AN ANALYSIS OF AGRI-ALLIED ENTREPRENEURS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND SELF-EMPLOYMENT IN AHILYANAGAR (AHMEDNAGAR) DISTRICT

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Abstract
The success of a business is significantly influenced by the mindset and approach of the entrepreneur. Entrepreneurs are frequently characterized by their strengths and weaknesses in areas such as risk-taking, decision-making, and other critical skills. This study explores the connection between an entrepreneur's attitude and key factors like financial management, production management, human resource management, marketing management, problem-solving abilities, and the acquisition of technical expertise, all of which contribute to self-employment success. This study explores the attitudes of agri-entrepreneurs toward entrepreneurship and self-employment in Ahmednagar District, a region with a strong agricultural base and growing interest in agribusiness. The research aims to understand the factors influencing their perceptions, motivations, and challenges in pursuing self-employment opportunities within the agricultural sector. Using a mixed-method approach, data was collected through structured surveys and in-depth interviews with agri-entrepreneurs engaged in various agricultural and livestock-based ventures. The findings reveal that while a significant proportion of respondents exhibit a positive attitude toward entrepreneurship, factors such as access to capital, market linkages, technical knowledge, and risk perception play a critical role in shaping their entrepreneurial intentions. Additionally, the study highlights the impact of government policies, training programs, and socio-economic conditions on fostering a self-employment culture among agri-entrepreneurs. The results provide valuable insights for policymakers, agricultural extension services, and stakeholders aiming to promote entrepreneurship and self-employment in rural and semi-urban areas. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on agricultural entrepreneurship and offers practical recommendations to enhance the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Ahmednagar District and similar regions.

***Keywords**: Agri-entrepreneurship, self-employment, attitudes, Ahmednagar District, agricultural development, rural entrepreneurship ,Agri-Allied Businesses.*

Introduction

An entrepreneur is an individual who observes the environment, identifies opportunities, mobilizes resources, and takes action to capitalize on these opportunities while managing associated risks. Agri-entrepreneurship, a concept closely aligned with entrepreneurship in agriculture, refers to the establishment of agribusinesses within the agricultural and allied sectors (Bairwa et al., 2014). Agri-entrepreneurs are individuals who engage in activities that enable farmers to adapt to a free-market economy (Richards and Bulkley, 2007) and introduce innovations that directly or indirectly enhance agricultural productivity (Haredero, 1979).

Globally, the scope and opportunities in agri-enterprises have expanded significantly due to the globalization of trade and agriculture, sparking increased interest in this sector. In India, the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-Reliant India Movement) aims to promote domestic manufacturing, with agriculture playing a pivotal role. Three key reforms have been introduced to support this mission:

1. **Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Ordinance**: This reform promotes liberal trade, removes interstate trade barriers, and provides farmers with more options to sell their produce.
2. **The Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Ordinance**: This ensures price visibility and stability, reduces market risks, addresses erratic food pricing, and encourages contract farming.
3. **The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Ordinance 2020**: This amendment aims to boost private investment in agricultural supply chains, food processing industries, and export infrastructure (Ministry of Law and Justice, 2020).

Additionally, the National Agriculture Market (eNAM), a pan-India electronic trading platform, seeks to create a unified national market for

agricultural commodities, paving the way for more agri-entrepreneurs to enter the sector.

While government policies play a crucial role, the attitude of the entrepreneur is equally vital for the success of agri-enterprises. Attitude, defined as a way of thinking, feeling, or behaving that reflects one's mindset, is a driving force behind entrepreneurial ventures. It fosters long-term positive change and in stills a sense of purpose and fulfillment in entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurial skills and a positive attitude reinforce each other, as noted by Davey et al. (2011): "Greater entrepreneurial experience or skill leads to higher interest in self-employment and increased perceived feasibility of self-employment." This study focuses not on individual traits but on supportive entrepreneurial attributes, such as attitudes toward financial management, production, human resources, marketing, problem-solving, and the acquisition of technical knowledge.

Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar) district, with its diverse topography encompassing midlands, wetlands, lowlands, and highlands, offers a conducive environment for agri-entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs in this region have established businesses in various agri-allied sectors, including value addition, fisheries, animal husbandry, mushroom cultivation, apiculture, and floriculture. For this study, respondents were selected from entrepreneurs who have successfully sustained their businesses for at least three years and achieved a certain level of maturity in their operations.

II. Objectives of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to examine the attitude of agri-entrepreneurs toward self-employment. The specific objectives include:

1. To evaluate the attitude of agri-entrepreneurs toward financial management.
2. To assess the attitude of agri-entrepreneurs toward production management.
3. To explore the attitude of agri-entrepreneurs toward human resource management.
4. To understand the attitude of agri-entrepreneurs toward marketing management.
5. To analyze the problem-solving attitude of agri-entrepreneurs.
6. To examine the technical know-how and the attitude of agri-entrepreneurs toward its acquisition.

III. Significance of the Study

Self-employment is a highly rewarding endeavor, and self-employment in agriculture is particularly fulfilling due to its unique dynamics. However, this field is inherently risky, and agri-entrepreneurship is often marked by failures. A proper mindset and orientation toward self-employment in agriculture are critical components of success.

While most studies have focused on the characteristics of entrepreneurs, this study shifts its focus to the attitudes of entrepreneurs toward specific aspects of enterprise management, which are indispensable for success. These aspects include a deep understanding of financial management, organizing and controlling production processes, managing human resources, acquiring and retaining markets, adopting a cognitive, emotional, and behavioral approach to problem-solving, and acquiring, distributing, storing, and interpreting technical knowledge.

IV. Research Methodology

A. Selection of Area

The study was conducted in Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar),Maharshatra state due to its significant potential for agri-entrepreneurship. The district's diverse topography and thriving agri-allied sectors make it an ideal location for this research.

B. Selection of Sample

A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 400 agri-entrepreneurs from Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar) district. These entrepreneurs were engaged in various agri-allied sectors, which were categorized into four groups: value addition, fisheries, animal husbandry, and other enterprises (such as mushroom cultivation, apiculture, and floriculture). A sample of 100 entrepreneurs was selected from each group.

C. Design of the Study

The study was conducted in two phases:

1. **Data Collection Phase**: A survey was conducted to gather data from the selected sample.
2. **Data Analysis Phase**: The collected data were coded, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical techniques.

D. Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

An online survey was conducted among the selected agri-entrepreneurs using a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool.

E. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data were analyzed using SPSS 20.0 for Windows. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and describe the data. Parametric statistical tools, such as one-way ANOVA and Z-tests, were employed to compare factors across different levels of demographic variables. ANOVA tests were used to determine whether there were significant differences between two or more means.

Post hoc tests or multiple comparison tests were applied when ANOVA results were significant.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to assess the significance and impact of attitudes toward the identified factors on self-employment. CFA, a type of structural equation modeling, focuses on measurement models, examining the relationships between observed indicators and latent variables (factors). This approach helped determine how attitudes toward financial management, production management, human resource management, marketing management, problem-solving, and technical know-how influenced self-employment outcomes

V. Results and Discussion

A. Demographic Profile of the Agri-Entrepreneurs

To understand the general characteristics of the selected agri-entrepreneurs, data related to their demographic profile was collected. This included information on age, level of education, income, gender, and caste. The findings are summarized in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: Demographic Profile of Agri-Entrepreneurs

Sl. No.	**Age**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
1	20-30 years	5	1.25
2	30-40 years	84	21
3	40-50 years	124	31
4	50 and above	187	46.75
	Total	400	100
Sl. No	**Level of education**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
1	Primary	97	24.25
2	Secondary	143	35.75
3	Graduation	113	28.25
4	Post-Graduation	47	11.75
	Total	400	100.0
Sl. No.	**Annual income**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
1	Upto 50000	36	9.0
2	50001-100000	48	12.0
3	100001-500000	216	54.0
4	500000-1000000	68	17.0
5	Above 10 lakhs	32	8.0
	Total	400	100.0
Sl. No.	**Gender**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
1	Male	261	65.25
2	Female	139	34.75
	Total	400	100.0
Sl. No	**Caste**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
1	General	320	80.0
2	OBC	68	17.0
3	SC /ST	12	3.0
	Total	400	100.0

A. Demographic Profile of the Agri-Entrepreneurs

The data related to the age of the agri-entrepreneurs reveals that their ages ranged from 20 to 50 and above. Among the respondents, the highest percentage belonged to the age group of 50 and above. Additionally, the majority of the agri-entrepreneurs had an education level at the intermediate level. In terms of income, most of the sample respondents reported an annual income in the range of Rs. 100,001–500,000. Furthermore, the majority of the agri-entrepreneurs were male and belonged to the general category.

B. Classification of Entrepreneurs Based on Agri-Allied Sectors

The entrepreneurs selected for the study were engaged in various agri-based allied sectors. They were classified into four groups: value addition, fisheries, animal husbandry, and other enterprises (such as mushroom cultivation, apiculture, and floriculture). The data related to this classification are presented in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Classification of Entrepreneurs Based on Agri Allied Sectors

Type of agri based enterprise engaged in	*Value addition*		*Fisheries*		*Animal husbandry*		*Other enterprises*	
	Frequency	*%*	*Frequency*	*%*	*Frequency*	*%*	*Frequency*	*%*
Dairy management					48	48.0		
Dairy products	4	4.0						
Poultry					28	28.0		
Duck rearing					8	8.0		
Floriculture							28	28.0
Apiculture							40	40
Value addition	96	96.0						
Mushroom							32	32.0
Fisheries.			100	100.0				
Goat rearing.					16	16.0		
Total	100	100.0	100	100.0	100	100.0	100	100.0

The table above presents the various types of agri-allied sectors practiced in the Ahilyanagar (Ahmednagar)district, along with the classification of identified agri-entrepreneurs based on value addition, fisheries, animal husbandry, and other enterprises.

Demographic profile of the agri-entrepreneurs.

a) Age Table 5.3 examines the influence of the demographic variable, age, on attitudes toward self-employment. Age was treated as the independent variable, and ANOVA was employed to compare the mean scores across different age groups. The results are displayed in Table 5.3

Table 5.3 Means, Standard Deviation and F Value for Age

Variables	*Age*	*N*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*F*	*p value*
Attitude towards self employment	20-30 years	5	24.00	0.00	4.630	0.003
	30-40 years	84	22.08	4.77		
	40-50 years	124	21.29	4.64		
	50 and above	187	19.98	4.55		

The ANOVA test presented in Table 5.4 shows that the p-value for the variable "attitude towards self-employment" is greater than 0.05. Therefore, it is concluded that the mean scores of attitude towards self-employment do not vary significantly with educational qualifications.

While there is a positive relationship between education and nascent entrepreneurship or new venture creation, evidence also suggests a nonlinear relationship between education and mature entrepreneurship

(Antoncic et al., 2007). Additionally, the total literacy rate in Ahilynagar district is 97.21 percent, which could serve as an advantage for fostering nascent entrepreneurship.

c)**Annual Income**

Annual income was treated as the independent variable, and ANOVA was used to compare the mean scores across different annual income ranges. The results are presented in Table 5.5.

Table 5.5 Means, Standard Deviation and F Value for Annual Income

Variables	*Annual income*	*N*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*F*	*p value*
Attitude towards self-employment	Upto 50000	36	18.11	3.26	18.445	<0.001
	50001-100000	48	17.08	3.99		
	100001-500000	216	20.96	4.45		
	500000-1000000	68	22.94	4.10		
	Above 10 lakhs	32	22.75	5.02		

The results of the ANOVA test reveal that the p-value for the variable "attitude towards self-employment" is less than 0.05. This indicates that the mean scores of the variable "attitude towards self-employment" differ significantly across different annual income groups.

Since the ANOVA test suggests a significant difference in attitudes towards self-employment among annual income groups, a post hoc test or multiple comparison test was conducted to identify which income levels differ significantly. The results are presented in Table 5.5(a).

The majority of the entrepreneurs belonged to the middle-income group. One reason for the larger number of entrepreneurs in this group is that entrepreneurship serves as an alternative to wage and salary employment and has the potential to generate double income (Edmiston, 2008).

Table 5.6 Means, Standard Deviation and F Value for Type of Agri Allied Sector

Variables	*Type of agri allied sector*	*N*	*Mean*	*Standard Deviation*	*F*	*p value*
Attitude towards self employment	Value Addition	100	18.32	4.77	21.177	<0.001
	Fisheries	100	22.96	3.48		
	Animal husbandry	100	21.56	4.53		
	Other enterprises	100	20.04	4.45		

The ANOVA test presented in Table 5.6 shows that the p-value for the variable "attitude towards self-employment" is less than 0.05. This indicates that the mean scores of the variable "attitude towards self-employment" differ significantly across different types of agri-allied sectors. Ahilyanagar (Ahmednagar) district is particularly well-suited for various agri-allied sectors due to its diverse topography, which includes midlands, wetlands, lowlands, and highlands.

Since the ANOVA test reveals a significant difference in attitudes towards self-employment among the different types of agri-allied sectors, a post hoc test or multiple comparison test was conducted to identify which specific sectors differ significantly. The results of this analysis are presented in the subsequent table.

Table 5.7 The Regression Coefficients - Attitude towards Self Employment

Factors/ Latent Variables (Dependent Variable)	Construct (Independent Variable)	Regression Coefficient	C.R.	P	Variance explained (%)	Rank
Attitude towards self-employment	1) Financial management (A1)	0.761	19.897	<0.001	58.0	2
	2)Production management (A2)	0.796	21.670	<0.001	63.4	1
	3)Human Resource management (A3)	0.596	13.687	<0.001	35.6	3
	4)Marketing management (A4)	0.579	13.169	<0.001	33.6	4
	5)Problem solving Attitude (A5)	0.416	8.824	<0.001	17.3	6
	6)Acquiring of technical Knowhow (A6)	0.562	12.667	<0.001	31.6	5

1) Financial Management

Financial management is crucial as a better understanding of financial issues enables entrepreneurs to realize business ideas, secure funding, and drive their ventures toward success (Cumurovic & Hyll, 2017). The results in Table 5.10 indicate that financial management significantly impacts attitudes toward self-employment. The standardized direct effect of this construct on the dependent variable (attitude toward self-employment) is 0.761, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.4 (p-value significant). Thus, it is concluded that financial management significantly influences the attitude toward self-employment among agri-entrepreneurs in the Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar) district.

2) **Production Management**

Production management is comparable in importance and scope to marketing and financial management (Holstein, 2008). The findings in Table 5.10 reveal that production management significantly impacts attitudes toward self-employment. The standardized direct effect of this construct on the dependent variable is 0.796, which is above the recommended value of 0.4 (p-value significant). Therefore, it is concluded that production management significantly influences the attitude toward self-employment among agri-entrepreneurs in the Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar) district.

3) Human Resource Management

Human resource management is a critical managerial function that can significantly influence entrepreneurial outcomes (Morris & Jones, 1993). Table 5.10 shows that human resource management has a significant impact on attitudes toward self-employment. The standardized direct effect of this construct on the dependent variable is 0.596, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.4 (p-value significant). Hence, it is concluded that human resource management significantly affects the attitude toward self-employment among agri-entrepreneurs in the Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar) district.

4) Marketing Management

Marketing is one of the most significant challenges faced by small- and medium-sized enterprises, yet it is essential for their growth and survival (Franco et al., 2014). The results in Table 5.10 indicate that marketing management significantly impacts attitudes toward self-employment. The standardized direct effect of this construct on the dependent variable is 0.579, which is above the recommended value of 0.4 (p-value significant). Thus, it is concluded that marketing management significantly influences the attitude toward self-employment among agri-entrepreneurs in the Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar) district.

5) Problem-Solving Attitude

Opportunities are often linked to valuable problem-solution pairings, and identifying these opportunities requires deliberate search and recognition (Hsieh et al., 2007). The findings in Table 5.10 reveal that problem-solving attitude significantly impacts attitudes toward self-employment. The standardized direct effect of this construct on the dependent

variable is 0.416, which exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.4 (p-value significant). Therefore, it is concluded that problem-solving attitude significantly influences the attitude toward self-employment among agri-entrepreneurs in the Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar) district.

6) **Acquiring Technical Know-How**
Failure to acquire new knowledge and adapt to technological advancements can hinder progress and the ability to meet shifting customer demands (Erzetic, 2008). The results in Table 5.10 show that acquiring technical know-how significantly impacts attitudes toward self-employment. The standardized direct effect of this construct on the dependent variable is 0.562, which is above the recommended value of 0.4 (p-value significant). Thus, it is concluded that acquiring technical know-how significantly influences the attitude toward self-employment among agri-entrepreneurs in the Ahilyanagar(Ahmednagar) district.

Conclusion

This study highlights that agri-entrepreneurs' attitudes toward factors such as financial management, production management, human resource management, marketing management, problem-solving attitude, and acquiring technical know-how significantly impact their inclination toward self-employment. Among these factors, production management emerged as the most significant, while problem-solving attitude was the least significant. The study also examines the influence of demographic variables such as age, education level, annual income, gender, caste, and type of agri-allied sectors on attitudes toward self-employment.

Hypothesis testing revealed that the mean scores of attitudes toward self-employment differ significantly for demographic variables such as age, annual income, gender, and type of agri-allied sectors. However, no significant differences were observed for education level and caste.

For entrepreneurs to succeed, the factors mentioned above play a pivotal role. Therefore, it is recommended that steps be taken to strengthen these skills. While government interventions have primarily addressed financial and regulatory obstacles, and skill-building programs through courses and seminars have been beneficial, there is now a need to foster the right entrepreneurial mindset.

Attitude, which reflects an individual's manner of thinking, feeling, and behaving, is deeply rooted in personality and can be challenging to change. To address this, attitudinal training focusing on cognitive skills, mentorship programs, exposure initiatives, and global and local entrepreneurship events can be implemented. Additionally, leveraging multiple channels such as advertising, TV and radio programs, and social media can help promote entrepreneurship and reshape attitudes.

In conclusion, government policies, schemes, and training programs for agri-entrepreneurs should be designed to address the various factors influencing entrepreneurial attitudes toward self-employment. By doing so, the success rate of entrepreneurs venturing into agriculture can be significantly enhanced.

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