Selected Mental Stress Indicators of Female Farmers working in the Farms

Neeta babruwahan
Prasad Deshmukh
Senior Scientist HDFS ,AICRP-Home Science &
Associate Professor, Dept of HDFS, College of Community Science, VNMKV
,Parbhani,Maharashtra, India
B.Sc H.Sc. student, College of Community Science ,VNMKV,Parbhani.

Abstract

It is widely reported that levels of stress, anxiety, and other mental disorders within the farming community exceed those of the general population, Recent United Nations (UN) figures, for example, show that women now comprise 43% of the global agricultural workforce (Doss 2011). More specifically, in an Irish context, the most recent census from the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2020 highlighted that female farm ownership had increased from 9.7% in 1991 to 13.4% in 2020 (Central Statistics Office 2020a, b). Although this figure is still below the 30% European average, it does indicate that an ever-increasing number of women are managing and owning farms here in Ireland (Department of Agriculture 2020). The objectives of research are to assess the selected mental stress among the female farmers, to carry out research on mental stress indicators of female farmers , a sample of purposely selected one hundred fifteen rural female farmers in the age group of 18-55 years were enrolled to carry the research using five point rating scale through interview prepared by AICRP unit (HDFS department). Most of the farm women faced highly stressed due to the making decision by own self, emotionally and economically. About half of the respondents faced highly stressed due to patriarchal family type. Fifty percentage of farm women were faced sometimes stress in health related indicator. This research is useful to mental professional to innovate the methodology to cope up the various issues for welfare of community.

Key Words *:Mental stress, Women farmer ,health ,emotional wellbeing, economical condition*

Introduction

It is widely reported that levels of stress, anxiety, and other mental disorders within the farming community exceed those of the general population .Recent United Nations (UN) figures, for example, show that women now comprise 43% of the global agricultural workforce (Doss 2011) In India, 57.8% of rural households are engaged in agriculture. Women farmers have been the backbone and play a significant role in the agricultural sector, including contributing to the production of major crops, livestock, horticulture, postharvest activities, agro/social forestry, fisheries, etc.

Some studies show that women farmers experience more psychological distress than men. Stress can negatively affect physical, mental, and spiritual health and well-being. Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It affects how we think, feel, act and

how we handle stress. Several studies reported that chronic stress among farming communities might lead to physical problems (e.g., headaches, sleep problems), mental problems (e.g., anxiety, anger, depression, suicidal thoughts, an increase in isolation), and cognitive issues (e.g., memory loss, inability to make decisions)

For any kind of ecosystem functioning and placing role of human at the epicentre of ecological services, it has got both structural and operational stress. The aftermath of green revolution, even though its glorious success, has offered both physical and psychological stress when three lakh farmers in India committed suicide , then certainly it can infer that the very ecosystem is suffering from functional and ecological stress. The incoming of toxic materials into an agro-ecosystem and its subsequent entry into the food chains has gone so deleterious that it merits a unique genre of ecological study. The farm women who have been ceaselessly and relentlessly in exposure with polluted ecosystem, are also under serious psychological stress. The lack of empowerment, entitlement and proper scientific orientation, they are consciously or unconsciously being exposed to the coercive ecosystem and its functioning, just to end up with fragile health and vulnerable psychic dispositions

Objectives

1.To select farm women to assess mental stress.

2. To find out the mental stress indicators of female farmers.

Methodology

A sample of purposely selected one hundred fifteen rural female farmers in the age group of 18-55 years were enrolled for carrying out the research study. These sample female farmer were enrolled   from five operational villages of AICRP-Home Science of Parbhani district viz Asola, pokarni, Pandhari, Katneshwar and Ukhalad. Prior to the initiation of the experiment, enrolled rural female farmer selected mental stress and its indicators were assessed by using interview scheduled developed by AICRP-HDFS   unit. Then five point scale such as No stress(01) less stress(02),sometimes stress(03),stressed(04) and highly stress(05) were assess used to using various mental stress indicators of farm women. The collected data were pooled,

analysed, tabulated and discussed to study frequencies and per centages of selected mental stress among the female farmers in the farm.

Tools used for the Research

Mental Stress scale : Selected mental stress among the rural female farmers assessed by using five point scale No stress(01) less stress(02),sometimes stress(03),stressed(04),and highly stress(5) which comprises of total 34 items and its indicators were assessed by using interview schedule developed by AICRP-HDFS unit. It include various selected indicators such as health related issues, decision making, emotionality and economic stress indicators which influencing the mental stress among the female farmers in the farm.

Findings

Table 1. Family background information of selected rural farm women

n-115

S. No	Variables	Rural farm women 100% (115)
	Age of the Respondent	
a)	Young (18-35 yrs)	37.39 (43)
b)	Middle (36-55 yrs)	51.30 (59)
c)	Old (above 55 yrs)	11.30 (13)
2)	**Religion**	
a)	Hinduism	88.69 (102)
b)	Muslim	0.86 (1)
c)	Christianity	-
d)	Others	10.43 (12)
3)	**Caste /category**	
a)	General (GM)	16.52 (19)
b)	OBC	34.78 (40)
c)	SC	10.43 (12)
d)	ST	38.26 (44)
e)	Others	-
4)	**Marital Status**	
a)	Married	93.04 (107)
b)	Unmarried	0.86 (1)
c)	Widow	5.21 (6)
d)	Divorcee	0.86 (1)
e)	Separated	-
5)	**Family Head**	

a)	Male	93.91(108)
b)	Female	6.08 (7)
6)	**Family Type**	
a)	Nuclear	73.04 (84)
b)	Joint	24.34 (28)
c)	Extended	2.60 (3)
7)	**Family Size**	
a)	Small (1-4)	62.62 (72)
b)	Medium (5-6)	22.60 (26)
c)	Large (>6)	14.78 (17)
8)	**Occupation**	
a)	Agriculture alone	56.52 (65)
b)	Agriculture + Allied activities (Animal husbandry, Fisheries etc.)	20.17 (17)
c)	Agriculture + Labourer work	20.86 (24)
d)	Agriculture + Allied activities + Labourer work	5.25 (6)
e)	Agriculture + Business	1.72 (2)
f)	Agriculture + Service	0.86 (1)
g)	Any others	-

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

Table 1 indicates the family background of rural farm more than half of the respondents (51.30%) comes from within the middle age category of 36–55 years, followed by 37.39 per cent in the younger age group of 18–35 years, while only 11.30 per cent were above 55 years of age. With regard to religion, the respondents were predominantly Hindus (88.69%), with a very small proportion being Muslims (0.86%) and 10.43 per cent practicing other religions, whereas no representation from Christianity was recorded. In terms of caste composition, most women belonged to Scheduled Tribes (38.26%) and Other Backward Classes (34.78%), while others were from General (16.52%) and Scheduled Castes (10.43%) categories. This highlights the fact that a large proportion of farm women came from socially and economically disadvantaged segments of society. As far as marital status is concerned, an overwhelming share of respondents were married (93.04%), while only small percentages were widowed (5.21%), unmarried, or divorced (0.86% each). Family leadership was largely male-dominated (93.91%), with only 6.08 per cent of households being headed by females, reflecting the prevalence of patriarchal decision-making patterns .

In relation to family type, nuclear families dominated (73.04%), while 24.34 per cent lived in joint families and just 2.60 per cent in extended families. Family size distribution showed that over 62 per cent belonged to small-sized families with 1–4 members, 22.60 per cent to medium-

sized families (5–6 members), and 14.78 per cent to large families of more than six members. Examination of occupational structure revealed that over half (56.52%) of the respondents depended solely on agriculture for their livelihood. About one-fifth (20.86%) combined agriculture with wage labor, and 20.17 per cent practiced agriculture along with allied activities such as livestock rearing or fisheries. A small group (5.25%) engaged in agriculture supplemented by both allied activities and labor work, while only a negligible proportion diversified into agriculture with business (1.72%) or service (0.86%).

Table 2   Stress indicators related to Health issues of female farmers working in the
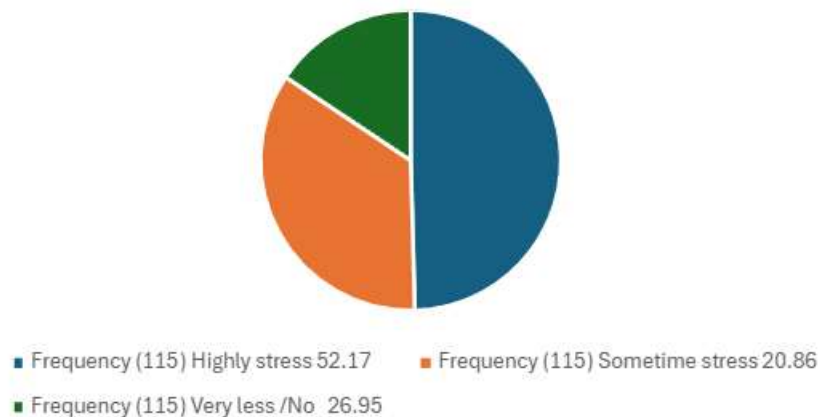
farm

n-115

Sr. No.	Particulars	Percentages of female farmers (115)		
		Highly stressed	**Sometime stressed**	**Very less /No Stressed**
1	Personal illness during busy periods	52.17 (60)	20.86 (24)	26.95 (31)
2	Risk of injury in the field	49.56 (57)	34.78 (40)	15.65 (18)
3	Farm-related accidents	29.56 (34)	17 (14.78)	55.65 (64)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

Stress indicators related to Health issues of female farmers working in the farms

Health indicators of female farmers working in the field

- Frequency (115) Highly stress 52.17
- Frequency (115) Sometime stress 20.86
- Frequency (115) Very less /No 26.95

Table 2 Stress indicators related to health issues of female farmers working in the farm

It is revealed from the table 2 that health issues are very important indicator of the anyone's mental soundness . Most of the farm women i.e, (60%) were undergone stress for sometimes, followed by (26.96%) highly stressed due to personal illness during busy periods in the farm followed by 24.00% reported, very less percentage of stressed due to their personal illness. While about the risk of injury in the field. while performing various farm operations(49.57%) i.e, half of the farm women reported about the stress for sometimes .While 15.67% of the farm women reported about highly stressed situations due to the risk of injury in the field. While 34.79% of the farm women revealed about the risk of injury in the field due to the various tools, machineries , equipment etc .As per the reports of respondents ,it indicates that more than half of the farm women i.e, (55.65%) revealed that they were highly stressed due to farm related accidents such as various injuries ,cuttings, fracture's ,rashes, eye injuries ,muscle fractures etc .While 29.56% were reported about the stress for sometimes followed by 14.78% comes under less stress due to farm related accidents

Overall more than half of the women reported their stress due to various stress indicators related to health which directly, indirectly is affecting on their mental stress.

Table 3   Stress indicators related to decision making indicators of female farmers

working in the farms

n-115

S. No.	Particulars	Percentages of female farmers (115)		
		Highly stressed	**Sometime stressed**	**Very less /No stressed**
1	Making decisions without necessary information	61.739 (71)	24.34 (28)	13.91 (16)

2	Concerns about family farmland	45.21 (52)	32.17 (37)	22.60 (26)
3	Lack of freedom to make one's own decisions	47.82 (55)	38.26 (44)	13.91 (16)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

Table 3 indicates the stress indicator due to decision making on their own related to farm preparation such as sowing, fertilizer applications, crop selection, weeding etc like so many decisions in the farm which defiantly create stress among the farm communities. Out of 115 respondents about (61.339%) were highly stressed while making decision without necessary information as followed by(24.34 %) were sometimes stressed and (13.91%) were very less stressed. By concerns about farmland half of respondents are highly stressed i.e., (42.21%) as compare to rest of them are (32.17%) whoever sometimes stressed and followed by (22.60%) were less stressed .

Mostly , Indian families are following culture of patriarchal family type because of that farm women facing stress while to make one's own decision and lack of freedom to make decisions in the home along with farm also. Half of them were faced highly stressed about (47.82%)followed by (38.26%) were sometimes stressed and (13.91%) were less stressed.

Stress indicators related to decision making of female farmers working in the farms

- Frequency (115) Highly stress 61.739 45.21
- Frequency (115) Sometime stress 24.34 32.17
- Frequency (115) Very less /No 13.91 22.6
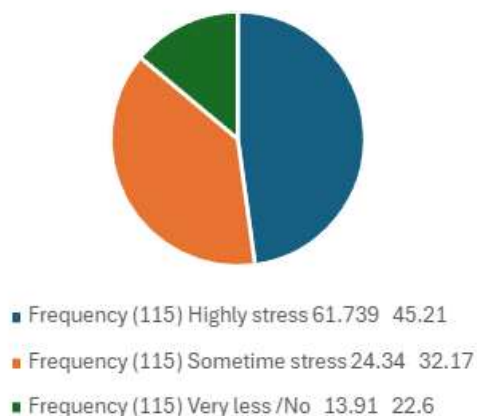
Table 4   Stress indicators related to emotions , performing farm operations in the farm

n-115

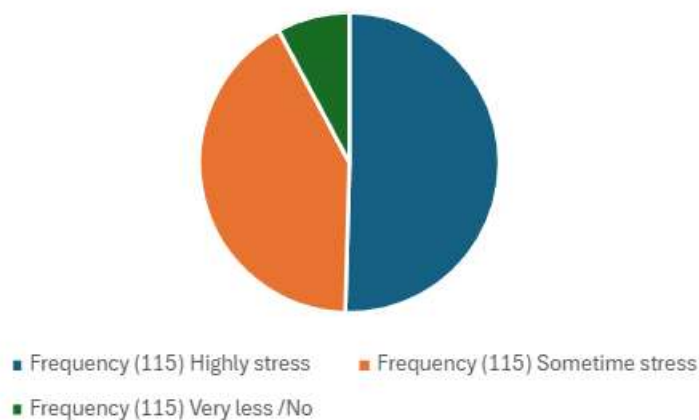| Sr. No.	Particulars	Percentages of female farmers (115)		
		Highly stressed	Sometime stressed	Very less /No stressed
1	Feeling lonely in the field	50.43 (58)	41.73 (48)	7.82 (9)
2	Not seeing enough people	50.43 (58)	41.73 (48)	7.82 (9)
3	Lack of close neighbours	40.86 (47)	52.17 (60)	6.95 (8)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

Table 4 reveals about emotional stress indicators of female farmers while performing farm operations in the farm. Without mental health there is no physical health . Mental health play a pro vital role in everyone's life. Half of the respondents were highly stressed about (50.43%)due while loneliness in the field followed by (41.73%) were sometimes stressed and (7. 82%) were less stressed. Farm women felt like not seeing enough people .In that context half of them were highly stressed about (50.43%) followed by (41.73%) were sometimes stressed and (7.82%) were less stressed.

Support and care are emotional needs of everyone .It is easy to state but difficult to fulfil in life. Above half of the women were faced sometime stressed 52.17% followed by 40.86% were highly stressed and 6.95% were very less stressed .Due to lack of close neighbours in the farm while performing various farm activities .

Stress indicators related to Emotions of female farmers working in the farms

Emotional/mental indicators of female farmers working in the fields

- Frequency (115) Highly stress
- Frequency (115) Sometime stress
- Frequency (115) Very less /No

Table 5   Stress indicators related to Economical issues of female farmers working in the farms

Sr. No.s	Particulars	Percentages of female farmers (115)		
		Highly stressed	Sometime stressed	Very less /No Stressed
1	Breakdown of machinery during ongoing farm operation	60.86 (70)	23.47 (27)	15.65 (18)
2	Lack of cash during work.	69 (60)	17.39 (20)	22.60 (26)
3	Making large purchases for farming	53.91 (62)	26.09 (30)	20 (23)
4	Worrying about arrears due to debt load	55.65 (64)	22.60 (26)	21.73 (25)
5	Adopting new technologies and practices related to farm	44.34 (51)	47.82 (55)	7.82 (9)
6	Financing retirement	54.78 (63)	27.82 (32)	17.39 (20)
7	Lack of financial assistance when needed for farm work	54.78 (63)	24.34 (28)	20.86 (24)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentages

The table 5 revealed about the economic stress among the female farmers working in the farm. Economic condition plays a significant role in stimulating mental stress among the female farmers working the field. While breakdown of machinery during on going farmo peratiny about more then half of them faced highly stressed about (60.86%) followed by (23.47%) were faced sometime stressed and (15.65%) were faced less stressed. Women plays a recessive role in maintaining economical decisions. Women were highly stressed about (69%) followed (22.60%) were very less stressed and (17.39%) were sometimes stress due to lack of cash during performing farm operations. Above half of the women faced highly stress about (53.91%) due to making large purchases for smooth conduct of farm operations and farming followed by (26.09%) were sometime stress and (20%) were less stress. Adoption of new technology is based upon the different factors. Mainly women were faced highly stress about (44.34%) followed by (47.82%) were sometime stress and (7.82%) were less stress .Most of the women 58.78% highly stress due to the financing retirement ,worrying about areas due to debt load and lack of financial assistance when needed for farm work. Kiran Rao et al., (2011) conducted the study aimed to share experiences from integrating a mental health intervention with microcredit activities for underprivileged rural women in Karnataka, India. Using a

qualitative approach, focus group discussions were conducted with two groups—one receiving both microcredit and mental health support, and a control group with only microcredit .After providing intervention, results showed reduced distress, improved sleep, stronger social support, and greater interpersonal trust, indicating that combining mental health care with livelihood initiatives enhanced both well-being and economic participation.

Conclusion

Most of the farm women faced highly stressed due to the making decision on their ownself, emotionally,and economically. While performing farm operations. About half of the respondents faced highly stress due patriarchal family type.(50%) of farm women were faced sometimes stressed in health related indicators. The results of the research are useful for the farming community, scientists, government and non government agencies to develop new welfare policies for mental soundness of farm women by developing new methodology.

References

Jayaraman, Anuja & Findeis, Jill & Swaminathan, Hema. (2004). STRESS AMONG FARM WOMEN:AN ANALYSIS OF FARM HOUSEHOLDS IN PENNSYLVANIA.

Kiran Rao et al., (2011) Community based mental health intervention for underprivileged women in rural India ,An Experiential report. *International Journal of Family Medicine*,2011,Article 621426

Sarkar, Titiksha & Mondal, Sabita & Roy, Jagadish & V C, Sanjay & Dey, Ayanavo & Kumar, Rahul. (2025). Understanding Stress in Farm Women: An Analysis of Contributing Factors. Journal of Scientific Research and Reports. 31. 114-121. 10.9734/jsrr/2025/v31i32883.

McClatchy, D.. Tower silo farming in New Zealand. Part II : economic possibilities.