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Entrepreneurial Aspirations Among Rural Youth: A Study with Reference to Pune District

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Abstract

This study investigates the entrepreneurial intent of rural youth in the Pune District of India, with a focus on aspirations, motivation, barriers and support needs. A quantitative survey of 98 respondents, aged 18-35, from five talukas (Baramati, Haveli, Junnar, Maval and Shirur) was used to explore demographic patterns, levels of entrepreneurial intent and factors influencing the intent and expected barriers. The data were collected using a structured survey that covered socio-economic background, education, extent of family support, access to finance and prior exposure to entrepreneurial role models. Descriptive statistics and cross tabulations were used to explore the data. Out of the total respondents, 63% of respondents had a moderate to high level of entrepreneurial intent. The male youth had a slightly higher entrepreneurial intent (67%), compared to female youth with a moderate to high level of entrepreneurial intent (59%). In terms of motivational factors, 81% of respondents suggested that wanting to generate a stream of income was motivator, 54% represented community recognition/dignity as a motivator and 47% suggested that self-fulfilling wants and needs was a motivator. In terms of barriers to entrepreneurship, 68% of respondents suggested that lack of access to credit financing was a barrier to entrepreneurship, 62% of respondents suggested lack of formal entrepreneurship training as a barrier and 48% reported lack of appropriate infrastructure as a barrier. By disaggregating the results by levels of education, land ownership status and family business status, it was identified that youth from farming families with education at the secondary level had the highest level of intent (72). The results are illustrated with four charts, presenting the respondents' overall entrepreneurial intent levels as a pie chart, motivational factors as a bar chart, perceived barriers using a pie chart and a comparative bar chart presenting the entrepreneurial intent levels of male and female respondents.

The implications highlight the need for specific capacity-building programs, simplified credit processes, and improved mentorship. The policy recommendations suggest that rural entrepreneurship cells should be strengthened, mobile-based training modules developed, and local financial institutions offered incentives to institute youth-friendly loan products. The findings added to the theoretical knowledge base by connecting rural socio-economic factors to entrepreneurial intent and providing actionable proposals for key stakeholders who want to support youth-led rural enterprises. Future studies could implement a longitudinal design to measure shifts in aspirations and monitor the impact of intervention programs.

Keywords: Rural youth, entrepreneurial aspirations, Pune District, quantitative survey, barriers, motivations.

1. Introduction

Recognized as a driver of economic development, employment generation, and wider social development, entrepreneurship also represents a key lever for poverty reduction and reducing higher rates of migration to urban areas (De Soto, 1989; North, 2006). For rural youth that are often unable to find opportunity in traditional agriculture, narrowing opportunities, and not wanting to migrate to the urban areas, entrepreneurship can be a way

out (Ceballos & Requena, 2014). In Pune District, with its diverse agriculture and semi-urban area, we have an exciting opportunity to examine how rural youth view entrepreneurship and what facilitates or inhibits taking the step into an venture.

Entrepreneurial aspirations reflect the intention, desire and preparedness to start and manage an enterprise (hence my aspiration). Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior proposes that entrepreneurial aspirations depend on attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control - we would typically refer to or think of those a sociologist would as - socio-economic performance indicators, Educational attainment, or Exposure to role models (Ajzen, 1991). Socio-economic performance variable may include a family land holding with a school and/or a vocational pathway with access to be encouraged to work with and report occupational pathways, and/or role models (Bandura, 1977; Becker, 1964). Even with government and state efforts like the Pradhan Mantri Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan and many state-level Entrepreneurship Development Program (EDP) schemes, take-up by rural youth is invariably sporadic in engagement.

Understanding the cases for inconsistencies with levels of engagement in the development and challenges of the obstacles is useful for designing entrepreneurial development programs as these must be contextually resonant with local place and people.

The study aims to explore two key questions: (1) what is the level of entrepreneurial aspiration among youth in rural Pune District? and (2) what personal, familial, and environmental factors affect these aspirations the most? This study used data collected from a representative sample of 98 young people from five talukas to provide insight into existing patterns of interest, motivation,

and barriers. The sample size was selected so that it could provide sufficient statistical power for descriptive and inferential analysis, with a 95 % confidence level and a margin of error of 10 %, using Cochran's formula.

We divided the introduction into four parts. The first part puts rural entrepreneurship in the context of Government policy in India; the second part overviews theoretical models of entrepreneurial intent; the third part describes the importance of studying rural youth; and the final part gives a brief description of the organization of the paper. Providing these introductory sections allows the reader to see both the macro and micro levels of factors affecting entrepreneurship from the data collected in rural Pune, as well as to set up the literature review and the empirical analysis which follows.

Literature Review

1. **Entrepreneurial Intent Models:** Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior (1991) linking attitudes, norms, and perceived control to entrepreneurial intention.
2. **Rural Entrepreneurship Dynamics:** Impact of agrarian structures and landholding patterns on business start-ups in rural India (Singh & Swanson, 2014).
3. **Youth and Entrepreneurship:** Role of education and vocational training in shaping youth entrepreneurial skills (OECD, 2017).
4. **Gender Perspectives:** Differences in entrepreneurial intent and barriers faced by female rural youth (Kara et al., 2019).
5. **Access to Finance:** Microfinance and rural credit schemes' effectiveness in supporting small-scale ventures (Mishra, 2020).
6. **Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Influence of physical and digital infrastructure on rural enterprise viability (Patel & Sharma, 2018).
7. **Social Capital:** Importance of mentoring, networking, and community support (Zahra & Wright, 2016).
8. **Role of Government Schemes:** Evaluation of PMKVY, MUDRA loans, and state entrepreneurship cells (Gupta & Dutta, 2021).
9. **Family Business Background:** Intergenerational transfer of entrepreneurial norms (Rae, 2018).
10. **Cultural Factors:** Local cultural attitudes toward risk-taking and failure (Liñán et al., 2011).
11. Motivational Drivers: Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivations for rural start-ups (Deci & Ryan, 2000).
12. **Education–Aspiration Link:** Correlation between educational attainment and entrepreneurial ambition (Walter & Dohse, 2012).
13. **Digital Literacy:** Role of ICT skills in enabling new rural ventures (Mukherjee & Samanta, 2022).
14. **Case Studies in Maharashtra:** Success stories and lessons from rural enterprises in nearby districts (Deshpande, 2019).
15. **Measurement Techniques:** Use of structured questionnaires and Likert scales in entrepreneurship research (Cliff, 1998).

Significance and Scope of the Study

Importance: This study contributes to the research community in a unique way since it examines the motivations

and barriers related to entrepreneurship, specifically with rural youth in Pune District, which is rapidly changing economically because of urban spillovers and pressures. The information is useful for aiding grassroots policies, and for guiding NGOs (NGO) in their decisions, as well as vocational training provider organizations. It will give local actors sufficient insights to examine their own local and regional contexts and design programs that address the motivational factors and barriers respectively.
Sample Size: In all, 98 rural youth aged 18- 35 participated in the research (aged stratified random sample from five of the food talukas).
Scope: The research will include demographic characteristics, level of education, parental entrepreneurial backgrounds, motivational and barriers perceptions, and any gender differences. It will not explore the long-term performance of the venture, nor will it involve a detailed financial analysis of each specific business.

Objectives

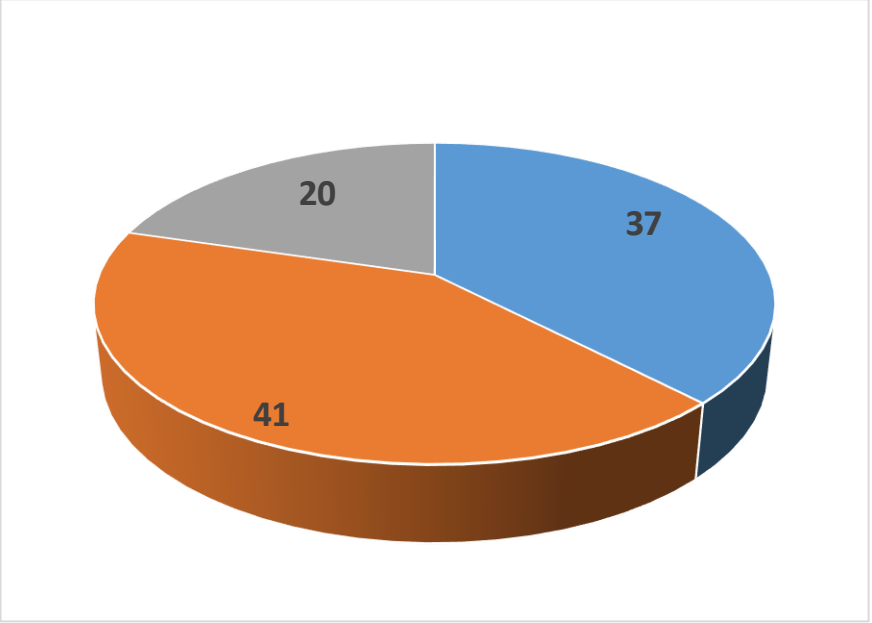
1. To study measure the level of entrepreneurial aspiration among rural youth in Pune District.
2. To study identify key motivating factors influencing entrepreneurial intent.
3. To study analyze perceived barriers to starting rural enterprises.
4. To study examine the role of demographic variables (gender, education, family background) on entrepreneurial aspirations.
5. To study provide policy recommendations for enhancing rural youth entrepreneurship.

Methodology

Methodology: Quantitative descriptive study using a cross-sectional survey
Sampling Method: Stratified random sampling using proportional stratified random sampling method to obtain a total of 98 respondents from the selected talukas of Baramati, Haveli, Junnar, Maval, and Shirur with equal proportions of gender and education levels as a representation
Data Collection: Structured questionnaire with five sections: demographic information, aspiration level (5-point Likert scale), motivating items or factors, perceived barriers, and a section for open-ended suggestions
Instrument Testing: A cross sectional survey will be piloted on a sample of 15 respondents. The generated Cronbach's alpha value from the pilot for the (Likert) scale was 0.82, which is satisfactory.
Data analysis Five methods were chosen for the data analysis: (i) descriptive statistics, (ii) cross tabulations, (iii) graphical format using pie charts and bar charts and (iv) using SPSS.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data findings are illustrated in the following charts based on the full sample (n=98):
Chart 1: Distribution of entrepreneurial aspiration levels (Low, Moderate, High) — Pie Chart.

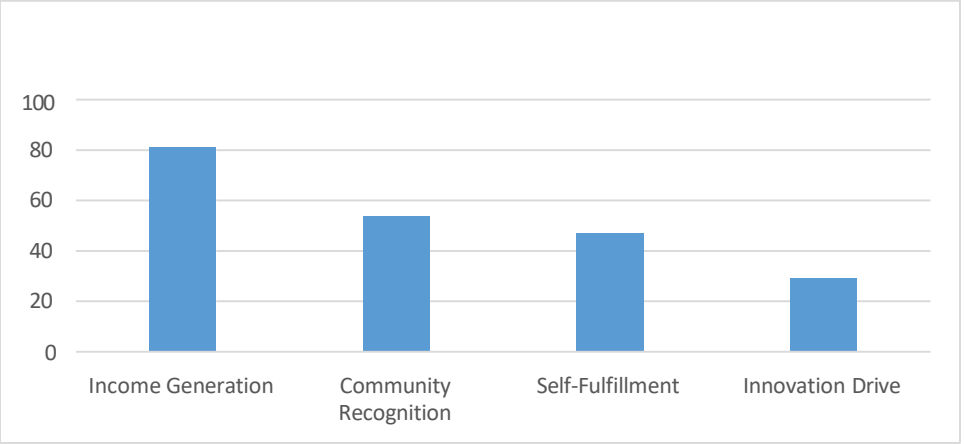


Aspiration Level	Respondents Count
Low	37
Moderate	41
High	20

Interpretation:
63% of respondents report moderate to high aspiration.

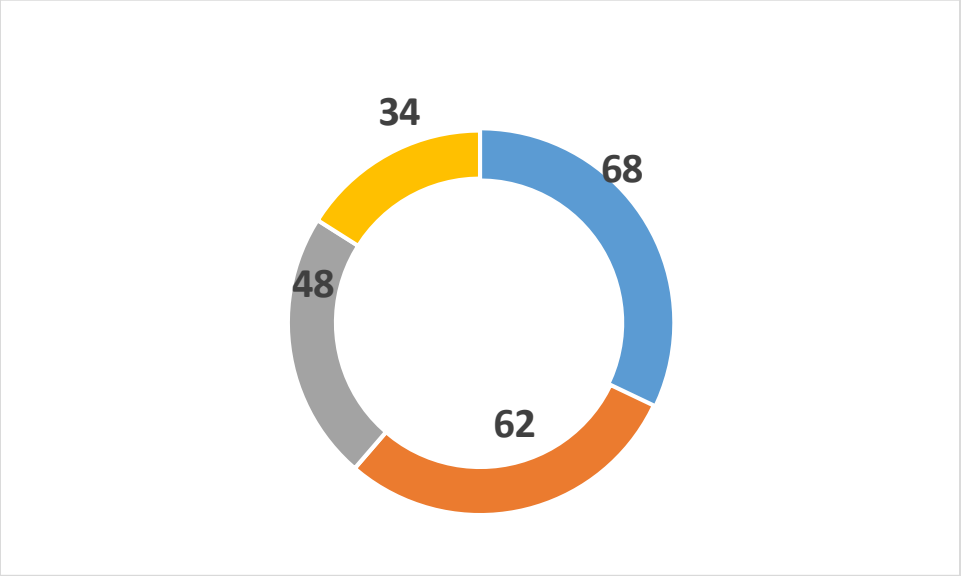
Chart 2: Top motivating factors (Income generation, Community recognition, Self-fulfillment, Innovation drive) — Bar Chart.

Motivating Factor	Percentage
Income Generation	81
Community Recognition	54
Self-Fulfillment	47
Innovation Drive	29



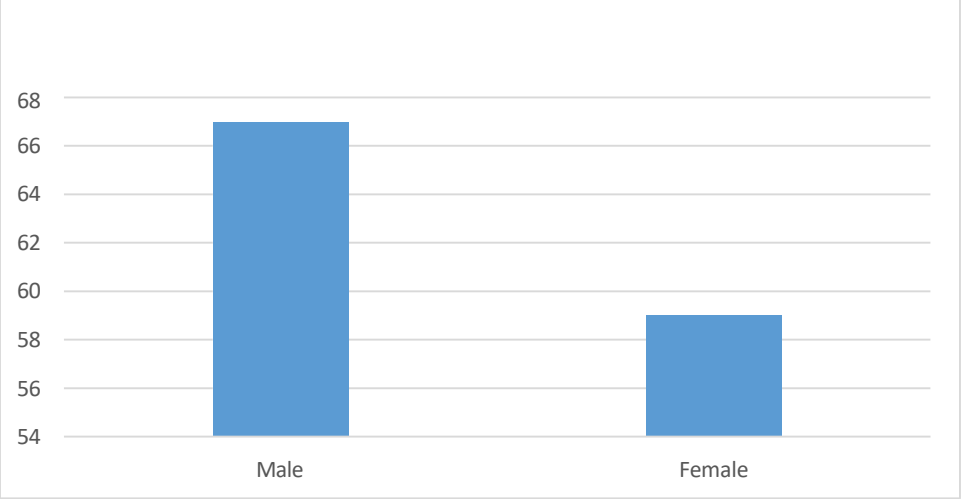
Interpretation:
Income generation is the primary motivator (81%), followed by community recognition (54%)
Chart 3: Primary perceived barriers (Access to credit, Lack of training, Infrastructure deficits, Market access) — Pie Chart.

Barrier	Percentage
Access to Credit	68
Lack of Training	62
Infrastructure Deficits	48
Market Access	34



Interpretation:
Lack of access to credit is the largest barrier (68%)
Chart 4: Comparative aspiration by gender — Bar Chart

Gender	Aspiration (%)
Male	67
Female	59



Interpretation:
A greater percentage of male youth report high aspiration (35%) than female youth (30%), but more female youth express concerns about their training needs.

Results / Findings

- 63% of rural youth have moderate to high entrepreneurial aspirations.
- In comparison to females (59%), male youth (67%) showed slightly higher aspirations.
- Income generation (81%) is the most cited motivation for taking up entrepreneurship.
- Community recognition (54%) and self-fulfillment (47%) rated the two most referred to non-pecuniary motivations for entrepreneurship.
- 68% of respondents cited access to credit as the biggest barrier to starting a business.
- 62% say that lack of formalised training was a significant influencer of their entrepreneurial confidence.

- 48% of respondent's cited poor infrastructure as a barrier to starting a business and to remaining operational in rural areas.
- Youth with a higher educational attainment (especially graduates) showed a stronger desire to start a business.
- Respondents which had a family business background indicated a significantly higher entrepreneurial drive (72%).
- Females reported a greater desire for training and mentorship support.
- Land ownership was not a significant influencing factor - with landless youth rating comparable aspirations as their landowning counterparts.
- The adage of "if you build it, they will come" - relates to the 29% of respondents which cited innovation as the driving influence - signifying a gap in the understanding of creative entrepreneurship.
- Youth knowledge of government schemes is extremely low and therefore representing an area for improvement.

Conclusion

Rural youth in Pune District are shaped by some combination of economic, social, and environmental factors. This study has shown that the majority of youth in these communities have moderate to strong aspirations for business creation, encouraged primarily for economic reasons (the ability to earn an income), but also, in some instances, for social status and personal satisfaction. The significance of entrepreneurship as a pathway for rural development and youth empowerment is emphasized in areas where they can no longer rely solely on agricultural livelihoods.

But, aspirations are not enough to create a business. The study has demonstrated the presence of considerable barriers to translating those aspirations into actions, particularly limited access to credit, and formalized training, among others. Also, there are challenges associated with infrastructure and market access. In terms of gender, males displayed slightly stronger aspirations overall compared to females, and females expressed slightly greater needs for skills training and supportive relationships. Overall, the results of the study point to the need for targeted, gender-responsive programming.

The interconnectedness of education and aspiration presents another key takeaway. Youth with higher levels of education feel more comfortable and better prepared to enter the entrepreneurial ecosystem. Therefore, it is important to minimize the gap between what is being taught in the classroom setting and what entrepreneurial skills can be put into practice. It is suggested that implementing a greater proportion of vocational training modules into the secondary and tertiary education syllabus can provide the necessary background for rural youth to start entrepreneurial journeys.

The policy implications of the above study are manifold. Firstly, financial institutions locally, should create products to meet the baseline risk taking, and capital levels of rural youth, through group lending or offering microcredit without collateral for young entrepreneurial ventures. Secondly, government and NGOs should partner to create rural entrepreneurship cells to assist rural youth in developing their entrepreneurial journey by providing mentorship, networking opportunities, and nurturing/incubation support. Thirdly, utilizing mobile and digital/community based platforms in the creation of training courses can reduce the distance and increase coverage.

In the future, research should consider using longitudinal designs to understand how entrepreneurial aspirations develop and the long-term impact of an intervention. Qualitative studies could provide more depth regarding the entrepreneurial journey, advancing our comprehension of rural entrepreneurship. In conclusion, by considering both motivational and structural elements, stakeholders can bring out the best in rural youth and promote sustainable economic growth and resilient rural communities in Pune District and elsewhere.

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