

Farmer Suicides in Madhya Pradesh

Ravi Singh Chouhan, H.K. Niranjana*, H.O. Sharma and Deepak Rathi

Agro-Economic Research Centre, JNKVV, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India

*Corresponding author: niranjan86hemant@gmail.com (ORCID ID: 0000-0002-8082-3802)

Received: 12-04-2019

Revised: 17-07-2019

Accepted: 25-08-2019

ABSTRACT

The study comprises 50 households related to victims' family of Rewa district of Madhya Pradesh as numbers of victims were found to be maximum in this particular district in the year 2014-15 and intensive survey of these respondents was carried out in the year 2015-16. It is observed from the data that the prominent causes of farmer suicides in Madhya Pradesh as recognised by the majority of the respondents were found to be family problems i.e. illness (46%), drug abuse/alcoholic addiction (32%), fall in social reputation (22%), extra martial affairs (36%) and frequent quarrel between victims and family member (20%). None of farmers was found to commit suicides due to poverty and property disputes. The main problems of suicides were found to be lack of access to mental health services in rural areas and shame attached to treatment (82%), lack of rehabilitation centres for drug and alcoholic addiction (78%) and lack of avenues for off/non farm income (52%). Therefore, it is suggested that the government should remove the bottlenecks and increase access in remote areas. In addition to these a psychologist must be appointed in Govt. Hospitals and Rehabilitation Centre for drug abuse and alcoholic addiction should be established at least at block level particularly in identified hot spots of farmer suicides districts of the state. Efforts should also be made so that crop insurance scheme should reach at individual level and health insurance should be made mandatory with Govt. support for the farming community. A campaign should also be launched for crop/variety diversification in various agro climatic regions of Madhya Pradesh. The role of various social institutions must be increased for this in future for increasing awareness of different development programmes of state and central govt. amongst the farmer community.

Highlights

- The Major Causes of farmers Suicide was found to be family problem, Drug/Alcoholic addiction in Madhya Pradesh.

Keywords: Farmer, suicides, Madhya Pradesh

Farmer suicides have turned out to be a major socio-economic concern in India that has resulted in profound implications on the quality of life of farmers. According to the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), one farmer committed suicide every 32 minutes between 1997 and 2005 in India. The prominent causes recognized for farmers' suicides were bankruptcy or indebtedness (20.6%), 'family problems' (20.1%), failure of crops (16.8%), illness (13.2%) and drug abuse/alcoholic addiction (4.9%) (Anonymous, 2015). The Situation Assessment Surveys of the National Sample Survey Organization

has reconfirmed the worsening situation of farm households which indicated that about 51.9 per cent of the farm households in India are indebted. Indebtedness is highest in Andhra Pradesh (93%), followed by Telangana (89%), Tamil Nadu (82%), Karnataka (77%) and Rajasthan (62%) (Table 1). It is to note that NSSO in its 59th round survey has revealed that given the choice, 40 per cent farmers will quit farming because it is not profitable, risky and it lacks social status. Interestingly, indebted farmers have taken higher credit from institutional sources (60%) as compared to the non-institutional sources (40%) (Anonymous, 2013).

The Intelligence Bureau in its report to the Modi government had said that there is an upward trend in the number of farmers resorting to the extreme measure of suicide in states like Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka and Punjab. The report also stated that the main reason for incidences like these was due to both natural and manmade factors: While natural factors like uneven rains, hailstorms, droughts and floods adversely affect crop yield, manmade factors such as pricing policies and inadequate marketing facilities result in post-yield losses (GoI, 2014). The following five States together accounted for 89.5 per cent of the total farmer suicides (5,056 out of 5,650) reported in the country in the year 2014 (Anonymous, 2015).

Table 1: Number of suicides and indebtedness in major suicide prone states of India

State	Number of Suicides in 2014	% of farmer suicides to all India total in 2014	% of indebted farm HH to total farm HH 2012-13
Maharashtra	2,568	45.5	57.3
Telangana	898	15.9	89.1
Madhya Pradesh	826	14.6	45.7
Chhattisgarh	443	7.8	37.2
Karnataka	321	5.7	77.3
Total	5056	89.5	51.9

In addition, according to the report, the land holding status of the farmers who committed suicide revealed that 44.5 per cent and 27.9 per cent of victims were small and marginal farmers, respectively and together accounted for 72.4 per cent (4,095 out of 5,650) of total farmer suicides. The report further reveals that 53.1 and 14.5 per cent of small farmers who committed suicides were reported in Maharashtra (1,135 out of 2,516) and Telangana (366 out of 2,516) respectively during 2014. Among marginal farmers, 39.7 per cent and 25.5 per cent of farmer suicides were reported in Maharashtra (627 out of 1,579) and Madhya Pradesh (403 out of 1,579), respectively as per National Crime Records Bureau, 2015.

Various factors like chronic indebtedness and the accumulation of inability to pay interest over years and economic decline gain drain and the rising

costs of agricultural inputs and falling prices of agricultural produce lead to complications and family disputes, depression and alcoholism etc, and eventually are responsible for suicides among the farmers. It was also seen that compensation following suicide helped the family to repay debt. They also opined that the causes are multi-factorial, cumulative, repetitive and progressive, leading an individual to a state of helplessness, worthlessness and hopelessness, obviously influenced by his social strengths and weaknesses along with his mental health status (Behere and Behere, 2008).

Farmer suicides still remain major challenge in Madhya Pradesh. With this background, keeping these reviews in mind the study addresses following specific objectives: (1) To identifying the hot spot of farmers suicides in Madhya Pradesh. (2) To study the causes leading to farmer suicides including production and market risks, sociological, psychological and other family related factors responsible for farmer suicides. (3) To recommend suitable suggestion to alleviate the incidence of farmer suicides.

DATA BASE METHODOLOGY

The study is confined to Madhya Pradesh state. Both primary and secondary data have been collected for the investigation. Rewa district purposively selected for the study as number of victims were found to be maximum in the state in the year 2014-15. A village/police station wise list of all the victims (150) was collected from the Superintendent of Police, District Rewa for the year 2014-15 and 33.33 per cent (50) victims have been selected for the study from various villages of the district. The primary data were collected from the victims and also from relatives/neighbours/friends of the victims by survey through pre tested interview schedule in the selected district environment. The primary data related to the study was collected in the year 2015-16. The Secondary data on district wise suicide cases in Madhya Pradesh for the period of 2003-04 to 2014-15 were collected from the office of the Additional Director General of Police, Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hot spot of farmers suicides, symptoms observed by family members before suicide of victims,

causes of suicide, impact on HH after committing suicide and suggestions given by the respondents were found to be workout and presented in following subheads.

Hot spot of farmers' suicides

The total numbers of 826 farmer suicides were registered in the year 2014-15 in the state. The intensity of farmer suicides was found to be only 5.36 suicides per lakh ha. of net sown area and 3.43 suicide per lakh ha. of gross cropped area in Madhya Pradesh. In the state only 8.39 farmer suicides were recorded over per lakh farming family. The maximum number of case were found to be registered in Rewa district 150 (18.16%) followed by Jhabua 104 (12.59%), Dindori 71 (8.60%), Shivpuri 43 (5.21%), Jabalpur 40 (4.84%), Satna 39 (4.72%), Alirajpur 37 (4.48%) and Umaria 31 (3.75%). In 27 districts, number of suicide were recorded to be less than 30 or 3.50 per cent and no suicide cases were recorded in the remaining districts (16) of the state.

The number of farmer suicides per lakh hectares of net sown and gross cropped area was found to be maximum in Jhabua district (54.8 & 40.7) followed by Rewa (41.3 & 29.0), Dindori (35.0 & 24.5), Umaria (29.6 & 21.4), Alirajpur (21.7 & 17.5), Singroli (16.8 & 12.3), Jabalpur (14.4 & 9.4), Satna (11.1 & 7.6) and Panna (10.3 & 6.7), while in remaining districts these ratios were found to be less than 10 (Table 2). The

number of farmer suicides per lakh farming families was found to be maximum in Dindori (63.07) followed by Rewa (60.93), Jhabua (55.89), Umaria (38.74), Shivpuri (23.50), Jabalpur (21.93), Sehore (19.49), Panna (17.83), Satna (16.24), Badwani (15.48), Khargone (13.64), Mandla (11.07) districts, while in remaining districts it was found to be less than 10.

Thus, On the basis of maximum numbers of farmer suicides, intensity of farmer suicides per lakh hectare of net & gross cropped area and per lakh of population Rewa, Jhabua, Dindori, Umaria, Shivpuri, Badwani, Alirajpur, Satna, Panna, Khargone, Bhopal and Jabalpur districts of Madhya Pradesh may be considered as hot spot of farmer suicides in Madhya Pradesh.

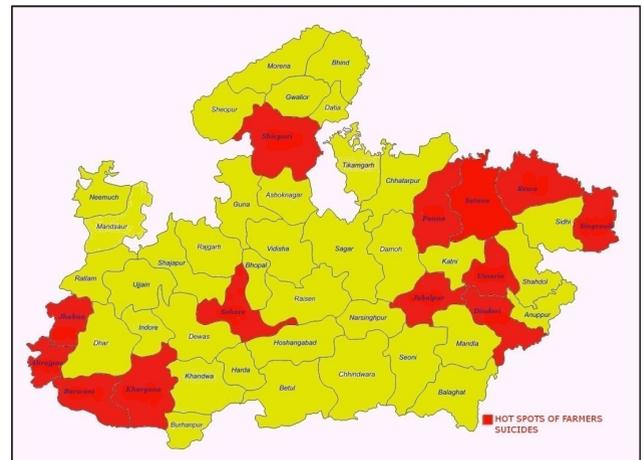


Fig. 1: Hot Spot of Farmer Suicides in Madhya Pradesh

Table 2: District-wise details of farmer suicides in the State (2014-15)

Sl. No.	Name of the district	No. of farmer suicides	% to state total	No. of farmer suicides		
				Per lakh hectare of Net sown area	Per lakh hectare of Gross cropped area	Per lakh farming families
1	Rewa	150	18.16	41.3	29	60.93
2	Jhabua	104	12.59	54.8	40.7	55.89
3	Dindori	71	8.6	35	24.5	63.07
4	Shivpuri	43	5.21	9.4	6	23.5
5	Jabalpur	40	4.84	14.4	9.4	21.93
6	Satna	39	4.72	11.1	7.6	16.24
7	Alirajpur †	37	4.48	21.7	17.5	0
8	Umaria	31	3.75	29.6	21.4	38.74
9	Panna	28	3.39	10.3	6.7	17.83
10	Singroli †	28	3.39	16.8	12.3	0
11	Sehore	26	3.15	6.5	3.4	19.49
12	Sagar	23	2.78	4.2	2.6	9.02
13	Khargone	22	2.66	7.2	4.9	13.64
14	Balaghat	20	2.42	7.2	5.8	7.86

15	Mandala	18	2.18	7.9	5.5	11.07
16	Ashoknagar †	16	1.94	5.1	3.2	0
17	Katni	16	1.94	7.4	5.2	8.94
18	Barwani	14	1.69	6.1	4.8	15.48
19	Mandsour	12	1.45	3.4	1.9	7.43
20	Sidhi	12	1.45	7.1	5.1	5.19
21	Anuppur †	11	1.33	6.7	5.3	0
22	Vidisha	11	1.33	2.1	1.2	7.84
23	Ujjain	10	1.21	2	1.1	6.24
24	Tikamgarh	9	1.09	3.2	1.9	5.2
25	Narsinghpur	8	0.97	2.6	1.7	5.95
26	Dewas	6	0.73	1.5	0.8	4.12
27	Ratlam	6	0.73	1.8	1	3.92
28	Khandawa	3	0.36	0.7	0.5	1.78
29	Shajapur	3	0.36	1.1	0.6	1.6
30	Datia	2	0.24	0.9	0.7	1.95
31	Harda	2	0.24	1.1	0.6	5.66
32	Betul	2	0.24	0.5	0.3	1.12
33	Neemanch	1	0.12	0.5	0.3	1.06
34	Damoh	1	0.12	0.3	0.2	0.63
35	Chhatarpur	1	0.12	0.2	0.2	0.43
36	Others*	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL		826	100	5.36	3.43	8.39

*Gwalior, Guna, Morena, Sheopur, Bhind, Indore, Dhar, Burhanpur, Chhindwara, Shivni, Shadol, Hoshangabad, Raisen, Bhopal, Rajgarh, Agar (16), † Newly born districts in Madhya Pradesh.

Symptoms observed by the Family Members

Symptoms observed by family members before suicide of victims were examined and found that the victim was mingling with his/her own community (70%) and neighbours households/friends (74%).

Table 3: Symptoms observed by family members before suicide (% of HH)

Sl. No.	Symptoms Enquired	Who answered Yes to total
1	Was victim mingling with his/her own family member?	70
2	Was victim mingling with his/her own community?	70
3	Was victim mingling with his/her neighboring households/friends?	74
4	Was victim consuming food regularly?	76
5	Was victim sleeping adequately during nights?	72

He was also consuming food regularly (76%) and sleeping adequately during night (72%) as reported

by the majority of HHs, which indicate that in spite of normal behaviour the victims committed suicide and family member were helpless to stop the suicide (Table 3).

Causes of Suicide

As far as suicides of farmers in the state are concerned various causes of suicide i.e. social farming and indebtedness were examined for the study.

Social Causes

The social causes of suicide includes poverty, property dispute, marriage related issues, family problems/commitments, illness, drug abuse/alcoholic addiction, gambling/batting/chit-fund and falling social reputation were examined with respective respondents as well as neighbours/relatives/friends of victims and presented in table 4.

All the HHs reported that poverty (BPL, AYY) is not a cause of suicide, while only 2 (AYY) and 8 (BPL) per cent of neighbours/relatives/friends of victims

reported that poverty is also a cause of suicide. Although, the percentage of HHs under APL, BPL and AAY were found to be 40, 48 and 12 per cent. Property dispute i.e. partition of land, house and jewellery was found a cause of suicide as reported by only 6, 2 and 2 per cent of respondents and only 10, 2 and 10 per cent of neighbours/relatives/friends of victims, respectively. Thus, property dispute of land, house and jewellery may also not be considered as a major social cause of suicide in the area under study. In case of marriage related issues, extra marital affairs followed by love failure were found to be major cause of suicide as reported by 36 and 16 per cent of respondents. It was also confirmed by 44 and 18 per cent of neighbours/relatives/friends of victims, respectively.

Table 4: Social causes of suicide

Sl. No.	Causes	% of HH to total sample who answered Yes	
		As per respondent	As per neighbours/relatives/friends
1 Poverty			
A	APL (40)	0	0
B	BPL (48)	0	8
C	AAY (12)	0	2
2 Property dispute			
A	Partition of land	6	8
B	Partition of house	2	2
D	Partition of jewellery	2	10
3 Marriage related issues			
A	Extra marital affairs	36	44
B	Divorce	0	0
C	Love failure	16	18
4 Family problems/Commitments			
A	Daughter's marriage	4	6
b	Frequent quarrel among the family members	24	22
5	Illness	46	48

6	Drug abuse/ Alcoholic addiction	32	44
7	Gambling/ betting/chit fund	8	12
8	Fall in social reputation	22	18

*Figure in parenthesis shows percentage of HHs under APL, BPL and AAY categories.

Family problems/commitments were also taken into consideration, while examining the social causes of suicide. Illness (46%) followed by drug abuse/ alcoholic addiction (32%), frequent quarrel among the family members (24%) and fall in social reputation (22%) were found to be major causes of suicide as reported by the majority of respondents. Gambling/batting/chit-fund and daughters marriages were also reported causes of suicide by 8 and 4 per cent of respondents in the area under study. These causes of suicide were also confirmed by the neighbours/relatives/friends of victims in same frequency and proportion with minor variations.

Thus, among the social causes of suicides, family problems and commitments followed by marriage related issues were found to be major causes of suicide. In case of family problems/commitment, illness and drug abuse, fall in social reputation, frequent quarrel among the family members were found to be major causes of suicide, while extra marital affairs and love affairs were found to be major causes under marriage related issues. These causes were also confirmed by the neighbours/relatives/friends of victims. Suicide was found to be least effected by poverty and property dispute in the area under study.

Farming Related Causes

Failure of crops, natural calamities and expectation from others were examined for the year 2014-15 and 2015-16 from the respondents and presented in table 5. It is observed from the data that failure of crop due to infestation of insect pest and diseases was found to be a cause of suicide in both the year 2014-15 and 2015-16 as reported by only 6 per cent of respondents.

Quarrel between the victim and others was found

to be major farming related cause of suicide as reported by 38 (2014-15) and 56 (2015-16) per cent of respondents. Natural calamities viz. failure of rainfall an occurrence of drought accidental fire and inability to sell output were also found to be other minor causes of suicides as reported by only 8, 6 and 2 per cent of respondents respectively.

Table 5: Farming related causes of suicides

Sl. No.	Causes	% of HH to Total sample who answered Yes	
		2014-15	2015-16
1 Failure of crop/s			
A	Others specify (infestation of insect pest and diseases)	6	6
2 Due to natural calamities			
a	Failure of rainfall/drought	8	8
b	Accidental fire	6	6
3	Inability to sell output	2	2
5	Quarrel between the victim & others	38	56
3 Expectations of			
a	Higher prices of output	18	16
c	Loan waiving	2	2
d	Institutional credit	2	2

Expectation of higher prices of output (18%), loan waiving (2%) and institutional credit (2%) were found to be causes of farming related suicides for the years 2014-15 and 2015-16.

Indebtedness Related Causes

Indebtedness related causes of suicides were not found as major causes of suicide for the year 2014-15 and 2015-16 (Table 6).

Table 6: Indebtedness related causes of suicides

Sl. No.	Causes	% of HH to Total sample who answered Yes	
		2014-15	2015-16
1	Indebtedness – Institutional & Non-Institutional		
a	Due to crop loan	0	0
b	Due to farm equipment’s loan	4	4
c	Due to non-agricultural loan	2	2
d	Due to non-institutional loan	2	2
2	Due to pressure from institutional sources	4	4
3	Due to pressure from non-institutional sources (mainly money lenders)	2	2

It is observed from the data that few respondents reported that suicide would have been committed due to farm equipment loan (4%), non-agriculture loan (2%) non-institutional loan (2%) and pressure created from institutional (4%) and non-institutional (2%) agencies in recovery of loan. It is concluded from the above results that major causes of suicides prevailing in the area under study were found to be social and farming related causes. Among these social related causes were found to be more prominent as compared to farming related causes.

Illness followed by drug abuse/alcoholic addiction, fall in social reputation, frequent quarrel among family members, extra marital affairs, love failure and gambling/betting /chit fund were found to be social cause prevalent in the study area (Table 7). In case of farming related causes quarrel between the victim & others followed by expectations of higher prices of output, inability to sell output and failure of crops due to natural calamities were found to be major causes of suicides.

Table 7: Ranking of the social, farming and indebted causes of suicides

Particulars	Causes	Ranking
Social causes	Extra marital affairs	V
	Love failure	VI
	Fall in social reputation	III
	Illness	I
	Drug abuse/Alcoholic addiction	II
	Gambling/betting /chit fund	VII
	Frequent quarrel among family members	IV
Farming related causes	Due to natural calamities	IV
	Inability to sell output	III
	Quarrel between the victim & others	I
	Expectations of higher prices	II

Impact on HH after Committing Suicide by the Victims

As for as the effect on HHs family after committing suicide by the victims is concerned it is found that they have lost their earning member of the family (40%), land was sold (36%), schooling of children

stopped (32%), postponement of son/daughter's marriage (18%) and insecurity in the family (18%) were found to be major effect on HH family as reported by the majority of respondents (Table 8).

Table 8: Impact on HH household after committing suicide

Sl. No.	After effect	% of HH to total sample who answered Yes
1	No earning member	40
2	Schooling of the children stopped	32
3	Land sold	36
4	Other assets sold (specify) Jewellery	2
5	Postponement of son/ daughter's marriage	18
6	Family member/s fell seriously ill	2
7	Family member/s under depression	4
8	Insecurity in the family	18

Family member/s were found under depression (4%), fell seriously ill (2%) and sold their Jewellery (2%) for meeting the financial obligations were found as minor after effect on the HHs after committing suicide by the victims.

Suggestions to Prevent the Suicide in Future

The suggestions given by the respondents to prevent suicide in future were also examined and enlisted in Table 9. The most important suggestions as reported by the majority of the respondents are; a psychologist should be appointed at least at district hospital for mental patient (82%), establishment of rehabilitation centre for drug/alcoholic addiction (78%), skill up-gradation/capacity building centre must be established at least block level (64%), compensation for crop damage/losses should at least meet input costs (62%), supply of better quality inputs for cultivation of crops (58%), increase/declaration of MSP for all crops (54%) and creation of non/off-farm level employment opportunities by village levels (52%).

The respondents also suggested that suicide would be stopped if crop insurance scheme

should be reached at individual farmers level (46%), public awareness should be created for difference developmental programmes of the Govt. (42%), health insurance should be made mandatory with Govt. support for the farming community (32%), crop/variety diversification (22%) and increased role of social institutions (16%) by the government.

Table 9: Suggestions to prevent the suicides in future

Sl. No.	Suggestion	% of HH to Total sample who suggested
1	Establishment of rehabilitation centre for drug/alcoholic addiction	39 (78)
3	A Psychologist should be appointed at least at district hospital for mental patient	41 (82)
4	Skill up-gradation / capacity building centre must be established at block level.	32 (64)
5	Creation of non/off-farm level employment opportunities by village levels.	26 (52)
6	Public awareness should be created for difference developmental programmes of the Govt.	21 (42)
7	Increase/declaration of MSP for all crops	27 (54)
9	Crop insurance scheme should be reached at individual level	23 (46)
10	Compensation for crop damage/ losses should at least meet input costs	31 (62)
11	Crop/variety diversification	11 (22)
12	Supply of better quality inputs	29 (58)
13	Health insurance should be made mandatory with Govt. support for the farming community	16 (32)
14	Increased role of social institutions	8 (16)

CONCLUSION

None of the farmer in the area under study was found to commit suicide due to indebtedness but on the basis of reviews, indebtedness was found to be a major cause of farmer suicides. It is also observed during the course of investigation that the farmers who committed suicide were found to have poor repaying capacity and risk bearing ability. Therefore utmost care should be taken before sanctioning of loan to the farmers. The prominent causes of

farmer suicides in Madhya Pradesh as recognised by the majority of the respondents were found to be family problems, illness drug abuse/alcoholic addiction, fall in social reputation, extra martial affairs and quarrel between victims and others. None of farmers was found to commit suicides due to poverty, property disputes and crop loan. The main problems were found to be lack of access to mental health services in rural areas and shame attached to treatment, lack of rehabilitation centres for drug and alcoholic addition and lack of avenues off/non farm income. Therefore it is suggested that the government should remove the bottlenecks and increase access in remote areas. Efforts should also be made so that crop insurance scheme should reach at individual level and health insurance should be made mandatory with Govt, support for the farming community. A campaign should also be launched for crop/variety diversification in various agro climatic regions of Madhya Pradesh. Govt, should also think twice keeping in mind the benefits realized should reached to the last man of the society, while finalising the programme and taking decisions regarding declaration of MSP, import & export duties etc. Hence, the crop specific decisions taken by the Govt, and its shocks on farmers must be analysed well in advance and should be mapped with suicide hot spots so that pro active, quickly and prompt actions can be taken to save not only life of the farmers but to protect their family members from unforeseen shocks.

REFERENCES

- Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India. 2015. National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs Government of India, pp. 1-322.
- Situation Assessment Survey of Formers: NSS 59th Round SCH 33:2003, National Sample Survey Organization - Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) (2013), Government of India, pp. 1-146.
- Behere, P.B. and Behere, A.P. 2008. Farmer suicides in Vidharbha Region of Maharashtra State: A myth or reality? *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, **50**: 124-127.
- Government of India. 2014. Agriculture Census 2010-11: All India Report on Number and Area of Operational Holdings. Agriculture Census Division Department of Agriculture and Co-operation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.