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## Assessment of optimism and self-efficacy levels for stress management of farmers in distress prone area

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### Abstract

The present investigation on Stress Management of Farmers in Distress Prone Area of Vidarbha was conducted purposively in six distress viz, Akola, Buldana, Washim, Amravati, Yavatmal and Wardha as the farmers were committing suicides in these districts during 2017-18. Exploratory and analytical research design was used for the present research. Out of six districts 360 respondents constitute the sample size.

The findings with regards to optimism of the respondents in selected districts indicated that maximum number of the respondents (66.39%) were found in medium category of optimism level followed by little less than one fifth of them (19.72%) were falls in low and only 13.89 percent of the respondents were having high optimism level. In the study area most of the respondents (64.72%) were found self-efficacious at medium category followed by little more than one fourth of them (25.28%) were in low self-efficacy level and only one tenth (10.00%) of the respondents were observed in high category of self-efficacy.

**Keywords:** Distress, stress, mindset, optimism, self-efficacy, suicide

### Introduction

In the modern era no one is fully satisfied in his or her life because of changing lifestyle of the people and their needs. Farmers are no exception to this. Farming is one of the most stressful occupations which deteriorate the quality of life of the farmers and committing suicide. Hence, by knowing the psychological variables of the farmers such as optimism, self-efficacy and stress mindset, this study will help to improve the quality of life and lessen the farmer's suicides by framing the suitable policy framework. Stress disturbs equilibrium of the body. It affects physically, emotionally and mentally. When individual experience stress or face demanding situation, they adopt ways of dealing with it as they cannot remain in a continued state of tension. Selye Hans, 1936 defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand placed upon it"

According to Oxford dictionary optimism is defined as hopefulness and confidence about the future or the success of something. Optimism play an important role because of its significance as keep our blood pressure down, make our life less painful, help us to take care of our self, help us to stay youthful, heart-healthy and help us to perform better

Self-efficacy of farmers refers to judgment of his capabilities to organise and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of agricultural performance. Self-efficacious farmers have belief that they are more competitive, challenging, recognized, curious to know farming practices, able to understand social needs easily. When farmers have lost such belief, his self-efficacy system deteriorates and prolonged deterioration leads him to commit suicide or to take some other profession. The studies related to farmer's suicide provide conceptual base to understand different correlates of self-efficacy.

Stress disturbs the equilibrium of the body. It affects physically, emotionally and mentally and physical and mental health is equally important. The process of stress management is named as one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society and ultimately for farmers. Stress management refers to the wide spectrum of techniques and psychotherapies aimed at controlling a person's levels of stress, especially chronic stress, usually for the purpose of improving everyday functioning.

Monat and Lazarus (1991) <sup>[2]</sup> described stress management as a general treatment approach to a wide variety of adaptations and health problems.

## Materials and Methods

### Locale of the study

The present study was undertaken in purposively selected, Akola, Buldana, Washim, Amravati, Wardha and Yavatmal districts of Vidarbha region of Maharashtra State as distress prone districts. The above six districts are considered as distressed districts in the report of fact finding team on Vidarbha - of Planning Commission, GOI (2006). Exploratory and analytical social research design was used for the present study.

On the basis of suicidal talukas in the six respective districts, one taluka from each selected district was selected by lottery method. Thus, from six districts, six talukas were selected based on the suicides of the farmers which may be because of stress. Thus, Akola, from Akola district, Chikhali from Buldana district, Karanja (Lad) from Washim district, Morshi from Amravati district, Darvaha from Yavatmal district and Wardha from Wardha district were selected for the study.

From the list obtained from collector office of the respective district, the list of villages where the farmers committed suicides was considered and proportionate numbers of villages were randomly selected from each taluka by lottery method of random sampling and from each taluka four (04) villages were selected. Thus, from six selected talukas total 24 villages were selected.

## Selection of Respondents

In the previous research studies on suicides of farmers, it is evidence that maximum number of the farmers are committing suicides having dry land upto 4.00 ha., who are in debt, and having no irrigation facilities. Hence, for the selection of respondents, the farmers having dry land, debt and no irrigation facilities were considered as selection criteria for selection of respondents. From each selected village, the list of farmers was obtained from talathi/Sarpanch, bank officials and key informants of the village based on the selection criteria. Amongst the selected list, 15 farmers were selected randomly from each selected village and from four selected villages and from each selected taluka 60 farmers were selected. Thus, from six districts, six talukas and 24 villages 360, farmers were selected to constitute sample size of the respondents.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Optimism

Optimism may significantly influence mental and physical well-being by the promotion of a healthy lifestyle as well as by adaptive behaviours and cognitive responses, associated with greater flexibility, problem-solving capacity and a more efficient elaboration of negative information. Hence in view of the importance of this variable in stress management researcher hypothesized to select this variable for the present study.

**Table 1:** Distribution of the respondents according their opinion about optimism

S. No	Statements	Agree		Cannot say		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	In uncertain times, I usually expect the best	39	10.84	53	14.72	268	74.44
2	It's easy for me to relax	80	22.22	90	25.00	190	52.78
3	If something can go wrong for me, it will. (R)	42	11.67	67	18.61	251	69.72
4	I'm always optimistic about my future	210	58.33	65	18.06	85	23.61
5	I enjoy my friends a lot	95	26.39	80	22.22	185	51.39
6	I hardly ever expect things to go my way. (R)	190	52.78	55	15.28	115	31.94
7	I don't get upset too easily.	70	19.44	85	23.61	205	56.94
8	I rarely count on good things happening to me. (R)	260	72.22	55	15.28	45	12.50
9	Overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad	342	95.00	00	0.00	18	5.00
10	It's important for me to keep busy	285	79.17	35	9.72	35	9.72

To measure the optimism, 10 statements were selected and Table 1 revealed that, with the opinion of the statement as, 'in uncertain times, I usually expect the best', majority of the respondents i.e. 74.44 per cent were disagree followed by (14.72%) were not given their opinion and only slightly more than one tenth (10.84%) of them were agree to this statement. Little more than half (52.78%) of the respondents were disagree to the statement as it's easy for me to relax followed by one fourth and little more than one fifth (22.22%) of them who were agree and cannot say opinion respectively. With the opinion of the statement as 'if something can go wrong for me, it will', number of respondents (69.72%) and 18.61 per cent were disagree and cannot opinion respectively where as only 11.67 per cent of them were agree to the this statement.' With regards to the statement as 'I am always optimistic about my future', 58.33 per cent and little less than () one fourth (23.61%) of respondents were agree and disagree opinion respectively to this statement while slightly less than one fifth (18.06%) had not given any opinion. The opinion of the respondents about the statement as 'I enjoy my friends a lot',

slightly more than half (51.39%) were disagree followed by little more than one fourth (26.39%) were having agree opinion and more than one fifth of them (22.22%) not given any opinion to this statement. 'I hardly ever expect things to go my way', more than half (52.78%) 31.94 per cent and 15.28 per cent of respondents were agree, disagree, and cannot say opinion to this statement respectively. The opinion about the statement as 'I don't get upset too easily' 56.94 per cent, 23.61 per cent and little less than one fifth (19.44%) of them were in disagree opinion, not said anything and agree opinion respectively. The opinion of the respondents about the statement as 'I rarely count on good things happening to me', majority (72.22%), 15.28 per cent and 12.50 per cent were agree, cannot and disagree opinion. With regards to the statement as 'overall, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad', large majority (95.00%) and one fifth per cent were having agree and disagree opinion. It's important for me to keep busy, majority of the respondents i.e. 79.17 per cent and equal proportion of the respondents (9.72%) were agree, cannot say and disagree opinion respectively.

**Table 2:** Distribution of respondents according to their level of optimism

S. No.	Optimism levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low (Up to 70.39)	71	19.72
2	Medium (70.40 to 84.49)	239	66.39
3	High (Above 84.49)	50	13.89
	Total	360	100.00

From the data presented in Table 2 it is indicated that, maximum number of the respondents (66.39%) were found in medium category of optimism level followed by little less than one fifth of them (19.72%) were falls in low and only 13.89 percent of the respondents were having high optimism level.

From the above findings it can inferred that, higher proportion of the respondents were observed in medium category of optimism level. These findings are in accordance with the findings of Anonymous (2017) <sup>[1]</sup> and Rani Palaskar (2018) <sup>[3]</sup>

who reported that maximum numbers of the respondents were having low to medium level of optimism. It may be due to less land holdings and not assured sources of livelihood.

## 2. Self-efficacy

It is assumed that people with a strong sense of self-efficacy view challenging problems as tasks to be mastered, develop deeper interest in the activities in which they participate, form a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities and recover quickly from setbacks and disappointments. Whereas, people with a weak sense of self-efficacy, avoid challenging tasks, believe that difficult tasks and situations are beyond their capabilities, focus on personal failings and negative outcomes and quickly lose confidence in personal abilities. To manage the stress knowing of self-efficacy of the farmers is important. Therefore this variable is selected for the study.

**Table 3:** Distribution of respondents according to their self-efficacy

S. No.	Statements	Agree		Can-not say		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1	Everyone knows that I am a successful farmer	72	20.00	81	22.50	207	57.50
2	People say that I can cultivate well	109	30.28	170	47.22	81	22.50
3	I cannot use all my capacities to be a successful farmer (R)	190	52.78	80	22.22	90	25.00
4	I have no difficulty to use new agricultural procedures	92	25.56	199	55.28	107	29.72
5	I am success in dealing with any agricultural problems	82	22.78	63	17.50	215	59.72
6	I cannot grow good amount of crops if I would be away from traditional agricultural practices (R)	187	51.94	83	23.06	90	25.00
7	Comparing with others, I grow more amount of crops	85	26.61	58	16.11	217	60.28
8	I am failure in agricultural competition (R)	240	66.67	48	13.33	72	20.00
9	No one can defeat me in crop production	42	11.67	73	20.28	245	68.06
10	I can understand any sort of agricultural discussion	45	12.50	105	29.17	210	58.33
11	I can grow crops whether there would be any drought or heavy shower	40	11.11	55	15.28	265	73.61
12	To grow good crops, I can do more work	88	24.44	272	75.56	0.00	0.00
13	I am proud of being a successful farmer	65	18.06	295	81.94	0.00	0.00
14	I imitate good farmers	90	25.00	260	72.22	10	2.78
15	I brood as how to get good crops	215	59.72	85	23.61	60	16.67
16	I do not like to think much about less production (R)	68	18.89	00	0.00	292	81.11
17	Always I try to remove all troubles in agriculture	33	9.17	105	29.17	223	61.94
18	If luck favours, there are good amount of crops (R)	276	76.67	00	0.00	84	23.33
19	I want to find reasons when I get good crops	102	28.33	00	0.00	258	71.67
20	It is useless to devote much time to think about agriculture (R)	287	79.72	00	0.00	73	20.28

Data presented in Table 3 indicated that, opinion about successful farmer higher proportion of the respondents (57.50%) were not said that they are the successful farmers followed by little more than one fifth of them (22.50%) not given any opinion about the same which may be because of yield or income may depends on climatic conditions while one fifth (20.00%) of the respondents said that they are the successful farmers.

About Peoples opinion of cultivation of field relatively higher proportion (47.22%) of the respondents could not say anything about the cultivation of field in good manner may be because of deficit of infrastructural facilities followed by 30.28 per cent of them were observed in confidence they can cultivate their field in good manner while more than one fifth (22.50%) were not in confidence about the peoples opinion that they can cultivate the field in good manner. More than half of the respondents (52.78%) were in opinion that they cannot use all their capacities to be a successful farmer, followed by one fourth of the respondents were said that they can use all their capacities to be successful farmers while little more than one fifth of them (22.22%) were not given any opinion about the same. About the statement no difficulty to

use new agricultural procedures more than half of the respondents (55.28%) were not said anything which may be due to lack or deficit of inputs followed by 29.27 per cent of them were negative about the same while slightly more than one fourth (25.56%) were agree to the same. Maximum number of the respondents (59.72%) were said that they cannot deal with any agricultural problems successfully which may be because of lack of knowledge about new agricultural technologies which was followed by more than one fifth of them (22.78%) who were in opinion that they can deal any agricultural problems while 17.50 per cent of the respondents not given any opinion about the same.

With regards to the statement as I cannot grow good amount of crops if I would be away from traditional agricultural practices, 51.94 per cent, 25.00 per cent and 23.06 per cent of the respondents were agree, disagree and cannot say opinion respectively. Relatively higher proportion of the respondents (60.28%) were not in confidence that they can grow more amount of crops comparing with others which may be because of less land holding followed by more than one fourth of them (26.61%) were observed in confidence they can grow more amount of crops comparing with others while only

16.11 per cent of the respondents could not anything about the same. Higher proportion of the respondents (66.67%) were agreed that they are failure in agricultural competition followed by one fifth of them (20.00%) were given disagree opinion about the same and more than one tenth (13.33%) could not say anything about the same. In case of statement as no one can defeat me in crop production, 68.06.83 per cent, 20.28 per cent and 11.67 per cent, were given disagree, cannot say and agree opinion respectively about no one can defeat them in crop production.

Relatively maximum number of the respondents was in confidence that they can understand any sort of agricultural discussion which was followed by 29.17 per cent and 12.50 per cent who were given cannot say and agree opinion about the same respectively. With the view about the statement as I can grow crops whether there would be any drought or heavy shower, majority of the respondents (73.61%) were not in confidence where as 15.28 per cent of them could not given any opinion while little more than one tenth (11.11%) of the respondents were in confidence that they can grow crops whether there would be any drought or heavy shower. Majority of the respondents (75.56%) were not given any opinion about making more work to grow good crops, followed by little less than one fourth of them (24.44%) who were in confidence about the same., with regards to be feeling proud of being a successful farmer, majority of the respondents (81.94%) were not given any opinion about feeling to be proud as a successful farmers which may be due to less land holding or specially dry land holdings while 18.06 per cent of them were having positive opinion about the same. With regards to the statement as, I imitate good farmers 72.22 per cent, 25.00 per cent and 2.78 per cent, were having cannot say, agree and disagree opinion about this statement. In case of the statement as I brood as how to get good crops, 59.72 per cent 23.61 per cent and 16.67 per cent the respondents were agree cannot say and disagree opinion respectively. Majority of the respondents (81.11%) were in opinion that they frequently think about less production followed by 18.89 per cent of the respondents were not thinking about the same which may be because thinking that there is no use to think about the things that can not in our hand.

With regards to the statement as, always I try to remove all troubles in agriculture, relatively higher proportion of the respondents (61.94%) were not observed in confidence that they can remove all troubles in agriculture followed 29.17 per cent of them could not given any opinion about the same while little less than one tenth of the respondents (9.17%) were in confidence to remove all troubles in agriculture. With regards to the statement as if luck favors, there are good amount of crops, majority of the respondents (76.67%) were observed in believing on luck followed by less than one fourth of them (23.33%) were given negative opinion about the same which means that they believe on their work.. In case of finding reasons when gets good crops 71.67 per cent and 28.33 per cent of the respondents where disagree and agree opinion about the same respectively. Majority of the respondents (79.72%) were in thinking that it is useless to devote much time to think about agriculture which may be because of the low productivity of crops, high inputs and not getting remunerative rate for the different commodity. This was followed by little more than one fifth of them (20.28%) who were thinking to do agriculture may be fact that there is no alternative for livelihood.

**Table 4:** Distribution of the respondents according to their levels of self-efficacy

Sr. No.	Self-efficacy levels	Frequency	Percentage
1	Low ( Up to 65.92)	91	25.28
2	Medium (65.93-76.51)	233	64.72
3	High (Above 76.51)	36	10.00
	Total	360	100.00

It is assumed from the Table 4 that most of the respondents (64.72%) were found in medium category self-efficacy followed by little more than one fourth of them (25.28%) were in low self-efficacy level and only one tenth (10.00%) of the respondents were observed in high category of self-efficacy.

From the above table it is concluded than higher proportion of the respondents were observed in medium to low level of self-efficacy. These findings are in consistent with the findings of Anonymous (2017) <sup>[1]</sup> and Rani Palskar (2018) <sup>[3]</sup> that were observed the similar findings.

### Conclusion

Maximum numbers of the respondents (66.39%) were found in medium category of optimism level followed by little less than one fifth of them (19.72%) were in low level of optimism. It can be concluded that large majority the farmers (86.11%) were in low to medium optimism which may be because of not fulfilling their needs with the available resources with them and therefore they became pessimistic. Further it is concluded that relatively higher proportion of the respondents (64.72%) were found in medium category self-efficacy whereas little more than one fourth of them (25.28%) were in low self-efficacy level which clearly indicates that in total majority of the farmers (90.00%) were in low to medium self-efficacious level which may be the reason of frequent problems in cultivating the land viz, less land landholdings or dry land, non-availability of credit in time, non-remunerative prices, frequent crop damage due to natural calamities or from wild animals etc which may causes stress to the farmers.

Hence, it is implicated that for making the farmers mindset more optimistic and more self-efficacious which may helps to manage the stress, Government should provide all required farming resources for the all-round development of farmers as the entire group of farmers were dry land farmers, having land, marginal to semi-medium land holding and in debt.

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