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Socio-economic scenario of farm youths engaged in Agripreneurship in rural Odisha

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Abstract

This paper investigates the socio-economic distribution of farm youths engaged in agripreneurship. The study was conducted in five agro-climatic zones of Odisha state. The purposive random sampling method was followed for the selection of respondents which includes 250 farm youths from five districts. The data was collected with the help of self-structured interview schedule and focused group discussions. The findings of this study revealed that around three quarter of farm youths are of more than 30 years of age with majority of them attaining higher secondary education and more than three fourth fourths of them have small operational holdings. Most of the respondents attain medium level of annual income and training exposure with greater access to social media. This study provides a reasonable coverage of key socio-economic dimensions that will help the policy maker while formulating any strategies for the farm youth who are extremely important target group for agricultural development perspective in rural areas, as their dissociation from farming will deprive the sector from next generation successor.

Keywords: Farm youth, agripreneurship, socio-economic

Introduction

Youth are the most potent force in the population of country. Youth being enthusiastic, vibrant, innovative and dynamic in nature is the most important section of the population. They show strong passion, motivation and will power which also make them the most valuable human resource for fostering economic, cultural and political development of a nation. A country's ability and potential for growth is determined by the size of its youth population. Youth is often understood to be the period of transition from childhood to adulthood, encompassing processes of sexual maturation and growing social and economic autonomy from parents and careers (Bennell, 2007) [3]. Conventionally, period from adolescence to middle age is termed as youth.

There is continuous decline in number of youth engaged in or who aspire to pursue agriculturally-related professions or careers. The demographic stability of farm sector is an important issue for sustainable engagement of human resources. In developed countries, such as the United States in 2012, the average age of a farmer was about 58.3 years, compared to 50.1 years for an average farmer in a developing country like India (Down To Earth, 2016). This is worrying because the next generation of the current farmers is quitting the profession. It means, In India we are approaching a situation where one of the biggest consumers of food will be left with few farmers. India is losing more than 2,000 farmers every single day and that since 1991, the overall number of farmers has dropped by 15 million (Sainath, 2013) [9]. This has several implications for the future of Indian agriculture and India's food security. According to Leavy and Hossain (2014) youth withdrawal from farming is emerging as a reasonably widespread norm. Young farmers play an important role in ensuring food security and if they are encouraged to involve in farming, challenges they face are need to be addressed. Over the past few years, rural youth have been shying away from agriculture and globally there is increasing interest in finding ways for engaging youth in agriculture (Paisley, 2013) [8]. Conventionally, period from adolescence to middle age is termed as youth. Age constitute the determining characteristics in the definition of Youth by various agencies. UN adopted the age group 15 to 24 for defining youth. The National Youth Policy initially (in 2003) defined the youth as in the age group 13-35. However, National Youth Policy, 2014 modified it and defined 'youth' as persons in the age-group of 15-29 years. In 2017, Government of India officially defines youth as persons between the ages of 15 and 35 years. (Youth in India, 2017) There has been an increased interest to focus upon the role of youth in agriculture and the agri-food sector more broadly.

Agripreneurship development focuses on creating a new breed of farmers with core business skills in undertaking farm-based businesses for maximising their income. who undertakes a

variety of activities in agriculture sector in order to be an entrepreneur. Agri-preneurship turn the farm operations into an agribusiness. The term Agri-preneurship is defined as generally sustainable, community oriented and directly marketed agriculture. A shift from agriculture to agribusiness is an essential pathway to revitalize Indian agriculture. Agripreneurship plays various roles in the growth and development of national economy through entrepreneurship development which increases the income level and employment opportunities in rural as well as urban areas (Bairwa *et al.*, 2014) [2]. Policy makers as well as farmers organizations see entrepreneurship as the panacea that will enable farming sectors to cope with the challenges. Encouraging agri-preneurship in rural area among the farm youths would be instrumental in changing the face of the country as majority of the population still lives in rural India.

Materials and Methods

Study area

The state of Odisha consisted of ten agro-climatic zones based on soil, weather and other relevant characteristics. To have a proper representative sample from different zones of Odisha, 5 districts were purposively selected from 5 different agro-climatic zones. These are Kalahandi (Western undulating zone), Mayurbhanj (North central plateau), Ganjam (North eastern ghat), Puri (East and South eastern coastal plains), Balasore (North-eastern coastal plains). Out of these selected districts, two blocks were randomly selected. Thus the present study was confined to 10 blocks in rural Odisha.

Selection of respondents

From each 10 blocks, sample of 25 youths were purposively selected for our study those who are in age group of 15 – 35 years who are involved in agripreneurship and belonging to farming family. They were selected in consultation with extension personnel of area. Agripreneurship activities includes horticulture, fishery, poultry, mushroom cultivation, Integrated farming system and all those allied activities which are carried out for secondary source of income. Hence, a total of 250 respondents were selected for the purpose of accomplishing the objective of our study. Data were collected by personal interview method at the farmers household or grazing ground or at their agribusiness units with the help of pre-tested structured interview schedule and focus group discussions.

Results and Discussion

Socioeconomic status is a composite measure of an individual's economic and sociological standing. It is a complex assessment measured in a variety of ways that account for a person's work experience and economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, and occupation. In the present study, it has been measured based on five resources namely, demographic, physical, economic, natural and social.

Socio - Economic Profile

The data pertaining to age of respondents has been analyzed and categorized into three categories (Table1). The study revealed that majority (73.60%) of farm youth in the five agroclimatic zones of Odisha fit into the upper young age category followed by 23.60 per cent belonging to middle young age group and only 2.80 per cent of farm youth were in lower young age. The plausible reason for this trend might be, higher age group of farm youth are more decisive about

considering agripreneurship as profession while the youth belonging to lower age group still may be seeking higher education as profession. Despite a number of affirmative schemes launched by government for upliftment of women, still India is a male dominated society where women are often seen as inferior to men. The present study revealed the same situation even in case of agripreneurial youth. As depicted in Table 2, the majority of sampled farm youth in the five agroclimatic zones of Odisha (74.80%) are males while only one-fourth (25.20%) are females. The reason for prevalence of low female farm youths might be due to lack of support, lack of land ownership rights and most female members take of farming after the marriage. By taking a cursory look at table 3, it revealed that majority of farm youths (63.60%) have nuclear family whereas 36.40 per cent of farm youths have joint family. The major reason for farm youth having nuclear family is probably due to their ability to take independent decisions and less number of family interfering in decision making pertaining to agribusiness and the concept of joint family approach is slowly eroding in villages.

The data presented in table 4 presented the educational levels of farm youths varied from illiterate to graduation level and above. It indicated that just more than one-third (36.80%) were educated up to higher secondary level, 28.80 per cent attained graduation degree or above, 27.60 per cent were of secondary level and only 6.80 per cent of young farmers were of primary education level. The importance of formal and higher education in today's world is realised by parents of farm youth even they are from farming background. In case of operational landholdings, The farm youths were classified into five groups according to their operational holdings as shown in table 5. Data clearly proclaimed that majority (79.20%) of the sampled young farmers had small landholdings i.e 2.5-5 acres followed by 13.6 per cent had semi-medium i.e. 5.1 – 10 acres of landholding. Only 6 per cent had marginal (less than 2.5 acres) and 1.2 per cent had medium (10.1-25 acres) operational holdings. This landholding distribution is matching with the general trends in the state and possible region of it might be that agriculture was found to be main occupation of the family who have inherited it from ancestors and mostly agriculture was practised in subsistence manner.

An outlook from the table 6 inferred that, around half (44.80%) of the youth in farming had medium level of annual income from primary occupation, followed by high level of annual income (29.60%) and low level of annual income (25.60%). The probable reason for the observed trend is the youths are mostly oriented towards income oriented agriculture but they still lack that additional source of income from just primary occupation. As a result secondary source of income from agripreneurship is very essential. Around half (46%) of the youth in farming had medium level of annual income from agripreneurship, followed by low level of annual income (28.80%) and high level of annual income (25.20%). This is represented in table 7. The reason might be the present generation of farm youth have profit maximization in mind and are quite risk taking but they lack experience and face some serious constraints which hamper their progress in attaining desired level of profitability.

Mass media exposure

Mass media exposure related to agricultural practices plays a dominant role in dissemination of technology. Table 8 revealed that mass media exposure of farmers are categorised into low, medium and high by taking response from farmers

in 3 point continuum viz. always, sometimes and never. Maximum number of farm youth has low exposure to traditional mass media followed by farmers having high and medium exposure to various sources of information. Most of the farm youth having low level of traditional mass media exposure explains that farm youth now a days are not much into newspaper, television and SMS for farm related information. But they just act as source of entertainment during leisure time. Meanwhile table 8 also projected that, nearly half (48.00%) of the youth in farming have high exposure to social media, followed by 27.20 per cent had low and 24.8 per cent had medium exposure to social media. In the present digital world, social media is taking lead to reach the farming community especially the farm youth who can

easily connect themselves with mobile applications leaving the television and newspapers to backseat. Farm youth with high access, time and cosmo politeness gets attracted towards different social media and utilising them in befitting way.

Exposure to Training

Table 8 indicated that, half (49.6%) of the farm youths had medium exposure and 38.80 per cent had low exposure to training. Only 11.6 per cent of them had high exposure to training. Most of the farm youths irrespective of their background have some exposure to training on agriculture to gain knowledge and attain certain skill levels but when it comes to the training related to specific agripreneural skills they lack proper training exposure.

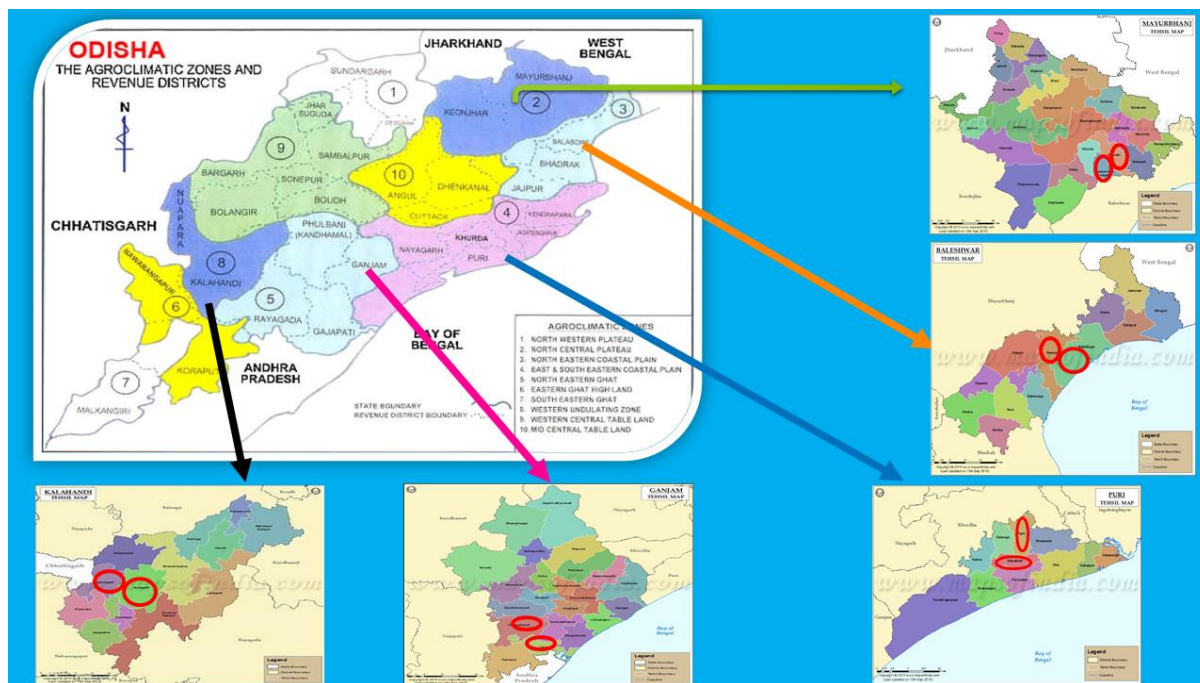


Fig 1: The figure showing the 10 agroclimatic zones of Odisha and arrows representing the 5 agroclimatic zones taken for our study viz. Mayurbhanj (North central plateau), Balasore (North-eastern coastal plains), Puri (East and South eastern coastal plains), Ganjam (North eastern ghat) and Kalahandi (Western undulating zone) from top to bottom. Encircled portion represents the selected blocks.

Table 1: Distribution of farm youth according to their age (n=250)

Sl. No.	Category	Kalahandi (n=50)		Ganjam (n=50)		Puri (n=50)		Mayurbhanj (n=50)		Balasore (n=50)		Total (n=250)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Lower young age (18 - 25 years)	0	0	0	0	3	6	0	0	4	8	7	2.80
2.	Middle young age (26-30 years)	11	22	11	22	11	22	11	22	16	32	59	23.60
3.	Upper young age (31-35 years)	39	78	39	78	36	72	39	78	30	60	184	73.60
4.	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	250	100

Table 2: Distribution of farm youth according to their gender (n=250)

Sl. No.	Category	Kalahandi (n=50)		Ganjam (n=50)		Puri (n=50)		Mayurbhanj (n=50)		Balasore (n=50)		Total (n=250)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Male	30	60	40	80	31	62	44	88	42	84	187	74.80
2.	Female	20	40	10	20	19	38	6	12	8	16	63	25.20
3.	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	250	100

Table 3: Distribution of farm youth according to their family type (n=250)

Sl. No.	Category	Kalahandi (n=50)		Ganjam (n=50)		Puri (n=50)		Mayurbhanj (n=50)		Balasore (n=50)		Total (n=250)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Nuclear	11	22	12	24	17	34	26	52	25	50	91	36.40
2.	Joint	39	78	38	76	33	66	24	48	25	50	159	63.60
3.	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	250	100

Table 4: Distribution of farm youth according to their education level. (n=250)

Sl. No.	Category	Kalahandi (n=50)		Ganjam (n=50)		Puri (n=50)		Mayurbhanj (n=50)		Balasore (n=50)		Total (n=250)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Illiterate	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2.	Primary	4	8	4	8	5	10	1	2	3	6	17	6.80
3.	Secondary	13	26	14	28	14	28	8	16	20	40	69	27.60
4.	Higher Secondary	21	42	20	40	19	38	14	28	18	36	92	36.80
5.	Graduate and Above	12	24	12	24	12	24	27	54	9	18	72	28.80
3	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	250	100

Table 5: Distribution of farm youth according to their operational landholding (n=250)

Sl. No.	Category	Kalahandi (n=50)		Ganjam (n=50)		Puri (n=50)		Mayurbhanj (n=50)		Balasore (n=50)		Total (n=250)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Marginal	4	8	1	2	4	8	0	0	6	12	15	6
2.	Small	42	84	44	88	40	80	48	96	24	48	198	79.2
3.	Semi-medium	4	8	5	10	6	12	2	4	17	34	34	13.6
4.	Medium	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	6	3	1.2
5.	Large	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	250	100

Table 6: Distribution of farm youth according to their annual income from primary occupation (n=250)

Sl. No.	Category	Kalahandi (n=50)		Ganjam (n=50)		Puri (n=50)		Mayurbhanj (n=50)		Balasore (n=50)		Total (n=250)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Low	13	26	11	22	18	36	7	14	15	30	64	25.60
2.	Medium	19	38	16	32	18	36	29	58	30	60	112	44.80
3.	High	18	36	23	46	14	28	14	28	5	10	74	29.60
4.	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	250	100

Table 7: Distribution of farm youth according to their annual agripreneurship income (n=250)

Sl. No.	Category	Kalahandi (n=50)		Ganjam (n=50)		Puri (n=50)		Mayurbhanj (n=50)		Balasore (n=50)		Total (n=250)	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
1.	Low	20	40	12	24	17	34	11	22	12	24	72	28.8
2.	Medium	23	46	25	50	26	52	17	34	24	48	115	46
3.	High	7	14	13	26	7	14	22	44	14	22	63	25.20
4.	Total	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	250	100

Table 8: Distribution of respondents according to their socio-economic characteristics (n=250)

Sl. No.	Socio personal characteristics	Range/ category	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1.	Mass media Exposure	Low (less than 11)	95	38
		Medium (11-20)	70	28
		High (20 and above)	85	34
3.	Social media	Low (Less than 3)	68	27.2
		Medium (3-8)	62	24.8
		High (8 and above)	120	48
3.	Training	Low (0-2)	97	38.8
		Medium (3-5)	124	49.6
		High (6-7)	29	11.6

Conclusions

India enjoys a very high demographic dividend with half of India's population of over 1.3 billion is under the age of 26 and the median age in India by 2020 is projected to be 29, making it the youngest country in the world. Rural youth constitutes about 41% of total population. But in present scenario only 20% youth of rural families are engaged in agriculture as source of employment which is an indicator of grim situation of agriculture in future. Most of the educated youth find agriculture as an unattractive proposition; especially the way it is practiced traditionally by their parents. This study which examines the socio-economic scenario of

farm youth engaged in agripreneurship was conducted in five agro-climatic zones of Odisha. The study was carried out by self-structured interview schedule. The results show that the majority of farm youths were from upper young age category, male, with higher secondary qualification, belonging to nuclear families, having small landholdings and are getting medium level of annual income. Most of these farm youths have low level of mass media exposure but have higher involvement in social media. They have medium exposure to training having greater access to training related to agriculture but face severe constraints related to agripreneurial skill training.

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