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Profile of rural youth to retaining in agriculture for livelihood security

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Abstract
Agriculture in India faces a dual challenge—meeting the rising food demand while dealing with shrinking farm sizes and declining land availability due to urbanization and industrialization. With the world population expected to surpass 850 crores by 2025, sustainable agricultural growth is crucial. Despite agriculture being the backbone of the Indian economy, its contribution to national income has declined significantly, from 50% at independence to 25% by 2000. Moreover, global investment in agricultural research and infrastructure has reduced, further complicating the situation. India's youth, constituting a significant portion of the rural population, hold the key to revitalizing agriculture. Encouraging their active participation requires understanding and addressing the barriers they face in farming. The research adopted a purposive and random sampling technique, selecting Rajkot and Jamnagar districts from South Saurashtra based on high migration rates. Four talukas were randomly chosen from each district, resulting in eight talukas. From each taluka, two villages were randomly selected, totalling 16 villages. In each village, 15 rural youth were chosen as respondents, totalling 240 youth who expressed a desire to leave agriculture as their profession. The study analysed socio-economic and psychological factors influencing rural youth in Saurashtra. Most respondents were aged 24-29, with at least a secondary education. Family sizes were medium to large, and incomes ranged from ₹50,001 to ₹2,00,000 annually. Land holdings were mainly small, with most owning marginal to small plots. Social participation and extension contact were moderate to high, and farming experience was medium. Information source utilization, risk and market orientation were moderate, as was economic motivation. Achievement motivation was highest among those with medium motivation. Leadership ability was moderate to high, and migration behaviour showed medium migration tendencies.

Keywords: Agriculture, livelihood, youth, retention

Introduction
India's rural economy, heavily reliant on agriculture, faces significant challenges in maintaining its vitality. With a growing population and shrinking farm sizes, the nation's food security hinges on attracting and retaining its youth in farming. Historically, agriculture's contribution to India's national income has declined, and global investment in agricultural development has decreased, highlighting a critical need for revitalization. Rural youth, a substantial portion of India's population, possess the potential to drive this change, but they are increasingly drawn to urban opportunities. Factors such as low returns, perceived social status, and limited access to resources contribute to their disinterest in farming. To address this, the government and institutions like ICAR are implementing initiatives to skill and empower rural youth, promoting entrepreneurship and modern agricultural practices. Understanding the attitudes and perceptions of these youth towards agriculture is crucial for developing effective strategies to ensure their engagement and secure the future of India's agricultural sector.

Objective
To study the profile of rural youth to retaining in agriculture for livelihood security

Materials and Methodology

The study was conducted in the Saurashtra region of Gujarat, specifically focusing on the retention of youth in agriculture. It utilized an ex post facto research design, where the researcher examines variables that have already occurred. The research adopted a purposive and random sampling technique, selecting Rajkot and Jamnagar districts from South Saurashtra based on high migration rates. Four talukas were randomly chosen from each district, resulting in eight talukas. From each taluka, two villages were randomly selected, totalling 16 villages. In each village, 15 rural youth were chosen as respondents, totalling 240 youth who expressed a desire to leave agriculture as their profession. An interview schedule was developed in accordance with the objectives of the study, pre-tested, and translated into Gujarati. Data were collected using this structured interview schedule, classified, tabulated, analysed, and interpreted to make the findings meaningful. Statistical measures such as percentage, mean, standard deviation, regression coefficient and correlation coefficient were used in the study.

Table 1: Selected taluka, village and respondents of Rajkot and Jamnagar district for data collection

Sr. No.	Name of District	Name of Talukas	Name of Villages	Number of selected respondents
1	Rajkot	Rajkot	Hadmatiya	15
2			Haripar	15
3		Padadhari	Fatepar	15
4			Ishvariya	15
5		Jasdan	Amrapur	15
6			Atkot	15
7		Lodhika	Balsar	15
8			Devgam	15
9	Jamnagar	Jamnagar	Jambuda	15
10			Khimrana	15
11		Lalpur	Dharampur	15
12			Jasapar	15
13		Kalavad	Kharedi	15
14			Chhatar	15
15		Dhrol	Hamapar	15
16			Kharva	15
Total Number of Respondents				240

Results and Discussion

Personal profile of youth

Age: Respondents were categorized into three age groups—18 to 23 years (25.84%), 24 to 29 years (49.58%), and 30 to 35 years (24.58%). A majority (74.16%) belonged to the age group of 24-35 years. This suggests that mid-aged rural youth are significantly engaged in agriculture, possibly due to ongoing education or involvement in family farming activities. The observed findings might be due to many rural youth in the 24-29 age group may still be pursuing education or recently graduated. Rajkot and Jamnagar, being prominent districts, likely host better educational facilities, attracting youth from nearby villages to settle or commute. Additionally, Saurashtra has a significant agrarian economy. Young individuals in the 24-29 age group might stay to support family farms or learn agricultural practices, especially in districts like Rajkot and Jamnagar, which have a mix of agricultural and industrial activities. These findings align with those of Jayapuria (2015) [8], Tripathi *et al.* (2018) [24], and Barad (2022) [4].

Education: Most respondents had higher secondary education (31.67%), followed by secondary (21.25%) and primary (14.17%). Graduates and postgraduates constituted 18.33%. The moderate to high literacy level is reflective of improved educational initiatives like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Similar trends were reported by Mbah *et al.* (2016) [14] and Pakhmode *et al.* (2018) [17].

Family Size: About 78.75% of respondents had medium to large families (5 to 8+ members). This suggests the continued prevalence of joint family systems that support agriculture-based livelihoods. These results were supported by Mbah *et al.* (2016) [14] and Pokar (2023) [18].

Annual Income: Most respondents (85.83%) earned between ₹50,001 to ₹2,00,000 annually, indicating a moderate income level. The income structure reflects small landholdings and diversified livelihoods, in line with Preethi (2015) [19], Yadav (2016) [26], and Shireesha *et al.* (2017) [21].

Landholding Size: Small (44.58%) and marginal (23.75%) landholdings dominated, with only 3.75% owning large holdings (>10 ha). Limited land access among youth restricts growth in agriculture. These findings are consistent with Olaniyi *et al.* (2011) [16] and Barad (2022) [4].

Social Participation: A majority (60.83%) showed medium social participation, with 26.25% having high participation. This implies an active role in community organizations, which influences agricultural involvement. Similar patterns were observed by Umunnakwe *et al.* (2014) [25] and Chouhan (2018) [6].

Extension Contact: Around 69.17% had medium contact with extension agencies. This suggests average access to agricultural advisory services, supporting findings by Preethi (2015) [19] and Mansuri (2020) [13].

Farming Experience: About 64.17% of respondents reported medium farming experience. Many started assisting on family farms early, contributing to practical learning. This was in line with Maheta (2020) [12] and Subhash (2020) [22].

Sources of Information: Medium (42.50%), high (17.92%), and very high (24.58%) utilization of information sources were noted, indicating effective awareness through modern media. These findings corroborate with Anarase *et al.* (2018) [2] and Barad (2022) [4].

Risk Orientation: Nearly 29.17% had a medium risk orientation, while 22.08% had a very high level. Youth in rural areas increasingly engage in risk-taking behavior, driven by economic necessity. This trend aligns with Thilagam (2012) [23] and Subhash (2020) [22].

Market Orientation: Medium orientation was found in 43.34% of respondents, whereas 27.08% showed very low orientation. The lack of storage and poor infrastructure may limit market-focused behavior. Comparable findings were noted by Mewara (2005) [15] and Raviya (2020) [20].

Economic Motivation: A medium level was observed in 39.58% of respondents. This indicates a strong but restrained desire among youth to improve their economic condition through farming. Similar trends were reported by Bhosale (2010) [5] and Pakhmode *et al.* (2018) [17].

Cosmopoliteness: Nearly half (46.67%) had a medium level of cosmopoliteness, suggesting limited but growing awareness of external environments due to digital access. Findings were in line with Deshpande (2009) [7] and Kimaro *et al.* (2015) [11].

Achievement Motivation: About 57.08% had medium achievement motivation, influenced by economic limitations and lack of resources. The result resonates with Anamica (2010) [1] and Shireesha *et al.* (2017) [21].

Leadership Ability: Medium leadership ability was found in 56.25% of respondents, indicating potential for active roles in agricultural development. This supports findings by Bagheri (2017) [3] and Tripathi *et al.* (2018) [24].

Migration Behaviour: A medium level was seen in 56.25% of respondents, highlighting seasonal migration for supplementary income. This agrees with findings by Jayaraj (2013) [9] and Joshi (2013) [10].

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to their personal profile (n=240)

1.	**Age group**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Age 18 to 23 years	62	25.84
2	Age 24 to 29 years	119	49.58
3	Age 30 to 35 years	59	24.58
	Total	240	100.00
2.	**Education**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Illiterate	06	02.5
2	Functionally literate	12	05.00
3	Primary education	34	14.17
4	Secondary education	51	21.25
5	Higher secondary education	76	31.67
6	Diploma	17	07.08
7	Graduate	21	08.75
8	Post graduate	23	09.58
	Total	240	100.00
3.	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	1 to 2 members	12	05.00
2	3 to 4 members	39	16.25
3	5 to 6 members	73	30.42
4	7 to 8 members	62	25.83
5	Above 8 members	54	22.50
	Total	240	100.00
4.	**Annual income**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Above ₹ 2,00,000	31	12.92
2	₹ 1,50,001 to ₹ 2,00,000	58	24.17
3	₹ 1,00,001 to ₹ 1,50,000	72	30.00
4	₹ 50,001 to ₹ 1, 00,000	76	31.66
5	Up to ₹ 50,000	03	01.25
	Total	240	100.00
5.	**Land holding**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Big size of land holding (above 10 ha.)	09	3.75
2	Medium size of land holding (4.01 to 10 ha.)	26	10.83
3	Semi medium size of land holding (2.01 to 4 ha.)	38	15.84
4	Small size of land holding (1.01 to 2 ha.)	107	44.58
5	Marginal size of land holding (0.01 to 1 ha.)	57	23.75
6	Landless (0.00 ha.)	03	1.25
	Total	240	100.00
6.	**Social participation**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Low level of social participation (Score < 09.13)	31	12.92
2	Medium level of social participation (Score 09.13 to 24.44)	146	60.83
3	High level of social participation (Score > 24.44)	63	26.25

Total		240	100.00
Mean = 16.78	S.D. = 7.66		
7.	**Extension contact**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Low level of Extension contact (Score < 23.07)	45	18.75
2	Medium level of Extension contact (23.08 to 34.95)	166	69.17
3	High level of Extension contact (Score > 34.95)	29	12.08
Total		240	100.00
Mean = 29.01	S.D. = 5.94		
8.	**Farming experience**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Less farming experience (Score < 6.12)	50	20.83
2	Medium farming experience (6.12 to 12.40)	154	64.17
3	More farming experience (Score > 12.40)	36	15.00
Total		240	100.00
Mean = 9.26	S.D. = 3.14		
9.	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Very less utilization of sources of information (00.0 to 11.4 score)	17	07.08
2	Less utilization of sources of information (11.5 to 22.8 score)	19	07.92
3	Medium utilization of sources of information (22.9 to 34.2 score)	102	42.50
4	High utilization of sources of information(34.3 to 45.6 score)	43	17.92
5	Very high utilization of sources of information (45.7 to 57.0 score)	59	24.58
Total		240	100.00
10.	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Very less level of risk orientation (0.0 to 1.4 score)	38	15.83
2	Less level of risk orientation (1.5 to 2.8 score)	45	18.75
3	Medium level of risk orientation (2.9 to 4.2 score)	70	29.17
4	High level of risk orientation (4.3 to 5.6 score)	34	14.17
5	Very high level of risk orientation (5.7 to 7.0 score)	53	22.08
Total		240	100.00
11.	**Market orientation**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Very low level of market orientation (6.0 to 10.8 score)	65	27.08
2	Low level of market orientation (10.9 to 15.6 score)	32	13.33
3	Medium level of market orientation (15.7 to 20.4 score)	104	43.34
4	High level of market orientation (20.5 to 25.2 score)	31	12.92
5	Very high level of market orientation (25.3 to 30.0 score)	08	03.33
Total		240	100.00

12.	**Economic motivation**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Very low level of economic motivation (6 to 10.8 score)	48	20.00
2	Low level of economic motivation (10.8 to 15.6 score)	26	10.84
3	Medium level of economic motivation (15.6 to 20.4 score)	95	39.58
4	High level of economic motivation (20.4 to 25.2 score)	45	18.75
5	Very High level of economic motivation (25.2 to 30 score)	26	10.83
Total		240	100.00

13.	**Cosmopoliteness**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1.	Very low level of cosmopoliteness (06 to 08.4 score)	30	12.50
2.	Low level of cosmopoliteness (08.4 to 10.8 score)	44	18.33
3.	Medium level of cosmopoliteness (10.8 to 13.2 score)	112	46.67
4.	High level of cosmopoliteness (13.2 to 15.6 score)	18	07.50
5.	Very High level of cosmopoliteness (15.6 to 18 score)	36	15.00
Total		240	100.00

14.	**Category**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Low achievement motivation (6.00 to 11.42)	44	18.34
2	Medium achievement motivation (11.43 to 22.28)	137	57.08
3	High achievement motivation (22.29 to 30.00)	59	24.58
Total		240	100.00
Mean = 16.85	S.D. = 5.43		
15.	**Leadership ability**	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
1	Low level of Leadership ability (Score < 6.22)	39	16.25
2	Medium level of Leadership ability (6.22 - 11.58)	135	56.25
3	High level of Leadership ability (Score > 11.58)	66	27.50
Total		240	100.00
Mean = 8.9	S.D. = 2.68		

16.	Migration behaviour	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low migration behaviour (Score < 25.5)	64	26.67
2	Medium migration behaviour (25.5 to 57.58)	135	56.25
3	High migration behaviour (Score > 57.58)	41	17.08
Total		240	100.00
Mean = 41.54	S.D. = 16.04		

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