



Rural Youth's Perspective on Agriculture as a Viable Livelihood Option

Amita Yadav

Faculty of Agricultural Sciences, GLA University, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh (281 406), India



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Corresponding Author

Amita Yadav

✉: amitayadavgbpuat@gmail.com

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Abstract

The long-term sustainability of agriculture depends on the willingness of young people to consider farming and allied enterprises as viable livelihood options. Understanding youth attitudes towards agriculture is therefore essential for designing effective extension and policy interventions. The present study assessed the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as an occupation in the Jait Village of Mathura district. An analytical research design was adopted and data were collected through a structured and pre-tested questionnaire. Attitude was measured using a series of statements and categorized into less favourable, favourable and more favourable attitude levels. The findings indicated that agriculture continues to be viewed positively by the majority of respondents. Nearly all respondents (96.67%) perceived agriculture as a major employment-generating sector for youth, while 90.00% believed that young people should actively engage in agricultural production. A majority (73.33%) expressed willingness to work in rural areas to pursue farming and 83.33% rejected the notion that agriculture is suitable only for illiterate individuals. Overall, 70.00% of respondents exhibited a favourable attitude towards agriculture as a livelihood option, whereas 23.00% demonstrated a less favourable attitude and only 7.00% expressed a highly favourable attitude. Despite the generally positive perception, several respondents preferred alternative occupations due to perceived economic uncertainties associated with agriculture. The findings highlight the need for strengthening entrepreneurial opportunities, improving profitability and promoting agriculture as a modern and rewarding profession to sustain youth participation in the sector.

Keywords: Agricultural extension, Agriculture, Attitude, Livelihood, Rural youth

Introduction

Agriculture continues to play a significant role in ensuring food security, employment generation and rural economic development in India. However, rapid urbanization, changing employment aspirations and increasing educational opportunities have gradually altered the career preferences of rural youth. Many young individuals perceive salaried employment as more secure, financially rewarding and socially prestigious than farming, resulting in declining interest in agricultural occupations and increased migration towards non-farm sectors (Maurya *et al.*, 2021; Sreelakshmi *et al.*, 2024).

Rural youth possess greater potential to adopt innovations, acquire new skills and contribute to the modernization

of agriculture. Creating an enabling environment that nurtures their interest and participation is therefore essential for ensuring long-term agricultural sustainability and rural prosperity (Gangwar and Kameswari, 2016). Attitude represents an individual's positive or negative evaluation towards an object, profession or activity and plays a crucial role in shaping occupational choices and behavioural intentions. A favourable attitude towards agriculture encourages youth participation, adoption of improved technologies, entrepreneurial engagement and long-term commitment to farming enterprises. In contrast, unfavourable perceptions regarding low profitability, high production risks and limited social recognition often discourage youth from pursuing agriculture as a viable

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livelihood option (Sreelakshmi *et al.*, 2024).

Understanding rural youths' attitudes towards agriculture is therefore essential for designing evidence-based policies, agricultural extension programmes and educational interventions that enhance the attractiveness of agriculture as a profession. Strengthening positive perceptions among rural youth can contribute to agricultural sustainability, generational renewal and national food security. Consequently, the present study was undertaken to assess the attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as a livelihood option.

Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Jait Gram Panchayat of Mathura district using an analytical research design. Thirty respondents from Jait Village were selected through simple random sampling. The study was designed as a micro-level exploratory investigation confined to a single Gram Panchayat. Therefore, a sample size of 30 respondents was considered adequate to generate preliminary insights into rural youths' attitudes towards agriculture. The findings are intended to provide location-specific evidence rather than broad statistical generalizations.

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. Prior informed consent was obtained from all respondents before data collection and confidentiality as well as anonymity of the information provided were strictly maintained throughout the study.

Primary data were collected using a structured and pre-tested questionnaire. Attitude towards agriculture was measured using two components. The first consisted of ten opinion statements regarding agriculture as an occupation with agree/disagree responses. The second component included fourteen attitude statements measured using a five-point Likert scale. Responses were assigned scores of 5 (Strongly Agree), 4 (Agree), 3 (Undecided), 2 (Disagree) and 1 (Strongly Disagree) for positive statements; whereas the scoring was reversed for negative statements. Accordingly, the possible total attitude score ranged from 14 to 70. Respondents were classified into less favourable, favourable and more favourable attitude categories using the Mean $\pm$ Standard Deviation method.

Based on total attitude scores, respondents were classified into less favourable, favourable and more favourable attitude categories. The collected data were analysed using frequency and percentage distributions (Microsoft Excel).

Results and Discussion

The responses obtained from the study indicated that respondents generally possessed a positive perception towards agriculture as a livelihood option (Table 1). Nearly every respondent (96.67%) recognized agriculture as a major source of employment capable of absorbing rural youth. Likewise, 90.00% believed that all youth should participate in agricultural production because they represent the future workforce of the country.

Nearly three-fourths (73.33%) expressed willingness to work in villages if they chose farming as a profession, demonstrating that rural residence itself was not perceived as a major deterrent. Furthermore, 83.33% disagreed with the statement that only illiterate youth should engage in agriculture, indicating that respondents recognized agriculture as a knowledge-intensive profession requiring education and skills.

However, mixed opinions emerged regarding agriculture as a personal career. Only 56.67% believed that they should continue farming because their fathers were farmers. Similarly, 60.00% agreed that they could still become successful without engaging in agriculture, suggesting that many respondents viewed farming as one of several possible career options rather than the only livelihood.

The study also found that 76.67% disagreed with the statement that they would become farmers only in the absence of other employment opportunities, reflecting that agriculture was not merely considered a last-resort occupation by most respondents. Interestingly, 60.00% disagreed with preferring office employment over agricultural production, indicating a relatively favourable perception towards farming.

Overall attitude categorization (Table 2) demonstrated that the majority (70.00%) of respondents possessed a favourable attitude towards agriculture as an occupation. Nearly one-fourth (23.00%) exhibited a less favourable attitude, while only 7.00% expressed a highly favourable attitude.

The predominance of favourable attitudes suggests that rural youth continue to recognize agriculture as an economically and socially relevant livelihood option. This favourable perception may partly reflect increased awareness regarding improved production technologies, agricultural education and government initiatives promoting entrepreneurship in agriculture. However, the relatively low proportion of respondents exhibiting highly favourable attitudes indicates that concerns regarding unstable farm income, climatic uncertainty and limited opportunities for career advancement continue to influence occupational aspirations.

Recent studies have similarly indicated that although rural youth recognize agriculture as an important livelihood sector, their long-term participation is often constrained by low remunerative prices, limited access to institutional credit, inadequate storage facilities, insufficient market support and the perception of agriculture as a less profitable occupation. Addressing these structural constraints through supportive policies, improved extension services and entrepreneurship-oriented interventions could substantially enhance youth engagement in agriculture (Gunashekhar *et al.*, 2024). The present findings are also in agreement with earlier studies reporting that a majority of rural youth generally exhibit medium to high levels of favourable attitudes towards farming, indicating considerable potential for strengthening youth participation through appropriate policy support, skill development and institutional interventions (Kavinila and

Murugan, 2019). These findings imply that strengthening agri-entrepreneurship, value addition, digital advisory services and market-oriented extension programmes may further enhance youth engagement in agriculture. Recent studies have reported that although young people acknowledge agriculture's employment potential, concerns regarding profitability, income stability and social prestige continue to discourage long-term engagement (FAO, 2022; Udisha and Philomina, 2024). Similarly, studies conducted in India have emphasized that enhancing market access, digital extension services and agri-entrepreneurship can significantly improve youth participation in agriculture.

The major factors shaping rural youths' perceptions towards agriculture and the support interventions required to strengthen agriculture as a viable livelihood option are summarized in figure 1.

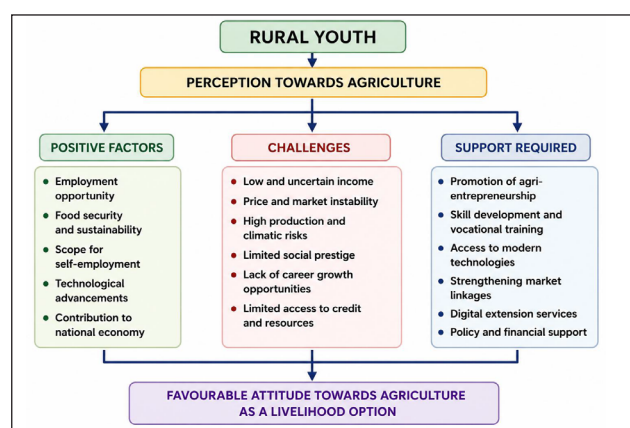


Figure 1: Conceptual framework illustrating factors influencing rural youths' attitude towards agriculture as a viable livelihood option

Table 1: Attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as an occupation (n = 30)

Sl. No.	Statement	Agree (%)	Disagree (%)
1.	Agriculture is a major employer of youth.	96.67	3.33
2.	Educated persons can become better farmers.	26.67	73.33
3.	All youth should engage in agriculture.	90.00	10.00
4.	I should become a farmer because my father is a farmer.	56.67	43.33
5.	Farming requires willingness to live in villages.	73.33	26.67
6.	Only illiterate youth should engage in agriculture.	17.67	83.33
7.	Success is possible without engaging in agriculture.	60.00	40.00
8.	Agriculture is too difficult and should be the last career option.	36.67	63.33
9.	I would become a farmer only if no other job is available.	23.33	76.67
10.	I prefer office employment to agriculture.	40.00	60.00

Table 2: Overall attitude of rural youth towards agriculture as a livelihood option (n = 30)

Sl. No.	Attitude category	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Less favourable	7	23.00%
2.	Favourable	21	70.00%
3.	More favourable	2	7.00%

Conclusion

The study demonstrated that rural youth hold favourable attitudes towards agriculture as a livelihood option. Most respondents acknowledged agriculture as an important employment sector and rejected the misconception that farming is suitable only for uneducated individuals. Nevertheless, only a small proportion exhibited highly favourable attitudes, suggesting that concerns regarding economic returns, career prospects and occupational prestige continue to influence career preferences. Strengthening extension support, improving access to institutional credit and markets, promoting skill-oriented training and encouraging agri-entrepreneurship could further strengthen favourable attitudes and improve long-term participation of rural youth in agriculture (Gunashekhar *et al.*, 2024).

Policies aimed at improving agricultural profitability, entrepreneurship opportunities, access to modern

technologies and market linkages could further strengthen youth interest in agriculture and encourage greater participation in the sector. Future studies involving larger and geographically diverse samples would help validate the present findings.

Ethical Statement

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence tools were used in drafting or preparing this manuscript. The manuscript was written, interpreted and revised solely by the authors, who take full responsibility for its content.

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