

# Attitude of Male Adolescents towards Family Occupation of Farming: Management Perspective for Indian Policy makers

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## **Abstract**

*Future of Indian agriculture depends largely on the occupational choice of male adolescents belonging to farming families. It is observable that constraints in farming are on the increase and these constraints could lead male adolescents to opt for other occupation for living. This study is conducted to find out the attitude of male adolescents towards their family farming occupation as attitude is a strong indicator to predict whether they are going to remain in farming occupation or would opt out from it. Further, on the basis of the findings, this study discusses the management issues which need immediate attention for policy makers of India.*

## **Introduction**

India faces a huge challenge of feeding 17.5% population of the world with just 2.3% of world's land area. This makes Agriculture sector vital for Indian economy and development. With 13.7% share in GDP (Annual Report DAC, 2012-13) and 58% population depending on it, agriculture can rightly be said as the backbone of Indian economy. The fact is that agriculture has always been a critical sector for Indian Economy. An average Indian still spends almost half of his/her total expenditure on food, while roughly half of India's work force is still engaged in agriculture for its livelihood. Being both, a source of livelihood and food security for a vast majority of low income, poor and vulnerable sections of society, its performance assumes greater significance. Moreover, National Food Security Bill further makes agriculture crucial.

One of the biggest challenges facing India in the field of agriculture is that whether the new generation belonging to farming families would opt for farming as their future occupation or owing to better opportunities in other areas would leave their family occupation. Adolescents belonging to farm families constitute a sufficient chunk of Indian population and their future choices of occupation are a matter of concern for not only their concerned family but also for the whole nation.

This study has been conducted in Varanasi and aims at finding the attitude of male

adolescents towards their family farming occupation. Historically farming has been a major occupation of Indians and so has been the case with people of Varanasi. Varanasi district lies in the state of Uttar Pradesh and has a population of 36.82 lakhs (census, 2011) and there are 1387 villages in the district. According to the 2001 census 52% labour force of Varanasi was involved in agriculture and there were 4.55 lakhs cultivators of farm lands which is an indicator that traditionally farming has been the major occupation of Varanasi. Whether this trend continues or not depend on the adolescents future occupational choice in the light of so many structural, social, and economic changes that are affecting the rural landscape of not only the Varanasi district but of the whole nation.

### Review of Literature

It is acknowledged that “adolescence is a time of rapid change and stress, which is perceived differently by each individual and influenced by personal and demographic characteristics” (Perrin and McDermott, 1997). Adolescents currently form the largest age group in the world in terms of numbers and adolescence is viewed as the developmental stage in which the most number of key life-events take place (Richter, 2006). Attitude development towards the future profession is a natural development which is supposed to take place in adolescents as result influenced by the developments which have taken place in his lifetime. This study is concerned with the male adolescents who belong to farm-families in Varanasi district and aims at finding out their attitudes towards family occupation of farming.

An attitude can be defined as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, event, activities, ideas, or just about anything in your environment (Zimbardo *et al.*, 1999). In the opinion of Bain (1927), an attitude is "the relatively stable overt behavior of a person which affects his status." Attitude can be formed based on an individual's degree of like or dislike on something. Usually attitude portrays either positive or negative views toward a person, place, thing or event. This can be described as the attitude object. People can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object, meaning that they simultaneously possess both positive and negative attitudes toward the item in question (Breckler and Wiggins, 1992). The salient factors that go into the building of the overall attitude of the individual towards the object are a) his/her beliefs about the attributes possessed by the object, b) his/her preference or otherwise for those attributes, and c) the relative importance of each attribute to the individual's decision making process. Measurement implies the process of obtaining information which can be subject to analysis. Attitude measurement relates to the process of measuring an individual's attitude towards an object. It has been stated that attitudes are affected by attributes and beliefs. So, the first step, before embarking on an attitude-measurement exercise, is selecting the relevant attributes of the object under investigation.

In this proposed study the object is the family occupation of farming. There are various

attributes attached that could affect the attitude towards it as has been mentioned in the literature:

- *Economic Viability of Farming*: It is commonly accepted among scholars that ensuring family continuity in farming is becoming more difficult all the time, and that succession in farming is more likely to be achieved on economically successful farms. According to Potter and Loblely (1996), succession is both a cause and an effect of a farm's current economic status. There is also a belief that the farm problem exist “as a result of the employment of more labor in agriculture than can earn as large a real income as the same labor could earn elsewhere in the economy.” In Varanasi 74% of cultivators have less than 0.50 ha of land, 14% had 0.5ha to 1 ha, and only 0.75% has 4-10 ha of land (census, 2001). So majority of farm-families have very less land from the point of view of economic viability and is a major attribute affecting attitudes towards farming occupation. Sharma and Bhaduri (2009) have also mentioned the average landholding is a significant factor affecting the choice of farming occupation.
- *Opportunities in non-farm sector*: Authors like Kimhi and Bollman (1999), Kimhi (2000), Goetz and Demertin (2001) in their studies on Canada, Israel and US farmers respectively, conclude that nonfarm income has a stabilizing impact on the farmer's household economy. Farmers in these cases use their non-farm income to augment their farm activities and it thus serves as a stabilizing factor rather than an avenue for exit. On the contrary authors like Pfeffer (1989), Weiss (1997) and Roe (1985) see a strong link between non-farm employment and withdrawal from agriculture. That is, growth in non-farm employment causes people to move away from farming by providing the much needed outlet. They propose that an exposure to non-farm occupation lowers the transaction costs (Glauben *et al.*, 2003). The analysis of occupational changes in the rural areas of developed economies emphasizes, among other processes, the diversification of income sources among farming households. This diversification may be the result of developing new activities within the farm, or the combination of farm-based and external sources of income. Both patterns represent the emergence of pluriactivity as a common strategy for farmers to reduce their reliance on agricultural production as the major source of income. Diversification, and more broadly, pluriactivity, as well as the underlying reasons for choosing this strategy, have long been discussed in the literature (Ilbery 1987; Fuller 1990; Bryden and Bollman 2000; McNally 2001; Sofer 2001).
- *Nearness to Urban Area*: It has been found that importance of proximity to urban areas for occupational choice can't be neglected (Sharma and Bhaduri, 2009).

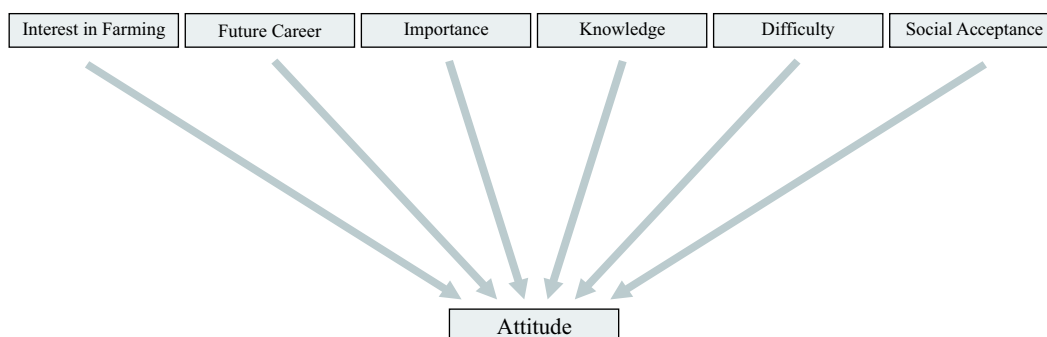
Finally, many policy makers argue that in the villages close to town farmers are more likely to shift out of agriculture (Lucas, 2000). Location and the distance of the farm from an urban hub of employment have an influence on the specific pattern of pluriactivity (Marsden *et al.*, 1989; Edmond *et al.*, 1993; Bowler *et al.*, 1996; Eikeland and Lie 1999; Sofer 2001). When better employment is available in the urban area which is not too far then the chances are that the person's choice of occupation will be affected. Urbanization of villages which are very near to Varanasi city is taking place at a very fast pace with many schools, colleges, and hospitals being opened up in these areas creating job opportunities to villagers thereby giving a second option to villagers from the earning point of view.

- *Impact of Government Intervention and Macro-economic Environment:* Andermann and Schmidt (1995, cited by Glauben, 2003) in a study on Germany have found that farming people significantly response to macro-economic changes and agricultural prices. Government payments too have been found to have contrasting impact. On the one hand while income assistance in terms of price supports results in slow down of migration; on the other hand diversions lead to greater migration out of farming (Barkley, 1990). In India there are many schemes for the farmers that are operational such as subsidy on farm inputs. Presently Government of India is running MNREGA scheme which ensures employment to rural people. So this attribute of government intervention is important from the occupational choice of farming is concerned as villagers have a chance for alternate income within their village.

### **Description of the Study**

In this study to measure the attitude of male adolescents belonging to farm families towards family occupation, six parameters have been used. Adolescents have given their responses on these parameters forming the basis of their attitudes towards farming occupation. These parameters are:

1. Interest in Farming
2. Future Career
3. Importance of Agriculture
4. Knowledge of Agriculture
5. Difficulty in Agriculture
6. Social Acceptance of Agriculture



**Figure 1: Parameters used for measuring attitude towards farming occupation**

Self-constructed questionnaire was used to get the responses. Questionnaire had 38 questions and response was taken on five point Likert scale (where 1 was for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree). Reliability of the questionnaire was measured through Cronbach's Alpha and was found to be 0.79 based on standardized items. Data was collected from 401 male adolescents belonging to farm families.

For analysis following statistical measures have been used:

1. Central Tendency
2. ANOVA

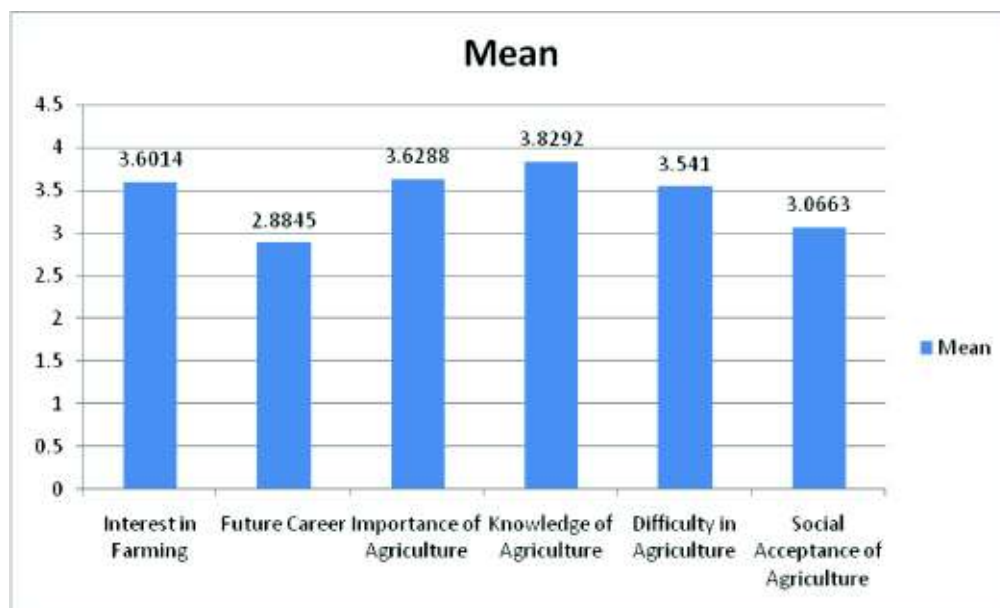
### Findings and Analysis

Mean score of all the respondents for the attitude was found to be 3.14 which shows that attitude of male adolescents towards family occupation of farming is positive.

Mean	3.1439
Std. Deviation	0.40791

**Table 1. Overall Attitude towards Family Occupation of Farming**

Mean scores on six parameters used for measuring attitude are shown in fig 2. Respondents mean score show that they have good knowledge of agriculture as well as they have interest in farming. Respondents also feel that agriculture is important for them. Mean scores on three parameters namely knowledge of agriculture, interest in farming, and importance of agriculture prima facie indicates that respondents are going to adopt agriculture as their future occupation. But when respondents were asked that how they feel about agriculture as their future career then the mean score of 2.88 indicates their reluctance to adopt agriculture as their career choice.



**Figure 2. Mean Score on Six Parameters used for Measuring Attitude**

Further, the respondents when asked about the difficulties faced in agriculture occupation, the mean score was 3.51 which show that respondents feel that difficulties in agriculture are high. Social acceptance of agriculture according to respondents is neither high nor low.

Attitude of respondents on the basis of caste given in table 2 show that it is positive for all the castes with mean score being highest for respondents belonging to schedule caste.

Caste of the Adolescents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
general	200	3.0967	0.3999
OBC	172	3.1847	0.39316
SC	29	3.2278	0.51286
Total	401	3.1439	0.40791

**Table 2. Overall Attitude towards Family Occupation of Farming – Caste wise**

Attitude of respondents was also found to be positive irrespective of the family size of the respondents, proximity of the respondents village to the city, their family dependence on agriculture, and the land holding of their family as shown in Table 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Family size of the Adolescents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
small	183	3.1731	0.38311
medium	122	3.162	0.45092
large	96	3.0652	0.39003
Total	401	3.1439	0.40791

**Table 3. Attitude towards Family Occupation of Farming – Family Size wise**

Adolescents village	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Near to the city	182	3.1867	0.38439
Far from the city	219	3.1084	0.42407
Total	401	3.1439	0.40791

**Table 4. Attitude towards Family Occupation of Farming – Proximity of village to city**

Family dependence on Agriculture	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
low dependence	98	3.2046	0.42128
medium dependence	112	3.1351	0.41485
high dependence	191	3.1179	0.39563
Total	401	3.1439	0.40791

**Table 5. Attitude towards Family Occupation of Farming – Dependence on Agriculture**

Familv Landholding	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
marginal	143	3.2749	0.38943
medium	158	3.0751	0.38431
big	100	3.0653	0.42654
Total	401	3.1439	0.40791

**Table 6. Attitude towards Family Occupation of Farming – Land Holding**

No significant difference was found in response among respondents on the basis of caste, proximity of village to the city, family size, and dependence on agriculture. However, significant difference was found in response of male adolescents as shown below whose

family has marginal landholding in comparison to those whose family have medium and big landholding (F-Test,  $p < .05$ ).

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.821	2	1.911	12.121	0
Within Groups	62.735	398	0.158		

(I) LandHolding	(J) LandHolding	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.
marginal	medium	.19982*	0
	big	.20967*	0
medium	marginal	-.19982*	0
	big	0.00985	1
big	marginal	-.20967*	0
	medium	-0.00985	1

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

### Management perspective for Policy Makers

There is a general conception that new generation of farming community is not interested in adopting farming as their future occupational choice. The reason being that farming has lot of difficulties and social acceptance is also low. Moreover, there are better opportunities available in other professions. The issue that whether the new generation of farming community would stay in farming or would opt out is of high significance for Indian agriculture.

This study shows that adolescents attitude towards farming occupation is positive irrespective of the profile of the adolescent (refer table 7). It is a significant finding of the study that attitude of the young generation of farming community in Varanasi is positive against the general conception that new generation has a negative attitude. More significant is that attitude is positive among all the castes. It is positive for all family sizes. Whether the adolescents are residing near to city or far from city, attitude is positive. Further, whether the family dependence on agriculture is high or low or medium attitude is positive. Family landholding also does not have any differentiating impact on adolescents when it comes to attitude towards farming occupation and attitude has been found to be positive for all landholding groups. Findings of the study provide strong reasoning that adolescents have attachment to farming and at present they do not feel negative towards farming.



<b>Attitude of Adolescents towards the Farming Occupation</b>				
	Verv Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Overall Attitude		✓		
Attitude on the basis of Profiles of Adolescents:				
General Caste		✓		
OBC		✓		
Schedule Caste		✓		
Small Familv Size		✓		
Medium Family Size		✓		
Large Family Size		✓		
Village near to Citv		✓		
Village far from Citv		✓		
Low family dependence on Agriculture		✓		
Medium Family Dependence on Agriculture		✓		
High Family Dependence on Agriculture		✓		
Marginal Landholding of Family		✓		
Small Landholding of Family		✓		
Big Landholding of Family		✓		

**Table 7. Adolescents attitude towards farming occupation on the basis of their profile**

Although, adolescents have positive attitude towards farming occupation but when it comes to farming as their future career it is concluded that only those who have marginal landholding have positive attitude towards farming as future career. Overall for the respondents attitude is

neutral and except for marginal landholding group, for all other groups it is neutral (refer table 8). Neutral attitude means that adolescents have not made up their mind to either accept or reject farming occupation as their career choice in future.

Attitude of Adolescents towards Farming as their Future Career				
	Very Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative
Overall Attitude			✓	
Attitude on the basis of Profiles of Adolescents:				
General Caste			✓	
OBC			✓	
Schedule Caste			✓	
Small Family Size			✓	
Medium Family Size			✓	
Large Family Size			✓	
Village near to City			✓	
Village far from City			✓	
Low family dependence on Agriculture			✓	
Medium Family Dependence on Agriculture			✓	
High Family Dependence on Agriculture			✓	
Marginal Landholding of Family		✓		
Small Landholding of Family			✓	
Big Landholding of Family			✓	

**Table 8. Attitude towards farming as future career on the basis of adolescent's profile**

Positive attitude towards farming occupation neutral attitude towards farming as future career choice is because of the difficulty felt by adolescents in agriculture. Difficulty in

agriculture is felt as high by adolescents across all profiles. Caste, family size, place of residence, family dependence on agriculture, or family holding of adolescents does not have any differentiating effect on the response when it comes to difficulty felt in agriculture. Unanimously, all groups feel difficulty in agriculture is high (refer table 9) and it is not a good sign for policy makers as it could be one of the most important factor that could drive the new generation towards other professions in future.

<b>Difficulty in Agriculture Felt by Adolescents</b>				
	Very High	High	Average	Low
Overall		✓		
Difficulty felt on the basis of Profiles of Adolescents:				
General Caste		✓		
OBC		✓		
Schedule Caste		✓		
Small Family Size		✓		
Medium Family Size		✓		
Large Family Size		✓		
Village near to City		✓		
Village far from City		✓		
Low family dependence on Agriculture		✓		
Medium Family Dependence on Agriculture		✓		
High Family Dependence on Agriculture		✓		
Marginal Landholding of Family		✓		
Small Landholding of Family		✓		
Big Landholding of Family		✓		

**Table 9. Difficulty felt in agriculture on the basis of adolescents profile**

It is suggested to the state and central government and also to experts of agriculture that new generation has still not framed their mind to opt out of farming occupation. Only issue is that

difficulties faced in farming occupation as mentioned below should be minimized:

- Shortage of inputs such as high quality seeds, fertilizers, and water.
- Ever increasing cost of inputs
- Problem of electricity in rural areas
- Insufficient remuneration for their outputs
- Low quality rural infrastructure
- Lack of technology for hi-tech farming

To make new generation of farming community stay in farming, it is mandatory for policy makers to ensure availability of basic infrastructure and required farming inputs and also ensuring enhanced income from the farming outputs by linking farmers to end consumers directly instead of middlemen taking away the larger share of farmers efforts. Further, opportunities have to be provided to the new generation to pursue pluriactivity may be through MNREGA or other schemes for extra income to new generation within the village. Three fold strategy proposed for policy makers is:

- Removing difficulties faced by farmers in farming profession
- Improving the basic infrastructure of villages
- Promoting pluriactivity depending on the other skills of farmers through Govt. Schemes for extra income within villages

In crux, it is suggested to the policy makers that positive signs are there when it comes to attitude of adolescents belonging to farming community towards agriculture and effective policies related to farming could not only make them stay with farming but could also result in effective contribution from them to the Indian economy in future.

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