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Attitude of Agriculture Collegian towards Opting Farming as a Profession

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ABSTRACT

Most agriculture graduates are absorbed in public and private sector jobs and only few are observed to have actually taken up farming as a life work which is in agreement to the general belief that farming is a non-professional, less prestigious and less profitable career to be taken up by the students after their graduation. Thus this exploratory study was carried out purposively on the B.Sc. (Agriculture) fourth year students in College of Agriculture, Imphal which is one of the allied colleges of Central Agricultural University, Imphal to study the attitude of agriculture collegian towards opting farming as a profession through personal interview of the respondents. From the study it is found that 90.62 per cent of the respondents had favourable attitude towards opting farming as a profession. From the study it is concluded that efforts are required to convert the covert attitude into overt behaviour such that graduates adopt farming as their profession so as to harness the potential of graduates and agriculture at the same time.

Keywords: Agriculture, attitude, collegian, farming, profession

INTRODUCTION

In India, Agriculture constitutes the major occupation and livelihood of around 70 per cent of the people, mostly in rural areas (FAO, 2015). The current status of Indian agriculture is the outcome that came into light after many revolutions namely green revolution (food grains), white revolution (milk), yellow revolution (oil seeds), blue revolution (fishery), silver revolution (egg), grey revolution (fertilizer) which is evident from the application of science and technology by the trained man power in the field of agriculture made possible by agriculture education by producing trained professional to serve in agriculture. Agricultural universities are established all over the country to impart education in agriculture and allied fields and produce manpower to take the country's agriculture to new heights. Presently there are 66 Agricultural universities in India with the enrollment of about 1,83,827 in the year 2015-2016 (MHRD, 2016).

The Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture is one of the basic and first step in agriculture education which aimed to provide enrolled collegians with knowledge, skill, and experience which are required to be assets in agriculture (James and Denis, 2015). Though, agriculture provides enormous employment opportunities after graduation there is a belief that farming is a non-professional, less prestigious and less profitable career to be taken up by the students after graduation.

To cite an example, a study by Mehta et al. (2011) revealed that for agriculture collegian civil/ administrative jobs remained the first choice followed by educational and research institutional jobs, state government jobs, agro-based public sector, agro-based private sector and self-employment, while, general jobs and farming were the least preferred job areas. Studies by Suryawanshi et al. (2010); Shivacharan (2014); Narain et al. (2015) and Yadav (2016) also showed lukewarm attitude of youth and collegian towards agriculture which seemed to be a source of concern and challenge to the future of agriculture in India. Harnessing the potential and retaining the youth especially the agri-graduates in agriculture can prove to be solution for unemployment, poverty and sustainability issues.

Central Agricultural University (CAU), Imphal was established in 1993 in order to cater the needs for education, research and extension needs in agriculture in

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the north-eastern states of India. The university has 7 well established campuses in 6 states (Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura, Mizoram and Sikkim) and recently 6 new colleges were started under the university adding one state Nagaland under its jurisdiction. Like in other parts of the country, general observation indicates that most of the graduates of the university are absorbed in well established public or private sector jobs. No recorded systematic study exists regarding the occupational choice of the alumni. Thus the study was conducted in order to measure the attitude of the collegians towards farming as a occupation and also to know the constraints perceived by the collegians towards opting farming.

METHODOLOGY

For the study College of Agriculture, Imphal which is located nearest to the Central Agricultural University Campus and also is the oldest college offering B.Sc. (Agriculture) under the university was selected purposively. Since the establishment of CAU, Imphal the college has awarded B.Sc. (Agriculture) degree to 762 students and M.Sc. (Agriculture) degrees to 243 students by the year 2015 (CAU, 2017).

The final fourth year B. Sc. (Agri.) students were selected purposively because they are in the verge of attaining their first degree and are in stage of deciding their professional career path. There were a total of 64 students in the fourth year of 2016-17 and complete enumeration was done. For measuring the attitude of the collegian towards farming as an occupation, the scale developed by Myster (1943) was used with slight modification. Data were collected using pre-tested well structured interview schedule during February 2017.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The profile of the respondents are discussed are presented hereunder.

Personal profile – It was found that the students were aged between 21 to 24 years and the result is in accordance with finding of James and Denis (2015) where the third and final year agriculture students were in age of 21 to 22 years. 59.37 per cent of them were male.

The OGPA (Overall Grade Point Average) of majority of the respondents ranged between 75.0 to 84.9 per cent which is 1st Class as per CAU regulations. Yadav (2016) also reported that majority of the students were found to have OGPA of more than 74.4 per cent. Details of the personal profile are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Personal profile of the agriculture collegian

Variables	Category	N	%
Gender	Male	38	59.37
	Female	26	40.63
Age	21 years	4	6.25
	22 years	23	35.94
	23 years	22	34.37
	24 years	15	23.44
O.G.P.A (%)	55.0 – 74.9	9	14.06
	75.0 – 84.9	45	70.31
	> 85.0	10	15.63

Socioeconomic profile – Around 59.00 per cent of the respondents were from urban background. Maximum numbers of the respondents' fathers were graduates (32.81%) and maximum of the respondents' mother (23.34%) had secondary school education. The parents educational status in the present study were higher as compared to that of the studies of Scott and Lavergne (2004) and Mondal (2014). With respect to occupational status, 50.00 per cent of the respondents' fathers were in government whereas 50.00 per cent of the respondents' mothers were homemakers sector. However, Oloruntoba (2008) and Ayanda et al. (2012) found that majority of the agriculture collegians' fathers and mothers were civil servants. More than half of the respondents' parents (54.69%) did not possess agricultural land holding. Among those who possessed land holding, majority possessed less than 5 acres of land. Majority of the parents' (73.44%) had medium level of annual income which is in agreement with the result of Yadav (2016) that majority of the collegian parents' had medium level of annual income. More than 80 per cent of the respondents belonged to nuclear family and had medium family size. Details of the socio-economic profile of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Socio-economic profile of the agriculture collegian

Variables	Category	N	%
Domicile	Rural	26	40.63
	Urban	38	59.37
Fathers' educational qualification	Illiterate	1	1.56
	Functionally illiterate	0	0
	Primary	7	10.94
	Secondary	8	12.50
	Higher secondary	11	17.19
	Undergraduate	21	32.81
	Post graduate	15	23.34
	Doctorate	1	1.56
	Illiterate	1	1.56

	Functionally illiterate	1	1.56
Mothers' educational qualification	Primary	13	20.31
	Secondary	15	23.34
	Higher secondary	13	20.31
	Undergraduate	13	20.31
	Post graduate	8	12.50
	Doctorate	0	0
Fathers' occupational status	Government	32	50.00
	Private	09	14.06
	Farming	11	17.19
	Others	12	18.75
Mothers' occupational status	Government	18	28.13
	Private	05	07.81
	Farming	03	04.69
	Homemaker	32	50.00
	Others	06	09.37
Size of land holding	0 Acres	35	54.69
	< 5 Acres	21	32.81
	5-10 Acres	5	07.81
	11-20 Acres	2	03.13
	>20 Acres	1	01.56
Annual income of parents	Low(< `64,850)	13	20.31
	Medium (`64,850 – ` 7,88,710)	47	73.44
	High (> ` 7,88,710)	4	06.25
Type of family	Nuclear	55	85.94
	Joint	9	14.06
Size of Family	Small (<4)	3	04.69
	Medium (4-8)	50	84.38
	Large (>8)	7	10.93

Psychological profile - Majority of the respondents had medium level of risk orientation (85.94%), self confidence (78.13%), income expectancy (73.44%), comfort expectancy (79.69%), economic motivation (82.82%), achievement motivation (79.69%) and mass media exposure (71.87%). Details of the psychological profile of the respondents are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Psychological profile of the agriculture collegian

Variables	Category	N	%
Risk orientation	Low (<19)	2	03.12
	Medium (19-25)	55	85.94
	High (>25)	7	10.94
Self confidence	Low (<23)	5	07.81
	Medium (23-31)	50	78.13
	High (>31)	9	14,06
Income Expectancy	Low (<7)	11	17.19
	Medium (7-13)	47	73.44
	High (>13)	6	09.37
Comfort Expectancy	Low (<9)	6	09.37
	Medium (9-13)	51	79.69
	High (>13)	7	10.94
Economic Motivation	Low (<13)	6	09.37
	Medium (13-19)	53	82.82
	High (>19)	5	07.81
Achievement Motivation	Low (<17)	4	06.25
	Medium (17-22)	51	79.69
	High (>22)	9	14.06
Mass Media Exposure	Low (<38)	8	12.50
	Medium (38- 53)	46	71.87
	High (>53)	10	15.63

Attitude of the collegian towards opting farming as an occupation

Based on percentage of their attitude score, the respondents were classified into four categories as presented in table 4.

Table 4: Overall distribution of respondents based on their attitude towards opting farming as a profession

Category	N	%
Unfavourable (0%-25%)	00	0.00
Less Favourable (26 % - 50 %)	03	04.69
Favourable (51 % - 75 %)	58	90.62
Highly Favourable (76 % - 100%)	03	04.69

It is clearly seen from the table 4 that majority of the respondents (90.62%) had favorable attitude towards taking farming as a profession followed by equal number of respondents with highly favorable (04.69%) and less (04.69%) favorable attitude respectively. No respondent was found to have unfavorable attitude towards opting farming as a profession. Okorley et al. (2006) reported that about half of the agriculture collegian expressed moderate to very high willingness for self-employment in agriculture while Yadav (2016) reported that around 60 percent of the students had neutral attitude.

Association of the attitude with profile characteristics of respondents

For finding out the association of the attitude of the collegian with their certain selected characteristics, statistical tools appropriate to the nature of the variables were employed. The statistical operations used were Pearson coefficient of correlation (r), Spearman rank order correlation (ρ) and Chi-square test of association (χ2). Details are presented in Table 5. Out of nineteen variables selected for the study, only four *viz.,* size of family, self confidence, income expectancy and comfort expectancy were found to have significant relationship with the dependent variable. Size of family was found to have negative and significant relationship at 5 per cent level of probability. Income expectancy and comfort expectancy were found to have positive and significant relationship at 1 per cent level of probability. While self confidence was found to have positive and significant relationship at 5 per cent level of probability. Available literatures in this respect indicated major influence of academic performance {Adedapo *et. al.,* (2014) James and Denis (2015), Zhirin (2015) & Thorat *et. al.,* (2015)} and parental profile {Adedapo *et. al.,* (2014) & Thorat *et. al.,* (2015)} but in the present study, psychological variables seem to be more important factor.

Table 5: Association of attitude agriculture collegian towards taking farming as a profession with selected variables

Independent variables	Operation	Value
Age	r	-0.049
Current OGPA	r	0.204
Annual income of parents'	r	-0.176
Size of land holding	r	0.084
Size of family	r	-0.280*
Fathers' educational status	ρ	-0.036
Mothers' educational status	ρ	-0.125
Risk orientation	ρ	0.144
Self confidence	ρ	0.256*
Income expectancy	ρ	0.327**
Comfort expectancy	ρ	0.266*
Economic motivation	ρ	-0.048
Achievement motivation	ρ	0.059
Mass media exposure	ρ	0.061
Gender	χ^2	1.064
Domicile	χ^2	0.327
Fathers' occupational status	χ^2	8.875
Mothers' occupational status	χ^2	4.125
Type of family	χ^2	2.478

ρ=Spearman rank order correlation
χ2= Chi-square test of association
r=Pearson coefficient of correlation
*Indicates significance at 5 per cent level of probability
**Indicates significance at 1 per cent level of probability

Constraints of the agriculture collegian in opting farming as a profession

Through pilot survey on the students of College of Agriculture, Krydemkulai and College of Post Graduate Studies, Umiam which are constituent colleges of Central Agricultural University, Imphal, as well as thorough review of literatures, nine constraints faced by agriculture collegians in opting farming as a profession were identified. The constraints were presented before the final respondents and they were asked to rank the constraints according to their perceived degree of relevance and importance in this regard. Garrett ranking technique was used to estimate the overall ranking for each constraint statements. The constraints and their ranking are presented in table 6.

Table 6: Constraints perceived by the agriculture collegian towards opting farming as a profession

Constraints	Garrett Score	Rank
Fluctuating and uncertain regular income	59.6	1
Lack of land holding	57.1	2
Low awareness of sources of credit	53.3	3
Attractive urban job	53.1	4
Low exposure to commercial farming	52.7	5

Expectation pressure from parents and peers for a so called better settlement	48.5	6
Involves risk and uncertainty	47.4	7
More theoretical oriented curriculum structure	39.8	8
Perceived low social status	39.2	9

It is noticed that fluctuating income and uncertain regular income nature of agriculture was the major constraint that keeps away the agriculture collegian from opting farming as a profession. Other important constraints were lack of land holding, low awareness of sources of credit, attractive urban job etc. Adebo and Sekumade (2013) also reported the unpredictable nature & risk involved in agriculture and land factors to be important constraints. While in the study of Ayanda *et. al.*, (2012) inadequate visit to successful agricultural enterprises and more theoretical orientation were prime constraints

CONCLUSION

Considering the importance of agriculture in the economy of the country as well as to provide solace to the rising unemployment rate among graduates, the adoption of agriculture as a life profession by the agricultural graduates, who are supposed to have thorough theoretical and practical knowledge about the subject is the need of time. It is encouraging to find that majority of the agriculture collegian of CAU, Imphal were having favourable attitude towards opting farming as a profession. Thus the challenge is how this covert attitude should be carried away in same manner and converted into overt behaviour where the collegians actually start adopting farming themselves. Taking cues from the constraints identified in the study more practical exposure to commercial farming, successful enterprises and entrepreneurs in addition to theoretical oriented curriculum structure should be mandated. At the same time awareness and exposure to various backward (seeds, pesticides, credits etc) and forward (value addition, market, certification) linkages in the practical classes is required. The recommendation of the Fifth Dean's Committee to ICAR for introduction of Rural and Entrepreneurship Awareness and Development Yojana (READY) programme is a welcoming and potential change

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