



## Impact of Work on the Quality of Life of Farmer

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### ABSTRACT

Farming which is the foundation of our food systems, is a very difficult job which has a great influence on the quality of life of those individuals who work in the farm. Farming has caused a lot of issues in the recent years; it is reported that people working in the farm tends to have lower self-esteem. Many farmers worry a lot about the environment cause all their livelihood depends on the environment, especially women and it is tougher for those women who have children. Farming causes harm to physical and mental wellbeing, increases the financial burden and social dynamics of the individuals. This conceptual article aims to explore the relationship between work and quality of life among farmers. It attempts to identify the various aspects of work, including its effect on their personal life, socio-cultural and economic wellbeing by utilising previously published literature. While work can provide purpose and satisfy the individual it has an impact on the wellbeing. It will also identify numerous aspects that affect the farmers quality of life.

Keywords: Farmer, Work, Quality of life, Agriculture, Well-being, Stress.

### Introduction

There is so much to love about farms the idea of raising a livestock, owning a farm, it may seem pleasant however it is very difficult, even on the best days (Karen Crowley et al., 2021). Many farmers are ecstatic in producing food and materials that provides long term or something significant to the communities. Farmers feel satisfied when they contribute something to the society and also nurturing the crops and livestock gives them joy which promotes their well-being (Amer Ait Sidhoum, 2022). It is reported that farmers have lower ability to perform work when compared with worker from other sectors. However, it does not mean that they do not have the capacity (Samuli et al., 2008). Agriculture plays an important role in many parts of the country. Many farmers face lots of problem including the natural disaster like flood, cyclones (Rajesh Sikder et al., 2014). Farmers depend upon the environment for agriculture and they think that they are less successful (Melinda et al., 1996).

### *Who are farmers?*

A farmer is someone who is actively working within agriculture raising living organisms for food or raw materials and it is usually applies to people who does some combination of raising field crops, or other livestock's (Xiaofang et al., 2017).

### *What does a quality of life mean?*

As stated by the World Health Organisation definition (1995: 1405): 'Quality of life is how an individual perceives the way he lives when evaluate with the existing cultures, norms and the value system prevailing in the society, also it is related to how much they have achieved and their expectation in the way they live, their living standards and challenges.' Molnar (1976) defined quality of life as a universal pattern based on an individual's expectation and life experiences (S. Windon et al., 2021). Quality of life is referring to when an individual access the tangible and non- tangible requirements of human and which ultimately create a happy life for the individuals and it applies to every individual.

## 2. Why the impact of work on farmer is prevalent in the recent time?

It is a prevalent topic because many of the farmers suffer from stress and health-related issue and effect their personal life. It is reported that in 2021 a National American Farm Bureau poll carried out a survey where they found that there is an increase of the farmers experiencing stress and mental health issues with a percentage of 61% when compared with the previous years. It is also mention that there is a stigma in the agriculture sector with the seeking of treatment for mental health or stress related even though such ideas have decreases overtime (Michele M. Kroll, 2022). Many of the farmers work overtime most of the time and in recent years it has increase drastically for 8-9 hours with lesser wage being paid. And they were even made to work overtime with less payment which the farmers find it hard to manage for their livelihood as many of the household expenditure has increased over the years. All this aspect contributes to stress and health issue (Kleinbooi K, 2013).

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### **3.What challenges do farmers encounters as a result of their occupation?**

Many farmers especially the small farmers find it challenging to sell their goods because of the modern economy as there are lots of processes and implications (Wolfgang et al., 2016). Farming may look easy and pleasing with its big open space, winds, fresh air but it can be very dangerous to the one who works in the farm. Though farming provides a sense of satisfaction through the various work and connect the individuals to nature, it has an impact on the wellbeing of those individuals who work in the farms either in their physical or mental wellbeing also cause financial stress and impacted their social lives. They face a lot of challenges which has a very negative effect on their body. It is reported that farmers suicides rate is 2-5x times higher than the other working sector. It is because of their job which is farming. It is a very stressful job which is highly connected with the anxiety and depression. The farmers experiences events such as the natural disaster, unpredictable weather which ruin their hard work crops, increase financial uncertainty, frequent fluctuating in the markets, and the labour shortage due to the adversity of the work, and the lack of access to sell their goods or trade disruptions contributes to the increased levels of stress for the farmers (The American Bureau farm, 2022).

#### ***Impact of Physical labour on a farmer's well-being***

The work of a farmer is mostly labour work which they had to utilise their strength. They spent long hours in the farm working- operating heavy machine, which sometimes they had to lift heavy machine and work overtime, and transporting bales dusty hay, rearing animals nurturing them which leads to muscle cramps, it also causes fatigue and exhaustion however most of the farmers do not stop, they over work themselves repeatedly with the injuries they had without treatment (Michele M. Kroll, 2022). According to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), the work of a farmer constituted on the top rank as the most dangerous profession, which produces a frequent work-related injuries and health issues. Many of the farmers do not check their time when they start working, they just focus on their work so that they can complete it and it is also justified as their love for their job. Farmers frequently work overtime because of the large amount of work sometimes it last from hours and extended to days and leads to seven days a week. These is more prevalent during the plantation and harvesting seasons (Sean Brotherson et al., 2022). Farmers are regularly exposed to pesticides, herbicides, and other chemicals almost every day which can have negative health consequences as they inhale and breathe in all the strong contaminated smells. Additionally, dust from working in the farm can lead to respiratory problems (Mima Junkichi, 1986).

#### ***Impact on mental health***

The mental stresses caused by farming is just as important as the physical injuries. Farmers worries a lot and their concerns are on the climate and the environment as the unpredictable weather always ruins their crops which they are depending for their livelihood (The American Farm Bureau, 2022). Farm stress is not only to the farmer but it also affects the families because of the tradition of the agricultural work environment. To the farmer the constant fear of losing the farm is scarier than the fear of closing down the farm. As it is a legacy, a lifestyle and an identity to them, the thought of not being able to passed it down to the next generation weighs heavily on the farmers which leads to stress. Stress and depression increase the chances of injuries while working, the effect also includes accident, heart disease, stroke, chronic pain and other diseases, all these contribute is prevalent because of the hectic work and the environment they are exposed to (Michele M. Kroll, 2022). Adding financial pressures, long hours, and unpredictable weather in the experiences of farmers can cause a high level of stress and anxiety however all these events are frequently faced by farmers in their work (Michelle M. Kroll, 2022). Such experiences lead to cause mental health issue like depression and suicidal ideation (Gori Maia A et al., 2021).

#### ***Unpredictable weather***

Farmers work is very harsh and difficult due to the frequent change in the agricultural landscape. Due to the excessive use of pesticides and fertilizers which has short term value caused a lot of negative impact on the environment, all these modern agricultural practices contaminate the water and also degrade the quality of the soil (FAO/WHO, 2013). Climate change plays a major role in farming as it is a threat with the rising temperature, changes in precipitation patterns, inconsistent weather and extreme weather like the droughts, floods which decreasing the productivity level and reduce the quality of crop growth, not only that it increases the spread of pests and diseases where the farmers are the first to get infected due to their work (United States EPA, 2017). So, all these factors combine produces an unwanted challenge for farmers, making them adapt to a less predictable and more vulnerable climate.

#### ***Financial Uncertainty***

Farming is a business which is very prone to volatile market prices, unpredictable weather patterns, and fluctuating market costs so farmers income depends on all these factors (Xuanye Zeng, 2021). Additionally, the high cost of land, equipment, and other inputs can create significant debt burdens to the farmers and prices for each items increases every year (S. Windon et al., 2021). This financial uncertainty can be a significant source of stress for farmers (Xuanye Zeng, 2021). Farmers has to adapt to the rapid change of new technology due to the development and the changes in environment so it causes them a fortune to stay updated for their survival (Sean Brotherson et al., 2022). Poor farmers do not have the money to afford expensive modern technologies though it may help them to produce better crops (Jules Pretty, 1998). Fluctuating market prices, global competition, and the ever-present threat of debt can cause constant anxiety and feelings of helplessness among the farmers (Karen Crowley et al., 2021).

### *Impact on their personal life*

The chronic physical and mental strain due to farm work activities often have a negative impact on the lives of farmers and their families. When one is stress or exhausted physically and mentally individual losses strength to make decision or think straight which in turn increases the risk of accidents and injuries (Karen Crowley et al., 2021). Stress can also contribute to the development of chronic health conditions like heart disease, high blood pressure, and depression (Sean Brotherson et al., 2022). The emotional burden of financial worries and the fear of losing the farm can strain family relationships and lead to feelings of hopelessness (The American Farm Bureau). Many people working in the farm faces lots of problem due to the work as they do not have much quality time their family, some couples face divorce and loss of a family member (Sean Brotherson et al., 2022). Another negative impact of farming is the lack of accessibility of healthcare, as we know most of the farms are located in the rural side and hospitals, clinics are set up in the urban areas. Services are not easily available when require therefore, farmers have to spend a lot of money for transportation due to the distance so most of the time they just leave their wounds untreated (Karen Crowley et at, 2021).

### **4. Some of the Coping Mechanisms for a farmer.**

Farming is a very crucial profession however one has to pay the price, that is individual who are in the farming sectors has health issue and it a kind of job that requires physical strength, is financially insecure and stressful. So, in order to promote their wellbeing, recognizing and acknowledging their challenges is the very first steps towards support systems. Here are some strategies that can be helpful to improves their wellbeing.

- A. **Training and Education:** Training initiatives for stress management, work life balance, workplace safety, health and wellbeing should be available for the farmer as such program will enhance their confidence and improve their work effectively (Moda, H.M.; et al., 2021).
- B. **Climate-Resilient Practices:** Updating the farmers about the climate resilient practices like adjusted planting schedules that is to plant crops accordingly and to develop the farming techniques. This will not only help the farm productivity but will also enhance the farmers ability to perform better and live a happy life also, it will be useful in overcoming the challenges that may arise due to climate change (Gori Maia A et al., 2021).
- C. **Technology adoption:** Assisting the farmers access to and education on new updated technologies like precision agriculture, automation tools, and weather monitoring systems can significantly help farmers to perform effectively, and decreases physical strain or other hard labour, and make better-informed decisions, helps in producing or increasing yields and reducing costs of the work activities (National Geographic, 2024).
- D. **Improved Market Access:** Providing the farmer to connect directly with the consumers through various setting likes the farmers' markets, cooperatives or online platforms can help enhance their control over pricing and the farmers will be able to generate some income (Attrra Sustainable Agriculture, 2023).
- E. **Social Support Systems:** Developing support networks system or connections for farmers, such as peer-to-peer, farmer to farmer mentoring programs or mental health program, can enhance their ability to manage stress, and improve their performance in their work (V. Rasheed Sulaiman et al., 2002), (Michele, 2022).

By implementing these strategies, we can provide a more positive work environment for farmers, which will allow them to work on the way they prefer and focus on producing a good quality food while also prioritizing their well-being and financial security.

### **5. Conclusion**

This conceptual article found that farming cause severe problem to the wellbeing of the farmers and even, they do not have time for themselves due to the demanding amount of work. Many of the farmers do not socialise much and their happiness is solely depending on the quality of their work and the result it produces. It is important to note that farming is not an easy task, it is a physically dangerous work as they lift heavy machine, inhale poisonous gas which is harmful for health daily. Many of the farmers do not have access to health care services due to their work schedule and because of the unavailability of nearby clinics, also farmers don't usually seek treatment as they think it's normal and they prefer not to waste their times (Karen Crowley et al., 2021). It is important to address the issue of the impact cause by working in the farm cause every working sector is important. Farmers also deserves to get the recognition and acknowledge for their work which includes the treatment and aids which is very much require in their field.

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