

An Analysis of the Aspirations of Undergraduate Agricultural Students

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ABSTRACT

Agricultural students have some plans to settle down in specific career after getting degree. In order to understand the diversified aspirations of the agricultural students, the present study was conducted among the 156 undergraduate students of Agriculture in all the constituent colleges of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University. Majority of the respondents stated that completing the B.Sc (Agri) degree programme itself as their major educational aspiration. Around 70 per cent of the respondents aspired to settle themselves in suitable positions in any government departments. Around 40 per cent of the respondents were interested in starting their own farms and also to establish their mushroom production units. Around 50 per cent of the respondents expressed their desire to earn an income of more than Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 1,00,000 per month. Most of the respondents expressed their desire to elevate the socio economic needs of their family.

Keywords: Economic aspiration, Educational aspiration, Job aspiration, Self employment aspiration, Social aspiration

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural education offers many opportunities to plan and choose a career to its recipients. The agricultural universities provide the diversified courses of study to the students fit for their choice. Agricultural students have some plans to settle down in specific career after getting degree. They do aspire for remunerative job as a fruit of their hard labors and have their own liking and disliking for various career avenues open to them after graduation. Most students settle themselves in the available job in the field such as department of agriculture, banking sector, fertilizer and pesticide companies. Students may also go for higher studies. Thus, there are various opportunities open to agricultural graduates, they can select any one of them as per their aspirations. In every university, apart from mandatory educational programmes there is a placement

cell which makes concerted efforts for the better placement of the students. There are trained staff members, who guide and motivate the students to explore the best opportunities for their settlements. Despite all these systematic efforts there exists a greater variation in the settlement pattern of the students. Hari *et al.* (2013) stated that only seven per cent of the respondents in Kerala and 11 per cent of the youth respondents in Rajasthan preferred agriculture and allied industries as their preferred occupation whereas, Umesh and Tekale (2019) concluded that nearly half of the rural youth towards agriculture had medium level of aspirations and 17.50 per cent of the rural youth had high level of aspirations. Some may not join the jobs offered through campus interview, others prefer for higher education. Even in aspiration of higher education preferences on the choice of institutions varies from parent institute, national to international institutions.

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Emphasizing institutional awareness and self-awareness of student, aspirations can help to construct a learning culture built around greater student engagement in and ownership of learning. This type of a culture sends a message to students who are just going through the motions or who don't know why they are in a post-secondary program that they need to consider their aspirations and make clearer, stronger connection between their goals and their behaviors. Doing so empowers learners through greater contributions in class and more engaged in the academic community of the institution and improves the overall educational environment and supports enhanced student success. A thorough understanding of the students' differential aspirations may help to evolve appropriate educational / training strategies for agricultural students.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), located at Coimbatore district, as it is one of the prominent institutions in India, offering agricultural education to students. All the seven constituent colleges of TNAU (Coimbatore, Madurai, Trichy, Killikulam, Thanjavur, Thiruvannamali, Pudukottai) were selected for the study purpose as B.Sc. (Ag) is the only course being offered on all the seven constituent college of TNAU. The outgoing students (2015-2019) batch was considered for the study as they might have already finalised their own aspirations. In total there were 620 students enrolled in the 2015-19 batch B.Sc. (Ag) degree programme under the constituent colleges of TNAU. It was decided to select 25 per cent of population as sample for the study and was fixed as 156 respondents. By employing proportionate random sampling method the respondents from the constituent colleges were selected.

Aspiration was operationally defined as a standard of achievement set by the students with regards to education, job, self-employment, economic status, profession and social status. In this study the aspirations of the student respondents were studied on the dimensions viz. educational aspirations, job aspirations,

self-employment aspirations, economic aspirations and social aspirations. For measuring aspiration level of the students with respect to the major areas the procedure followed by Sathyashri and Arunachalam (2019) was adopted. Percentage analysis was done to get meaningful interpretation of the results. Cumulative frequency method was also employed to categories the respondents into low, medium and high on their aspirations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results pertinent to the educational aspirations of the students are given in Table 1. There were five major aspirations expressed by the student respondents. Majority of the respondents (63.46%) stated that completing the B.Sc. (Ag) degree programme itself as their major educational aspiration. Little more than two fifth of the respondents (44.87%) aspired for masters studies. About thirty per cent of the respondents (28.85%) aspired for job oriented specialized courses after completing their B.Sc. (Ag) degree programme. Obtaining a doctoral degree was a major aspiration for 13.46 per cent of the respondents. It was interesting to note that 10.50 per cent of the respondents aspired to do a degree course other than agriculture, related with business administration, journalism, personality development and entrepreneurship development. From the findings it could be understood that majority of the students wished to end up their educational aspirations by completing B.Sc. (Ag) degree course. Considerable percentage of the respondents aspired for master's degree.

Table 1: Educational aspirations

S.No.	Educational aspirations	Percentage
1.	To complete doctoral studies	13.46
2.	To complete masters studies	44.87
3.	To complete undergraduate studies	63.46
4.	To do job oriented specialised short term courses	28.85
5.	To complete an additional degree course other than agriculture	10.90

(Multiple response)

Table 2: Job aspirations

S. No.	Job aspirations	Percentage
1.	To secure higher administrative positions through UPSC (IAS, IPS, IFS, etc.) examinations	58.33
2.	To secure suitable position in government departments	69.23
3.	To secure suitable position in department of agriculture	41.66
4.	To secure suitable position in agricultural university	25.64
5.	To secure suitable job in private organization	12.82
6.	To secure suitable job in nationalized banks	35.90
7.	To secure suitable job in corporate sector	16.66
8.	To secure suitable job in panchayat raj administration	17.31
9.	To secure suitable job in voluntary organizations	20.51

(Multiple response)

There were nine different job aspirations expressed by the respondents. The results are given in the Table 2. Majority of the respondents (69.23%) aspired to settle themselves in suitable positions in any government departments. Little less than sixty percentage of the respondents aspired for higher administration positions through UPSC examinations. Around forty percentage of the respondents aspired for suitable jobs in the department of agriculture followed by the respondents (35.90%) wished for a suitable position in nationalized banks. About one fourth of the respondents were interested to get suitable position in agricultural universities. The respondents also expressed their desire to get suitable positions in voluntary organization (20.51%), panchayat raj administration (17.31%), corporate sector (16.66%) and any private organizations (12.82%). It could be understood that a major portion of the respondents aspired for suitable position through government departments. This result is in line with Jondhale and Wattamwar (2004) who revealed that 47.12 per cent respondents aspired to secure jobs in private organisations, while 41.38 per cent of the students had an aspiration to secure administrative position in government departments. The other job aspirations of the students were to secure academic position in

Agricultural Universities, to secure scientist post through Agricultural Scientist Recruitment Board and to secure job in multinational companies.

Self-employment aspirations of the respondents were studied in terms of nine different aspects as expressed by the respondents. Findings in the Table 3 show that almost an equal percentage of the respondents were interested in starting their own farms (42.95%) and also to establish their own mushroom production units (41.66%). Around thirty percent of the respondents desired to establish ornamental nurseries. About 26 per cent of the respondents were interested to start poultry units and also to start commercial dairy units. Around twenty percent of the respondents were interested in establishing their own agro service centers. Establishing sericulture unit (17.95%) and fruit processing unit (14.74%) were their other self-employment aspirations. The result derive support from Deshpande and Deshmukh (2005) who observed that around two fifth of the respondents had aspired to develop their own farm. Thirty percentage of the respondents aspired to start their own business, while 15.00 per cent aspired to start their own consultancy services, whereas Aiyelaagbe *et al.* (2009) observed that 78.00 per cent of the trainees (agricultural graduates of University of Agriculture, Nigeria) of the Work Learn Earn Programme had planned to go on to start their own small scale organic business while 32.00 per cent of the respondents were undecided. The other aspirations were expressed by lesser percentage of the respondents.

Table 3: Self-employment aspirations

S.No.	Self-employment avenues	Percentage
1.	Ornamental nursery	31.41
2.	Fruit processing unit	14.74
3.	Agro-services centre	22.43
4.	Sericulture	17.95
5.	Poultry	26.28
6.	Mushroom production	41.66
7.	Dairy	26.28
8.	Goat rearing	19.23
9.	To start own/develop own farms	42.95

(Multiple response)

Tamil Nadu state and central governments are taking lot of steps to enable our agricultural graduates to start their own agro consultancy services. Despite such efforts only around twenty percent of the respondents expressed their interest in this venture. Hence, it is felt that one or two basic courses in establishing such agro consultancy service units would help the students to develop their confidence in such ventures. Moreover developing agro-consultancy services with trained agriculture graduates would lessen the burden of the government departments in their process of transfer of technology.

The findings in the Table 4 show that little more than fifty percentage of the respondents (53.31%) expressed their desire to earn an income of more than Rs. 50,000 to upto Rs. 1,00,000 per month, whereas 42.95 per cent of the respondents stated that they need at least Rs. 1,00,000 per month. Around one-fifth of the respondents (19.87%) had an economic aspiration to earn an income in the range of Rs. 25,000 to Rs. 50,000 per month. Only a negligible percentage of the respondents aspired to earn an income below Rs. 20,000 per month. From the results, it could be understood that the student respondents had greater levels of economic aspirations and shows that they well understood their future family economic needs in the light of the ever-growing modern world. The pattern of their job aspirations and their income needs per month are almost matching. The result was opposite to the study conducted by Bothikar *et al.* (2009) which indicated that a

Table 4: Economic aspirations

S.No.	Economic aspirations	Percentage
1.	To earn income more than 1,00,000/ month	42.95
2.	To earn income more than Rs. 50,000 to 1,00,000/ month	53.21
3.	To earn income of Rs. 20,000 to 50,000/ month	19.87
4.	To earn income of Rs. 10,000 to 20,000/ month	3.85
5.	To earn income of at least upto Rs.10,000/ month	1.92

(Multiple response)

Table 5: Social aspirations

S.No.	Social aspirations	Percentage
1.	To elevate the socio economic level of my own family	85.27
2.	To work for the development of my own village	62.82
3.	To work for the development of farmers	75.00
4.	To get social recognition	69.87
5.	To work for the development of my own society	70.51
6.	To become leader in social groups	53.85
7.	To become an ideal wife/ husband	65.39

(Multiple response)

substantial per cent (45.83 per cent) of vocational agriculture students aspired to earn Rs. 15,000/- to 20,000/- per month.

Findings in the Table 5 reveal that most of the respondents (85.27%) expressed their desire to elevate the socio economic needs of their family. Three fourth of the respondents were interested to work for the development of farmers, whereas 70.51 per cent of the respondents expressed their aspiration to contribute their efforts for the development of their own society and 69.87 per cent of the respondents desired to get appropriate of social recognition. Majority of the respondents wanted to become an ideal wife/ husband (65.39%). They also aspired to work for the development of their own village (62.81%) and to attain a leadership position in local social groups (53.85%). It is natural that everyone would first work for their family, then for their own village and then their local society. The same had been expressed in the present study also. It is an appreciable fact that their social aspirations include getting proper social recognition and also attaining leadership position in some local groups. This shows that student respondents have a very clear thinking about ideal family life and its importance.

CONCLUSION

Majority of the respondents stated that completing the B.Sc. (Ag) degree programme itself as their major educational aspiration. Around seventy percentage of

the respondents aspired to settle themselves in suitable positions in any government departments. Around forty percentage of the respondents were interested in starting their own farms and also to establish their mushroom production units. Most of the respondents expressed their desire to elevate the socio economic needs of their family. Most of the student respondents preferred to settle down in white collar government jobs and their preferences towards the different self-employment projects were very much less. The lesser orientation of the students towards higher education may be due to family commitments and lesser exposure and involvement in the preparation for ICAR fellowship examinations. Hence, special workshop on higher educational opportunities may be conducted at least once in a year. From every department, ICAR coaching classes have to be organized in a systematic manner. Appropriate educational strategies to be framed in order to train graduates intensively at the end of their degree programme in order to develop their entrepreneurship skills. Systematic training on the remunerative self-employment projects and higher levels of motivation could help them to become agripreneurs.

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