

Comparison of Educational and Occupational Aspirations of Rural Youth from Farming Families of Kerala and Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

Aspirations act as key motivator in success of any individual. Lower aspirations are often ascribed as one of the reasons for lower achievement of any individual including the rural youth. Two hundred youth respondents from farming families of Kerala and Rajasthan were interviewed to analyze their educational and occupational aspirations and the effect of socio-cultural and economic factors on aspirations. The results revealed that only a small fraction of youth were interested in agriculture and allied industries in both of these states. The study found that socio-cultural factors influenced the educational and occupational aspirations of the respondents. A significant variation between the aspirations of respondents of both states was observed in the study. Certain social factors viz teachers, relatives & neighbours, media and social acceptance had more influence on respondents in one state than other, indicating the importance of socio-cultural factors prevailing in the society. The study has also highlighted that aspiration is one of the important element influencing the youth educational and occupational preference and hence, should be analyzed in harmony with other elements to enable more rational and scientific policies in this context.

KEYWORDS: Aspirations, educational, occupational, rural youth, farming, Kerala, Rajasthan

INTRODUCTION

The key challenge before any populous country is to feed its citizens which is most often exacerbated with the problems like high unemployment, lower per capita income and a low human resource development 2011. census observed only a relative decline in percentage of people involved in agriculture but very recently, the decline has been both relative and absolute. The decline has been so drastic that only 24.6 per cent of the work force is involved in cultivation, indicating a drastic decline of almost 7.6 per cent than before (Chandramouli, 2012). Research evidence (Rojewski, 1999; Sherwood, 1989) have pointed out that aspiration is one of the psychological factor that influence the youth's decision for a career in the future. Aspiration plays an important role in life choice of the people, how they feel and think about themselves (Schaefer and Meece, 2009) including the rural youth. There is a paucity of research on youth reluctance to farm in India, and an analysis of youth aspirations will enrich this field to enable rational policy formulation and provide a deeper picture of why the youth of India are moving out of agriculture. Hence, the present study was conducted to assess different factors responsible for aspirations of rural youth in two states of India.

METHODOLOGY

Two states viz. Rajasthan and Kerala were

purposely selected for the study based on the criteria of literacy rate and unemployment rate. As per Government of India (GoI) Reports (2013), Kerala state has higher literacy rate (94.5%) and higher youth unemployment rate (31.5%), while Rajasthan has lower literacy rate (67.7%) and lower youth unemployed (8.8%) than the average of India. These differences satisfied the major selection criteria. From both these states one district (Kottayam from Kerala and Bikaner from Rajasthan) was selected randomly and from each district one block (Pallom from Kottayam and Lunkaransar from Bikaner) was selected randomly. From each block two villages (Panachikadu and Thiruvapur from Pallom block and Garbadesar and Kaloo from Lunkaransar block) were selected, thus making a total of four villages. Based on the electoral role and key informant interviews a list of rural youth from farming families were prepared and fifty male respondents in the age group of 16 to 30 years were selected randomly from the list for each village making a total of two hundred respondents for the present study. Ex-post facto survey method was employed for the study. The data were collected through semi-structured interview schedule. The data were expressed in frequency, percentage and were statistically analyzed using chi-square analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Educational aspirations

The data presented in the Table 1, evident that educational aspirations of the respondents of both states

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significantly differed and the aspirations of respondents in Kerala were higher than those of Rajasthan. Most of the respondents, from both states aspired to complete education at least up to graduation level. This shows that youth of both states are aware of the importance of the education. About 21.5 per cent of the youth aspired to acquire professional education within which Kerala youth depicted more inclination towards professional education which may be attributed to higher literacy level of the respondents in Kerala.

Table 1: Educational aspirations of the respondents
n=200

Level of education	Kerala (n=100)	Rajasthan (n=100)	Total (n=200)	χ^2 - Value
Primary level	0	3	3 (1.5)	36.524**
Middle school	0	8	8 (4)	
High School	4	16	20 (10)	
Intermediate	12	22	34 (17)	
Graduation	28	25	53 (26.5)	
Professional course	33	10	43 (21.5)	
Post graduation	14	14	28 (14)	
Doctoral	9	2	11 (5.5)	

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage; **significant at 1 per cent level of significance ($P < 0.01$)

On further analysis of the professional courses (Table 2), the youth intended to join. Bachelor of Technology and allied courses (39.53 %), followed by medicine (23.25%). Only about 7 per cent respondents preferred agriculture related courses. This showed that, young people from farming family are disinclined to join agriculture related jobs, revealing the trend that agriculture was not the preferred job for youth from farming family.

Table 2: Professional course aspiration of the youth of Kerala and Rajasthan

Type of professional course	Kerala (n=33)	Rajasthan (n=10)	Total (n=43)
B.Tech and allied technical	12	5	17 (39.53)
Medicine and allied	8	2	10 (23.25)
Agriculture and allied	2	1	3 (6.9)
Management	6	2	8 (18.7)
Others	5	0	5 (11.62)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage

Occupational aspirations

Occupational aspirations as depicted in Table 3 revealed that only 7 per cent of the respondents in Kerala and 11 per cent of the respondents in Rajasthan preferred agriculture and allied industries as their preferred occupation. Majority of the respondents preferred government employment (39.5 %) followed by private employment. This contradicts the results of Bhanu (2006) carried out in Karnataka who found that majority of the youth were interested in farming. But the results are in harmony with the results from of Bajema *et al.*, 2002.

Table 3: Occupational aspirations of the youth of Kerala and Rajasthan

Occupation	Kerala (n=100)	Rajasthan (n=100)	Total (n=200)	χ^2 - Value
Farmer	7	11	18 (9)	12.473*
Govt employee	48	31	79 (39.5)	
Private employee	28	26	54 (27)	
Business and other non farm enterprise	15	20	35 (17.5)	
Others (include labourers, commission agents etc)	2	12	14 (7)	

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage; *significant at 5 percent level of significance ($P < 0.05$)

Factors influencing aspirations

The date present Table 4, it is evident that the key factors affecting aspirations of youth are parental influences, friends, income, prestige and social acceptance. Among all the factors, “parental influences” was the most influencing factor (64 %) in the study area. However, the youth responded that income and social acceptance least influenced to the tune of 4.5 per cent and 7 per cent respectively.

Other relatives & neighbors, media and easiness of the job had comparatively lower influence on the respondents in the study area. A difference between two states can be observed with respect to certain factors like influence of teachers, social acceptance, other relatives and media which may be attributed to the socio- economic conditions and educational status prevailing in the study area.

It was found that Kerala villages had more urbanite nature compared to Rajasthan leading to the fact that social acceptance is more significant in Rajasthan. Literacy and more penetration of mass media in rural areas can explain the significant difference between the influences of media on aspiration in both these states.

Moreover, the mean family size in Kerala was low compared to Rajasthan which may be the reason for less influence of relatives in Kerala.

Although low aspirations have been always ascribed to lower achievement levels of education and occupations (Speilhofer *et al.*, 2011), these aspirations can not be analyzed in isolation. The socio-cultural factors of the society have a deep influence on person's aspirations, since aspirations are not static but are dynamic, subjected to environmental stimulus (St.Clair and Benjamin, 2010).

This indicates that aspirations may be modified depending on the situations and the influence of society.

Table 4. Factors influencing aspirations

Factors influencing aspirations										n=200
Factors influencing aspirations	Kerala (n=100)			Rajasthan (n=100)			Total (n=200)			χ^2 - Value
	MI	I	LI	MI	I	LI	MI	I	LI	
Parental influences	63	35	2	65	34	1	128 (64)	69 (34.5)	3 (1.5)	0.379
Friends	48	43	9	44	48	8	92 (46)	91 (45.5)	17 (8.5)	0.507
Teachers	37	48	15	20	49	31	57 (28.5)	97 (48.5)	46 (23)	10.646**
Other relatives and neighbor	15	38	47	30	56	14	45 (22.5)	94 (47)	61 (30.5)	30.414**
Other persons	2	14	84	5	18	77	7 (3.5)	32 (16)	161 (80.5)	2.090
Income	55	41	04	53	42	05	108 (54)	83 (41.5)	9 (4.5)	0.160
Prestige	48	42	10	50	41	09	98 (49)	83 (41.5)	19 (9.5)	0.101
Social acceptance	40	48	12	51	47	2	91 (45.5)	95 (47.5)	14 (7)	8.483*
Easiness to do	13	48	39	23	48	29	36 (18)	96 (48)	68 (34)	4.246
Media	44	32	24	12	38	50	56 (28)	70 (35)	74 (37)	27.935**
Other factors	38	41	21	35	45	20	73 (36.5)	86 (43)	41 (20.5)	0.334

(MI=most influence, I= influence, LI= Least influence)

Figures in parentheses indicate percentage; **significant at 1 percent level of significance (P<0.01); *significant at 5 percent level of significance (P<0.05)

CONCLUSION

The study has found that aspirations varied according to the states and was influenced both by social and cultural factors. Further, a more detailed study of these factors is needed to understand its variation in India to frame certain extension strategies to bring the youth to agriculture.

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