

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges (SWOC) of the Rural Youth in Agriculture

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ABSTRACT

SWOC analysis is a method of investigating the rural youth and the farming activities within this framework, assessment of the current situation of the rural youth. SWOC summarized most important key points of the rural youth, by grouping the problems and benefits based on the four elements of the SWOC - strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, which allows easier identification of strategies and ways to develop and agricultural activities in rural areas. SWOC analysis presents a very simple methodology, a list of 22 items (strengths-6, weaknesses-5, opportunities-6, and challenges-5) was prepared and examine with 120 rural youth individually, the respondents were asked to rank the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges as perceived by them using the statistical tool of RBQ (Rank Based quotient) method. Leading agriculture and awareness about the future, Possess to good spirit and less fear for failure are ranked major strength of rural youth. Large sections of the youth population untrained and less educated and less contact with extension agencies and lack of proper guidance are ranked foremost weaknesses. Formation of youth clubs for TOT Training opportunities exist for youth interested in agriculture are ranked primary opportunities and lack of financial support and dependency on others and lot of increased migration to urban areas are perceived important challenges of rural youth.

Key Words : SWOC, Rural youth, Agriculture

INTRODUCTION

Youth form a large proportion of the global population. They are valuable human resource and are important asset for development for countries in which they constitute the majority of the population. Young people in rural areas are the future of agricultural and other rural industries. This paper presents rural youth strengths, weaknesses, Opportunity and Challenges for involving in farm activities. SWOC is an acronym stands for Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Challenges. SWOC analysis is a planning tool used to understand the Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Challenges involved in a person, project, or in a business. It is defined as a process of generating information that is helpful in matching an rural youth capacities to the farming activities in which it

operates. SWOC analysis is a strategic planning method used to research external and internal factors which affect rural youth success and growth.

Strengths are positive tangible and intangible attributes, internal to individual, basic assets of the rural youth in agriculture which provides growth and development.

Weakness is the liability of an individual, to involvement of rural youth which affect the growth and utilization in agriculture.

Opportunity is the ability of an individual to expand the prospect and exploitation of rural youth towards agriculture in varied aspects.

Challenges are the external factors, Situations that might block the rural youth activities and allied sectors.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in Dharmapuri district of Tamil Nadu. Dharmapuri district had eight blocks. Out of those eight blocks, six blocks namely Pappireddipatti, Harur, Morappur, Nallampalli, Karimangalam and Pennagaram, from these blocks, four villages per block were randomly selected. Among these villages total of 120 respondents (18-35 years) were selected by using random sampling technique. A well structured and pre - tested interview schedule was used to collect data by personal interview. In the formulation of research methodology for SWOC, a list of 22 items (strengths-6, weaknesses-5, opportunities-6, and challenges-5) was prepared after reviewing the relevant researches conducted in SWOC on different dimensions and also on holding discussion with specialized scientists. An interview schedule was prepared to unearth the SWOC parameters of the rural youth. The perceived responses of the respondents under each parameter were listed. Further, the respondents were asked to rank the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges as perceived by them.

Rank based quotient:

The ranks attributed for different SWOC parameters

and the frequency of rural youth ranked could be used for the calculation of Rank Based Quotient (RBQ) (Raj Pravin 2001).The formula for RBQ calculation is as follows.

$$RBQ = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n (F_i) (n + 1 - i)}{Nn} \times 100$$

where,

F_i = frequency of youth for the i^{th} rank and SWOC parameters

N = number of youths

n = number of ranks

n

Σ = sum the multiply factor

$i=1$

n

$\Sigma (F_i) (n+1-i) = F_1 \times n + F_2 \times n-1 + F_3 \times n-2 + \dots + F_n \times 1$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

SWOC matrix:

Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges (SWOC) of the rural youth.

	Factors likely to lead to positive change and involvement of the rural youth in agriculture	Factors which may leads to compromise further improvement of the rural youth
Internal attributes	<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leading agriculture and awareness about the future Possess to good spirit and less fear for failure Spread innovativeness to social system Risk taking behavior Good innovators Knowledge an ICT tools 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large sections of the youth population untrained and less educated Less contact with extension agencies and lack of proper guidance Lack of knowledge about rural youth related programmes Lack of support from family members Less awareness about modern technologies
External attributes	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formation of youth clubs for TOT Training opportunities exist for youth interested in agriculture Agri business activities Formation of commodity groups Employment in agro based industries Increased foreign exchange through greater production of traditional export of commodities 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lack of financial support and dependency on others and lot of increased migration to urban areas Lack of access to land and capital along with entrepreneurial skills Skill gaps in agricultural education and training Negative social impacts and natural disaster Lack of connection between food and agriculture leading to an uncertain future for sustainable food security

Strengths of rural youth:

As strength is the basic asset which provides growth and success to lead the agriculture effectively, this part of the study deals with the strength as perceived by the rural youth. The item ranked by youth on priority based on its comparative advantage over youth in agriculture is given in Table 1.

Rural youth aware leading agriculture and awareness about the future which was their major strength of the youth and hence, it was ranked first with RBQ value of 88.67. The main reasons for this outcome might be due to the youth were socially active and positive minded. The energy that the youth possessed a good spirit reason might be due to and the youths provides tremendous opportunities for increasing agricultural productivity, and hence ranked second with RBQ value 87.83. The rural youth placed innovativeness to social system by assigning with RBQ value 86.16. This is because, the young people are best positioned to know how to reach out to their peers, what interests they could best contribute and what additional support they required to do so. Rural youth expressed that, the risk taking behaviour as their strength and hence, it was ranked fourth with RBQ value 84.50. Young people are ideal catalysts for change and give their greater tendency and willingness to adopt new ideas, concepts and technology which are all critical to change the way in which agriculture is practiced and perceived. Rural youth

expressed that they were good innovators as strength of the youth and hence, it was ranked fifth with an RBQ value 82.67 followed by knowledge of ICT tools with RBQ value of 64.83. Large section of youth had less education on ICT, this might be reason due to least rank of the knowledge on ICT tools.

Weaknesses of rural youth:

Weakness is the liability of the rural youth in agriculture and it is an internal factor. The rank assigned by the respondents had been incorporated in Table 2.

Majority of the responded that large sections of the youth population were untrained and less educated that might be the major weakness of the youth and ranked first with an RBQ value of 92.16. A major problem encountered by youths in agriculture was less contact with extension agencies and lack of proper guidance which was the second most weakness of the youth with a RBQ value of 89.83. The government provided lot of opportunities to youth in agriculture and its allied sectors but it was not properly reached to the rural youth. Lack of knowledge about rural youth related programmes was ranked as the third weakness by the youth with a RBQ value of 82.00. Youth are the integral part of the families which taken as the sole occupation farming. But many rural parents don't want their children to take up farming. Without the support of parents, it is difficult for young people to be involved in farming. So, they considered

Table 1 : Distribution of respondents according to their strengths

Sr. No.	Particulars	Rank					RBQ	Rank
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	Leading agriculture and awareness about the future	81	23	6	7	3	88.67	1
2.	Possess to good spirit and less fear for failure	88	12	7	5	8	87.83	2
3.	Spread innovativeness to social system	78	16	15	7	4	86.16	3
4.	Risk taking behaviour	75	19	10	10	6	84.50	4
5.	Good innovators	70	16	22	4	8	82.67	5
6.	Knowledge an ICT tools	55	11	4	28	2	64.83	6

Table 2 : Distribution of respondents according to their weaknesses

Sr. No.	Particulars	Rank					RBQ	Rank
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	Large sections of the rural youth population untrained and less educated	94	11	10	4	1	92.16	1
2.	Less contact with extension agencies and lack of proper guidance	88	13	12	4	3	89.83	2
3.	Lack of knowledge about rural youth related programmes	73	14	15	8	10	82.00	3
4.	Lack of support from family members	68	22	13	6	11	81.67	4
5.	Less awareness about modern technologies	53	32	17	8	10	78.33	5

lack of support from family members as a weakness and assigned with a RBQ value of 81.67. Rural youth expressed that, lack of awareness about modern technologies as one of the top most weakness of the youth and hence ranked fifth with a RBQ value of 78.33.

Opportunities of rural youth:

An opportunity is the ability to grow and achieve. It is an external factor which could be grasped as success by an individual. The opportunities in agriculture as perceived by the rural youth is given by respondents are given in Table 3.

As per the Table 3, rural youth expressed that formation of youth clubs for transfer of technology (TOT) as the major opportunities for them and hence ranked first with RBQ value of 90.33. The main reason for this outcome might be due to the fact that agriculture needs changes with a revised set of skills with a vision to address to new challenges.

There was no doubt that government would need to play a key role along with youth in agricultural development. Many were aware of the need to bring more young people to provide interesting training opportunities in agricultural sector. These training

opportunities existed for youth interested in agriculture and hence, assigned with RBQ value of 88.67 followed by agri- business activities with RBQ value of 88.00. Rural youth expressed that the formation of commodity groups as an important opportunity them. Hence, it was ranked with RBQ value of 80.33. The empowerment of youth through agro-based industries would reduce poverty and would provide them the opportunities that would enable them to be gainfully employed. This might be the possibility for employment in agro-based industries and hence assigned with RBQ value of 78.00. Youth felt the need for increased foreign exchange through greater production of traditional export of commodities. Hence it was ranked sixth place with RBQ value of 77.00.

Challenges of rural youth:

A challenge is a situation which blocks activities and programmes of the rural youth in agriculture. The challenges of rural youth are depicted in Table 4 and the discussion is presented as follows:

In the Table 4, youth had a lack of financial support; dependency on others and lot of increased migration to urban areas with the highest RBQ value of 90.00. Rural youth expressed that lack of access to land and capital

Table 3 : Distribution of respondents according to the opportunities available to them

Sr. No.	Particulars	Rank					RBQ	Rank
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	Formation of youth clubs for TOT	91	12	8	6	3	90.33	1
2.	Training opportunities exist for youth interested in agriculture	92	6	7	12	3	88.67	2
3.	Agri business activities	83	17	10	5	5	88.00	3
4.	Formation of commodity groups	71	15	10	13	11	80.33	4
5.	Employment in agro based industries	62	19	16	11	12	78.00	5
6.	Increased foreign exchange through greater production of traditional export of commodities	53	28	17	12	10	77.00	6

Table 4 : Distribution of respondents according to the challenges they could face

Sr. No.	Particulars	Rank					RBQ	Rank
		1	2	3	4	5		
1.	Lack of financial support and dependency on others and lot of increased migration to urban areas	91	11	8	7	3	90.00	1
2.	Lack of access to land and capital along with entrepreneurial skills	87	9	10	8	6	87.16	2
3.	Skill gaps in agricultural education and training	81	12	10	9	8	84.83	3
4.	Negative social impacts and natural disaster	77	12	13	8	10	83.00	4
5.	Lack of connection between food and agriculture leading to an uncertain future for sustainable food security	69	15	14	13	9	80.33	5

along with entrepreneurial skills as their major challenge and hence ranked it as the second challenge with RBQ value of 87.16. Promotion and support of advocacy work that was aimed at creating entrepreneurial awareness among youth about countless opportunities that caused across the value chain remained paramount. This view was expressed by the youth as a challenge and they assigned skill gaps in agricultural education and training as the third highest RBQ value of 84.83. Rural youth expressed that negative social impacts and natural disaster as the fourth challenge with a RBQ value of 83.00. Food is required to drive all productive activities and therefore it is imperative that the region has significant control over this strategic resource both in terms of quality and quantity. This view was expressed by youth as a challenge and they assigned lack of connection between food and agriculture leading to an uncertain future for sustainable food security with the fifth highest RBQ value of 80.33.

Conclusion:

SWOC analysis is evident with the illustrated review results that youth are positively activated in farming activities. On the basis of conclusions it was recommended that first of all take serious steps for

developing need based policies and programmes in which Rural Youth actively participate for the development of their villages. Youth are willing to adopt new ideas and technologies and therefore agricultural extension services should target youth to transform agriculture. The youth could be the ideal catalyst to change the poor image of persons involved in agriculture, especially in the rural communities given their greater possibility to adapt new ideas, concept and technology which are all important to changing the way agriculture is practiced and perceived.

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