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Attitude of Undergraduate Agriculture Students Towards Farming: Empirical Evidence From a Premier State Agricultural University in India

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Abstract

Agricultural education plays a critical role in developing skilled human resources for sustaining and revitalizing the farming sector in India. Despite agriculture being the backbone of the national economy, there is increasing concern about the declining inclination of educated youth towards farming as a profession. The present study was undertaken to assess the attitude of undergraduate agriculture students towards farming and to examine selected socio-demographic, educational, economic, and psychological factors influencing their career aspirations. The study was conducted at a State Agricultural University in India using an analytical research design. Data were collected from 126 final-year B.Sc. (Agriculture) students through a pre-tested structured questionnaire. Attitude towards farming was measured using a standardized scale, and appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools were employed for data analysis. The findings of the study are expected to provide valuable insights for agricultural education planners, extension professionals, and policy makers to reorient curricula, experiential learning components, and career guidance mechanisms in State Agricultural Universities for promoting farming as a respectable, viable, and aspirational profession among agriculture graduates.

Keywords: Attitude, farming profession, agricultural education, career aspirations, undergraduate students, career choices

INTRODUCTION

Historically, agriculture has formed the bedrock of India's economy, sustaining rural livelihoods, ensuring food security, and supplying raw materials to agro-based industries. Even during rapid industrialization and expansion of the service sector, agriculture continues to employ a substantial proportion of the population and remains central to inclusive national development [1, 2]. Recognizing this strategic importance, India has invested considerably in strengthening agricultural education through a nationwide network of State Agricultural Universities (SAUs), Central Agricultural Universities, and institutions under the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR). These institutions are entrusted with developing technically competent human resources capable of advancing agricultural research, extension, agribusiness management, and farm-level innovations.

The core mandate of agricultural education is not only to prepare graduates for scientific and administrative roles but also to nurture progressive

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farmers and agri-entrepreneurs who can lead the transformation of the sector. However, recent empirical evidence suggests a shifting trend in the career preferences of agricultural graduates. Several studies have reported a dominant inclination toward government services, higher education, banking, and private sector employment, while relatively fewer graduates express a preference for farming as a primary occupation [3, 4, 5]. Farming is increasingly perceived as economically uncertain, risk-prone, and socially less prestigious than salaried employment [6]. This perceptual shift raises critical concerns regarding the future engagement of technically trained youth in primary agricultural production.

Attitudes towards farming play a decisive role in shaping occupational choices and long-term professional commitment. Drawing from the Theory of Planned Behavior [7]. attitude constitutes a key determinant of behavioral intention and action. In the context of agricultural education, favorable attitudes towards farming may encourage graduates to adopt innovative practices, pursue agripreneurship, and contribute meaningfully to rural development. Conversely, neutral or negative attitudes may lead to disengagement from direct farming activities, thereby widening the gap between scientific advancements and field-level applications. Empirical studies have demonstrated that socio-personal factors, achievement motivation, and exposure to agricultural enterprises significantly influence students' perception of farming [8, 9].

Undergraduate agriculture students represent a particularly significant cohort, as they undergo structured academic training, experiential learning programs such as RAWE (Rural Agricultural Work Experience), and exposure to research and extension systems during their formative years. Their career aspirations and attitudinal orientations are shaped by an interplay of socio-demographic background, family educational and economic status, academic performance, information exposure, and psychological attributes such as achievement motivation [10, 11]. Understanding these determinants is essential for aligning agricultural education with national priorities related to sustainable agriculture, entrepreneurship development and rural transformation.

In this context, the present study was undertaken to assess the attitudes of undergraduate agriculture students towards farming and analyze selected socio-demographic, educational, economic, and psychological factors associated with their career aspirations in a State Agricultural University in India. By generating empirical evidence on students' perceptions and aspirations, this study seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on revitalizing agricultural education and fostering a motivated, innovative-oriented, and future-ready generation of agricultural professionals.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the assumption that the attitudes of undergraduate agriculture students towards farming are influenced by a complex interaction of socio-demographic, educational, economic, media exposure-related, and psychological factors (Figure 1). Attitude towards farming was treated as the central dependent variable, representing students' favorable or unfavorable evaluation of farming as a potential livelihood and professional career.

Socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, caste, family background, and place of residence (rural/urban) constitute the foundational social context within which students develop their early perceptions of agriculture and farming. Students from farming families or rural environments are often more familiar with agricultural practices and may exhibit relatively favorable orientations towards farming as a profession.

Educational factors, including the medium of schooling and academic performance, shape students' cognitive orientation towards agriculture and influence their professional self-confidence. Exposure to scientific agricultural education may strengthen students' understanding of modern farming systems and their potential for innovation and entrepreneurship in the field.

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Economic variables such as parental occupation, family income, and landholding size influence students' perceptions of the economic viability, profitability, and social status associated with farming. Students from households with larger agricultural holdings or farming backgrounds may perceive agriculture as a more feasible livelihood option than those from non-farming or urban professional families.

In addition, exposure-related factors, including mass media exposure, access to job-related information sources, and participation in co-curricular activities, play an important role in broadening students' awareness of emerging opportunities in agriculture, agribusiness, and allied sectors. Such exposure may significantly shape their career aspirations and perceptions of farming as a modern and knowledge-intensive profession.

Finally, psychological attributes, particularly achievement motivation and aspiration levels, act as internal drivers that influence students' willingness to engage in challenging, innovative, and entrepreneurial activities in agriculture. Students with higher achievement motivation may be more inclined to perceive farming not only as a traditional occupation but also as a potential entrepreneurial venture.

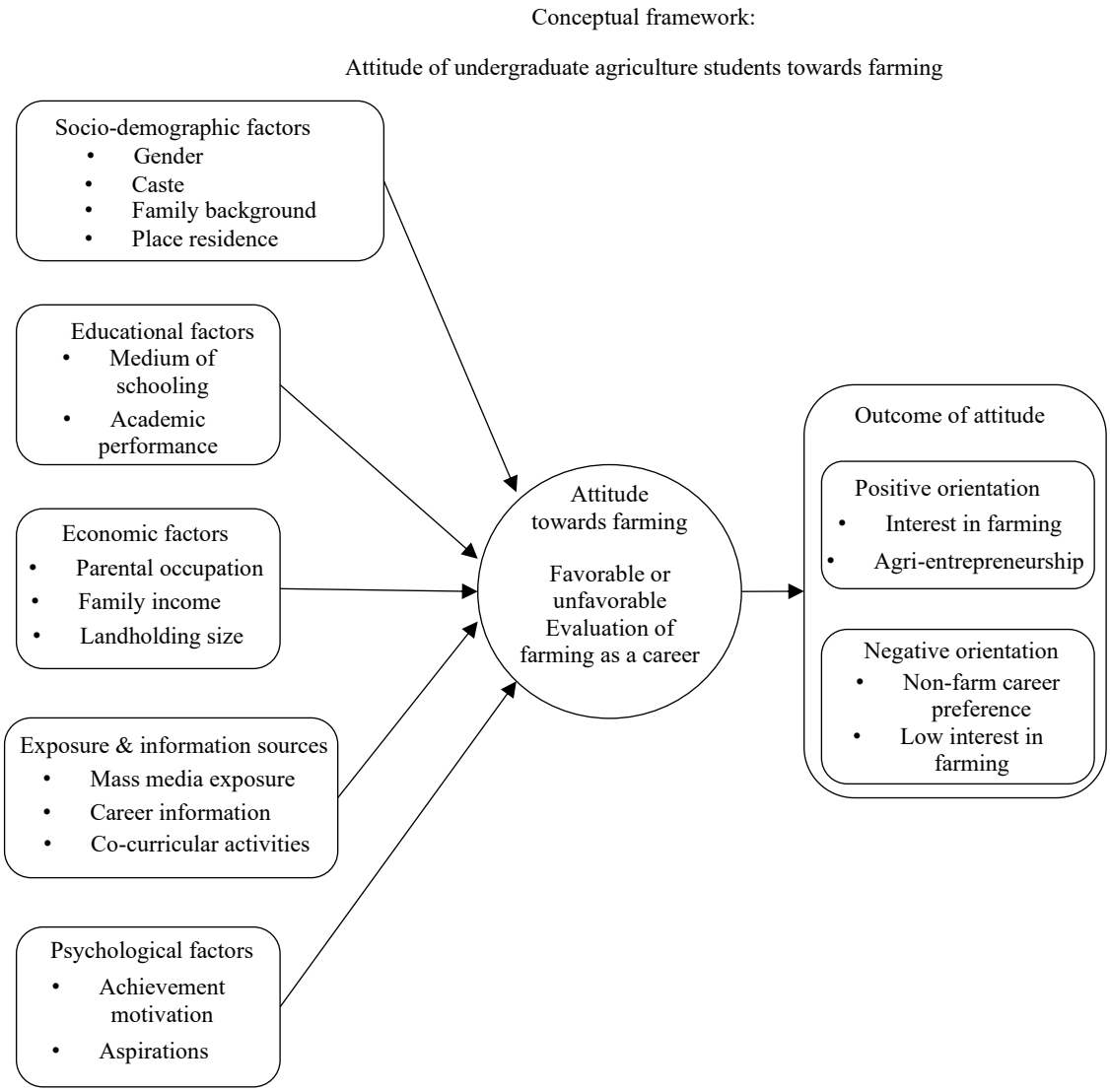


Figure 1. Conceptual framework—student's attitude towards farming as a career option.

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The conceptual framework (Figure-1) therefore posits that the combined influence of socio-demographic background, educational experiences, economic context, exposure to information sources, and psychological attributes determines the nature and direction of students' attitudes towards farming. A favorable configuration of these variables is expected to generate positive attitudes towards farming, whereas dominance of urban orientation, non-farming family background, or strong career aspirations for the non-farming sector may result in neutral or negative attitudes.

This conceptual understanding guided the identification of variables, the development of research hypotheses, and the analytical framework adopted in this study.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

An analytical research design was adopted to study the attitude of undergraduate agriculture students towards farming and its relationship with selected independent variables. This design was considered appropriate for examining the associations among variables in natural academic settings.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at the College of Agriculture, G. B. Pant University of Agriculture and Technology, Pantnagar, Uttarakhand, India. The University, established in 1960 on the Land Grant pattern, is the first State Agricultural University in India and is renowned for its integrated approach to teaching, research, and extension. The College of Agriculture is a flagship constituent college that offers undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs in agricultural sciences.

Selection of Respondents

The respondents comprised final-year undergraduate students enrolled in the B.Sc. (Agriculture) programme. Final-year students were purposively selected because they were at a critical stage of career decision-making. A census method was followed, and out of 133 students enrolled, data was collected from 126 students using a structured questionnaire. The remaining seven students did not complete the questionnaire or returned incomplete questionnaires and were consequently not included in the study sample. Moreover, it represents a 94.74 % response rate, which is quite good and acceptable in social and behavioral sciences.

Variables and Measurement

The independent variables included gender, caste, family background, place of residence, medium of education, academic performance, family type, family size, family educational status, landholding size, parents' occupation, parents' annual income, sources of job information, mass media exposure, participation in co-curricular activities, and achievement motivation.

Attitude towards farming was measured using a structured attitude scale comprising statements related to the economic, social, occupational, and lifestyle dimensions of farming. Responses were recorded on a Likert-type continuum, and composite attitude scores were calculated. Based on the mean and standard deviation, respondents were categorized into positive, neutral, and negative attitude groups.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through personal interactions with respondents using a pre-tested questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, were used to describe the characteristics of the respondents. Inferential statistical tools were employed to examine the relationships between the selected independent variables and career aspirations. The detailed results and discussion are presented in the following section.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-Demographic Profile of Undergraduate Agriculture Students

The socio-demographic profiles of the respondents provide critical context for interpreting variations in students' attitudes towards farming. The distribution of respondents across gender, caste, family

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background, educational exposure, economic status, and agrarian structure reflects the contemporary composition of higher agricultural education in India. The results are given in Table-1 below. The results are given in Table-1 below.

Table 1. Socio-demographic profile of undergraduate agriculture students.

Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	58	46.04
Female	68	53.96
Caste		
General	81	64.29
OBC	19	15.08
SC/ST	26	20.63
Family Background		
Rural	43	34.13
Semi Urban	42	33.33
Urban	41	32.54
Medium of Education		
Hindi	14	11.11
English	112	88.89
Family Educational Status		
Low (8.77)	15	11.90
Medium (8.77 to 15.85)	64	50.79
High (15.85)	47	37.31
Land holding pattern		
Small (<2.76 Ha)	94	74.60
Medium (2.76 to 8.31 Ha)	18	14.29
Big (>8.31 Ha)	14	11.11
Family Type		
Nuclear	99	78.57
Joint	26	20.64
Extended	1	0.79
Family size		
Small (5)	46	36.51
Medium (5 to 10)	74	58.73
Big (10)	6	04.76
Annual Income		
Low (<2.98)	18	14.29
Medium (2.98 to 11.76)	83	65.87
High (11.76)	25	19.84
Parental Income		
Low	18	14.29
Medium	83	65.87
High	25	19.84
Academic Performance		
Low	25	19.84
Medium	78	61.91
High	23	18.25

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Gender Distribution

The gender composition of the respondents indicates a slightly higher representation of female students (53.96%) compared to male students (46.04%). This trend reflects the increasing participation of women in agricultural higher education in India. Over the past decade, several State Agricultural Universities (SAUs) have reported rising female enrolment in B.Sc. (Agriculture) programs, signaling a gradual feminization of agricultural education.

Similar findings were reported by Tripathi et al. (2025) [12]. and Jain et. al. (2022) [13]. where female enrolment in undergraduate agriculture programmes exceeded male enrolment. The growing presence of women in agricultural education has important implications for gender-sensitive extension strategies and rural entrepreneurship development in India.

Caste Composition

A majority of respondents belonged to the general category (64.28%), followed by SC/ST (20.63%) and OBC (15.07%). This distribution reflects broader patterns of access to professional agricultural education in India, where socioeconomic advantages often influence enrolment trends.

Previous studies by Seema et al. (2025) [14]. and Rohit et al. (2026) [15]. also reported a higher representation of general category students in SAUs, while students from SC/ST backgrounds, though increasing, remain comparatively underrepresented. Caste composition is significant because the social background often influences career aspirations, risk orientation, and access to agricultural resources.

Family Background (Rural–Urban Origin)

The respondents were fairly evenly distributed across rural (34.12%), semi-urban (33.33%), and urban (32.53%) backgrounds. This balanced representation suggests that agricultural education is attracting students beyond traditional farming homes.

Earlier research by Kamboj et al. (2026) [16]. and Raju and Devrani (2023) [8]. found that students from rural backgrounds tend to have a stronger emotional attachment to farming, whereas urban-origin students often view agriculture as a scientific or managerial profession rather than a primary occupation. Rural upbringing has been positively associated with favorable attitudes towards farming and agri-entrepreneurship.

Medium of Education

A large majority of students (88.88%) had English as their medium of education, while only 11.12% studied in Hindi medium institutions. This reflects the dominance of English-medium schooling among students entering professional agricultural programs.

Studies by Sebastian (2024) [17]. have highlighted that English-medium students often demonstrate higher academic exposure and access to global agricultural knowledge systems, although vernacular-medium students may exhibit a stronger grassroots orientation. The medium of instruction may influence confidence, employability aspirations, and preference for public versus private sector employment.

Family Educational Status

Approximately half of the respondents (50.79%) belonged to families with a medium level of educational status, followed by high (37.30%) and low (11.90%) educational statuses. This indicates that most students come from moderately educated households, which may influence their academic motivation and career orientation.

Saddikuti, Karthikeyan, and Sheela (2022) [18]. found a positive relationship between parental education and professional aspirations among agriculture students. Higher parental education often correlates with a preference for government services, agribusiness, or higher studies rather than primary farming as an occupation.

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Landholding Pattern

A substantial proportion of respondents (74.60%) belonged to small landholding families (<2.76 ha), followed by medium (14.28%) and large landholders (11.11%). This reflects the prevailing agrarian structure of India, where small and marginal farmers are dominant.

National-level studies (Agricultural Census, Government of India, 2015-16) consistently show that more than 85% of Indian farmers fall under small and marginal categories. Chinchmalatpure (2021) [19]. indicates that students from larger landholding families are more inclined toward commercial farming, whereas those from small holdings often prefer salaried employment because of perceived income instability in farming.

Family Type

The majority of respondents (78.57%) belonged to nuclear families, while 20.63% came from joint families, and only 0.79% from extended families. This reflects the ongoing sociological transition in rural India from joint to nuclear family systems in recent years.

According to Ahmed and Nauriyal (2020) [20]. students from nuclear families often exhibit higher individual decision-making autonomy in career selection, while joint family systems may exert a collective influence on occupational choices, including continuation in farming.

Family Size

Most respondents (58.73%) belonged to medium-sized families (5–10 members), followed by small families (36.50%) and large families (4.76%). Family size may influence economic dependency ratios and perceived livelihood securities.

Research suggests that larger family sizes may increase economic pressure, motivating students to seek stable, non-farm employment. Conversely, a moderately sized family may provide labor support for agricultural operations, potentially encouraging engagement in farming.

Annual Family Income

The majority of respondents (65.87%) belonged to the medium-income category, followed by high income (19.84%) and low income (14.28%). This indicates that most students came from economically moderate households.

Earlier studies by Joshi and Kashyap (2020) [6]. observed that students from higher-income families tend to view farming as an entrepreneurial opportunity, while those from lower-income families often prefer secure salaried jobs. Income level significantly shapes risk-taking behavior and investment capacity in agriculture.

Academic Performance

A majority of the students (61.90 %) had medium academic performance, followed by 19.84 per cent with low and 18.25 per cent with high academic performance, respectively. These findings are supported by Raju and Devrani (2023) [8]. who also reported that the majority of respondents had medium academic performance.

Thus, we can summarize that the socio-demographic profile suggests that the respondents predominantly belong to small landholding, medium-income, moderately educated nuclear families, with balanced rural–urban representation and increasing female participation. These characteristics are crucial for understanding variations in attitudes towards farming, career aspirations, and entrepreneurial orientation among undergraduate agriculture students.

Sources of Information, Media Exposure, and Co-Curricular Participation

Understanding the information ecology of undergraduate agriculture students is critical for interpreting their career orientations and professional preparedness. The present analysis categorizes

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sources of job-related information into three categories: (i) personal sources, (ii) institutional sources, and (iii) mass media. The results are given in Table-2 below.

Personal Sources of Information

The findings indicate that seniors (81.74%) were the most frequently cited personal sources of job-related information, followed by friends (74.60%), teachers (65.87%), and parents (59.52%). In contrast, juniors (7.14%) and neighbors (6.34%) were rarely consulted.

The predominance of seniors as a primary source suggests a strong peer network dependency in career decision-making. Senior students, who have recently been exposed to competitive examinations, placements, and postgraduate admissions, serve as credible and accessible reference groups. The high reliance on peer networks aligns with Social Learning Theory and reference group influence models, which emphasize observational learning in career formation.

Similar findings were reported by Kamboj et al. (2026) [16]. who observed that agriculture undergraduates rely heavily on peer and senior guidance for information related to competitive exams and agribusiness opportunities. Seema et al. (2025) [14]. also documented that peer influence significantly predicts career aspiration patterns among agriculture students.

Teachers were consulted by 65.87 per cent of respondents, indicating substantial academic mentorship. Faculty members often act as formal opinion leaders in academic ecosystems. Tripathi et al. (2025) [12]. reported that teacher guidance positively correlates with aspirations for higher education and research-oriented careers in agriculture.

Parents (59.52%) were also a significant source of information, reflecting the continued importance of family in occupational socialization in India. Ahmed and Nauriyal (2024) [20]. found that parental involvement significantly shapes agricultural graduates' professional ambition and risk perception.

Table 2. Sources of information about job and media exposure (N=126).

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Sources of information about the job (Personal)		
Teachers	83	65.87
Seniors	103	81.74
Juniors	09	7.14
Parent	75	59.52
Friends	94	74.60
Relatives	48	38.09
Neighbors	08	6.34
Sources of information about the job (Institutional)		
University placement cell	75	59.52
ICAR institutions	35	27.77
Sources of information about the job (Mass media)		
Internet	109	86.50
Magazine	22	17.46
News paper	63	50.00
Television	29	23.01
Radio	04	3.17
Books	23	18.25
Journals	17	13.49

(Multiple responses were allowed to choose from the given sources)

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The relatively low consultation of relatives (38.09%) and minimal influence of neighbors (6.34%) suggest a transition from traditional community-based information flows to more structured academic and peer networks.

Institutional Sources of Information

Among institutional sources, the University Placement Cell was consulted by 59.52 per cent of respondents, whereas only 27.77 per cent. Moderate utilization of placement cells indicates partial institutional engagement in facilitating career pathways. However, the comparatively lower reliance on ICAR institutions may reflect the limited direct interface between students and national-level research bodies.

A study emphasized that institutional career services significantly enhance employability awareness and structured career planning among agriculture students. Similarly, Arunachalam (2020) [21]. noted that proactive placement supports mechanisms in SAUs improve students' orientation towards agribusiness and private-sector employment. The findings suggest that while institutional mechanisms are present, informal and digital sources appear to dominate information-seeking behaviors.

Mass Media and Digital Exposure

Among mass media sources, the Internet emerged was the most dominant source (86.50%), followed by newspapers (50.00%), television (23.01%), books (18.25%), magazines (17.46%), journals (13.49%), and radio (3.17%). The overwhelming reliance on the Internet indicates digital transformation in information acquisition among the agricultural youth. This trend aligns with the broader digitalization of higher education and employment systems in India. Verma et al. (2017) reported that over 80 percent of agricultural students prefer online platforms for job notifications and competitive examination preparation. The moderate use of newspapers (50%) suggests continued relevance of traditional print media, particularly for government job announcements. However, minimal reliance on radio (3.17%) and low engagement with journals (13.49%) may indicate declining consumption of conventional information channels among youth.

Joshi and Kashyap (2020) [6]. reported that higher digital exposure positively correlates with entrepreneurial intention and awareness of agritech startups. Furthermore, Yadav and Sharma (2022) [8]. observed that students with greater online engagement exhibited broader career diversification beyond traditional farming roles. The comparatively low consultation of academic journals may reflect limited research orientation at the undergraduate level, suggesting the need to strengthen scientific information literacy.

Thus, we can summarize that the data collectively reveals a multi-layered information network dominated by peer influence and digital media exposure. Seniors and friends function as primary social capital nodes, whereas the Internet acts as the principal informational infrastructure.

Statistically, the distribution patterns (percentages exceeding 70% for seniors, friends, and Internet use) indicate a high clustering around peer-digital networks. This concentration suggests that career information dissemination strategies in State Agricultural Universities should prioritize structured peer-mentoring systems and digital career platforms.

The limited utilization of ICAR institutions (27.77%) and journals (13.49%) indicates a potential gap in research–student interface. Strengthening exposure to national research systems and professional bodies may positively influence research orientation and innovation-driven farming aspirations of farmers. Furthermore, from a theoretical standpoint, the findings align with the Information Seeking Behavior model, which posits that accessibility, credibility, and immediacy determine source preference. Digital platforms and peer networks fulfil these criteria more effectively than formal institutional channels.

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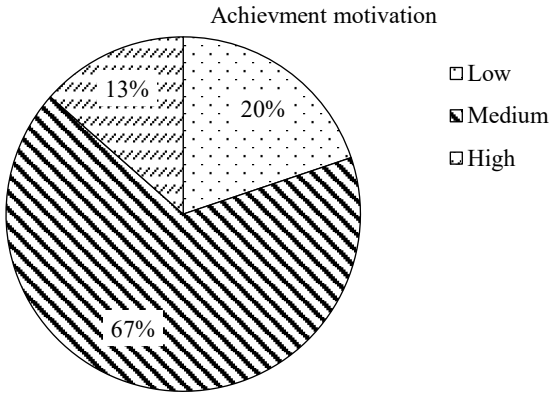


Figure 2. Distribution of students on the basis of achievement motivation

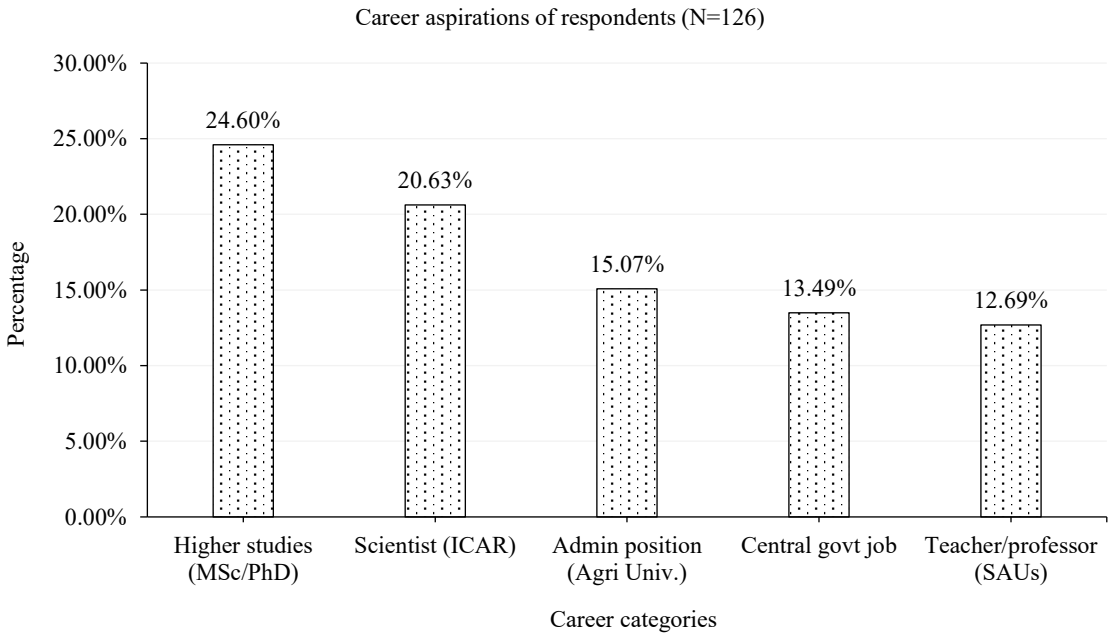


Figure 3. Distribution of students on the basis of career aspirations.

Achievement Motivation of Students

Achievement motivation is a crucial psychological construct that influences career aspirations, entrepreneurial intentions, and professional commitment among agricultural graduates. It reflects an individual's drive to excel, take calculated risks, and achieve success through personal effort. The results are presented in Figure-2 below.

The analysis revealed that a majority of respondents fell in the medium achievement motivation category, followed by those in the high category, while a relatively smaller proportion belonged to the low-achievement motivation group. This distribution suggests that most undergraduate agriculture students possess a moderate internal drive for accomplishment, but only a limited segment demonstrates a highly competitive orientation.

The predominance of medium-level motivation indicates a balanced motivational structure, where students may aspire to stable and structured career pathways (e.g., government services, postgraduate studies) rather than highly risk-intensive entrepreneurial ventures. This trend aligns with McClelland's Need Achievement Theory, which posits that individuals with moderate achievement motivation prefer situations with manageable risks and predictable outcomes.

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Surve (2005) [10]. noted that experiential learning programs such as RAWE (Rural Agricultural Work Experience) and experiential modules enhance achievement motivation by providing real-world performance challenges. Further, it was noted that experiential learning programs such as RAWE (Rural Agricultural Work Experience) and experiential modules enhance achievement motivation by providing real-world performance challenges.

Career Aspirations of Undergraduate Agriculture Students

Career aspiration represents an individual's long-term professional goals and reflects the interplay between socio-demographic background, educational exposure, economic conditions, and psychological orientation. In the context of agricultural education, understanding students' career aspirations is critical for aligning academic curricula, experiential learning modules and institutional support systems with emerging employment landscapes. The results obtained in respect of the five-top career aspirations of undergraduate students are given in Figure-3 below.

Career aspiration analysis (Figure 3) revealed that among the top-five career choices expressed by the Undergraduate students, pursuing higher studies (M.Sc. /Ph.D.) was the most preferred career option (24.60%), followed by becoming a scientist in the ICAR system (20.63%). Further, administrative positions in agricultural universities and Central Government services were ranked third, securing a job in the central government was ranked fourth, and teaching positions in State Agricultural Universities were ranked fifth. Furthermore, the dominance of higher education and research-oriented aspirations reflects the perceived prestige, stability, and professional growth associated with these careers, while comparatively fewer students express interest in direct engagement with farming or entrepreneurial ventures. Thus, we may conclude that the career aspiration pattern indicates a transition from a traditional occupation-centric orientation to a multi-dimensional professional outlook. Government employment remains the dominant aspiration, followed by higher education and emerging entrepreneurial interests, while exclusive farming preferences appear comparatively limited.

The study findings are supported by Seema et al. (2025) [14]. who reported that more than 60 percent of agriculture undergraduates preferred government jobs due to job security, social prestige, and assured income. Similarly, observed that students from small- and medium-landholding families demonstrated a higher inclination towards public sector employment as a risk-averse strategy. The preference for government services may also reflect perceived income instability in farming and a lack of confidence in entrepreneurial ecosystems. Further, Kamboj et al. (2026) and Raju and Devrani (2023) [16, 8]. also reported that the greater majority expressed the preference to be engaged in government service or in a post graduate study, and the least preference was expressed towards direct agricultural practice.

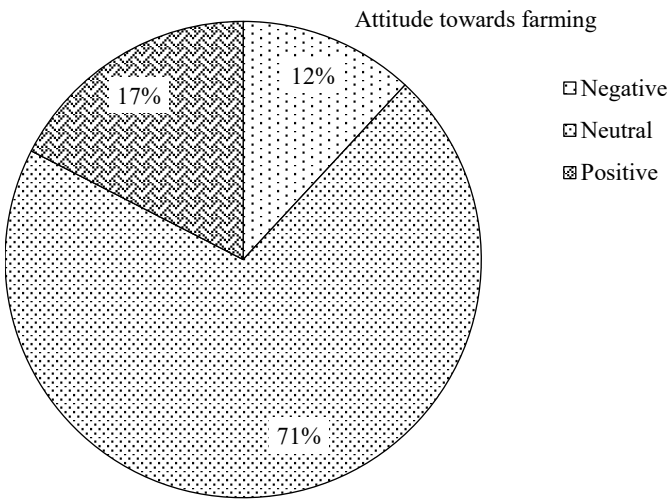


Figure 4. Distribution of students on the basis of attitude towards farming.

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Attitude of Undergraduate Agriculture Students Towards Farming

Attitude is said to be a strong predictor of human behavior or acceptance of new ideas or technology [22]. Attitude towards farming represents the degree of favorableness or favorableness that students hold regarding farming as a profession. This reflects their perception of farming in terms of economic viability, social prestige, sustainability, risk, and future potential. The categorization of respondents into low, medium, and high attitude groups provides an important psychological indicator of their professional inclination towards agriculture. The results are presented in Figure 4.

Attitude analysis revealed that a substantial majority of students (70.63%) exhibited a neutral attitude towards farming, while only 17.46% demonstrated a positive attitude and a small proportion (11.90%) held negative attitudes towards farming as a profession.

The predominance of neutral attitudes indicates ambivalence rather than outright rejection of farming, suggesting that while students do not strongly oppose farming, they are hesitant to adopt it as their primary career option. This may be attributed to perceived economic risks, social status concerns, and limited exposure to profitable farming models in the region.

Similar findings were reported by those who observed that agriculture undergraduates generally maintain a moderately positive perception of farming but prioritize secure employment options and reiterated that while students respect farming as a sector/opportunity, fewer consider it their first career preference.

Relationship between Student's Socio-Demographic Variables and Their Attitude

Understanding the determinants of career aspirations among undergraduate agriculture students require examining the association between socio-demographic, educational, economic, and psychological variables. Pearson's correlation analysis was employed to determine the direction and strength of the relationships between the selected independent variables and career aspirations. The results are presented in Table-3.

Correlation analysis revealed that academic performance, family educational status, parents' occupation, parents' annual income, mass media exposure, and achievement motivation were positively and significantly related to career aspirations. Among these, achievement motivation showed the strongest association, underscoring its critical role in shaping professional ambition.

Table 3. Relationship between selected socio-demographic characteristics and career aspirations of undergraduate agriculture students.

S.N.	Independent variables	Correlation coefficient (r)
1.	Gender	-0.163
2.	Caste	0.124
3.	Family Background	-0.031
4.	Place of Residence	-0.132
5.	Medium of Education	-0.098
6.	Family Type	-0.059
7.	Family Size	-0.048
8.	Family Educational Status	0.205*
9.	Parent's Occupation	0.190*
10.	Parent's Annual Income	0.249**
11.	Mass Media Exposure	0.247**
12.	Achievement motivation	0.332**
13.	Academic Performance	0.198*

**Significant at 0.01% level; ** Significant at 0.05% level; NS- non-significant*

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Conversely, gender, caste, family background, place of residence, medium of education, family type, and family size exhibited non-significant relationships with career aspirations. These findings suggest that aspirations are increasingly shaped by individual competence, exposure, and motivation rather than by traditional socio-demographic attributes.

These findings are supported by Rahim and Nataraju (2009) [23]. who reported that gender was not significantly associated with aspiration levels. Suryawanshi and Wattamwar (2003) [24]. observed that family background did not show any relationship with career aspirations. These findings are contrary to those of Rao (1993) [25]. who reported that the educational background of respondents had a significant relationship with the career preference of agricultural students. Furthermore, the findings are contrary to those of who reported that family type was significantly related to aspirations. A study by Surve (2005) [10]. found a non-significant relationship between family size and students' aspirations. Additionally, Shumba and Naong (2012) [26]. reported that family type was significantly related to career aspirations.

Furthermore, Deshmukh (2005) [27]. reported a significant relationship between family education status and students' aspirations, and the Agriculture Census (2015-16) [1]. found a significant relationship between parents' occupation and aspirations. Saritha (2000) [28]. noted a significant relationship between family annual income and aspirations. Furthermore, Lakshmi et al. (2009) [29]. identified a positive and significant relationship between mass media exposure and the career preferences of undergraduate agricultural students.

Thus, we may conclude the following: (i). Psychological factors (achievement motivation) are more influential than socio-demographic characteristics, (ii). Economic capital (parental income) enhances aspirational flexibility (iii). Information exposure (mass media) acts as a catalytic variable in shaping diversified career goals, and (iv). Academic competence strengthens ambition and professional self-efficacy. It is interesting to note that traditional structural variables such as caste, gender, and rural background appear to have limited direct influence on career aspiration formation among contemporary agriculture students.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides empirical evidence on the attitudes of undergraduate agriculture students towards farming and the factors shaping their career aspirations within the context of a premier State Agricultural University in India. Despite being trained in agricultural sciences and being exposed to experiential learning components, a substantial proportion of students exhibited a neutral attitude towards farming as a profession. This finding indicates neither an outright rejection nor a strong acceptance of farming, but rather an ambivalence rooted in perceived economic risks, social prestige concerns, and uncertainty regarding long-term livelihood security.

The students' career aspirations were predominantly oriented towards higher education, research, and salaried positions within the ICAR–SAU system and government services. Farming and self-employment options remained comparatively less preferred, suggesting a disconnect between the objectives of agricultural education and the professional aspirations of its primary stakeholders. The analysis further revealed that individual-centric factors such as academic performance, family educational status, parental income and occupation, mass media exposure, and achievement motivation significantly influenced career aspirations, whereas traditional socio-demographic variables like gender, caste, family background, and place of residence played a limited role in influencing career aspirations.

The findings underscore a gradual shift in aspiration formation among agricultural students, driven more by exposure, competence, and motivational attributes than by inherited socio-cultural characteristics. This transition reflects broader structural changes in rural economies and labor markets,

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where farming is increasingly perceived as a high-risk and low-status occupation unless supported by innovation, entrepreneurship, and institutional backing. Thus, this study highlights the urgent need to reorient agricultural education and policy frameworks to make farming an intellectually engaging, economically viable, and socially respected profession for educated youth.

Contribution to Knowledge

The present study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on agricultural education and rural human resource development by providing empirical evidence on undergraduate agriculture students' attitudes towards farming within the context of a premier State Agricultural University in India. Unlike studies that focus primarily on career aspirations, this study integrates attitudinal analysis with socio-demographic, economic, informational, and psychological variables, thereby offering a more holistic understanding of aspiration formation among agriculture graduates. The study identifies the predominance of neutral attitudes towards farming and establishes the significant influence of academic performance, family educational status, parental socio-economic attributes, mass media exposure, and achievement motivation on career aspirations, while demonstrating the diminishing role of traditional socio-demographic factors. By empirically substantiating the attitudinal disconnect between agricultural training and professional preference for farming, this study provides a critical evidence base for reorienting agricultural education, experiential learning, and policy interventions aimed at attracting educated youth to farming and allied agri-entrepreneurial ventures.

Implications for Career Aspirations of Undergraduate Agriculture Students

The findings indicate that career aspirations among undergraduate agriculture students are shaped more by psychological, academic, economic, and informational factors than by basic socio-demographic characteristics of the students. Achievement motivation emerged as the strongest determinant, suggesting that students with higher internal drive, goal orientation, and competitive spirit are more likely to exhibit ambitious and diverse career aspirations. Similarly, academic performance, parental education, parental occupation, and family income positively influenced professional ambition, indicating that educational capital and economic security provide confidence and flexibility in career decision-making. The significant role of mass media exposure further highlights the importance of digital access and information networks in expanding students' awareness of employment, higher education, and entrepreneurial opportunities. Together, these findings suggest that strengthening motivational orientation, enhancing academic excellence, and improving structured career guidance systems can substantially elevate the professional aspirations of undergraduate students in agriculture.

Implications for Overall Agricultural Education

The results underscore the need for agricultural education systems to move beyond traditional demographic considerations and focus on developmental and capability-enhancing interventions. Since psychological drive and exposure to information significantly shapes career ambition, curricula must integrate achievement motivation training, leadership development, entrepreneurship education, and experiential learning components that build confidence and self-efficacy in students. Universities should strengthen digital career platforms, incubation centers, and industry linkages to convert aspirations into actionable opportunities. Additionally, structured mentoring, academic support systems, and financial facilitation mechanisms can help reduce socioeconomic disparities in access to opportunities. By fostering a learning environment that promotes innovation, competitiveness, and informed decision-making, agricultural education can cultivate a generation of graduates who are not only technically competent but also aspirational, adaptable, and professionally resilient in a rapidly transforming agri-food sector.

Policy Recommendations

This study highlights the importance of understanding undergraduate agriculture students' attitudes towards farming in the context of agricultural human resource development. The findings suggest that agricultural universities must strengthen experiential learning components, such as Practical Crop

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Production, Rural Agricultural Work Experience, and entrepreneurship-oriented training, to enhance students' confidence and interest in farming. Career guidance, mentoring by successful agripreneurs, and exposure to innovative farming models can play crucial roles in shaping positive attitudes.

Policymakers need to strategically reposition farming within agricultural education as a modern, knowledge-intensive, and entrepreneurial profession rather than merely a subsistence occupation. Curriculum redesign and pedagogical innovation should emphasize technology adoption, agribusiness management and value chain integration. Experiential learning components, such as RAWE and other field-based programs, must be strengthened by incorporating exposure to successful farm entrepreneurs, start-ups, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and market actors.

Structured career counselling and mentorship systems within agricultural universities are essential for guiding students toward diverse and progressive farming models. Additionally, targeted policy incentives, including start-up grants, subsidized credit, land leasing facilitation, and assured market linkages, can encourage agricultural graduates to consider farming as a viable professional choice. Leveraging digital media and showcasing the success stories of educated farmers can further reshape youth perceptions. Finally, agricultural education reforms should be aligned with national initiatives, such as agri-startup promotion, self-reliance missions, and skill development programs, to ensure coherent and supportive career pathways for graduates.

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