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INFLUENCE OF SRP ON ENTREPRENEURSHIP BEHAVIOUR OF AGRICULTURE GRADUATES

Vaishnavi P[1], D. A. Nithya Shree[2] and S. Udhayan[3]

1 Junior Liaison Officer, Coffee board,
2 Professor, Department of Agricultural Extension Education, College of Agriculture, University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad - 580005
3 Subject Matter Specialist (Agronomy), ICAR – KVK, Krishnagiri - 635 120
E-mail: p.vaishnavi1997@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Student Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana (READY) programme was initiated by Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) to equip final-year agriculture students with practical and entrepreneurial skills. Since 2016–17, it has been implemented across various State Agricultural Universities (SAUs). This study was conducted to measure the entrepreneurial behaviour of agriculture graduates across seven dimensions: innovativeness, risk-taking ability, achievement motivation, decision-making ability, leadership ability, management orientation, and goal-setting ability. An ex-post-facto research design was employed, and data were collected from 350 graduates across seven State Agricultural Universities in South India. A standardized scale developed by Sanketh et al. (2020) was used, and responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale. Data were analyzed using mean scores, index values, ranking, and ANOVA. The overall entrepreneurship behaviour index among graduates was found to be 73.42, indicating a moderate to high level of entrepreneurial behaviour. Leadership ability ranked highest among the dimensions (79.38), followed by goal-setting (75.06) and Innovativeness (73.41). High scores in these areas indicate better entrepreneurial orientation among graduates exposed to SRP. The findings indicate the potential role of SRP in enhancing the confidence, initiative, and risk-taking tendencies of graduates. However, lower indices in areas such as decision-making dependence and limited awareness of incubation facilities point to gaps in entrepreneurial readiness. Institutional differences were also observed, with PJTSAU ranking highest (75.84) due to strong industry linkages and networking opportunities. The findings underscore the impact of experiential learning and field exposure provided through SRP in enhancing entrepreneurial traits. To further strengthen these outcomes, universities should focus on expanding access to incubation centres, providing mentorship, and fostering real-world industry engagement.

Keywords: *agriculture graduates, experiential learning, entrepreneurship behaviour, student ready programme*

INTRODUCTION

The Student Rural Entrepreneurship Awareness Development Yojana (READY) programme introduced by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), was officially launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri. Narendra Modi on July 25th, 2015 across various State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) in the country (Vaishnavi *et al.,* 2023). In the context of increasing unemployment among agricultural graduates and the growing need for self-employment opportunities, such initiatives have gained significant importance in recent years. Since the 2016-2017 academic year, the programme has been integrated into the final year of undergraduate degree programme in disciplines such as Agricultural Engineering, Biotechnology, Community Science, Dairy Technology, Food Technology, Forestry, Fisheries, Horticulture and Sericulture (Vaishnavi *et al.,* 2024a; Arundhathi *et al.,* 2024). The primary objective of the programme is to equip graduating students with essential entrepreneurial skills and practical knowledge to promote self-employment and innovation within the agricultural sector (Vaishnavi *et al.,* 2024b).

To assess and enhance the effectiveness of the Student READY Programme, this study focused on evaluating the entrepreneurial behaviour of agriculture graduates who were actively involved in the implementation of various components of the programme. Specifically, the study examined seven key dimensions of entrepreneurial behaviour: innovativeness, risk-taking ability, achievement motivation, decision-making ability, leadership ability, management orientation, and goal-setting ability. By assessing these behavioural traits, the study aims to generate meaningful insights that can contribute to the improvement of entrepreneurship development efforts within the agricultural education system.

OBJECTIVE

The primary objective of the study was to assess the entrepreneurial behaviour of agriculture graduates.

METHODOLOGY

An *Ex-Post-facto* research design was used in the study to measure the entrepreneurship behaviour of agriculture graduates towards Student READY Programme (SRP). The study was conducted in seven agricultural universities of South India, *viz.,* University of Agricultural Sciences, Bengaluru (UASB); University of Agricultural Sciences Dharwad, (UASD); University of Agricultural Sciences, Raichur (UASR); Acharya N.G. Ranga Agricultural University (ANGRAU), Professor Jayashankar Telangana State Agricultural University (PJTSAU), Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU) and Kerala Agricultural University (KAU).

A simple random sampling technique was employed for the selection of respondents. From each university, one agriculture college was selected for the study. From each selected agricultural college, a list of graduates who passed out in 2022 was obtained, and 50 respondents were randomly selected using randomization methods. Thus, a total sample of 350 agriculture graduates was included in the study (Vaishnavi *et al.,* 2025).

A standardized scale developed by Sanketh *et al.* (2020) was adopted for the study. The scale consists of 35 statements covering seven dimensions *viz.,* innovativeness, risk taking ability, achievement motivation, decision making ability, leadership ability, management orientation and goal setting ability. The response for each statement was rated on a five point continuum Likert-scale which ranged from 'strongly agree' (5 point) to 'strongly disagree' (1 point) for positive statements and the scores were reversed for negative statements. The data collection was done by the use of an interview schedule through personal interviews as well as through Google forms.

The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools such as mean score, index and ranking to assess the level of entrepreneurship behaviour. In addition to descriptive statistics, the reliability of the entrepreneurship behaviour scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to determine the internal consistency of the scale and its dimensions. Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to examine the inter-relationship among the seven dimensions of entrepreneurship behaviour, namely innovativeness, risk-taking ability, achievement motivation, decision-making ability, leadership ability, management orientation, and goal-setting ability. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was further used to examine the differences in entrepreneurship behaviour across universities.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Entrepreneurship behaviour of agriculture graduates (n = 350)

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score (Index)
A	**Innovativeness**	
1	My family and friends discourage my innovativeness	3.57 (71.43)
2	Agriculture innovations are simple, possess high value and adoptable	3.69 (73.71)
3	I will not try to explore Startup opportunities for taking up new ventures	3.08 (61.60)
4	Innovations in Agri-startups develop more opportunities	4.12 (82.40)
5	I learnt innovative way of doing activities during Hands on Training (HOT)	3.89 (77.89)
B	**Risk Taking Ability**	
6	One should undertake risk to make a big profit than to be content with less profit	4.06 (81.14)
7	Person who is not willing to take higher risks usually have a better financial conditions	2.93 (58.51)
8	Trying an entirely new enterprise by an individual involves risk, but it may rewards higher	3.87 (77.43)
9	I learnt that moderate risk taking fetches good results	3.75 (75.09)
10	I am willing to take up innovations which even results to natural uncertainties	3.34 (66.86)
C	**Achievement Motivation**	
11	I Work differently to achieve new	4.07 (81.49)
12	I would not like to accept new challenges because that makes me to work harder	3.20 (64.00)
13	I want to earn only to afford a comfortable way of life	2.79 (55.89)
14	I could get satisfaction of serving farmers than earning profit	3.80 (76.00)
15	The satisfaction obtained in Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) programme as motivated me to achieve more in future	4.03 (80.51)

D	**Decision Making Ability**	
16	I always depend on parents, siblings, teachers, mentors, friends and relatives to take decision on important activities	2.71 (54.29)
17	I will consider seasonality future factors before decision making in Agri-preneurship	3.95 (79.09)
18	One should not take proper and timely decision to achieve in life	3.21 (64.29)
19	It is necessary for a person to look after all the alternatives before making any final decisions	4.09 (81.71)
20	I normally make decision based on prevailing conditions and also anticipated future	4.02 (80.34)
E	**Leadership ability**	
21	I will be leader than follower	4.09 (81.71)
22	I am happy to solve problems before anyone tries to solve them	4.11 (82.23)
23	I will not motivate others to get desired results	3.54 (70.80)
24	I will lead the team of like-minded professionals to take up innovation	4.06 (81.20)
25	I enhanced my leadership qualities in RAWE programme	4.05 (80.91)
F	**Management orientation**	
26	I find very easy to accomplish tasks as I am good at communication skills	3.89 (77.83)
27	I have not learnt the operational skills duly rather than simply doing works	2.89 (57.89)
28	I always set priorities and organize them to achieve my goals	4.11 (82.11)
29	I will not make use of incubation facilities available to initiate an enterprise	2.86 (57.20)
30	I learnt managerial skills in industrial and institutional attachment courses	3.93 (78.57)
G	**Goal Setting ability**	
31	I always set standards to achieve my goals	4.12 (82.46)
32	Setting goals will always helps to boost the self-confidence of an individual	4.29 (85.77)
33	Setting goals is not an important aspect in start-ups	3.27 (65.31)
34	I will not set short and long term goals based on nature of enterprises	3.12 (62.40)
35	I would try to figure out and set my goals before completing graduation programme	3.97 (79.31)

Note:
1) Mean score are calculated based on five point continuum,
2) The value in the parenthesis indicates the index

The result in Table 1 indicates the entrepreneurship behaviour of agriculture graduates. Under the innovativeness component, the highest overall entrepreneurship behaviour index (82.40) for 'innovations in agri-startups develop more opportunities'. This indicates that agriculture graduates might view startups in the agricultural sector as a way to capitalize on emerging market needs, technology advancements, and changing consumer demands, thereby creating more opportunities for growth and success. The results are in line with the findings of Mahammad *et al.* (2022); Mahammad *et al.* (2021).

On the other hand, the lowest overall entrepreneurship behaviour index (61.60) for the item 'I will not try to explore startup opportunities for taking up new ventures'. The reason might be that some graduates may lack confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities or might doubt their skills in successfully managing a startup venture. This lack of self-assurance can discourage them from considering new ventures.

In case of risk taking ability component, 'one should undertake risk to make a big profit than to be content with less profit' had a highest overall entrepreneurship behaviour index of 81.14. This suggests that agriculture graduates possess a strong entrepreneurial mindset that embraces risk-taking as an integral part of entrepreneurial ventures. They may view calculated risks as opportunities for growth and advancement in their entrepreneurial pursuits. The results are in line with the findings of Rai *et al.* (2025); Pandey *et al.* (2025); Rathod *et al.* (2025).

Further, 'person who is not willing to take higher risks usually have a better financial conditions' had a lowest overall entrepreneurship behaviour index of 58.51. This is because agriculture graduates prioritize stability and security. They tend to choose safer investments and steady career paths, resulting in improved financial status. However, this approach may lead to lower scores in entrepreneurship behaviour, as it involves taking on higher risks for potential awards.

'I Work differently to achieve new' possessed a high overall entrepreneurship behaviour index (81.49) under achievement motivation component. This indicates that graduates possess self-confidence in their abilities to achieve

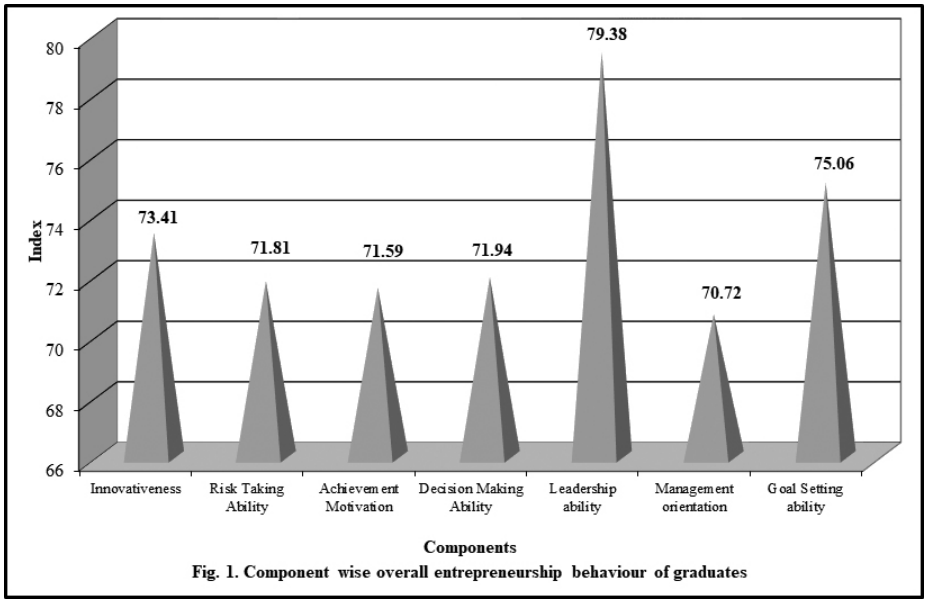

Fig. 1. Component wise overall entrepreneurship behaviour of graduates

new goals and succeed in their entrepreneurial pursuits. They have belief in their skills and competencies to tackle challenges and achieve desired outcomes. The results are in line with the findings of Rathod *et al.* (2025); Kumar *et al.* (2024); Saini & Patel (2024); Mahammad *et al.* (2022); Mahammad *et al.* (2021).

In contrast, the least overall entrepreneurship behaviour index for the item 'I want to earn only to afford a comfortable way of life' was found to be 55.89. Among the graduates some of them may want to do service to the society, apart from having comfortable life, hence may be the result.

Under decision making ability component, the highest overall entrepreneurship behaviour index for the item 'it is necessary for a person to look after all the alternatives before making any final decisions' was found to be 81.71. This phenomenon can be attributed to the likelihood that graduates are more prone to making rational and informed decisions. They consider all the available information, evaluate the pros and cons, and weigh the potential outcomes before making a choice.

Further, 'I always depend on parents, siblings, teachers, mentors, friends and relatives to take decision on important activities' had a lowest overall entrepreneurship behaviour index of 54.29. All the graduates have become adults and like to be independent which means they don't want to depend on other for making decision, which has resulted in low perception.

With respect to leadership ability component, the overall entrepreneurship behaviour index was more than 80.00 in case of four items *viz.,* 'I am happy to solve problems before anyone tries to solve them' had an overall entrepreneurship behaviour index of 82.23 followed by 81.71 for 'I will be leader than follower', 81.20 for 'I will lead the team of like-minded professionals to take up innovation' and 80.91 for 'I enhanced my leadership qualities in RAWE programme'. The SRP which has made the students to stay away from the campus and work in various situations independently has helped them to enhance their leadership skills.

In Management orientation, the highest overall entrepreneurship behaviour index was 82.11 for the item 'I always set priorities and organize them to achieve my goals'. The reason might be institutional attachments has helped the graduates to understand the organizational set up and the management techniques in different organizations, which leads to improvement in management skills.

In contrast, the least overall entrepreneurship behaviour index for the item 'I will not make use of incubation facilities available to initiate an enterprise' was found to be 57.20. This could be attributed to the fact that the universities do not have the facility of incubation and students are not aware of the importance of incubation centres.

Under goal setting ability component, the overall entrepreneurship behaviour index was more than 80.00 in case of two items *viz.,* 'setting goals will always helps to boost the self-confidence of an individual' had an overall entrepreneurship behaviour index (85.77) and 82.46 for 'I always set standards to achieve my goals'. This is attributed to the fact in SRP, teachers mainly acted as facilitator and graduates had to complete the work in the given time and provided resources, hence they had to set their goals which have helped them to understand the importance of goal setting.

Table 2: Component wise overall entrepreneurship behaviour of agriculture graduates towards Student READY programme (n = 350)

Sr. No.	Components	Overall Mean Score (Index)	Rank
1	Innovativeness	3.67 (73.41)	III
2	Risk Taking Ability	3.58 (71.81)	V
3	Achievement Motivation	3.58 (71.59)	VI
4	Decision Making Ability	3.60 (71.94)	IV
5	Leadership ability	3.96 (79.38)	I
6	Management orientation	3.53 (70.72)	VII
7	Goal Setting ability	3.75 (75.06)	II

The component wise overall entrepreneurship behaviour of agriculture graduates in relation to the Student READY Programme is presented in Table 2. Among the seven components, leadership ability secured the highest rank with an entrepreneurship behaviour index of 79.38. This may be attributed to the experiential learning approach of SRP, wherein graduates actively engaged with rural communities. Such exposure enabled them to develop practical skills in coordination, decision-making, and group involvement, thereby enhancing their leadership abilities.

Table 3: University wise overall entrepreneurship behaviour of agriculture graduates towards Student READY programme (n = 350)

Sr. No.	Universities	Overall Mean Score (Index)	Rank
1	UASB	3.23 (74.00)	IV
2	UASD	3.15 (72.01)	V
3	UASR	3.26 (74.57)	III
4	ANGRAU	3.26 (74.58)	II
5	PJTSAU	3.32 (75.84)	I
6	TNAU	3.10 (70.97)	VII
7	KAU	3.14 (71.93)	VI
	Overall entrepreneurship behaviour	3.21 (73.42)	-

The overall entrepreneurship behaviour index for agriculture graduates was found to be 73.42 (Table 3). The reason behind this is the various components of the Student READY Programme, which provide experiential learning opportunities and contribute to the development of entrepreneurial skills among graduates.

Among the universities, PJTSAU ranked first with entrepreneurship behaviour index of 75.84. One of the key factors contributing to PJTSAU ranked first has strong industry collaborations and partnerships, which provide graduates with exposure to real-world challenges and opportunities. Such linkages help in enhancing practical understanding and entrepreneurial orientation among graduates. Additionally, the university facilitates extensive networking opportunities by connecting students with entrepreneurs, investors, and subject matter experts. These interactions enable students to gain insights, build professional relationships, and explore potential ventures, thereby contributing to improved entrepreneurship behavior (Fig. 2).

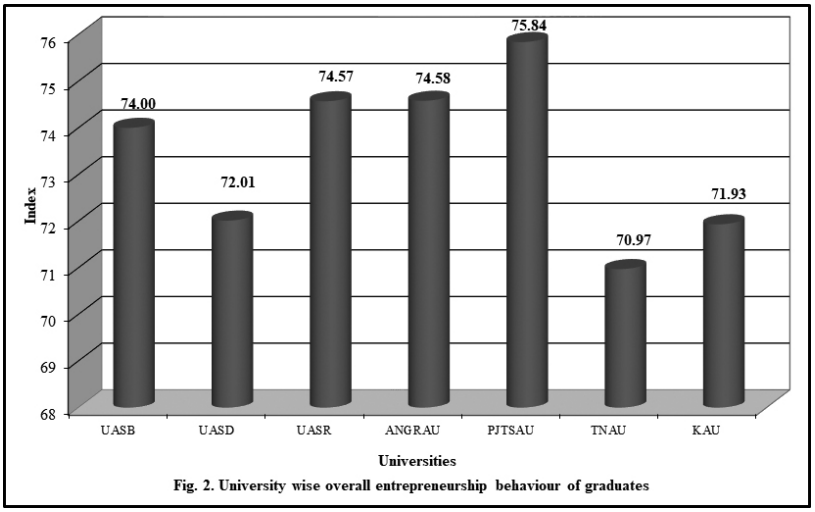

Fig. 2. University wise overall entrepreneurship behaviour of graduates

Table 4: Comparison of entrepreneurship behaviour of agriculture graduates (n = 350)

Sr. No.	Universities	Mean	F value	SEM	CD value
1	UASB	129.48	3.115**	1.770	4.923
2	UASD	126.02			
3	UASR	130.50			
4	ANGRAU	130.52			
5	PJTSAU	132.72			
6	TNAU	124.20			
7	KAU	125.84			

** Significant at 1 per cent level

Table 4 presents the variation in entrepreneurship behaviour among agriculture graduates across different universities. The ANOVA results revealed a statistically significant difference among the universities (F = 3.115, significant at 1 per cent level) indicating that the level of entrepreneurship behaviour varies across institutions This suggests that institutional factors have a measurable influence on entrepreneurial outcomes. The observed variation may be attributed to differences in programme implementation, including credit hours allocated to SRP, the type and quality of organizations associated for training, and the extent of staff involvement in mentoring and supervision. These institutional factors play a crucial role in shaping the entrepreneurial competencies of graduates.

Table 5: Reliability coefficients of entrepreneurship behaviour dimensions (n = 350)

Sr. No.	Dimensions	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Innovativeness	5	0.78
2	Risk Taking Ability	5	0.74
3	Achievement Motivation	5	0.81
4	Decision Making Ability	5	0.76
5	Leadership Ability	5	0.84
6	Management Orientation	5	0.73
7	Goal Setting Ability	5	0.80
	Overall Scale	**35**	**0.86**

The result in Table 5 revealed that the instrument exhibited satisfactory to high reliability, indicating that the statements included under each dimension consistently measured the entrepreneurial behaviour of agriculture graduates. The Cronbach's alpha values of the dimensions ranged from 0.73 to 0.84, which confirms acceptable internal

consistency among the items. Among the various dimensions, leadership ability showed the highest reliability coefficient (0.84), followed by achievement motivation (0.81) and goal-setting ability (0.80), reflecting strong consistency in measuring these constructs. Furthermore, the overall Cronbach's alpha value of the entrepreneurship behaviour scale was 0.86, demonstrating high reliability and confirming the suitability of the instrument for subsequent statistical analyses and interpretation.

Table 6: Inter-dimension correlation matrix of entrepreneurship behavior (n = 350)

Variables	IN	RT	AM	DM	LE	MO	GS
Innovativeness (IN)	1						
Risk Taking Ability (RT)	0.58**	1					
Achievement Motivation (AM)	0.61**	0.54**	1				
Decision Making Ability (DM)	0.49**	0.57**	0.63**	1			
Leadership Ability (LE)	0.66**	0.59**	0.71**	0.65**	1		
Management Orientation (MO)	0.55**	0.52**	0.60**	0.62**	0.68**	1	
Goal Setting Ability (GS)	0.63**	0.56**	0.69**	0.61**	0.74**	0.66**	1

** Significant at 1 per cent level

The correlation matrix presented in Table 6 indicates the degree and direction of association among the seven dimensions studied. The findings revealed that all the dimensions of entrepreneurship behaviour had positive and significant inter-relationships with one another at one per cent level of significance. This indicates that improvement in one entrepreneurial dimension is likely to positively influence other dimensions as well.

Among the dimensions, leadership ability exhibited strong positive correlation with goal-setting ability (r = 0.74), achievement motivation (r = 0.71), and management orientation (r = 0.68). This suggests that graduates possessing higher leadership qualities were also more likely to demonstrate stronger motivation, better managerial orientation, and clearer entrepreneurial goals.

Achievement motivation also showed substantial positive association with goal-setting ability (r = 0.69) and decision-making ability (r = 0.63), indicating that highly motivated graduates were more inclined towards effective planning and independent decision-making.

Innovativeness exhibited positive and significant relationship with all other dimensions, particularly with leadership ability (r = 0.66) and goal-setting ability (r = 0.63), implying that innovative graduates tend to possess stronger leadership traits and entrepreneurial vision.

The findings indicate that entrepreneurship behaviour is multidimensional in nature, where various behavioural attributes are closely interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The experiential learning and field exposure provided through the Student READY Programme may have contributed to the simultaneous development of these entrepreneurial dimensions among agriculture graduates.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights that agriculture graduates possess a moderate to high level of entrepreneurial behaviour, with an overall entrepreneurship behaviour index of 73.42. Among the various components, leadership ability emerged as the most prominent, largely attributed to practical exposure and independent responsibilities undertaken during the Student Ready Programme (SRP). Other components such as goal setting, achievement motivation, and risk-taking ability also reflected strong indices, indicating that graduates are generally confident, proactive, and open to innovation and calculated risks in their entrepreneurial pursuits.

Despite these strengths, lower indices in certain areas such as dependence on external support for decision-making and lack of awareness or access to incubation facilities indicate that there are still gaps in entrepreneurial readiness. These shortcomings may be due to inadequate institutional infrastructure, limited exposure to startup ecosystems, or a lack of self-efficacy among some students.

The variation observed across universities particularly the higher performance of PJTSAU highlights the critical role of industry collaborations, mentorship, and hands-on learning in fostering entrepreneurial behaviour. To further nurture entrepreneurship among agriculture graduates, it is essential for institutions to strengthen these elements by expanding access to incubation facilities, enhancing mentorship opportunities, and promoting experiential learning across the board.

The significant inter-correlation among entrepreneurial dimensions further suggests that the

Student READY Programme contributes towards holistic entrepreneurial development among agriculture graduates.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of the study provide actionable insights for policymakers, educational institutions, and programme developers aiming to strengthen entrepreneurial behaviour among agriculture graduates. The following policy directions are recommended:

(1) Foster Agri-Startup Ecosystems on Campus: Given that graduates showed high innovativeness in agri-startups (Index: 82.40), universities should establish structured incubation centres and innovation hubs focused on agriculture. Regular hackathons, startup expos, and idea-to-prototype programmes can help channel student creativity into viable ventures.

(2) Build Entrepreneurial Confidence through Experiential Learning: The low index for exploring startup opportunities (61.60) suggests a lack of self-confidence. Institutions should implement entrepreneurship boot camps, pitch training, and mentorship from early-stage to reduce fear of failure and improve risk-taking aptitude.

(3) Integrate Structured Risk Management Training: High acceptance of entrepreneurial risk (81.14) indicates readiness, but conflicting views on financial caution (58.51) show a need for structured education on risk management, financial planning, and decision-making under uncertainty.

(4) Encourage Achievement-Oriented Learning Modules: High scores under achievement motivation (81.49 and 85.77) call for curriculum models that emphasize individual goal setting, innovation-led assignments, and progress tracking to sustain motivation and reinforce entrepreneurial purpose.

(5) Promote Independent Decision-Making Skills: The lowest score under decision-making ability (54.29) reflects reluctance to depend on others. Encourage autonomy by designing projects that require students to make real-time decisions, supported by case studies and role-play simulations.

(6) Expand Leadership Development Opportunities: With leadership ability ranking highest (79.38), institutions should formalize leadership opportunities through peer-led agri-enterprises, community mobilization tasks, and leadership certification integrated into RAWE and SRP modules.

(7) Enhance Awareness and Access to Incubation Facilities: The low index for using incubation (57.20) suggests limited awareness or access. Universities should publicize incubation opportunities, partner with external incubators, and include incubation orientation in the curriculum.

(8) Embed Management Training into Academic Programmes: The high score in management orientation (82.11) supports the inclusion of modules in project planning, resource management, and enterprise modeling. Institutional partnerships for management internships can offer additional exposure.

(9) Leverage Goal Setting to Improve Entrepreneurial Outcomes: The strongest score across all components (85.77) for goal setting shows that structured goal-setting practices enhance confidence. Embedding SMART goal frameworks in SRP deliverables can reinforce entrepreneurial clarity and direction.

(10) Replicate Best Practices from High-Performing Institutions: PJTSAU's leading performance (index: 75.84) is linked to strong industry linkages and networking. Policy should encourage all agricultural universities to adopt similar engagement strategies to improve entrepreneurship behaviour institution-wide.

(11) Standardize Entrepreneurship Exposure Across Universities: Variation across institutions (as per Table 3) suggests inconsistent exposure to entrepreneurship. National guidelines should be developed to standardize entrepreneurship-related credit hours, mentorship quality, and institutional support.

By integrating these policy measures, educational institutions can enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem, making graduates not just job seekers but agri-enterprise creators who can contribute meaningfully to rural transformation and sustainable development.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This is to declare that there is "No conflict of interest" among researcher.

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