



Factors Affecting the Occupational Aspirations of Agricultural Postgraduates

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ABSTRACT

Occupation is the means of earning and aspiration is what we want to be in future. The technical advancements in agriculture and education are providing many opportunities for graduates in choosing their career. The universities of Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu and Acharya N. G. Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU), Guntur, Andhra Pradesh were selected through purposive random sampling technique. The sample size was restricted to 50 from each university under study considering the time constraint. The profile characters were measured using frequency and percentage. Descriptive statistics was used for analysis of achievement motivation and information seeking behavior regarding the career opportunities. Variables were categorized measured using mean and standard deviation and respondents were divided into low, medium and high based on the results. At postgraduate level, many respondents aspired to be in agricultural research and in state department of agriculture. The study on factors influencing the occupational aspirations revealed that the job security and parents' motivation played an important role in choosing their career.

Key Words: Career, Opportunities, Factors, Occupation, Aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

When I grow up, what do I want to be? What is the best profession for me? These are the concerns that every youngster asks himself and is asked by others at some point of time, particularly in high school or after graduation. Although these inquiries may appear to be basic and straightforward, they are not always easy to answer in real terms. The occupational aspiration is the decision of a person to pursue a particular profession as a source of income. It is the most important aspect of any student's life to achieve the desired level of satisfaction and happiness. Occupation plays an important role in the life of an individual. Thus, those in the education process develop awareness towards the type of education imparted and the courses in which they are enrolled. It helps them in judging their future prospectus and scope for employment (Bhosale, 2011).

Students are the ultimate decision-makers about their career options. However, they are influenced by their fathers to some extent, whereas mothers' role in decision making about their career was very meagre (Preeti, 2015). The responses made by students to the query "what will be the next?" might mostly be based on past experiences and also indicate the backdrop of their everyday life (Lumby *et al*, 2003). However, recruiting efforts, interest towards animals, job goals and parental involvement contributes to more than half of the experiences (Esters and Bowen, 2004). Recent technical advancements in agricultural technology and research have significantly expanded the scope of agricultural graduates, resulting in numerous new career prospects. Agricultural graduates currently have an access to wide range of career opportunities. Individuals who choose a profession or a career based on their particular interests and talents have

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considerably better levels of job satisfaction and are proven to be more economically productive.

College experience would be the first step in choosing a career for the great majority of today's agriculture students (Scofield, 1994). Employers infer that higher education is failing because graduates' employability skills are not sufficiently developed (Evers *et al*, 1998). Activeness of the scholars during their academic period, nature of syllabus, motivating factors, infrastructure and library facilities altogether play a vital role in employability of the graduates (Divya and Chauhan, 2015). Pull and pull factors are engaged in declined interest of youth towards agriculture. A crucial pull factor may be the presence of potential non-farm activities which can provide better income (Peou, 2016). Push factors may include hardships in procuring land, the desire to be self-reliant and the usual low farming income (Rigg *et al*, 2016). Knowing the students' profile, their capacity to make a career decision, the degree of interest they have in their decision, and the extent to which other factors impact their decision-making skills would help in better understanding them. This will significantly assist policymakers in framing the syllabus in such a way that it meets the students' learning needs. The present study was conducted with an objective to study the profile characteristics, occupational aspirations and factors influencing the occupational aspirations of agricultural postgraduates of TNAU and ANGRAU.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted among the agricultural postgraduates of TNAU and ANGRAU during the academic year of 2020-2021. There was prevalence of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and the method of data collection used was Google forms for safety and convenience. The primary data were collected through well-designed questionnaire. The questionnaires were circulated to postgraduates of TNAU and ANGRAU through WhatsApp to nearly 70 members from each selected university and

the response rate was approximately 70 per cent. Purposive sampling of the respondents from the two universities was taken. Random sampling was followed and the sample size of 50 was considered omitting the multiple responses and overall sample size was 100 representing equally from both the universities. The variables were framed as multiple-choice questions and some of them like achievement motivation and information seeking behaviour were measured on a five-point scale. The occupational aspirations were shortlisted into fourteen categories which was provided with a check box to collect multiple responses. Total score was worked out by summing all the scores for all the preferred jobs to quantify job preference. Thereafter, mean score for each preferred job was worked out and ranked as per the mean scores (Sasidharan, 2013). Along with frequency and percentage, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation had been used for analysis. Based on the mean scores, ranks were allotted to the occupational aspirations.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Gender and academic performance

It was observed that the ratio of male to female in both the universities under study was 2:3. This can be explained as 11 per cent increase of gross enrolment ratio over a period of five years, female enrolment increased by 18 per cent from 2015-16 to 2019-20 (Anonymous, 2021). Respondents' academic performance was assessed in terms of overall grade point average (OGPA) or the percentage secured in their last relevant degree. The results revealed that more than half of the respondents (64.0%) from TNAU belong to first class and majority of the respondents from ANGRAU (58.0%) belong to distinction (Table 1).

Parent's education

The postgraduate scholars with educated mothers had good awareness about the development of necessary knowledge, skills and attitude required to be employable in this competitive era. Such

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Table 1. Distribution of agricultural postgraduates of TNAU and ANGRAU according to gender and academic performance.

Sr. No.	Gender	TNAU (n=50)		ANGRAU (n=50)	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
A	Gender				
1.	Male	20	40	20	40
2.	Female	30	60	30	60
B	Academic Performance				
3.	Second Class (6.00 to 6.99 OGPA)	18	36	2	4
4.	First Class (7.00 to 7.99 OGPA)	32	64	19	38
5.	Distinction (8.00 and above OGPA)	-	-	29	58

Table 2. Agricultural postgraduates of TNAU and ANGRAU according to their parent's education

Sr. No.	Category	TNAU (n=50)				ANGRAU (n=50)			
		Father		Mother		Father		Mother	
		F	P	F	P	F	P	F	P
1.	No formal education	4	8	4	8	5	10	3	6
2.	Primary level	2	4	7	14	4	8	11	22
3.	SSC	11	22	8	16	9	18	14	28
4.	HSC	18	36	14	28	12	24	12	24
5.	Graduation and above level	15	30	17	34	20	40	10	20
	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100

awareness of mothers might have motivated their children to acquire knowledge and skills to choose diversified jobs as their career options. The result was in line with the findings of Bhosale (2011). It was detailed from the results that majority of the respondents' parents had minimum education.

Native and land holding

The data (Table 3) relates to the respondent's childhood familiarity with rural, semi-urban, or urban background. Nearly half of the respondents (42.0%) from TNAU were from urban background and the respondents of ANGRAU were almost equally distributed in urban and rural categories. The actual amount land owned by the respondents'

family in hectares was taken into account. It was observed that half of the respondents from TNAU were with marginal land holding and nearly one-third of the respondents from ANGRAU possessed marginal lands. In both the universities one-fifth of the respondents were with no land.

It was measured in monetary terms as gross income per annum. Nearly half of the respondents (42.0%) from TNAU were with an annual income of above 4 lakh and 46.0 per cent of respondents from ANGRAU were with less than 1.0 lakh of annual income. The different information sources such as television, newspapers etc., regarding the career opportunities and the respondents' frequency of

Table 3. Agricultural postgraduates of TNAU and ANGRAU according to their family land holding.

Sr. No.	Category Frequency	TNAU (n=50)		ANGRAU (n=50)	
		Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
A.	Native				
1.	Urban	21	42	20	40
2.	Semi-urban	13	26	8	16
3.	Rural	16	32	22	44
B.	Land holding				
4.	No land	10	20	10	20
5.	Marginal land holding	25	50	16	32
6.	Small land holding	5	10	11	22
7.	Medium land holding	6	12	7	14
8.	Big land holding	4	8	6	12
C.	Parent's annual income.				
9.	Up to 1.00 Lakh	8	16	23	46
10.	1.01 to 2.00 Lakh	15	30	8	16
11.	2.01 to 3.00 Lakh	2	4	5	10
12.	3.01 to 4.00 Lakh	4	8	2	4
13.	Above 4 Lakh	21	42	12	24
D.	Information seeking behaviour				
14.	Low	6	12	9	18
15.	Medium	34	68	31	62
16.	High	10	20	10	20
E	Achievement motivation				
17.	Low	6	12	8	16
18.	Medium	31	62	37	74
19.	High	13	26	5	10

contact were measured under information seeking behaviour. The information seeking behaviour of the respondents from both the universities was found to be of medium level. The value for TNAU was 13.8 ± 2.05 and for ANGRAU students, it was 14.66 ± 1.99

Achievement motivation

It is described as the respondents' realistic vision, confidence, feelings, and willingness to attain pre-determined goals in the near future. From the table 08. It was observed that the achievement motivation of 62.0 per cent of respondents from TNAU was at medium level and nearly three fourth

of the respondents from ANGRAU were with medium level of achievement motivation. The value for TNAU was 17.46 ± 2.48 and for ANGRAU students, it was 18.32 ± 2.98 .

Occupational Aspirations

Based on the results, approximately half of the respondents from both the universities aspire their career as agriculture research scientist in State Agricultural Universities (SAU)/Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) institutes followed by state department of agriculture. The least preferred aspirations were cooperatives and administrative/managerial among TNAU and ANGRAU

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Table 4. Agricultural postgraduates of TNAU and ANGRAU according to their occupational aspirations.

S.No.	Type of Job	TNAU (n=50)		ANGRAU (n=50)	
		Frequency	Rank	Frequency	Rank
1.	State Department of Agriculture (SDA)	28	II	21	II
2.	Academic teaching	21	III	17	V
3.	Research scientist job in SAU/ICAR	29	I	25	I
4.	Agricultural entrepreneurship	16	IV	20	III
5.	Banking sector	15	V	16	IV
6.	Agri-input dealership	5	X	6	X
7.	Agricultural marketing	6	IX	8	VIII
8.	Agricultural Consultancy	5	XI	3	XIII
9.	Administrative / Managerial	10	VIII	2	XIV
10.	Agricultural Journalism	4	XII	5	XI
11.	Cooperative society	2	XIV	7	IX
12.	NGOs	11	VI	10	VI
13.	Establishment of own NGO	3	XIII	4	XII
14.	Forest Department	10	VII	9	VII

respondents respectively. The level of career choice was observed wider among the postgraduates. From the results it can be concluded that the most preferred job for majority of postgraduate scholars was to get a job in state department of agriculture, followed by academic or teaching, agricultural research and agricultural entrepreneurship (Naveen Kumar, 2020).

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The results revealed that while choosing among their career opportunities, job security was found to be the most important factor with a mean score of 2.82 among the respondents of TNAU and the most important factor for opting the career for ANGRAU respondents was parents' choice with a mean score of 2.86. Parents' encouragement to enter an occupation other than theirs occupies the next place for both the universities with a mean score of 2.6 and 2.82 among TNAU and ANGRAU respectively. The least influencing factor for the respondents of TNAU was the influence of current

farming situation on occupational choice with a mean score of 2.16 and ANGRAU was social status associated with an occupation with 2.08 mean score. The findings derive accordance from those of Scofield (1994).

CONCLUSION

Majority of the respondents of TNAU felt that job security was more important and among the respondents of ANGRAU opined that their aspirations were according to their parents' choice. There has been a considerable motivation from the parents to enter into occupation other than theirs and also the influence of the current farming situation on occupational choice was also noticeable. Majority of graduates will leave university as job seekers rather than job providers. Youth must be equipped with capacities to improve their skills and abilities in carrying out income generating activities, Developing entrepreneurial ideas among students and establishing a platform to develop their innovative skills by providing more practical

Table 5. Factors influencing the occupational aspirations of agricultural postgraduates.

Sr. No.	Category	TNAU (n=50)		ANGRAU (n=50)	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1.	Job security is important for me	2.82	0.482	2.78	0.545
2.	My parents encouraged me to enter an occupation other than theirs	2.6	0.728	2.82	0.523
3.	My parents look favourably upon my career choice	2.56	0.705	2.86	0.405
4.	Social status associated with an occupation is important in seeking an occupation	2.34	0.872	2.08	0.853
5.	Prestige associated with an occupation is important in making career decisions	2.28	0.784	2.34	0.872
6.	My family's income influenced my choice of curriculum	2.22	0.79	2.32	0.844
7.	The current farming situation influenced my occupational choice	2.16	0.792	2.42	0.835

experience, interactive learning, collaboration with industries, and, most importantly, the availability of funds for the start-ups would definitely shed some light, which is very important for graduates to explore and establish their desired enterprise.

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