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Factors Affecting the Agrarian Distress Proneness in Vidarbha

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Abstract- The present study was carried out in Akola, Buldana, Amravati, Washim, Yavatmal and Wardha districts of Vidarbha in Maharashtra during 2012-2013. An exploratory design of social research was used. In total 240 farmers (120 farmers having land bellow 2 ha (Marginal to Small) + 120 farmers having land above 2 ha. (Semi-medium to Large farmers) were selected by random sampling method; it covers 24 villages and 9 Tahsils of six districts of Vidarbha. The main objective of this study was to study the agrarian distress proneness level amongst the selected farmers in Vidarbha. The composite index of agrarian distress of selected respondents was obtained with the help of Composite Index of selected 16 factors. The composite index were analysed by using the method of Prem Narain, et.al (2011). The salient findings revealed that near about cent percent (98.58%) selected farmers were having high composite index of agrarian distress. The non-remunerative prices (having Mean Severity Score 4 out of 3), weather related uncertainties (MSS=3.99), fluctuation in market rates (MSS=3.95), rise in cost of inputs (MSS=3.92), lack of irrigation facilities (MSS=3.87), lack of accurate weather information (MSS=3.66), crops damages by wild animals (MSS=3.46), etc.

Keywords: *agrarian distress, composite index, mean severity score, non-remunerative prices.*

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Abstract- The present study was carried out in Akola, Buldana, Amravati, Washim, Yavatmal and Wardha districts of Vidarbha in Maharashtra during 2012-2013. An exploratory design of social research was used. In total 240 farmers (120 farmers having land bellow 2 ha (Marginal to Small) + 120 farmers having land above 2 ha. (Semi-medium to Large farmers) were selected by random sampling method; it covers 24 villages and 9 Tahsils of six districts of Vidarbha. The main objective of this study was to study the agrarian distress proneness level amongst the selected farmers in Vidarbha. The composite index of agrarian distress of selected respondents was obtained with the help of Composite Index of selected 16 factors. The composite index were analysed by using the method of Prem Narain, et.al (2011). The salient findings revealed that near about cent percent (98.58%) selected farmers were having high composite index of agrarian distress. The non-remunerative prices (having Mean Severity Score 4 out of 3), weather related uncertainties (MSS=3.99), fluctuation in market rates (MSS=3.95), rise in cost of inputs (MSS=3.92), lack of irrigation facilities (MSS=3.87), lack of accurate weather information (MSS=3.66), crops damages by wild animals (MSS=3.46), etc. were the severely affecting factors for agrarian distress in selected six districts of Vidarbha. Hence Central and State government should take care of all mentioned factors for reducing the agrarian distress.

Keywords: agrarian distress, composite index, mean severity score, non-remunerative prices.

I. Introduction

Over two and half lakh farmers have committed suicide between 1995 and 2011 across India, including in states like Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, U.P., Punjab, Haryana and Kerala. Most of the victims belong to small and marginal farmers, and many belonging to backward class and scheduled castes (Murthy, 2013). According to the data available from National Bureau of Crime Record the number of farmers suicides have been on increase year after year [Sainath, P (2012) in The Hindu]. Several scholars who have analysed the farmers suicides contend that these suicides are the legacy of the economic reforms [Mishra (2006), Deshpande and Prabhu, 2005.]. As per the Mishra, 2007 and Kale, 2008 poor returns to cultivation and absence of non-farm opportunities are indicative of the larger socio-economic malaise in rural India.

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Thus the various factors behind distress are more or less similar across the country. Major among them are market imperfections and economic, social, psychological, technological and institutional (Rao, 2008). However, for the purpose of the extent exercise, the focus of the study would be restricted to mostly the economic aspect that leads to "distress".

As per the Radhakrishna Committee Report (Anonymous, 2007) the Government of India declared 31 districts in four States (Andhra Pradesh-16, Karnataka-6, Maharashtra-6 and Kerala-3) as distress districts. These districts are mostly rainfed, agriculturally less developed and low productivity districts, where the Prime Minister's Relief and Rehabilitation package is being implemented. This package is designed with regional specificity to address issues of moisture conservation, infrastructural development, augmentation of non-farm sources of income and employment to farmers. Among distress districts, six districts are from Vidarbha region of Maharashtra State. These districts are Yavatmal, Buldana, Amravati, Akola, Washim and Wardha.

The current research study was conducted with the objectives to study the socio-economic profile of the selected respondents, to assess the factors affecting the agrarian distress in distress districts, to find the agrarian distress proneness level of the respondents according to the Composite index of agrarian distress of selected 16 factors and to document the suggestions from the respondents for betterment of farming business.

II. Methodology

Present research investigation was carried out in six distress districts of Western Vidarbha region of Maharashtra with exploratory design of social research. These districts were namely Akola, Buldana, Amravati, Washim, Yavatmal and Wardha districts of Vidarbha in Maharashtra. From each district four villages where selected randomely and from each selected village 5 marginal to small and 5 semi-medium to large land holding farmers were interviewed with the help of structured interview schedule. Thus this investigation was confined to a sample of 240 farmers (120 marginal to small + 120 semi-medium to large land holding farmers) from 24 Villages of six districts of Vidarbha region of Maharashtra.

a) Composite index of Agrarian distress

Operationally agrarian distress proneness refers to the inability of the respondent to cope up with existing farming business. A teacher made scale consisting of 16 factors (Table 2) that adversely affect the farming business of the farmers were used to measure the Agrarian Distress Proneness. The responses were taken on four point continuum according to adverse effect of each factor as severe, somewhat, can't say, not at all by assigning the scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. The distribution of the respondents were done according to the Composite index of agrarian distress of selected 16 factors. The composite index were analysed by using the method of Prem Narain, et.al (2011). The distribution of the selected farmers according to obtained (0 to 1) composite index of agrarian distress have been done by equal interval method as follows.

Sr.No.	Level of agrarian distress proneness according to the Composite index of agrarian distress (0 to 1)	Frequency (%)
1	Low (Up to 0.33)	
2	Medium (0.34-0.66)	
3	High (Above 0.66)	

b) Mean Severity Score (MSS)

The responses were taken on four point continuum according to adverse effect of each selected factor as severe, somewhat, can't say, not at all by assigning the scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Sum of the raw score of each selected factor was the distress proneness score of an individual farmer which was converted into Mean Severity Score with the help of following formula. On the basis of MSS each identified Factor has been ranked.

$$\text{Mean Severity Score (MSS)} = \frac{\text{Sum of the raw score of each selected factor}}{\text{Total number of Respondents}}$$

III. Results and Discussion

a) Profile of farmers

The data with respect to various characteristics of the selected group of the farmers have been furnished in Table 1. It was observed from Table 1. that 45.42 per cent of the selected farmers were under old age category i.e. above 50 years, followed by more than one third respondents (37.50%) were from middle age group having age between 36 to 50 years. The remaining 17.08 per cent respondents were from young age group. From the above data it was inferred that from all age group respondents were selected for this study.

Out of the total respondents, maximum 40.00 per cent of the selected respondents were having high school level education, 21.66 per cent had higher secondary school level education followed by middle school (15%), college level (12.92 %), primary (7.92 %) and 2.50 per cent were illiterates have not attended formal schooling. Majority (70.00%) of the selected respondents were having medium family size having 4 to 6 family members. Among the selected farmers 51.25 per cent have only farming as the occupation, followed by agriculture + labour (34.58%), agriculture+ service/ pension (7.50%), agriculture + non professional business (5%) and Agriculture + allied occupation was observed with only 4 (1.67%) farmers. Thus it was inferred from the above data that lack of allied occupation was noted with majority (98.33%) of the selected farmers.

It is observed from Table 1 that over half (52.50%) of the selected farmers have well/tube well as irrigation source but most of the wells were dry in Buldana and Washim districts due to low rainfall during 2012-13 year and secondly electric load shading was the acute problem with the farmers for using the available water for crops in all selected district.Whereas, sizable 43.33 per cent farmers have no source of irrigation, they have to depend on monsoon rains only, negligible 2.50 and 1.67 per cent farmers have river and canal as a source of irrigation respectively. Majority (97.08%) of farmers have crop-crop farming system and very negligible (2.92%) farmers have crop-dairy/sericulture as the farming system.

Nearly one third (32.92%) of the selected farmers have annual income upto Rs. 50,000 only, followed by in the range of Rs. 50,001 to 1, 00,000 (23.75%), Rs. 1,00,001 to 2,00,000 (23.33%), Rs. 2,00,001 to 4,00,000 (11.67%), Rs 4,00,001 to 8,00,000 (6.25 %) and above Rs. 8,00,000 was observed with only 2.08 per cent farmers. The decreasing trend of annual income was observed with the selected farmers. More than half (51.25%) of the respondents have no bullock pair they totally depend on others, followed by 40.00 per cent of the farmers have one bullock pair whereas, 8.33 per cent have two pairs and remaining one farmer (0.42%) has three bullock pairs. Amongst the selected farmers only 10 per cent have their own tractor and these are the big farmers. Whereas, remaining majority (90%) of the farmers have no own tractor.

The data about the sources of information availed by the all selected farmers revealed that neighbors and VLW/AEO/AO/KVK SMS were used by each 63.75 per cent farmers . This was followed by television (52.08%), news paper (47.92%) as a important sources of information. Majority of the selected farmers (70.42%) farmer having low level of sources of information and remaining (29.58%) comes under medium level of sources of information.

Soybean (91.25%) and pulses (88.75% mostly Tur in Kharif & Gram in Rabi) were grown by majority of selected farmers, followed by cotton (42.92%), cereals (24.17%), fruits and vegetables (10.83%), flower crops were with 4 (1.67%) farmers and only two (0.83%) farmers have medicinal and aromatic plants. Only 22.08 per cent farmers had enrolled/ availed the facility of crop insurance scheme. Majority of the farmers expressed that they have not get any benefit after availing the facility of crop insurance scheme in past due to the wrong assessment of risk at division level. The risk assessment should be done at village level was the suggestion given by the majority of the farmers.

It was observed from Table 1. that 22.08 per cent of the selected farmers were observed defaulters against the institutional crop loan, hence they were not eligible for getting the fresh loan during 2012-13 season. It was noted from the data that 36.67 per cent of farmers not availed the crop loan during 2012-13. It might be due to the fact that 22.08 per cent farmers were defaulter and hence not eligible for getting the institutional loan. Whereas, remaining farmers were have service/pension as a source and due to difficult procedure few of them not have availed the crop loan.While 23.75 per cent had availed loan in the range of Rs. 25,001-50,000, followed by Rs.50,001-1,00,000 (17.92%), upto Rs. 25,000 (10.83%), in the range of Rs. 1,00,001-2,00,000 (7.08%) and remaining 3.75 per cent have availed above Rs. 2,00,000 crop loan during 2012-13.

b) Selected factors and their effect on agrarian distress

In all total 16 factors were selected by taking opinion of the expert and reviewing the review of literature on agrarian distress. The adverse affect of each selected factor on farming business has been measure by taking the responses of the selected farmers as severe, somewhat, can't say, not at all by assigning the scores of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively. Sum of the raw score of each selected factor was the severity score of an individual factor which was converted into Mean Severity Score. On the basis of Mean Severity Score (MSS) each selected factor has been ranked and data has been furnished in Table 2.

The data from Table 2 revealed that non-remunerative prices (MSS-4 out of 4), weather related uncertainties (MSS-3.99), fluctuation in market rates (MSS-3.95), rise in cost of inputs (MSS-3.92), lack of irrigation facilities (MSS-3.87), lack of accurate weather information (MSS-3.66) and crops damages by wild animals (MSS-3.46) were on Rank-I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII respectively. The unavailability /high wages of labour having MSS-3.38 (Rank-VIII), followed by yield uncertainties MSS-3.37 (Rank-IX), lack of storage facilities MSS-3.16 (Rank-X), inadequate market facilities MSS-2.87 (Rank-XI), problem of electric load shedding MSS-2.66 (Rank-XII), lack of technical knowledge MSS-2.57 (Rank- XIII), non availability of chemical fertilizers in market at proper time MSS-2.23 (Rank-XIV), restricted credit and non-availability at proper time MSS-2.02 (Rank-XV) and spurious quality seeds having MSS-1.97 and ranked on XVI. Anonymous, (1998) and Kale, et.al (2011) was also reveals the same type of finding in their research projects.

c) Composite Index of Agrarian Distress

The composite index of agrarian distress of selected respondents was obtained with the help of Composite Index of selected 16 factors. The composite indices were analysed by using the method of Prem Narain, et.al (2011). The distribution of the selected farmers according to obtained Composite Index (0 to 1) of Agrarian Distress have been done by equal interval method in low (Up to 0.33), medium (0.34-0.66), and high (Above 0.66) and the results have been depicted in Table 3.

The data regarding composite index of agrarian distress of selected respondents from Table 3 revealed that majority (99.58%) of the farmers were having high composite index of agrarian distress and remaining one (0.42%) respondent has medium level of composite index of agrarian distress.

Hence this research study clears that near about cent per cent (99.58%) selected farmers were in high agrarian distress and hence government should have to take care of all selected factors for reducing the agrarian distress in selected six distress districts of Vidarbha.

d) Suggestions to prevent agrarian distress

Taking suggestions for avoiding present agrarian crisis is one of the important aspects of this study. It refers to the opinion of respondents about what action should be taken for reducing distress proneness level among the farming community, which can help to some extent for finding out ground realities for agrarian distress and help to suggest different measures to solve farmers' distress in Vidarbha region. The responses received from the respondents are presented in Table 4.

It is clear from Table 4 that cent per cent (100%) respondents suggested for remunerative prices to their farm produce, recently they did not gets the remunerative prices as per the cost of cultivation. Some time input cost is not get return after selling farm produce. Secondly there is variation/ fluctuations in marker priceses. In this year 2012-13 most of the cotton

growers sold their cotton in the month of December-2012 at the rate Rs. 3900 per quintal but after that in the month of March 2013 cotton rate was 5000 per quintal. At this stage most of the farmers not gets the benefits, but benefits were goes to middle man who purchase the cotton in the month of December-2012. This was followed by majority (96%) per cent farmers suggested for timely input in low cost, it may be due to the facts that since from last ten years input cost raised tremendously but unfortunately farm produce will not get the remunerative price as per the cost of cultivation.

Provide subsidy for fencing the farms was the suggestion given by majority (95%) farmers, recently due to the increasing population of wild animals like dear, Rohi, Wild pigs, etc., these wild animals damages the field crops, hence majority farmers had given suggestion for more subsides on farm fencing. Provision/ creation of irrigation facilities was suggested by 83 per cent farmers, followed by provide more subsidy for purchasing the tractor was suggested by 75 per cent farmers, this may be due to the decreasing trend of farm labors in farming business. Construct the cement plug on every Nala in each village was the suggestion reported from 67 per cent farmers, this is the indication of awareness amongst the farming community about soil and water conservation practices, due to the decreasing trend of monsoon rains.

Abundant electric supply on day time for farming business is also important suggestion given by sizable (56%) group of farmers. In rural areas of Vidarbha electric load shading is the acute problem, during day time there are only three days in a week i.e. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday on this day farmers gets the 5 hours electricity during day time. Hence farmers suggested for day time electricity. Availability of information about Govt. Schemes and agricultural technology was reported by 52 per cent farmers, followed by assessments of crop insurance risk should be done at village levels is the suggestion received from 42 per cent farmers, earlier we have seen that very few respondents have availed/enrolled the crop insurance scheme, as per the opinion of farmers earlier they have enrolled the crop insurance scheme but they are not get any benefits. Hence the farmers suggested for village level assessment of risk in crop insurance. Promote the export of farm produce for getting benefits to farmers were reported by 42 per cent farmers, it may be due to the facts that when government promote the export of farm produce like cotton, onions, etc. farmers gets the good prices.

IV. Conclusion and Policy Options

This research study clears that near about cent percent (99.58%) of the farmers have high Composite Index of Agrarian Distress Proneness. The non-remunerative prices (having Mean Severity Score (MSS)-4 out of 4), weather related uncertainties (MSS-3.99), fluctuation in market rates (3.95), rise in cost of inputs (MSS 3.92), lack of irrigation facilities (MSS-3.87), lack of accurate weather information (MSS-3.66) and crops damages by wild animals (MSS-3.46) all these factors were having maximum Mean Severity Score (MSS) amongst the selected farmers and Rank on -I, II, III, IV, V, VI and VII respectively. Hence government should have to take care of all selected factors for reducing the agrarian distress in selected six distress districts of Vidarbha.

In six distressed districts of Vidarbha namely Buldhana, Akola, Washim, Amravati, Yavatmal and Wardha near about cent percent (99.58%) of the farmers have high (Above 0.66) Composite Index of Agrarian Distress. The non-remunerative prices (having Mean Severity Score (MSS)-4 out of 4), weather related uncertainties (MSS-3.99), fluctuation in market rates (3.95), rise in cost of inputs (MSS 3.92), lack of irrigation facilities (MSS-3.87), lack of accurate weather information (MSS-3.66) and crops damages by wild animals (MSS-3.46) were the severely affecting factors. Therefore, it is, recommended that government should give the remunerative prices to the farm produce and takes due consideration of mentioned factors for reducing the agrarian distress in selected six distressed districts of Vidarbha.

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Table 1 : Distribution of selected respondents according to their Characteristics

Sr.No.	Characteristics	Category	Respondents N=240	
			Frequency	%
1	Age	Young (Up to 35 Years)	41	17.08
		Middle (36-50)	90	37.50
		Old (Above 50)	109	45.42
2	Educational level	Illiterate	6	02.50
		Primary school	19	07.92
		Middle school	36	15.00
		High school	96	40.00
		Higher secondary school	52	21.66
		College	31	12.92
3	Family Size	Small (Upto 3)	32	13.33
		Medium (4 to 6)	168	70.00
		Large (7 to 9)	33	13.75
		Very large (Above 9)	7	2.92
4	Occupation	Agriculture + Labour	83	34.58
		Agriculture (only farming)	123	51.25
		Agriculture + Allied occupation	04	01.67
		Agriculture +Non professional business.	12	05.00
		Agriculture+ Service/ Pension	18	07.50
5	Land holding	Marginal (Up to 1.00 ha.)	20	8.33
		Small (1.01 to 2.00 ha.)	100	41.67
		Semi-medium (2.01 to 4.00 ha)	50	20.83
		Medium (4.01 to 10.00 ha.)	60	25.00
		Large (Above 10.00)	10	4.17
6	Irrigation sources	No source	104	43.33
		River	6	2.50
		Well/Tube well	126	52.50
		Canal	4	1.67
7	Farming system	Crop-crop	233	97.08
		Crop-dairy/sericulture	7	2.92
8	Annual income Rs.	Up to 50,000	79	32.92
		50,001 to 1, 00,000	57	23.75
		1,00,001 to 2,00,000	56	23.33
		2,00,001 to 4,00,000	28	11.67
		4,00,001 to 8,00,000	15	6.25

		Above 8,00,000	5	2.08
9	Bullock pair	Nil	123	51.25
		One	96	40.00
		Two	20	8.33
		Three	1	00.42
10	Own Tractor	No	216	90.00
		Yes	24	10.00
11	Information sources	Neighbors	153	63.75
		Local leaders	29	12.08
		Panchayat/society officials	11	4.58
		News papers	115	47.92
		Radio	14	5.83
		Television	125	52.08
		Cinema/film shows	0	0
		Dealer	55	22.92
		VLW/AEO/AO/KVK-SMS	153	63.75
		Leaflets/ Krushi Swandini/ Magazine	41	17.08
		Internet	0	0
12	Information sources level	Low (Up to 33.33)	169	70.42
		Medium (33.34 to 66.66)	71	29.58
		High (Above 66.67)	0	00.00
13	Type of crop	Cereals/ millets	58	24.17
		Pulses	213	88.75
		Soybean	219	91.25
		Cotton	103	42.92
		Fruits and vegetables	26	10.83
		Flower crops	4	1.67
		Medicinal and aromatic	2	0.83
14	Crop Insurance Facility availed during 2012-13	Yes	53	22.08
		No	187	77.92
15	Defaulter Position during 2012-13	Yes	53	22.08
		No	187	77.92
16	Amount of Crop Loan Availed during 2012-13	Not availed	88	36.67
		Upto 25,000	26	10.83
		25,001-50,000	57	23.75
		50,001-1,00,000	43	17.92
		1,00,001-2,00,000	17	7.08
		Above 2,00,000	9	3.75

Table 2 : Ranking of the selected Factors according to their Mean Severity Score amongst selected respondents

Sr.No.	Factors	Ranking of Factors & Mean Severity Score (MSS) N=240
1	Non-remunerative prices	I (4.00)
2	Weather related uncertainties	II (3.99)

3	Fluctuation in market rates	III (3.95)
4	Rise in cost of inputs	IV (3.92)
5	Lack of irrigation facilities	V (3.87)
6	Lack of accurate weather information	V I(3.66)
7	Crops damages by wild animals	VII (3.46)
8	Unavailability /high wages of labour	VIII (3.38)
9	Yield uncertainties	IX (3.37)
10	Lack of storage facilities	X (3.16)
11	Inadequate market facilities	XI (2.87)
12	Problem of electric Load shedding	XII (2.66)
13	Lack of technical knowledge	XIII (2.57)
14	Non availability of chemical fertilizers in market at proper time	XIV (2.23)
15	Restricted credit and non-availability at proper time	XV (2.02)
16	Spurious quality seeds	XVI (1.97)

Table 3 : Distribution of respondents according to Composite index of Agrarian Distress

Sr.No	Composite Index of Agrarian Distress (0-1)	Respondents N=240	
		Frequency	%
1	Low (Upto-0.33)	0	00.00
2	Medium 0.34-0.66)	1	0.42
3	High (Above 0.66)	239	99.58
	Total	**240**	**100.00**

Table 4 : Suggestions given by farmers to prevent agrarian distress proneness levels

Sr.No	Suggestions	Respondents N=240	
		Frequency	%
1	Remunerative prices to farm produce.	240	100.00
2	Timely input in low costs	230	96.00
3	Provide subsidy for fencing the farms	227	95.00
4	Provision/ creation of irrigation facilities.	200	83.00
5	Provide more subsidy for purchasing tractor	180	75.00
6	Construct the cement plug on every *Nala*	160	67.00
7	Abundant electric supply on day time for farming.	127	56.00
8	Availability of information about Govt. Schemes and agricultural technology.	125	52.00
9	Assessments of crop insurance risk should be done at village levels.	100	42.00
10	Promote the export of farm produce for getting benefits to the farmers	100	42.00

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