

Future Prospects of Agripreneurship: A Study on Career Aspirations of State Agricultural University Students in Gujarat

Jayasudha J¹, R. M. Naik² and Kumar C³

¹*Agricultural Extension & Communication, N. M. College of Agriculture,
Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari, Gujarat*

²*N.M. College of Agriculture, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari, Gujarat*

³*ICAR – Central Institute of Brackishwater Aquaculture, Chennai, Tamil Nadu*

KEYWORDS Agripreneurship. Aspiration. Education. Employment. Gujarat. Students

ABSTRACT This study examined the career aspirations of agricultural students and identified key personal, psychological and informational factors influencing them. Data were collected from undergraduate, postgraduate and Ph.D. students from State Agricultural Universities in Gujarat using a structured interview schedule, and weighted mean scores and Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) were applied for analysis. Results indicated a strong preference for secure and prestigious careers, particularly government jobs such as administrative services, nationalised banks, and UPSC positions, while private and NGO employment was less preferred due to perceived instability. Respondents showed moderate entrepreneurial orientation, favouring agribusiness activities like organic farming, food processing, and dairy enterprises. High economic aspirations were evident, with most aiming for monthly incomes above INR 1,00,000. SEM analysis revealed significant interactions among age, innovativeness, information sources, and critical thinking, influencing overall career aspirations.

INTRODUCTION

Agribusiness entrepreneurship has evolved into one of the major drivers of economic growth in the setting of the energetic and highly competitive global marketplace. In developing countries, the agribusiness sector in particular is crucial to the growth of rural economies (Kurmanalina et al. 2020). Career aspirations represent a learner's orientation towards a particular professional or occupational goal (Domenico and Jones 2007). It was reported that it can be influenced by gender, socio-economic status and family support. During adolescence, aspirations are especially important because they allow teenagers to evaluate the degree to which various choices help or hinder their chances of attaining desired goals. Agriculture continues to play a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of India by providing livelihood security, employment opportunities, and food security to a large proportion of the population. In recent years, the agricultural sector has undergone significant transformation due to technological advancement, mar-

ket liberalisation, climate variability, and diversification of agri-based enterprises. These changes have expanded the scope of career opportunities in agriculture beyond conventional farming to include government services, agribusiness, research, extension, agristart-ups, and allied sectors. Consequently, understanding the career aspirations of agricultural students who represent the future human capital of the sector has become increasingly important for effective policy formulation and educational planning. Among agricultural students, career aspirations are often shaped by factors such as job security, income stability, social prestige, family expectations, and awareness of emerging opportunities (Singh et al. 2018). Several studies have reported that agricultural graduates show a strong preference for government employment due to assured salary, pension benefits, and higher social recognition (Kumar and Meena 2016; Reddy et al. 2020). Agripreneurship, which involves applying entrepreneurial principles to agricultural and allied activities, has been widely recognised as a means to enhance farm income, generate rural employment, and promote sustainable agricultural development (Lans et al. 2017). However, earlier research indicates that risk per-

Address for correspondence:

E-mail: sudhajaganathan97@gmail.com

ception, lack of capital, inadequate skills, and limited institutional support often discourage agricultural youth from pursuing entrepreneurial ventures (Sharma and Bhaduri 2019). At the same time, recent trends suggest increasing interest in modern, technology-driven, and value-added enterprises such as organic farming, food processing, nursery management, and agri-services (Patel et al. 2021). The present study was undertaken to analyse the career aspirations of agricultural students, assess their preferences across employment and self-employment domains, and identify the key factors influencing aspiration levels using regression analysis and structural equation modelling. Earlier studies have examined individual determinants of career choice among agricultural students, limited research has attempted to explain career aspiration through an integrated analytical framework that captures the complex interrelationships among personal, psychological, and informational variables. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) provides a robust methodological approach to simultaneously assess direct and indirect effects among multiple constructs and to validate theoretical models of career development (Kline 2016).

Objectives

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- ♦ To study the career aspiration of students about future prospects of agripreneurship
- ♦ To study the direct and indirect effect of the variables on the career aspiration

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted an ex post facto research design, as the variables under investigation had already occurred and could not be manipulated by the researcher. This design was considered appropriate to examine the influence of selected personal, socio-economic, psychological, and informational characteristics of students on their attitude towards agripreneurship. The study was conducted in four agricultural universities of Gujarat state, namely, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari, Junagadh Agricultural University, Junagadh, Anand Agricultural University, Anand, and Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University, Sardarkrushinagar. The population of

the study comprised final year B.Sc. (Agriculture), M.Sc. (Agriculture), and Ph.D. (Agriculture) students enrolled in the selected universities. From each university, 25 respondents were selected from each degree programme using a simple random sampling technique. Thus, a total of 75 respondents were selected from each university, resulting in an overall sample size of 300 students for the study. The study was guided by the positivist research philosophy, which assumes that students' characteristics objectively influence their career aspirations, and that these relationships can be empirically measured and statistically analysed. A deductive research approach was followed, wherein existing theories and empirical evidence were used to derive hypotheses and test them using quantitative data. A quantitative research methodology was employed for the study. Primary data were collected through a structured and pre-tested interview schedule developed specifically for the study. Data were gathered using the interview method, which ensured clarity of responses and minimised non-response and misinterpretation of questions. The study followed a cross-sectional time horizon, wherein data were collected from the respondents at a single point in time. Statistical tools used were weighted mean score, rank and SEM analysis. R software has been used for SEM analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The independent variables are age, gender, area of residence, monthly family income, type of family, size of family, parents education, parents occupation, business background, size of land-holding, spending leisure time, family support, source of information, trainings undergone, risk taking ability, achievement orientation, leadership ability, critical thinking, self confidence and innovativeness. The dependent variable is career aspiration about future prospects of agripreneurship. The results were discussed in the following tables.

Career Aspiration About Future Prospects of Agripreneurship

From Table 1, it was observed that the respondents reveal a clear inclination toward secure and prestigious career paths, with government employment emerging as the foremost priority. The highest aspiration among job-related options was to secure administrative positions in government

Table 1: Career aspiration about future prospects of agripreneurship (n=300)

<i>S. No.</i>	<i>Career aspiration</i>	<i>WMS</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<i>A</i>	<i>Job Aspiration</i>		
1.	To secure higher administrative positions through UPSC (IAS, IPS, IFS, etc.) examinations	3.20	III
2.	To secure administrative position in government departments	3.39	I
3.	To secure position in department of agriculture	2.83	IV
4.	To secure position in agricultural universities	2.74	V
5.	To secure job in private agricultural organization	2.44	IX
6.	To secure job in nationalised banks	3.36	II
7.	To secure job in corporate sectors	2.50	VI
8.	To secure job in Panchayat raj administration	2.48	VII
9.	To secure job in voluntary organisations (NGO)	2.44	VIII
10.	To secure job in cooperative sectors	2.48	VII
<i>B</i>	<i>Self-Employment Aspiration</i>		
1.	To start own business	2.95	I
2.	To render own consultancy services	2.55	III
3.	To start own/develop own farm	2.91	II
4.	To render own development services	2.47	IV
<i>C</i>	<i>Self-Employment Avenues</i>		
1.	Nursery	3.11	I
2.	Fruit processing unit	2.66	X
3.	Agro-services centre	2.71	IX
4.	Sericulture	2.64	XI
5.	Apiculture	2.89	VIII
6.	Poultry	2.63	XII
7.	Mushroom production unit	2.95	VI
8.	Dairy	2.98	V
9.	Goat rearing unit	2.56	XIII
10.	Fisheries	2.46	XIV
11.	Food processing sectors	3.01	III
12.	Seeds production enterprise	3.00	IV
13.	Organic farming	3.05	II
14.	Bio fertilisers production enterprise	2.90	VII
<i>D</i>	<i>Economic Aspiration</i>		
1.	To earn income more than INR 1,00,000/month	3.90	I
2.	To earn income more than INR 50,000 to 1,00,000/month	2.70	II
3.	To earn income of INR 20,000 to 50,000/month	1.82	III
4.	To earn income of INR 10,000 to 20,000/month	1.31	IV
<i>E</i>	<i>Professional Aspiration</i>		
1.	To become a well-known agriculture scientist	3.26	I
2.	To become an innovative farmer	2.71	V
3.	To become a well-known administrator	2.95	II
4.	To become a successful businessman	2.82	III
5.	To become a well-known academician	2.77	IV
6.	To become a recognised social worker	2.54	VI

departments (WMS 3.39), followed by securing jobs in nationalised banks (WMS 3.36). This indicates that respondents strongly value career stability, social status, and long-term security associated with government employment. The aspiration to clear UPSC examinations (IAS, IPS, IFS: WMS 3.20) also ranked high, further emphasising the desire for high-profile administrative roles. These results align with earlier studies that reported agricultural graduates showing stronger preference toward government employment due to as-

sured salary, job security and social prestige. In contrast, aspirations for positions in private agricultural organisations, NGOs (WMS 2.44), and corporate sectors were comparatively lower. This reflects a perception among respondents that private-sector jobs offer less stability and fewer long-term benefits than government jobs. Similar trends were reported by previous researchers who observed that agricultural students prefer predictable and risk-free employment environments.

With respect to self-employment aspirations, respondents displayed a moderately positive entrepreneurial orientation. Starting their own business (WMS 2.95), developing their own farm (WMS 2.91) and providing consultancy services (WMS 2.55) received higher weighted mean scores, indicating a recognition of the opportunities available in agribusiness ventures. However, aspirations regarding development service activities were comparatively lower, suggesting that respondents view direct business ventures as more viable than service-oriented enterprises. The preference for specific self-employment avenues further supports this pattern. Nursery management (WMS 3.11), organic farming (WMS 3.05), food processing (WMS 3.01), seed production (WMS 3.00), and dairy enterprises (WMS 2.98) were the most preferred avenues. These choices reflect the growing awareness of profitable agripreneurial opportunities in emerging sectors such as organic farming, input production and value-addition. Enterprises like fisheries, goat rearing, sericulture and poultry ranked lower, indicating that traditional and labour-intensive farming activities are perceived as less attractive due to higher risks, lower returns and market uncertainties. Earlier studies have similarly highlighted that youth increasingly prefer modern, technology-driven and value-added enterprises over conventional allied activities.

Economic aspirations of the respondents were notably high. The majority aspired to earn more than INR 1,00,000 per month (WMS 3.90), indicating strong financial ambitions and a desire for upward economic mobility. Aspirations declined sharply with decreasing income categories. This pattern reflects the growing influence of consumer-driven lifestyles and high financial expectations among educated rural youth. Such trends have been reported in other studies, which show rising income aspirations among agricultural graduates due to exposure to modern education, technology and diversified job markets. Regarding professional aspirations, becoming a well-known agricultural scientist (WMS 3.26) ranked highest, followed by becoming a well-known administrator (WMS 2.95) and successful businessman (WMS 2.82). This shows that respondents aim for recognition, achievement and leadership in their chosen fields. The lower aspiration to become an innovative farmer or social worker suggests that field-level and community-oriented roles are perceived as less

prestigious or rewarding compared to professional and managerial positions. Similarly, Foong et al. (2026) observed that agricultural graduates develop stronger professional aspirations when educational systems provide greater exposure, institutional support, and social engagement with agricultural career opportunities.

The findings of the present study provide important insights into the career aspirations of agricultural students and their perception toward agripreneurship as a future career pathway. The results clearly indicate that respondents continue to demonstrate a strong preference for secure and prestigious occupations, particularly government employment, while simultaneously showing growing interest in selected agripreneurial ventures and modern agricultural enterprises. The discussion of these findings can be interpreted from socio-economic, psychological, and educational perspectives. The dominance of government employment aspirations among respondents reflects the continuing influence of job security, social prestige, and assured income on career decision-making among agricultural students. Administrative positions in government departments, nationalised banks, and civil services examinations such as UPSC received the highest weighted mean scores. This trend may be attributed to the socio-economic environment in rural and semi-urban India, where government jobs are traditionally perceived as symbols of stability, authority, and social recognition. Agricultural graduates often encounter uncertainty in private-sector employment due to fluctuating market conditions, lower salary assurance, and limited career security. Consequently, students tend to favour occupations that provide long-term economic stability and social mobility. Similar observations were reported by earlier researchers, who found that agricultural students predominantly preferred public-sector employment over entrepreneurial or farming careers because of the reduced risk and greater societal acceptance associated with government positions. At the same time, the study also reveals a gradual shift in perception toward self-employment and agripreneurship. Respondents expressed comparatively high aspirations for starting their own businesses, developing their own farms, and engaging in consultancy services. This suggests that agricultural students are increasingly recognising agriculture as a potential enterprise-oriented sector rather than mere-

ly a traditional farming occupation. The growing exposure to agri-start-ups, digital agriculture, organic farming, value addition, and agri-based innovations may have contributed to this positive orientation. The preference for nursery management, organic farming, food processing, dairy enterprises, and seed production indicates that students are attracted toward ventures that offer better profitability, market demand, and opportunities for innovation. These enterprises are generally associated with lower land requirements, quicker returns, and higher scope for value addition compared to conventional farming systems. The comparatively lower preference for enterprises such as fisheries, sericulture, poultry, and goat rearing may be explained by the perception of these enterprises as labour-intensive, risk-prone, and dependent on uncertain market and climatic conditions. Students may also perceive these activities as lacking prestige when compared to technology-driven agribusiness ventures. In addition, inadequate technical knowledge, lack of infrastructural support, and limited exposure to successful enterprise models may discourage students from considering such enterprises as attractive career options. These findings indicate that agricultural youth are more inclined toward modern, commercially viable, and innovation-oriented agribusiness sectors that align with changing market trends and consumer preferences. The findings related to economic aspiration demonstrate that respondents possess very high financial expectations, with the majority aspiring to earn more than INR 1,00,000 per month. This reflects the growing influence of modern lifestyles, increased educational exposure, digital media influence, and changing socio-economic aspirations among rural youth. Educated agricultural students increasingly compare agricultural careers with other professional sectors, thereby expecting higher income levels and improved standards of living. Such aspirations also indicate that students are likely to evaluate career opportunities based on economic returns, growth potential, and financial independence. The findings imply that agriculture and agribusiness sectors must become economically rewarding and technologically progressive to attract and retain talented youth. Professional aspirations further highlight respondents' desire for recognition, achievement, and leadership. The aspiration to become a well-known agricultural scientist, admin-

istrator, or successful businessman suggests that students seek professional identity and social status along with financial success. Lower preference for becoming innovative farmers or social workers indicates that field-level occupations may still be perceived as less prestigious despite their societal importance. This highlights an important challenge for agricultural education systems and policymakers: improving the image and social value of farming and rural development professions among educated youth. Strengthening exposure to successful agripreneurs, innovative farmers, and rural enterprises through experiential learning and field interaction may help transform such perceptions.

This result is similar to the findings of Raju and Devarani (2023), who stated that the majority of the respondents (43.90%) expressed a preference for careers in academia, which was ranked first. This was followed by aspirations for employment in the public sector (35.04%), securing the second rank. A smaller proportion of respondents showed interest in agri-business (10.04%) and the private sector (9.84%), which were ranked third and fourth, respectively. Notably, only a minimal percentage of respondents (1.18%) expressed a preference for farming as a career, placing it at the lowest rank among all categories. Maloth et al. (2026) observed that the majority (61.40%) planned to achieve the highest level of education in their area and students exhibited high achievement motivation, with a strong desire to excel in their profession, gain recognition, and achieve career success.

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) Results

From Table 2, age, source of information, achievement orientation, critical thinking, and innovativeness were found to have a significant influence on career aspiration. The positive relationship between information exposure, innovativeness, and agripreneurial aspiration observed in the present study is supported by recent findings of Amaran et al. (2025), who reported that agripreneurship intention among Indian agricultural students was significantly influenced by entrepreneurial attitude, educational exposure, and access to information regarding agricultural opportunities. The finding that exposure to information and experiential learning improves entrepreneurial orientation is supported by Keerthana et al. (2025), who reported that techno-savviness, vocational training,

Table 2: Regression parameters for career aspiration

S. No.	Variables	Estimate	SE	Z value	p value
1.	Age	1.425	0.634	2.246	0.025
2.	Gender	0.564	0.906	0.623	0.533
3.	Area of residence	-0.211	0.581	-0.364	0.716
4.	Monthly family income	0.216	0.444	0.487	0.626
5.	Type of family	0.378	1.204	0.314	0.753
6.	Size of family	0.053	0.789	0.068	0.946
7.	Parents education	0.010	0.247	0.040	0.968
8.	Parents occupation	-0.161	0.246	-0.656	0.512
9.	Business background	0.785	0.908	0.864	0.388
10.	Size of landholding	-0.525	0.455	-1.155	0.248
11.	Spending leisure time	0.289	0.217	1.330	0.184
12.	Family support	1.534	0.916	1.675	0.094
13.	Source of information	0.948	0.152	6.257	0.000
14.	Trainings undergone	0.119	0.885	0.134	0.893
15.	Risk taking ability	0.340	0.249	1.366	0.172
16.	Achievement orientation	0.627	0.188	3.345	0.001
17.	Leadership ability	-0.105	0.218	-0.482	0.630
18.	Critical thinking	0.424	0.176	2.410	0.016
19.	Self confidence	0.174	0.180	0.965	0.335
20.	Innovativeness	0.529	0.220	2.399	0.016

decision-making ability, and economic motivation significantly influenced entrepreneurial orientation among agricultural students. The present results regarding the growing preference for agripreneurship and innovative agricultural careers among youth are further corroborated by recent studies conducted by Lindgren and Alrawashdeh (2026), who reported that sustainable agricultural education and innovation-oriented learning positively influence agricultural career aspirations among rural youth. The relationship between cognitive adaptability, mindset, and agripreneurial intention identified in recent research by Anton et al. (2026) also supports the present findings that critical thinking and innovativeness significantly contribute to career aspiration among agricultural students.

From Table 3, it is observed that the variable for age ($\beta = 1.425$, $p = 0.025$) had a positive and significant effect on career aspiration, suggesting that older age students possess clearer career goals, higher maturity, and broader exposure to agricultural opportunities. This may be attributed to in-

creased academic exposure, practical experience, maturity, and interaction with professional environments as students progress through their educational programmes. As students advance academically, they gain experience and confidence, shaping stronger aspirations regarding their future careers in agriculture. Source of information ($\beta = 0.948$, $p < 0.001$) emerged as the strongest predictor (standardised $\beta = 0.320$). Students who actively seek information through media, digital platforms, training programmes, and academic exposure display greater awareness of career opportunities, technologies, and innovations in agriculture, resulting in higher aspiration levels. This finding highlights the critical role of information access in shaping students' perception regarding agricultural careers and agripreneurial opportunities. Students who actively access information through digital media, social networking platforms, agricultural extension services, academic resources, training programmes, and mass communication channels are more likely to develop broader aware-

Table 3: Significant parameters ($p < 0.05$) for career aspiration

S. No.	Variables	Estimate	SE	z value	p value	std.all
1.	Age	1.425	0.634	2.246	0.025	0.109
2.	Source of information	0.948	0.152	6.257	0.000	0.320
3.	Achievement orientation	0.627	0.188	3.345	0.001	0.190
4.	Critical thinking	0.424	0.176	2.410	0.016	0.133
5.	Innovativeness	0.529	0.220	2.399	0.016	0.126

ness regarding emerging opportunities in agriculture. Achievement motivation ($\beta = 0.627, p = 0.001$) significantly predicted aspiration, indicating that students with a strong desire for accomplishment and excellence are more future-oriented and ambitious. Such students are likely to aspire for higher studies, leadership roles, competitive jobs, or entrepreneurship in agriculture. This aligns with motivational theories stating that high achievers set higher personal and career goals. The positive influence of achievement orientation in the present study suggests that enhancing motivational and goal-oriented educational approaches may encourage agricultural students to pursue progressive and entrepreneurial career pathways. Critical thinking ability ($\beta = 0.424, p = 0.016$) positively influenced aspiration levels. Students who can analyse situations, evaluate options, and solve problems effectively are more capable of visualising realistic and progressive career paths. As modern agriculture becomes more knowledge-intensive, critical thinking becomes essential for innovation, decision-making, and career advancement. Modern agriculture increasingly requires scientific decision-making, technological adaptation, market analysis, and strategic management skills. Students possessing strong critical thinking ability are better equipped to analyse opportunities, evaluate alternatives, solve practical problems, and make informed career decisions. Such individuals are more capable of adapting to the rapidly changing agricultural environment characterised by climate uncertainty, technological advancements, and market competition. Therefore, critical thinking contributes not only to academic performance but also to career confidence and aspiration development. Innovativeness ($\beta = 0.529, p = 0.016$) had a significant positive effect, indicating that students who are creative, open to experimentation, and willing to adopt new technologies tend to exhibit higher aspirations, particularly toward agriprenurship and technology-driven roles. Innovative students typically view agriculture as a dynamic field with opportunities for value addition, start-ups, and digital agriculture. This suggests that students who are creative, open to new ideas, and willing to adopt innovative technologies tend to demonstrate higher aspiration toward agriprenurship and modern agricultural professions. Innovative individuals are generally more receptive to emerging concepts such as precision farming, digital agricul-

ture, agri-start-ups, value addition, and sustainable farming practices. They perceive agriculture as a dynamic and opportunity-oriented sector rather than merely a traditional occupation. Innovativeness encourages experimentation, adaptability, and entrepreneurial thinking, which are essential traits for succeeding in contemporary agribusiness environments. The positive relationship between innovativeness and aspiration indicates that educational institutions should foster innovation ecosystems through incubation centres, entrepreneurship development programmes, skill training, and exposure visits to successful agriprenurial enterprises.

Table 4: Fit indices for career aspiration

S. No.	Indices	Values
1.	Chisquare	0
2.	df	0
3.	p value	NA
4.	Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	1
5.	Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	1
6.	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0
7.	Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	0

From Table 4, the structural equation model (SEM) developed to explain career aspiration exhibited a perfect model fit, as indicated by the fit indices presented in the table. The chi-square value was zero with zero degrees of freedom, resulting in a non-applicable p-value. This condition indicates that the model is just-identified, meaning that the number of estimated parameters exactly equals the number of known variances and covariances in the data. The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) both attained a value of 1.00, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.90 for acceptable fit and 0.95 for excellent fit. These values suggest that the proposed model perfectly reproduces the observed covariance matrix when compared to a null model. Similarly, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) were 0.00, indicating no residual error between the observed and model-implied matrices.

From Figure 1, it was observed that age had a positive direct influence on all the endogenous constructs included in the model. Age exerted a moderate positive effect on achievement orientation ($\beta = 0.33$), followed by critical thinking ($\hat{\alpha} =$

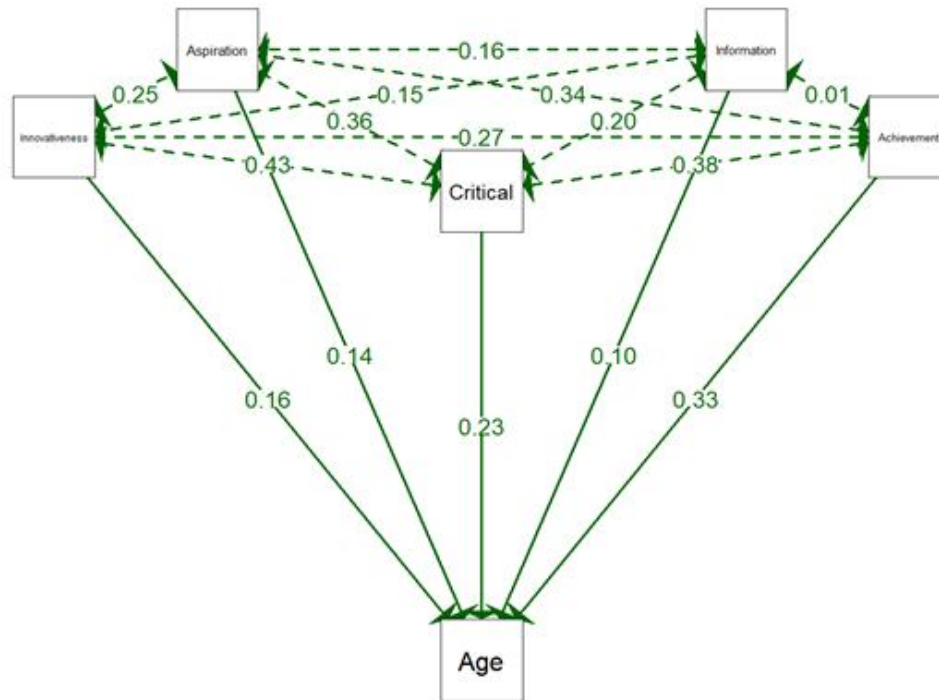


Fig.1. Circular path diagram for career aspiration

0.23), innovativeness ($\beta = 0.16$), career aspiration ($\beta = 0.14$), and source of information ($\beta = 0.10$). This indicates that as respondents grow older, their level of achievement motivation, analytical ability, innovativeness, aspiration, and access to information tend to increase. The significant influence of achievement orientation and leadership-related aspirations identified in the SEM model is in agreement with the findings of Maloth et al. (2026), who observed that agricultural students with higher achievement motivation and leadership orientation exhibited stronger career aspirations and greater inclination toward professional advancement in agriculture. Innovativeness showed a positive effect on career aspiration ($\beta = 0.25$), suggesting that individuals with higher innovativeness tend to have stronger career aspirations. Innovativeness also exhibited a positive association with critical thinking ($\beta = 0.36$) and source of information ($\beta = 0.34$), indicating that innovative individuals are more likely to seek information and apply analytical thinking. Career aspiration demonstrated a pos-

itive influence on critical thinking ($\beta = 0.27$) and achievement orientation ($\beta = 0.20$). This implies that higher aspiration levels motivate individuals to think critically and strive for better achievement outcomes. It also had positive association with source of information ($\beta = 0.16$), indicating that individuals with higher career aspirations tend to marginally increase their engagement with information sources, though the strength of this relationship suggests that aspiration alone may not be sufficient to substantially enhance information-seeking behaviour without adequate institutional support and access mechanisms. The present finding that innovativeness positively contributes to career aspiration and entrepreneurial orientation is consistent with Raman et al. (2026), who emphasized that innovativeness, opportunity-seeking behaviour, and entrepreneurial orientation significantly enhance agripreneurial success and performance among agricultural entrepreneurs. Source of information had a strong positive effect on critical thinking ($\beta = 0.38$), highlighting that access to

and use of information significantly enhances analytical and evaluative abilities. Its direct effect on achievement orientation was negligible ($\beta = 0.01$), suggesting that information contributes to achievement orientation mainly through indirect pathways rather than direct influence. Critical thinking emerged as an important mediating variable, positively contributing to achievement-related outcomes by linking information, aspiration, and innovativeness with performance-related constructs.

Further interpretation of the SEM path analysis reveals that career aspiration among agricultural students is not shaped by isolated variables, but rather through a dynamic and interdependent network of psychological, developmental, and informational factors. The positive influence of age on all endogenous constructs suggests that the process of aspiration development evolves progressively with academic maturity and experiential exposure. As students advance through different stages of education, they gain broader interaction with faculty members, extension personnel, industry experts, training programmes, and digital learning platforms, which collectively contribute to stronger achievement orientation, innovative thinking, and career clarity. This finding supports developmental theories which state that career aspirations become more structured and realistic as individuals accumulate knowledge, experience, and self-awareness over time. From an educational standpoint, the findings emphasise the need to redesign agricultural curricula toward experiential and competency-based learning approaches. Agricultural universities should focus not only on technical knowledge dissemination but also on nurturing innovation, analytical thinking, entrepreneurial behaviour, and career planning skills among students. Programmes such as agribusiness incubation, entrepreneurship development training, field-based experiential learning, industry interaction, start-up mentoring, innovation competitions, and exposure visits to successful agripreneurs can play a vital role in strengthening aspiration levels. Integrating digital agriculture, artificial intelligence, precision farming, and market-led extension approaches within the curriculum may further encourage students to perceive agriculture as a modern and profitable sector. Overall, the SEM path analysis demonstrates that career aspiration in agripreneurship is a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the interaction of maturity, in-

formation exposure, innovative orientation, analytical ability, and motivational factors. The findings reinforce the importance of developing an enabling educational and institutional environment that simultaneously promotes critical thinking, innovativeness, achievement motivation, and informed career planning among agricultural students.

CONCLUSION

The present study provides a comprehensive understanding of the career aspirations of agricultural students and the factors influencing them. The findings reveal a strong preference for secure, prestigious, and financially stable careers, with government employment, particularly administrative and banking positions, emerging as the most preferred option. This reflects the continued importance of job security, stable income, and social status in career decision-making. In contrast, lower preference for private and NGO sectors indicates perceptions of instability and limited long-term benefits. Despite this, respondents exhibited a moderately positive orientation toward self-employment and agripreneurship, especially in modern, technology-driven enterprises such as organic farming, nursery management, food processing, seed production, and dairy. Traditional labour-intensive activities were less preferred, indicating a shift toward innovative agribusiness opportunities. High economic aspirations, including a desire to earn above INR 1,00,000 per month, further reflect strong financial ambitions. Regression and structural equation modelling results revealed that career aspiration is significantly influenced by age, source of information, achievement motivation, critical thinking ability, and innovativeness. Among these, source of information emerged as the strongest predictor, highlighting the importance of media exposure, digital access, and training. Overall, the study concludes that while agricultural students continue to prioritise government employment, there is a parallel and emerging interest in high-income professional roles and modern agripreneurial ventures. These findings highlight the urgent need for policymakers, universities, and extension systems to strengthen career guidance, entrepreneurship development, experiential learning, and information dissemination. Enhancing students' access to credible information, fostering in-

novativeness and critical thinking, and aligning educational curricula with emerging opportunities agri-business and agri-technology will be crucial in translating aspirations into sustainable and productive career outcomes in the agricultural sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study lead to several important recommendations for strengthening career aspiration and promoting agripreneurship among agricultural students. Educational institutions should establish structured career guidance and counselling programmes to expose students to diverse career opportunities beyond conventional government employment, including private-sector roles, agribusiness management, agri-startups, and emerging technology-driven agricultural careers. Regular career workshops, mentorship programmes, expert lectures, and interaction with successful professionals and entrepreneurs can help broaden students' perspectives and reshape their perceptions regarding agricultural careers. In addition, greater emphasis should be placed on enhancing students' exposure to agripreneurship opportunities through the regular organisation of entrepreneurship development programmes, practical training, field visits, business incubation support, and interaction with successful agripreneurs. Such initiatives can improve students' confidence, entrepreneurial orientation, and willingness to engage in self-employment ventures. The study also highlights the need for curriculum reforms aimed at strengthening critical thinking, analytical ability, and problem-solving skills among students. Agricultural education should increasingly focus on experiential learning approaches, case-based teaching, project-based assignments, and real-life problem-solving activities that enhance students' decision-making capacity and adaptability to changing agricultural environments. Furthermore, universities should actively encourage innovativeness and technology adoption by integrating innovation-driven learning systems within academic programmes. Establishing agri-startup incubation centres, organising hackathons, innovation competitions, and research-oriented projects can foster creativity, entrepreneurial thinking, and technological orientation among students. Such institutional support mechanisms will help create a more dynamic educational ecosystem that motivates

agricultural students to pursue innovative and sustainable agripreneurial careers.

AUTHORSHIP CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Dr. R. M. Naik is the researcher's Ph.D. guide, under whose guidance the research work has been carried out.

Kumar C helped in data analysis using statistical tools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The researchers would like to extend their heartfelt thanks to the Indian Council of Social Science Research for funding the research through the fellowship.

REFERENCES

- Amaran S, Kumar R, Patel M 2025. Fostering the future: Agripreneurship intentions among Indian agricultural students. *International Journal of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development*, 12(2): 45-58.
- Anton J, Ferreira P, Gomez L 2026. Cognitive adaptability and agripreneurial intention among agricultural youth. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*, 10: 1814235.
- Domenico DM, Jones KH 2007. Career aspirations of pregnant and parenting adolescents. *Journal of Family and Consumer Sciences Education*, 25(1): 24-33.
- Foong SY, Rahman NA, Abdullah H 2026. Educational exposure and professional aspiration among agricultural graduates. *Advances in Agricultural Education and Extension*, 18(1): 77-92.
- Keerthana VP, Singh A, Reddy BS 2025. Factors influencing entrepreneurial orientation among agricultural students. *International Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 8(8): 225-233.
- Kline RB 2016. *Principles And Practice Of Structural Equation Modeling*. 4th Edition. New York: Guilford Publication.
- Kumar S, Meena MS 2016. Career preferences of agricultural students and factors influencing their choice. *Indian Journal of Extension Education*, 52(3): 78-83.
- Kurmanalina A, Bimbetova B, Omarova A, Kaiyrgaliyeva M, Bekbusinova G 2020. A swot analysis of factors influencing the development of agriculture sector and agribusiness entrepreneurship. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*, 26(1): 1-8.
- Lans T, Seuneke P, Klerkx L 2017. Agricultural entrepreneurship. In: A Fayolle (Ed.): *Handbook of Research on Entrepreneurship Education*. Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, pp. 381-403.
- Lindgren M, Alrawashdeh S 2026. Sustainable agricultural education and career aspirations among rural youth. *Journal of International Agricultural and Extension Education*, 33(1): 14-28.
- Maloth SP, Katkuri SS, Choudhary S 2026. Career aspirations, achievement motivation and leadership orientation

- among graduate agriculture students. *International Journal of Agriculture Extension and Social Development*, 9(1): 91-94.
- Maloth R, Devi P, Kumar V 2026. Achievement motivation and career aspiration among agricultural university students. *Indian Journal of Extension Education*, 62(1): 88-95.
- Patel DR, Singh R, Patel VM 2021. Entrepreneurial intentions of agricultural students towards agribusiness ventures. *Journal of Agribusiness Development*, 13(2): 45-54.
- Raju MS, Devarani L 2023. A study on career aspirations of agricultural students in India. *Indian Research Journal of Extension Education*, 23(4): 79-84.
- Raman T, Joseph A, Kiran P 2026. Innovativeness and entrepreneurial orientation as determinants of agripreneurial success. *International Journal of Agricultural Technology*, 22(3): 411-425.
- Reddy AA, Raju SS, Kumar P 2020. Employment preferences of agricultural graduates in India: An empirical analysis. *Agricultural Economics Research Review*, 33(1): 25-34.
- Sharma P, Bhaduri S 2019. Entrepreneurial motivation and challenges among agripreneurs in India. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 11(3): 451-472.
- Singh AK, Verma AP, Singh R 2018. Aspirations and career choices of agricultural students in India. *Indian Research Journal of Extension Education*, 18(2): 1-7.

Paper received for publication in March, 2025
Paper accepted for publication in May 2026