

Characteristics of the Undergraduate Students of Agriculture and their Future Plans

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Abstract

The present study was undertaken at B. A. College of Agriculture, Anand. A total 141 undergraduate students randomly selected from this college. Data were collected with the help of structured interview schedule. For the measurement of various variables, suitable scales developed by various social scientists were used. The students (36.88 per cent) were in second-class category, whereas proportion of the respondents in pass class and first class category was 31.21 per cent and 18.44 per cent, respectively. Only 13.48 per cent of the students were passed with distinction. The average O.G.P.A. of agricultural college student was 64.42. It came to knowledge during the personal discussion with students that the tight schedule of classes and examinations and the heavy work load of undergraduate students might be the reason for the poor performance of majority of undergraduate students. participation in extracurricular activities of majority of the students (56.03 per cent) was low followed by 17.73 per cent of the students who were having medium participation and 11.35 per cent students had high participation, while 14.89 per cent students were not participated in any of the extracurricular activities.

Key words: Characteristics, Undergraduate Students, Agriculture, Future Plans

Introduction

Agricultural education is a professional education. It is also an instrument for bringing out desirable changes in rural structure, the economy and standard of living. The main objective of giving college education in the field of agriculture is to produce the better educated and technically sound youth for maximizing agricultural and allied production.

Swatez (1995) purports it is the primary task of the leadership educator to establish an environment that "is open to debate, discussion and even disagreement with the texts, the instructor and one another." Beyond establishment of the purposes of leadership, identification of individual strengths and weaknesses on the way to developing a personal leadership approach, enhancement of analytical skills and sharing of new and emerging leadership theories (Wren, 1994; Lewis, 1995 and Watt, 1995).

Colleges of agriculture in the United States have contributed significantly to the achievements of their graduates, but have not provided enough opportunities for leadership development (Love and Yoder, 1989). Today's agricultural industry demands a high standard from college graduates, and employers are increasingly seeking them out to be effective leaders in their

companies and organizations (McKinley, Birkenholz, and Stewart, 1993). Employers therefore desire leadership ability from employees, especially in problem solving and team work (Andelt, Barrett, and Bosshamer, 1997). However, Graham found that teamwork, decision making, leadership, and initiative were areas in need of improvement among graduates (Graham, 2001). This presents a need for colleges of agriculture to provide opportunities at the college level for students to participate in leadership development activities to more effectively prepare them for success upon graduation.

There are only 106 agricultural colleges in India according to 0.69 per cent of the total even through 70 per cent of the population of India depends on agriculture for their livelihood. Therefore it is necessary to increase the number of agriculture colleges to improve the contribution of agriculture to the GDP. Keeping this in view, the present study was undertaken with the following specific objectives:

1. To study characteristics of the undergraduate students of agriculture.
2. To study the future plans of the undergraduate students of agriculture.

Methodology

The present study was undertaken at B. A. College of Agriculture, Anand. A total 141 undergraduate

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students randomly selected from this college. Data were collected with the help of structured interview schedule. For the measurement of various variables, suitable scales developed by various social scientists were used. Mean, standard deviation and co-efficient of correlation were used to analyze the data.

Results and Discussion

Personal Characteristics of the Students:

Age:

The information presented in Table 1 shows that more than half of the respondents (56.03%) had age in the range of 20 to 22 years. While proportion of respondents in age group 17 to 19 years and 23 to 25 years were 39.01 per cent and 4.96%, respectively. The average of the respondent was 19.91 years.

This indicate that the students enrolled in agriculture college were above 17 years and belonged to different age groups, which may be due to the fact

Table 1: Distribution of respondents according to their personal characteristics N=141

S. No.	Characteristics	Number	%tage
1.	Age		
	17 to 19 years	55	30.01
	20 to 22 years	79	56.03
	23 to 25 years	07	4.96
	Mean score	19.91 years	
2.	Birth order		
	1 st	39	27.66
	2 nd	53	37.59
	3 rd	34	24.11
	4 th and above	15	10.64
	Mean score	2.25	
3.	Caste		
	Non-reserved	103	73.05
	Other backward	31	14.89
	Scheduled tribe	03	2.13
	Scheduled caste	14	9.93
	Mean score	5.27	
4.	Marital status		
	Married	15	10.64
	Unmarried	126	89.36
5.	Academic achievement		
	Pass class (4.5 to 5.99)	44	31.20
	Second class (6.0 to 6.89)	52	36.88
	First class (6.9 to 7.39)	26	18.44
	Distinction (7.4 and above)	19	13.48
	Average grade point	64.42	
6.	Participation in extra curricular activities		
	Low participation (up to 3 score)	79	56.03
	Medium participation (4 to 6 score)	25	17.73
	High participation (7 and above score)	16	11.35
	Non-participation	21	14.89
	Mean score	2.90	

that most of the students join the agriculture college just after passing the higher secondary school certificate (10 + 2) examination.

Birth order:

It can be seen from the Table No. 1 that more than one third of the respondents (37.59 per cent) were second born children. Numbers of students born at first and third position were 27.66 per cent and 24.11 per cent, respectively. While number of students born at fourth and above position were 10.64 per cent. The average value of birth order is 2.25. It can be inferred from the data that the first and second born children combined form majority of the student population.

Cast:

Considering the categories of reservation on the basis of caste as per the Government rules, it was observed from Table 1 that majority of the respondents (73.05 per cent) were from non-reserved caste categories, whereas number of students belonged to other backward caste, schedule caste and scheduled tribe were 14.89 per cent, 9.93 per cent and 2.13 per cent, respectively.

It is a well known fact that the literacy rate, social and economic condition of the non-reserved caste is higher than the reserved caste, thus they were getting more exposure to the higher education field and they can afford higher education to their children. This may be a probable reason that majority of the agricultural college students were belonged to higher caste.

Marital status:

It is evident from the Table 1 that only 10.64 per cent of the students were married and 89.36 per cent were unmarried. This finding showed that most of the undergraduate students were unmarried. On scrutinizing the questionnaire it was found that the students belonged to various communities. The varied customs and social obligation of individual community was definitely the reason for the above observation.

Academic achievement:

A look into Table 1 indicates that more than one third of the students (36.88 per cent) were in second-class category, whereas proportion of the respondents in pass class and first class category was 31.21 per cent and 18.44 per cent, respectively. Only 13.48 per cent of the students were passed with distinction. The average O.G.P.A. of agricultural college student was 64.42. It came to knowledge during the personal discussion with students that the tight schedule of classes and examinations and the heavy work load of undergraduate students might be the reason for the poor performance of majority of undergraduate students.

Participation in extracurricular activities:

It was observed from the Table 1 that participation in extra curricular activities of majority

of the students (56.03 per cent) was low followed by 17.73 per cent of the students who were having medium participation and 11.35 per cent students had high participation, while 14.89 per cent students were not participated in any of the extra curricular activities. It could be concluded from the above findings that majority of the students had low participation in extra curricular activities.

Pattern of semester system education in the agricultural faculty, leads to the students to be over loaded with study and examination work leaving them with very less leisure time to participate in other activities. Preparation for higher studies adds to this problem further, might be the reason for low participation in extra curricular activities.

Family Background Characteristics of the students

Family background characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 2.

Family size:

The Table 2 revealed that majority of the respondents (59.58 per cent) were belonged to the families who had more than four members, while respondents coming from the families of up to four members were 40.42 per cent. Average size of family was 4.95. From these findings it can be concluded that more than half of students were from larger families with more than four persons.

The average size of the family is less than five that means in most of the families number of children is three or less. It may be due to the successful implementation of family planning programme and increased literacy, education and awareness among the people. The changed life style and living conditions also helped in the emergence of large number of smaller families or nuclear families.

Number of real brothers and sisters:

The average number of real brothers and sisters in the respondent's family was observed to be 1.96 from the data presented in Table No. 2. It was also observed that majority (74.47 per cent) of the respondents had up to two brothers and sisters, while 19.86 per cent of the students had three to four brothers and sisters and 5.67 per cent of the respondents were found to have five and above brothers and sisters.

The average number of family members was 4.95 which indicate that on an average there were less than three children in the family. This may be mainly due to the adoption of family welfare programmes like family planning and the increased level of literacy, education and changed life style of family members.

Father's education:

It is appeared from the Table 2 that 36.17 per cent of the students' father was graduates followed by 14.89 per cent were post graduates. Respondents' father with the educational qualification of higher

secondary level, high school level, primary school level and literate were 21.28 per cent, 14.18 per cent, 6.38 per cent and 4.26 per cent, respectively. Only few number of respondents' father were illiterate.

Above results clearly indicated that father of majority of the respondents' father were graduates and above and merge number of students' father were illiterate. At present educational facility for graduate and post-graduate was available at taluka/district level which motivated them for higher education might be the reason for higher education among majority of the students' father.

Family educational status:

The data presented in Table 2 portrays that majority of the respondents (80.85 per cent) were from the family of medium educational status followed by 16.31 per cent of the respondents were belonged to the families with high educational status and only 2.84 per cent of the respondents were from families of low educational status.

On the bases of foregoing discussion it can be concluded that all the respondents were from medium to high educational status family group. This might be due to the fact that majority of the students' father were graduate and post graduate.

Father's occupation:

It can be seen from the Table 2 that the respondents' father engaged in farming was 45.39 per cent. Respondents' fathers engaged in service, private sector/independent profession, business and labour were 38.30 per cent, 7.10 per cent, 7.10 per cent and 0.7 per cent, respectively. Only 1.14 per cent of the respondents' father was not having any job.

It can be concluded from the discussion that majority of respondents' father were occupied in farming and service. High percentage of father in farming may be credited to their rural background and the service may be due to the good educational level.

Family occupational status:

It was noticed from Table 2 that more than two third of the respondents (68.80 per cent) were belonged to the family having medium occupational status. While the respondents having high and low family occupational status was 27.66 per cent and 3.54 per cent, respectively. The average family occupational status score was 4.99.

The above discussion leads to the inference that majority of the respondent's family occupational status was medium to high. This can be attributed to the earlier findings that majority of the respondents' father were occupied in service and farming.

Family annual income:

It was evident from Table 2 that more than half of the respondents (51.77 per cent) family had income

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their family background characteristics N=141

S. No.	Characteristics	Number	%age
1.	Family size		
	Up to 4 members	57	40.43
	Above 4 members	84	59.58
	Mean score	4.96	
2.	Number of real brothers and sisters		
	Up to 2	105	74.47
	3 to 4	25	19.86
	5 and above	08	5.87
	Mean score	1.95	
3.	Father's education		
	Illiterate	04	2.84
	Literate (can read and write)	06	4.26
	Primary school	09	6.38
	High school	20	14.18
	Higher secondary	30	21.28
	Graduate	51	36.17
	Above graduate	21	14.89
	Mean score	4.16	
4.	Family educational status		
	Low status (up to 1.99 score)	04	2.84
	Medium status (2 to 4.99 score)	113	80.85
	High status (5 and above score)	24	16.31
	Mean score	4.12	
5.	Father's occupation		
	Agriculture farming	64	45.39
	Independent profession/private sector	10	7.10
	Business	10	7.10
	Service	34	38.30
	Labour	01	0.70
	Persons with no job	02	1.41
	Mean score	5.04	
6.	Family occupational status		
	Low status (up to 3 score)	05	3.54
	Medium status (3.1 to 5 score)	97	68.80
	High status (above 5 score)	39	27.66
	Mean score	4.99	
7.	Family Annual income		
	Low status (up to Rs. 35,000)	31	21.99
	Medium status (Rs.35,0001 to 80,000)	37	26.24
	High status (above Rs. 80,000)	73	51.77
	Average income	Rs. 109335	
8.	Family land holding status		
	Low status (up to 5 score)	48	34.04
	Medium status (5.1 to 15 score)	34	24.11
	High status (above 15 score)	22	15.60
	Persons with no land	37	26.25
	Average land holds	9.05	
9.	Father's social participation		
	Low participation (up to 1 score)	129	91.49
	Medium participation (2 to 4 score)	09	6.38
	High participation (above 4 score)	03	2.13
	Mean score	0.67	
10.	Class status		
	Low status (up to 33.33 scores)	00	0.00
	Medium status (33.34 to 66.66 scores)	109	77.31
	High status (above 66.66 scores)	32	22.69
	Mean score	58.32	

above Rs. 80, 000 per annum followed by 26.24 per cent of the respondents belonged to the families having an annual income ranging from Rs. 35, 001 to Rs. 80, 000 and 21.99 per cent of the respondents were from the families having income less than Rs. 35, 000. The average family income was Rs. 1, 09, 335/- per annum.

Above discussion inferred that majority of the respondents were from the families having good economic status. Which may be due to the fact that a good number of respondents' father were engaged in service and medium to large farmers had medium educational as well as occupational status.

Family land holding:

Table 2 shows that 73.75 per cent of the families of the respondents possessed land. Out of which majority of the respondents (34.04 per cent) were from the families of low land holding status, while proportion of the respondents having medium and high land holding status were 24.11 and 15.60 per cent, respectively.

On the basis of Indian family system parents used to give a part of their land to their children as share after their marriage. Due to this continuous process and the emergence of large number of nuclear families caused reduction in the land holding level of families. Industrialization and urbanization also played a main role for reducing the per capita availability of land.

Father's social participation:

Social participation level of parents was considered important in this study and it was observed from Table 2 that a great majority of the respondents' father (91.49 per cent) had low level of social participation, followed by 6.38 per cent with medium level and only 2.13 per cent of them had high level of participation in social organizations. Mean score of the participation level of respondents' father was 0.67.

It is obvious from the above analysis that majority of the respondents' father had low level of participation in social organizations. On scrutinizing the questionnaire it was found that among those participating in social organizations majority of them participated in the village panchayat or co-operative societies.

The probable reason of the low level of participation may be because most of the parents were farmers and serviceman, who could spare very less time for other activities.

Class status:

It was observed from the Table No. 2 that more than three fourth of the respondents (77.31 per cent) belonged to medium class status families followed by 22.69 per cent from high class status families.

It was earlier reported that a good percentage of the respondents father were graduates and post graduates and were engaged in service or farming or

Table 3: Future plan of the respondents

S. No.	Future plan	Number	Percentage
(A)			
1.	Further study only if job is not available	28	19.86
2.	Wish to take up any job available	31	21.99
3.	Further study even if job is available	82	58.15
(B)			
4.	If further study		
	Agricultural stream	37	31.91
	Non-agricultural stream	45	26.24

working in private sector. The average income level of respondents' family was Rs. 1, 08, 980/- and the family members too having good occupation and educational background. All these cumulatively added to form the medium to high class status of the families for the majority of the respondents.

Future Plans of the Respondents

Every student has a future plan as what he would like to do on completion of his study. Data from the Table 3 throws light on the future plan of the students under investigation.

It was observed from the above Table 3 that more than half of the respondents (58.15 per cent) had a plan to pursue further study on graduation, 21.99 per cent of the respondents were planned to take up any of the available job and 19.86 per cent of the respondents were planned for higher studies only if there was no job available to them. Among the respondents, those who planned for higher studies 31.91 per cent of them opted for agriculture related subjects for higher studies and 26.24 per cent of them opted the courses not related to agriculture like MBA, Information Technology etc. Our findings are similar with Susan and Brown (1998) who reported that six respondents indicated that approval for these courses would be "difficult," nine responded that approval would be "easy" or "extremely easy." In terms of the agricultural education faculty itself, 97% (n=33) of those departments indicating that they have growing programs indicated that the faculty was either "extremely" or "somewhat supportive," with 3% (n=1) "ambivalent" toward leadership and human resource development/management courses.

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