



Factors Affecting Perception of Farm Families Towards Farming as an Occupation

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ABSTRACT

Background: Perception is the way something is regarded/understood. It is mainly created by two factors; one is physiological and another is psychological characteristics of the human being. Thus, perception is not only physiological process that is what one sees with the eyes it is a much more complex process involving psychological process too, by which any person selectively assimilates and gives meaning to the stimuli in the environment. It is subjective process, that is why different people perceive the same stimuli in different manner. The current study aimed to study the factors affecting perception of farm families towards farming as an occupation.

Methods: The present study was conducted to ascertain the factors affecting perception of farm families towards farming as an occupation. The results are based on the perspective of different researchers.

Result: There were six major factors identified namely economic, socio-cultural, physical, personal, psychological and push and pull factors affecting perception. The economic factors comprised of variables like income, cost of agricultural production and vicious cycle of debt and loan in farming and socio-cultural factors had variables like professional and social status of farming along with family influence affecting children occupational choice. Personal factors consisted of personal interest and satisfaction of farmers derived from farming while physical factors included hard work and lack of resources along with hazardous working conditions in farming. Stress prevalent among farmers and satisfaction of farmers either with farming income or its status and risk associated with farming as a profession were studied under psychological factors. Push and pull factors comprised the reasons of farm families attracting towards urban areas for achieving better employment avenues and higher social status and prestige associated with other occupations.

Key words: Economic, Farm families, Perception, Psychological, Push and Pull, Socio-cultural.

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture plays a significant role in the Indian economy. Over 70.00 per cent of the rural families bank on agriculture. It plays a significant role in Indian economy as it contributes about 17 per cent to the total GDP (Shagun 2021) and provides livelihood to over 60 per cent of the population (Kant 2019). It can rightly be termed as the backbone of Indian economy. The fact is that it has always been a critical sector for Indian economy. Future of Indian agriculture depends largely on the perception of farm families towards farming as an occupation. It is observable that constraints in farming are on the increase and these constraints could lead farm families to opt for other occupation for living. India might very well be at the 'tipping point' of the growth in its agricultural population. The rapid growth and diversification of developmental activities has resulted in much needed expansion of employment opportunities, but at the same time, has triggered rural to urban migration. This trend has inadvertently resulted in shift of farm labour to non farm sectors.

Farmers prefer to be employed in cities because of better education, health and employment avenues. An individual earning is an important predictor of life satisfaction and happiness. Many studies on job satisfaction conclude that job security, salary and type and hours of task are significant determinants of satisfaction. Furthermore, many factors could affect the farmers' encouragement, especially

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the problems he/she is subject to rather than disliking for farming itself. This could include both individual constraints such as credit, inputs, access to land, extension services and location factors, such as climate, ecology and regional prosperousness. Low earnings, low profitability, high riskiness, less access to credit, low social status and inability to pay the loan over time are some of the factors contributing to lack of interest among farmers in continuing with farming. The farmers who have access to loans either from the government or private sector are more likely to like farming than those with no loans. However, farmers with debts outstanding for over a year are less likely to like farming.

Availability of family labour can be beneficial in farming but at the same time lack of its utilisation can be counter productive. Apart from personal and family situation, geographic location also matters. Urbanisation, climatic conditions (rainfall), commercialisation and regional prosperity make considerable impact. Farmers of high rainfall states are more satisfied with farming.

Perception is subjective process. Perception is mainly created by two factors; one is physiological and another is psychological characteristics of the human being that is why different people perceive the same stimuli in different manner based on what particular characteristics of the situation they choose to selectively assimilate or absorb the stimuli, organisation of the information and the way in which they interpret stimuli to understand the situation (Singh 1992).

So, in the present study knowing factors affecting perception of farm families towards farming as an occupation is very crucial, it is the perception which will determine whether farming will be continued or discontinued as an occupation for farming families for the present generation as well as their future generation. Perception towards farming are formed by what farm families members perceive positively or negatively about the farming. Thus perception of farm families can or cannot be based upon their personal experience in farming as an occupation, but also by their information regarding farming, knowledge and psychological reaction towards the farming. Perception simply refers to “a person’s evaluation of any psychological object”. These perception judgments are made mainly by items of knowledge, which are dependent on three general categories of information, information about past behaviour, own cognitive information and psychological information.

Keeping these points in mind, this paper is an attempt to explore various factors affecting perception of farm families towards farming as an occupation by reviewing the literature available.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A systematic review of english language literature published in between 2003-2022 was carried out. The database used in initial search strategy included Google scholar and research gate. Search strategy used terms like perception of farm families towards farming as an occupation and factors affecting occupational choice and the way farming is perceived. After proper screening of articles with clear

objectives, sound study designs, satisfying data collection methods and well described data analysis procedure were downloaded and final set of research papers, review papers and articles were reviewed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Factors affecting perception of farm families towards farming as an occupation

Different researchers have given different perspectives in this regard the factors affecting the perception are discussed as follows:

Economic factors

The economic gain or returns are the most important aspect of any occupation, Farming is an occupation which has very fluctuating income sometimes it is too high and sometimes it is too low which entirely depends on many external factors like climatic conditions, market strategy, attack of pest and diseases and many internal factors like quality of inputs, farmers’ effort etc. The economic factors as shown in Fig 1 are as follows:

Income

Singh (2013) while discussing the income and livelihood of farmers in Uttar Pradesh revealed that agriculture was not able to provide sustenance to a large number of farmers in the state. Adejboh *et al.* (2016) also found negative perception of students towards farming as a profession due to poor income from farming. The findings were in agreement with the findings of Sood (2014), Sharma and Bhaduri (2013), Anonymus (2016), CSDS Report (2014), Bera (2018) and Singh *et al.* (2015), these researches concluded that not only the farm income was very low but the year on year fluctuation was also very high, which were the main reasons for farmers wanted to quit farming. Another studies by Neelam (2017) and Sergio (2014) revealed that the average annual income of small and marginal farmers of Uttar Pradesh was less as compared to unskilled labour which was forcing rural youth for moving them away from agriculture associated with poor income and poor living standard.

On the other side, Bello *et al.* (2015) found that agriculture occupation was economically profitable among farm families as agricultural activities were based completely on family labour which used their children as help that provides non-paid working force. Sood (2014), Widiyanti *et al.* (2018)

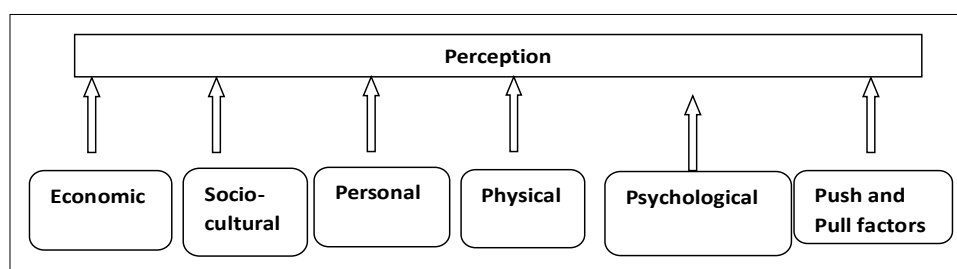


Fig 1: Factors affecting perception.

and Ranganathan (2015) also reported that income from farming in farming households was maximum followed by income from livestock and income from non-farm business and least from wages and salary. Farmers liked farming as it gives them a good income.

High cost of agricultural production

A study was conducted in Sudan by Bello *et al.* (2015) on rural youth to study the attitude of rural youth towards farming as an occupation and also to identify the reasons for leaving agriculture as an occupation and the results showed that the high cost of agricultural production was considered as a main reason to leave agricultural work (*i.e.* high cost of inputs) followed by low crop productivity. In a study of Sawant *et al.* (2014) majority of the students perceived agriculture as a stepping stone to other profession but found its job requiring enormous capital. High input cost was one of the constraints in milk production (Pandian and Prabhu 2010).

Vicious cycle of debt and loan

Reddy, (2018) concluded that a vicious cycle of debt and loan waivers was worsening the plight of the marginal and tenant farmer. A study was conducted on the economic distress and farmer suicides in rural Punjab by (Gill 2013) which revealed that there were many contributing factors to suicide among farmers of Punjab such as crop failure, unemployment and indebtedness which pushed them to end their life. Thus, high cost of agricultural production is one of the reasons for leaving agriculture as an occupation.

Socio-cultural factors

Socio-cultural factors are common tradition, habits, customs, lifestyles and values that characterize a society. The socio-cultural factors as given in Fig 1 are discussed as follows.

Professional status

Bhuva *et al.* (2017) concluded that 52.38 per cent farmers felt farming stands at lowest ladder as profession in the society but at the same time revealed that 53.33 per cent of the farmers were strongly agreed that farming provides freedom to manage work time by self. Few also reported (15.0%) sense of pride in being a farmer (Sood 2014). Farming had low occupational status. Farming stands at lowest ladder as the profession in the society. Girls did not want to marry a farmer, marrying a farmer means physically hard life (Kaundinya 2017). Getnet and Asrat (2012) indicated that the poor image of persons involved in agriculture needs to be changed and the young people are the ideal catalysts for such change given their greater propensity and willingness to adopt new ideas, concepts and technology which are all critical to changing the way agriculture is practiced and perceived. Perceptions of students on career prospects in agriculture were poor societal value of farmers (Adejoh *et al.*, 2016).

Family pressure

Sood (2014), Oladele *et al.*, 2016) and CSDS Report (2014) indicated that nearly 20.0 per cent of those who disliked

farming said they were doing it only because of family pressure whereas Anuja and Lavanya (2017) revealed that 85% of the respondents were interested in farming but they were not fully involved in agriculture because they were restricted by the family members and society.

Peer and parents influence

A case study examined by Mohammed and Noorani (2015) on rural youth perceptions towards farming and their decision of whether or not to work as a farmer, while many youth held negative perceptions of farming, which were reinforced through peer and parental influence. Sharma (2007) in her study across 13 states reported that among youth, farming was still a mark of their identity as their forefather's profession. Interestingly only 34.0 per cent of the youth's parents responded that they would like their children to do farming not only because there was a lack of opportunities elsewhere but because that was what they had done for generations.

Negative thinking

Farming was considered as default occupation among the rural dwellers with little or no education and even no access to higher education, they decide to take possession of family farm to continue farming activities (Wilson 2008).

Personal factors

Personal factors are those factors which are very personal to an individual engaged in particular profession like his interest, deriving joy and satisfaction from his profession, his personal reasons to be engaged in particular occupation *etc.* The personal factors have been presented as follows.

Lack of other options of occupations

Narain *et al.* (2015) found that about 92.0 per cent farmers were practicing farming due to lack of any other options.

Personal interest and satisfaction

Agrawal and Agrawal (2017) and Sood (2014) reported that the interest of farmers was important in farming and their occupational satisfaction affected their incentive to invest in farming whereas report of National Centre of Universities and Business (2015), Akubari (2016), Adejoh *et al.* (2016) and Jayne (2010) found that the young people were usually not interested in this field of work, in large part due to their perception of farming being antiquated and unprofitable and youth regard farming as a 'dirty activity' due to lack of proper facilities and agriculture was regarded as an employer of the last resort to younger generation. Similarly Leavy and Smith (2010) and Narain *et al.* (2015) also found farming as unattractive sector for youth. Youth with high level of education were more likely to have negative attitude towards farming which was attributed to the more chances of securing better jobs in the formal sector as compared to those who had low level of education (Bello *et al.*, 2015).

Physical factors

In the agriculture sector there are certain issues which cannot be eliminated completely, loss in production due to

adverse weather conditions is one of those issues. Weather changes are not completely predictable, especially in India which has such a vast variety of weather conditions in different regions, therefore the income from the agricultural sector is fluctuating, it entirely depends on the effect of weather conditions. Attack of pest and diseases on crops are also uncertain, market risks is always there in farming, a farmer is not sure about his income till his produce is sell out in market because prices of crops changes overnight as per Government regulations, the physical factors are discussed below:

Physically hard

Life as a farmer was ultimately tied to life in a village which most of the respondents found hard and demanding. Johanson (2009) indicated that there was also a belief that the farm problem exist as a result of the employment of more labour in agriculture that can earn as large a real income as the same labour could earn elsewhere in the economy. Bhuva *et al.* (2017) conducted study on 210 farmers in south Gujarat region to find out the attitude of farmers towards farming as an occupation and results indicated that large majority (70.00%) of farmers were either strongly agreed that farming always leads to hard life. Tadele and Gella (2014) and Sawant *et al.* (2014) in their analysis of challenges of becoming young farmer indicated that youth had negative attitude towards agriculture also found that it was considered tiresome and dirty occupation and large majority of youth (80%) were more attracted for working in non agricultural sector. Majority of the youth were engaged in major activities such as variety selection, sowing and marketing except transplanting in case of paddy where they were partially involved (Rani and Rampal 2016).

Hazardous working conditions

The farm environment presents many hazardous working conditions, dangers and worries including physical, biological, chemical, mechanical hazards and the risk of machinery break-down were local farm factors (Anonymous 2014).

Labour shortage

Murugesan and Rajarajan (2016) indicated that the contribution of Indian agriculture in national economy is decreasing every year and labour shortage was the major problem which the Indian farmers were facing due to large scale shift in the labour force from agriculture sector towards the construction and textile industries and many other unorganised sectors of work. Shireesha (2016) revealed that the lack of appropriate market, unforeseen environmental conditions, scarcity of resources and the youth might be also attracted towards some less laborious and time bound job which might have contributed for unfavourable attitude formation towards farming among youth.

Lack of resources

The most important constraints encountered by the rural youth in farming as an occupation were inadequate

availability of labour, high cost of cultivation, pests and diseases problem, low returns, inadequate power supply, lack of remunerative prices, inadequate irrigation facilities (Singh 2016). Report of NSSO (2016) also reported that inadequate and untimely supply of fertilizers, inadequate training programmes, inadequate and untimely supply of seed, lack of proper guidance, destruction of crops by wild boars and inadequate technical know how of chemicals are other constraints faced by rural youth. Farmers face a series of unprecedented, intersecting challenges like increasing competition for land and water, rising fuel and fertilizer prices, increased influence of and changing markets and climate change (IFAD 2013). In a study on perception regarding agricultural credit provided by the district cooperative banks in Chhattisgarh, it was found that loan is not in time, the loan procedures is complicated and bankers behavior is discourteous (Gupta and Agrawal 2018). Negative perceptions of smallholder farmers towards organic farming in South Africa indicated that organic farming certification is difficult to obtain (Styen *et al.*, 2021). Dairy farmers were unsatisfied with benefits specifies in the dairy venture capital fund scheme (Auhad *et al.*, 2015).

Marketing problems

Transportation cost, inadequate market infrastructure, lack of market information, lack of processing units, storage facility, price fluctuation were the major problems in agricultural marketing (Reddy *et al.*, 2017). Rajarajan and Murugesan (2016) found that one of the worst problems faced by the farmers was that of marketing their products for which majority of the farmers fail to get remunerative prices and compel to dispose their products at a very low price and thereby the middlemen availed the opportunity of deriving undue benefits.

Psychological factors

The factors which gives stress among farmers and mainly related to satisfaction of farmers either with farming income or its status and risk associated with farming as a profession. The discussions made under psychological factors indicated in Fig 1 are as follows:

Farmers experienced a high demand work environment coupled with low control and low social support developed stress and strain, mental health problems and depression. Global factors like climate change, commodity markets, high interest rates and the decline in rural infrastructure were often out of the control of the farmers. Unpredictable events occurring at regional and community levels include weather and extreme and unpredictable climatic patterns such as floods or prolonged drought. Seasonal conditions, weather dependency and threats to stock and crops due to disasters, disease or pests were identified as community factors. (Anonymous 2014b).

Sood (2014) and report of NSSO (2005) considered farming as stressful and risky occupation and hence farmers did not like doing it. They perceived that becoming an

entrepreneur in the agricultural sector was highly risky and that agribusiness was seasonal in nature meaning there could be periods of waiting without income, the results are in agreement with findings of Ramesh and Madhvi (2009) indicated that majority (60.0%) of them have reported high level of financial stress. Nearly one third of them have reported high stress due to weather, nearly four percent have stated that they face high stress in social interaction. Economic stress was the main reasons why the farmers wanted to give up farming. Getnet and Asrat (2012), Ometesho *et al.* (2017) and Thompson *et al.* (2017) identified farmers perception on risk in farming on five general risk areas (production, marketing, financial, human and legal risks). Findings indicated that on an average farmers were more concerned with traditional farm business risks (production, financial and marketing risks) relative to human and legal risks when managing their farm businesses. Farmers complained of repeated losses. Large percentage (70.0%) of respondents reported loss because of unseasonal rains, drought, floods and pest attack (CSDS Report 2014).

Financial worries included irregular and uncertain income and financial debt, the effects of new government regulations (Anonymous 2014b). Farming has been listed as one of the ten most stressful occupations in the world (Anonymous 2015). In support to his findings Sainath (2014) stated that farmers' suicides were rising with a declining farming population. Farmers were found to have an increased prevalence of psychological morbidity, depression and levels of anxiety than non-farmers (Anonymus 2016).

A study was conducted on farmers suicides at national level by Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare, Government of India (2017) to determine the causes of farmers suicides identified that indebtedness (20.6%), farming related issues were the prominent causes among Indian farmers. Farming occupation encompasses all types of stresses to farmers; the farmers mostly experience unpredictable weather and financial problems as major stress factors (Khuresi and Somnundaram 2018).

Push and pull factors

Youth's attitude towards farming is mostly negative (World Bank 2007). The pull factors of the urban area and the push factors of the rural areas have contributed towards the present attitudes.

Noorani (2012) explored youth migration to urban areas found that the success stories of migrations paint a picture of urban superiority in the minds of the youth. As a result, as risky as migration to urban centres might be, many youth decide to migrate so, that they can fulfil their aspirations just like many before them. Parental and peer influences also create negative perceptions of farming by hailing the urban life as more praise worthy than the rural life which may foster a new sense of urban identity among youth. Youth who move by these influences may end up migrating in search of jobs that they perceive to carry a higher status and prestige than farming.

Challenges in changing negative perception of farm families

Lack of awareness

Farmers are unaware about many of the supporting schemes of the Government which are running for their help like many agricultural insurance schemes, subsidies given on inputs and this may be due to financial illiteracy.

High inputs cost

India is facing challenge that the inputs of farming like seeds, planting materials, fertilizers, pesticides and others are too expensive and many small and marginal farmers cannot afford them easily.

Hard labour

Farming is very laborious work and farmers have to work in harsh weather either it is too hot or too cold they have to do work continuously 24×7.

Attitude of the farmers

The biggest challenge is the negative or neutral attitude of farmers towards farming and things associated with it.

CONCLUSION

Perception of farm families towards farming as an occupation plays a very important role in determining the future of farming as a profession and retaining youth in agriculture. So after knowing various factors affecting perception towards farming as a profession can be very beneficial for changing the negative perception of farm families by making changes in the negative aspects associated with the factors and also encouraging positive perception among farm families by giving more attention on the positive aspects of various factors.

Conflict of interest: None.

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