

EXPLORING STUDENT PERSPECTIVES ON RURAL AGRICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT WITHIN THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

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Abstract

This paper explores the perspectives of College of Agriculture students about their involvement in work experience in rural areas. By use of an extensive combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses, questionnaires, and interviews, the study reveals the attitudes, obstacles, and advantages that students have in relation to their involvement in agricultural activities in rural communities. The results highlight how crucial practical experience, learning, and personal development are in the field of agriculture. The study also emphasises how important it is to combine theoretical understanding with real-world application, encourage community involvement, and support cross-cultural interactions among students. Teachers and legislators can create efficient plans to maximize work-study programmes in rural agriculture by addressing and comprehending students' perceptions. This will ultimately help to develop the next generation of agricultural leaders and advance sustainable agricultural practices.

Keywords: *Perception, Students, Rural, Agriculture, Work Experience, College Agriculture Experiential, Perception, Rawe, Practice and Learning.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of agricultural education is to produce skilled laborers who can engage in farming, research, teaching, and extension activities for the advancement of agriculture in India. Increased agricultural production, sustainability, ecological and environmental security, profitability, employment stability, and equity can all be achieved with its help. Several ICAR committees proposed that the programme should have a significant connection between agricultural education and real-world farming situations. Given the impact that agricultural knowledge has on farmers' socioeconomic behaviour, agricultural graduates are required by university regulations to work and study in rural areas during their internship.

Exploring Innovation Research Methodologies in a Variety of Multidisciplinary Fields and Their Prospective Future Impact

February 2024

This course is typically offered by SAUs during the final semester (VII or VIII) of an undergraduate degree programme.

For more than 60% of Indians, agriculture is the main driver of the country's economy. Since most of these farmers live in rural areas, improving the socioeconomic conditions in which they operate is essential to the prosperity of our nation. This kind of hands-on training and experience working with people in villages becomes inevitable because the rural work experience is essential to building a graduate's competence in functioning as an effective teacher, researcher, and extension professional in the transfer of technology to rural families. One of the finest ways to generate highly skilled agricultural graduates with a wide range of knowledge and skills to tackle new challenges is through RAWE.

This kind of hands-on training and experience working with people in villages becomes inevitable because the rural work experience is essential to building a graduate's competence in functioning as an effective teacher, researcher, and extension professional in the transfer of technology to rural families. One of the finest ways to generate highly skilled agricultural graduates with a wide range of knowledge and skills to tackle new challenges is through RAWE. In this context, a brand-new graduate course called the Rural Agricultural Work Experience (RAWE) Programme was introduced during the eighth semester at Indian agricultural universities. It was thought to be the best chance to help students become fully immersed in the rural environment, as well as to help them develop the necessary potential. As early as 1980–81, the Andhra Pradesh Agricultural University in Hyderabad was the first to include the RAWE programme in its curriculum. This came soon after the suggestions made by the Randhawa Committee.

2. LITERATURE RRVIEW

Jjuuko et.al (2019) study looks into Ugandan agricultural vocational education, emphasising student experiences. The study looks at different pedagogical strategies for agricultural education and illuminates the opportunities and difficulties faced by students in Uganda's agriculture industry. Their results provide insightful information that may be used to improve student learning and the efficacy of agriculture education initiatives.

Monavvarifard et.al (2019) Examine how students might help Iranian universities of agriculture and natural resources achieve higher standards of sustainability. The focus of their

Exploring Innovation Research Methodologies in a Variety of Multidisciplinary Fields and Their Prospective Future Impact

February 2024

research is on how students may promote sustainable development practices by participating in the value co-creation process. The study promotes a cooperative approach to resource management and environmental conservation within academic institutions by integrating students in sustainability activities.

In Li's (2022) focus switches to the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on agricultural education, particularly the move to online learning. From the viewpoint of the students, the study explores the advantages, difficulties, and necessary advancements of online learning. The study offers insightful information about how agricultural education can be adapted to digital platforms by examining students' experiences during the epidemic. It also emphasises the significance of resolving issues and improving online learning opportunities for students pursuing careers in agriculture.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current work was deliberately carried out at the College of Agriculture in Delhi, which is a branch of the National Institute of Plant Genome Research (NIPGR) in New Delhi. The study's respondents were students who had finished the RAWE programme in the 2022–2023 academic year. Out of the sixty pupils, forty-six were male and fourteen were female. Perception among RAWE programme participants at NIPGR Delhi is the dependent variable under investigation. Since RAWE had already been put into practice and student experience data had already been gathered, an ex-post facto study design is being used. The data covering the study's objectives was gathered using a pre-structured interview schedule. Frequency, percentage, mean score, and rank were used to analyse the collected data.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The distribution of RAWE students is shown by the results in Table 1. According to the study, 3.60 percent of people had poor perception. Regarding the Rural Agriculture Work Experience course, 38.50 percent of students had a medium opinion, while the majority of students (57.90%) had a positive perception. Nonetheless, it was determined that the majority of students in the high group felt favourably about the programmes for rural agriculture work experience. The emphasis placed on each aspect of farming that was incorporated into the RAWE curriculum is helping the kids learn, according to the results. The results showed that over 57.90% of RAWE participants had a high opinion of the programme, 38.50% had a

Exploring Innovation Research Methodologies in a Variety of Multidisciplinary Fields and Their Prospective Future Impact February 2024

medium opinion, and over 3.60% had a bad opinion. It is demonstrated that the attention paid to each module and the orientation programme of the Rural Agriculture Work Experience curriculum is helping the students learn. The results have supported the observations made by earlier researchers.

Table 1: Students' distribution according to how they felt about RAWE (N = 60)

Categories	No. of students	Percentage
Low	03	3.60
Medium	22	38.50
High	35	57.90
Total	60	100.00

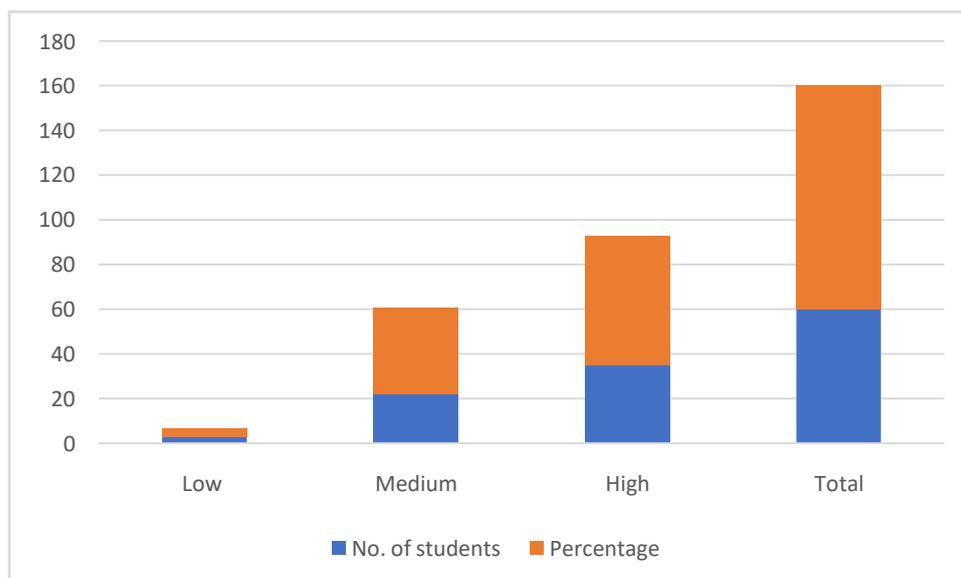


Table 2: Participants' perceptions of RAWE (N = 60)

Statements	Mean Score	Rank
Village Attachment has helped student to get familiar with rural people	3.80	VI
RAWE helped to understand local situations	3.30	II
To understand the working of rural	3.20	V

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Multidisciplinary Fields and Their Prospective Future Impact
February 2024**

To understand socio-economic conditions of the farmers and their status	3.95	I
To realize adoption patterns and adoption gaps of the farmers	2.99	III
RAWE helped me to understand farming systems and home management.	3.0	IV

Information shown in (Table 2) The statements that are supplied, together with the related mean scores and ranks, provide insightful information about how students see the College of Agriculture's rural agriculture work experience (RAWE). It is noteworthy that students place a high value on village attachment, as seen by the relatively high mean score and the recognition of its function in promoting familiarity with rural areas. Furthermore, the focus on comprehending farmers' socioeconomic circumstances highlights students' awareness of the larger agricultural context. There is potential for improvement in RAWE's comprehension of adoption patterns and gaps among farmers, even though it helps to some amount with understanding local circumstances and farming systems. Although there is room for improvement, overall the data indicates that RAWE programmes successfully support students' immersion into rural life and culture while also improving their comprehension of agricultural dynamics and socioeconomic realities.

5. CONCLUSION

Students at the College of Agriculture have a favourable perspective on job experience in rural agriculture, which is based on hands-on learning and community immersion. Students receive unique insights into the nuances of rural living, farming techniques, and socio-economic dynamics through programmes like village attachment and hands-on experiences. The results highlight areas for improvement, such as better understanding farming systems and adoption patterns, but they also highlight how important experiential learning is for developing a deeper understanding of agriculture and building meaningful relationships with rural communities. This favourable opinion lays the framework for students to later act as proactive participants in the development of sustainable agriculture.

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**Exploring Innovation Research Methodologies in a Variety of
Multidisciplinary Fields and Their Prospective Future Impact
February 2024**

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