



CONSTRAINTS AND STRESS IN FARMERS- A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

This study is based on personal interviews of the 171 farmers from 96 villages of interior Vidarbha. It is observed that the farmers are exposed to different types of constraints which is categorized under different heads viz. Personal, natural, technical and economic constraints. Stress level in farmers was measured with a standardized tool "stress scale tests" by Dr. M Singh. The collected data was analyzed using statistical (Chi Square) test. Around 50% farmers were reported major constraints about salinity of land, less land and low prices of crop at harvesting time as a cause of stress, which is followed by the constraints like lack of irrigation and aberrant weather conditions, family members and their bad habits of alcohol which is due to workless culture in rural areas. About 41.52% of the farmers resorted to allied activities as a supplementary source of income to meet their financial needs. The high level stress was noted in case of 13.45% farmers and most serious that is 2.92 % farm families were noted with very serious stress level. A definite association existed between the different types of constraints and the stress level of the farmers. The results revealed that almost all the farmers were exposed to the varying degrees of the constraints as well as stress levels. Among the various constraints Natural and Economic Constraints were of major concern. There is association between age and economic constraints (132.52**), income and personal constraints (11.74*), income and stress (12.66*), education and all constraints (10.49*), education and stress level (21.26**), stress level and constraints (61.35**).

Keywords- Farmers, constraints, stress level, Personal, natural, technical and economic constraints.

Introduction

Agriculture has always been celebrated as the primary sector in India. India is an agrarian economy, which means, agriculture is the pre-dominant sector of the Indian economy. True to this, even to this day, in spite of the Indian economy opening out to the world and globalization, close to 70% of the population still depends on agriculture for its livelihood. Despite a steady decline in its share to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) agriculture remains the largest economic sector in the country.

The very nature of farming itself is the cause of many strains for farming families. Farming can be an isolating profession, as farmers traditionally work long hours, outside, often in bad weather and alone. An individual whose primary job functions involves livestock and agriculture. A farmer takes all the necessary steps to insure proper nourishment of the attempts that he raises and then sells the items to purchasers. Some farmers have been able to capitalize on the need for high demand products that they produce such as organic vegetable and livestock.[8] An additional stress for many farmers is the speed of change within the industry over the last 10 years. Now government and EEC regulations have brought with them mountains of paperwork which many farmers find stressful. At the same time, farming families have faced critical public opinion and press coverage in recent years.[6]

Caroline Davies, director of the Rural Stress Information Network (RSIN), says: 'Farmers are at a very vulnerable stage, they are exposed to a lot of criticism, and they do feel that society is against them. 'James Morrish, development officer for the RSIN in the south west, says calls for help have fallen since foot and mouth disappeared. But he still receives between 50 and 60 calls a day from farm workers seeking advice. Isolation is the biggest problem, with economic difficulties and animal health regulations are also causing pressures.[4]

A state of stress exists when unusual or excessive demands threaten a person's well-being or integrity. Extraordinary efforts are needed to master the situation and there is the danger that coping capacities will be overwhelmed with the consequence of disturbed functioning, pain or anxiety, illness or even death. Stress defined neither by the person (coping resources ego strength etc.) Nor by his reactions (stress responses, but rather by the inter play of the three.) Stress can originate in physiological, psychological and social condition and threaten the integrity of in its body the personality or the social system. Threat can disturb psychological well-being and psychological functioning. Social institutions produce psychological stress.

No matter how stressed farmers feel, they can't just call in sick. 'Practically, even if you are in the worst state of stress and shock, you still have to go outside every day, feed the

sheep, milk the cows and tend to the animals,' says Brian Warren, a dairy farmer in Devon and a representative of the Farm Crisis Network which helps farming families who are experiencing problems. This culture of just getting on with things can mean that stress goes ignored. And it is not just the farmers themselves who take the brunt of the strain, but also wives and families.

Caroline Davies of the RSIN noted that, "it is the women who make the first move to deal with the situation. 'With the men, the initial problem is getting them to speak. It is women who will pick up the phone and talk when they are under stress,' Many calls to the RSIN come from women worried about their husbands or partners, who just won't talk about things, she adds. Talking to someone is always the first important move towards coping, The Samaritans advice. 'The burden of uncertainty and distress caused by another setback can be overwhelming. Talking to someone can be the first step forward,' says a spokesperson. There are several organisations dedicated to helping farmers cope with stress and providing stress counselling. Two of those organisations, the Farm Crisis Network and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, suggest the tips to help farmers cope.[4]

Often, when we talk about sustainable agriculture, it is sustainable in terms of products and economics not in terms of people". We would like to see attention given to the sustainability of the people in the agricultural community. The large number of the population of the developing countries comprises small farmers and landless labors. For these farmers who are tied to subsistence levels of living considering their small size of the holding, monoculture cannot increase their income through crop development alone. Many small farmers are faced lots of constrains. The stress level depends upon the constraints of farming. Some constraints reported commonly by maximum farmers are as follows.

- Lack of electricity and irrigation water.
- Lack of knowledge about improved farm techniques.
- Lack of labor for performing farm operations.
- Uncertainty in farm income due to weather hazards.
- Low price returns from farm produce.
- Inadequate and untimely availability of crop loans.
- Insufficient capital availability.

The most important but not least is **debts**. In which the farmer takes the birth in

debts and die in the same condition. The economic condition in the agricultural industry are a major source of stress for Canadian farmer and their families and affects almost every face/ off farm lives. The stress resulting from adverse economic condition has been ongoing for some time and continues to exist with pervasive effects on farm health and safety. This culture of just getting on with things can mean that stress level goes ignored and it is not just the farmers themselves who take brunt of the strain, but also wives and families.[12]

Unstable and adverse economic conditions with the agricultural industry are not new. For a number of years, Canadian and Vidarbha region's small farmers have experienced high level of stress arising from a number of sources, including high input cost, low market return, uncertain markets and unfavorable weather conditions. These factors have had an impact on income, debt and asset values in the industry. Farmers perceived debt, addiction, environmental problems, poor prices for farm produce, stress and family responsibilities, Government apathy, and increased cost of cultivations. Private money lenders, use of chemical fertilizers and crop failure as the reasons for farmers suicides.

The literature reveals the worldwide condition of farmers. In India, the constraint factors of farmer might be different as they are the vulnerable section of the society. Hence, this study deals with following objectives.

Objectives:-

- 1) To find out association between age and economic constraints of farmers.
- 2) To find out association in between income and personal constraints of farmers.
- 3) To find out association in between education and stress level of farmers.
- 4) To Find out association in between constraints and stress level of farmers.

Methodology:-

- The study was conducted in the Akola Dist. 96 villages were selected for data collection.
- Research design: An Exploratory Research methods and survey method was used.
- Representative samples of 171 farmers from 96 villages in Akola district were selected.
- Questionaries' and interview methods were used to collect samples.
- Stress level in farmers was measured with a standardized tool "stress scale tests" by Dr. M Singh.
- The collected data was analysed using statistical(Chi Square) test

Result and Discussion:

It is observed that the farmers are exposed to different types of constraints which is categorized under different heads viz. personal, natural, technical and economic constraints. Around 50% farmers were reported major constraints about salinity of land, less land and low prices of crop at harvesting time as a cause of stress, which is followed by the constraints like lack of irrigation and aberrant weather conditions, family members and their bad habits of alcohol which is due to workless culture in rural areas. About 41.52% of the farmers resorted to allied activities as a supplementary source of income to meet their financial needs. The high level stress was noted in case of 13.45% farmers and most serious that is 2.92% farm families were noted with very serious stress level.

Chi-square test is used to study the association between the attributes classified as row and column attributes. It is an approximate test, distribution free as no assumptions about the normality of data are made.

In the table no.1 selected respondent are classified according to age and economic constraints as low, medium, high economic constraints. The age categories are 20-30, 30-40, 40-50, and 50-above. While the total economic constraints score are grouped as low (20-40), medium (40-60), high (60-above). The observed frequency and expected frequency are presented in the table. It is revealed that the chi-square value is significant at 1% level of significance indicating the strong association in between age and economic constraints. The middle age people are mostly suffering from high level of stress due to economic constraints, as they are carrying the greater responsibilities of family viz. higher education of children, marriages of their daughters and old parent's health problems. Young farmers stated that debt., insufficient funds at the time of cultivation of land are the major constraints boosts high level of stress.

In the table no.2 selected respondents are classified according to income categories and personal constraints as low, medium, and high. The income categories are up to 50,000, 50,000 to 1 lac and 1 lac to above. While the total personal constraints score are grouped as low (50-60), medium (60-70), high (70-80). The observed frequency and expected frequency are presented in the table. The Chi-square value is given below the table. It is revealed that the chi-square value is significant at 5% level of significance indicating the association in between income and personal constraints. Though there is association but all the income

levels of farmers indicating lower income status, hence due to less income there is high degree of constraints in all income levels or categories. Economic constraints are the major cause of stress in farmers.

In the table no. 3 selected respondents are classified according to education and stress as low medium, high. The education categories are lack of formal education, 1st to 11th, 12th to above. While the total stress score are grouped as low (20-40), medium (40-60), high (60-80). The observed frequency and expected frequency are presented in the table. The Chi-square value is given below the table. It is revealed that the Chi-square value significant at 1 % level of significance indicating the strong association in between education and stress. The results indicate that higher the education greater the stress level. Higher education leads to more expectations and comparison with well to do people in the society. This may be due to shame, guilt and empty feelings due to helplessness and constraints.

In the table 4, selected respondent are classified according to stress and all constraints as low, medium, high. The stress categories are low (20-40), medium (40-60), high (60-80), while the all constraints score are grouped as low (50-60), medium (60-70), and high (70-80). The observed frequency and expected frequency are presented in the table. The chi-square value is given in the table. It is revealing that Chi-square value significant at 1% level of significance, indicating the strong association in between stress and all constraints.

Table 1: Age and Economic Constraints

Attributes Age \ economic constraints	Low (20-40)	Medium (40-60)	High (60above)	Total
20-30	11 (12.1052)	7 (6.7251)	5 (4.1695)	23
30-40	28 (26.8421)	18 (14.9122)	5 (9.2456)	51
40-50	31 (28.9473)	13 (16.0818)	11 (9.9707)	55
50-above	20 (22.1052)	12 (12.2807)	10 (7.6140)	42
Total	90	50	31	171

1% level of significance, Chi square value=135.52**

Table 2: Income and personal constraints

Attributes Income \ per. Constraints	Low (50-60)	Medium (60-70)	High (70-above)	Total
0-50000	15 (15.7894)	39 (28.9473)	36 (45.2631)	90
50000 - 1 lac	7 (7.0175)	9 (12.8655)	24 (20.1169)	40
1 lac-above	8 (7.1929)	7 (13.1871)	26 (20.6198)	41
Total	30	55	86	171

Chi square value=11.74*

Table 3: Education and Stress

Attributes Education\ Stress	Low (20-40)	Medium (40-60)	High (60-80)	Total
Illiterate	7 (5.6666)	5 (5.3684)	5 (5.9649)	17
1-11	40 (30.00)	30 (28.4210)	20 (31.5789)	90
12-above	10 (21.3333)	19 (20.2105)	35 (22.4561)	64
Total	10	19	60	171

Chi square value=21.26**

Table 4: Stress and Constraints

Attributes Stress\ constraints	Low (50-60)	Medium (60-70)	High (70-80)	Total
Low 20-40	50 (27.6315)	8 (25)	17 (22.3684)	75
Medium 40-60	5 (25.42)	40 (23)	24 (20.5789)	69
High 60-80	8 (9.9473)	9 (9)	10 (8.052)	27
Total	63	57	51	171

Chi square value=61.3467**

Conclusion

The study is mainly based on an exploratory research design. The major emphasis was on the discovery of ideas, awareness and insight. Hence it is concluded that the--

- Constraints of farmers and their stress are positively associated with each other.
- The exposure of the farmers to the natural calamities normally put them under severe stress. The natural calamities like severe droughts, excessive rains, hailstorms may lead to heavy damages on farm and can become a cause of severe stress to the farmers.
- On the other side, the help of Government is positively associated with the use of improved tools of farming and implementation by the respondent farmers.
- The help of Government in the form of subsidies induce the farmers to go for the adoption of improved tools of crop cultivation, hence if the farmers using more of information sources normally avail maximum Government facilities.
- This is a need of hour to minimise the constraint of farmers by making them aware regarding alternative sources of income are available and also facilities made available by the Government for unexpected loss in farming
- Increasing stress levels are leading to depression and attempts of suicide by

farmers, hence psychological stability is required to farmers.

- The alternate income sources should encourage and suggest to farmers.
- Society should offer them helping hand by all possible means.

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