

Farmers' Suicides in Andhra Pradesh – A Study

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Abstract: This paper presents a study on the farmer's suicides in Andhra Pradesh.

Keywords: Farmers, Suicides, Widow.

1. Introduction

"Social and cultural context, alongside aspects of the physical environment and individual traits appear paramount when it comes to understanding and addressing farmer suicide" - Collins J & Ward BM – 2019

"Why farmers are killing themselves? It is in the agricultural sector that the battle for long term economic development will be won or lost" - Prof. Gunnar Myrdal, Nobel Laureate

According to the latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data on accidental deaths and suicides, 10,281 farmers committed suicide in 2019, down from in 2018, whereas the figure for daily wages went up to 32,559 from 30,132. The suicide rate in the deeply stressed farming sector accounted for 7.4 per cent of the total suicides in the country, resulting in deaths of 5,957 farmers and 4,324 agricultural labourers, the NCRB said in a report containing the latest data. The total number of suicides in the country increased up to 139,123 in 2019 from 1,34,516 in 2018. In 2019, a total of 5,563 male farmers and 394 female farmers committed suicide while agricultural labourers included 3,749 males and 575 females. Said the report states and union territories such as West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Delhi, Lakshadweep and Pondicherry reported zero cases of farmers and agricultural labourers committing suicide. Among daily wage earners who committed suicide, 29,092 were male and 3,467 female.

India has one of the highest suicide rates in the world in 2019, a total of 10,281 farmers and farm labourers died by suicide across the country, according to statistics from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). Taking one's own life is still a crime in India, and experts have said for years that the actual numbers are far higher because most people fear the stigma of reporting. Farmers struggling to save their crops, dug their bore wells even deeper and to fend off increasing pest attacks, they loaded their fields with chemicals. The skyrocketing agricultural costs forced many farmers to take on more debt and crop failures over the years eventually destroyed generations of rural families. The number of suicides involving farmers and

farmhands in Andhra Pradesh increased to 1,029 last year from 664 in 2018. As per the Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India report released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for the year 2019, Andhra Pradesh stood third in the country in terms of suicides farmers and farm hands.

The state accounted for 10 per cent of such cases in India. Maharashtra took the first place, with 38.2% of such suicides, followed by Karnataka, with 19.4%. Madhya Pradesh (5.3%) took the fourth place, while Telangana and Chhattisgarh (4.9% each) shared the fifth position of the 1,029 people in the farming sector in Andhra Pradesh who committed suicide, 839 were men and 190 women. As many as 628 farmers, including 190 tenant farmers took their lives for reasons not specified. In 2018, the number of farmers who committed suicide was 365, including 166 tenant farmers, which shows that more farmers who own land took the extreme step. As for agricultural labourers, 401 committed suicide in 2019, compared to 299 in 2018, according to the NCRB. In neighbouring Telangana, eight agricultural labourers committed suicide in 2019 the same as in the previous year. Meanwhile, the number of farmers, including tenant farmers, who committed suicide reduced from 900 in 2018 to 491 last year. The increase in the number of farmer suicides in AP in 2019 was unexpected, as conditions for the agriculture sector were favourable, with good rainfall and sufficient water in reservoirs, unlike in 2017 and 2018, which witnessed drought conditions.

The first incidence of farmer suicide was reported in 1986 in Kerala. He was rubber growing farmer from the state, but the incidence was neglected by the state government as an accident. There after more number of farmers ended life through suicide in the state of Kerala. Further during the 1990s, the spate of farmer suicides spread from north to south Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Punjab. The growing incidences of farmer suicides are found particularly after the New Economic Policy in the country.

Indian farmers could not compete with the developed countries due to high price of indigenous product. However, agricultural products of the developed countries are cheaper because of the higher degree of subsidies to them by the government. The institutional credit mechanism is expected to play a vital role in agricultural development. The co-operatives are specially meant for the supply of credit to the small and marginal farmers. The share of non-institutional sources was 93 per cent in 1951 which declined sharply after the nationalization

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of the commercial banks. Again the same has been on the rise during the period of financial liberalization. It is a matter of concern, because the root cause of the present distress is indebtedness and which is on account of the increasing share of the non-institutional sources in agricultural credit disbursement and the heavy rates of interest.

Indian agriculture continues to be monsoon dependent uncertainly of nature leads the farmers to distress. Low productivity, less income and high loans taken for agriculture are forcing some of our farmers to commit suicide. Apart from this, the Prime Minister has mentioned that technology will be used in implementation of the scheme to make it a fast, user friendly, efficient and fraud free. This new crop insurance plan will be functional from the kharif season of crop cultivation. Andhra Pradesh has great potential and is well equipped to move forward on the path of progress. It has beautiful natural resources, fertile land and also climate conditions. Nearly 75 per cent of its area is covered by the river basins of the Godavari and the Krishna and their tributaries Andhra Pradesh is the largest producer of rice in India. The introduction of Economics reform period, these are financial depression and devolution of many and foreign exchange rate drastically declined. It was affected not only in agricultural sector, but also in economic growth of a country as a whole. Thereafter, it was changed the economic condition due to open market of International Monetary Fund in India. Therefore, this leads to globalization, liberalization and privatization of our economy.

2. Review of Related Literature

The review of literature is an important component of any research as it helps to understand the research problem in depth. Keeping in view the significance and relevance of previous studies concerning the present problem, efforts have been made to collect them and present in a brief manner.

Anindya Das (2018), farmers' suicide in India has become a controversial issue, with political repercussions along with attendant huge loan waivers and vote bank politics. As an academic task, it begs the question is farmers' suicide a cause of concern and we think so, but with a nuanced understanding. Rather than a broad generalization of it being a countrywide problem and keeping in view the niceties, we turn to extant literature that has tried to dwell into the causes of this phenomenon. We use an interdisciplinary lens to review selected literature and analyse this. Concluding from the analysis we suggest a multilevel approach that is both pragmatic and useful to understand farmers' suicides and theoretically mature to think about suicides in general. The commentary does not propose solutions, though this may be implicit, the larger aim is to theorize about factors for suicide in general. Natarajan Sundaram (2019), this study focused on the reasons that caused such a disaster. The study rests on a review of the literature which was extracted from journals, reports, and newspapers from 2004 to 2019. Most of the farmer's suicide was due to the distress, crop failure, indebtedness, poverty, lack of institutional credit, poor irrigation, lack of awareness on new technologies, a high-interest rate of non-institutional agencies and lack of government policies. Previous studies had also focused on the

time period when suicide may occur. The review identified the following reasons for the agricultural crisis and farmer's suicides-poverty, indebtedness, crop failures, distress, lack of awareness on new technologies, inadequate debt, marketing of produce, the high interest of non-institutional credit, and depletion of water levels. The government had to shift its focus from industries to agriculture and shift its agricultural policies from short-term to long-term ones. Ashalatha and Rajeswari (2018), their analyzed of varied sources on the reasons for farmers suicide state that monsoon failure, climate change, high debt burdens, government policies, mental health, personal issues and family problems if it is reviewed deeply increase in input costs like chemical, seeds, fertilizers, which are to be purchased from outside, water crises, interest rate, water disputes, dominance of money lenders and contractors over marketing channels are the most prominent factors responsible for farmers suicides. Manjulatha and Ramappa (2017), a study on farmers suicides in Karnataka revealed that the highest number of farmers who had committed suicides belonging to marginal and small holdings category (80%) and 45 percent of the victims opined that the income from agriculture has decreased over the last five years and agriculture was no more an attractive occupation. The social causes were the worry of daughters' marriage as reported by 14 per cent of the sample victims. Marriage related issues like dowry, extra marital relations and divorce and love failure were not at all the causes for suicide. Shilpa Agarwal (2015), the study observed that, consistent with a recent systematic review of suicide studies in India showing that depression plays a less dominant role in suicide in India. Even though alcohol use and alcohol dependence was found to be one of the risk factor in this review, the strength of this association was far less than reported between mental illness and suicide in developed countries. Suicide in India is more prevalent in women is much more likely to involve hanging and ingestion of poison and is more closely associated with social cause and less closely associated with mental illness. Its prevention needs a multidimensional approach with a careful assessment and addressing of social factors contributing to the problem. Reducing alcohol consumption, unemployment, poverty, domestic violence, improving social justice and reducing social inequalities are essential to reduce the suicide rates in India. Vinayat (2016) stated that farmers had committed suicides in Karnataka due to the low price of agricultural produces and the absence of adequate debt in a timely manner. There are other factors apart from indebtedness which caused farmers suicides such as diminishing overall agricultural growth, very low productivity and loss of income. Keeping the above study need and objectives formulated.

3. Need for the Study

The contributory factors to farmers' suicides, relief and rehabilitation, and the related issues need a thorough research study.

It consists to remunerative agriculture, resilience building and rational expenditure, reassurance through connectivity, righteous conduct, religious support and responsible reporting.

In suicide-prone in Andhra Pradesh agricultural institutes and scientists should start distributing seeds of resilience, tolerance and contentment among farmers, suggested researchers. Along with subsidies, increased farm profits, the focus should also be on resilience building and problem solving skills etc., of farming families. Experts underlined that farmers don't need money only, they need motivation too. Agricultural universities can play a powerful role in dissipating the culture of shame associated with mental illness and depression as it is the fear of stigma that acts as a barrier to seek appropriate treatment they suggested.

A. Objectives of the study

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of families involved in suicide in Andhra Pradesh.
2. To identify and examine the causes of suicides among the farmers in the state of Andhra Pradesh.
3. To study the impact of suicide of the farmers on the status of the families.

B. Limitations

1. The study is limited to Rayalaseema Districts of Andhra Pradesh.
2. The study mainly concentrates on farmer suicides families.
3. The study is limited to a few variables relating to farmer's suicide families like socio-economic conditions of affected families.

4. Research Methodology

It is concerned with the different procedure followed in the construction and development of data gathering instrument relating to different variables included in the study and method adopted in the selection of sample, collection of data and analysis of data.

A. Locale and Sample Design of the Study

Andhra Pradesh consists of 13 districts, out of 13 districts the highest number of suicide registered cases will be selected as locale of the study. It is reported from Anantapuram, Chittoor, Kadapa and Kurnool Rayalaseem region of Andhra Pradesh. The Rayalaseema region depend on seasonal rain falls only, the

rains comes too early or too late it difficult to cultivate, and another backdrop of the victims low irrigation levels and lack of irrigation projects. The study on victims of suicide farmer families identified the total suicide cases, from each district 50 farmers' suicides victims' families have been selected for stratified random sampling to the study thus, a total of 200.

B. Data Collection

The present study is based on the data from both primary and secondary sources. The secondary data will be collected from various government reports and institutions like Census reports, National Crime Records Bureau, State and Regional Crime Bureaus. Agricultural Research Centre's, Agricultural Departments, Districts Crime Records, Directorate of economic and statistics and Direct Rural Development Authority (DRDA) of Rayalaseema Districts, Books, Journals and News Paper etc. The primary data will collected by Scheduled method to have a comprehensive study and analytical view at Sociological macro level a detailed census method of investigation will conducted for the study. The proportion of farmers' suicides families of villages was also taken into accounted families.

5. Tools and Techniques

For the purpose of the present study the following tools will be developed by the investigator. The collected data was pooled and analysed using appropriate statistical techniques like, percentages only for the study.

The table 1, presents that the distribution of farmers who raised loans from lands/money lenders and the borrowing range between Rs. Below one Lakhs to above 3 lakhs. Nearly 50 percent from the total as well as from each of the four districts fall in the range of borrowing between 2-3 lakhs. It may be classified here that in the rural areas in majority of the cases the local land lords act also as money lenders to the small and marginal farmers. These land lords not only lend money but also lend grain to this family when this family faces the scarcity of food grains for consumption.

The table 2, shows that the majority of the farmers i.e., 35 percent of the farmers incur, debt from money lenders. Credit extended from relatives and friends respectively 28 percent and 9 percent from the total sample ranges from below one lakhs

Table 1
Amount of Debt to the land Lords/Money lenders at the time of Suicide

S. No.	Debt.in Rs.	Anantapur		Chittoor		Kadapa		Kurnool		Total	
		NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
1	Below1 Lakhs	6	12.0	8	16.0	4	8.0	5	10.0	23	11.50
2	1-2 Lakhs	18	36.0	17	34.0	13	26.0	15	30.0	63	31.50
3	2-3 Lakshs	22	44.0	19	38.0	17	34.0	23	46.0	81	40.50
4	3 Lakhs and above	4	8.0	6	12.0	16	32.0	7	14.0	33	16.50
Total		50	100	50	100	50	100	50	100	200	100

Table 2
Amount of Debt at the time of suicide

S. No.	Source of borrowing	Anantapur		Chittoor		Kadapa		Kurnool		Total	
		NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%	NO	%
1	Friends	2	4.0	4	8.0	7	14.0	3	6.0	18	9.0
2	Relatives	11	22.0	8	16.0	16	32.0	21	42.0	56	28.0
3	Money lenders	16	32.0	14	28.0	9	18.0	17	34.0	56	28.0
4	Banks	21	42.0	22	44.0	18	36.0	9	18.0	70	35.0
Total		50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0	50	100.0

and 1-2 and 2-3 lakhs above credit. The main reason from committing suicide by the farmer was mounting debts and their inability to clear them. Pressure from the land lords/ money lenders, friends and relatives increased to repay. According to the serving widows their husbands were insulted and even abused, which undermined the farmers self-respect putting them to shame. It may also be mentioned that at least a chunk of the farmers brought this calamity by themselves with their unthinking acts like profligate behavior as well as going in for digging of bore wells indiscriminately without any results or with little result. However in the case of majority agricultural failed due to a combination of factors like drought, excess rain fall use of spurious seeds and adulterated fertilizers and pesticides.

A. Causes for suicides

- Expectation of non-institutional credit and failure of rain was reported as major farming related causes.
- Non-realization of higher output, non-relation of higher price, lack of access to expected institutional credit and lack of irrigation.
- Failure of crop due to attack of pests and diseases, lack of access to irrigation water, and cyclones, drought was common cause in all selective sample areas, well failure was one of the cause suicide.
- Failure to avail expected amount of credit was quoted as major cause, expectation of institutional credit, were as expectation of non- institutional credit was high, expectation of loan waiving was cited as a reason for suicide, lack of extension services, delayed payment to the output sold.
- A crop failure, an unexpected health expense or the marriage of a daughter are perilous to the livelihood of these farmers
- Many farmers have committed suicide by drinking the pesticides that no longer work on their crops.
- Many small farmers don't qualify for bank credit, forcing farmers to turn to money lenders, who charges up to 20 percent interest on a four months loan.
- While the prices of crops have been pushed down often even below the cost of production the prices of inputs such as seed, fertilizers and pesticides have gone up.
- With limited resources, farmers depend on borrowed money to purchase seeds and other inputs and to farm their land. A drop in their farm income could quickly lead to farmers owing more than they own.
- Financial stress, constant financial pressure related to the farm crisis and ongoing drought and flood which add to the economic problems
- Depression arising from exposure to agricultural chemicals/pesticides may increase the risk for mood disorders and ultimately suicide.

B. Impact of rainfall, drought on agriculture

The occurrence and conditions of drought are influenced by a number of factors. Rainfall and cropping pattern are different across the region. It is not just the deficiency of rainfall, but also

uneven distribution of rain across the season, duration of rainfall deficiency and its impact on region agriculture, economy and its people livelihood. Commonly it will leads to agricultural drought that characterize drought. The effects of drought on crop production might be annual and perennial crop losses, damage to crop quality, income loss for farmers due to reduced crop yields, reduced productivity of cropland, insect infestation, plant disease, increased irrigation costs, cost of new or supplemental water resource development (Wells, Dams, Pipelines). Drought conditions are long-lasting due to poor rainfall in frequent years; these conditions do not allow people the opportunity to recover from the impact of drought to survive with the impact. The effects of drought are based on frequency, severity, degree and on the vulnerability of the region and sectors. The recurrent failure of monsoons affects the crop production in the Rayalaseema region. It has been noticed in that the total irrigated area continuously decline in Rayalaseema varies from year to year. The cropping pattern is also varies with the effect of climate, rainfall and lack of other irrigation sources. The fundamental change that occurred in the cropping pattern is that there was significant decline of area under food crops especially Jowar, Bajra, and Maize in the whole region. The percentage of area under non-food crops has more than doubled. Commercial crops (Sugarcane, Sunflower, and Cotton) have replaced the area under food crops in the region. The trends and impact of drought, rainfall on agriculture.

Conclusion and recommendations

□ Droughts may not be avoidable, but their effects can be avoidable. Even after utilizing all the available water resources, about 50% of our cultivable area will still depend on rains. Therefore, our agricultural scientists, policy formulators and farmers should appropriately realize the magnitude of role that. The rains are very erratic, uncertain and unevenly distributed. Therefore, the agriculture in these areas has become a sort of gamble with the nature and very often the crops have to face climatic hazards. The farmers also take up farming half-heartedly as they are not sure of being able to harvest the crops. Thus, water scarcity becomes a serious bottleneck in drought in agriculture. In dry areas where unpredictable rain and famine are a frequent phenomenon the farmer has to look up for a secondary occupation to augment his income. To a large extent cattle development as a subsidiary occupation has been thought of to relieve the suffering of the people in this Rayalaseema.

6. Recommendations

- There is an urgent need to change the cropping pattern in drought prone areas of the regions to prevent further downside of underground water table.
- It is also necessary to identify backward districts and specific area programmes may be initiated through state and central grants.
- Contingency crop plan to support farmers for sowing of dry crops to the government.
- Relief fund and local area development fund for drinking water and others integrated watershed management programme-water harvesting and conservation water saving

technologies-drip and sprinkler irrigation systems.

- To strengthen government employment programmes especially in drought seasons.

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