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DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND STRESS AMONG PUNJAB FARMERS - A STUDY

Jagdeep Kaur and Dr. D J Singh

Department of Psychology, CT University, Ludhiana, Punjab India.

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Abstract

Herein is an attempt to explore the levels of depression, anxiety and stress among farmers in Punjab. In this connection, descriptive survey method was employed in order to describe the state of mind among farmers. A randomized sample of 100 Punjab farmers was included for data collection in the present study. DASS questionnaire developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) was used to assess the depression, anxiety and stress among farmers. The results found that in depression the highest percentage of respondents fall in normal level followed by moderate, mild, severe and extremely severe level of depression respectively. Similarly, highest percentage of the respondents fall in normal level followed by extremely severe, moderate, severe and mild level of anxiety respectively. The study suggests that government should provide financial and other support measures for farmers so that it would be of great help in reducing the occurrence of stress, depression and anxiety among farmers.

Keywords:- Depression, Anxiety, Stress, Famers.

Introduction

In India, about 68% of population lives in rural areas where agriculture is the prime source of income. Farming and its related activities provide employment for 60% to 70% of the people in rural areas and hence plays an important role in determining the rural economy (Jha, 2006). Due to the impact of green revolution, India has become self-sufficient in food production; however, malnutrition and rural poverty have not yet been completely eliminated (Kannan &Sundaram, 2011).

Employment through agriculture-related activities has also declined over the years. A large proportion of rural inhabitants have not been benefited from the economic growth of past 20 years in India (Sharma, 2015). In fact, liberalization has brought about a crisis in the agricultural sector that has pushed small-scale cash crops farmers into debt (Kennedy & King, 2014). All these factors have a great impact on physical and psychological health of the farmers. Since depression is identified to be the leading cause of disability, it represents a major public health concern worldwide (WHO, 2010). Depression and suicide are closely interlinked. Almost 60% of the individuals died due to suicide were found to have depression. Early identification of depression is critical for reducing suicidal deaths. It was found that suicidal rates in India were high among marginal farmers growing cash crops and farmers with high level of indebtedness (Kennedy, &King, 2014). Bomble, &Lhungdim (2020) reported that more than half 58% of farmers have reported distress of mental health and 41.7% farmers were reported no distress of mental health in last two

weeks. The most commonly reported symptoms of mental health relate to anxiety and insomnia, with 55% of farmers suffering from this symptom. The second highest ranking prevalence of symptoms is somatic problems (34.7%).

Depression

Depression is very common in men and women. A depressed mood and a loss of interest or pleasure are the key symptoms of depression. Patients may that they feel blue, hopeless in the dumps or worthless. For a patient, the depressed mood often has a distinct quality that differentiates it from the normal emotion of sadness or grief. Patients often describe the symptom of depression as one of agonizing emotional pain and sometimes complain about being unable to cry, a symptom that resolves as they improve. Depression may also involve fatigue, insomnia and feeling of worthlessness, a recurrent inability to think or concentrate and recurrent thoughts of death or suicide.

An individual who experiences five or more of these symptoms at once during the same two-week period is classified by DSM-IV as undergoing a major depressive episode. May (1969) quoted that "depression is the inability to construct a future". Similarly, Jamenson (2011) postulated that"depression can be defined as a mental state that is characterized by attitude that is pessimistic and melancholic with a lack of mental and physical activity." A study conducted by Viswanathan et al. (2019) on depression, suicidal ideation and resilience among rural farmers and revealed that farmers had high prevalence of depression and suicidal ideation and low level of resilience. in addition, Ahmed et al. (2019) assessed the prevalence of depression among farmers and its determinants in selected villages of Bangalore rural district. A cross sectional study was conducted among 570 farmers in 12 selected villages and found that high level of depression among farmers as compared to the general population.

Anxiety

Anxietyis a normal and often health emotion. Everyone experience anxiety. It is characterized most commonly as a diffuse, unpleasant, vague sense of apprehension often accompanied by autonomic symptoms such as headache, perspiration, palpitations, tightness in the chest, mild stomach discomfort and restlessness indicated by an inability to sit or stand still for long. The particular constellation of symptoms present during anxiety tends to vary among persons. Anxiety is an alerting signal. It warns of impending danger and enables a person to take measures to deal with a threat. Fear is a similar alerting signal, but it should be differentiated from anxiety. Fear is a response to a known, external, definite, or non-conflictual threat; anxiety is a response to a threat that is unknown, internal, vague or conflictual. According to Kaplan

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et al. (1996), "Anxiety is characterized by diffuse, unpleasant, vague sense of apprehension, often accompanied by autonomic symptoms such as headache, perspiration, palpitations, tightness in the chest, and mild stomach discomfort." According Gidron (2013), "trait anxiety refers to the stable tendency to attend to experience and report negative emotions such as fears, worries and anxiety across many situations. This is part of the personality dimension of neuroticism versus emotional stability."

Torske et al. (2016) examined the anxiety and depression symptoms among farmers in Norway and revealed that both male and female farmers had higher levels of depression symptoms than the general working population, but the levels of anxiety symptoms did not differ. The differences in depression symptom levels between farmers and the general working population increased with age. Notwithstanding, Sanne et al. (2004) investigated the farmers are at risk for anxiety and depression. The study encompassed 17295 workers age 40-49, including 917 farmers were selected from population to check the levels of anxiety and depression. The results showed that farmers were associated with high levels of anxiety and depression as compare to non farmers.

Stress

Stress is very personal thing. Although certain kinds of events such as the death of a loved one or participation in military combat are universally stressful other situations may or may not be stressful to a specific person. Consider for instance bungee jumping. Some people would find jumping off a bridge while attached to a slender rubber tether extremely stressful. However, there are individuals who see such an activity as challenging and fun filled. Whether bungee jumping is stressful depends in part, then on a person's perception of the activity. For people to consider an event stressful, they must perceive it as threatening or challenging and must lack of all the resources to deal with it effectively. According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984), "stress is a function of degree of person-environment fit. When our resources are more than adequate to deal with difficult situation, we may feel little stress." According to Beehr& Newman (1978), "Job stress as a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterized by changes within people that force them to deviate from their functioning."

Ramesh and Madhavi (2009) studied the occupational stress among farming people. A sample of 200 hundred farmers from four villages from Villupuram district in Tamil Nadu was selected. 50 farmers from each village were selected as sample for this survey by using simple random sampling method. The Farm Stress Inventory created by James & Walker (.....)was used to understand the stress related factors. Results indicated that the occupational farming leads to stress due to financial weather, work overload, social

interaction and farm hassles. It was inferred that all selected dimensions are producing either high or medium level of stress to farming people. Similarly, Bitton et al. (2019) examined the stress, anxiety, depression and resilience in Canadian farmers and revealed that scores for stress, anxiety and depression were higher and resilience lower than reported normative data. This study will be helpful to understand the stress, depression and anxiety among farmers in Punjab.

Objectives

1. To study the level of depression among Punjab farmers.

2. To study the level of anxiety among Punjab farmers.

3. To study the level of stress among Punjab farmers.

Research question

1. To what extent Punjab farmers experience stress, depression and anxiety.

Method

In this research study, descriptive survey method was employed in order to explore the levels of depression, stress and anxiety among the farmers.

Participants

A randomized sample of 100 Punjab farmers was included for data collection in the present study. The age group of selected data was between 18-40 years. Every participant was assured that their responses will be kept confidential and will never be used for any other purposes.

Instruments

DASS questionnaire developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) was used to assess the depression, anxiety and stress among farmers. There was 42 items in this measure to assess anxiety, depression and stress among the farmers.

Statistical Analysis-

In order to find out the levels on depression, anxiety and stress among farmers, percentage analysis were performed.

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Results and Discussion

The fundamental stage in the practice of psychological research, after the compilation of data, is the analysis and discussion of the data. In this regard, raw data on depression, anxiety and stress among farmers of Punjab were analyzed using simple percentage analysis. Therefore, the stated analysis is given comprehensively in the following Tables.

Table 1: Levels of Depression among Punjab Farmers.

S. No.	Levels of Depression	N	Percentage
01	Extremely Severe	09	09%
02	Severe	04	04%
03	Mild	20	20%
04	Moderate	20	20%
05	Normal	47	47%
Total		**100**	**100%**

The above results showing pervasiveness of depression level of farmers in Punjab. Results presented in Table 1 displays that 09% (n = 09) farmers possess extreme severe depression whereas, 04% (n = 04) respondents reported severe level of depression. About 20% (n = 20) respondents reported mild level of depression and 20% (n = 20) possess moderate level of depression. The highest percentage of respondents i.e. 47% (n = 47) reported normal level of depression. The observation of the results suggest that highest percentage of the respondents fall in normal level followed by moderate, mild, severe and extremely severe level of depression respectively. Further, Figure 1 shows graphical representation of levels on depression of farmers in Punjab.

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Figure 1: Graphical Representation of Levels of Depression among Punjab Farmers.

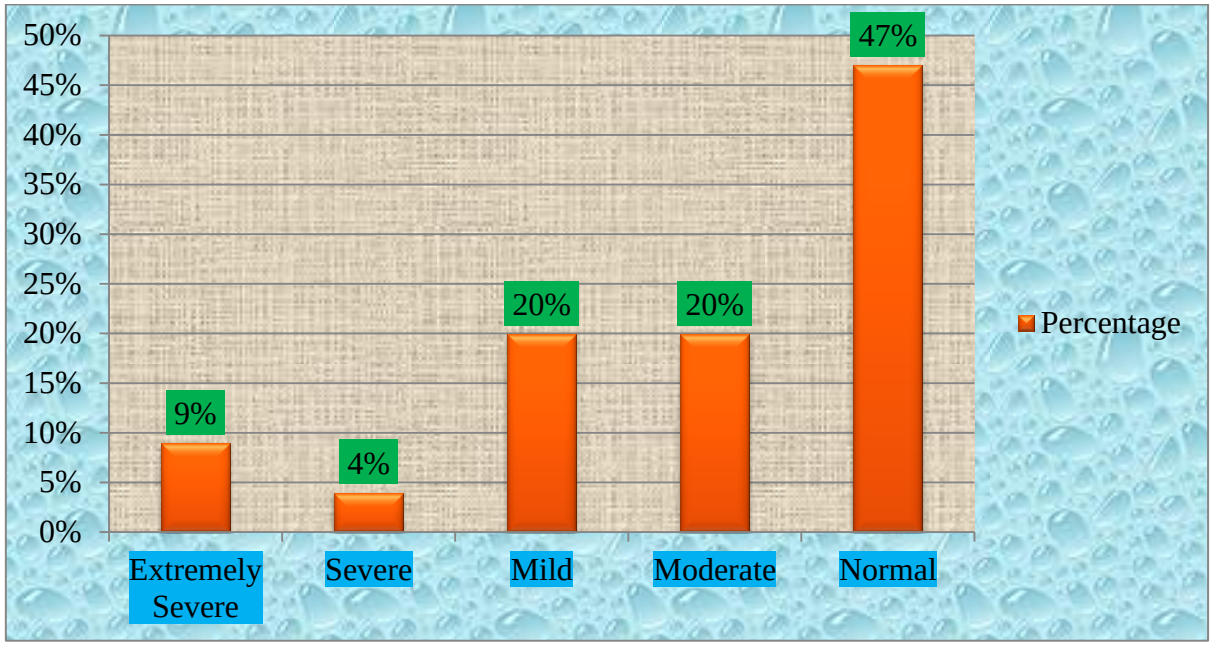

TABLE 2: LEVELS OF ANXIETY AMONG PUNJAB FARMERS.

S. No.	Levels of Anxiety	N	Percentage
01	Extremely Severe	20	20%
02	Severe	09	09%
03	Mild	04	04%
04	Moderate	17	17%
05	Normal	50	50%
Total		**100**	**100%**

Results presented in Table 2 displays that 20% (n = 20) farmers feel extreme severe level of anxiety whereas, 09% (n = 09) respondents reported severe level of anxiety. About 04% (n = 04) respondents reported mild level of anxiety and 17% (n = 17) possess moderate level of anxiety. The highest percentage of respondents i.e. 50% (n = 47) reported normal level of anxiety. The observation of the results suggest that highest percentage of the respondents fall in normal level followed by extremely severe, moderate, severe and mild level of anxiety respectively. Further, Figure 2 shows graphical representation of levels on anxiety of farmers in Punjab.

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Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Levels of Stress among Punjab Farmers.

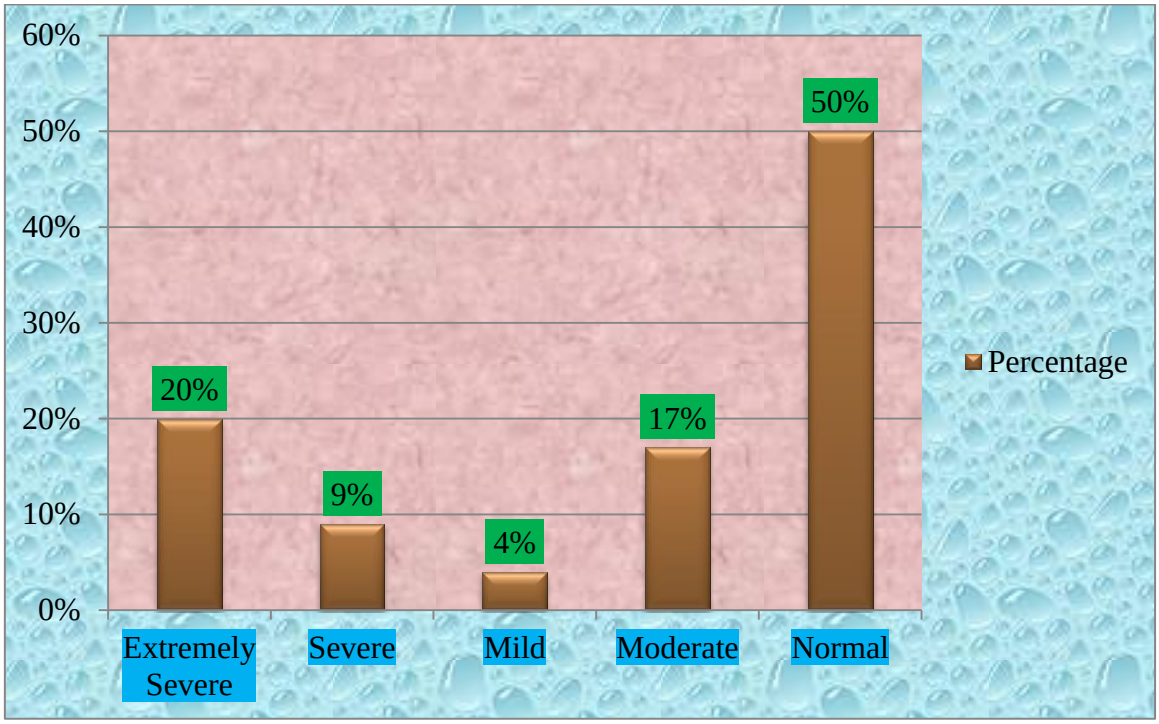

TABLE 2: LEVELS OF STRESS AMONG PUNJAB FARMERS

S. No.	Levels of Stress	N	Percentage
01	Extremely Severe	01	01%
02	Severe	07	07%
03	Mild	17	17%
04	Moderate	17	17%
05	Normal	58	58%
Total		**100**	**100%**

Results presented in Table 3 displays that 01% (n = 01) farmers feel extreme severe level of stress whereas, 07% (n = 07) respondents reported severe level of stress. About 17% (n = 17) respondents reported mild level of anxiety and 17% (n = 17) possess moderate level of stress. The highest percentage of a respondents i.e. 58% (n = 58) reported normal level of stress. The observation of the results suggest that highest percentage of the respondents fall in normal level followed by moderate, mild, severe and extremely severe

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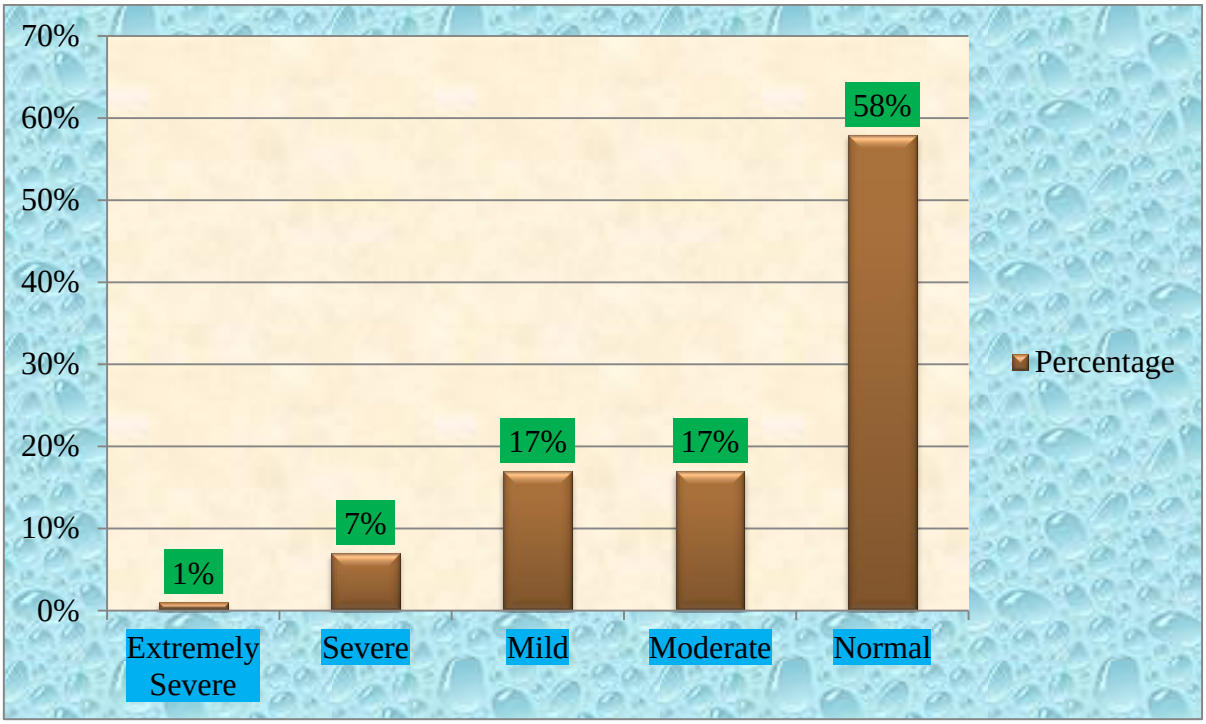
level of stress respectively. Further, Figure 3 shows graphical representation of levels on stress of farmers in Punjab.

Figure 3: Graphical Representation of Levels of Stress among Punjab Farmers.



The findings of this study are consistent with the results of Bomble & Lhungdim (2020), reported that more than half 58% of farmers have reported distress of mental health. The most commonly reported symptoms of mental health relate to anxiety and insomnia. Similarly, Das, 2011) reported thatmental illness constitutes nearly one sixth of all health-related disorders. Notwithstanding, changing life-style, crop failure, natural calamity (drought and flood), unemployment, frequent disruptions in income, economic crisis, lack of social support and increasing insecurity are the compounding factors of mental health problems among farmers in India (Chatterjee, 2009). Moreover, Jones-Bitton et al. (2019)'s study supported our results that scores for stress, anxiety and depression was higher and resilience was lower than reported normative data.

Conclusions and Suggestions for future research

This research study was conducted to assess the anxiety, stress and depression level among farmers in Punjab. The results found that in depression the highest percentage of respondents fall in normal level followed by moderate, mild, severe and extremely severe level of depression correspondingly. Similarly, highest percentage of the respondents fall in normal level followed by extremely severe, moderate, severe

and mild level of anxiety respectively. At last, the highest number of the respondents falls in normal level followed by moderate, mild, extremely severe and severe level of stress respectively. To summarize, it can be said that farmers are not free from anxiety, depression and stress in Punjab. So, it is the responsibility of government to provide financial and other support measures to farmers so that it would be of great help in reducing the occurrence of depression, stress and anxiety among farmers. Counseling sessions for the farmers is the need of the hour because it can help farmers to improve their mental health status and get relieved from the distress. Training the farmers about the methods of farming in difficult climatic circumstances will be the long-term action to reduce the problems among farmers. Our research study suggests that further research can be conducted on mental health in relation to suicidal ideation, socio-economic status and resilience among farmers.

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