Levels of Alienation of Cotton Growers in Distress Areas: A Micro Study in Guntur and Warangal Districts of Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

The Ministry of Agriculture & Co-operation, Govt. of India reported that 11782 farmers have committed suicides in the country during last five years. Most of these suicides have been reported from cotton growing areas of Maharastra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab and other states. In this context, an attempt has been made in this study to look at the alienation of cotton growers. The study was conducted in Guntur and Warangal districts of AP considered as major cotton growing areas during 2007. The alienation was measured on four variables i.e., powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation and self estrangement. The findings reveal that majority of the respondents are moderate to high in economic and socio-political powerlessness issues. An equal percentage of the respondents are in agreement with the statement that cotton farming is trapped in vicious circle of drought and rain. Majority agreed that isolation is felt due to engagement of each one with their own commitments and can not spend time with friends, relatives and family members. Regarding majority of the statements that reflect self-estrangement respondents are under undecided stage. This might be due to confused stage of cotton farmers because of earlier sufferings of cotton and last few years cotton is fetching good returns. Great majority (about 80 per cent) of the respondents had medium alienation followed by high (about 20 per cent) alienation. Same trend was observed among both the categories i.e., up to 2 ha and more than 2 ha refelecting that farm size does not have influence on alienation.

Key words : Alienation, Cotton, Growers.

As per the report (2006-07) prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture & Co-operation, Govt. of India, 11782 farmers have committed suicides in the country during last five years. Most of these suicides have been reported from cotton growing areas of Maharasthra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Punjab and other states. The report further states that cotton growers are not able to get the remunerative prices to their produce. They have to sell their crop at very low prices and are not able to repay their debts due to drought and continuous crop failure. Under the circumstances, the only escape route for them is suicide. They are doing this due to frustration and humiliation. Durkheim (2002) pointed out that, suicide could be because of social isolation/ individualism (egoistic) or excess social integration (altruistic), breakdown of social regulation (anomic) or excess social regulation (fatalistic). In a recent review of neurobiological literature, Mann (2002) identified some important correlates of suicides. Most suicide victims have a diagnosable psychiatric disorder and the most common disorder is mood swings. The neurobiological risk factors are predisposing in nature. They are internal factors that exist with the individual. All those identified with this risk do not

commit suicide. Presence of additional factors that are external to the individual becomes crucial. This takes us to socio-economic risk factors that are precipitating in nature. They can act as a trigger. In this context, an attempt has been made in this study to look at the phenomenon of cotton growers' suicides through socio-psychological perspective which treats suicide as a deviant behavior.

MATERIAL AND METHODS
Selection of District:

Out of 22 rural districts in Andhra Pradesh, sixteen districts has been identified as high farmer's suicides prone districts and declared as distressed districts. Among these sixteen districts, two districts namely Guntur and Warangal districts were selected purposively where in considerable number of farmers suicides had occurred and considering as major cotton growing areas.

Selection of Mandals:

From each of the selected Districts, four mandals having larger area under cotton cultivation and where comparatively larger number of farmer suicides had reported were selected purposively.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents according to Powerlessness

S No	Powerlessness	% of respondents					
		Very high	High	Moderate	Less	Very less	Zero level
Economic							
1	Non availability of capital	12.0	26.5	26.0	31.5	3.5	0.5
2	Ceased sources of credit	7.0	27.5	28.5	29.5	7.5	0.0
3	Family members	13.5	41.0	31.5	10.5	3.5	0.0
4	Relatives	9.0	34.5	35.0	16.0	5.5	0.0
5	Friends	6.0	34.0	23.0	28.5	6.5	2.0
6	Banks	10.0	41.0	28.5	15.0	4.5	1.0
7	Moneylender	9.0	28.5	36.5	17.0	7.0	2.0
Socio-political							
8	Participation in formal organization	23.0	11.5	22.0	19.5	3.5	20.5
9	Participation in social informal organization	5.0	18.0	31.0	20.0	4.5	21.5
10	Participation in political organization	5.5	18.0	31.5	26.5	3.5	6.5
11	Participation in Non Government organization	7.0	17.5	22.5	23.0	4.5	25.5
12	Participation in Farmers forum, groups, associations	2.5	15.0	46.0	22.0	2.0	12.5
Other							
13	Lack of cooperation from others	16.0	10.5	37.5	25.5	3.0	7.5
14	No involvement in decision making	2.0	22.5	36.5	26.5	4.5	8.0
15	No one seeks my advice in family matters	6.0	28.0	30.0	20.5	5.5	10.0
16	No one seeks my advice in agriculture practice	6.0	18.0	31.5	23.0	11.5	10.0
17	No bullock pair	7.0	17.0	34.5	19.5	8.5	13.5
18	Insufficient implements	7.5	19.0	47.5	17.0	8.0	1.0
19	Insufficient equipments	6.5	25.5	40.0	19.0	5.5	3.5
20	No sprayer / duster	6.0	20.5	45.5	19.0	5.5	3.5

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to levels of Powerlessness

S No	Powerlessness	% age of Small farmers (up to 2 ha)	% age of Big farmers(> 2 ha)
1.	Low (up to 33.33)	0.00	0.00
2.	Medium (33.34 to 66.66)	82.00	87.00
3.	High (66.67 and above)	18.00	13.00
	Total	100.00	100.00

Table 3. Distribution of respondents according to Meaninglessness:

S No	Meaninglessness	% of respondents				
		SA	A	UD	DA	SDA
1	Now cotton farming is trapped in vicious circle of uncertain rain and drought. I think cotton growing become meaningless	22.5	27.0	22.0	20.5	6.5
2	The credit cap is too low than that of the requirements, so, I am unable to meet the expenses made over cultivation of the cotton	17.0	30.5	30.0	13.5	8.5
3	There is no guarantee of remunerative market prices for cotton and the received prices are not based on the cost of cotton cultivation, thus I found cotton farming meaningless	16.5	21.5	31.5	23.0	7.0
4	Government pays more attention towards distress condition of cotton growers	15.5	21.5	27.0	22.5	11.0
5	Cotton farming is non profitable business and hence become a meaningless job	11.0	19.0	40.5	18.0	10.5
6	Though I earn little lower than my expectations, I think cotton farming is the only mean of satisfying my family needs	17.5	22.5	31.5	20.5	6.0
7	I do not receive any respect from the family members	10.5	17.0	35.0	24.5	11.5
8	Cotton cultivation receives cash amount in one time	15.5	19.5	32.0	29.5	4.5

Table 4. Distribution of respondents according to levels of Meaninglessness

S No	Meaninglessness	% age of Small farmers (up to 2 ha)	% age of Big farmers(> 2 ha)
1.	Low (up to 33.33)	6.00	2.00
2.	Medium (33.34 to 66.66)	59.00	61.00
3.	High (66.67 and above)	35.00	37.00
	Total	100.00	100.00

Selection of Villages:

Based on larger area under cotton cultivation, 20 villages from each district, comprising five villages from each mandal were selected. Thus present study was confined to 40 villages

Selection of Respondents:

The listed cotton growers were grouped into two strata on the basis of land holding viz. land holding up to 2.00 hectare and 2.01 to 4.00 hectare. Taking into considerations the continuance of cotton farming since last five years 100 cotton growers from each stratum was selected by proportionate random sampling. Thus, in total 200 cotton growers were selected for the study.

Data framework:

Data were collected from the respondents through personal interview with the help of structured interview schedule during 2007. In addition, the secondary sources were used to obtain some other relevant data. The collected data was tabulated, scored and analyzed by applying appropriate statistical methods.

Table 5. Distribution of respondents according to Isolation

S No	Isolation	SA	A	UD	DA	SDA
		\% of respondents				
1	Previously my relatives, neighbors and friends used to help me in crisis, but now nobody is ready to help me	20.0	26.0	33.0	18.5	2.5
2	Due to repeated cotton crop failures leading me to poor economy, no body wants to maintain relations with me thinking I may become a sort of economic burden over them	14.5	30.5	32.5	18.0	4.5
3	Due to absence of enhancement in my economy with continuous cotton farming, I fail to repay the debts that obtained from my relatives hence I found guilty to ruined the relations with them	11.5	27	30.5	25.0	6.0
4	Now a days everyone I know is wholly engaged in earning his own wages and can not spend any time for me, thus I feel lonely	21.0	29.5	31.5	15.5	2.5
5	Due to unworthy indebtedness I lost my identity in the society hence I seldom avoid to express my social presence	12.5	33.0	24.5	27.0	3.0
6	I feel stress and I fail to obtain moral supports from everyone I expect. This make me feel isolated	13.5	30.5	30.0	20.5	5.5
7	The Isolation is unwanted but I don't think that it only can lead somebody to end his life	13.0	25.5	31.5	22.0	8.0
8	No body maintains relations with me due to poor economic conditions	14.5	28.0	29.0	25.0	3.5
9	People avoid me due to contagious diseases	13.0	27.5	27.5	28.0	4.0
10	People avoid me due to my bad habits	11.5	31.0	25.5	25.0	7.0
11	I feel happy living alone	10.0	23.5	39.0	18.0	9.0
12	I hate my existing fashion / system, so I keep myself aloof	11.0	34.0	29.0	21.0	5.0

Table 6. Distribution of respondents according to levels of Isolation

S No	Isolation	\% age of Small farmers (up to 2 ha)	\% age of Big farmers(> 2 ha)
1.	Low (up to 33.33)	0.00	0.00
2.	Medium (33.34 to 66.66)	68.00	50.00
3.	High (66.67 and above)	32.00	50.00
	Total	100.00	100.00

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Powerlessness:

The findings presented in the table 1 reveal that majority of the respondents are moderate to high in economic and socio-political powerlessness issues. With regard to other issues of powerlessness majority of the respondents are low to medium category. It was observed from the results that about one fifth of the respondents not participating in formal, social informal and non governmental organization. Comparatively participation in political organizations is good. It clearly explains that farmers are not organized as farmers but as party workers.

It could be observed from the table 2 that a great majority of the farmers had medium powerlessness in both the categories i.e., up to 2 ha and more than 2 ha followed by high powerlessness and none of them under low category.

2. Meaninglessness:

It could be inferred from the table 3 that majority of the respondents are in agreement with the statement that cotton farming is trapped in vicious circle of drought and rain. But about equal percentage of the respondents are undecided to disagree to the statement. In other statements also respondents nearly equally distributed both in agree and disagree categories and interestingly in almost one third proportion of the respondents are under undecided category.

A close looks at the table 4 reveals that majority i.e 59-61 per cent of the respondents fall under medium category followed by high and low meaninglessness category. Same trend was observed with the up to 2ha and more than 2ha category respondents explains that farm size has not any cushioning to the perceived distress situations.

3. Isolation:

A cursory look at the figures presented in the Table 5 reveal that about one third respondents are in dilemma regarding many statements that signify isolation hence they choose their response at undecided (middle) in the provided five point continuum scale. Respondents also well distributed in agree and disagree categories regarding various statements. The reason may be due to good crops

Table 7. Distribution of respondents according to Self-estrangement

S No	Self-estrangement	% of respondents				
		SA	A	UD	DA	SDA
1	In this year I made serious reduction in the area under cotton farming and deviated towards some other crop that requires low input cost	27.0	15.0	32.5	22.5	2.5
2	Every year, the cotton farming was put to loss and the prices obtained even can not meet the expenditure on the inputs.This has resulted in reduction in the area under cotton	18.5	27.0	30.0	19.5	5.0
3	There are myriad chances of increase in the area under cotton if the Government functionary announces better market prices before start of the season	16.0	35.0	24.5	20.0	4.5
4	High risks in cotton cultivation forced the farmers to adopt some other crops rather than following cotton based farming system	12.0	21.5	36.5	26.5	3.5
5	Monopoly Cotton Procurement Scheme (MCPS) fails to make one time payments of the cotton so I mostly prefer sale of the produced cotton to private purchaser	14.0	17.0	36.5	22.5	10.0
6	Heavy attack of cotton insects, pests and diseases lead me to shift from the cotton	5.5	16.0	39.0	32.0	7.0

Table 8. Distribution of respondents according to levels of Self-estrangement

S No	Self-estrangement	% age of Small farmers (up to 2 ha)	% age of Big farmers(> 2 ha)
1.	Low (up to 33.33)	1.00	0.00
2.	Medium (33.34 to 66.66)	60.00	52.00
3.	High (66.67 and above)	39.00	48.00
	Total	100.00	100.00

Table 9. Distribution of respondents according to levels of Alienation

S No	Alienation	% age of Small farmers (up to 2 ha)	% age of Big farmers(> 2 ha)
1.	Low (up to 33.33)	0.00	0.00
2.	Medium (33.34 to 66.66)	81.00	80.00
3.	High (66.67 and above)	19.00	20.00
	Total	100.00	100.00

obtained in the last 3 years but at the same time earlier failures still daunting the respondents. Hence, they might have responded as undecided.

It could be observed from the finding presented in table 6 that majority (68 per cent) of the respondents under up to 2ha category had medium isolation followed by high isolation (32 per cent). With regard to respondents of more than 2 ha, equally distributed (50 per cent each) in medium and high isolation category. In both the cases none of them were under low isolation category.

4. Self-estrangement:

From the results presented in table 7 it could be observed that majority of the respondents distributed from disagree to agree via undecided categories regarding all the statements of self-estrangement. In this case too about one third of the respondents choose the response as undecided explaining their dilemma of past crop failures and recent past good crop.

From the perusal of the table 8 it could be inferred that majority (60 per cent) of the respondents of up to 2 ha category had medium self estrangement followed by high (39 per cent) self estrangement. In

case more than 2ha respondents 52 per cent had medium self estrangement closely followed by high (48%) self estrangement.

5. Alienation:

From the results presented in table 9 it could be observed that great majority (about 80 per cent) of the respondents had medium alienation followed by high (about 20 per cent) alienation. Same trend was observed among both the categories i.e., up to 2ha and more than 2ha. This can interpreted that farm size don not have influence on alienation.

Conclusions:

Majority of the respondents are moderate to high in economic and socio-political powerlessness issues. About one fifth of the respondents are not participating in formal, social informal and non governmental organization. But, participation in political organizations is good. It clearly explains that farmers are not organized as farmers but as party workers. Majority of the respondents are in agreement with the statement that cotton farming is trapped in vicious circle of drought and rain. Majority (68 per cent) of the respondents under up

to 2ha category had medium isolation followed by high isolation (32 per cent). With regard to respondents of more than 2 ha, equally distributed (50 per cent each) in medium and high isolation category. Majority of the respondents distributed from disagree to agree via undecided categories regarding all the statements of self-estrangement. In this case too about one third of the respondents choose the response as undecided explaining their dilemma of fast crop failures and recent fast good crop. In overall, Great majority of the respondents had medium alienation followed by high alienation. Same trend was observed among both the categories i.e., up to 2ha and more than 2ha. This shows that farm size do not have influence on alienation.

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