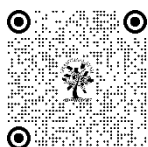


GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES TO PREVENT FARMER SUICIDES IN KARNATAKA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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DOI

[10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.5074](https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i5.2024.5074)

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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ABSTRACT

The issue of farmer suicides in Karnataka, India, is a big, sad problem. It's knotted up with things like money matters, community stuff, nature woes, and emotional struggles. This research project takes a good, hard look at the difficulties farmer people have to wade through in Karnataka. We're talking about monetary troubles due to heavy debts, social burdens coming from family and society's expectations, nature-related troubles like droughts and climate change, and emotional challenges that get worse with loneliness and a lack of helpful networks.

The government's stepping in with a mixed bag of solutions - from debt easement steps, grants, crop insurance plans, to mental health programs. They're hoping to fix these problems and save lives. But - and you're gonna love this question - are these solutions actually working? That's what we want to find out. We should dig deep to find the real, root issues and help the farming field become strong and flexible in all ways - economic to emotional. This research points out that we seriously need a wide-ranging plan of action. It should put the well-being of farmer folks first and encourage ways of farming that are good for the long run - for Karnataka, sure, but really for the whole wide world.

Keywords: Farmer Suicides, Karnataka, Economic Distress, Government Interventions

1. INTRODUCTION

In India, especially in the past few decades, farmer suicides have become a serious and recurring problem. The reality that pushing them over the edge to committing suicide is more than just poverty, but is rooted in a culmination of multiple rest factors such as, social, environmental and psychological. India as a country has had its fair share of farmers, and for many of them having no way to turn to after facing endless hardships turned their life into a nightmare. Out of all the states in India, this dilemma is vital in the state of Karnataka which happens to be one of the worst hit areas. There is an overdependence on agriculture in Karnataka and along with multiple agriculture based different climactic zones in one state there is bound to be a problem. The state has faced droughts, a lack of irrigation systems, and volatile levels of rainfall, all of which greatly reduced farming output and income. A confluence of the burden of unpaid loans, and embarrassment of how failed crops can affect their economic situation has forced farmers to see suicide as the only solution to their problems. Even worse, in rural areas of Karnataka, farming is considered a family job, an identity, and even a source of pride. Can you imagine the burden that mentally put on a farmer when everything goes down south?

Karnataka is facing systemic issues that have pushed a large number of farmers to take their own lives. There needs to be a well detailed plan that can turn the economy around.

1.1. OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

- To identify and analyze the causes of farmer suicides in Karnataka
- To know government interventions and policies

2. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

This study has a special value for various reasons. It analyses the effectiveness of the existing government interventions and thus provides some information which can be used by the policymakers. It also exposes the inadequacies and the issues in the regime in place thus helping in formulating stronger and precise approaches towards curbing farmer suicides. This enables one to appreciate the scope of the problem and its more implication on the rural community. This knowledge is paramount in the planning of comprehensive development strategies that will adequately respond to the short and the long term demands of the farming population. The research makes a contribution towards the emerging literature on rural distress and agricultural. It also contributes to the body of knowledge through presentation of information that scrutinizes governmental actions and policies, which deepens the appreciation of the problem in concern among his fellow scholars and researchers. The study can help in advocacy because it highlights enfarmer's situation and government's responses. It engages the attention of the stakeholders including civil society organisations, media, and people in general on urgent need for sustainable measures.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present paper involves a systematic review and analysis of secondary sources such as government reports, academic literature, and policy documents to evaluate the effectiveness of various strategies implemented by the Karnataka state government in addressing farmer suicides, with a focus on identifying key factors contributing to the crisis and assessing the impact of governmental interventions on mitigating farmer distress and promoting mental health and well-being in the agricultural sector.

4. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Kumara and Shanmugam (2022) reviewed sustainable agricultural practices and farmer suicide in Karnataka, highlighting macro-level agrarian distress in India characterized by indebtedness, loss of livelihoods, and farmer suicides, specifically concentrating on the centrality of collaborative measures and strategies by both the central and Karnataka state governments to address the agrarian crisis; they highlighted the turn of agriculture as a key cog in India's socio-economic development that is currently under threat by the alarming incident of farmer suicides that afflict cultivators and agricultural workers, with seven states accounting for a collective 87.5% of these deaths due to a range of factors apparently including monsoon failure, climate change, high debt burdens, policies by the government, mental health challenges, and personal/family problems, which particularly impact the majority of small and marginal farmers within Indian agriculture.

Sreenath et al. (2022) with in-depth details into farmer suicides in rural India as marked by agrarian unease, exploring its impact on growers from numerous states and different crops, bring to attention the sustained glorification associated historically with farmers and agriculture by the political system, with occurrences of farmer suicides cropping up post-1991 reforms; the paper seeks to understand the crisis in agrarian sectors through bibliometric analysis of existing studies, elucidate the rationale behind farmers resorting to killing themselves, by providing a linkage of farmer suicides and distressed agriculture in a conceptual framework where the indebtedness of farmers is pinpointed as a major when on utilizing bibliometric analysis; recognize trends and tendencies in the literature.

Bhattacharyya et al. (2020) explore the complex issue of farmer suicides in India, emphasizing both macro and micro dimensions. They aim to understand the root causes as well as variations in suicide rates across different states. Utilizing data from 2015, they calculate normalized rates while examining correlations with state-level variables related to

agriculture and socio-economic development. Their findings lend support to Durkheim's theory, asserting that farmer suicide primarily arises as an individual phenomenon, further underscored by a collection of micro-level studies.

Deshpande (2020) discusses agrarian distress as a significant topic within Indian academic discussions leading to farmer suicides. The discourse includes references to surveys like the Farmer Situation Assessment Survey conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), alongside notions regarding agricultural policies that trace back to the Royal Commission on Agriculture in 1926. This reflection reveals persistent discontent among farmers despite advancements made within the agriculture sector.

Parvathamma (2016) investigates the diverse causes behind farmer suicides in India, identifying critical issues such as inadequate monsoon rains, overwhelming debt burdens, genetically modified crops, and government policies. She assesses how effectively governmental responses and strategies address this ongoing crisis faced by farmers.

Mukherjee (2009) investigates the alarming trend of farmer suicides in India, framing it as a dire reflection of the ongoing agrarian crisis. This situation has been worsened by liberalization policies that have increased rural debt levels, particularly in states like Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, and Chhattisgarh. Farmers face immense financial pressures due to their reliance on non-institutional loans and the demands associated with growing hybrid cash crops. These problems are compounded by issues such as crop failures, pest infestations, climate change challenges, and insufficient irrigation systems. As a result, some farmers view suicide as an escape from their dire circumstances. The reviews take a comprehensive look at this critical issue of farmer suicides across India. They highlight its complex nature by exploring both broad systemic factors and individual personal struggles. Key contributors to this dilemma include agrarian hardship, mounting debts, ineffective policies, and various socio-economic elements. The reports make clear the pressing need for a collaborative approach among government bodies to implement effective interventions and significant policy reforms aimed at resolving this humanitarian crisis effectively.

5. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Karnataka, recognized for its rich agricultural legacy, has a historical relationship that is closely connected to farming. Since ancient times, this region has stood out as an important agricultural center, characterized by its diverse landscapes that range from coastal plains to the Deccan Plateau and the Western Ghats. The area's fertile soils have supported various crops, establishing agriculture as a fundamental component of its economy. The agricultural landscape of Karnataka encompasses numerous crops including rice, sugarcane, cotton, pulses, oilseeds, and fruits such as mangoes and bananas. Additionally, the state makes substantial contributions to spice production with items like cardamom, pepper, and ginger. Agriculture plays a crucial role in enhancing the state's GDP and employs a significant portion of the population—especially in rural regions. However, despite Karnataka's strengths in agriculture, it faces significant challenges relating to farmer suicides. Recent statistics indicate a troubling trend—with instances of farmer suicides increasing over time. Evidence from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) highlights alarming figures concerning these incidents within the state, pointing toward serious distress within the agricultural community. Various issues such as failed harvests, rising debts, inadequate institutional support, and adverse climatic conditions are pivotal factors fueling this crisis among farmers in Karnataka.

State	Number of Farmer's Suicide
Maharashtra	4,248
Karnataka	2,392
Andhra Pradesh	917
Tamil Nadu	728
Madhya Pradesh	641

Top 5 States with Highest Incidence of Farmers' Suicide in India

(2019-2021) Source: Statista. (n.d.). Infographic | More than 112,000 Suicides in Indian Farming in 10 Years

The information for the years 2019-2021, however, brings forth a disturbing fact about the farm crisis in India, with the tragic Maharashtra topping the chart of the most farmers suicides at 4,248. This tragic fact illustrates just how hard

farmers in Maharashtra, some of whom are struggling under the burden of debt while relying on acts of the nature to part them with their lives, have it. Karnataka is not too far behind, indicating a scary trend that is being seen in several states. Andhra Pradesh, whose figure stands at 1,483, Tamil Nadu at 612, and Madhya Pradesh with 582 also record alarming numbers, hinting at the large spread of the issue. These devastating statistics call for urgent action by policy-makers and stakeholders to address the root causes of farmer distress and design meaningful programs that address agricultural livelihoods and mental health in these regions.

5.1. SOME OF THE REASONS FOR FARMERS SUICIDE IN KARNATAKA

Economic-Material Problems: Peasants face a grim economic situation, mostly as a result of mounting debts. The already heavy burden becomes worse with the occurrence of events such as crop failure and market system price fluctuation. As farmers battle to keep up with repayments without clear income prospects, the stress can have a cascading affect, making them tolerable to mental health conditions and self-harm.

Social Pressure: Apart from economic hardships, farmers also experience social pressures that add to their misery. Responsibilities towards family and societal pressures put in unwanted stress on such youth, taking a toll on their mental health. The burden of meeting families' needs in the face of community expectations has driven many farmers to the feeling of being alone as they deal with these pressures.

Environmental Factors: Farming is one of the most vulnerable economic activities to environmental factors, so members of the agricultural community need to deal with droughts, the absence of successful monsoon seasons, and impacts of climate change. These factors all hurt crop yields and put farmers' livelihoods at risk, worsening an already difficult financial situation. In addition, variations in the weather patterns increase uncertainties in this sector thus increasing the levels of anxiety of the farmers.]

Psychological issues: This is an important psychological aspect of the farmer suicide crisis. The overwhelming weight of economic and social pressures combined with geographical isolation can have a detrimental effect on farmers' mental health. What's more, inadequate psychological and livelihood support all contribute to increasing hopelessness and despair which make them more susceptible to suicidal ideas and actions. To tackle the psychological causes, the destigmatisation of mental health issues must be combined with the development of strong support networks, as well as mental health services that are appropriate for the particular requirements of farmers.

6. GOVERNMENT INTERVENTIONS

As far as the overview of policies is concerned, under the aegis of various national and state-level governments, numerous policies have started to emerge to address the complex matter of committing suicides by farmers. The various policies aim at carrying out a number of interventions aimed at different aspects of distress among farmers and the mental challenges faced by them.

Debt Relief Measures: Apart from other causes, debt itself is one of the reasons for committing suicides in farmers; hence, it has been acknowledged by the government to relieve farmers of the burden of debt. This often amounts to debt restructuring initiatives, loan waivers, or debt subsidy schemes for cleansing the financial profile of farmers and getting them out of a debt trap.

Subsidies and Financial Aid Programs: Whenever governments provide a subsidy and a financial aid program, the aim is to assist farmers in reducing the cost of production and increasing income. This may include input subsidies on fertilizers, seeds, and machinery together with direct cash transfer or grants.

Crop Insurance Schemes: Governments have implemented crop insurance schemes to protect farmers from the financial risks of crop failures due to adverse weather conditions or other unforeseen events. These schemes provide farmers with financial compensation in the event of crop losses, helping to stabilize their income and mitigate the impact of agricultural risks.

Minimum Support Price (MSP) Initiatives: Minimum Support Price initiatives aim to ensure remunerative prices for farmers' produce, providing them with a guaranteed income floor for their crops. Governments seek to safeguard farmers' incomes and incentivize agricultural production by setting a minimum price for agricultural commodities.

Agricultural Extension Services and Support: Agricultural extension services play a crucial role in disseminating knowledge, technology, and best practices to farmers, empowering them to improve their agricultural practices and

enhance productivity. Governments invest in agricultural extension services to provide farmers with access to information, training, and technical assistance, enabling them to adopt sustainable and resilient farming practices.

Specific Programs and Schemes in Karnataka: In addition to national-level interventions, the state of Karnataka has implemented specific programs and schemes tailored to address the unique challenges faced by farmers in the region. These initiatives may include state-funded support programs, subsidies for agricultural inputs, and targeted interventions to address the root causes of farmer distress and prevent suicides. Through these targeted efforts, the government of Karnataka aims to support farmers and promote the well-being of agricultural communities across the state.

6.1. STRATEGIES TO PREVENT FARMERS' SUICIDES IN KARNATAKA

The alarming rate of farmer suicides in Karnataka thus necessitates urgent action in finding the root causes of farmer distress, which also requires preventive measures. Provide financial support and debt relief to distressed farmers. Create multiple schemes to actively grant loans for debt relief or low-interest loans to farmers. This is to specifically minimize the financial burdens of farmers. Crop insurance and risk mitigations-Secure crop insurance schemes providing risk cover for farmers against their crops being destroyed during failure or natural disasters. Make farmers aware of the merits of crop diversification and boost the adoption of practices that mitigate the risks they face in mono-cropping.

Technology and information access: Give access to modern agricultural technologies such as surface irrigation, drought-resistant seeds, and mechanized farming equipment. Establish information centers or mobile apps for disseminating timely information regarding weather forecasts, market prices, and best agricultural practices.

Infrastructure Development: Improve rural infrastructures like roads, storage spaces, and market linkages to enable efficient movement of agricultural produce. Ramp up access to electricity and irrigation facilities to act as a further incentive for year-round agricultural activity in rural areas.**Skill Development and Training:** Capacity building for farmers through training and workshops in modern farming, organic farming, and financial management skills. Trainers from agricultural Universities and research institutions should be involved to conduct specialized support based on local farming conditions.

Mental Health Support: Establishment of counseling centers or counseling helplines with therapeutic support services for distressed farmers and their families. Increase awareness regarding literacy on mental health issues and on ending stigmas against seeking professional help.

Market Reform and Price Stabilization: Formulate policies that accord fair prices for agricultural produce through regulating intermediaries, alongside preferential market access for farmers. Enhance market intelligence systems for forecasting price variations in favour of farmers' making crop-production and marketing decisions.

Community Support and Social Networking: Foster community support networks and self-help groups among farmers for resource sharing, knowledge, and experience. Such a tendency should be supported by NGOs, community-based organizations, and government agencies in support and pleading the farmers' cause. **Governmental Interventions and Policy Reforms:** Promote policy reforms at both state and national levels toward the resolution of the underlying issues in the agricultural domain, such as land control, water management, and agriculture subsidies. Enforce sufficient budgetary provisions for agriculture and rural development projects and ensure their effective implementation. **Long-Term Perspective Sustainability Initiatives:** Promotion of sustainable farming practices directed towards conserving soil, water resources, and biodiversity for the ultimate benefit of the farmers and the ecosystem. Investing in research and innovations directed at climate-resilient crops and farming systems that can adapt to changing climatic variations.

7. CONCLUSION

The discourse surrounding farmer suicides in Karnataka indicates the intricate web of factors responsible for this deplorable phenomenon. For farmers, the breadth of economic hardships, social pressures, environmental challenges, and psychological factors creates a daunting landscape that pushes many to despair. Against this backdrop, an unusually high incidence of farmer suicides brings into sharp relief the necessity of an effective intervention combined with comprehensive policy responses to attack the core issues of agrarian distress with a view to protecting the well-being of farming communities. Economic distress in Karnataka is characterized as the predominant reason for farmer suicides. The sufferings brought about by indebtedness, worsened by crop failure and market fluctuations, serve to deepen a sense

of hopelessness and despair. Agencies of government have provided such interventions in many forms, such as debt relief measures, subsidies, and financial aid programs, which attempt to address the financial pressure that compulsively drives farmers into debt traps. But the effectiveness of these schemes might need to be scrutinized further. The very nature of structural problems that leads to such widespread indebtedness in the agricultural sector still ought to be addressed if we have to create a resilient, vibrant agricultural sector over the long term. Social issues also have a key role in farmer suicides, as cosseted responsibilities and societal demands compound stress and isolation in farmers. Conclusively, posing such social pressures infers economic assistance to facilitate appropriate community programmatic environment, thereby building social networking and, hence, a sense of belonging and support. Environmental challenges bequeath additional vulnerabilities on farmers in Karnataka. Drought, a failure of the monsoons, and climate change further make clear the dangers faced by agricultural livelihoods with the end result of crop failure. Climate-resilient agriculture and sustainable water management practices are important for dealing with such environmental risks while enhancing the adaptive capacity of farmers.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

None.

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