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The Study on the Impact of COVID-19 on the government policies in the Chatarshahpur Village, Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

*The main objective of the research work in the Chatarshahpur village of Bhadohi district in Uttar Pradesh was to study the impact of COVID-19 on the government policies running in the village. The pandemic has affected the lives drastically in the whole country. When life in the tier-1 cities was most affected, most of the population started the reverse migration, which means migrating back to villages from the cities. It was the village and the villagers who welcomed these migrants with an open heart and also made necessary arrangements for their quarantine. The pandemic has affected almost everyone. The workings of the big companies were also affected badly, which resulted in job losses. The majority of the migrants from the village, Chatarshahpur, are also engaged in the private sector. When the pandemic hit, they lost their jobs and returned back to their village, and the majority of them joined their family members in farming. The government policies helped the people sustain their livelihood in the time of the pandemic as in this tough time for the needy and the poor such as the Public Distribution System. We took this research topic to get a better view on what was the ground reality of the workings of the policies.*

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, NGOs, Reverse Migration, Policies, Government

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## **1. Introduction:**

India is the home to 1.3 billion people, and for its people, the government of India is severe and hence has a lot of policies being implemented for the better of the people residing here. A government policy portrait the political activities, plans, and intentions of the government, which aims at achieving a particular set of targets. The policies are made so that the country's people are benefitted, and the government makes sure that no section of the society is left untouched while designing the policies. Sometimes it is also seen that several policies are designed for some particular section of people. Such policies are made for the development of these people as these people might have faced discrimination on some part of their life by which their lives might have been affected. Overall, if we see, then we can clearly understand that the policies regulate the lives of the people in many ways for their betterment.

In the time of the pandemic also, the policies were running as smoothly as before. As per the Ministry of Rural Development, the following schemes are more prominent in rural areas. Schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), DeenDayal Upadhyay – GraminKaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Shyama Prasad Mukherjee National RuRBAN Mission and National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP) are the major schemes of government of India working smoothly in the rural areas. All these schemes are being implemented in order to bring about overall improvement in the quality of life of the people in rural areas by employment generation, strengthening of livelihood opportunities, promoting self-employment, skilling of rural youths, provision of social assistance, and other basic amenities. (Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India: rural. nic.in (website)). In the state of Uttar Pradesh, the state government is also pretty much dedicated to working for the betterment of the people of the state and for which it has made several schemes that would help each and every people of the state.

The government of Uttar Pradesh has also introduced a number of social welfare schemes to benefit the poor people, farmers, and other deprived sections of the society, with the primary focus being put upon agriculture, education & the health sector. The schemes like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Yojana in U.P, KG to PG Scheme, U.P Kisan Kist Yojana, U.P PM Krishi Sinchai Yojana, Kisan Uday Yojana, UP Fasal Rin Mochan Yojana (UP Farm Loan Waiver Scheme), Deendayal Suraksha Bima Yojana, E-Mandi, Gaudhan Yojana, Soil Health Card, FasalBima Yojana, Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (2018) in UP, Ujjwala Yojana, GraminVidyuti Karan Yojana, ShandianuUP widow (vidhwa) Pension Scheme and many more<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>source:sarkariyojana.com

Undoubtedly, the pandemic has hit everybody hard and the government and its policies were no exceptions.

## **2. What is COVID-19? And What is its impact?**

The COVID-19 (coronavirus disease) is an infectious disease that was first detected in the Wuhan city of China. It is a highly infectious disease that spreads by physical interactions like talking (without mask), handshakes, coughing/sneezing in public places. This disease marked its presence in the year 2019 in the month of December, when the majority of the Chinese people started getting affected due to COVID-19. As per Wikipedia (2021), COVID is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (i.e., SARS-CoV-2). Eventually, it became a pandemic, and the world is yet to free itself from this deadly disease. Fever, cough, breathing difficulties, loss of smell, loss of taste, and weakness are some of the most common symptoms of COVID-19.

Being one of the most populated countries, the impact of COVID-19 in India was very high as 1,12,29,398 cases have been detected till 08<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (*Google News 2021*), which is almost 10% of all the cases of COVID-19 detected in the whole world. The total death due to COVID-19 stands at 1,57,853 in India as on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (Source: *Google News 2021*), which accounts to 6.08% of the global death caused due to COVID-19. In Uttar Pradesh, the number of cases till 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021 stands at 6,04,279, which is around 5.38% of total cases in India (Source: *Google News, 2021*). And as far as the Bhadohi district of Uttar Pradesh is concerned, total of 2255 cases have been detected as on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2021 which and the total casualties stand at 27 (source: *Bing.com*). The world still lives in fear of COVID-19 as many have lost they are near and dear to this pandemic. But there is a ray hope for the whole world as the mass production of the COVID-19 vaccine is on the way. Countries like India has mass producer of vaccines, the Serum Institute which has a capacity of producing vaccines in bulk whom the whole world is eyeing for.

The Serum institute, with its COVISHIELD and the Bharat Biotech with its COVAXIN, is already in the process of vaccinating the Indian citizen as well as many dozes of the COVISHIELD being sent to neighboring countries by the Indian government. Many companies in India are also in the process already to develop the vaccines, such as The Biological E Ltd, Cadila Healthcare Ltd, Hetero Biopharma, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories Ltd(Source:livemint.com). If we see around the world, then the pharmaceutical giant Pfizer is already ready with its COVID-19 vaccine, Russia with its *Sputnik V*, and many more in the race. So at last, there is a healthy chance that the world would be vaccinated with the COVID vaccine very soon, and all the normal activities shall be started as before.

### **3. Methodology:**

The research (survey) on the project, which is the impact of COVID-19 on government policies, is mainly based upon primary data collection which is collected through structured interviews with the local residents of the village, Chatarshahpur. Apart from the basic questionnaire which was provided by the university, I prepared one additional questionnaire, which I used as part of the survey to the assigned topic. By stratified random sampling, 25 households out of the overall households of the village belonging to several communities were interviewed in the span of 20 odd days. Apart from the structured interview, several unstructured interviews were also taken from the people belonging to near-by areas as well. This research/survey is also based on secondary data collection and is also reviewed from different sources.

#### **3.1 Unstructured Interview:**

An unstructured interview is a type of interview in which the interviewer doesn't make up his mind for a set of questions in mind rather, and the questions come up as a spontaneous one to the interviewers' mind. The questions come out inflow for which no preparation had been made in the past.

#### **3.2 Structured Interview:**

A structured interview is that kind of interview in which the interviewer goes to the field with a particular set of questions to be asked to the public. The structured interviews are basically close-ended. The questions are basically designed in advance for the interviewees. Such questions are asked in a particular form to understand a pattern in the responses.

#### **3.3 Participant Observation:**

The survey/research conducted is qualitative research in which the participant not only engaged himself/herself but also played an active role in understanding the implication of the mentioned activities in order to get a clearer view. The survey also includes notes which were noted while observing the things going around.

#### **3.4 Non-participant observation:**

Under this activity, the researcher observes the participants just by observing his activities without getting involved directly in the research work.

### **3.5 Field Notes:**

This refers to all the notes taken into consideration while conducting the field survey during the interview.

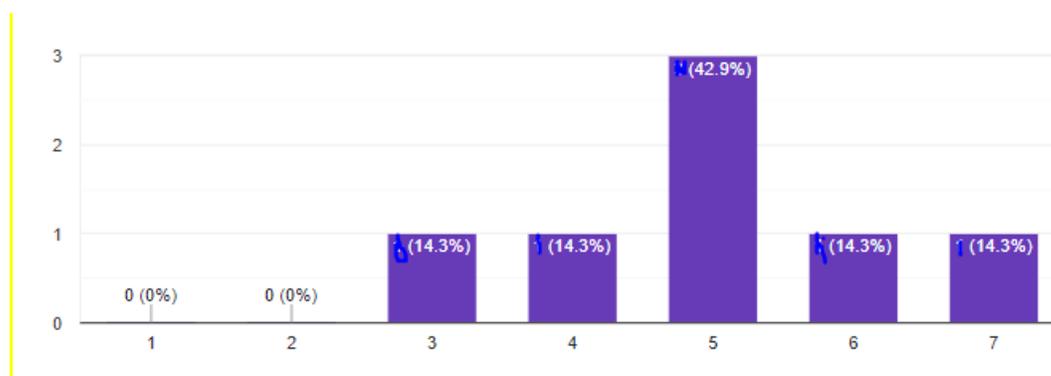
### **4. Impact of COVID-19 on government policies in Chatrashahpur village:**

For conducting the survey regarding "the impact of COVID-19 on government policies," there are several policies that were taken into consideration while conducting the survey/interview, and these policies are Pradhan Mantri Matri Vandana Yojana (Maternity Benefits provided to the mother), Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Card Yojana, National Rural Health Mission, Mid-Day Meal Scheme (In primary+intermediate School), Public Distribution System, National Horticulture Mission, MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), Kissan Credit Card, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, PMJJBY (Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana), PMSBY (Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana).

There were several mixed reviews among the household when asked about the awareness of these government schemes. Some said they are aware of all the schemes, but there were also some people who were not aware of all the mentioned schemes, although they knew a few of them. Now coming towards the impact of COVID-19 on these schemes, here in the village of Chatrashahpur, there was no effect of the pandemic as told in the survey as well as by the Pradhan Shri Ram Narayan Yadav himself. The main reason the village could stop the spread of the virus is the strict quarantine facilities adopted by the Pradhan of the village as well as the villagers. The migrants, who returned to the village last year during the lockdown, were quarantined for fourteen days in the quarantine centers. Proper facilities were made available for them so that they do not face any difficulties during their quarantine. Hence, this came out as a big plus point for the village for not getting affected by the deadly virus.

There was no major impact of COVID-19 on the government policies in the village rather, and there were several pluses for takings. During the pandemic, while social gathering was strictly prohibited still the villagers joined hands together and stayed connected via a digital platform. They were regularly monitoring the workings going around the village by constantly getting in touch with the Pradhan Ji. And by virtue of this, there was better work (with transparency) observed. The villagers even say that effective workings were done in the initial phase of lockdown. The village meetings, discussions were majorly done via the digital platform (WhatsApp), which also saw people's interest and more active participation as earlier such level of participation was not observed.

Now talking about the functioning of the policies, the people of the village did not notice any change in the policy; in fact, they liked the functioning of the Public Distribution System in the pandemic. They seemed very satisfied with the PDS system as there was no delay and disturbance in the functioning of the policy. In addition to that, more care was being provided to the villagers as proper sanitization of the village got initiated; people even got the benefit of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, under which the central government rolled out to pay Rs. 2000/- every quarter to the farmers to compensate for their losses. There was no construction of new houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana at the time of the pandemic, but people believe it was the time to survive, not building homes. Overall if we see, the people seemed to be satisfied with the government's workings in the time when COVID-19 was at its peak.



(Diagram 4.1<sup>6</sup>, showing the awareness about the government policies on a scale from 1-7)

(Where 1 is the lowest & 7 is the highest)

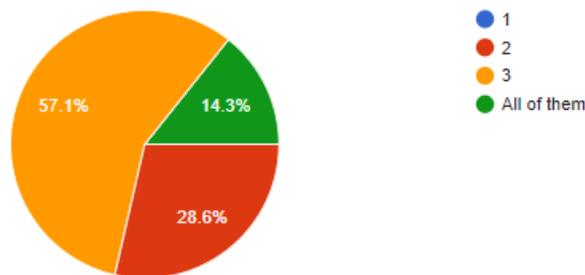
The majority of the people of Chatrashahpur confirmed that they are aware of the majority of the government policies. In contrast, very few confirmed that they knew all the mentioned government policies before, and a very few said that they knew only a few guidelines run by the government. As per the government policy survey questionnaire, the following are the findings: -

**4.1 From the above-mentioned schemes, how many schemes are you aware of? And under how many policies, you and your family are enrolled in?**

Referring to the first part of the question, the response which is received is that more than half of the respondents are aware of more than three mentioned policies. In contrast, there are only 14.3% of respondents are aware of all the policies mentioned in the survey questionnaire. Also, there is a surprising fact that despite living in the same village, under the same roof, more

<sup>6</sup>Source: Primary Data Collection, Household Surveys

than 20% of the respondents could only recall two of the mentioned policies. The reason for the respondents not knowing all the mentioned policies could be the lack of awareness campaign ran in the village, the respondents' visit to *panchayat* meetings, the respondents' interest to know about the policies, the respondents' unwillingness to get themselves registered under the schemes or maybe not frequent organizing of the village meeting by the Pradhan of the village. But in my view, having noticed the respondents' behavior and thinking, I can say that they are not very open to sharing their views/opinions on many a point (except for a few). They believe that if they share their point of view regarding the asked schemes, then they may end up losing the benefits they get from the schemes.

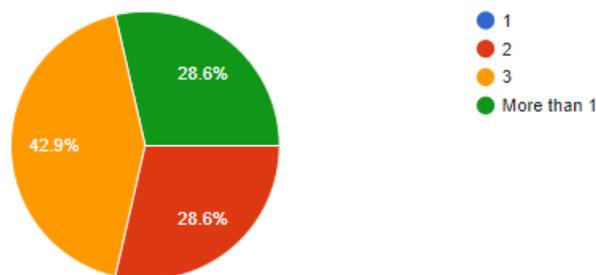


(Diagram 4.1.16, showing the awareness among the respondents on knowing the schemes)

(Source: Primary Date Collection, Household surveys)

(Where the number 1,2,3 stands for the number of policies known by the respondents)

Now coming to the second part of the question, here we can clearly see that almost every respondent is a part of one scheme or the other. No one is left without any schemes (as far as the households interviewed). From the survey, we got the conclusion that almost 42.9% of the households were enrolled in more than two schemes, whereas about 30% of the households are the beneficiary of at least two policies. This shows the effectiveness of the policies being implemented in the village. The most common schemes the majority of the households were enrolled in is The Public Distribution System (PDS), The Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, and MGNREGA.

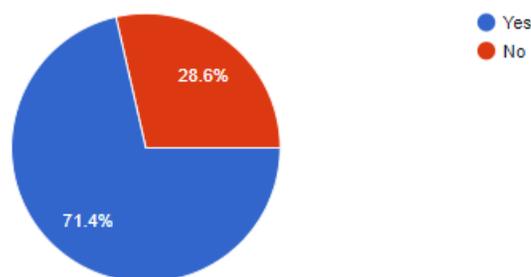


(Diagram 4.1.2<sup>7</sup>, showing the number of schemes the households are enrolled in)  
(The numbers in the legend indicate the number of schemes known to the respondents)

#### 4.2 Since how many years your family is a beneficiary? Do you think this change is for good?

Responding to the above-asked question, different households gave different answers. Many respondents have been getting benefits from the scheme since its inauguration, and a few are recent joiners. The respondents who have been benefitting for the past fifteen to twenty years are mostly the beneficiary of the PDS system. The implementation of the PDS (Public Distribution System) was started way back in 1997, and since then, the respondents' older generation has been a part of it. Moreover, there are many respondents who are recent joiners of the schemes. These schemes ought not to be the PDS only but also the newer schemes like the Ujjwala Yojana, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, etc.

In the interview, almost 3/4<sup>th</sup> of the total respondents agreed upon the point that these policies have brought in positive changes in their lives, but there are still approximately 25% of the respondents who said that there was no significant impact on their lives due to these policies as they believe that such policies are only making them weak in real sense. For this 25% of the respondents, employment should be the main focus, and the government should be making policies to generate employment.



(Diagram 4.2.1<sup>8</sup>, showing respondents' response whether the policies have brought in changes in their life or not)

(In the legend, Yes – The schemes have brought positive changes in the respondents' lives, No - The schemes have brought no changes in the respondents' lives)

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<sup>7</sup>Primary Data Collection, Household surveys

<sup>8</sup>Primary Data Collection, Household Surveys

**4.3 Changes the households want to see in the existing policies. Did you receive any additional benefits during the pandemic? Did you observe any positive response in the policies during the pandemic?**

Although many of the respondents seemed to be pretty much satisfied with the existing policies' workings, there are definitely a few suggestions from their side that they want to see to be featured in implementing the policies. Suggestions like the supply chain of the PDS should be improved. Like there is a regular complaint from their side, which is that there is no fixed date of supplying of the PDS to the villagers. The date varies very frequently. So this creates a problem for the respondents to actually manage their groceries. Another suggestion which they want to see in the policies is that there should be more awareness campaigns regarding specific schemes so that proper knowledge could be made to the villagers. They can fully utilize the benefits from the government policies and schemes.

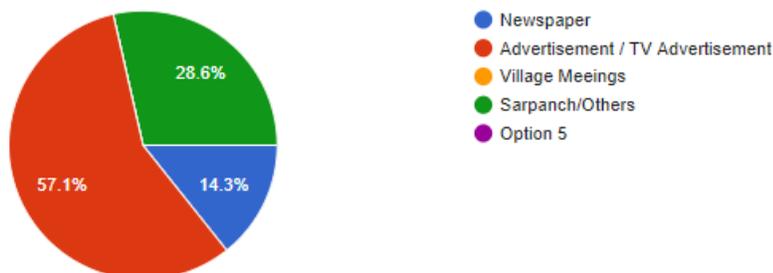
Now talking about the additional benefits than the respondents strongly agreed upon the point that they did not receive any additional benefits from the government officials during the time of the pandemic although the schemes seemed to be running smoothly in the village when talked about the additional benefits, there was none. When talked about the effectiveness (changes) of the schemes, then the majority of the respondents said that there was no additional work that was carried out in the policies during the pandemic, and hence the schemes were carried out as before.

**4.4 How in general, do the villagers get to know about the policies/schemes available?**

It is seen many times that the actual beneficiary of certain schemes/policies is unaware of the schemes. The same was also observed in the survey where many of the respondents were unaware of the scheme's name itself in which they could only recognize a few of the schemes out of the mentioned ones. Having experienced this scenario, it was important to include a question regarding via which we can get to know their sources of information, whether it is a reliable source or not.

The main source of information for the respondents came out to be the "advertisements" (including the TV advertisement, social media) as around 57% of the households said that they get to know about the different government policies/schemes through electronic media such as WhatsApp etc. The second source through which the respondents come to know about the policies/schemes is via the Sarpanch himself. Mainly through the Panchayat meetings where such important queries are discussed, and the details regarding the schemes are shared. Surprisingly, "Newspaper" bags the third position as the source of information regarding the government policies and schemes which somehow says that the newspaper has been limited to the older people only as the youth of today do not want to carry the newspaper rather they prefer

having inbuilt mobile application software through which they get to know about all the information. As per the survey, 57.1% get to know about the schemes via Advertisement, 28.6% through Sarpanch/Pradhan of the village, and 14.3% of the respondents have "Newspaper" as their source.



(Diagram 4.4.1<sup>9</sup>, showing the source of the information gathering by villagers)

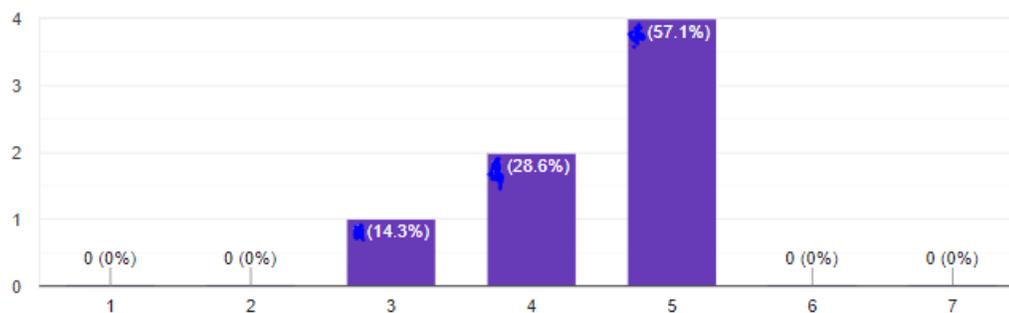
#### 4.5 Lastly, what changes do you want to see in the existing schemes?

There were many views that the respondents came up with, but the most common change all of them want to see is that the government should do something by which all the schemes/policies should become more accessible. And by accessible, they mean less paperwork, formalities, and most important of all, more awareness campaign regarding the policies.

Other suggestions which came up through these policies, the government should do something so that the migration of people towards the urban area should be minimized. Also, one issue which the respondents came across is the proper execution of policies. There was an issue once a while via which the PDS was delayed by some days, so proper management at the ground level should be done. But as a whole, people seemed to be more or less satisfied with the overall workings of the government.

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<sup>9</sup>Primary data collection, Household surveys



(Diagram 4.5.1<sup>10</sup>, showing the overall satisfaction of the respondents with the existing policies on a scale of 1-7)  
(Where 1 is the lowest & 7 is the highest)

In the survey, the majority of the respondent rated to average (rated 5 on 7) which accounts to 57.1% added there is a scope of improvement in the implementation part. In contrast, very few rated the existing policies as poor, which accounts for 14.3% of the total respondents.

##### **5. Limitation in the research work: -**

For the research work, I had to travel to the village, Chatarshahpur daily from the near-by village Dulhipur, where I was staying throughout my stay. For the research purpose, I also made a questionnaire with several sets of questions related to the policies, their workings and their effect on them during the pandemic. In the questionnaire, there was also a question related to the workings of the officials, the Pradhan of the village, and the local administration.

Although I was able to derive several key points from the questionnaire as well as from my field work still there were some limitations in the research work, which have been highlighted below.

- Asking such detailed set of questions to the households was not at all easy as due to lack of interaction and being a stranger to someone, deriving the detailed and correct response was difficult.
- Many of the respondents did not reveal the answers to many of the questions as they were uncomfortable in sharing the same with me for the research study purpose.
- Lack of cooperation was also seen among the villagers as I observed they do not like to mix up with the people stranger to them.
- The time crunch could also have been a factor affecting the research paper as spending much time with a particular respondents' family was a tough task.

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<sup>10</sup>Primary Data Collection, Household Survey

## 6. Conclusion:

The pandemic has definitely affected the lives of the people not just in the Chatarshahpur village but also the whole country. No matter whether big or small each and every organization was badly affected due to this pandemic. The government's focus was also shifted towards stopping the pandemic from spreading, which somehow might have affected the workings of the policies and schemes implemented by the government. There were some flaws in the workings of the policies as mentioned by the villagers, like the channel of distribution was affected, proper monitoring by the officials was also seemed to be lacking, the approach of the officials towards the public could also have been a little better. But overall, the villagers seemed happy with the implantation workings of the policies in the village. Although they definitely want to see some changes in the workings of the current schemes, they were happy with the fact that the schemes and policies didn't disappoint them as the policies were not stopped during this time rather, maintaining the regularity of the schemes during the pandemic was more important for the villagers. In short, more or less, the villagers seemed to be satisfied.

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