

## Study of Socio-economic Condition of Deceased Farmers and Post Suicidal Consequences over their Families

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### ABSTRACT

Recently farmer's suicides have been receiving attention of public, media, researchers and policy makers' in Vidarbha region of Maharashtra State. In Vidarbha there are six crises districts, Wardha is one of the core districts hence the present study was framed to know the socio-economic and situational factors leading to suicidal death by the farmers and the consequences faced by household of suicide farmers after suicide. Annual income of majority of respondents (31.00%) was only rupees fifty thousand and about 18 per cent were below poverty line. Socio-economic status of deceased farmers was medium (31.00%) followed by low (28.00%) to very low (23.00%). Indebtedness of the respondents was found highly significant but negatively correlated with SES. Financial crisis and pressure of repayment of loan were the major consequence faced by the deceased farmers' families.

**Key words :** Socio-economic status, Suicide, Deceased farmer family

State of Maharashtra tops the list of farmer suicides with over 5,000 peasants under duress from crop failure and indebtedness ending their lives in the last five years. A study by the Agriculture Ministry said, it is also a need to ponder why should farmers mostly from Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, that too from the cotton belt, have been committing suicide? why they have been committing suicide in last few years only? Why should there be a spurt in suicide cases only during a particular time of the year? That is between the sowing and the harvest seasons. At sowing time, they are hard-pressed for money and at harvesting time, they broke because of poor yields. Similarly why farmers are shifting from cotton to crop like soybean? To address indebtedness of farmers, the government has also waived off agriculture debt of over Rs 70,000 core in the budget 2010-11, it added. But, still suicide among farmers is not in control. In Vidarbha there are six crises districts namely, Yavatmal, Wardha, Akola, Amravati, Buldana and Washim.

If nothing positive happens in Indian agriculture, in coming years and if farmers continue to be squeezed by the global and domestic markets they will have to either abandon agriculture or rebel against government or else the spate of suicides would continue to haunt the country. Hence, the present study is felt important to know the socio-economic condition of deceased farmers and post suicidal consequences facing by their families.

### METHODOLOGY

Present study was conducted in Wardha District of Maharashtra State as which is one of the crises districts of Vidarbha. An exploratory research design was used for this study. A list of farmers who had committed suicide was obtained from the office of District Collector, Wardha. The families of the deceased person/ the beneficiaries of government package were taken as respondent and the responsible

person from the family (wife, son, brother/father) were taken as the respondents for the study. Thus, in all 100 families of deceased person were contacted personally at their places of residence. In this way 70 villages in the district were covered for contacting the selected respondents.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Socio-economic status of deceased farmer's family

The dependent variable for the present study was socio-economic status of deceased farmers family, the data regarding the dimensions/indicators of socio-economic status are presented separately in the following Tables and discussed accordingly.

#### Family occupation

**Table 1.**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their family occupations**

Sr. No.	Family occupation	Respondents (N=100)	
		Frequency	%
<b>a)</b>	<b>Occupation of deceased farmer</b>		
1	Agriculture + labour	29	29.00
2	Agriculture (farming)	46	46.00
3	Agriculture + allied occupation	17	17.00
4	Agriculture + business	02	02.00
5	Agriculture + service	06	06.00
<b>b)</b>	<b>Occupation of other dependents</b>		
1	Landless labour (daily wage earner)	32	22.00
2	Agriculture + labour	45	45.00
3	Agriculture (farming)	18	18.00
4	Agriculture + allied occupation	03	03.00
5	Agriculture + business	02	02.00
6	Agriculture + service	00	00.00

The distribution in Table 1 indicated that 46.00 per cent respondents who were the family heads had only agriculture (farming) as their occupation followed by 29.00 per cent respondents were labourer in addition to the farming, 17.00 per cent of them possess

agriculture + allied occupation (backyard poultry goatary etc). Remaining 6.00 per cent and 2.00 per cent family heads were having service and business in addition to agriculture, respectively. Occupations with regard to dependents of family head about 45.00 per cent and 22.00 per cent had the occupation of agriculture + labour and land less labourer, respectively.

It is indicated from the data that the maximum farmers who have committed suicide were engaged in agriculture as a major occupation that could be the major support of the family for their livelihood which was lost by the family with the suicide of their family head. These findings corroborate with the findings of Kale (2008), Rajput (2009) and Shetye (2012).

### Land holding

The data revealed from Table 2 that majority

**Table 2**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their land holding**

Sr. No.	Land holding	Respondents (N=100)	
		Freq.	%
<b>a)</b>	<b>Farm size</b>		
	Marginal (Up to 1 ha )	12	12.00
	Small (1.01 to 2.00 ha)	43	43.00
	Semi-medium (2.01 to 4.00 ha)	27	27.00
	Medium (4.01 to 10.00 ha)	18	18.00
	Large (Above 10 ha)	00	00.00
<b>b)</b>	<b>Type of cultivation</b>		
	Rain fed	74	74.00
	Irrigated (but, seasonal)	26	26.00
<b>c)</b>	<b>Cropping pattern *</b>		
	Seasonal cropping / single cropping	43	43.00
	Double / multiple cropping	40	40.00
	Biannual cropping	20	20.00
	Orchards	07	07.00
<b>d)</b>	<b>Source of irrigation</b>		
	No source	58	58.00
	River and nala	13	13.00
	Well	18	18.00
	Tube well	08	08.00
	Canal	03	03.00
<b>e)</b>	<b>Ownership of land</b>		
	Land leased out	07	07.00
	Land leased in	00	00.00
<b>f)</b>	<b>Contingency paid yearly worker</b>		
	No	73	73.00
	Yes	27	27.00

\*Multiple responses

of respondents (43.00%) were having small land holding followed by semi medium (27.00%) and medium (18.00%) farmers. In the study area rain fed type of land was possess by 74.00 per cent respondents. Majority of respondents had no source of irrigation (58.00%) and others had source of irrigation like well (18.00%) river and nala (13.00%) which were found to be idle when irrigation required. Among all the respondents 43.00 per cent respondents were growing only single or seasonal crop followed by 40.00 per cent were following double or multiple cropping pattern. One fifth of respondents (20.00%) had biannual cropping and 7.00 per cent had orchards. It is inferred from the findings that most of the deceased farmers were having very poor land resources for cultivation. These findings were in conformity with the findings of Kale and Mankar (2010).

### Family education

It is observed from Table 3 that majority of respondents (deceased farmers) (48.00%) were educated up to middle school, followed by 26.00 per cent respondents educated up to primary school. Very small percentages of respondents were having education up to high school (10.00%) and graduation (04.00%). Respondents wife were found to be educated up to primary school (35.00%), elementary education (25.00%) and 24.00 per cent wives were illiterate.

**Table 3**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their family education**

Sr. No.	Family education	Respondents (N=100)	
		Frequency	%
<b>a)</b>	<b>Husband's education</b>		
	Illiterate	06	06.00
	Elementary (can read and write only)	06	06.00
	Primary	26	26.00
	Middle school	48	48.00
	High school	10	10.00
	Technical college	00	00.00
	Non technical college	04	04.00
<b>b)</b>	<b>Wife's education</b>		
	Illiterate	24	24.00
	Elementary (can read and write only)	25	25.00
	Primary	25	25.00
	Middle school	12	12.00
	High school	10	10.00
	Technical college	00	00.00
	Non technical college	04	04.00

### Annual income

It is apparent from Table 4 that annual income of nearly one third respondents (31.00%) were only upto Rs. 50,000/- followed by annual income of 21.00

per cent respondents between Rs. 50,001/- to Rs.1,00,000/- and 15.00 per cent respondents annual earning was up to Rs. 1,00,001 to Rs. 1,50,000. It is noticed that 18.00 per cent of them were found in below poverty line even though they were agriculturists. The majority of families were having annual income below one lakh, it was probably because they lost their family head who shared the major responsibilities of earning the money for livelihood of their family. These findings were in line with the findings of Kamthe (2007) and Kale and Mankar (2010).

**Table 4**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their annual income**

Sr. No.	Annual income	Respondents (N=100)	
		Frequency	%
1	Below poverty line	18	18.00
2	Up to Rs. 50,000/-	31	31.00
3	Rs. 50,001/- to Rs. 1,00,000/-	21	21.00
4	Rs. 1,00,001 to 1,50,000/-	15	15.00
5	Rs. 1,50,001/ - to creamy layer (Rs. 4,00,000)	12	12.00
6	Above creamy layer	04	04.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.00</b>

### Socio-political participation

It is evident from Table 5 that the position of respondents in respect of socio political participation. revealed that, the most of the deceased farmers (61.00%) had no position in any social or political organization, 30.00 per cent of them had membership in one social or political organization. Very meagre percentage of respondents i.e. 06.00 per cent, 03.00 per cent and 02.00 per cent of them had official position, membership in social or political organization and financial contribution or raising common funds, respectively. It is indicated that the socio political participation of deceased farmers were low. Similar findings were reported by Deshmukh (2009).

**Table 5**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their socio-political participation**

Sr. No.	socio-political participation	Respondents (N=100)	
		Frequency	%
1	Without any position in social or political organization	61	61.00
2	Membership of one social or political organization	30	30.00
3	Membership of one social and political organization	03	03.00
4	Involved in community work though not having membership or official position in any social or political organization.	16	16.00
5	Financial contribution / Raising common funds	02	02.00
6	Official position in social or political organization	06	06.00
7	Village leader/opinion leader	00	00.00
8	Wide public leader	00	00.00

### Household

It is observed from Table 6 that majority of deceased farmers (58.00%) had mud wall and thatched type house followed by 33.00 per cent possessed brick wall and tiled house Majority of them had poor type of house, but all of them had their own house. About half of the respondents (51.00%) had facility of toilet or soak pit, 32.00 per cent had LPG connection. Condition of their house was found to be very poor, they need much repair (45.00%) and need some repair (37.00%). Majority respondents (96.00%) had electricity in their house. Most of the respondents (71.00%) had single type family having 4-6 members (medium) in the family of 89.00 per cent respondents and only 09.00 per cent have had large family (7-9 members). Great majority of respondents (94.00%) had no storage house in their house. It is inferred that most of the deceased farmer's family had possessed poor type of house hold and lost moral support of family members which is high in joint family. Mohanty and Shroff (2004) and Deshmukh et al. (2010) also found nuclear family of maximum victim farmers.

**Table 6**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their household**

Sr. No.	Household	Respondents (N=100)	
		Freq.	%
<b>a)</b>	<b>Type of house</b>		
	Shed thatched (Stalk frames)	03	03.00
	Mud wall and thatched	58	58.00
	Brick wall and tiled	33	33.00
	Concrete house	06	06.00
<b>b)</b>	<b>Ownership of house</b>		
	Own	100	100.00
<b>c)</b>	<b>Other facilities *</b>		
	Toilet / soak pit available	51	51.00
	Well inside the yard	03	03.00
	Bio Gas connection / LPG connection	32	22.00
	No other facilities	24	24.00
<b>d)</b>	<b>Condition of the house</b>		
	Need much repair	45	45.00
	Need some repair	37	37.00
	Neat and well kept without court yard	15	15.00
	Neat and well kept with court yard	03	03.00
<b>e)</b>	<b>Lightning facility</b>		
	Kerosene lamp / Petromax	04	04.00
	Electricity	96	96.00
<b>f)</b>	<b>Family Type</b>		
	Single	71	71.00
	Joint	29	29.00
<b>g)</b>	<b>Family size</b>		
	Small (1 to 3 members)	02	02.00
	Medium (4 to 6 members)	89	89.00
	Large (7 to 9 members)	09	09.00
<b>h)</b>	<b>Storage house available</b>		
	No	94	94.00
	Yes	06	06.00

\* Multiple responses

**Material possession**

It is seen from Table 7 that majority of respondents (79.00%) have possessed harrow and hoe, over all (55.00%) were having wooden plough, 15.00 per cent had sprayer and 14.00 per cent of them had mould board plough. In the household equipments 78.00 per cent respondents had no any storage facility

**Table 7**  
**Distribution of respondents according to their material possession**

Sr. No.	Material possession	Respondents (N=100)	
		Freq.	%
<b>a)</b>	<b>Farm implements / equipments*</b>		
	Harrow	79	79.00
	Hoe	79	79.00
	Wooden plough	55	55.00
	Wooden seed-drill	00	00.00
	Mould board plough	14	14.00
	Ferti-hoe	00	00.00
	Iron seed-cum-fertilizer drill	00	00.00
	Duster	00	00.00
	Sprayer	15	15.00
	Diesel engine	00	00.00
	Electric pump.	01	01.00
<b>b)</b>	<b>Household equipments</b>		
	No grain storage facility	78	78.00
	Kangi	13	13.00
	Metallic bins	09	09.00
	Furniture *		
	No furniture availability	19	19.00
	Chair	80	80.00
	Tables	03	03.00
	Almirah	23	23.00
	Deevan	05	05.00
	Other house hold equipments*		
	Watch/torch	96	96.00
	Fan	100	100.00
	CD player	03	03.00
	Mixer / grinder	02	02.00
	Telephone/mobile	40	40.00
	Refrigerator	02	02.00
<b>c)</b>	<b>Animal possession</b>		
	No farm animals (Bullock)	20	20.00
	Non discrete ( domestic) farm animals	66	66.00
	Discrete (breeds) farm animals	14	14.00
	No milch animals	35	35.00
	Non discrete ( domestic) milch animals	65	65.00
	Discrete (breeds) milch animals	00	00.00
	No goat / sheep	38	38.00
	Non discrete (Domestic) goat / sheep	62	62.00
	Discrete (Breeds) goat / sheep	00	00.00
	No poultry possession	66	66.00
	Possess poultry (backyard poultry)	44	44.00

<b>d)</b>	<b>Information sources *</b>		
	No information Sources	51	51.00
	Farm publications	11	11.00
	News paper –Daily / Weekly / Fortnight	03	00.00
	Radio	15	15.00
	TV – Black and white / coloured	45	45.00
<b>e)</b>	<b>Farm structure</b>		
	No cattle shed	43	43.00
	Katcha cattle shed	55	55.00
	Pucca cattle shed	02	02.00
	Implements shed		
	No implement shed	20	16.67
	Katcha implement shed	96	80.00
<b>f)</b>	<b>Transport *</b>		
	No transport facility	75	75.00
	Cycle	25	25.00
	Bullock cart	07	07.00
<b>g)</b>	<b>Farm visits/Exhibitions/Extension activities</b>		
	Sometimes	15	15.00
	Never	85	85.00
<b>h)</b>	<b>Financial attributes</b>		
	Loan borrowed	100	100.00
	Repayment behaviour (defaulter)	100	100.00

\* Multiple responses

for grains, least of the respondents were having kangri (13.00%) and metallic bins (09.00%) for storage. Nearly one fifth of the respondents (19.00%) had no any furniture in their house and the other respondents having some furniture like chair (80.00%), almirah (23.00%), deevan (5.00%) and table (03.00%). Other household equipments available with the respondents are fan (100.00%), watch or torch (96.00%), mobile (40.00%), CD player (03.00%), mixer/grinder (02.00%) and refrigerator (02.00%).

Regarding the animal possession, 20.00 per cent deceased farmers had no farm animal and the remaining who had the farm animals had domestic animal (66.00%) and discrete/breed (14.00%). In milch animals 65.00 per cent respondents had domestic breeds, 62.00 per cent had domestic goat/sheep. Majority of respondents (66.00%) had no poultry birds and remaining (44.00%) were having backyard poultry. Over half of the respondents (51.00%) had no any information sources, some of the respondents had television (45.00%), radio (15.00%) etc. More than half of respondents (55.00%) had possessed katcha cattle shed and 43.00 per cent had no any cattle shed. With regard to the transport facility majority of them (75.00%) won't have any transport facility. Regarding their participation in extension activities, majority of them (85.00%) had no participation in any activity. In the financial attributes all respondents have borrowed loan from different agencies, but all of them were defaulters in repayment of loan. In all type of materials

the respondents have possessed traditional, old and inefficient materials which need more time, labour and drudgery in the farm operations. It was probably because of poor socio-economic condition, lack in infrastructure facilities, guilt feelings for not fulfilling the family requirements / liabilities and defaulter among the financial agencies that could increase the social, cultural, financial and psychological pressure on the farmers.

### Overall socio-economic status

**Table 8.**

**Distribution of the respondents according to overall socio-economic status of deceased farmers**

Sr. No.	Category	Respondents	Percentage
1	Very low	23	23.00
2	Low	28	28.00
3	Medium	32	32.00
4	Medium high	15	15.00
5	High	03	03.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.00</b>

The position of deceased farmers in respect of socio-economic status in Table 8 revealed that majority of deceased farmers i.e. 32.00, 28.00 and 23.00 per cent were found in medium, low and very low category of socio-economic status, respectively. Only 15.00 and 03.00 per cent of them had medium-high and high socio-economic status, respectively.

**Table 9.**

**Coefficient of correlation between independent variables and socio-economic status of deceased farmers**

Sr. No.	Variable	'r' value
1.	Age	0.3821 **
2.	Education	0.4498**
3.	Occupation	0.4556 **
4.	Land holding	0.5397 **
5.	Irrigation source	0.4683 **
6.	Annual income	0.3072 **
7.	Social participation	0.4341**
8.	Type of family	0.0441NS
9.	Indebtedness	- 0.4882 **
10.	Economic motivation	0.116 NS

\*\*Significant variables at 0.01 level of probability  
NS: Non significant variables

### Relational analysis

It is apparent from Table 9 that most of the selected variables viz., age, education, occupation, land holding, irrigation source, annual income and social participation were highly significant with the socio-economic status of the respondents. Indebtedness was also found highly significant, but negatively correlated with the socio-economic status of farmers. It clearly indicated that improvement in positively significant variables were much helpful to increase the level of socio-economic status of farmers. Indebtedness of farmers was responsible to lower down the socio-economic status. Similar findings were reported by Kaplan, et al. (1994).

### Post suicide consequences faced by families of deceased farmer

It is observed from Table 10 that all the respondent families (100%) reported that they were facing financial problem very much. The central and state Govt. provided a relief package to families of suicide victim, but majority of the respondents reported that the aid was not sufficient to recover from indebtedness, hence 92.00 per cent respondent families were under pressure of repayment of loan.

**Table 10.**

**Post suicide consequences faced by families of deceased farmer**

Sr. No.	Item	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Financial crisis	100	100.00
2.	Pressure of repayment of loan	92	92.00
3.	Absence of elder person in family	82	82.00
4.	Worried about education of children	70	70.00
5.	Threat to social life	66	66.00
6.	Anxiety about the marriage of daughter/daughters.	65	65.00
7.	Mental stress	60	60.00
8.	Worried about health care of children and old age members of family.	52	52.00
9.	Lack of financial help/aid	58	58.00
10	Lack of confidence to manage the home.	40	40.00

### Multiple responses

The vast majority of deceased farmer families (82.00%) under study have reported that they intensely feel the loss of elderly person. This was very common problem in every family, because in most of the cases family head committed suicide. After loss of family head 70.00 per cent families were worried about the education of children and their future social and economic security. The threat to social standing in society was felt by 66.00 per cent of families, such families were also feeling threat to their social security.

The victims' families (65.00%) were found strong anxiety about the marriage of their daughter/daughters. Searching of son-in-law/laws, fulfillment of their financial demands was an important concern of victims' families. About 60.00 per cent

families had problem of mental stress due to shocking and suddenly loss of a family member due to suicide, while 58.00 per cent families had problem of financial help or aid, because no one in society come forward for financial assistance in such cases. Among the deceased farmer families, 52.00 per cent were nervous and express their worries about the health care of children and old age member of their family. About 40.00 per cent victims' wives found to lose their confidence in holding their family to fight with the consequences, extremely nervous about to manage the responsibilities of their families and to fulfill their liabilities.

## CONCLUSION

Thus, with these above findings it could be said that majority of respondents had financial problem which could be eased by generating the employment through different petty business, etc. and subsidiary occupation, like tailoring, dairy, poultry, etc. It is also necessary to build up the psychology of farmers who are in mental stress by motivating them for yoga and meditation.

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