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Why Students Opt for Agriculture as a Discipline: Insights from Rajasthan, India

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ABSTRACT

Agriculture plays a vital role in food security, rural livelihoods, and economic development. Understanding why students choose agricultural education is crucial for shaping academic policies and workforce strategies. This study examines the key factors influencing undergraduate students

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in Rajasthan to pursue agriculture, focusing on career opportunities, financial expectations, self-interest, social influences, and external guidance. Despite the increasing demand for skilled agricultural professionals, research on students' motivations for enrolling in agricultural programs remains limited. Existing studies often overlook specific reasons that attract students to this field. This study addresses this gap by providing empirical insights into students' aspirations and expectations regarding agricultural education. A structured questionnaire survey was conducted in 2025 among 200 final year undergraduate agricultural students across various districts of Rajasthan. A random sampling technique ensured diverse representation. Data were collected on students' backgrounds, motivations, and perceptions of agricultural education. A three-point Likert scale (Agree, Neutral, Disagree) was used to assess responses, and descriptive statistical methods, including percentages, mean scores, and ranking, were applied to analyse the data. Results indicate that better career scope (83.50 per cent), self-interest (79.00 per cent), and the desire to improve farmers' livelihoods (79.00 per cent) are the primary motivators for choosing agriculture. Parental advice (63.50 per cent) and high earnings expectations (59.50 per cent) also play a significant role, while teacher's guidance (54.00 per cent) and social status (52.00 per cent) have a moderate impact. Coaching's influence (29.00 per cent) is the least significant factor. To support students, policymakers and educational institutions should enhance career counselling, expand skill development programs, and promote entrepreneurship in agriculture. Strengthening job opportunities, financial support mechanisms, and exposure to modern agricultural practices can encourage more students to pursue agriculture, ensuring a skilled workforce for the sector's sustainable growth.

Keywords: Agriculture; career; farmers livelihood; graduate; Likert scale.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agriculture has been the cornerstone of the Indian economy, contributing substantially to employment and rural development. As economies grow, the industrial sector's contribution increases, while the agricultural sector's share decreases (Mafi et al. 2024). The discipline of agricultural education plays a vital role in equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge to enhance productivity, sustainability, and technological advancements in the sector. In Rajasthan, where a significant portion of the population depends on agriculture for their livelihood, it is crucial to understand the motivations behind students' decisions to pursue agriculture as their field of study in graduation. Identifying these aspects can help policymakers, educators, and institutions improve the appeal and effectiveness of agricultural education.

Within recent years, agricultural educators have become increasingly aware of the necessity to view the profession from a global perspective (Harbstreit et al. 1992). KVK plays a pivotal role in the agricultural landscape of India (Choudhary et al. 2023 & Gautam et al. 2024). The right career choice for students entering professional education is critical, as it will have a significant impact on their professional life and future success. (Esters et al. 2005) Not only is the mission of agricultural education to prepare and

support individuals for careers (Case & Whitaker, 1998), but agricultural education in public schools has a successful record of helping students set and achieve career and educational goals (Bajema, Miller, & Williams, 2002). When a career choice is misperceived, it redirects all individual efforts and resources in the wrong direction, which is not only frustrating but also draining of individual energy and resource waste. Re-alignment is possible, but it has significant time, financial, and motivational implications. Students' career choices must be based on strong knowledge, complete information, and appropriate guidance that matches their personality type and other intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The students need to be oriented on new emerging trends, future opportunities and challenges in the context of career choice options. They need to know the prevalent market trends and practices and job scenario of various sectors. (Ahmed et al., 2017).

Career choices play a crucial role in shaping an individual's professional growth and economic stability. In the field of agriculture, career decisions are influenced by multiple factors, including personal interests, economic prospects, social recognition, and external influences such as family, teachers, and peers. Given the increasing significance of agriculture in ensuring food security and sustainability, it is

essential to understand what motivates students to pursue careers in this sector. (Singh et al. 2022, 23 & Bhunwal et al. 2023)

This study aims to examine the key reasons influencing undergraduate students' decisions to pursue agricultural education in Rajasthan. It explores the role of career opportunities, financial expectations, self-interest, social influences, and external guidance in shaping students' choices. By analysing students' perceptions, the study provides insights into how different factors contribute to their decisions and highlights the need for career counselling, skill development, and policy interventions to strengthen the agricultural workforce.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study utilized a well-structured questionnaire to collect primary data in the year 2025 from 200 final year undergraduate agricultural students pursuing agriculture across various districts in Rajasthan. A random sampling technique was employed to ensure a diverse representation of students from different backgrounds. The questionnaire covered demographic details, motivational aspects, and perceptions regarding the benefits and challenges associated with agricultural education.

To analyze students' reasons for choosing agricultural education, a three-point Likert scale was used, with response options of Agree, Neutral, and Disagree. This approach facilitated a systematic assessment of students'

perceptions and the extent to which various aspects influenced their decisions. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, including percentages, mean scores, and ranking, to identify key trends and patterns in students' motivations for selecting agriculture as their field of study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's results reveal that multiple interrelated aspects influence students' decisions to pursue agri-education. The key findings from the analysis are elaborated in the Table 1.

The socio-economic background of undergraduate agricultural students in Rajasthan reflects a diverse representation from different districts and regions of the state. The sampled students belong to various social groups, with approximately 41 per cent from the Jat caste, which has a strong agricultural background, traditionally engaged in farming and allied activities. Following this approx., 6 per cent of students belong to the Meena caste, 6 per cent to the Kumawat caste, and 5 per cent to the Brahmin caste. Additionally, 3 per cent of students belong to the Jat Sikh community, while the remaining students come from other caste groups, contributing to the overall diversity in the sample. This demographic distribution highlights that a significant proportion of agricultural students come from farming backgrounds, which may shape their inclination towards agricultural education and future career aspirations.

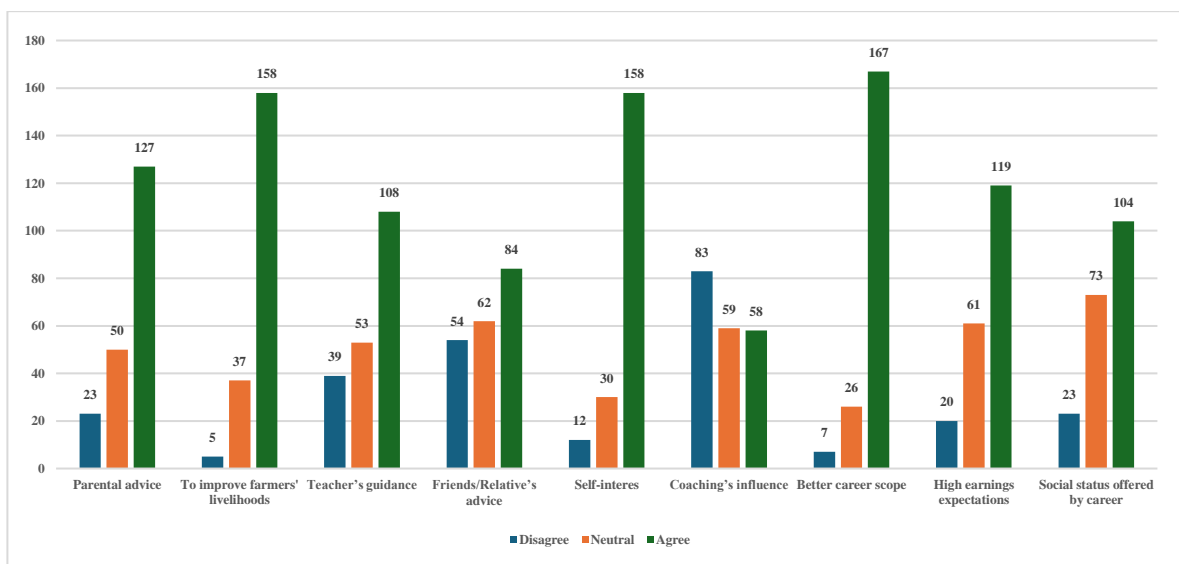


Fig. 1. Factors Behind Students' Choice of Agricultural Education in Rajasthan

Table 1. Factors behind students' choice of agricultural education in Rajasthan

Reason/Statement	Agree	Per cent	Neutral	Per cent	Dis-agree	Per cent	Mean Score	Rank
Parental advice	127	63.50	50	25.00	23	11.50	1.48	IV
To improve farmers' livelihoods	158	79.00	37	18.50	5	2.50	1.24	II
Teacher's guidance	108	54.00	53	26.50	39	19.50	1.66	VII
Friends/Relative's advice	84	42.00	62	31.00	54	27.00	1.85	VIII
Self-interest	158	79.00	30	15.00	12	6.00	1.27	III
Coaching's influence	58	29.00	59	29.50	83	41.50	2.13	IX
Better career scope	167	83.50	26	13.00	7	3.50	1.20	I
High earnings expectations	119	59.50	61	30.50	20	10.00	1.51	V
Social status offered by career	104	52.00	73	36.50	23	11.50	1.60	VI

The analysis of students' reasons for choosing agricultural education reveals that better career scope is the most significant determinant, with 83.50 per cent of respondents agreeing, a mean score of 1.20, and the highest rank (I). This indicates that students prioritize long-term job opportunities and growth prospects in their career decisions, showing their preference for stable and rewarding careers in agriculture and allied sectors. A well-defined career path with diverse opportunities in government, private, and entrepreneurial domains makes agriculture an attractive choice.

The second most influential reason is the motivation to improve farmers' livelihoods, with 79.00 per cent agreement and a mean score of 1.24 (Rank II). This reflects students' strong inclination toward contributing to the agricultural sector by addressing issues such as low productivity, financial instability among farmers, and modernizing farming techniques. Many students see their careers as a means to uplift rural communities and enhance the agricultural economy. The adoption rate of an innovation is closely associated with the user's understanding of that innovation. (Jaipal et al. 2023, 24 & Kumar et al. 2024.)

Similarly, self-interest ranks III with 79.00 per cent agreement and a mean score of 1.27, suggesting that personal passion plays a crucial role in educational choices. Many students pursue agricultural education because of their deep interest in subjects like agronomy, agricultural economics, soil science, animal sciences, agribusiness, or agricultural engineering. Their intrinsic motivation, rather than external pressures, drives their decisions, making them more committed and engaged in their field.

Parental advice also plays a significant role, ranking IV with 63.50 per cent agreement and a mean score of 1.48, highlighting the influence of family in shaping students' educational preferences. In many cases, students come from farming backgrounds where parents encourage them to pursue education that can either improve their family's agricultural business or help them secure stable jobs in agricultural services and administration.

High earnings expectations (Rank V) with 59.50 per cent agreement and a mean score of 1.51 show that financial prospects are an important but not the primary motivator. While agriculture-

related careers may not always offer the highest salaries initially, opportunities in agribusiness, government jobs, and research institutions provide lucrative financial incentives over time. Students who consider this factor prioritize financial stability but may also value other aspects such as job security and career growth.

Social status associated with agricultural careers ranks VI, with 52.00 per cent agreement and a mean score of 1.60, indicating that prestige in the profession influences some students but is not a dominant factor. With increasing recognition of agriculture's role in national development and food security, professions in this sector are gaining more respect, which could explain why social status is moderately important for students.

Factors like teacher's guidance (54.00 per cent, 1.66, Rank VII) and friends/relatives' advice (42.00 per cent, 1.85, Rank VIII) have relatively lesser influence, suggesting that peer and institutional guidance do not strongly shape students' choices for agricultural education. While teachers play an essential role in education, their impact on students' decisions appears to be secondary, as students likely rely more on personal interests and family opinions. Similarly, advice from friends and relatives may not be as influential because educational choices in agriculture are often driven by long-term goals rather than social influence.

The least influential reason is coaching's influence, with only 29.00 per cent agreement, a mean score of 2.13, and the lowest rank (IX), implying that coaching institutes do not significantly impact students' decisions. Unlike technical or medical fields, where coaching plays a crucial role in educational selection, agricultural students may rely more on university education, internships, and field experiences rather than external coaching programs.

Overall, these findings highlight that students' decisions to pursue agricultural education are largely driven by career opportunities, personal motivation, and the desire to contribute to agriculture, rather than external influences like coaching, teachers, or friends. The study underscores the need for universities and policymakers to focus on enhancing career prospects, improving income opportunities, and fostering student interest in agriculture to ensure a sustainable and skilled workforce in this sector.

4. CONCLUSION

The study reveals that better career scope (83.50 per cent), self-interest (79.00 per cent), and the desire to improve farmers' livelihoods (79.00 per cent) are the key factors influencing agricultural students' career choices. Parental advice (63.50 per cent) and high earnings expectations (59.50 per cent) also play a notable role, while teacher's guidance (54.00 per cent) and social status (52.00 per cent) have a moderate impact. Coaching's influence (29.00 per cent) ranks the lowest, indicating minimal effect on career decisions.

Overall, students prioritize career opportunities, financial stability, and personal motivation over external influences. To support them, educational institutions and policymakers should focus on career counselling, skill development, and job opportunities in the agricultural sector.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declares that no generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc.) and text-to-image generators have been used during the writing or editing of this manuscript.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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