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PERCEPTION OF RURAL YOUTH TOWARDS FARMING AS AN ENTERPRISE

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ABSTRACT

Rural youth are valuable human resources who may contribute significantly to both developmental initiatives and agriculture of a nation. India has the largest population of youth referred to as Gen-Z. As most of the youth in India are living in rural areas, so a clear understanding and a correct perception in farming and allied activities is necessary for them. With the help of Ex-Post-Facto research design this present study was carried out in Jorhat and Morigaon districts of Assam.120 respondents from 4 villages of both the districts was selected by using a multi stage purposive cum random sampling design. Primary data for the study was collected through the use of personal interview and structured schedule. For analysis of data, Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient, chi square test were used. Through the use of correlation and Chi-square tables it was determined that age, the size of operational land holding, farming experience, entrepreneurial experience, training exposure, attitude towards farming, annual family income were positively and significantly related and educational level, preferences of livelihood, gender, mass media exposure, membership in social organization have significant association with perception of rural youth towards farming as an enterprise.

Keywords: *perception, rural, youth, farming, enterprise*

INTRODUCTION

In many nations farming plays a significant role in combating poverty and promoting economic development. Now a days the word 'Youth' is a common word in the tip of everybody's tongue. Generally It is referred to as the time period between childhood and adult age. Youth is defined as 15-29 years in the National Youth Policy-2014. Presently, two third of the total population of India is in this age group. One in every five Gen Z people of the world lives in India. (McKinsey and Company, 15th November, 2022). Having such a big working class people and a less dependent population, India is presently having an inevitable advantage. The poor image of the youth involved in agriculture needs to be changed. These changes can give greater prosperity and willingness to adopt new idea, technology and, new things. These are important to change the way how agriculture is perceived and practiced in recent time. To attain economic stability in a country the agriculture sector must be vibrating and the youth encouraged taking farming as a noble profession. So, it is an urgent need to raise and sustain the youths interest and participation in agriculture related activities. Unemployment among the global youth will be increase to 34.6% by 2023. (Forbes India, 12th August, 2021). Because of their limited access to resources (in particular land), markets, finance, education and skills training, the youth often face unemployed situation or engaged with unpaid informal work, very low-skilled, hazardous jobs. The majority of educated young people now a day's believe that agriculture as an unattractive carrier, especially the traditional way it is practiced by their parents. Director of the National Agri-Food Biotechnology Institute (NABI), Ashwani Pareek said that over 4000 Indian farmers were living agriculture on daily basis (The Print, 4th August, 2023). It is projected that around half of India's population will live in cities by 2035, which would provide a problem for the food security of the nation.(Kumar *et al*., 2019). J S Rajput, a former NCERT chairman, said that youth need to be fully utilized in order to revitalize agriculture, which is the foundation of India's rural economy (Times of India, 21stJanuary, 2011).While most of the workforce in India is employed in agriculture, many people view agricultural growth as the primary mechanism that makes rural development possible. It is, therefore, necessary to analyze the role which the youth can play in agriculture development. But now a days, it is often seen that only the adult people of the village are engaged in agricultural activities, but not young people.

Rural and urban unemployment rates of Assam are 8.2 per cent and 9.0 per cent respectively, whereas the overall unemployment rate in India is 4.3 and 7.4 respectively in rural and urban regions. (Economic Survey, Assam 2021-22). The unemployment rate for Assam was 8.6% in February 2023 (TEQIP, 6th August 2023). To manage the food supply for the growing population and to create some employment opportunities for the rural youth, there is a need to transform

agriculture and its allied sectors from livelihood to industry and business not only in India, but in Assam as well.

OBJECTIVES

(1) To study the psychological and socio-economic characteristics of rural youth.

(2) To measure the perception of rural youth towards farming as an enterprise.

METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in the Jorhat and Morigaon district of Assam. One sub-division from the Jorhat district and one sub division from Morigaon district were randomly selected.Two development blocks from Morigaon sub division, two development blocks from Jorhat sub-division were randomly selected for the study. One village from each development blocks was randomly selected. Thus, all together there were four randomly selected villages. To obtain information and response for the study, 30 respondents from the total number of youths from each of the four villages were randomly selected for the final sample. Thus, there were in total 120 respondents (youth between 15-29 years) who constituted the final sample of study. Primary data were collected from the respondents during March-May, 2023through personal interview method in the residences of the respondents.19 independent variables were selected for carried out the study. The dependent variable in this study is "Perception of Rural youth towards Farming as an Enterprise" measured by using the scale createded by Preethi, Nataraju, Lakshminarayan (2014) with small change. Scale consisted of economic, technology, social and other dimensions, which consisted of 7, 6, 5 statements respectively. All total there were18 statements and the responses were obtained using a continuum with five points. Scores ranged from 1 to 5, with 1, 2,3,4,5 for strongly disagree, disagree, undecided, agree and strongly agree respectively. The respondents' overall perception score was determined by first adding the points received on each of the three dimension calculated by adding up the scores obtained by him/her on the statements of three dimensions statements, and then again adding the entre sum of the three dimension scores to produce the overall findings. Perception score ranges from 7 to 35, 6 to 30 and 5 to 25 for economic, technology, social and other dimension respectively. Higher score on this scale shows that the respondents have high degree of perception about farming as an enterprise. So based on the sum of scores obtained from three dimensions, respondents were categorized into three groups.The research schedule employed in the study consisted of both structured and open-ended questions. The research schedule prepared for this study was first tested by taking a sample of 20 respondents in a non- sampling area. The data were analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, co-efficient correlation and chi-square.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Psychological and Socio-economic characteristics of rural youth

Table 1 : Distribution of respondents according to Socio-economic and psychological characteristics (n=120)

Sr. No.	Profile	Category	Frequency	Percent
1	**Age(Years)**	15-19	30	25.00
		20-24	41	34.17
		25-29	49	40.83
2	**Gender**	Male	69	57.50
		Female	51	42.50
3	**Educational level**	Below HSLC	12	10.00
		Pass HSLC	28	23.33
		Pass HS	61	50.83
		Graduation	16	13.33
		Post Graduate (PG)	01	00.83
		Post Graduate and Above	02	01.67
4	**Type of family**	Single	84	70.00
		Joint	36	30.00
5	**Size of family (members)**	Small family(less than 4)	21	17.50
		Medium Family(4-6)	78	65.00
		Large family(more than 6)	21	17.50

Sr. No.	Profile	Category	Frequency	Percent
6	**Size of operational land holding(Ha)**	Marginal(Below1)	97	80.83
		Small(1-2)	18	15.00
		Semi Medium(2-4)	05	04.17
7	**Marital status**	Married	24	20.00
		Unmarried	96	80.00
8	**Occupation of parents**	Farming	37	30.83
		Daily wage worker	18	15.00
		Seasonal worker	05	04.17
		Agri-business	10	08.33
		Non-agri-business	17	14.17
		Service	33	27.50
9	**Occupation of respondents**	None	63	52.50
		Farmer	10	08.33
		Non agriculture business	07	05.83
		Agriculture business	06	05.00
		Service	30	25.00
		Daily wage worker	04	3.33
10	**Annual income of family(₹)**	Below 1,00,000	27	22.50
		1,00,000-3,00,000	48	40.00
		3,00,000-5,00,000	32	26.67
		5,00,000-7,00,000	13	10.83
11	**Annual income of respondents (₹)**	No income	63	52.50
		Below 1,00,000	39	32.50
		1,00,000-300,000	14	11.67
		3,00,000-5,00,000	04	03.34
12	**Farming experience of respondents(years)**	Short term experience(less than 3)	50	41.67
		Medium term experience(3-7)	55	45.83
		Long term experience(more than 7)	15	12.5
13	**Preferences of livelihood**	Agriculture business	39	32.50
		Non-Agriculture business	27	22.50
		Service	38	31.67
		Farming	16	13.33
14	**Entrepreneurial experience(Years)**	No experience(Zero)	50	41.67
		Short term experience(0-2)	28	23.33
		Medium term experience(2-4)	25	20.83
		Long term experience(4-6)	15	12.50
15	**Mass media exposure**	Reading/watching farm related article/video in social media and YouTube	97	80.83
		Reading newspaper	06	05.00
		Reading farm literature(Ex, GhorePothare)	04	03.33
		Listening to farm radio programme (Ex, Krishak Bani)	02	01.67
		Watching farm T.V. programme. (Ex, Krishi Darshan)	11	09.17

Sr. No.	Profile	Category	Frequency	Percent
16	**Membership in social organization**	No membership	62	51.67
		Member in one organization	53	44.17
		Secretary of one organization	02	01.67
		President of one organization	03	02.50
17	**Extension contact**	No	93	77.50
		Yes	27	22.50
18	**Training exposure**	No training	53	44.16
		1 day training	62	51.66
		2 day training	01	00.83
		3 day training	03	02.52
		4 days and above training	1	00.83
19	**Attitude of respondents towards farming**	Low(less than 55)	12	10.00
		Medium(55-67)	91	75.83
		High(more than 67)	17	14.17

Findings of the table 1 showed that 40.83% respondents belonged to 25-29 year followed by 34.17 per cent of 20-24 year and 25% percent of 15-19 years age group. These results are similar with the findings of Buragohain (2016). On the other hand, 57.5% percent and 42.5 per cent respondents were male and female respectively. Participation of less female in farming may be due to they have less interest on farming. These findings are similar with the findings of Saikia (2012). The data indicates that the majority (50.83%) of the respondents had completed higher secondary followed by 23.33 percent had completed High School, 13.33 per cent was Graduate, 10 per cent were below High School, 1.76 per cent of respondents had completed up to Post Graduate and above and 0.83 per cent of respondents had completed up to the Post Graduation level. Only a small percentage of respondents possessing higher education may be due to non-realization about the importance of formal education, poor economic status and lack of educational institution nearby areas. The table indicates that the majority (84%) of the respondents had a single type of family and only 36 per cent had joint type. The reason may be the fragmentation of the land holding. These results are same with the findings of Buragohain (2016).It demonstrate that majority (76%) of the respondents had small sized families made up of members up to 5 and only 24 per cent respondents had a large sized family consisting of more than 5 members. The reason may be due to the fragmentation of the land holding.

The finding also reveals that the majority (80.83%) of the respondent's family had marginal land holding in the overall sample, followed by the small land holding (15%) and only 4.17 per cent of the respondent's family had medium sized land holding. Reason may be due to the single type of family and generation to generation division of ancestral land which may have led to a reduction of land holding sizes. The results show that the majority of the respondents were unmarried (80.00%) and only 20.00 per cent were married. These results are similar with the findings of Magagula, B. and Tsvakirai, C.Z. (2020).It also reveals that the parental occupation of around 30.83 percent of respondents was farming followed by 27.5 per cent of them in service, 15 per cent of them in daily wage worker, 14.17 per cent of them were engaged in non-agriculture, business, 8.33 per cent of them in agriculture business and only 4.17 per cent of them were seasonal worker.

The findings showed that the majority (52.50%) of respondents had no occupation may be due to they were student.25 per cent of all respondents were worked in the service sector, followed by 8.33 per cent were farmer and 5.83 per cent were involved in non agricultural business, followed by 5 per cent were in the agricultural business sector and daily wage work was the occupation of only 3.33 per cent of the respondents. From the Table 1 it is found that majority (40%) of the respondents came from the families with yearly incomes Rs.1,00,000-3,00,000 while 26.67 per cent of respondents had annual incomes between Rs.3,00,000-5,00,000.About 22.5 per cent of respondents belong to the family who had annual income below Rs.1,00,000 and only 10.83 per cent of them belong to the family had annual income ranged from Rs. 5,00,000-7,00,000. It is also seen from the Table 1 that majority (52.5%) of the respondents had no annual income. 32.5 per cent of the respondents had annual income below Rs.1,00,000 while 11.67 per cent had annual income between Rs.1,00,000-3,00,000 and only 3.34 per cent of the respondents had annual income between Rs.3,00,000-5,00,000. These results are similar with the results of Magagula *et al*. (2020).It is evident that most of the respondents had medium term, farming experience (45.83%) may be due to they do not have any interest in farming. 41.67 per cent had a short term and only 12.5 per cent respondents had long term farming experience. Data shows that the

majority (32.5%) of the respondents preferred agriculture business as their future livelihood followed by 31.67 per cent as service, 22.5 per cent as non-agriculture business and only 13.33 per cent preferred farming as their future livelihood. Majority of the respondents preferred agriculture business may be due to their family background and father's occupation. According to the findings of Table 1 majority of the respondents (41.67%) had no entrepreneurial experience followed by 23.33 per cent had short term, 20.83 per cent had medium term, 12.5 per cent had a long term entrepreneurial experience may be because of lack of passion, leadership quality, lack of higher education.

It shows that majority of the respondents (80.83%) read/watch farm related article/video in social media and YouTube may be due to the good internet facility and easy availability of mobile phones. 9.17 per cent of them watch farm T.V. progrmame followed by reading newspaper (5%), reading farm literature (3.33%).1.67 per cent of respondents listening to farm radio programme, it may be because of the fact that they do not give any importance or show interest in listening to farm radio programme.It is found that majority of the respondents (51.67%) had no membership in any organization.44.67 per cent of the respondents are member in a single organization while 2.5 per cent are secretary of one organization and 1.67 percent are President of one organization. Based on the findings of Table 1, majority (77.5%) of the respondents had no extension contact and only 22.5 per cent of them had extension contact with AEA, ADOs, KVK personnel and village panchayat members for the purpose of getting information on farming. The reason may be due to the lack of awareness on different extension contact methods.Table 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents (51.66%) had attended only 1 day of training progrmamme. Only 2.52 per cent had attended 3 days of training progrmamme and 0.83 per cent of them attended training for 2 days and 0.83 per cent of respondents was attended training for 4 days and above. There were 44.16 per cent of the respondents who had not undergone any training related to farming. These resultss are similar with the findings of D. B. Patel*etal.* (2011); Vinaya et al. (2019); Patel and Vinaya (2022) and Patel et al. (2022).

As per the Table 1, major portion of the respondents (75.83%) possessed medium attitude towards farming. A sizeable portion of the respondents (14.17%) had high level of attitude towards farming. And less per cent (10%) of the respondents had low level of attitude towards farming.

Perception towards farming as an enterprise

Table 2 : Perception towards farming as an enterprise in terms of economic, technology, social and other dimension

(n=120)

Sr. No.	Perception	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	**Economic Dimension**	Low(less than 17)	21	17.50
		Medium(17-29)	79	65.83
		High(More than 29)	20	16.67
2	**Technology Dimension**	Low(less than 16)	22	18.33
		Medium(16-26)	81	67.50
		High(More than 26)	17	14.17
3	**Social and other dimension**	Low(Less than 12)	14	11.67
		Medium(12-22)	96	80.00
		High(More than 22)	10	08.33

As per the data showed in Table 2, majority of the respondents (65.83%) had medium level of perception towards farming as an enterprise in terms of economic dimension. 17.5 per cent of respondents had low and 16.67 per cent of respondents had high perception towards farming as an enterprise in terms of economic dimension respectively. Findings shows that majority of the respondents (67.5%) had medium perception towards farming as an enterprise in terms of technology dimension. 18.33 per cent of respondents had low and 14.17 per cent of respondents had high perception towards farming as an enterprise in terms of technology dimension respectively.On the other hand major portion of the respondents (80%) had medium perception in farming as an enterprise in terms ofsocial and other dimension. 11.67 per cent of respondents had low and 8.33 per cent of respondents had high perception towards farming as an enterprise in terms of social and other dimension respectively.

Overall perception towards farming as an enterprise

Table 3 : Overall perception towards farming as an enterprise (n=120)

Category	Frequency	Percent
Low(less than 56)	12	10.00
Medium(56-68)	101	84.17
High(more than 68)	07	05.83

As per the data showed in Table 3, among the respondents majority (84.17%) had medium perception towards farming as an enterprise. However, the overall perception of 10 per cent respondents was low while 5.83 per cent of respondents were high towards farming as an enterprise respectively.This may be due to the fact that lack of interest to farming activities, and may be the busy schedule of education. Mean and standard deviation is 62.42 and 6.20. These results are similar with the results of Marina (2018); Machapathri Praneeth *et al (2023*); Konani et al. (2024); Panasara et al. (2023); Jatav et al. (2023).

Relationship between perception towards farming as an enterprise and independent variables

Table 4 : Co-efficient of correlation between perception towards farming as an enterprise and independent variables (n=120)

Sr. No.	Variables	r value	t value	P value
X_1	**Age**	0.240**	2.688**	0.0082
X_2	**Size of family**	-0.115	-1.257	0.2110
X_3	**Size of operational land holding (in ha.)**	0.358*	4.175*	0.0000
X_4	**Farming experience**	0.222*	2.478*	0.0146
X_5	**Entrepreneurial Experience**	0.274**	3.102**	0.0024
X_6	**Training exposure**	0.262**	2.951**	0.0038
X_7	**Attitude towards farming**	0.244**	2.735**	0.0072
X_8	**Annual Income of respondents**	0.276**	3.125**	0.0022
X_9	**Annual Family Income**	-0.165	-1.828	0.0717

* and ** Indicate significance of value at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Findings presented in Table 4 shows that variables such as age (r=0.240), Entrepreneurial Experience(r=0.274), Training exposure(r=0.262), Attitude towards farming(r=0.244), Annual Income of respondents(r=0.276) and Size of operational land holding(r=0.358), Farming experience(r=0.222) had a positive and significant relationship with perception at 0.01 and 0.05 probability level. Perception of rural youth towards farming as an enterprise had no significant relationship with the remaining variables viz., Size of family, annual family income.

Association of selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents with perception towards farming as an enterprise

Table 5 : Association of selected socio-economic characteristics of the respondents with perception towards farming as an enterprise

(n=120)

Sr. No.	Independent variable	Chi test	P value
X_1	**Educational Level**	25.46*	0.004539
X_2	**Type of family**	4.68	0.96328
X_3	**Occupation of parents**	11.8	0.298665
X_4	**Occupation of respondents**	9.15	0.821323
X_5	**Preferences of livelihood**	13.76*	0.032435
X_6	**Gender**	6.93*	0.031273
X_7	**Marital status**	4.04	0.000073
X_8	**Mass media exposure**	21.22*	0.04725
X_9	**Membership in social organization**	24.01*	0.00052
X_{10}	Extension contact	5.31	0.070299

* and ** Indicate significance of value at P=0.05 and 0.01, respectively

Table 5 shows that Educational level (χ^2=25.46),preferences of livelihood(χ^2=13.76), gender (χ^2=6.93), mass media exposure(χ^2=21.22),membership in social organization(χ^2=24.01) had significant association at 5 per cent level of probability with the perception towards farming as an enterprise. Others such as, type of family, occupation of parents, and occupation of respondents, marital status, extension contact had no association with perception of rural youth towards farming as enterprise. These results are similar with the results of R. S. Ghasura and M. R. Bhatt (2023).

CONCLUSION

Rural youth play a crucial role in making a nation's future and it constitutes important segments of the country's population. In present scenario most of the youth are unemployed. But gradually youth workforce is shifting from the agriculture to non agriculture sector. It will be a major stress for the country's growth. As India is an agrarian country so engagement of its rural youth in farming or agriculture sector is necessary. In the situation of COVID-19 pandemic rural entrepreneurship is getting more shine because migrated from rural areas peoples and youths are

interested towards rural entrepreneurship. Due to low income in farming rural youth who were raised in rural agricultural environment found it difficult to sustain themselves and their families. These youth learned farming from an early age, but their migration to other job meant that their farm education was wasted. Therefore, it is important to make a paradigm changes in programmes for education, training, promotion to encourage rural youth to choose careers in agriculture.

RECOMMENDATION

The research of the study in terms of overall perception of rural youth towards farming as an enterprise found that the majority had medium to low level, only negligible percent (5.83%) of rural youth had high level perception. Therefore, to change this situation, the Government should provide various financial assistance and business training, workshops, short term courses regarding farm entrepreneurship to make this profession rewarding and profitable.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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