



Research Article

Perception of Students on Agriculture as An Occupation- A Reference to Pondicherry University Postgraduate Students

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Article Information

Received: 15 June 2023

Revised version received: 25 July 2023

Accepted: 27 July 2023

Published: 31 July 2023

Cite this article as:

Amaran K and A. Krishnamoorthy (2023) *Int. J. Soc. Sc. Manage.* 10(3): 55-59.

DOI: 10.3126/ijssm.v10i3.57134

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Peer reviewed under authority of IJSSM

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Keywords: agriculture; perception; youth

Abstract

This research article investigates the perception of postgraduate students at Pondicherry University regarding agriculture as an occupation. The study examines the demographic characteristics of the participants and explores their perceptions of agriculture. The sample comprises 56.4% female and 43.6% male respondents aged 21 to 28. Most (93.6%) of the participants fall within the 21 to 25 age group. Regarding the family type, most respondents (75.6%) belong to nuclear families, while a minority (20.5%) reside in joint families. Regarding residence, 53.8% of the respondents live in urban areas, while slightly over one-third (46.2%) reside in rural areas. The academic backgrounds of the participants are diverse, with approximately one-third belonging to the social science stream (34.6%), management stream (33.3%), and life science stream (32.1%), respectively. The study reveals that 65.4% of the respondents have a medium level of perception towards agriculture, while 34.6% have a high level of perception towards agriculture as an occupation. The article further presents the results of statistical analyses, including an independent sample t-test and analysis of variance (ANOVA). These indicate no significant differences in perception of agriculture as an occupation across gender, nativity, course of study, and family type. These findings contribute to understanding postgraduate students' perception of agriculture as a career option and provide insights for policymakers and educators in promoting agriculture as a viable and attractive occupation for future generations.

Introduction

India's agriculture plays a key role in the nation's economy, the generation of jobs, and food security. India's vast rural area and diverse agro-climatic conditions have contributed to its centuries-old tradition of agriculture. The Economic Survey 2020-2021 (Government of India, 2021) states that in the fiscal year 2019–2020, the agricultural and related industries comprised around 20% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Additionally, according to Statista's

projections for 2020, the agriculture industry employed almost 42% of all workers in the nation. These statistics demonstrate that agriculture is important to India's economic development and employment opportunities. India has also produced many crops, setting a record for food grain output in 2020–2021 with 303.34 million tonnes (Government of India, 2021). These accomplishments show how important agriculture is to maintaining food security for the Indian people and to satisfying the needs of a

developing country. However, the industry also faces difficulties such as restricted access to irrigation, dispersed land holdings, and shifting market conditions. The Indian government has launched a number of programmes to assist farmers and promote sustainable agricultural practices in order to address these issues. India wants to increase agricultural output and solidify the sector's basis by concentrating on technology breakthroughs, infrastructure improvement, and welfare initiatives.

In addition, a nation's most valuable asset is its youth, whose future and present depend on them. Sustainable methods of agriculture necessitate active young engagement, which is now challenging in many parts of the country. Young people are losing interest in agriculture these days. They have evolved from "job seekers" to "entrepreneurs" in agriculture and allied fields. Other factors may also discourage young people from pursuing a career in agriculture. As a result, the country must capitalise on these youngsters' agricultural potential at the appropriate time and channel it towards its overall economic development.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable decline in the number of students choosing agricultural occupations, posing a challenge for the farming industry. Previous studies (Fazidah et al., (2021); Widiyanti et al., (2018); Angaitkar et al., (2013)) showed that the youths highly perceive agriculture as an occupation. At the same time, the youths are heisted to choose that as an occupation due to lack of income security in the agriculture sector, monsoon, irrigation, climate change etc. (Kudare, 2012). To address this issue, it is crucial to understand students' perceptions of agriculture as a career choice. The agricultural sector can develop effective strategies to attract and retain youth by gaining insights into the factors that shape students' perceptions. Harnessing the potential of the youth is vital for the advancement of agriculture. This research paper aims to explore and analyse students' perception of agriculture as an occupation, considering various factors that influence their career choices. These factors encompass individual preferences, socio-cultural norms, educational opportunities, technological advancements, and societal attitudes towards agriculture.

Overall, this study aims to know postgraduate students' perception of agriculture as an occupation. Furthermore, the association of the perception of agriculture as an occupation with socio-demographic factors such as gender, family type, nativity and course of study were studied. This research holds significance as it can provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders by identifying the key drivers behind the declining interest in agricultural careers. By understanding these drivers, targeted strategies and interventions can be developed to promote a positive perception of agriculture, highlight its diverse career

opportunities, and inspire students to pursue agricultural occupations. Drawing upon a comprehensive review of existing literature conducted in various contexts and regions, this research paper will comprehensively analyse students' perceptions of agriculture as an occupation. The ultimate goal is to contribute to formulating effective strategies that attract and retain a new generation of talented individuals enthusiastic about addressing the challenges and opportunities in agriculture. Such efforts are essential for promoting sustainable food production, addressing global food security concerns, and ensuring a prosperous future for the agricultural industry.

Methodology

The present study employed a cross-sectional design to investigate the perception of agriculture among postgraduate students at Pondicherry University. A multistage sampling method was utilised to select the participants. Initially, three schools, namely the School of Management, Life Sciences, and Social Sciences, were chosen through a lottery method. Subsequently, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select samples from each of the three schools. Ninety questionnaires were distributed, with 78 participants providing their responses, resulting in an 86% response rate.

Results

Among the respondents, 56.4% were female, while 43.6% were male. The age range of the participants varied from 21 years to 28 years, with the majority (93.6%) falling within the 21 to 25 years age group. Regarding the family type, most respondents (75.6%) lived in nuclear families, while a minority (20.5%) resided in joint families. Regarding residence, 53.8% of the respondents lived in urban areas, while slightly over one-third (46.2%) resided in rural areas. As for academic backgrounds, approximately one-third of the respondents belonged to the social science stream (34.6%), management stream (33.3%), and life science stream (32.1%), respectively.

The majority (65.4 per cent) of the respondents have a medium level of perception towards agriculture as an occupation, and 34.6 per cent have a high level of perception towards agriculture as an occupation.

Table 2 shows the results of an independent sample t-test to analyse gender differences and Nativity Differences in the Perception of agriculture. A perusal of Table 1 shows that the mean difference was not significant for perception of agriculture as an occupation across gender and nativity.

Table 3 shows that Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine the differences across course of study and family type in the perception of agriculture. Table 3 indicates no significant differences across the course of the study and family type perception of agriculture.

Table 1: Level of perception towards agriculture as an occupation

S.N.	Perception	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Low (<114)	0	0
2.	Medium (115 – 179)	51	65.4%
3.	High (>180)	27	34.6%
	Total	78	100%

Table 2: Independent Sample T-test for Gender and Nativity Difference in Perception of Agriculture as an occupation.

Variable	Variables	N	M	SD	t (df=76)	p
Gender	Female	44	167.64	16.464	-1.584	.117
	Male	34	173.72	17.258		
Nativity	Urban	42	169.45	16.939	.912	.365
	Rural	36	172.97	17.063		

Table 3: ANOVA test for course of study and family type Differences in Perception of agriculture as an occupation.

Variable	Categories	N	M	SD	F	p
Course of study	Social Science	27	172.14	15.446	.831	.365
	Management	26	172.73	18.226		
	Life Sciences	25	168.20	17.533		
Family type	Nuclear	59	172.40	16.705	.859	.428
	Joint Family	16	166.12	17.266		
	Separated	3	171.33	22.810		

Discussion

The current study examined postgraduate students' perception towards agriculture as an occupation at Pondicherry University. The findings provide light on the demographics of the participants and also their perception towards agriculture. The focus of the discussion is on the important findings and their implications. The study found that respondents were gendered fairly even, with 56.4% females and 43.6% males. This gender representation is an advantage for the study because it covers viewpoints from both male and female students. The participants' ages ranged from 21 to 28 years, with the majority (93.6%) lying between the ages of 21 and 25. These findings imply that the perceptions of the younger generation will be critical in influencing the future of agriculture as a profession. Regarding family structure, most respondents (75.6%) belonged to nuclear families, while just 20.5% lived in joint families. This demographic trait suggests that most

participants are individualistic decision-makers, which may affect their employment choices. In addition, the study found that 46.2% of respondents lived in rural areas, compared to 53.8% who did. This distribution emphasises the significance of considering urban and rural viewpoints when addressing how people perceive agriculture as an occupation. The academic backgrounds of the participants were varied, with around one-third coming from each of the streams of social science (34.6%), management (33.3%), and life science (32.1%). This distribution suggests that the survey adequately grabbed the perceptions of students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, so enabling a thorough knowledge of their perspectives on agriculture as a possible career path. It suggests that different educational experiences impact how individuals view agriculture rather than just specific academic fields. According to the study, 34.6% of respondents had high levels of perception of agriculture as an occupation, compared to the majority of

respondents (65.4%) who had a medium level. These results show that although a sizeable percentage of the participants had a favourable opinion of agriculture, there is still space for improvement in promoting agriculture as a desirable career path. The independent sample t-test investigated how gender and nativity affected people's opinions of agriculture as an occupation. However, Table 2's findings showed that regardless of gender or nativity, the mean difference was not statistically significant. These results imply that the respondents' perceptions of agriculture were not significantly influenced by their gender or nativity. To examine the variations in perceptions of agriculture among subjects of study and family types, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was done. However, as shown in Table 3, there were no significant variations in how people perceived agriculture depending on their education path and family structure. These findings suggest that students' academic levels and family structures did not significantly affect how they perceived agriculture as a profession. Policymakers, educational institutions, and agricultural organisations should consider the study's findings. Develop specific strategies that address the issues and interests of students across various populations to improve their perception of agriculture as an attractive career. The significance of sustainable farming methods should be emphasised, the variety of employment options in agriculture should be made known to a broader audience, and the agricultural sector's economic viability should be emphasised.

Conclusion

The research examined investigated students' perceptions of agriculture as an occupation option. According to the study's findings, students have a high and medium level of perception of agriculture as an occupation. The study identified some elements that positively influenced students' perceptions of agriculture. These characteristics include exposure to agricultural education programmes, practical hands-on experiences, and relationships with agrarian professionals. These experiences helped students appreciate the wide range of occupations available in agriculture and comprehend the importance of agriculture in addressing global issues such as food security and sustainability. Furthermore, the study emphasised the significance of early agricultural exposure and the necessity for educational institutions and policymakers to encourage agricultural education at both the primary and secondary levels. We can create a better awareness of agriculture and its potential as a meaningful career choice by incorporating agrarian subjects into the curriculum and giving students with opportunities to engage with the business.

To summarise, resolving students' misunderstandings about agriculture and promoting its benefits are critical steps towards encouraging a new generation of young individuals to pursue careers in agriculture. We can motivate youngsters to choose agriculture as a viable and enjoyable

career option by creating awareness, providing educational opportunities, and highlighting the shifting nature of the business. Finally, this will contribute to the agriculture sector's growth and sustainability, assuring a successful future for both individuals and the global society.

Disclosure Statement

Funding Statement

This research did not receive specific grants from public, commercial or non-profit funding agencies.

Declaration of Interest statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

Data will be made available on request.

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