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A study on entrepreneurial behavior of ericulture farmers in the Charaideo district of Assam

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study was to analyze the entrepreneurial behavior of ericulture farmers of the Charaideo district of Assam. Results show that the majority of respondents were medium level of entrepreneurial behavior and that majority respondents (83%) were from the middle to the young age, acquired education level were 98% from primary school to college, 83.33% had marginal land holdings, out of which up to 0.5 ha area under ericulture, 60% had a high level of knowledge and experience in sericulture, 50% had extension contact and 53.33% had undergone training. The respondents had a medium level of persuasiveness and motivation to achieve. 8.33% had high managerial ability. Around 35% of the respondents possess low entrepreneurial behavior followed by 11% of the respondents having high entrepreneurial attributes. Knowledge ability and risk taking ability were high entrepreneurial indicators and persistence, feedback usage, self-confidence and persuasiveness were more important dimensions.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial attributes, Entrepreneurial behaviour, ericulture and respondents

Entrepreneurship is the driving force for the economic growth of a country. By definition, entrepreneurship is discovering, evaluating and exploring opportunities and process of pursuing those opportunities by the individuals without regard to resources currently under control. The French economist, Richard Contillon used the term entrepreneurship in the economic context for the first time to associate with business risk and uncertainty bearing. As commonly perceived, an entrepreneur is an intelligent and highly motivated person willing to take risks to achieve specific goals and is able to fabricate new things to prove its worthiness (Mubarak, 2018). The economic growth and development of advanced countries is attributed chiefly to its entrepreneurial populace rather than capital (Shivacharan *et al.*, 2015). Although India is among the first eight industrially advanced countries of the world, it still predominately ranks as an under-developed nation and to solve many of the problems – unemployment being one of the many; it is of utmost importance to harness the latent entrepreneurial talent of its people through entrepreneurship training (Sahasranamam and Sud, 2016).

More recently, it is being acknowledged the transformative nature of entrepreneurship, especially to help emerge the poor out of poverty. There is a disparity between the urban and the rural areas in India with regard to employment. Studies show that entrepreneurship and innovation in rural areas are unearthed gold mines to extract new employment opportunities and avenues for economic independence. Entrepreneurial avenues have emerged in various fields such as electronics, computers, medicine, designing, textiles, agriculture etc. With 70% of India's workforce residing in rural areas and agriculture being the primary source of livelihood for 58% of its population, it is imperative to evaluate the opportunities for promoting entrepreneurship in this sector (Kumar and Jom, 2019). Sericulture is a comprehensive agro-based cottage industry, which aims to uplift the socio-economic status of the people and accounts for livelihood security for over 8.5 million people in the entire silk production value chain from farm to fabric. Sericulture provides opportunities for self-employment, to earn quick return and additional revenue to the farmers especially to those having small to marginalized land holdings and the economically vulnerable sections of the society (Roy and Sarkar, 2015). India stands second in silk production but is the largest consumer of raw silk and silk fabric in the world (Sujathamma *et al.*, 2018). It is the only country in the world with the out turn of all four varieties of raw silk, namely Mulberry, Tasar (Tropical and Oak), Eri and Muga. In the year 2019-20, among the four varieties of silk produced, Mulberry accounted for 70.46 % (25,239 MT), Tasar 8.76% (3,136 MT), Eri 20.11% (7,204 MT) and Muga 0.67% (241 MT) of the total raw silk production of 35,820 MT (Anon., 2020a).

Ericulture which is rearing of eri silkworm (*Samia ricini* Donovan) and spinning of yarn to weaving of endi

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clothes has been an intrinsic part of the rural economy of Assam. Ericulture generates employment to a large number of unemployed people and thousands of families in Assam are directly or indirectly engaged in ericulture activities such as rearing of silkworm, as spinners, weavers and also in marketing of cocoons and clothes etc. (De and das, 2007). Assam with the highest production of eri silk contributes 62% of total eri silk in India (Anon., 2020a). The Charaideo district is located in the eastern part of the Sivasagar district of the upper Brahmaputra valley zone, consists of more than 67 sericulture villages and with around 7435 families engaged in ericulture not only to earn an additional income, but also to relish on the pupae which is considered a delicacy (Anon., 2020b). With this background in consideration, the present study was designed with the intent to analyze the entrepreneurial behavior of ericulture farmers of Charaideo district.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study is based on the exploratory design of social research to measure the entrepreneurial behavior of ericulture farmers. The Charaideo district if Assam was the location of the study. Charaideo district comprises of 4 blocks namely Lakwa, Mahmora, Sonari and Sapekhati. Out of which Mahmora and Sapekhati blocks were selected purposively for the study as these blocks have the maximum number of families engaged in ericulture. Thus from the two blocks, 5 villages were selected at random. From each village 6 ericulture farmers were selected by using the random sampling method to constitute a total sample size of 60 ericulture farmers. Data collection from those 60 ericulture farmers was done through personal interview with the help of structured interview schedule constructed in accordance with study objectives. To measure the entrepreneurial behavior of the respondents, a scale developed by Anon., (1981) was used. The scale consists of sub scales of ten entrepreneurial attributes namely risk taking, hope of success, persuasiveness, manageability, self-confidence, knowledge ability, persistence, feedback usage, innovativeness, and achievement motivation. Each sub scale comprises of five statements measured on five point continuum, such as "Utmost important", "Most important", "Somewhat important", "Less important" and "Not important" with weight age of 5, 4,3,2,1 thus making a total of 50 statements. Scores varied from 50 to 250.

Entrepreneurial behavior index by addition of scores of ten entrepreneurial attributes was used to measure the entrepreneurial behavior index (Wankhade *et al*., 2013)

The data collected were categorized, tabulated, and analyzed by using frequency, percentage, mean, and rank scores as measures of check.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of the investigation was to study the entrepreneurial behavior of ericulture farmers of Charaideo district. Previous studies of many researchers indicate the significant role played by socio-economic characteristics of farmers in shaping the entrepreneurial behavior. The results from Table 2 depict that the majority of ericulture farmers are from the middle age group (56.67%) followed by the young age group (30%) and the old age group (13.33%). Education level was observed to be 98% with 5% of the respondents having completed their graduate studies. 56.67% of the respondents were male and the rest were female. More than half of the respondents had marginal land holding (83.33%) and the area under sericulture plantation was found to be less than 1 hectare (on an average sericulture land is 0.50 acre) for 100% of the respondents. 10% of the respondents had small land holding and 6.67% had medium land holding. The average annual income from ericulture is about Rs.10,500, with a total average annual income of Rs. 30,000 which include income from other sources such as agriculture. Similar socio-economic profile was observed by Parameswaranaik *et al*. (2020) while studying entrepreneurial behaviour of ericulture farmers in Assam (BTC). 60% of the respondents had a high level of knowledge and experience in sericulture, followed by medium (30%) and low (10%). Extension contact and training undergone were observed to be in the medium level with 50% and 53.33%, respectively.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to overall entrepreneurial behaviour (N=60)

Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage
Low	Up to 72.33	21	35
Medium	72.34 to 87.05	32	54
High	Above 87.05	7	11
	Total	60	100

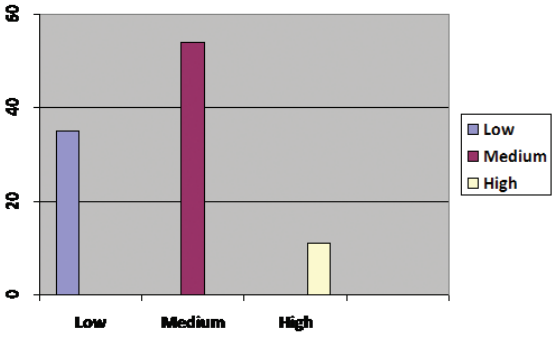

Fig. 1: Overall entrepreneurial behaviour

Table 2: Socio-economic profile of ericulture farmers (N=60)

Sl.No.	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Age			
1	Young (up to 35 years)	18	30.00
2	Middle (36 to 55 years)	34	56.67
3	Old age (above 55 years)	8	13.33
Sex			
1	Male	34	56.67
2	Female	26	43.33
Education level			
1	Illiterate	1	1.66
2	Primary school	6	10
3	Middle school	29	48.33
4	Higher education	21	35
5	College level	3	5
Size of land holding			
1	Marginal (below 1 ha)	50	83.33
2	Small (1 to 2 ha)	6	10.00
3	Medium (2 to 5 ha)	4	6.67
Area under sericulture			
1	Up to 0.5 ha	60	100
2	0.501 to 1 ha	0	0
3	1.01 to.5 ha	0	0
Level of knowledge			
1	Low	6	10
2	Medium	18	30
3	High	36	60
Extension contact			
1	Low	14	23.33
2	Medium	30	50
3	High	16	26.67
Training undergone			
1	Low	22	36.67
2	Medium	32	53.33
3	High	6	10
Annual income (₹)	**From ericulture (₹)**	**Other sources (₹)**	**Total(₹)**
Average	10500	30000	40500
Minimum	6000	10000	16000
Maximum	15000	50000	65000

Table 3: Entrepreneurial attributes of ericulture farmers (N=60)

Sl. No.	Dimensions	Categories (scores)	Frequency	Percentage
1	Risk taking ability	Low (5-12)	14	23.33
		Medium (13-19)	26	43.33
		High (20-25)	20	33.33
2	Hope of success	Low (5-12)	20	33.33
		Medium (13-19)	25	41.67
		High (20-25)	15	25.00
3	Persistence	Low (5-12)	15	25.00
		Medium (13-19)	30	50.00
		High (20-25)	15	25.00
4	Feedback usage	Low (5-12)	12	20.00
		Medium (13-19)	38	63.33
		High (20-25)	10	16.67
5	Self-confidence	Low (5-12)	15	25.00
		Medium (13-19)	37	61.67
		High (20-25)	8	13.33
6	Knowledge ability	Low (5-12)	6	10.00
		Medium (13-19)	18	30.00
		High (20-25)	36	60.00
7	Manageability	Low (5-12)	45	75.00
		Medium (13-19)	10	16.67
		High (20-25)	5	8.33
8	Persuasiveness	Low (5-12)	15	25.00
		Medium (13-19)	35	58.33
		High (20-25)	10	16.67
9	Innovativeness	Low (5-12)	33	55.00
		Medium (13-19)	20	33.33
		High (20-25)	7	11.66
10	Achievement motivation	Low (5-12)	13	21.67
		Medium (13-19)	42	70.00
		High (20-25)	5	8.33

Table 4: Mean score of entrepreneurial dimensions obtained by ericulture farmers

Sl. No.	Entrepreneurial dimensions	Mean	Rank
1	Risk taking ability	16.13	II
2	Hope of success	14.80	VII
3	Persistence	15.50	III
4	Feedback usage	15.40	IV
5	Self-confidence	15.00	V
6	Knowledge ability	18.80	I
7	Manageability	10.50	X
8	Persuasiveness	14.83	VI
9	Innovativeness	12.30	IX
10	Achievement motivation	14.76	VIII
	Overall mean	14.80	

From Table 3, it could be deduced that, most respondents possess a medium level of risk talking ability (43.33%). About 33.33 % were high risk takers and 23.33% low risk takers. Similar result was reported by Sahu *et al*. (2020). It shows that entrepreneurs are moderate risk takers taking calculated risk as shown by studies that for the success of any enterprise, an entrepreneur must possess risk bearing ability but at moderate level.

Hope of success (41.67%) was at medium level. While 33.33% of respondents had low level of hope of success, around 25% had high hope of success. Wankhade *et al*. (2013) reported similar results indicating that entrepreneurs have hope of success than fear of failure.

Half of the respondents are persistent (50%) while the low and high level of persistence observed at 25%. It shows that the respondents are persistent and that failure does not easily discourage them which are evident from the level of self-confidence observed among them. The respondents were willing to use feedback (63%) with medium level self-confidence (61.67%) followed by low confidence level (25%). It might be due to their experience and complete involvement in ericulture activities. Studies of Sivacharan *et al*. (2015) and Parameswaranaik *et al*. (2020) support similar entrepreneurial behavior.

The respondents were highly knowledgeable (60%) and were willing to gain knowledge about market and value chain. As studied by Aiyadurai (1999), an entrepreneur to achieve better results must be knowledgeable of their enterprise. The respondents possess a medium level of persuasiveness (58.33%) and achievement motivation (70%) followed by low level of persuasiveness (25%) and achievement motivation (21.67%). The manageability and innovativeness was found to be low among the respondents with a percentage of 75% and 55% , respectively. Only 8.33% of respondents had high managerial ability, revealing that the respondents lack the basic managerial skills of delegating responsibilities and duties. This finding is in concurrence with the finding of Wankhade *et al*. (2013). The medium level of innovativeness (33.33%) could be due their limited information about ericulture practices (Parameswaranaik *et al*., 2020).

Based on the findings of the study, it is clear that the majority of respondents possess a medium level of entrepreneurial behaviour (54%). Around 35% of the respondents possess low entrepreneurial behaviour followed by 11% of the respondents having high entrepreneurial attributes (Table 1). Nandhini *et al.* (2020) reported similar results in sericulture farmers of Tamil Nadu. As shown in Table 4, knowledge ability and risk taking ability were high entrepreneurial indicators. It can be concluded that among the entrepreneurial dimensions persistence, feedback usage, self- confidence and persuasiveness were more important dimensions. While achievement motivation, innovativeness, hope of success and manageability were less important entrepreneurial dimensions. In order to improve entrepreneur behaviour level, capacity building, skill development training, awareness and new technologies and techniques should be disseminated to eri entrepreneurs including good marketing facilities.

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