50 per cent had a low level of perception towards agriculture as a profession. The probable reason might be due to the fact that most of the agricultural graduates had an agricultural background and also due to the good practical education imparted upon them in their undergraduation. The present finding of the study was similar to the findings reported by Vihari (2018) and Naik (2019).

Characteristics influencing the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession

To know the characteristics that influence the perception of agricultural graduates, certain profile characteristics of the agricultural graduates were selected for the study. Therefore, to ascertain the relationship between the characteristics of the agricultural graduates and their perception, the correlation coefficient ('r') was calculated and the data is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Correlation between profile of the agricultural graduates and their perception towards agriculture as a profession (n=120)

Sr. No.	Name of the independent variable	'r' value
X ₁	Age	0.3253**
X ₂	Academic performance	0.2746**
X ₃	Place of residence	0.1995*
X ₄	Family type	0.0771 ^{NS}
X ₅	Family size	0.1539 ^{NS}
X ₆	Parental occupation	0.2481**
X ₇	Size of land holding	0.2426**
X ₈	Annual income	0.2710**
X ₉	Mass media exposure	0.2394**
X ₁₀	Achievement motivation	0.2680**
X ₁₁	Agricultural business anxiety	0.2294*
X ₁₂	Economic motivation	0.2991**
X ₁₃	Risk orientation	0.2756**
X ₁₄	Self-confidence	0.2498**

* = Significant at 0.05 level ** = Significant at 0.01 level
NS = Non-significant

The characteristics of the agricultural graduates *viz.*, age, academic performance, parental occupation, size of land holding, annual income, mass media exposure, achievement motivation, economic motivation, risk orientation and self-confidence had a positive and highly significant relationship with the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession. The characteristics of the agricultural graduates *viz.*, place of residence and agricultural business anxiety had a positive and significant relationship with the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession. The characteristics of the agricultural graduates *viz.*, family type and family size had a positive and non-significant relationship with the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession. The present findings related to age and parental occupation were similar to the findings reported by Bodake (2016) and the present findings to family size, size of land

holding, annual income, mass media exposure, achievement motivation, economic motivation and risk orientation was similar to the findings reported by Vihari (2018).

CONCLUSION

The study infers that majority of the agricultural graduates had medium to high level of perception towards agriculture as a profession. Thus, efforts should be made to maintain that interest by improving their practical knowledge related to agriculture. The agricultural universities should train the students with more practical oriented education due to the declining job availability at present, so that the students would be inclined towards adopting agriculture as a profession and get self-employed through farming. The characteristics influencing the perception of agricultural graduates towards agriculture as a profession should be considered during the curriculum planning of their course.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors of the paper declare no conflict of interest

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