

# A Study to Assess Occupational Stress among Farmers Residing in a Selected Rural Area of Rahata Taluka, Ahmednagar District

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## Abstract

**Background:** During the recent years, farming has gone through lot of changes and it also found to be one of the potential areas for stress. Along with irregularities in weather and financial issues; greater use of automation technology, more use of organic production, decrease price for agricultural products and new complicated legislations have made the life of farmers more stressful one. In this study an attempt is made to find out the factors which are causing stress and made the life of farming community more miserable.

**Materials and Methods:** A descriptive design with cross-sectional survey approach was used to collect the data. A modified version of farm stress inventory created by James & Lily Walker was used to assess the occupational stress. The samples were selected by purposive sampling technique. The samples comprised of 60 farmers of a selected village of Rahata taluka Ahmednagar District Maharashtra. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

**Results:** The findings of the study revealed that majority of the participants had occupational stress in each area of assessment (Financial stress, farming hassles, weather stress, work overload and other people as stressor)

**Conclusion:** study concluded that farming hassles and financial stress was common and more significant type of stress among most of participant participants.

**Keywords:** *Farmers and occupational stress (Financial stress, farming hassles, weather stress, work overload and other people as stressor)*

## Introduction

Globally agriculture occupation has been described as one of the most hazard-prone occupations. This industry has one of the worst records for high incidence of occupational ill health, injuries and work related fatalities. Farming community weather stress will be more considerable as compared to other components of stress<sup>1</sup>

Mcgregor, Willock et al conducted a study

to assess farmers stress indicated that five stress related domains predominate in farmers. The first was “economics” including loan repayments and government agricultural policies. The second domain was “geographical isolation “and recorded the farmers distance from services. Third domain was “time pressure” indicated the experience of having too much to do in little time. The fourth domain was “climatic conditions” adducing information about rainfall, frost and wind erosion. The fifth domain was “hazardous

working conditions” which enquired about chemicals. The data analyzed in this study was collected via a survey of farmers. The result was highest stressors with mean scores of 3.3 (where 1 indicated no stress and 5 very severe stress) were found to be filling government forms, adjusting to new government regulations and poor weather conditions<sup>2</sup>

Study conducted by Dr Jane parry, Dr Helen Barnes et al explored the ways in which stress affect farming communities, how this has changed in recent years and degree to which work related aspects of stress may be assuaged by support interventions. A qualitative case study research approach was employed to address these issues, involving 60 interviews in five locations across England and Wales. In examining farming stress a distinction was made between its intrinsic, extrinsic and work related dimensions. While interviewees tended to associate day- to-day worries and acute stress with farming’s intrinsic demands (such as disease and adverse weather conditions), external causes of tension (such as competition and regulation), together with worries about finances and family were associated with more sustained anxieties<sup>3</sup>

Agriculture with its allied sectors is the largest source of livelihoods in India. 70% of the rural households still depend primarily on agriculture for their livelihood with 82% farmers being small and marginal<sup>4</sup>

As per the report of free Press journal A 42 year old farmer from Kusadgaon in Jamkhed tehsil of Ahmedgar district in state of Maharashtra committed suicide by hanging himself who was having one and half acres of agriculture land and he had taken loan of 1.5 lakh State bank of India and could not repay it, another farmer who was 60years old from Parbhani district of Maharashtra ended his life by hanging himself, he also had taken loan from bank as well as from private money lender, which he was unable to

repay.<sup>5</sup>

A community based descriptive cross sectional study conducted in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra revealed that farmers experiencing unpredictable weather and financial problems as major stress factors. The study also revealed that differences of stress levels on various factors were statistically significant when compared to size of landholding of farmers-small farmers were more susceptible. This study concluded that weather fluctuations and unpredictability leads to significant effects on production of crop and which is directly related to the annual income of farmers; hence policymakers, agricultural scientists marketing and financial experts need to create a suitable environment for farmers to overcome these stressors<sup>6</sup>

A descriptive study conducted have clearly indicated that the farming occupation leads to stress due to financial, weather, work overload, social interaction and farm hassles. It is inferred that all the selected dimensions are producing either high or medium level of stress to farming people. It is also found that stress due to financial factors is found to be slightly higher than other stresses<sup>7</sup>

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to assess the level of occupational stress among farmers residing in a selected rural area of Rahata taluka. The descriptive study design with cross-sectional survey approach was used to collect data. Total 60 farmers were selected as per inclusion and exclusion criteria with purposive sampling technique. Data collection was done on 5 point likert scale with a modified version of farm stress inventory created by James & Lily Walker. Tool was divided into five components as financial stressors, farming hassles, weather related stressors, work overload ad others as stressors to assess the occupational stress.

Prior permission was obtained from concerned local authority of a selected village of Rahata Taluka . During data collection, the researcher introduced himself to the respondents and their willingness for the participation was ascertained. The respondents were assured that the confidentiality of the information will be maintained. The informed consent was obtained from the respondent before the data collection. The researcher himself collected data from each subject with interview technique. The data collected from each subject was recorded systematically and organized in a way that facilitated computer entry and data analysis.

### Findings

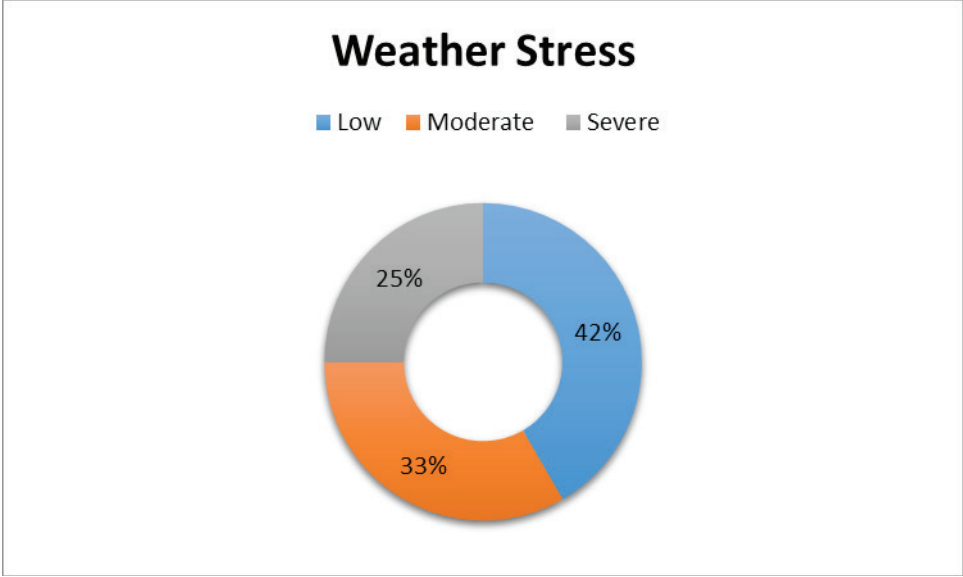
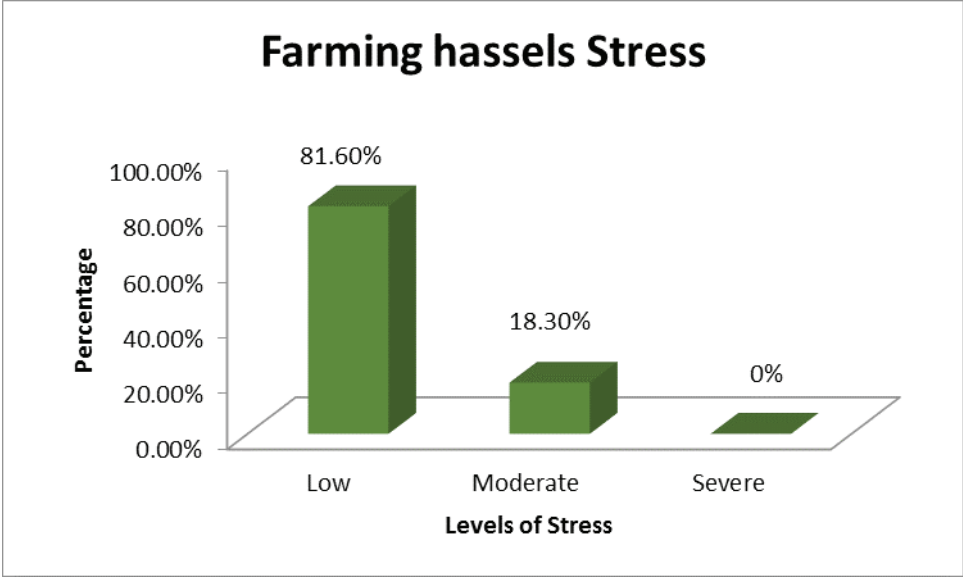
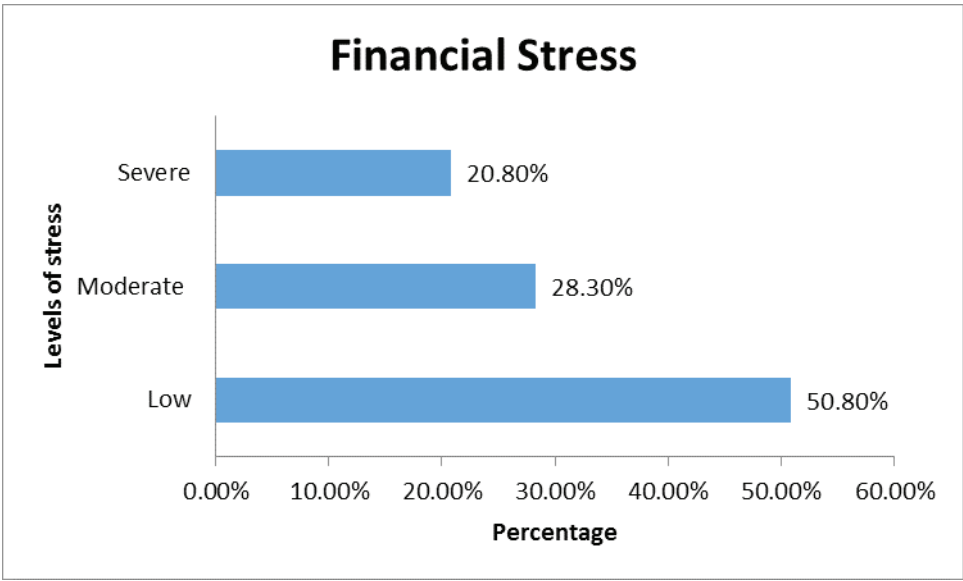
**Findings related to demographic profile:** Most of the farmers (26.66%) were in the age group of 41-50 years. The study was dominated by male farmers (100%). Majority of study subjects (60%) were with secondary school education and only 8% were with no formal education. Most of the farmers (88.33%) were married and 11.66% were unmarried. 80% of farmers were Hindu by religion and 3.33% belonged to Christian community. Majority of the participants (90%) had source of income other than farming only 10% were fully dependent on farming for their livelihood. 40% of the participant's per capita monthly family income was Rs. 3287-6573 and 8% of the participants had monthly per capita income of Rs 986-1971. 86% of the farmers were residing in Pakka house and 14% were residing in Kaccha type of house. 48% of the farmers were living in nuclear families followed by 35% and 16% were residing in joint and extended joint families respectively. Majority of farmers (56%) had more than three dependents in family only 5% had one dependent in their families. 58% of the farmers had priority responsibility of higher education of their children followed by 25.66% had

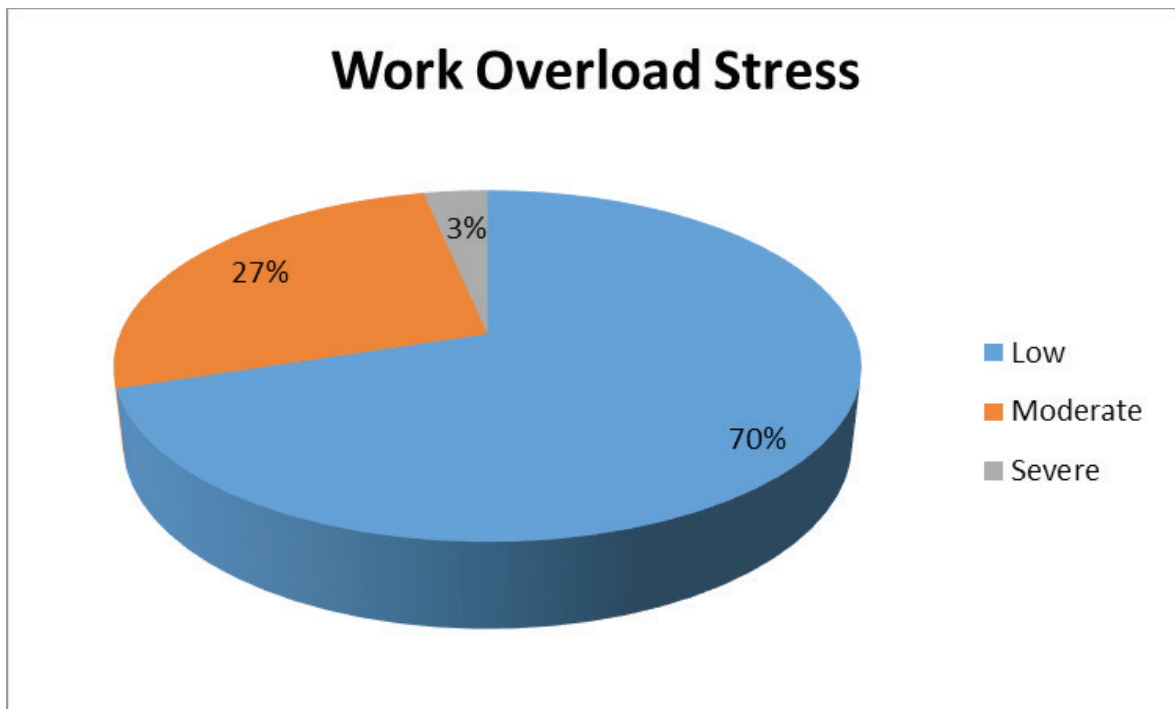
priority responsibility of marriage of their daughters.

### Findings related to agricultural Characteristics:

majority of the participants (43.33%) had more than four acres of agricultural land and 10% of the farmers had only 1-2 acre of agricultural land. 73% of farmers had no irrigation facilities and 27% farmers had irrigation facilities available for farming. For 86% of the farmers had irregular and inadequate electricity supply for farming related work. Crop seeds were easily available for 90% of farmers only 10% had difficulty to get it. 86.66 % of the farmers were regularly using pesticides and 13.33% were sometimes using pesticides. Own farming equipments were available for 31.66% of farmers and 31.66% were borrowing farming equipments on rent basis. For 86% study participants fertilizers were easily available and for 20% it was difficult to get it. 40% of the participants preferred to have mixed type of crop yielding and 13.33% were yielding horticultural crop. 35% of farmers had personal borrowing followed by 26% had self financed farming and 18.33% took loan from bank. 40% of the faced recent crop failure. Crop Storage facility was unavailable with the 73.33% study participants and for 26.66% participants it was available.

**Major findings of the study:** In the financial component 50.8% study participants had low, 28.3 had moderate and 20.8% had severe level of stress. In farming hassles component 81% respondents were having low level of stress followed by 18.3% with moderate level of stress. In weather stress component 25% were having severe, 33.3% were having moderate and 41.6% had low level stress. In work overload component of stress 70% subjects had low, 26% had moderate and 3.3% had severe level stress. Other people as low level of stress was experienced by all the participants (100%)





### Discussion

In the Present study majority of the participants were with (60%) secondary school education, this finding is supported by the study conducted to assess potential sources of stress for farmers in England and Wales<sup>8</sup>

The study conducted to assess role of financial threat, social support, work stress and mental distress among farmers in Ireland shows that 97% of the participants were male<sup>9</sup>; in the present study all the participants (100%) were male.

Study conducted to assess the risk factors affecting farmers mental health, the findings of the study showed that 58% of the farmers had more than three dependents in family<sup>10</sup> however in present study 56% of participants had more than three dependents in family.

Study conducted to assess burnout and hopelessness among farmers; findings of this study showed that majority (70%) of farmers had recent crop failure<sup>11</sup> where as in present study recent crop

failure was faced by 40% of the farmers.

A study conducted to assess stressors among farmers in eastern North Carolina indicated that 88% of farmers were having source of income other than farming and majority of farmers (76.46%) were not having storage facility for yielded crop<sup>12</sup> where by present study revealed that 90% of the participants have source of income other than farming and for 73.33% participants storage facility is not available for yielded crop.

Present study indicated that most of farmers had low to moderate level of stress in all the areas of assessment (financial stress, farming hassles, work overload, weather stress and other people as stress ) only few percentage of the farmers were having severe occupational stress study conducted by Dr Javed Kureshi on occupational stress among farming people in Aurangabad district of Maharashtra, the findings of this study showed that the farming occupation encompasses all type of stresses to farmers, the study are farmers were experiencing unpredictable weather and financial problems as major stress factors<sup>6</sup>.

### Recommendations:

1. Same studies can be conducted on larger no of samples to generalize the findings
2. Interventional Programmes to be initiated to develop coping abilities of the farmers
3. There should be Proper implementation of welfare schemes related to farmers.

**Ethical Clearance:** was obtained from Institutional Ethics Committee PIMS (DU) CON

**Source of Funding:** Self

**Conflict of Interest:** None

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