

Factors Affecting the Choice of BS in Agriculture as a Course in DEBESMSCAT

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Abstract. The choice of a study program is an important decision as it forms the foundation of an individual's career and professional development. This decision can influence a student's future in terms of academic success, self-understanding, and career goals. This study examined the factors that influenced the choice of BS in Agriculture as a course in the DEBESMSCAT-Cawayan Campus and the students' perceptions and level of acceptance regarding this course. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through a survey questionnaire distributed to BS Agriculture students. The findings indicated that personal aspirations and interests, peer influence, limited options, and practical considerations were significant factors influencing course selection. Factors such as economic status, dream course, and ease of employment held varying levels of influence on students' decision-making process. The study also revealed that students perceived BS in Agriculture as a course that brought satisfaction, offered hands-on experience in agriculture, and presented favorable job prospects. The study emphasized the importance of intrinsic motivations, practical involvement, and career prospects in course selection. Furthermore, students acknowledged the course's value in providing knowledge and recognized its demand in national and international employment markets. These findings provided insights for educational institutions and policymakers to design strategies and support systems that catered to students' preferences, enhanced informed decision-making, and promoted agricultural education. Further research was recommended to explore the specific reasons behind these factors and delve deeper into students' motivations in choosing BS in Agriculture as a course.

Key words: BS in Agriculture, career prospects, course selection, factors influencing choice, student perceptions.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the pursuit of higher education holds immense importance in society. It serves as a symbol that an individual is prepared to confront the inevitable challenges in both work and life (Shabbir & Jalal, 2018). Higher education has been associated with numerous benefits, including increased job opportunities, higher salaries, and improved social mobility (Chan, 2016). However, many students face obstacles in attaining their desired degree due to circumstances like financial difficulties and uncertainties about which course to pursue (Pather, 2015). Research has shown that financial constraints can significantly impact students' educational choices and outcomes (Dynarski, 2003). Furthermore, inadequate career guidance and limited access to information about different fields of study can hinder students' decision-making process (Castleman & Meyer 2019).

As a result, individuals often find themselves seeking employment to sustain their livelihoods. Unfortunately, having a job alone is insufficient, as a lack of educational qualifications can lead to difficulties at work and potentially land individuals in laborious positions with lower salaries (Mcguinness & Mavromaras,

2007). Therefore, selecting a course that aligns with personal aspirations becomes crucial, as it facilitates the achievement of life goals and provides access to more suitable job opportunities, ultimately leading to a comfortable life with government benefits (Nazareno et al., 2021). The decision-making process of choosing a college course necessitates careful and thorough analysis (Galotti & Umscheid, 2019). Factors such as personal desires, interests, strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and skills play a vital role in making an informed choice (Gestiada et al., 2021). Failure to consider these aspects often leads individuals to select courses that do not align with their characteristics (Ouano et al., 2019). In some cases, external influences, such as friends, relatives, and parental preferences, can also contribute to poor decision-making, potentially complicating one's future (Edmonds, 2012).

Within the DEBESMSCAT-Cawayan Campus, one of the offered courses is BS in Agriculture, a field of study that holds significant importance (Madayag & Estanislao, 2021). Although many students harbor a genuine passion for agriculture and aspire to enroll in this course, various factors like limited enrollment slots or peer and family influence sometimes divert them towards alternative options (Quijano-Pagutayao et al.,

2020). Opting for the right course within the agricultural domain, based on individual interests and aspirations, can provide students with valuable knowledge and skills to contribute to the growth of the agricultural sector and enhance their own lives.

The objective of this study is to identify the factors that influence the choice of BS in Agriculture as a course within DEBESMSCAT. It aims to ascertain the level of acceptance and assumptions associated with this course. Specifically, the study will address the following research inquiries: (1) What factors influence the choice of BS in Agriculture as a course in DEBESMSCAT? (2) What assumptions do students hold regarding this course? (3) What impact does this course have on students' future lives? (4) What is the level of acceptance of BS in Agriculture as a course among DEBESMSCAT students?

Frameworks of the Study

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored in Social Cognitive Theory, which posited that students' choices and behaviors were influenced by their personal experiences, observations of others, and beliefs about their capabilities (Bandura, 1986). In the context of choosing BS Agriculture, this theory suggested that students' decisions were shaped by their observations of successful agricultural professionals, their perceived self-efficacy in pursuing agricultural studies, and the social support they received from family, peers, and educators. Additionally, this study was supported by the Self-Determination Theory, which highlighted the role of intrinsic motivation and psychological needs in driving behavior (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Applied to the choice

of BS Agriculture, this theory suggested that students were more likely to choose this course if it aligned with their personal interests, values, and aspirations. Furthermore, individuals were more likely to be engaged and committed to a course if it satisfied their need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Therefore, students who perceived BS Agriculture as personally meaningful and fulfilling were more inclined to choose it as their course of study.

The Expectancy-Value Theory posited that individuals' choices and motivations were influenced by their beliefs about success in a specific domain and the perceived value attached to it (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000). In the context of BS Agriculture, this theory suggested that students' decision to pursue this course may have been influenced by their expectations of success in agricultural studies and the perceived value they attached to a career in agriculture. Factors such as perceived job prospects, potential financial rewards, and intrinsic satisfaction derived from working in the agricultural field may have shaped their choices. Another theory that strongly supported this study was the Career Development Theory, which focused on understanding the factors that influenced individuals' career choices and development (Hj Mohd Daud, 2019). In the case of choosing BS Agriculture, this theory suggested that student's career aspirations, interests, and perceived opportunities within the agricultural sector played a significant role. Exposure to agricultural careers, career guidance, and the availability of internships or experiential learning opportunities in the field of agriculture could have impacted students' decisions to pursue BS in Agriculture.

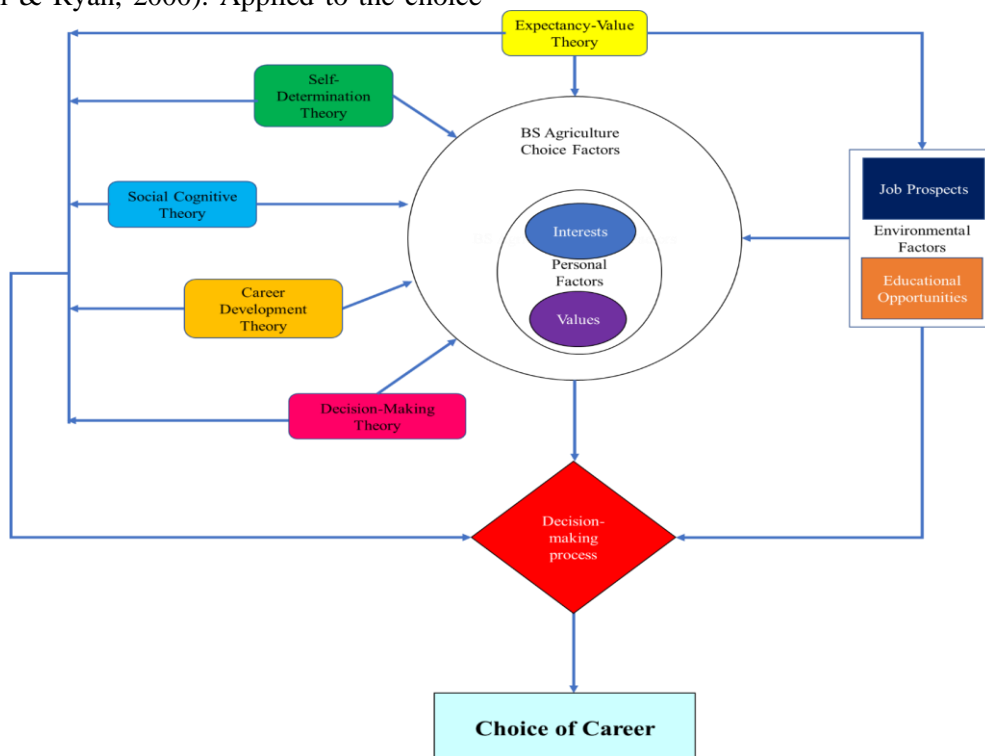


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Finally, based on Decision-Making Theory, which explored the cognitive processes and factors that influenced individuals' decision-making processes (Morelli, 2021), students evaluating the choice of BS Agriculture considered various factors, including personal interests, academic abilities, career prospects, financial considerations, and societal influences. Factors such as information availability, decision-making skills, and personal values could have shaped their final decision to choose BS Agriculture as a course.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework illustrated the various factors that influenced the decision to choose BS Agriculture as a course of study. It provided a visual representation of the interplay between personal factors, environmental factors, the decision-making process, and the ultimate choice made. Personal factors played a significant role in shaping individuals' inclinations toward pursuing BS in Agriculture. These factors included interests, values, personality traits, and abilities. Interests reflected the specific areas or subjects that captured a person's curiosity and passion. Values represented the guiding principles and beliefs that individuals prioritized in their lives. Personality traits and abilities further contributed to shaping their suitability for a career in agriculture. These personal factors were internal to the individuals and strongly influenced their preferences and motivations in choosing the course.

Environmental factors, on the other hand, encompassed external influences that impacted the decision-making process. Job prospects in the field of agriculture, educational opportunities available, and social influences from family, friends, or the community all contributed to shaping individuals' perspectives on pursuing BS Agriculture. Job prospects provided insights into the potential career paths and opportunities available in the agricultural sector, which could influence the decision to choose the course. Educational opportunities refer to the availability and quality of academic programs in the field. Social influences, such as the opinions and expectations of family and friends, could also sway individuals' decisions. The decision-making process was a critical component of the framework. It involved weighing the costs and benefits associated with pursuing a BS in Agriculture course and understanding the different options available. Individuals consider the advantages and disadvantages, such as the financial investment, time commitment, and potential career prospects, before making a decision. Exploring alternative options and understanding the potential outcomes of different choices further informed the decision-making process. Ultimately, the framework depicted the outcome of the decision-making process - the choice to pursue a BS in Agriculture as a course of study. This outcome reflected the culmination of the various factors considered and evaluated throughout the decision-making journey.

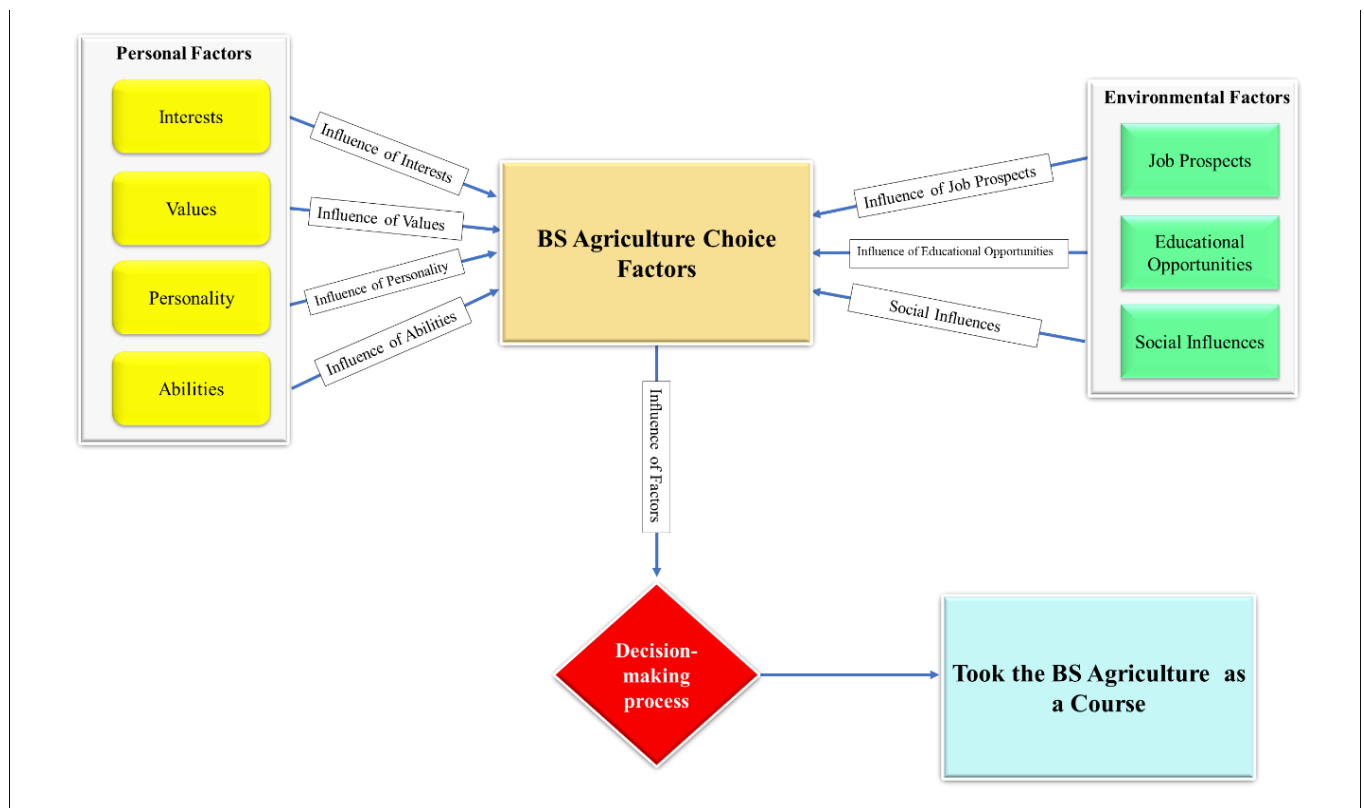


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework

METHOD

Research Design and Sampling

This study adopted a quantitative research design to investigate the factors affecting the choice of BS in Agriculture as a course in DEBESMSCAT. The research design allowed for the systematic collection and analysis of data to address the research objectives effectively. The population for this study consisted of BS in Agriculture students in DEBESMSCAT. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula, considering a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. Based on the frequency data provided in Table 1, the total population size was determined to be 93 students. Using the formula $n = N / (1 + N(e)^2)$, the sample size was calculated to be approximately 76 students.

Data Collection and Statistical Analysis

The data for this study were collected using an electronic survey questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of items related to factors influencing the choice of BS in Agriculture, the effect of these factors, perceptions of BS in Agriculture students in choosing their course, and the level of acceptance of the course. The e-survey questionnaire was distributed to the identified BS in Agriculture students in DEBESMSCAT. Clear instructions were provided, and respondents were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaire. The collected data were then compiled for further analysis. The collected data were analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the frequencies, percentages mean, and rankings of the factors affecting the choice of BS in Agriculture, the effect of these factors, and the perceptions of students.

Ethical Considerations

This study adhered to ethical guidelines to ensure the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured of the anonymity and voluntary nature of their participation. The data collected were used solely for research purposes and were reported in aggregate form to maintain confidentiality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Factors Affecting the Choice of BS in Agriculture as a Course in DEBESMSCAT

The results presented in Table 1 align with previous research findings regarding the factors influencing course selection in higher education. The influence of personal aspirations and interests, as indicated by the "Dreamed Course" factor, is consistent with studies by Shabbir & Jalal (2018), which emphasize the significance of aligning educational choices with individual aspirations and passions.

Furthermore, the impact of peer influence on course selection, highlighted by the "Friends Influence" factor, is in line with studies conducted by Gestiada et al. (2021), which emphasize the role of social networks and interpersonal relationships in shaping academic decisions. The presence of the "No choice at all" factor, indicating students who may have selected BS in Agriculture due to limited options or external circumstances, corresponds with the findings of Mcguinness & Mavromaras (2007), who emphasize the influence of constraints and practical considerations on course selection. The relatively lower impact of "Parents' choice" and "Economic Status" factors aligns with the research conducted by Quijano-Pagutayao et al. (2020), which suggests that while parental influence and financial considerations play a role, they may be outweighed by other factors in course selection.

Table 1. Factors Affecting the Choice of BS in Agriculture as a Course in DEBESMSCAT

Factors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Dreamed Course	27	35.53	1 st
Parents' choice	5	6.58	5 th
Friends Influence	21	27.63	2 nd
Economic Status	7	9.21	4 th
Ease of employment	0	0	6 th
No choice at all	16	21.05	3 rd

The absence of any responses for the "Ease of employment" factor, indicating that students did not consider it as a significant factor in their decision, is consistent with the findings of previous studies by Mcguinness & Mavromaras (2007) and Pather (2015), which suggest that students may prioritize personal interests and aspirations over solely focusing on future job prospects. The insights gained from the analysis of Table 1 contribute to the existing body of knowledge and provide valuable implications for educational institutions and policymakers. Understanding the factors that influence course selection can assist in designing appropriate strategies and support systems to promote agricultural education and cater to the preferences and aspirations of students (Shabbir & Jalal, 2018).

The Effect of the Factors in Choosing BS in Agriculture

In Table 2, the mean scores and descriptive ratings for the factors affecting the choice of BS in Agriculture are presented. The mean scores indicate the average level of influence that each factor has on the decision-making process (Baker, 2018). The descriptive ratings offer a categorization of the factors based on their perceived impact (Wiswall & Zafar, 2015).

Among the factors examined, the factor with the highest mean score is "Economic Status" (2.92), indicating that it holds a relatively stronger influence on the choice of BS in Agriculture (Stock & Stock, 2019). This suggests that students consider their economic

circumstances as an important determinant in selecting this course. The factors "Dreamed Course" (2.80) and "Ease of employment" (2.80) both share a similar mean score, signifying that they hold a moderate level of influence on the decision-making process (Winslow & Davis, 2016). This suggests that students place significance on pursuing a course aligned with their aspirations and one that offers favorable employment prospects.

Table 2. Effect of the Factors in Choosing BS in Agriculture

Factors	Mean	Descriptive Rating
Dreamed Course	2.80	Affect
Parents' choice	2.55	Affect
Friends Influence	2.63	Affect
Economic Status	2.92	Affect
Ease of employment	2.80	Affect
No choice at all	2.79	Affect

The factors "Friends Influence" (2.63) and "No choice at all" (2.79) both receive relatively lower mean scores compared to the other factors. This implies that while they still influence the choice of BS in Agriculture, their impact is perceived to be slightly weaker (Aydin, 2015). The factor "Parents' choice" (2.55) has the lowest mean score among the factors, suggesting that parental influence may have a relatively lesser impact on the decision-making process (Zahed Zahedani et al., 2016). It is important to note that these findings are based on the responses of the participants in the study. The descriptive ratings assigned to the factors as "Affect" indicate that the majority of the participants perceive these factors to have some degree of influence on their choice of BS in Agriculture (Mishra et al., 2017). However, it is crucial to consider that individual perspectives and experiences may vary, and there may be other factors not included in this study that could also play a role in influencing the decision (Baker, 2018).

Overall, these results provide valuable insights into the factors affecting the choice of BS in Agriculture. Understanding these factors can inform educational institutions and policymakers in developing strategies and support systems to facilitate informed decision-making and enhance student satisfaction and success in pursuing this course (Ma et al., 2021).

Perceptions of BS in Agriculture Students in Choosing Their Course

The findings presented in Table 3 provided insights into the perceptions of BS in Agriculture students regarding the factors influencing their choice of the course. The table displayed the frequencies, percentages, and ranks assigned to each factor, shedding light on the relative importance placed on these factors by the students.

The factor that ranked first in terms of perception among the students was "Satisfaction and fulfillment," with a frequency of 29 (38.16%) respondents. This suggests that a significant proportion of students perceive the BS in Agriculture course as a pathway that brings personal satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of intrinsic motivations and personal interests in course selection (Han et al., 2021). The second-ranked factor, "Hands-on experience in agriculture," garnered a frequency of 23 (30.26%) respondents. This indicates that a considerable number of students recognize the value of practical involvement in agriculture as an influential factor in their decision to pursue the BS in Agriculture course. Such a perception resonates with the notion that experiential learning plays a crucial role in enhancing students' understanding and skill development in their chosen field (Kolb, 2015). The factor "Ease of finding a job" secured the third rank, with a frequency of 14 (18.42%) respondents. This finding suggests that a subset of students considers the potential job prospects associated with the BS in Agriculture course as a motivating factor in their decision-making process. The perception of favorable employment opportunities in the field of agriculture may stem from various factors, such as the growing demand for professionals in the agricultural sector or the students' career aspirations (Ansari & Ansari, 2019).

Table 3. Perceptions of BS in Agriculture Students in Choosing Their Course

Factors	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Hands-on experience in agriculture	23	30.26	2 nd
Satisfaction and fulfillment	29	38.16	1 st
Fulfillment of my parents' dreams	7	9.21	4 th
Ease of finding a job	14	18.42	3 rd
Less effort exerted in all subjects	3	3.95	5 th

On the other hand, the factor "Fulfillment of my parents' dreams" obtained the fourth rank, with a frequency of 7 (9.21%) respondents. This indicates that a minority of students attribute their choice of the BS in Agriculture course to their parents' aspirations. The influence of parental expectations on course selection has been documented in previous studies, highlighting the significance of familial expectations and cultural factors in shaping students' educational choices (Paulsen, 2001). Lastly, the factor "Less effort exerted in all subjects" received the fifth rank, with only 3 (3.95%) respondents perceiving it as influential in their

decision. This suggests that a minimal number of students consider the perceived ease of the course and reduced academic effort as factors influencing their choice of BS in Agriculture. This finding emphasizes that students in this study place greater emphasis on factors related to personal fulfillment, practical experience, and career prospects rather than seeking academic shortcuts. It is important to interpret these findings with caution, recognizing that individual preferences and motivations can vary among students. Additionally, qualitative research approaches could provide deeper insights into the reasons behind these perceptions and explore the nuances associated with the factors influencing the choice of BS in Agriculture as a course.

Overall, these findings contribute to a better understanding of the factors that influence students' perceptions when selecting the BS in Agriculture course. The identification of these factors can inform educational institutions and policymakers in developing strategies to attract and retain students in agricultural education programs, ultimately contributing to the growth and sustainability of the agricultural sector.

Level of Acceptance of BS in Agriculture Students on their Course

The results presented in Table 4 are indicative of the level of acceptance among BS in Agriculture students regarding various factors associated with their chosen course. The mean values and descriptive ratings provide valuable insights into the students' perceptions and attitudes.

Table 4. Level of Acceptance of BS in Agriculture Students on their Course

Factors	Mean	Descriptive Rating
In-demand course	3.55	Moderately acceptable
Ease of employment	3.16	Acceptable
The high employment rate in national or international	3.54	Moderately acceptable
More knowledge obtained	3.84	Moderately acceptable
Give enjoyment and satisfaction	3.46	Acceptable

Regarding the factor "In-demand course," the obtained mean value of 3.55 suggests that students perceive the course to be moderately acceptable. This implies that there is a certain level of recognition among the students regarding the demand for professionals in the field of agriculture, aligning with previous research findings (Lavadia et al., 2021). The factor "Ease of employment" received a mean value of 3.16, indicating an acceptable level of acceptance. This suggests that students perceive the course to offer reasonable prospects for employment, consistent with studies emphasizing career opportunities within the agricultural

sector (Fitz-Koch et al., 2018). Furthermore, the factor "High employment rate in national or international" obtained a mean value of 3.54, indicating a moderately acceptable level of acceptance. This suggests that students are aware of the potential for high employment rates both within their own country and in international contexts, in line with previous research highlighting the global demand for agricultural professionals (Tilman et al., 2011). In terms of the factor "More knowledge obtained," the obtained mean value of 3.84 indicates a moderately acceptable level of acceptance. This implies that students recognize the educational benefits associated with the course, aligning with studies emphasizing the importance of knowledge acquisition in agricultural education (Zossou et al., 2020).

Finally, the factor "Give enjoyment and satisfaction" received a mean value of 3.46, indicating an acceptable level of acceptance. This suggests that students find the course to be enjoyable and satisfying to a certain extent, in accordance with previous research emphasizing the role of student satisfaction in academic pursuits (Wach et al., 2016). Overall, the findings of this study align with previous research, demonstrating students' positive perception and acceptance of the BS in Agriculture course (Ortega-Cruz & Quimbo, 2019). The results highlight the importance of addressing areas of improvement to further enhance the students' experience and align the course offerings with their expectations.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that personal aspirations, interests, and peer influence play significant roles in students' choice of pursuing a BS in Agriculture. Factors such as the "Dreamed Course" and "Friends Influence" have a moderate impact, while parental choice and economic status exert relatively less influence. Notably, students prioritize personal fulfillment over ease of employment when making their decisions. The BS in Agriculture course is perceived as moderately acceptable, offering in-demand opportunities, reasonable job prospects, and knowledge acquisition. Based on these conclusions, it is recommended to promote the course's appeal by highlighting its potential for personal fulfillment, practical experiences, and promising career opportunities. Additionally, addressing economic constraints and ensuring financial accessibility should be prioritized to ensure that all interested students have equal opportunities to pursue agricultural education. Fostering social networks and peer influence within the agricultural education community can also play a vital role in attracting and retaining students in the program. Furthermore, there is a need to strike a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences in the curriculum, as students value hands-on learning opportunities.

Continuously improving the overall student experience through curriculum enhancements, faculty development, and support services will contribute to student satisfaction and success in the BS in Agriculture program. By implementing these recommendations, educational institutions can better cater to students' preferences and aspirations, thereby promoting the growth and sustainability of agriculture courses.

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