

Agriculture and Stress of Farmer

V Kavitha Kiran

Assistant Professor, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, College of Community Science, PJTSAU, Hyderabad.

ARTICLE ID: 04

Introduction

Agriculture is considered as the most stressful occupation because of uncertain weather, fluctuations in market prices and input costs, disease outbreaks, machinery breakdowns and government policies. These conditions affect the success or failure of farmers subjecting them to stress and anxiety. It is considered as stressful because farmers have no or less control over these “make or break” factors. The financial impact of these factors threatens the farmers whether to continue agriculture or not. Depression, Suicidal Ideation, low Resilience among farmers, and psychological health disturbances were more common in farmers and farm workers. In 2017, 10,655 people involved in agriculture committed suicide in India, according to data released on January 2, 2020, by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB). Among those who took their lives, 5,955 were farmers/cultivators and 4,700 were agricultural laborers. They comprised 8.2 percent of all suicide cases in the country in 2017. The global Burden of Disease study 1990-2017, reported that Telangana has the third-highest incidence of anxiety disorders. The higher prevalence of depressive and anxiety disorders could be related to higher levels of modernization and urbanization as per the study conducted by ICMR and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (2017). Great importance was given to machinery safety, occupational hazards of farming and fatalities have decreased during the past two decades, but little has been done to make farming psychologically less strenuous.

Here are some common sources of stress for farmers

- ✚ **Financial Pressure:** Fluctuating commodity prices, high production costs, and unpredictable weather conditions can lead to financial instability. Farmers face challenges in meeting their financial obligations, leading to stress and anxiety.
- ✚ **Weather and Climatic Uncertainties:** Farmers heavily depend on weather conditions for successful crop production. Unpredictable weather patterns, like droughts, floods, and extreme temperatures can significantly impact crops causing stress.

- ✚ **Market Volatility:** Farmers are exposed to market fluctuations, which can affect the prices of their products. Sudden changes in market conditions can lead to financial losses and create a sense of insecurity among farmers.
- ✚ **Workload and Long Hours:** Farming is often considered by long demanding working hours, specifically during peak seasons. The physical and mental strain of constant labor can contribute to stress and fatigue.
- ✚ **Regulatory Challenges:** Farmers must navigate through various regulations related to land use, environmental conservation, and agricultural practices. Adhering to complex regulations can be stressful.
- ✚ **Isolation:** Rural areas have limited social interactions, leading to feelings of loneliness and lack of emotional support, exacerbating stress levels.
- ✚ **Succession Planning and Farm Transitions:** Planning for the future of the farm, especially when passing it on to the next generation, can be stressful. Succession planning involves complex decisions that impact both the business and the family dynamics.
- ✚ **Health Issues:** Farming involves exposure to various environmental factors, chemicals and physical hazards, which can contribute to health concerns. Limited access to healthcare services in rural areas may add to the stress of managing health issues.
- ✚ **Technology Adoption:** Keeping up with rapidly evolving agricultural technologies can be challenging. Farmers may feel pressure to invest in new equipment and techniques leading to financial strain and the need to adapt to change.
- ✚ **Emotional Attachment:** Farmers often develop a strong emotional attachment to their land and livestock. Facing challenges such as crop failure or disease outbreaks can be emotionally draining.

It is important to recognize the unique challenges farmers face and to promote mental health awareness and support within agricultural communities. Implementing resources such as counseling services, and community support programs can help to alleviate farmer stress.

References

Kyu HH, Abate D, Abate KH Global, regional, and national disability-adjusted life-years (DALYs) for 359 diseases and injuries and healthy life expectancy (HALE) for 195



countries and territories, 1990-2017: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. *Lancet*. 2018; 392: 1859-1922

