

Occupational Aspiration of Undergraduate Agricultural Students of Kerala Agricultural University- A Multidimensional Analysis

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The study titled 'Occupational aspiration of undergraduate agricultural students of Kerala Agricultural University- A multidimensional analysis' was undertaken during 2017 - 19. The objectives of the study was to study and compare the occupational aspirations of the male and female undergraduate students of agriculture and also to categorise and compare the male and female undergraduate agricultural students based on the level of occupational aspiration. The study analyses both idealistic and realistic occupational aspirations of the undergraduate agricultural students by considering the concept of long and short range for goal period expression. The study also categorises the students based on their level of occupational aspiration by following the procedure adopted by National Opinion Research Centre (NORC) and Ajit [1] in developing level of aspiration scale. The occupational prestige rating scale establishes level of occupational prestige as viewed in India as well as determines the weighted score for each of the occupation. The sample of the study comprised of 120 third year and final year students *i.e.*, 60 students from College of Agriculture (COA), Vellayani, 35 students from College of Horticulture (COH), Vellanikkara and 25 students from College of Agriculture (COAP), Padannakkad were selected based on proportionate random sampling method. The results on occupational aspiration of the students revealed that more

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than half (56.65%) of the undergraduate students in agriculture belonged to the category of high level of occupational aspiration. Getting the state/ central government job (67.5%) and entering into administrative sector jobs through PSC's (48.3%) were the realistic occupational aspirations of majority of the students. Becoming Agricultural scientist in central/ state government (45.85%) and cracking civil services (36.66%) were the idealistic occupational aspirations of the majority of the students. It was also observed that irrespective of the gender and college of study, the students' level of occupational aspirations remained same.

Keywords: Occupational aspiration; Kerala Agricultural University; agricultural graduates.

1. INTRODUCTION

Aspiration is an intense desire for high achievement and it replicates the student hopes in terms of their educational attainment, expecting position as a government employee or a private employee after finishing their study [2]. Occupational aspirations are articulated as career related goals or choices which gives us important motivational push for career related behaviours and future educational and career excellence [3]. One of the major contemporaneous problem of the youth is the struggle they face while selecting the occupation for the development along their career path. Youth now-a-days are adjusting with the occupation which doesn't meet their interests, attitude and personality due to lack of proper career guidance which lead to frustration among the youth which consequently results in many problems we are facing in our society. So, it is mandatory to make youth think about the occupation they are going to pursue in the course of their life which gives them satisfaction as well as earning their livelihood. The study on occupational aspirations of the undergraduate students of agriculture is of great importance for both individual and for the nation because by aspiring for and choosing the right and suitable occupations, they will relish in their world of work and the nation will flourish through the efforts of the enthusiastic working men and women [4]. Further, the study also helps the policy makers in analysing the aspirations of the students and formulate the curriculum which meets the needs of the students effectively. For achieving this task, it becomes obviously important to understand the occupational aspirations of undergraduate agricultural students. Therefore, the study was endeavoured to understand the occupational aspirations of the undergraduate agricultural students in Kerala Agricultural University (KAU) and categorise the students based on their level of occupational aspiration as the major objectives.

2. OBJECTIVES

- a) To study and compare the occupational aspirations of male and female undergraduate agricultural students.
- b) To categorise the students based on their level of occupational aspirations
- c) To study and compare the level of occupational aspirations of male and female undergraduate agricultural students.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study was conducted in the three colleges under KAU viz., College of Agriculture (COA), Vellayani; College of Agriculture, Padannakkad (COAP) and College of Horticulture (COH), Vellanikara which were purposively selected as these are the three colleges in which undergraduate and postgraduate courses on agriculture are being offered from KAU. Proportionate random sampling method was used in the study to gather the sample from three different colleges of KAU. It refers to method of sampling in which the number of participants from each subgroup is determined by their number relative to the entire population [5]. The sample for the study were selected from the third and final year students of the above said colleges. There are 200 students in COA, Vellayani; 120 students in COH, Vellanikara and 107 students in COAP, Padannakkad respectively in third year and final year. Based on the proportion of students in the three colleges, 60 students from COA, vellayani: 35 students from COH, Vellanikara and 25 students from COAP, Padannakkad were selected randomly for the study making the total number of 120 respondents. Further, for comparison of occupational aspirations of male and female undergraduate students the sample was also categorised into male and female students based on their respective proportion in the three colleges. Since female students are more than male students, more female students

were included in the sample of the study. Ex post facto research design was adopted for conducting the study since it is aimed at analysing the level of occupational aspirations of the undergraduate agricultural students. This is a kind of research design where investigation is done after phenomenon and investigators do not have control over the factors which influence their aspirations and cannot be manipulated [5]. Statistical tools used in the study are frequency, percentage, Man-Whitney test, p value to draw the meaningful inferences from the study which are tested at 5 per cent level of significance.

Since the objectives of the study are to understand the occupational aspirations of the students and to categorize them based on their level of occupational aspirations, the scale developed by Ajit [1] was used in the study. In the scale the occupations were categorized into realistic and idealistic occupational aspirations to consider the concept of long and short range for goal period expression. Idealistic aspiration refers to the job which student chooses if he or she is free to choose without considering their socio-economic and academic background, while, realistic aspiration refers to the job which student is really sure that he or she can get that job in short run after considering the academic and socio-economic background. Further, to categorise the students based on level of occupational aspiration, the occupations were given the weightage from high to low by following the procedure adopted by National Opinion Research Centre (NORC) and Ajit [1] in developing level of aspiration scale. The occupational prestige rating scale establishes level of occupational prestige as viewed in India as well as determines the weighted score for each of the occupation.

In the present study, the scale consists of four sections in which two sections represent idealistic occupational aspirations and another two sections represent realistic occupational aspirations of the students. In the each section, there were six different jobs based upon rank from high to low. One job from each section was chosen by the respondent. The scores were allotted for each occupation ranging from 1 to 6. If the job from among the highest prestige occupations was chosen, then the score of 'six' was given to the respondent and 'one' score was given to the one who had chosen among the low prestige occupations. To avoid Extreme Response Style (ERS) type of errors while collecting data, the jobs were listed randomly in

each section. For each of the four sections, the scores allotted were 6,4,5,1,3,2 for the first section, 6,2,5,3,4,1 for the second section, 2,5,6,3,4,1 for the third section and 6,4,3,5,2,1 for the fourth section respectively. The range of individual scores were 4 to 24 for the whole questionnaire. Based on the total scores obtained the respondents i.e., undergraduate students were classified into three categories as shown in the table.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Occupational Aspirations of the Undergraduate Agricultural Students in Comparison with Male and Female Students

The schedule adopted for the study consists of two components i.e., realistic and idealistic occupational aspiration of the students. Under each component there were two sets of questions (1&3 under realistic and 2&4 under idealistic occupational aspirations respectively). Hence frequency and percentage analysis for all the four questions was done in the pattern as follows.

3.1.1 Realistic occupational aspiration of the students

The distribution of the undergraduate agricultural students based on their Realistic occupational aspirations is presented in the Table 2.

The close look into the overall distribution of the undergraduate students based on their occupational aspiration revealed that more than half (67.5%) of the students aspired to get a job in state or central government followed by 11.66 per cent of the students aspired to become a clerk/ PO in banks and 7.5 per cent and 6.66 per cent of the students aspired to get a job in private companies and service in any agricultural university respectively. Whereas, only 4.16 per cent and 2.5 per cent of the students aspired to do service in any established farm and non-government organisation respectively. In case of male and female students also the same pattern of the distribution was reflected.

From the results it can be concluded that in the realistic situations considering the socio-economic background majority of the students aspired to get any central or state government jobs. Many of the students aspired for

government jobs due to the status, security, pays and perks of the jobs in the government sector.

The distribution of the undergraduate agricultural students in KAU based on their realistic occupational aspirations (Set 2) are presented in the Table 3.

The overall distribution of undergraduate students based on their realistic occupational aspirations in the table above revealed that majority of the students (48.35%) aspired to get any administrative job in government sector followed by 20.83 per cent of the students who aspired to start their own agricultural or horticultural farm. Almost same number of students (10% and 9.16%) aspired to get a job in State Soil Conservation Department and cooperative organisations like Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative (IFFCO), Krishak Bharathi Cooperative (KRIBHCO) respectively. However only negligible number of students i.e., 7.5 per cent and 4.16 per cent aspired to start their career as private consultant in agriculture and starting agribusiness centre respectively. Regarding the distribution pattern among male and female students, it can be observed that the trend is similar to that of overall distribution

From the above table it can be inferred that irrespective of their gender, majority of the students aspired to get into government sector even though there are highly paid jobs in private sector. Further, critical analysis of the table above shows that least number of students preferred to be self-employed and the possible reason behind this might be the huge investments required to start the agribusiness and more gestation period involved in reaching break-even point for the firm after starting the business which might be disappointing them from pursuing career in agribusiness.

The results are not in line with the results of the studies conducted by Arunachalam and Somasundaram [6] and Shashikant [7].

3.1.2 Idealistic occupational aspiration of the students

The distribution of undergraduate agricultural students in KAU based on their idealistic occupational aspirations (Set 1) is presented in Table 4.

The overall distribution of the undergraduate agricultural students based on their idealistic occupational aspiration revealed that majority (45.85%) of the students aspired to become agricultural scientist in state or central government followed by 16.62 per cent of the students who aspired to become agricultural field officer in banks and 13.35 per cent of the students who aspired to be an entrepreneur in agro industry. While only 10.85 per cent and 10 per cent of the students aspired to become a teacher in higher secondary schools and agriculturist in abroad respectively. Only 3.33 per cent of the students aspired to get a job in multinational companies.

Pertaining to the male students vis-à-vis female students, their idealistic occupational aspirations were almost similar to the pattern of distribution of overall respondents i.e., majority of them aspired to secure any government job. Whereas for teaching in higher secondary schools more female students were willing when compared to male students. This may be because of the general benefits that females can get if they choose that job like nearness of the schools to their homes, five day week, vacation and less burden when compared to other jobs.

The results are in adherence with the results of the study conducted by Humayon et al. [8].

The distribution of undergraduate students based on their idealistic occupational aspirations (set 2) is presented in Table 5.

The overall distribution of the undergraduate agricultural students based on their idealistic occupational aspirations revealed that majority of

Table 1. Categorisation of undergraduate agricultural students based on level of occupational aspiration

S.No.	Category	Score range
1	Low level of occupational aspiration	9 to 14
2	Medium level of occupational aspiration	14 to 19
3	High level of occupational aspiration	19 to 24

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents based on their realistic occupational aspiration. (Set 1)

List of Jobs	Male (n= 47)		Female (n=73)		Overall (N=120)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Central or State government service	33	70.21	48	65.75	81	67.5
Job in private companies (Fertilizer/ Pesticide/ seed production)	3	6.38	6	8.21	9	7.5
Clerk / Probationary Officer in banks	6	12.76	8	10.95	14	11.66
Service in Non-Governmental Organisation	1	2.12	2	2.73	3	2.5
Service in any agricultural university	2	4.25	6	8.21	8	6.66
Service in any farm (Agriculture/Horticulture)	2	4.25	3	4.1	5	4.16
Total	47	100	73	100	120	100

(Prepared by B. Vinodkumar, 2019)

Table 3. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents based on their realistic occupational aspiration (Set 2)

List of Jobs	Male (n= 47)		Female (n=73)		Overall (N=120)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Private consultant in agriculture	7	14.9	2	2.73	9	7.5
Starting own agricultural/ horticultural farm	9	19.15	16	21.92	25	20.83
Administrative service in Government Sector (PSCs)	19	40.44	39	53.44	58	48.35
Job in co-operative banks/ organisations(IFFCO, KRIBHCO etc)	5	10.63	6	8.23	11	9.16
Service in State Soil Conservation Department	5	10.63	7	9.58	12	10
Starting Agri business centre/ Agro service centre	2	4.25	3	4.1	5	4.16
Total	47	100	73	100	120	100

(Prepared by B. Vinodkumar, 2019)

Table 4. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents based on their idealistic occupational aspiration. (Set 1)

List of Jobs	Male (n= 47)		Female (n=73)		Overall (N=120)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Central/ State government's agricultural scientist	23	48.9	32	43.85	55	45.85
Agriculturist in abroad	5	10.66	7	9.58	12	10
Agriculture field officer in banks	7	14.9	13	17.8	20	16.62
Teaching agriculture in Higher Secondary school	3	6.39	10	13.7	13	10.85
Entrepreneur in agro industry	7	14.9	9	12.34	16	13.35
Job in multi-national companies	2	4.25	2	2.73	4	3.33
Total	47	100	73	100	120	100

(Prepared by B. Vinodkumar, 2019)

Table 5. Frequency and percentage distribution of respondents based on their idealistic occupational aspiration (Set 2)

List of jobs	Male (n= 47)		Female (n=73)		Overall (N=120)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Civil Services (UPSC)	21	44.7	23	31.5	44	36.66
Pursuing higher studies and getting job as scientist in central government	12	25.53	16	21.95	28	23.36
Professor/ Scientist in SAU's	5	10.63	6	8.22	11	9.16
Job as a management professional in agri-business companies	8	17.02	21	28.76	29	24.16
Information technology expert in agriculture	0	0	6	8.21	6	5
Researcher in private organisation	1	2.12	1	1.36	2	1.66
Total	47	100	73	100	120	100

(Prepared by B. Vinodkumar, 2019)

Table 6. Distribution of under graduate agricultural students based on their level of occupational aspiration vis-à-vis male and female students

Level of occupational aspiration	Male (n= 47)		Female (n=73)		Overall (N=120)	
	F	%	F	%	F	%
Low (9 to 14)	6	12.76	3	4.1	9	7.5
Medium (14 to 19)	16	34.05	27	36.97	43	35.85
High (19 to 24)	25	53.19	43	58.93	68	56.65
Total	47	100	73	100	120	100
Mean score	19.42		19.47		19.45	
Mann Whitney statistics= -0.162						
P value = 0.871						

(Prepared by B. Vinodkumar, 2019)

the students (36.66%) aspired to enter into civil services followed by 24.16 per cent of the students who aspired to become a management professional in agribusiness companies and 23.36 per cent of the students who aspired to become a scientist in central government after pursuing higher studies. Whereas only 9.16 per cent, 5 per cent and 1.66 per cent of the students aspired to become professors in SAU's, IT expert in agriculture and researcher in private organisation respectively.

Regarding the idealistic occupational aspirations of male and female students, the distribution pattern observed in female students was almost similar to that of overall distribution pattern of the students and in the case of male students, after civil services majority of them aspired to become scientist in central government after pursuing higher studies and to become a management professional in agribusiness company which was reverse in the case of female students.

In the above table majority of the students revealed that becoming a civil servant was their ideal occupational aspiration. This may be due to the reason that it was the most prestigious job in India with wide range of responsibilities backed by discretionary powers. It also doesn't require the student to be from good economic background.

By critically analysing all the above tables, it can be concluded that majority of the students irrespective of their gender aspired to get a job in government sector.

The results are in adherence with the results of the studies conducted by Raj Kumar [9] and Niketha et al. [10].

3.2 Categorisation of the Students Based on Their Level of Occupational Aspiration In Comparison With Male and Female Students As Well As the College Wise Comparison

3.2.1 Categorisation of undergraduate students based on their level of occupational aspirations

The distribution of the undergraduate students of agriculture in KAU based on their level of Occupational aspirations is presented clearly in the Table 6.

The close look at the overall distribution of the students based on their level of occupational

aspiration from the above table revealed that majority of the students (56.65%) were having high level of occupational aspiration followed by 35.85 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the students who had medium and low level of occupational aspiration respectively.

The comparative analysis of level of occupational aspirations of the male and female students also revealed the similar pattern of distribution as it was in the case of overall distribution.

To find the difference in the level of occupational aspirations of male and female students, Mann-Whitney test was conducted by the investigator. The results of the test revealed that there was no significant difference between the level of occupational aspiration of the male and female students. This indicates that gender of the students had no influence in the formation of their level of occupational aspirations. The estimated P- value in the above table which is greater than 0.05 indicates that there is no significant difference between the level of occupational aspirations of the male and female students at both 5 per cent and 1 per cent level of significance.

These findings are in line with the results of the studies conducted by Pradhan [11] and Ajit [1] and conflicting with the results of the studies conducted by Rahim [12] and Senthilselvam & Subramonian [13].

4. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the research is to study and compare the occupational aspirations of male and female undergraduate agricultural students and to categorise the students based on their level of occupational aspirations. From the results of the study it can be concluded that most of the undergraduate agricultural students are interested in getting a jobs in government sector which are secured and have many benefits. Further, students were reluctant to start their own enterprise and securing a job in private sector. This is an indication that among the undergraduate agricultural students of KAU most of the students lack entrepreneurial aspirations and risk taking behaviour. Most of the students have high level of aspirations like cracking civil services and entering into high profile jobs which is a good signal. It is also evident from the results of the Man whitney test reveals that there is no significant difference among the occupational aspirations of male and female undergraduate agricultural students. But for a country like India

in which agriculture is the backbone, it needs lot of human capital which is efficient in tackling the problems of agriculture sector. So policy makers should focus on nurturing the students at undergraduate level so that they can have critical thinking ability and undertake agripreneurship as their career choice. Further the curriculum planners should think about the capacity building of agricultural graduates by including more entrepreneurial development programmes in their curriculum. Further handholding and counselling services must be extended to the students after graduation to empower them to pursue agribusiness. To get more insights about the occupational aspirations the study can be undertaken by including post graduate and doctoral students into the sample and comparing their aspirations.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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