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A Study of Social Behaviour in the context of COVID-19 in village named Ghatampur, Bhadohi district in Uttar Pradesh

Amlan Mohanty¹, Saptadeep Biswas², Dr. Balram Bhushan³, Anand Pandey⁴, and Badri Narayan⁵

Abstract

The following research work in the village named "Ghatampur" in Bhadohi of Uttar Pradesh state was to study the after-effects of the COVID-19 on the social behavioural changes among the villagers. The Covid-19 pandemic drastically changed the lives of the villagers with a few months of impact in India. The subsequent after-effects of the pandemic broke the normal life cycle and halted the normal village life. Many people from the village who worked in the Tier-1 cities of the country in the west like Mumbai lost their jobs; they were facing absolute monetary problems, no food, insecurities, no upcoming future to start again in the city for the near distant future, and last but not the least the threat to death due to Covid-19. These factors affected so profoundly the villagers from inside that a sort of crisis broke down among them, and migrant workers started returning to their respective villages. Ghatampur is one of these Covid-19 affected villages where migrant workers returned to their village with many difficulties, and certainly, it was not so easy. It surely affected the existing relationship between the villagers, among the family members, even in some cases there was extra stress, distress, agony due to the sudden job loss, insecurity related to the near future, the burden of carrying forward the huge family load with a bright future. The existing relationships between the villagers were stained to some extent, and the existing social factors do affect, to some extent, the behavioural pattern of the villagers. With a request from FARF (Fundamental Action and Research Foundation), we have chosen this research topic to deeply study the after-effects of the pandemic in social behaviour of the villagers. FARF organization has been doing an excellent job of social works like educating girls from lower castes of nearby villages, helping the distressed villagers provide food during prolonged lockdown, raising awareness among the villagers, etc. They wanted to study the after-effects of the pandemic on the village to get a general idea about how this

¹ School of Rural Management (SRM), XIM University, Bhubaneswar, India.

² School of Rural Management (SRM), XIM University, Bhubaneswar, India.

³ School of Rural Management (SRM), XIM University, Bhubaneswar, India.

⁴ Fundamental Action and Research Foundation, India.

⁵ Fundamental Action and Research Foundation, India.

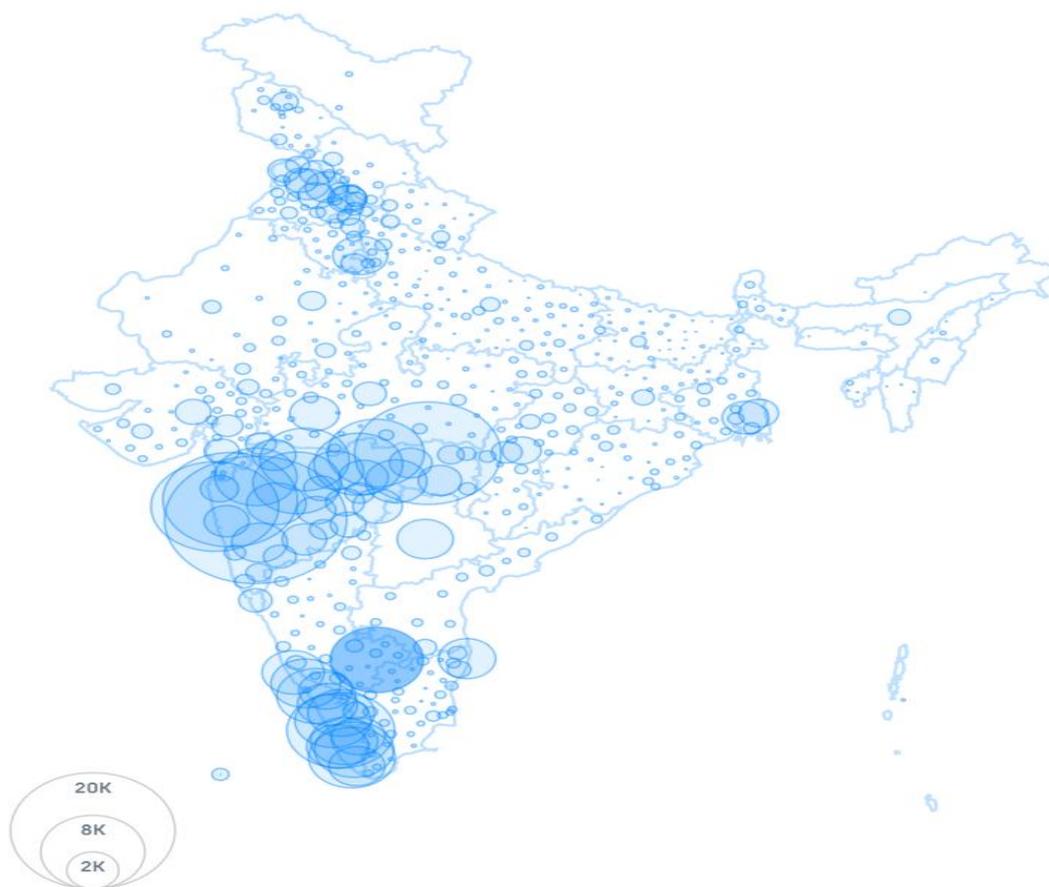
pandemic has changed the dynamics of the lives of the villagers and based on that. They can find the main focus areas to work out for their plan to narrow down the gaps.

Keywords: Covid-19, social, migration, distress, relationship

1. Introduction:

Covid-19 is a highly infectious disease first discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. This disease is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2)⁶. This virus has led to an ongoing pandemic across the world, and the pandemic is still not over yet. Fever, cough, weakness, breathing problems, and a loss of smell and taste are common symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms appear one to fourteen days after virus exposure.

In India, its impact was quite huge too. As of March 08, 2021, the total number of cases reported all over India in 1,12,29,398 cases⁷, which is about 9.61% of the real cases reported worldwide. Due to this virus, the total death cases are 1,57,853 cases as of March 08 2021⁷. This accounts for about 6.08% of the total death cases around the world.



(Picture 1⁸: Covid-19 case map of March 08, 2020)

⁶ Wikipedia, 2021

⁷ Google News, 2021

⁸ Source: www.covid19india.org, 2021

In Uttar Pradesh, the total number of cases is about 6,04,279 on March 08 2021⁷. It accounts to about 5.38% of total cases in India. Particularly in Bhadohi District of Uttar Pradesh, the total number of cases.

The Covid-19 gave a huge setback to the world but it also changed many things and the ways we live in our life. It changed the way we live, our hygiene, our buying behavior, and, most importantly, changed the way people behave socially. It restricted the number of people who can gather around, and it changed the way we think about a disease, forcing us to make a mask an important part of our lives as of today. The migration status changed a lot. The relationship between people, be it, neighbors, be it, family members, also changed.

Covid-19 impacted the finance sector the most. Many businesses shut down and suffered a huge loss. It also impacted our village Ghatampur in the Bhadohi district. The supply chain and distribution were disrupted, making it difficult for other non-essential shop owners in every part of India. The government has been working till now to make us adopt new life learnings and make them a habit in our lives and our day-to-day activities. It is also the responsibility of the citizens of India to adopt health practices as a part of their social behavior. As the world's situation due to Covid-19 improves slowly, the hope of normalization is also on its way. Miraculously, there was no covid-19 case found in Ghatampur village or any neighboring villages.

1.1. Social Behavior:

"Social Behavior" refers to interactions between two or more organisms of the same species, which includes any behavior in which one member has an impact on the other. This is due to contact between specific individuals. Social actions can be compared to trade, with the understanding that you will receive the same in return when you offer. It has various parameters from those, the behavioral change in the human being can be measured and analyzed. Human beings who live in society face different situations when their interactions with their family members like parents, wife, children, relatives, neighbors, close friends, colleagues, etc. The human being does change their behaviors in various situations in their day-to-day activity. Especially in any pandemic, disaster, accident in these kinds of problems, human's everyday life, actions get halted. So these sudden, drastic changes do influence their mental behavior and their interactions with their close peers.

This behavioral change is applicable for both urban & rural people in any country. Because of any disaster or pandemic type of emergency, the urban and rural people faced many difficulties. The flow of daily life changes affects them in their psychological understanding, and behavioral change is observed with people. This change can be towards good from bad or vice-versa. There can be both good and bad behavioral changes, and it affects the life of any individual. Various factors can be brought to the discussion for measuring the behavioral changes in any person. After measuring the different parameters, we can get an overall idea about the changes in behaviors in any human being.

1.2. COVID-19 impact (Reverse migration):

Sudden emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic changed the dynamics of the country from top cities to every small village of the farthest corner of the country. The virus affected every Tier-1, Tier-2, Tier-3 city, and even village people thought pandemic would not enter the villages. Due to COVID-19, a lockdown was announced suddenly throughout the country; thus,

many people lost their jobs in the cities and started to return to their hometown villages to the following states– Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, etc. The death rate was increasing from time to time, and people from villages staying in towns started to return to their villages suddenly in a rush. These sudden changes in daily life deeply impacted the lives of the migrant workers, and above that, there was a life and death situation in the lives due to the pandemic. Not only do people have to save themselves but also need to take care of their family. All these lifestyle changes suddenly changed the behaviors of the people. So, to study the behavior of the village, we need to consider the sudden reverse migration for the villagers. This sudden in-migration was indeed a significant trigger in behavioral changes within the villagers.

1.3. Social discrimination, sudden joblessness & insecurity:

The villagers who returned to their villages alone or with families had already lost their job with no money in hand with them. The lives of the returnees were saved at least. To some extent, discrimination was evident, but the currently living people in the village helped them during the mandatory 14 days isolation period. There was no discrimination between upper-caste & lower caste while staying in quarantine because the own saving life and others was the most important thing. Discrimination related to caste was not observed as accounted by the villagers. Other times, this was a genuine concern about people from different caste staying together for 14 days, but this time some different picture was observed. Again, due to joblessness, young generation people were facing agony, tension, stress. People with family were in a lot more distress due since they have to take care of so many people simultaneously.

2. Methodology:

The total research is based on primary data collection from 50 households of Ghatampur Village of Bhadohi District. The research was carried out by random sampling of households. Data was collected by a basic survey sheet and one extra survey questionnaire on social behavior. Structured and unstructured interviews asked the survey questions. Lastly, the report is also based on secondary data collected and verified by different sources.

2.1. Structured Interview:

These interviews are carried out with some predetermined set of questions, and the questions remain the same for every respondent to create a pattern for better understanding. The questions have the necessary inputs which are required for the targeted topic and are close-ended in nature.

2.2. Unstructured Interview:

These interviews are carried out informally, just like an informal talk between persons. These interviews provide more insights as the respondents are not asked any predetermined set of questions rather than informal talks about the targeted topic.

3. Covid-19 Impact on Social Behavior of Ghatampur Village Households:

Social behavior has changed a lot during the Covid-19 peak, and it will continue after it also. During the survey, we observed no Covid-19 case in our village, i.e., Ghatampur. There was no case either in the neighboring villages, which indicated less effect of Covid-19 in all

nearby villages. The villagers told us that there was no halt of any activity rather than the market activities and buying/selling activities. They respected the government norms and used masks for about four months, but maximum people stopped using that.

The surprising fact is there was in and out-migration too during the Covid-19 peak months, but there was no case detected after proper quarantine and testing. The migration was mainly from Mumbai, the worst-hit city of India due to Covid-19. After coming from Mumbai, also people tested Covid-19 negative in Ghatampur village and nearby villages like Chatrashahpur and Dulhipur.

As there was no Covid-19 impact on Ghatampur village, the social behavior was also not impacted much. It was impacted in the way people thought about people coming in and going out of the village. During the quarantine period, the people were kept in the village government school, but certain people were given a chance to do home quarantine. During the quarantine in their respective homes, the people slept and lived under various trees outside their homes for 14 days. People also avoided going to the homes of people under the quarantine period.

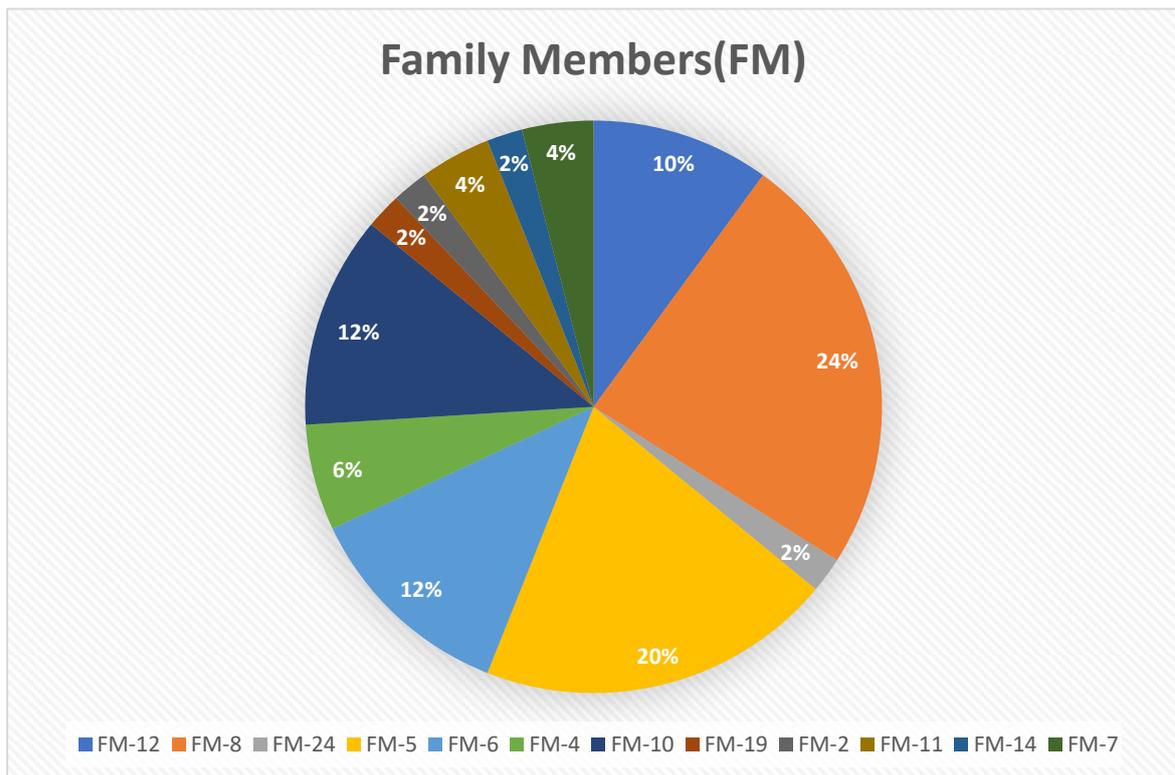
According to the survey of Social Behavior questionnaire:

3.1. The total households consisting of 50 households gave us an unlimited number of 409 members. It included adults as well as children. The household which has the highest number of members stood at 24 and lowest was of 2 members. The households have been divided in this present time, which was not earlier. We observed that due to disputes between brothers, the households had been divided.

In our sample, we found around 12 households were of 8 members striking the highest number of members for each household. The average member per household stood at 8 members approx.

The total members of households are essential to know about the social behavior patterns between different families. Maximum migrant members of the households came back during the peak times of Covid-19, which was a matter of concern for everybody. The household with 10 family members was extra cautious in comparison to the household with 5 family members. The responsibility and basic needs increased for people with households with more family members. This changed the behavior of people towards each other a bit.

The following chart shows the various votes given by different households:



(Figure 1*: Percentage distribution of people taken into consideration in the survey based on no of family members in various categories)

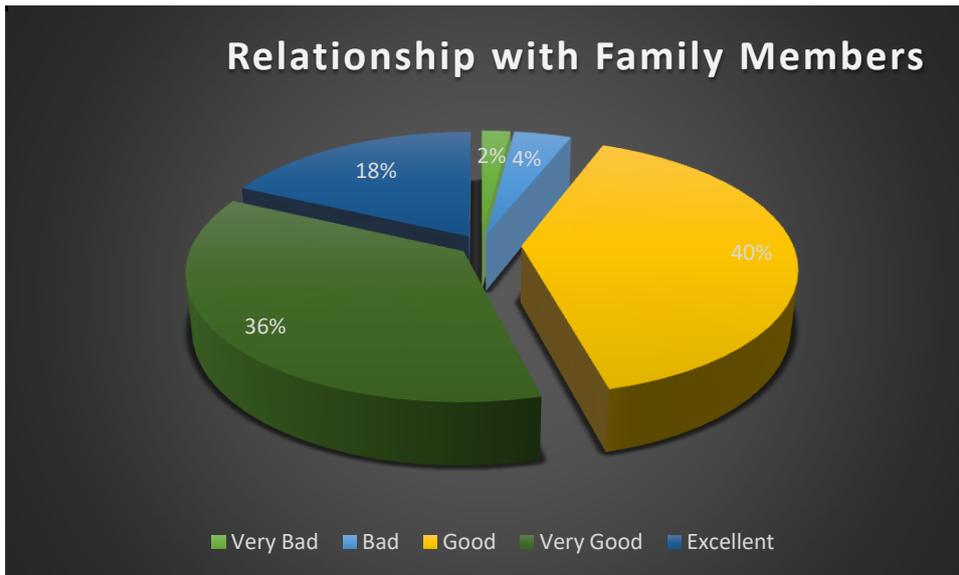
3.2. The relationship between the family members during this pandemic also shows the change in the social behavior of the villagers in Ghatampur. Due to lockdown, many members of the households lost their jobs and came back home, entirely dependent on the members living here. The trauma of losing jobs was also putting a lot of pressure on the family members' mental health conditions, which compelled them to act more aggressively than before.

As we continued with the unstructured interview method, we found out that a few family members became short-tempered during this time. The earning members of the family also faced pressure financially and mentally as their burden has increased. So, the relationship between family members changed to some extent.

The rating was based on a scale of 5, where 5 means Excellent and 1 means very bad. 9 people voted for 2, 24 people voted for 3, 13 people voted for 4 whereas only

4 people voted for 5. Zero people voted for 1, which shows a positive sign that nobody has some severe issues with anybody during and after the lockdown phase.

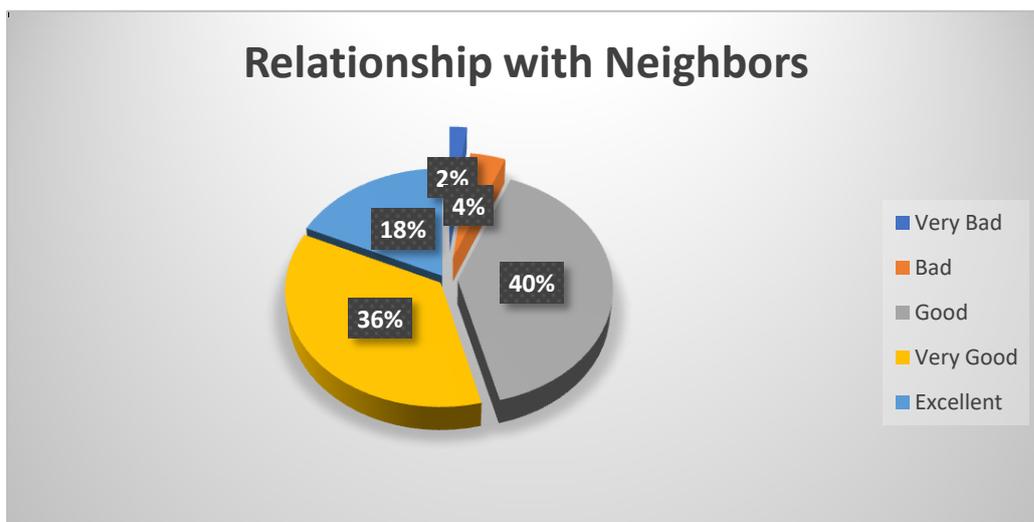
* Source: Based on household survey



(Figure 2*: Percentage distribution of people taken into consideration in the survey based on the ratings provided by the participants about their relationship status with the family)

3.3. The relationship between different households, mainly with neighbors during Covid-19, was a concern due to the stress level in the lockdown phase. But to surprise, the relationship between households and neighbors remained more or less the same. As we talked about the relationship status with the neighbors, they claimed to have the same relationship with everyone as it was before Covid-19. It has nothing to do with the impact of Covid-19 on the behavior towards each other.

The survey ratings we got while structured interview sessions revealed that only one household has an awful relationship with their neighbors which they already had before Covid-19. 2 households gave a rating of inadequate to their relationship status with their neighbors. 20, 18, 9 households voted for good, very, and excellent relationship status, respectively.



(Figure 3*: Percentage of ratings in various categories about the relationship with neighbors with the participants in the survey)

* Source: Based on household survey

3.4. Covid-19 disrupted the jobs of many people. Due to which the earning and spending capacity went down drastically. This changed people's behavior, which showed a significant amount of under confidence and financial pressure. According to our survey, around 40 households were engaged in either private jobs or businesses of their own. Due to Covid-19, the essential shop owners (in our field survey, 4 necessary goods shops) have done excellent business. Apart from them, all other enterprises suffered losses and were burdened financially.

The private job holders suffered the most. They were not paid during the lockdown phase, and a maximum of the people was engaged in sales profile outside Uttar Pradesh. They were working maximum in cities like Mumbai, Pune, Varanasi, etc. According to our survey data collected, 26 household members are engaged in private jobs across few cities. Out of them, 19 household members lost their jobs due to Covid-19. After they came back home, they were financially dependent on the members living in Ghatampur village.

According to them, after a few months, the mental pressure grew on the members who lost their jobs. They started to pray to God for helping them. The people living in a joint family were in a better stage. Domestic help was divided in between different family members. Nobody agreed to the point of domestic violence increasing, and they didn't even agree to the fact that domestic violence happens. According to our observation, domestic violence may be happening in their family, but it has not increased due to covid-19. What has increased is heated verbal fights and arguments.

The Covid-19 impact also helped in new income-generating activities as their old income-generating activities were stopped. They were engaged in various agricultural activities and selling dairy products. 10 households were not engaged in any private jobs or business activities through shops. They were either from government jobs that didn't had much effect during Covid-19 lock down phase or were purely doing agriculture to sell the products or for self-consumption. As there was no Covid-19 case found in Ghatampur village or any nearby villages, the daily routines didn't get affected, and people lived their everyday lives as claimed by them. As per the analysis, we did the total jobs affected for households during the lockdown phase at 33 out of 40 working households. The 2 household members were lucky that they still got half the salary as they were working for a financial firm.

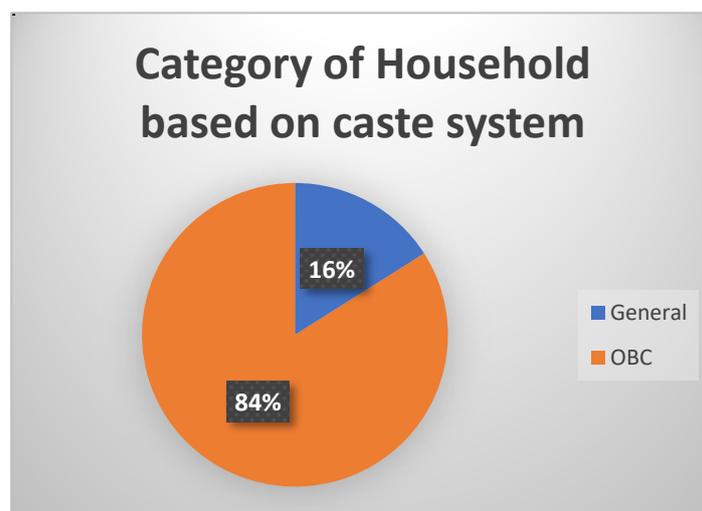
* Source: Based on the household survey



(Figure 4*: Job status of the participants from the village in the survey)

3.5. Social behavior based on caste and religion didn't change during the Covid-19 peak or lockdown phase. As per the data collected and observation, we found out that there is discrimination among the villagers, but whatever it is, it already existed in the past. Due to Covid-19, there is no additional emergence of caste-based racism. So, during Covid-19, there was no further discrimination. Whatever was existing previously in the village was still prevailing.

Out of 50 households, 8 households are of the General category, and 42 households are of the OBC category. All are Hindus, and everybody rated their understanding of change in social behavior during Covid-19.

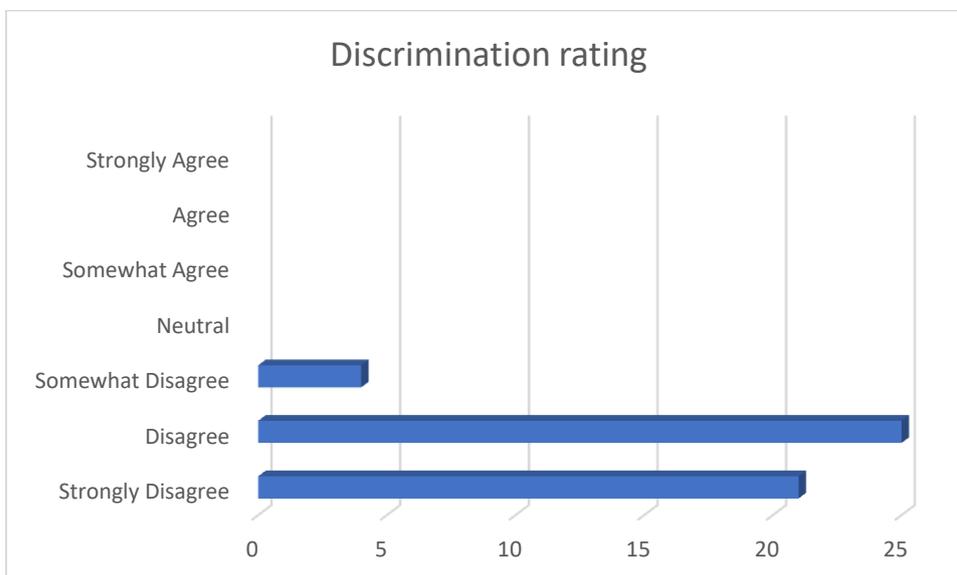


(Figure 5*: Category of the village participants in the survey)
(Source: Based on Household Survey)

* Source: Based on Household Survey

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People rated their understanding of discrimination on a scale of 7 where 1 means strongly disagree, and 7 means strongly agree. The question we asked was the scale on which they feel that discrimination exists before and during Covid-19 has discrimination changed in any sense. The findings are as follows:



(Figure 6: Discrimination ratings for various participants in the survey)

Out of 50 responses, 21 rated strongly disagree, 25 rated disagree, and 4 rated somewhat disagree. As there was no significant Covid-19 impact on social behavior, caste-based discrimination was not mentioned by any of the villagers. The 4 people who voted for the 3rd rating said that they had some personal history with higher caste people a few years ago for a dispute in irrigation practice where they felt because they are from a lower caste, priority was given to the upper caste (especially the Brahmins) of the village which has no proof backing the claim. Other than that, there is no discrimination among the people.

3.6. Migration status changed drastically in Ghatampur village during and after Covid-19 also. This shows an impact on social behavior as there was a considerable reverse migration during the peak phase. Many people came back to their homes after losing jobs, fear of getting Covid-19, to avoid strict lockdown in big cities. The transportation back to the village was challenging as many were coming back from the train, and few were coming back by changing buses and then taking the train back home. There were a total of 19 Migrant households out of 50 households. Many of the other households also have some migrant members, but they said that they consider them a different household now. They don't visit the village or claim anything that they have here. There was no discrimination against the people coming into the village. They just had to complete the quarantine period and get back home. The Covid-19 cases were zero in Ghatampur village, so the social impact was significantly less. It was unique that people were allowed to quarantine themselves for 14 days under a tree near their houses. They spend the whole 14 days and nights under that tree and after completion directly went to their houses.

4. Limitations in study work:

For doing the research work related to the social behavior study of the village we prepared a questionnaire with some set of questions trying to cover the family pattern, relationship of the bread earner of the family with the children of the family, other members, relationship with the neighbors, rated understanding of the participants about their current status

in society they live in based on their religion, caste. Also, we tried to cover the migration pattern for the houses in the village, the reason behind the reverse migration etc. All these answers we got from the villagers we analyzed and tried to find out some meaningful insights from it. On which we have presented our findings in the previous sections. Although we were able to provide some insights from the survey work, there were some limitations in our research work which we have provided below in the following mentioned points:

- ✓ The type of detailed study which should be done to understand the holistic picture of the behavioral pattern of the whole family needs a lot of detailed interactions and focused group discussion with the participants, which due to time crunch and lack of resources, were not possible from our end.
- ✓ Asking family relation-type questions to the participants in the survey is not an easy job and very risky. Although the type of responses we got from them was not satisfactory, participants don't give correct answers to these kinds of family-related questions. Also, they feel hesitant to disclose these kinds of deep family-related matters to outsiders.
- ✓ To some questions, respondents didn't even disclose the answers since the questions were too personal and related to family matters. So, participation from the respondents was not entirely 100 % cooperative.
- ✓ The research work needed more focused observations of each family taken into consideration in the study. Still, that type of detailed observation needs more time from our side to each family and affirmation from the respondent side to us to do the research work.

5. Conclusion:

The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in rural India changed the dynamics of the villagers' lives, and many lost their jobs in the city. Many people have to leave behind their city life and return to the village with their family, belonging and leave behind the city life. Indeed, these types of incidents affected the behaviors of the villagers returning to the village with too much insecurity, no prospect for future income, and uncertainty. Still, there were some positive effects. People started living jointly with other family members, believing in family members, relatives, neighbors, gaining the confidence of jointly living with others, standing for each other during the distress positively affected the behavior towards good for the migrants. Gaining confidence in a difficult situation, the family members, women & children of the family were the major players for continuously supporting the male members during this distressing time. In our survey, we can indeed say that we have tried our best to cover all the parameters that directly and indirectly affect the behavioral pattern of the people, which can affect the day-to-day lives of the people. The Covid-19 distressing situation is coming back to the average time to time, and we can indeed say that the everyday lives of these villagers will soon come back to normal, and regular life rhythm will quickly return.

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