



Farmers Suicide in Marathwada Region: A Geographical Analysis

Rajekhan Shikalgar

Assistant Professor in Geography,
Rajaram College, Kolhapur

Mahmedhusen Patil

Associate Professor in Geography,
Shri. Vijaysinh Yadav College, Peth-Vadgaon

Abstract:

Historically India has agrarian economy it has more than 60% population either directly or indirectly depends on agriculture and its related services. But now a day in the race of development of Industrial and Service sector, India has given secondary importance to agriculture sector and its allied services. This negligence resulted to increase in crises in agriculture. Especially after Globalization, Indian farmers are in financial trouble and he is neglected by everyone. Suicides by the farmers are a burning issue in Marathwada region of Maharashtra. The arid climate of a Marathwada region and drought like conditions influences the yield from agriculture. Low yield and low price lead farmer to an economical distress. To overcome the economical need he borrowed credit from moneylenders and other sources which become a trap for him and the resulting frustration drove him to commit suicide. The present paper throws light on causes and consequences of suicides in Marathwada region of Maharashtra. For the study data collected through primary as well as secondary source. Primary data collected through field visit, interviews with the farmers and secondary data obtained from various documents, reports and newspaper articles.

Keywords: *Farmers suicide, Crop failure, Debt and Economical distress*

Introduction:

Agriculture is the backbone of India's Economy. More than 60% population is engaged in agriculture and its related activities and it accounts for 10% India's gross domestic product. But now a day's, Indian agriculture passing through lots of problems like lack of investment, crop failure, lack of irrigation, minimum support price, natural calamities like droughts and many more. The agriculture in an India and a state is at the mercy of monsoon and thus it is highly vulnerable. Any Suicide is regrettable for a country & its people. Although farmers commit suicides in huge numbers is a serious thing for the nation like India, which is agrobased.



India's national crime record bureau in the past 20 years nearly 3 lakh farmers have committed suicides in the country. In the year 2018, first three months of the years (January, February, and March) records 696 suicides in Maharashtra. This farmers belongs to 3 regions of the state via; Marathwada (arid belt), North Maharashtra and West Maharashtra (the sugar belt). From these three regions Marathwada shares the highest number of suicides.

The Marathwada is known as the arid belt of Maharashtra. Now it famous as suicide belt of Maharashtra and whole Maharashtra is stepping towards becoming the "Suicidal Capital of India". The Marathwada region lies in the rain shadow zone of the state. The low amounts of rainfall lower the yield. This is not compensated by highest prices. Thus the farmers suffers from low yield low price & high cost of production & trap in to this cycle which finally push him in to debt which leads to the suicide. This phenomenon is known as agrarian crisis.

In the view of above, a study on suicides by farmers in Maharashtra, specifically in Marathwada region of Maharashtra has taken as research topic for this paper.

Objectives:

- To study the Spatio-temporal distribution of farmer suicides in Marathwada region
- To study the factors responsible for incidence of farmers suicide in Marathwada region

Data sources and Methodology:

The data have been collected through primary as well as secondary sources. To study the farmer suicide, primary data was collected by asking questions to 200 local people and farmers in Marathwada region with the help of well-designed scheduled cum questionnaire. For this systematic random sampling techniques were used. The secondary data were collected from various governmental and non-governmental reports, newspapers and articles. The concern data were collected from district socio-economic review and district census handbook. Collected data were analysed by using Likert scales and then represent it with the help of tables, charts and diagrams.

Study Region:

Marathwada region is geographically situated between 17°38'53" North to 20°40'51" North Latitude and 74°33'28" East to 78°21'12" East longitudes. The region has on its borders Telangana state on the East, Nashik and Ahmednagar districts on the West, Jalgaon, Buldhana and Akola districts on the North and Solapur district on the South. Geographical area of Marathwada is 64434 sq. km. and the population is 1,87,31,872. In Marathwada, there are 8



districts, 76 Talukas, 64 Towns and 8495 villages as per census 2011. The soil of Marathwada is generally stiff and dark coloured. The land of the region is flat with elevation ranging between 300 and 900 meters. Godavari is the important river flowing through Marathwada particularly serving the districts of Aurangabad, Nanded and Parbhani.

Result and Discussion:

Spatio-temporal distribution of Farmers suicide:

As per the table number 1 show that, from the year 2010 to 2015 there is continue increase in farmer suicide in Marathwada. After that from the year 2015 to 2019 there is slight decrease in farmer suicide. The highest number (1133) of suicide cases recorded in the year 2015 while it is least (191) in the year 2010. (Table 1)

From the year 2010 to 2017 there are 4516 farmer suicide cases were recorded in eight ditrict of marathwada. The highest number (1223) of farmer suicide recorded in Beed followed by Nanded (814), osmanabad (621), and Aurangabad (498). While least farmer suicide cases (189) were recorded in Hingoli District (Table 2)

Table 1										
Temporal distribution of farmers suicide:										
Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
India	15964	14027	13754	11772	12360	12602	11370	2917	2761	
Maharashtra	3141	3337	3786	3146	2568	3228	3361	1398	1307	2532
Marathwada	191	169	198	207	574	1133	1053	991	618	835
Source: Divisional Commissioner Office, Aurangabad										

Table 2									
District wise Farmer Suicide in Marathwada Region (2010-17)									
District	Aurangabad	Latur	Beed	Parbhani	Jalna	Hingoli	Osmanabad	Nanded	Total
No. of farmer suicide	498	371	1223	494	306	189	621	814	4516
Source: Divisional Commissioner Office, Aurangabad									



Factors responsible for Farmer Suicide:

Table number 3 shows that, the following reasons are of farmer suicides according to the expert in the field of agriculture and farmers:

- **Natural causes**

According to 80 percent respondents, natural calamities are the main cause of farmer's suicide. The effective agricultural production is mostly depends on favourable weather condition. Due to the impact of climate change, heavy rain, floods, droughts, uneven and unequal raining, and heavy cyclones occurs so the farmers are not able to take qualitative and quantitative production from their farm. Therefore, there is very much gap between expectation and actual production from the farm, which cause heavy economic burden to the farmer force to commit suicide.

- **Economic Causes**

More than 80 percent respondent strongly reported that increase in cost of production also forces to the farmers to commit suicide. Even some times all the conditions are favourable but farmers don't get proper return of their product. Most of the time farmers are not able to recover cost price of their product. Marginal & small farmers don't have another option for earning. Continuous losses turn them to become insolvent and frustration of the same forces them to commit suicides.

Agriculture requires more capital for smooth functioning but more than 66 percent of the farmers are marginal land owners and they are economically poor. So they are facing economic problems for successful running of agricultural activities. At the same time nationalize banks are not willing to lend funds to farmers as there is no surety to return it. Because of that farmer go towards the private money lenders. Private money lenders gave the lend funds to them by mortgage their land. Even they lends funds to farmers, they charges very high rate or compound rate of interest.

In addition to this, farmers has their family responsibilities like child education, children's marriages and health provisions of their family members, which requires huge money. The burden of these entire things turns farmers towards suicides.

- **Political Causes**

Government plays an important role in making policy and decision in agriculture sector. More than 90 per cent respondent strongly agreed that, the government are failing to take effective measures for agriculture. They frequently declare various relief packages for farmers but failing to take effective implementation of the same. So the needy farmers don't get the benefits of such packages.



- **Social Causes**

Illiteracy, tradition and culture also forces to farmers to commit suicide. Due to illiteracy and inadequate knowledge, they turn to rights and rituals of orthodox and other religious activities such as dowry which require more money. If the farmers fails to perform all these traditions and cultural activities they become frustrate and turn towards suicide.

- **Other causes:**

Sometimes due to the economic frustration, farmer becomes drug addicted and drunker. Due to the addiction of drug, he loses the self-control and farmer turn to commit suicide.

Table 3					
Factors responsible for Farmer Suicide:					
Reasons for farmers suicide	No of Respondent (%)				
	Not at all	A little	Moderately	Very Much	Extremely
Natural Calamities	2	2.5	15.5	18.5	61.5
Increasing Debt	1.5	3.5	6	31.5	57.5
Lack of irrigation	3.5	6.5	10	20.5	59.5
Mono cropping	5.5	9.5	18.5	15.5	51
Debt bondage	5	10	15	20	50
Lending method	3.5	13.5	21.5	30.5	31
Government loans not readily available	6.5	5	4.5	4.5	79.5
Lack of capital	3.5	9.5	21	25.5	40.5
Marginal land	1.5	11.5	20.5	25.5	41
Rising prices of fertilizers and seeds	6.5	6	16.5	26	45
Lack of side business	3.5	10.5	15.5	21	49.5
Poor price for farm produce	0	0	9.5	12	78.5
Economic hardship	0	4	4	22	70
Insufficient power supply	12.5	12.5	16	19.5	39.5
Increased cost of cultivation	0	4.5	10.5	18	67
Sugarcane phobia	8.5	10.5	10.5	11	59.5
BT Cotton seeds	9.5	9.5	21	23.5	36.5
Addictions	57.5	16.5	11	4	11
Stress and family responsibility	5	5	0	28.5	61.5
Social prestige	5	4.5	20.5	31	39
Marriage problem, the dowry method	6.5	3.5	13.5	16	60.5
Physical and Mental Health problems	19	24.5	4.5	24	28
Family strife	14	14	21	11	40
Labour problem	0	0	9.5	20.5	70
Government apathy	0	0	8.5	31	60.5
<i>Source: Calculated by author</i>					



Correlation between Farmer suicide and Working Population:

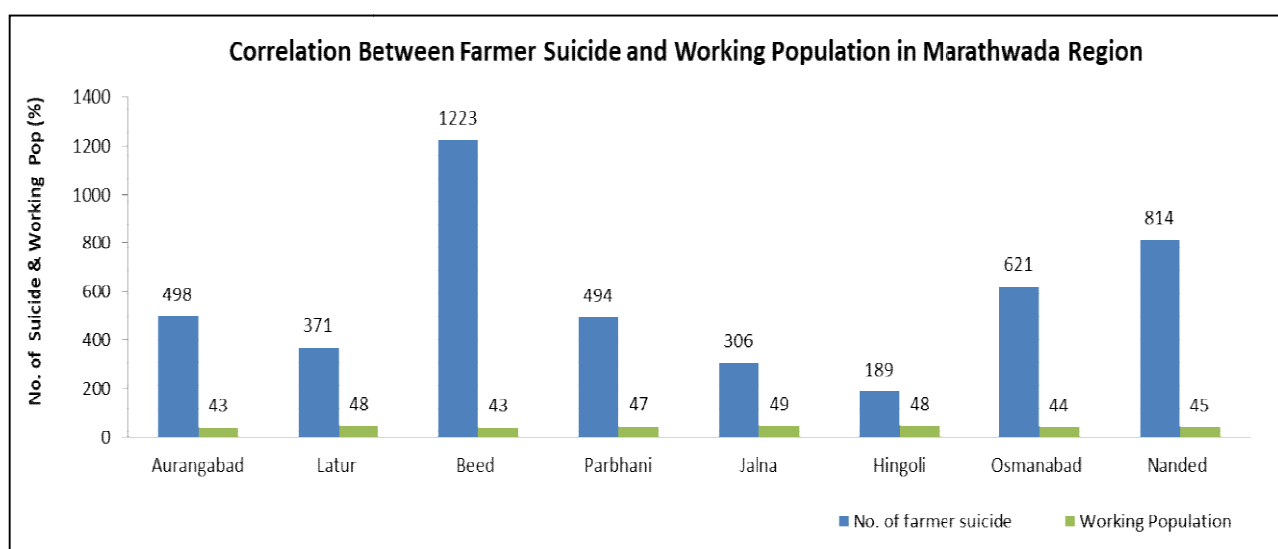
Figure 1 shows that, the correlation between farmer suicide and working population in Marathwada region. There is negative relationship between farmer suicide and percentage of working population to the total population. The Beed district having minimum percent of working population (43%) record the highest farmer suicide cases (1223). While Hingoli district records highest percentage of working population (48 %) results minimum farmer suicides (189). (Fig 1)

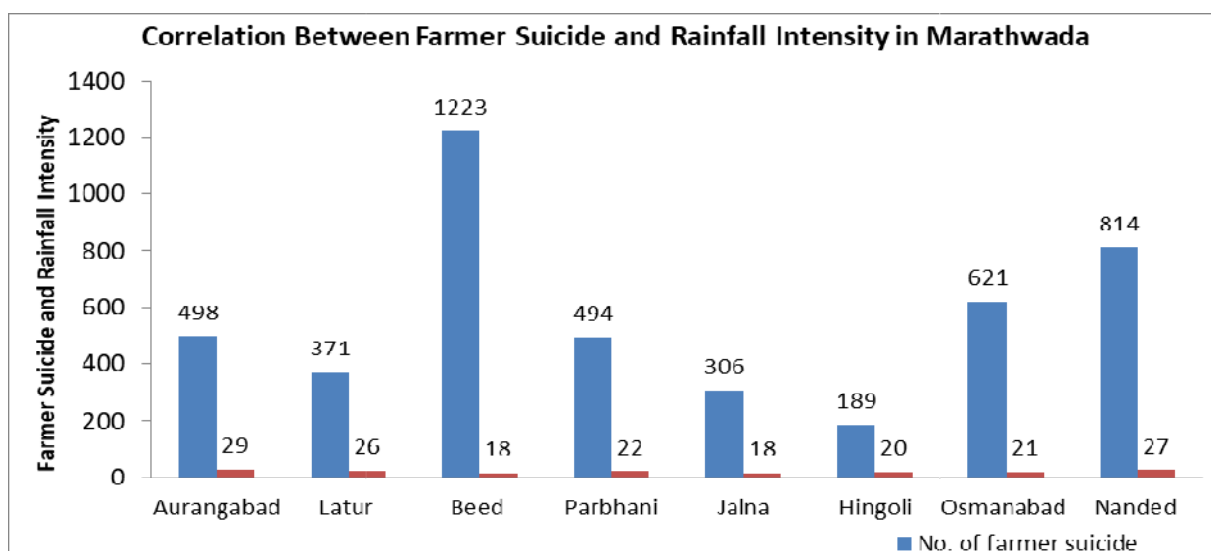
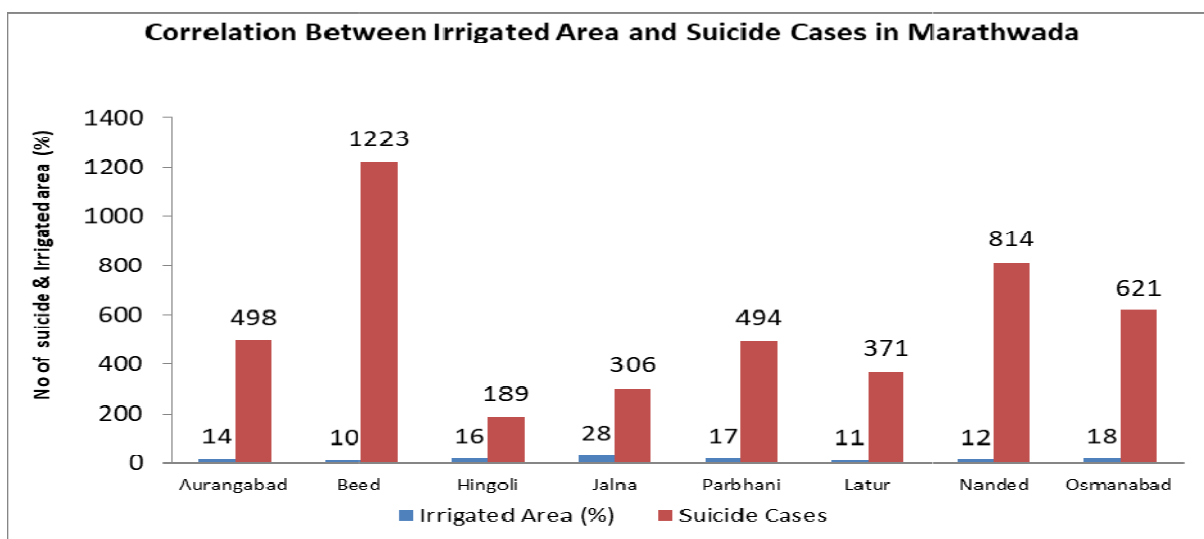
Correlation between Irrigated Area and Suicide Cases:

Figure 2 shows that, positive correlation between percentages of irrigated land to the total land and number of farmer suicides in the study area. The Beed district having minimum percentage of irrigated land (10%) to the total land recorded highest number of farmer suicide (1223). On the other hand, Jalana district having highest percentage of irrigated land (28%) recorded least farmer suicide (306) (Fig 2)

Correlation between Farmer Suicide and Rainfall Intensity:

Figure 3 shows that, there is negative relation between rainfall intensity and farmer suicide. Beed district recorded least rainfall intensity (18) resulted the highest farmer suicide (1223). Aurangabad district recorded highest rainfall intensity (29) having less suicide cases (498). (Fig .3)





Conclusions:

- Since 2015, the number of farmer suicides has decreased slightly.
- Beed district has the highest number of farmer suicides and Hingoli has the lowest.
- Natural disasters, lack of irrigation, non-availability of government loans, inadequate prices for agricultural produce and economic distress have led to an increase in farmer suicides.
- The lower the rainfall intensity, the higher the suicide rate.
- An increase in the working population shows a decrease in the number of farmer suicides.
- An increase in irrigation facilities leads to a decrease in farmer suicides.
- Farmers who have committed suicides primarily included those who relied on mono-cropping specifically sugarcane



Suggestions:

- To select drought resistant crops according to the geographical environment.
- To create awareness among the farmers to adopt multi-cropping system instead of mono cropping system.
- The government must fix the Minimum Support Price (MSP) of all crops before sowing.
- Social awareness needs to be created to stop undesirable practices like dowry.

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