

# JOURNAL OF SOCIETY IN KASHMIR

(A Peer-Reviewed, Refereed and Open-Access Journal)

ISSN: 2249-667X

[jsk.uok.edu.in](http://jsk.uok.edu.in)

## Editor

**Prof. Aneesa Shafi**

Head, Department of Sociology

University of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar, J&K - 190006

Email: [aneesashafi@uok.edu.in](mailto:aneesashafi@uok.edu.in)

## Associate Editors

**Dr. Manzoor Hussain**

Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology

University of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar, J&K - 190006

Email: [dr.manzoor\\_hussain@yahoo.co.in](mailto:dr.manzoor_hussain@yahoo.co.in)

**Dr. Mohmad Saleem Jahangir**

Senior Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology,

University of Kashmir, Hazratbal, Srinagar, J&K - 190006

Email: [saleem@uok.edu.in](mailto:saleem@uok.edu.in)

## Editorial Advisory Committee

**Prof. Anand Kumar (New Delhi)**

**Prof. Noor Mohammad (Aligarh)**

**Prof. Elżbieta Perzycka (Poland)**

**Prof. Zainuddin (Aligarh)**

**Prof. Sherry Sabarwal (Chandigarh)**

*Journal of Society in Kashmir* is an annual Journal of Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir. All rights are reserved. Except for brief quotations in scholarly works, no part of this journal may be reproduced in any form without the written permission of the author(s) and the Editor.

Email address for all necessary correspondence: [hodsociology@uok.edu.in](mailto:hodsociology@uok.edu.in)

### Subscription Rates

	<b>Inland</b>	<b>Overseas</b>
Individual	Rs. 100	\$ 10
Institution	Rs. 200	\$ 20

### Published by

Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir

Hazratbal, Srinagar, J&K - 190006 (India)

## MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

There is no deadline to submit manuscripts. However, early submissions (preferably before 30<sup>th</sup> July of) shall be eligible to be considered for the publication in the issue of same year.

- Manuscripts (research or review papers) and all editorial correspondence should be addressed to: [hodsociology@uok.edu.in](mailto:hodsociology@uok.edu.in)
- Articles (4,000–8,000 words) and Book Reviews (1,000–1,500 words) can be submitted.

### Basic formatting of the manuscripts

- Affiliations with complete postal and email address of contributors must be provided along with their manuscript. If there are two or more authors, then corresponding author's name and address details must be specified clearly.
- Articles should be typed on one side of the paper, preferably A4 and double-spaced throughout (even for quotations, notes, references) accompanied by a soft copy (identical to the hard copy), preferably in MS Word.
- Articles must have an abstract of 100–150 words and 4–6 keywords.
- Book reviews must contain the name of author/editor and the book reviewed, place of publication and publisher, year of publication, number of pages, ISBN and the price.

### In text citations (as per APA, 7th edition)

- (Marx, 1986, p. 50); (Joreskog & Sorborn, 2007, pp. 50–66); Shafi et al. (2007) [for three or more authors]; ('Study finds', 2007); (Anonymous, 1998); (Giddens, 1991, 2006, in press); (Giddens, 1996; Mead, 1999)

### References

- Appadurai, A. (1997), *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. London: University of Minnesota Press
- Baker, F. M., & Lightfoot, O. B. (1993). Psychiatric care of ethnic elders. In A. C. Gaw (Ed.), *Culture, ethnicity, and mental illness* (pp. 517-552). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.
- Beck, U. (2007). Beyond class and nation: reframing social inequalities in a globalizing world 1. *The British journal of sociology*, 58(4), 679-705.

**JOURNAL OF SOCIETY IN KASHMIR**

ISSN: 2249-667X

Volume 12		2022	
ARTICLES			
S. No	Name of Article	Author	Page No
1	Multi-dimensional impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Analytical Study	Jayanta Kumar Behera	1-18
2	Challenges of Marginal Peasants and Agricultural Labourers in India	Nirdosh Kumar	19-27
3	Menstrual Health and Hygiene Framework: A Human Right Approach	Rizvana Choudhary	28-43
4	Diversity, Pluralism and News Framing: An Analysis	Ajaz Ahmad Gilani	44-60
5	Impact of income, healthcare facility and female literacy on infant mortality rate - A comparative analysis of South Asian and Central Asian Countries	Adnan Hussain Lone, G. M. Rather, Aijaz Ahmad Khanday	61-72
6	Significance of Marriage Practices in Kashmir Valley with Special Reference to Srinagar City	Khushboo Jan, Manzoor Hussain	73-81
7	A study of 'children in conflict with law' in Kashmir	Asima Hassan	82-98
8	Impact of Covid-19 on the Mental Health: A Sociological Study of University Students of Kashmir	Junaid ul Rashid	99-115
9	Marrying in the times of Covid-19: Understanding the transitory changes in the associated practices thereof	Irfan Ahmad Hajam	116-133
10	Practicing religion in the times of COVID-19: Experiences from Srinagar city of Jammu and Kashmir	Hibat U Noor	134-156
11	Attendance of devotees at religious places amid Covid-19: A qualitative study in district Srinagar	Mudasir Shafi	157-176

12	Back to Village Programme of Jammu and Kashmir - A platform for citizen engagement towards good governance and equitable development	Bilal A. Bhat, Jahan Ara Jabeen, Waseem Amad Ganie	177-197
13	Impact of MGNERGA Scheme on Gujjar Community in Kashmir with Specific Reference to Food Security: A Sociological Study	Mohd Anzar Warr	198-210
14	COVID-19 pandemic and the response of public schools: An empirical study of the primary schools of Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir	Tafaz-UI-Hussain Ganaie	211-231
15	Covid-19 and mental health of Adolescents: An empirical study	Peerzada Saliq Hameed	232-255

#### Book Reviews

	Name of the Book	Reviewer	
1	The Culturalization of Caste in India: Identity and Inequality in a Multicultural Age	Syeeda Nousheen Fatima	256-258
2	The urban family: a study of Hindu social system	Shameem Ahamad Ganayee	259-261
3	Impact of globalization on tribals: In the Context of Kerala	Irshad Ahmad Shah	262-263

**Multi-dimensional impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Analytical Study**

Journal of Society in Kashmir

12(1) 01 - 18

ISSN: 2249-667X

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/50776272-c889-4af7-b812-e3902ecf7c11.pdf>

**Jayanta Kumar Behera\***

**Abstract**

*This paper describes the present state of coronavirus spread in India, as well as the impact of various interventions. This study presents a variety of trends and patterns based on data from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, and other Indian state entities. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic, most individuals became subject to both economic and emotional challenges like as job loss, bad treatment at work place, increased excessive workload, and so on, which were exacerbated by family obligations. Anxiety, sadness, drug abuse, and violent behaviour have all been linked to severe risk factors for unemployment. In fact, several studies reveal that people who lose their employment are twice as likely to report experiencing despair and anxiety as those who continue to work continuously. The present study intends to elicit the education, economic, health, migration and physical troubles faced by the people during the Covid lockdown.*

**Keywords**

Education, health, migration, poverty, unemployment, preparedness, social unity

**Introduction**

The novel corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic causing the acute Respiratory Syndrome has originated in Wuhan city, UN Report, (2020) China and rapidly spread Worldwide, which have made greater challenges to the human life. The pandemic has posed a severe threat to all the nations of the world, irrespective of developed or developing. The UN has called the Covid-19 pandemic as 'the greatest test that we have faced since the formation of the United Nation' (WHO report, 2020). A

---

\* Department of Sociology, I. G. N. Tribal University, Amarkantak, Anuppur, Madhya Pradesh  
Email: [jkbigntu@gmail.com](mailto:jkbigntu@gmail.com)

new coronavirus has sparked a global outbreak since the first cases were reported on December 31, 2019. Health systems in almost all nations are overburdened as a result of COVID-19. Other pandemics that occurred in the past had an influence on their respective communities. With the Covid-19 epidemic, we are seeing historically rare and once in a generation events. A pandemic impacts governments, national infrastructure, economies, and, most importantly, the entire social fabric of civilization, which includes our values, in addition to the human cost in terms of deaths and sickness. The toll is pervasive and impacts the whole human population in all facets of their lives. Because pandemics recur, we must reflect on the history to inform the present and the future. Pandemic can be defined in epidemiological terms as “an epidemic occurring worldwide, or over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries and usually affecting a large number of people” (Harris, S. S., 2000 & Morens, D.M et al., 2009: 1018-1021).

A pandemic or epidemic is when a group of invasive germs infects a population of people, causing illness and frequently fatalities. The characteristic of an epidemic or pandemic is its ability to spread by contagion, which is influenced by the organism in question's virulence as well as intricate social, economic, and political factors. This suggests that containment attempts may not always keep up with the speed of dissemination. There have been several pandemics that have been documented throughout recorded history, which is mostly Western history. Each of these pandemics has left its mark on our history and culture, including developing the fundamental ideas of contemporary health sciences. The main pandemic outbreaks that have occurred throughout recorded history and into the twenty-first century are outlined here. Here is a brief discussion on how this pandemic affects the human life and the society.

The World Health Organization (WHO) announced, COVID-19 as a global pandemic in March 2020 owing to unprecedented large number of deaths (WHO Coronavirus Disease Dashboard, 2020). The developing nations and underdeveloped countries have suffered more due to weaker healthcare system. The pandemic made an unprecedented impact and significantly disrupted most of the industries. According to International Monetary Fund (IMF), most of the countries may encounter negative growth in their per capita income as an impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Moreover, India recorded the lowest ever growth in GDP in the year 2020-2021 lower than greatest recession of 1930s (EEPCINDIA.org). India too is deeply impacted by this pandemic; There are around 25.8 Million confirmed cases and 0.28 million deaths in India as on May 20, 2021. As the cases are witnessing a linear growth, India is

squeezed in between two challenges together, one being the health emergency and other being the economic impact. Most of the industries in India are hit severely which brought down the GDP growth to -23.9% in Q1 2020 (Trading Economics 2020).

India being a developing country is also suffering from this deadly pandemic which not only breakdown the economy of the state but it also degrades the family relation too. Government of India has called the nationwide lockdown in various phases from 24th march, 2020 and again in April 2021. Women and children are at risk of suffering greater levels of violence during the pandemic because individuals spend more time together in close quarters and in isolation at home while managing extra stressors including school closures, increased care responsibilities, and financial strain (www.unwomen.org.). The pandemic has exacerbated the shadow pandemic of multiple impacts on human society in several countries which have enacted special policies, laws and programmes to deal with various problems and effect within the country. India is not an exception. Therefore the present article tries to explore how covid-19 pandemic has fuelled the adverse impact on the human society.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

The current study deals with to find out the social, economic, education, health, employment, migration, and domestic violence effect of Covid-19 on Indian society. It also aims to identify their understanding of preventative measures and present psychological situation. The research work is also focused on the attitude of people towards the spread of this epidemic and roles played by the government and non-governmental organizations during the pandemic.

### **Rational behind the Study:**

The current trajectory of the pandemic in India is distinct in terms of mortality and infection dissemination as compared to certain other countries in the world. The pandemic's effects on society, the economy, and psychology are all evident. We think it's important to look at how people have learned to deal with the pandemic situation on the one hand and the social isolation on the other, which has never been seen before. It needs to find how people alter their lifestyle and behaviours when residing in their houses. In the current literature, there are gaps in good research on the effect of epidemics on everyday life of the people, which will require to be filled in efficiently through the current research.

### **Methodology:**

The present research has applied analytical approach to study the impact of pandemic on consumer buying pattern in India. As such it is based on secondary sources of data, collected from various secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines, journals, blogs, government websites, published reports, social media, and company annual reports etc. The collected data was analyzed using suitable statistical tools. The data is collected during the periods of 2020 to 2021 to mark the impact of Covid-19. The data is considered as a benchmark to see the impact of Covid-19 on various aspects i.e. social, economic, health unemployment, migration, violence etc. along with the changing strategy taken by the Government from time to time to mitigate the pandemic. The Indian government has also adopted a number of measures to solve the situation, starting with increased financing for health care, supporting industries, and longer tax schedules.

#### **Virus transmission and human suffering:**

The Covid -19 pandemic spread countries across the world. Two hundred thirteen countries threatened by this epidemic. It makes the countries socially, economically, educationally, culturally, politically and spiritually incapacitated. The WHO (World Health Organisation), social scientist, activists, political leaders and administrators thought about it, how to get release from this epidemic. Underprivileged citizens of India are battling for unprecedented social and financial catastrophes. Both the state and central governments are failing/incapable to provide social security and relief. It is too difficult for Indian people to spend their life in a smooth and simple way. It is difficult to come up with any theories about the treatment and flight path of Covid-19. So here we should have a lesson that increasing of testing centers and testing more and more is very important to detect the numbers of positive cases. From the said discussion it is found that: Tracing-testing-detecting-treatment-recovering. To disseminate the knowledge regarding the epidemic, spread awareness about universal health campaign, new strategy of treatment and vaccine helped the people to get control against hideous pandemic. We can also get victory against such new pandemic by adopting all these mixed measures. However a safe and highly effective vaccine is to be required to break channel of this pandemic. But we cannot sit quiet just keep believing on this vaccine. Instead of this, we should try to develop the ability of antibodies and also try to make a tendency to live with this environment/virus. Certainly in coming years /day we should have a superfine vaccine and strategy to cure from this epidemic, whereby the whole world can use such vaccine or we must have competed for so long with the virus that in us. After which we can



see a round of small outbreaks and will become habituated to live with this virus. We have a lesson from this epidemic i.e. chicken pox that the entire global scientist comes together to fight against this pandemic and finally they got the great achievement. This is the hope that together we will succeed in this cause. But this struggle perhaps will make us to realize that those virus that used to attack humanity before, is still among us. Even though, a crisis created by their wrath is over, but the infection of that virus/bacteria's is still among us.

Most of the countries use experiment and inaccurate interventions, but there is not yet a single straight forward diagnosis as to when all of this will stop. Health care systems are crumbling, economies are striving to rebound from the wreckage, and the mass of impoverished people are suffering an unparalleled social and financial crisis, with most governments unable to provide sufficient social security and relief. The corona effect will badly hurt the poor, daily wage labor, and small business. Media reports stated that daily wage employees in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha were leaving the city to return to their native places. It has become very costly for daily wage labourers to keep on living in Mumbai, Delhi, and Gujarat etc. with the city being locked down and company shut down. This explains the need to get out of town. As the coronavirus crisis deteriorates in India, Indians in the lower-income class could either focus on saving their jobs or their lives. In addition, religion has been affected in numerous ways by the pandemic, including the cancellation of religious services of different religions, the closing of Sunday schools, as well as the cancellation of pilgrims during festivals. Many churches, synagogues, mosques, temples in the midst of the pandemic have provided worship through live broadcasts. People often stay at home and maintain a social distance to shield themselves from the corona virus.

**Education:**

Definitely, education is the most important factor influencing the development of the nation and well being of all. Covid-19 had a variety of effects on the global educational system. The services and functions of educational institutions were to be suspended during the physical lockdown. Earlier, it was anticipated that the lockdown would only last a few months, therefore no planning had been done for an alternate kind of instruction. Private educational institutions began planning for online education while the lockdown continued, but government educational institutions, particularly those in remote areas, lagged behind because they lacked the necessary equipment and channels to give instruction in an online format. Students from economically disadvantaged groups that

attend government schools are the most vulnerable and have suffered the most. Later, when it became clear that the lockdown would last longer, government educators shifted their efforts online in order to educate children. However, it has been a significant issue for both instructors and students because neither group had received the necessary training, nor many pupils lacked access to tools like smartphones, internet connections, or wifi. Weak internet access, an unsuitable home setting for learning, and a lack of awareness about using online platforms have exacerbated the situation.

Many tales make the front pages of newspapers, such as a girl taking a class on top of a hill, a student in the field for an online class, a father selling his cow to buy a smart-phone for his child for online education, and many others. The situation becomes more complicated for people who have two or more school/college going children, just one smart phone to take online classes (due to budgetary constraints), and the scheduling of the classes overlap for more than one. Many students were forced to suffer or stop studying as a result for several months. There are drawbacks to online learning as well. Access to the virtual world via smartphones rendered kids addicted to certain undesirable online platforms. Denying their physical activities, they have developed a habit of engaging in on-screen activities and are attached to their smartphones for social media sites like YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and others.

**Health Impact:**

The epidemics of COVID-19 constitutes a significant health emergency in India, and both have had a significant impact on human health, society, and the economy mostly in struggle against coronavirus from becoming an epidemic and affecting the health of the population and economy of the country, as well as the careful and deliberate policies and programmes required in India. Our Indians are ignorant of health and sanitation and of the shortage of sanitation facilities in India in both rural and urban areas. Healthcare services also must be strengthened and individuals who take lessons from government hygienic practices also must be improved. India is a huge population dense country, and it continues to be the biggest challenge for government to provide fundamental necessity. A good decision taken by the government during lock down that during the lockdown, basic necessities such as food and health care as the government provided supplies of necessity stuff door to door. Because they are unable to leave their homes or interact with others, the majority of the population isolates themselves socially as a result of the lockout. Recent studies confirm the impact of lockdown on human behaviour and demonstrate that those who are in lockdown have

detrimental psychosocial changes that affect their thinking and anxiety (Orzech, K.M et al., 2016: 43-50).

The current research explored the initial psychological effect on the Indian population of the COVID-19 outbreak. As the disease spread, day-to-day health, economic and livelihood problems soared. The implications of the pandemic's effect on mental wellbeing will help educate health officials and the public and provide those in need with mental health interventions. This can direct researchers to schedule future longitudinal studies for the assessment of Necessity of care (Banerjee D., 2020). There are problems with the mind, including anxiety, worry, and sleeplessness. The Government of India, in partnership with various institutions of national significance, has introduced helpline numbers to provide guidance and advice. The World Health Organization has called for taking the requisite measures to tackle the detrimental effects on psychological health and well-being of the spread of Coronavirus (Yao, H., 2020). People are able to relate the virus to worries about being sick, being helpless, hopeless, stigmatised, and even dying (Chapman M. J., 2008: 446-452). During an outbreak, offering psychological first aid and counselling is important. It helps to alleviate psychological distress and to encourage techniques for adaptive coping to cope with the situation (Patel A, 2019). Despite WHO and other public health authorities' efforts to contain the outbreak of COVID-19, stress is created throughout the country during this time of crisis (Chaturvedi S.K., 2020: 1-2) much like its effect on global counterparts (Yao H., 2020). The primary concern should be continuous care for emotional and psychosocial well-being in various communities during the epidemic (Dong L, 2020). During the initial stage of the COVID-19 disease outbreak, it was suggested that a huge number of them had a psychological effect. Greater impacts have been anticipated at younger ages, for females, and for those with documented physical comorbidities. There is a need for policy makers to consider mental health challenges when preparing measures to tackle the pandemic.

The policy on the health services is the key to the management of the pandemic. The scarcity of the hospitals, hospital beds, oxygen, medicines and health service providers etc. is the major concern of the present crisis. We have also witnessed the shortage and black marketing of medicines, oxygen and other facilities. The recent trend of the governments' leaning towards neo-liberal approach has allowed private sector to earn super profits from the already crippled masses. This makes an urgent imperative to assess the health policy in general and emergency health policy in this crisis situation in particular. The public expenses on health services have to be assessed in the light of its inadequacy to meet the emergency needs. Another important policy issue is concerned with

private health care providers and out of pocket expenses amidst the economic fallout.

### **Employment & Migration:**

During the sudden lockdown last year, the most adverse consequences were on migrant workers, resulted into pathetic miseries faced by them while returning home. It has not only left the governments bewildered but also revealed the multilayered relationship between the migrant workers and virus in the shape of their vulnerability in terms of mobility, social security, health and above all the livelihood or employment. Even after a year, things did not change and reverse migration has been repeated out of fear of last year's horrific experiences. The phenomenon has disproportionately affected the different states of India. The capacity to respond to the crisis is also different in different states. There have been a number of socio-economic impacts of reverse migration on the home states like Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha etc. This calls for a fresh design for the emergency response in terms of the challenge of reverse migration and livelihood.

One of the most visible consequences of COVID-19 pandemic is the migration of people from city to villages. The invisible became visible. The Indian government statistics had not computed the exact number of migrants swarming the city. The 2011 census puts it at 450 million who have migrated to different parts of the country, though it leaves out the short-term migrations. Using railways data and cohorts-based migration between 2011 and 2016, the Economic Survey of India has computed as annual average flow of close to 9 million people migrating between the states significantly higher than the census estimates (Economic Survey of India, 2017-18).

Migration is not a new phenomenon. What distinguishes the old from the new migration is the systematicity of movement coupled with unobtrusive logistics of management of migrants, on the one hand, and the viability and surety of returning home at the time of crisis, on the other. The returning home in the COVID-19 is one such example. The city's opulence could not sustain the migrants, thereby unveiling the rickety and unjust resource distributive systems, namely - health, education, wages, and welfare schemes - of the economy leading to reverse migration. It is the biggest ever reverse migration witnessed in the history of India. According to Amitabh Kundu and Mohanan's (2017) estimation, among 22 million people destabilized 12 million have returned home. According to another source, about 30 million people or 15-20 percent of the total migrants have returned. The informal sectors that account for 93 percent of migrants' employment suffered significant

casualties. Approximately 80percent of India's 470 million people are working in the unorganised sector, according to industry estimates. They toil to keep the informal economy running by pulling rickshaws, selling vegetables, building malls, or working as domestic help.

The countrywide lockdown to contain the virus relegated the migrant labour towards a pathetic situation marked by hunger, homelessness and unforeseen miseries. According to a Survey of Migrant Workers Action Network (SWAN) conducted in middle of April 2020 (sample survey of 1,11,159 migrant workers) revealed that 90 percent of them were not paid their wages in various states, 96 percent did not get ration from government outlets and 70 percent did not get cooked food during lockdown (The Hindu, 20 April, 2020). The lockdown drove the migrant labour on the margins of further alienation, insecurity and humiliation. In the first few days of the nationwide lockdown, the country witnessed a mass reversal of migrant workers from cities to villages posing humanitarian and health challenge as well as an unprecedented logistical nightmare. With repeated depictions of endless procession of workers stranded in cities without job, shelter, or money, facing starvation and health dangers, and fleeing to their villages, the hitherto invisible migrant workers abruptly became prominent in the mainstream media.

They have been reduced to the position of debris as they trudge long miles with their families - men carrying small children on their shoulders, women carrying their things on their heads - going without food in their bellies for long periods, sometimes incurring the wrath of police officers, and with no apparent respite in sight (Singh et.al, 2020:2). These migrants labour while walking to foot or suffered significant casualties on the way. Additionally, it illuminates their Dickensian working conditions and the shadowy aspects of India's labour market (Kumar, 2020). Reports have shown how underpaid labourers continue to be exempt from labour rules and lack access to social security as well (Chaudhary et.al., 2020; Bales, 2020). The challenge of the pandemic is compounded by specific policies of dispossession and derogation of labour rights. The sudden and unplanned enforcement of the lockdown without any support measures for labour migrants had made the conditions of the latter extremely insecure, unsafe and chaotic. In this context one scholar contends 'the condition has worsened due to state negligence and apathy towards migrant's also xenophobic attitude of communities towards returnee migrants' (Samaddar, 2020b: 20).

### **Poverty:**

It has impacted all spheres of life - political, economic, social and cultural. The COVID-19 epidemic continues to have an impact on populations,

including those who live in poverty, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, children, and indigenous peoples. It is most harmful to those who belong to the socioeconomic categories that are most at risk. It has changed the way the institutions have worked so far. It has posed an enormous threat to the governments all over the world ([www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/](http://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/)). Even as a hapless poverty stricken landless migrant, it is always the woman's lot to feed her children and ensure that her family is taken care of in sickness and disease. There are countless stories of the women rising up to the occasion in spite of severely hostile circumstances. However, in the larger scheme of things, she is seen to be without an agency. She is forced to accompany the male member of the family if he desires for her to do so. The migrant women's agency will be discussed at length later in this Paper when the covid19 related displacement is discussed. The International Labor Organization (ILO 2020) report reveals that as an after effect of it, an expected 400 million of such laborers were in danger of reaching horrid state of poverty.

The stress and strain of unemployment can have a detrimental effect on general welfare during the COVID 19 pandemic. The risk of sadness, anxiety, self-harm, drug abuse, and viciousness is higher when one is unemployed. In fact, several studies reveal that as compared to those who have steady employment, those who lose their jobs are twice as likely to experience side effects of despair and anxiety (Goldman-Mellor, S. j., 2016: 350-55). When compared to other major Indian cities, Chennai has the fourth-highest percentage of residents who live in slum areas - about 18.6%. 123.9 million of India's 397 million employees are women, of whom 106 million work mostly in rural regions and the other 18 million do so in metropolitan areas. (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>).

**Social harmony:**

Social harmony is a unique quality of human being which has revealed when we contrast it with certain other types. The crises of Covid-19 have revealed the vulnerability of people, populations and economies, calling for a rethink of the organisation of economic and social activities. Strong responses focused on unity, collaboration and transparency call for crises. Most of the people during this epidemic period were worried about their friends and family. Those people have social cohesion or social contact with the community centers and religion places, they felt isolated because they are not permitted to go outside to meet their friends and visit to the religious places. To give social support and a sense of community to people who have participated in acts of mutual aid towards their relatives and friends in order to encourage them in maintaining their optimism

during this time of epidemic and to disseminate important information about COVID-19. In addition to the value of social distancing, social unity should not be overlooked as an important method to combat such exceptional infectious diseases and other collective threats. During this period some of the people help their neighbours in any possible ways by maintaining social distancing protocol. The theoretical and practical aspects of federalism and have favoured management of socio-cultural diversities with the golden rule of unity in diversity to strengthen federalism through mutual cooperation.

### **Domestic violence:**

The pandemic has exacerbated the shadow pandemic of gender based violence in several countries which have enacted special policies, laws and programmes to deal with gender based violence within the walls. India is not an exception. In light of the fact that Spain and Italy had been under lockdown for a few weeks previous to the outbreak in India, it is necessary to acknowledge that reports of an increase in domestic violence cases were released almost simultaneously from every corner of the world. The National Commission for Women has published a report stating that 94% cases of domestic violence were reported during the lockdown period. Therefore the present article tries to explore how covid-19 pandemic has fuelled the domestic violence against women in the society.

Domestic violence has become more prevalent throughout the world as a result of obligatory home quarantine (remain at home) laws, physical seclusion, looming economic uncertainty, and pandemic-related worries. Regardless of the COVID-19 context, an alarming number of cases of gender-based violence have been reported worldwide. The UN describes it as a "shadow epidemic" that will have major effects for women's safety, protection, and health ([www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)). It is hypothesized that governmental orders closing down in home and social distancing made the people to stay at home have increased the risk of indulging intimate partners in violence, especially women being the victim. According to the Domestic Violence Act India 2005, domestic violence is "any act of commission or behaviour resulting in physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, and economic abuse, and can vary from calling names, insulting, and sexual violence"). The UN has urged immediate action to stop the global rise in domestic violence. Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General, stated on April 5, 2020 via Twitter, "I encourage all governments to put women's safety first as they respond to the epidemic". He has urged all governments to prioritise ending domestic violence in their national response strategies for the Covid-19 epidemic.

Due to lockdown and social isolation measures taken to prevent the spread of viruses, the dangers of escalating marital violence, including physical, emotional, and sexual annoyance, have increased. The emphasis on shutdown time means that needy persons are more disadvantaged and it is more difficult for them to obtain assistance. The government must consider ways to identify domestic violence reports or report on all resources in order to address the rising challenge. Additionally, the online gambling industry has been badly impacted by the coronavirus outbreak. Online gaming has had a significant growth in consumers, which has helped many businesses enjoy a rise in revenue. This is especially true for certain people who are self-isolating and staying at home due to stringent government laws.

### **Major steps taken by Government:**

Additional noteworthy act is the Disaster Management Act of 2005: constitutionally, Disaster Management is part of the residuary power of legislation which, according to Article 248 of the Indian constitution, lies with the Indian Parliament. While the Disaster Management Act 2005 belongs to entry 23 of the concurrent list (namely, "Social security and social insurance, employment and unemployment"), it was intended to deal with disasters at both central and state levels. The union government officially classified COVID-19 as a "notified disaster" on March 14. The act allows both the central and state governments to levy a complete lockdown and regulate people's movement/activity.

While centre's focus has been essentially in achieving economies of scale in vaccine development, in setting up guidelines and directives for the entire administrative units in the country at all levels; states have persistently played a significant role in executing effective responses to health crisis. The frenzy of efforts that the central government has made towards widening coronavirus testing and intervening in the financial sector to alleviate growing public concerns should be evaluated in line with the tangential efforts of various states. These states had to come up with (and implement) innovative methods in dealing with the crisis. In regards to the declaration of relief measures, actions taken by state governments reemphasize the necessity of a strong federal structure for effective governance. For instance, Kerala was the first state to publicize a stimulus package of INR 200 billion (USD 2.6 billion). A week later, the central government declared a stimulus package worth USD 22.6 billion to help people during the crisis. For the poor, this rescue effort offered three months' worth of free food grains and cooking gas, as well as financial incentives for women and low-income seniors. Yet another important initiative was taken by the state of Odisha, even before



coronavirus cases began spreading in the state. The self-quarantine measure was promoted by Odisha, for the people who could return to their family/homes amidst pandemic. Consequently, almost 84000 of the state's population were quarantined for effective containment of COVID-19. An online portal for the mandatory registration of the people entering the state was also launched and put into effect. Such a measure could aid the govt. in tracing the infected and carry out futuristic screening. The Punjab administration used micro-containment and house-to-house monitoring to prevent the epidemic, and they later requested that other governments use the same approach (Tribune News Service, 2020). It must be noted that district administrations have been incredibly proactive as well, in containing the pandemic. The district administration agreed an effectively aggressive approach towards containment, especially the multiple screening of the residents. The dedicated hard work of officers at various levels within the district was responsible for district's surmounting success. This invited appreciation from all the corners, motivating centre to implement the model of containment in the worst affected regions of the country (Tribune News Service, 2020).

The pandemic also proved to be a source of much motivation for intergovernmental collaboration during the lockdown. In three months, the prime minister reached out to multiple chief ministers through video conference meetings. States confirmed their support for the extension of the lockdown while also seeking extra financial sustenance from the union in order to improve their gloomy financial health. Time and time again, the integrated decision to extend the lockdown was appreciated by the Prime Minister. India has been receiving worldwide praise for its controlling of the outbreak, especially seeing its immense population density, but there were admittedly condemnations concerning the quick imposition of the nationwide Lockdown. The federal government could have managed the outbreak in a much more effective manner if they had consulted the states from the very beginning. Additionally, a few days' notice to ease into lockdown (instead of the abrupt one that occurred) would have allowed industries and manufacturers to adjust and make alternate arrangements. Above all, migrant workers and citizens should have been notified and assigned a proper deadline by which to return home in a prompt and timely manner.

Furthermore, for the effective rollout of the vaccination programme in the entire country in a phased manner, the centre issued directives to the state government and instructed them not to come out with an isolated plan for vaccine rollout of their own. To warrant this, an expert committee on vaccine administration was set up by the central government- the committee would oversee the vaccine rollout. It was

expected out of the states to adhere to the directives given by the committee in ensuring the coordinated action of vaccine rollout. Although it may seem centralising on the surface however, this was done to only roll out vaccine in a planned, coordinated and cooperative manner. Thereupon, this was another instance of effective cooperation between centre and state in containing the outbreak (The Hindu, 2020).

### **Role of NGOs and Ugly face of the Society:**

After the first nationwide lockdown announced in March 2020, the government machinery came to a standstill. Its health care system and management were reduced to a helpless situation due to the scale and gravity of the lockdown effects. The public administration found itself helpless in maintaining law and order on the one hand and saving lives from Covid 19, hunger, foot, transportation etc. on the other. At that time the NGOs came forth actively. The voluntary organization provided food, water, medicine, donated money, helped in local supply etc. Thus, the administration needs to engage civil society in a more effective and structured manner. They should be engaged in the PMIM (Policy Making, Implementation and Monitoring) model that is suggested by this author as a method of engaging the civil society in the administration of Covid 19.

Some reports and incidents present a very negative and selfish face of the society and administration. Administrative corruptions in providing Covid relief, treatment, fine and help have been often reported in newspapers. The administration coerced people in the name of enforcing Corona guidelines. People are reduced to helpless creatures. The overcharging by hospitals, medical stores, black marketers of essential commodities, oxygen cylinders, medicines like Remdesivir injections, beds in hospitals, nursing the patient have aggravated the miseries of the people. The immoral practices have also been reported. Exorbitant charges were taken even after the death of Covid patients like ambulance, woods for cremation, coffins and so on. But the government functionaries pay little attention to check these immoral practices. But as a society also we need to contemplate a lot. Along with the administrative lacunae, society is equally to be blamed.

### **Preparedness during Covid-19:**

Human values and ethics have to follow by all sections of society - governmental or non-governmental. While using the natural resources and making policies a communitarian and ecological approach has to be adopted. The government must create infrastructure to make available the food, medicine and other life-saving essentials to be used in the hour

of exigency. The rates of medical services and products should be universal and stable. The local level rural and urban governments should be given more functional and financial powers to deal with the situation in their own ways. A time-bound feedback and reviews system should be at the top priority of the governments. Public feedback about the administration should be taken seriously to curb corruption and lethargy. No doubt the state and non-state actors are trying hard to handle the pandemic and provide relief to people, but state apparatus, involving health administration, civil & police administration, sanitary staff, medical personnel and local governments etc. has proved to be inadequate. The non-state actors like NGOs, civil society and spirited individuals have also come forth to help the people but these cannot be the alternative of state. In this context, it becomes an urgent imperative to underline the issues in legal provisions, administrative functions and policy endeavours like preparedness, formulation and implementation of policies, coordination (among Centre and States, different departments and government agencies), role of local bodies, arresting corruption etc.

**Conclusion:**

The Covid-19 epidemic has adversely affected social, economic, cultural, and public health systems in a series of direct and indirect ways. Although pandemics and their effects are not entirely new to humans, it appears that the contemporary world was not particularly well prepared for this pandemic on a worldwide scale. The lockdown clamped to arrest the pandemic has disrupted the economy of every nation including India. The pandemic induced significant changes in human behavior. The analysis of pre and post lockdown data reveals that, pandemic has shown its impact on multiple sectors. The government should also intervene on various sectors with some suitable policies to measures wave of pandemic. The lockdown and slowed down economy has influenced the business performance both in public and private sector. There is no light of hope to arrest the muted virus so far except waiting for hard immunity and vaccination. This unprecedented phenomenon simultaneously creating some social, economical and psychological problems, those have serious impacts on human binges also. The impact of this pandemic has worsened the living quality of urban/rural people and the already existing financial crisis among the families. People are cut off from their friends and family as well as the outside world, which has an impact on their mental health. Young people's social, physical, and mental welfare might suffer by living in such conditions. Almost every sphere of human life has changed since the outbreak of the pandemic. The pandemic is still not over. Thus, we are still grappling with the challenges of the

pandemic, and it is unlikely to get over the deadly virus very soon. Waiting and waiting is the only thing we can do before we hit the sudden epiphany. Crucial conditions such as these call for powerful and efficient policy-making in health, business, government and society, with the pressures of a new unemployment and economic crisis. Like its global counterparts, the COVID-19 disease outbreak has created a great deal of confusion in the lives of the Indian public.

### References:

- Banerjee, D., (2020). *"The COVID-19 outbreak: Crucial role the psychiatrists can play"*, Asian J Psychiatry, 50:102014. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.>, PMID: 32240958.
- Cascella, M. Rajnik M, Cuomo A, et al. (2020). *"Features, Evaluation and Treatment Coronavirus (COVID-19)"*, In: Stat Pearls [Internet], Treasure Island (FL): Stat Pearls Publishing; 2020 Jan., Available from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK554776/>.
- Chaturvedi S. K. (2020). *"Covid-19, Coronavirus and Mental Health Rehabilitation at Times of Crisis"*, J Psychosoc Rehabil Ment Health, Pp.1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40737-020-00162-z> PMID: 32292688),
- Chaudhary, Monika, P. R. Sodani, and Shankar Das, (2020). *'Effect of COVID- 19 on Economy in India: Some Reflections for Policy and Programme'*, Journal of Health Management, Vol.22, No.2, pp.169-180. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0972063420935541> Accessed on: 10 September, 2020.
- Covid-19 and Essential Services provision for survivors of violence against women and girls, [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org).
- Covid-19 and violence against women, (2020). *'What the health sector/system can do'*, <http://apps.who.int/iris/handle/>, 7 April, 2020.
- Dong, L. & Bouey, J., (2020). *"Early Release-Public Mental Health Crisis during COVID-19 Pandemic"*, China-Volume 26, Number-7, July 2020, Emerging Infectious Diseases journal-CDC, [cited 30 Mar 2020], <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2607.200407> PMID: 32202993.
- Economic Survey of India, (2017). Ministry of Finance, Government of India <https://www.indiabudget.gov.in/budget2017-2018/survey.asp>.

- Gender and pandemic urgent call for action published by UNODC, United Nations office on Drugs and Crime, [www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org).
- Goldman-Mellor, S. J. (2016). "Unemployment and Mental Health", Encyclopedia of Mental Health, 2016, Pp. 350-55. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-397045-9.00053-7>.
- Govt of India, 2005 [www.indian.gov.in](http://www.indian.gov.in)
- Hall RCW, Chapman M. J., (2008). "The 1995 Kikwit Ebola outbreak: lessons hospitals and physicians can apply to future viral epidemics", Gen Hosp Psychiatry, 30:446-452. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.genhosppsych.2008.05.003> PMID: 18774428.
- Harris, S.S., (2000). "A Dictionary of Epidemiology", Fourth Edition, Oxford University Press, New York.
- <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/slums-in-chennai-increase-by-50-in-a-single-decade/articleshow/50618951.cms> accessed on 12-5-2021.
- <https://tradingeconomics.com/india/gdp-growth-annual?user=analyst37123>
- International Labour Organization, (2020). "ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work", Second edition, Updated estimates and analysis.
- Kumar, Arun, (2020). 'The Pandemic in Changing the Face of Indian Labour', The Wire, May 9. <https://thewire.in/economy/covid-19-pandemic-indian-labour> Accessed on: 15 May, 2020.
- Kundu, Amitabh and Mohanan, P.C., (2017). 'Internal Migration in India: A very Moving Story', Economic Times, April 11, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/etcommentary/internal-migration-in-india-a-very-moving-story/> Accessed on: 15 April, 2021.
- Morens, D. M. et al., (2009). "What is a pandemic?", J Infect Dis. 2009; 200: 1018-1021. doi: 10.1086/644537.
- Orzech, K. M., Grandner, M. A., Roane, B. M., & Carskadon, M. A. (2016). "Digital media use in the 2h before bedtime is associated with sleep variables in university students", Computers in human behavior, 55, Pp.43-50.
- Patel A. & Jernigan D.B. (2019). "Initial Public Health Response and Interim Clinical Guidance for the 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak-United States", December 31, 2019-February 4, 2020; 69: 7.
- Samaddar, Ranbir (ed.), (2020b). "Burdens of An Epidemic: A Policy Perspective on COVID-19 and Migrant Workers", Calcutta: ACPG Publication.

- Singh, S. K., Patel, Vibhuti, Aditi Chaudhary and Nandlal Mishra, (2020). '*Reverse Migration of Labourers Amidst COVID-19*', Economic and Politically Weekly, Vol.55, Issue No.32-33.
- Social Impact of Covid-19, <https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/2020/04/social-impact-of-covid-19/> accessed on 3 May, 2021.
- The Hindu Special Correspondent, (2020). "*Vaccine distribution: Work in tandem with Centre, Health Ministry tells States*", The Hindu, November 3, 2020, Accessed January 13, 2021.
- The Indian Express (2020). "Stock markets post worst losses in history; aensex crashes 3,935 points amid coronavirus lockdown", The Indian Express, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/business/market/bse-sensex-nse-nifty-stock-market-live-updates-coronavirus-global-markets-6327415/>
- The Indian Express (2020). "We should plan for negative growth rate this FY, says Arvind Subramanian", The Indian Express, available at: <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/expressadda-live-updates-arvind-subramanian-coronavirus-economy-recession-india-lockdown-6382855/>
- Tribune News Service, (2020). "*PM Modi asks other states to adopt Punjab's COVID-combat model of micro-containment, house-to-house surveillance*" The Tribune, June 16, 2020. Accessed September 6, 2020.
- UN Report, (2020). [www.unwomen.org](http://www.unwomen.org) 9 April, 2020.
- WHO report, (2020). [www.who.org](http://www.who.org) 14 May, 2020.
- Yao H, Chen J-H, Xu Y-F. (2020). "*Patients with mental health disorders in the COVID-19 epidemic*", Lancet Psychiatry, 2020; 7: e21. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(20\)30090-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(20)30090-0).
- Yao H, Chen J-H, Xu Y-F., (2020). "*Rethinking online mental health services in China during the COVID-19 epidemic*", Asian J Psychiatry, 50:102015. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2020.102015> PMID: 32247261.

**Challenges of Marginal Peasants and Agricultural Labourers in India**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**

12(1) 19 - 27

ISSN: 2249-667X

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/654bc3eb-8f35-43aa-81b0-1638f8806123.pdf>

**Nirdosh Kumar\***

**Abstract**

*The Indian economy is an agricultural economy because more than half of India's population is engaged in agriculture in many ways. Some people are owners of land while some are reliant on labour work to fulfill consumption needs. The government of India has taken many steps to improve the economic conditions of landless labourers. Poor economic conditions of people reflect in their standard of living and are also associated with many problems. Nowadays, many changes have taken place in Indian agriculture. In this situation, only large peasants are able to cope with the challenges. On the other hand, marginal peasants and landless labourers, who do not have sufficient land to cultivate and are partially reliant on labour work to meet consumption needs, face many problems. This paper explores all the changes that have taken place in agriculture and the responsible reasons behind them. This paper is based on existing literature related to agrarian relations and some observations from rural areas.*

**Keywords**

Agriculture, labour, landholding, marginalization, income

**Introduction:**

There are two types of human settlement in the world; 'rural' and 'urban'. These both settlements are quite different on the point of ritual sphere as urban represent to modernity and rural symbolizes to traditions. Both are also different in social, cultural, and economic aspects. Rural economic life is completely based on agriculture, and it is also a way of life for peasants and agricultural labourers. The plot of land that a peasant cultivates with the help of family members works as his main source of livelihood and gives him a sense of identity and belonging. Rural

---

\* Assistant Professor in Department of Law, Maharaja Agarsen Institute of Management Studies, Delhi  
Email: [chandelnirdosh@gmail.com](mailto:chandelnirdosh@gmail.com)

settlement also has a different household system where many families live under one roof and kinship plays a crucial role in different affairs, as described by S. S. Jodhka (2012). Marginal peasants also work as labourers to supplement the household income. In Indian rural society, diversity in lifestyles can be seen on the basis of differences in landholdings. As Daniel Thorner (2006) described that socially malik form a distinct group within the village. These maliks generally belong to the Brahmin, Thakur, or any other high ranking caste. They live in larger houses, wear finer clothes, and have a better diet than the rest of the villagers. Contrary to this, the kisans are drawn primarily from cultivating or artisan castes, and the majdurlog primarily from harijans, scheduled, depressed or "backward" classes. These landless labourers are reserved to do those types of works that are considered degrading, such as ploughing in the Eastern Uttar Pradesh (Thorner: 2006). Thus, maliks belonged to higher castes usually. They did not like to cultivate the land by their own hands because they thought that doing physical labourer cultivating land by themselves would decrease their social prestige in the society. They lease-out their land to tenants or marginal peasants to get it cultivated. This paper will examine the impact of government initiatives, crop diversification, non-agricultural income, dropout rates, and online education on the lifestyles of peasants and agricultural labourers.

### **Impact of Government Initiatives**

Government of India initiated land reform programs to remove the large gap in landholdings of people. Abolition of zamindari, ceiling on land, consolidation of landholdings, security of tenants and distribution of land were some steps taken by the government. The main aims of land reform program were to achieve an egalitarian society, to improve economic conditions of people and prevention of exploitation of actual tillers who used to cultivate land for deriving livelihood. Besides, voluntary land reform movements like Bhoodan and Gramdaan movements were also started by Acharya Vinoba Bhave, for collecting land to distribute among landless people. But there were some loopholes in these policies of land reforms. So rich people who were aware of those loopholes took advantage of them and became successful in retaining large sizes of land. As Daniel Thorner (2005) described that according to a sample survey which was conducted after five years of implementation of the Zamindari Abolition Act, reported that 10 percent households in villages still continued to own 50 percent of land of the village. This was because in Zamindari Abolition Act there was a provision that if a landholder proves his land as 'sir' and 'khudkhast' (land which is self-cultivated by owner) then he is allowed to retain that amount of land. Many record keepers were small people. Many of them were



appointed by large landholders. So, by exerting pressure the larger landholders increased the amount of land on their name as *sir* and *khudkhast* (Thorner, 2005). J.P. Singh (2006) also found that India is dominated by marginal farmers but they own only 17 percent of the total cultivable area. They face livelihood crisis. Their holding is not viable economically. There are not much additional employment opportunities for them in rural areas to improve standard of life. Consequently, they migrate to cities and rural area of advanced states in search of job. In this process many of them sell their land (Singh: 2006). Further, Esha Shah (2012) also recorded about changes which took place after green revolution in India. After independence of India, a great amount of hunger and famine were faced by the people. As a solution of grain's scarcity, program for technological development was projected through 'green revolution'. The term 'green revolution' came into existence in the late 1960s as 'new technology' in which high yielding varieties of cereals like wheat and rice was introduced and focused on high use of agro-chemicals like pesticides and fertilizers, new techniques of irrigation and cultivation for more production (Esha Shah: 2012). These marginal peasants had very small size of landholdings and did not have appropriate techniques for its cultivation. Economically they were not efficient to purchase these agricultural appliances. They usually hired-in techniques of cultivation on high rents. Thus agriculture proved unprofitable for them. In that situation crop diversification could be helpful to face the challenges.

### **Crop Diversification**

Sukhpal Singh (2005) found that small farmers faced a number of challenges in the era of globalization and liberalization. Crop diversification could be fruitful idea for profit maximization or risk minimization if they work hard and learn new skills and risks but small farmers failed in producing high value profitable crops due to non-availability of sufficient and timely irrigation, high cost of cultivation, lack of capital and credit availability, lack of access to new technology, attack of Pests and diseases and high risks (Singh: 2005). Besides cultivating own land, these marginal peasants used to work as labourers on the land of large peasants for fulfilling consumption needs. But technological advancement proved a boon for large peasants as through techniques rich farmers were able to cultivate large size of land by their own hands. So they preferred to hire-in labourer occasionally as per needs. Although introduction of irrigation facilities increased possibility to grow many crops in a whole year but all replaced labour could not be absorbed. Anand Chakravarti (2001) used interview and observation

techniques to collect data and conflict approach to describe agricultural operations and activities. By using conflict approach he took data from those who controlled over means of production and those who labored for them. Purnea district falls under the region of North Bihar where highest proportion of agriculture labourer exists (census 1991). Aghanbigha village had large tracts of level land assuring with canal irrigation that's why it was possible produce both Rabi and Kharif types of crops. Farmers of other villages used to produce only Kharif crops because of dependency on monsoon for irrigation. In Aghanbigha village sharecropping (Bataidari) pattern was in practice. But due to introduction of tractorisation and canal irrigation cropping pattern shifted to commercial crops and rich farmers started to cultivate their land by hiring labour and farm servants. Both the categories, labourers and servants worked under the supervision of a sepahi (an elite category among farm servants). As by tractor it was easy to cultivate large tracts of land. Thus demand of bataidars decreased. On the other hand introduction of canal irrigation farmers started to grow many crops in a year which resulted in increase in demand of labourers. Earlier due to lack of irrigation, people used to produce only one crop in monsoon season. Replacement of bataidar by hiring labour gave birth to class struggle between bataidars and farmers because bataidar tried to resist their eviction from land and farmers wanted to retain possession on same land. Exploitation lies on pattern of ownership on means of production because exploiter has control over means of productions while exploited are dependent of them to get basic needs (Chakravarti: 2001). Thus crop diversification proved beneficial to only large peasants who have good techniques of cultivation and irrigation.

### **Impact of Non-agricultural Sources of Income**

Although nowadays many opportunities have opened in rural areas to work as labourers in non-agricultural sectors but usually people get lower wages in them. So people prefer to go to cities for jobs as in cities they get higher wages. If they work as labourers, and security guards in a company, industry or in a factory on a fixed salary then too they can earn more than working in rural areas.

Land is seen as a source of wealth and status in the village society. That's why a person tries not to sell the land which is an affirm source to derive livelihood. Selling land is considered a sin in village society. A strong belief is prevalent in rural India that if one cannot increase the size of land by purchasing from others then at least he should not sell ancestral land which is transferred from generations to generations. But for a marginal peasant who has tiny size of land and does not have techniques of

cultivation, it is impossible to fulfill consumption needs of the family. Gradually, he loses his interest in farming and prefers to be involved in non-agricultural activities for survival after selling land. Income diversification can be seen as a good idea to supplement household income and to deter land sell as Deborah Fahy Bryceson (1999) in her study on income diversification in four villages of Tanganyika territory of Africa, found that some members of small peasant families turned to jobs in non-agricultural sector for seeking additional sources of income apart from cultivation of land (Bryceson: 1999). After selling land they do not want to be engaged in labour work in nearby areas but prefer to migrate to distant areas where no one knows to them. Their preference for migration to distant areas after becoming landless is an effort to maintain prestige and status in the eyes of villagers. Although they face many problems in doing non-agricultural works which is new to them as they were born in peasants' family so they knew the nuances of agriculture.

In the seminar proceedings held at National Institute of Community Development in 1974, Paramahansa (1975) also reveals that in some parts of India where new agricultural technologies and high value commercial crops were introduced, large farmers took the advantage of commercial crops like cotton, tobacco, etc. In these areas small farmers who have one acre or even less of land were not in a position to take advantage of the new agricultural technology. So they leased out their land to big farmers who were interested to increase the size of holdings under cultivation to take advantage of modern methods of cultivation. After selling land these small farmers either migrated to neighboring towns and cities in search of jobs or opted to work as landless agricultural labourers. Further, it also recounts that this trend was observed by scholars in Maharashtra, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh where land was allotted to agricultural labourers to turn them into landowners, some of them sold their land due to lack of money for cultivation. It is also observed that some small farmers sold their allotted land due to high values of land. But having a small piece of land was not enough reason. Whenever tiny pieces of land were allotted to the landless, there was also a need to provide them necessary resources to make a beginning (Paramahansa, 1975: 9-10). Government has taken many steps to improve economic conditions of landless labourers. Under the land reforms program, surplus land was allotted to these needy people but they could not retain the land because of several reasons. Debal K. Singha Roy (2005) also described that the government of West Bengal has distributed surplus vested (common) land to agricultural labourers and they have thus become peasants. But due to non-availability of appropriate technologies, the poor peasants are selling the small pieces of land to commercial cultivators

(SinghaRoy, 2005). Thus after selling land, these people migrated to cities in search of jobs. They were totally dependent on labour work to fulfill consumption needs of the families.

### **Dropout**

Education can play an important role in improving economic conditions of the family especially in case of marginal peasants and landless labourers. Nowadays these people have understood the value of education. They also know the difference between quality of education in private schools and government schools. But because of poor economic conditions they are not able to send their children in private schools. As Shashi Bhushan Singh (2004) described that due to the low quality of education in government school people prefer to send their children to English-medium private schools which is costly (Singh, 2004). Moreover, Mona Sedwal and SangeetaKamat (2011) described that income of the household, parental education, home environment and school environment are main factors to retain a child's education and complete it and often these are associated with affluent upper caste families (Sedwal and Kamat, 2011). Besides that, it is found that children of marginal peasants and labourers help their parents in domestic works and also work as part-time labourers as their parents alone are not able to earn enough to meet all expenses of the family. This is the reason which results in their dropout from education. It can be seen mainly in the peak season of crops when the time is very crucial as timely cutting and threshing of crops is required. So, children of poor people assist their parents to store wheat for consumption of the family members for the whole year. Children of marginal peasants not only work on their own fields but also work on the fields of others. Amartya Sen (1971) analyzed data on school dropout for all India and for rural schools of Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. He observed that withdrawal of children from school during the peak agricultural seasons was considerably higher among the economically less privileged group (Sen, 1971). Thus, weak economic conditions are responsible for school dropouts.

### **Non-accessibility to Online Education**

Covid-19, a pandemic also posed a new threat for labourers. Prime Minister Modi declared "Janta Curfew" on Sunday, March 22, 2020. On March 24, 2020, the Government of India under Prime Minister ordered a nationwide lockdown. Due to the lockdown colleges, industries, and transportation facilities had been closed. Lockdown was imposed in hurry so these people could not move to their native places. Factories had been closed, so their income was stopped suddenly. Even they were not

able to arrange necessary items to fulfill consumption needs in urban areas where they were staying. Consequently, they started to move to their native areas. No transportation was available, so they kept moving on foot to reach their homes, some of them hundreds of miles away.

After reaching home they had to find work to fulfill the needs of the family, as mentioned earlier. Further, this situation resulted in over availability of labour force in rural areas and posed many problems to labourers, sharecroppers, and tenants who were engaged in working in the villages already.

It is found that villages are not self-sufficient in nature. All needs of villagers cannot be fulfilled in the territory of the village. There are many things for which they have to go to another villages or cities. During lockdown, there were some restrictions on free movement from villages to cities. Government officials were not coming to the offices. All government offices like blocks, tehsils, District Magistrate offices and District Courts were closed. Farmers need a copy of land records, i.e.  *khasra*  and  *khatauni* , for getting credit cards issued from the bank, an income certificate, and electricity connections for tube wells etc. So, for these aforementioned tasks farmers needed to go to offices that are located in Amroha city. The Government of India took various measures to ensure smooth delivery of items for domestic consumption without any increase in their prices.

All educational institutions had been closed. To minimize the loss of the classes, online teaching system was adopted. This was a new experience for teachers and students. For attending online classes students needed a smart mobile phone, tablet, or laptop with a good internet connection. As reported in India Today on July 7, 2020, online teaching is based on the assumption that every student has access to the internet, a smart phone or laptop, and a reliable electric connection to get them charged. But in reality, a large section of the Indian population does not have access to these all necessary appliances. This problem is pertained mainly to students, especially in rural areas (India Today, July, 7, 2020). Thus, people who have good sources of income and access to smart phones, laptops and internet connection their children were able to attend the online classes. Network related problems like disconnection from the online classes, voice breaking and inability to join the classes, etc. also worked as barriers to taking online classes. On the Other hand, as mentioned above, children with poor economic background did not have access to smart phones or laptops along with good internet connections so they were not able to attend online classes. Moreover, these people were striving hard to fulfill their consumption needs, so it was not feasible for them to purchase (during the unlock period) a smart phone or

laptop with a good internet connection to attend online classes. So, their children could not benefit from this initiative of online teaching, even though it adversely affected their education.

### Conclusion

Landholding is seen as a status symbol in rural society. That's why no one prefers to sell his land, but in contingent situations, land comes on the market for sale. Crop diversification and income from non-agricultural sources have proved significant in supplementing peasants' households' income. Although it is found that large peasants are in a position to reap maximum benefit from crop diversification since they are economically sound and have good techniques for cultivating land. Marginal peasants, whose landholding is not viable to fulfill needs of the family, prefer to sell their land and get involved in jobs in non-agricultural sectors to meet needs of the family since agriculture has proved unprofitable venture for them as mentioned above. This land is usually purchased by such peasants who have other sources of income. Thus, the government's initiatives to improve the quality of life of landless labourers have proved to be very limited in their impact. COVID-19 has also created many problems for them. Non-accessibility to smart phones, laptops, and internet connections affected the education of their children negatively. Consequently, some of them lost their interest in education, which is seen as a key factor for improving standards of living by getting knowledge and good jobs in non-agricultural sectors.

### References:

- Bryceson, Deborah Fahy. 1999. African Rural Labour, Income diversification and livelihood approaches: A long term Development Perspective. *Review of American Political Economy*. 26 (80): 171-189.
- Chakravarti, Anand. 2001. *Social Power and Everyday class Relations*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- <https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/featurephilia/story/covid-19-impact-can-online-education-be-made-accessible-to-all-1697894-2020-07-07>
- Jodhka, S.S. 2012. Introduction. In Jodhka, S.S. (ed.) *Village Society: Essays from Economic and Political Weekly*, pp. 1-20. New Delhi: Orient Blackswan Private Limited.
- Paramahansa, V.R.K. (ed.). 1975. *Changing Agrarian Relations in India: Papers and proceedings of Seminar held at the National Institute*

*of Community Development, Hyderabad in 1974*. Hyderabad: The National Institute of Community Development.

- Sedwal, Mona and SangeetaKamat. 2011. Education and Social Equity in Elementary Education. In R. Govinda (ed.) *Who Goes to School: Exploring Exclusion in Indian Education*, pp. 87-122. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Sen, Amartya. 1971. *Primary Education in Rural India*. New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill.
- Shah, Esha. 2012. A Life Wasted Making Dust: Affective Histories of Dearth, Death, Debt and Farmers' Suicides in India. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. 39 (5): 1159-79.
- Singh, J.P. 2006. Changing Agrarian Relationships in Rural India. *Indian Journal of Agricultural Economics*. 61 (1): 36-64.
- Singh, ShashiBhushan. 2004. Future of Midday Meals. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 39 (9): 998-1000.
- Singh, Sukhpal. 2005. Changing Structure and Organizations of Agriculture and Small farmers in India. *Social Change*. 35 (4): 1-31.
- SinghaRoy, Debal K. 2005. Peasant Movements in Contemporary India: Emerging Forms of Domination and Resistance. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 40 (52): 5505-5513.
- Thorner, Daniel and Alice Thorner. 2005. *Land and Labour in India; Introduction by Sabyasachi Bhattacharya*. New Delhi: DC Publishers.
- Thorner, Daniel. 1978. Maliks and Moneylenders-Their role. In A.R. Desai (ed.) *Rural Sociology in India (fifth edition)*, pp. 331-332. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

**Menstrual Health and  
Hygiene Framework: A  
Human Right Approach**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**

12(1) 28 - 43

ISSN: 2249-667X

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/615b2f78-0709-4921-b0bd-e9f69cb62f2a.pdf>

**Rizvana Choudhary\***

**Abstract**

*Menstruation is a natural reproductive process. In our society, menstruation is considered as something that is unclean, shameful, and impure. The conversation regarding menstruation among women and adolescent girls from an initial age is observed as taboo. If menstruating women and adolescent girls cannot access safe and private places for managing menstrual hygiene, it is against their dignity. There is a need for a holistic approach that addresses menstrual health and hygiene issues within the context of human rights. When women and girls cannot manage their bleeding cycle hygienically, it can negatively impact their rights. With this background, the main objective of this paper is to examine basic rights in the context of menstrual health and hygiene. The present paper will be descriptive and secondary sources of data will be used. This study is significant because it helps to understand the existing human rights in the context of menstrual health and hygiene.*

**Keywords**

Women, adolescent girls, human rights, menstrual health and hygiene, menstruation.

**Introduction and Methodology**

Menstruation is a natural process that is associated with a woman's ability to procreate (Thakur, et al., 2014). The onset of menstruation is called Menarche, one of the milestones in an adolescent girl's life (Manhas, Asmat, and Dolker, 2017). Menstruation is periodic vaginal bleeding that occurs with the shedding of the uterine mucosa, one of the symbols of Puberty. There are over 355 million women and girls, who are menstruating each day (Greetz, et al., 2016). The starting stage of menstruation is called menarche, and this stage usually occurs between

---

\* Ph. D. Scholar, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar  
Email: [rizwanamehraj11@gmail.com](mailto:rizwanamehraj11@gmail.com)



the age groups of 12-13 years of girls (Spot On! Improving menstrual health and hygiene in India, 2015). A Female experiences about 455 bleeding cycles across her reproductive years (Panday, 2014). In many societies, people don't have enough knowledge regarding periods and consider it a pity. Inadequate awareness and information lead to various meaningless restrictions in the daily routine of menstruating women and girl's life. Restrictions like: they are not allowed to enter religious places for prayers during their periods because people considered them impure (ibid, 2017). Women are restricted to touch the holy books as they are unclean (Garg, Goyal, and Gupta, 2011). A strict diet has been followed by girls like not eating Ghee, butter, or milk. The parents believe that if adolescent girls consume a healthy diet they would grow faster and the flow of blood also increase (Gill, 2019). In addition to this, there are restrictions on the bathing of menstruating women in some societies. Due to these restrictions and poor understanding women are not aware of how to manage periods hygienically. Therefore it is a need to understand the term menstrual hygiene management. Menstrual hygiene management refers to *"Women and adolescent girls are using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of a menstrual period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual management material. They understand the basic facts linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort and fear"* (UNICEF, 2019). Menstrual health and hygiene mainly depend upon the socio-cultural, economic, and education status of families (Maniar and Mehta, 2017). Menstrual health and hygiene stand for *"Encompass both Menstrual Health management and the broader systematic factor that link menstruation with health, wellbeing, gender equality, education, equity, empowerment, and rights. These systematic factors have been summarized by UNESCO as accurate and timely knowledge; available, safe, and affordable materials; informed and comfortable professionals; referral and access to health services; sanitation and washing facilities; positive and social norms, safe and hygienic disposal and advocacy and policy"* (UNICEF, 2019). Menstrual health and hygiene are integral to achieving sustainable development goals. In 2015, UNICEF adopted 17 sustainable development goals and these goals are arranged in such a way that they address the problems of sustainability and health (United Nations, 2015). Although menstrual hygiene is not mentioned in any of the SDGs, it is still linked directly to some of the proposed SDGs. Like SDG 3: *Ensure healthy lives and promotes well-being for all, at all ages*. It is the fundamental right of every human being to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Buta study conducted by Sultan

and Sahu (2017) revealed that menstruating women often managed periods in unhygienic ways. Menstruating women develop their hygienic practices and strategies to deal with periods according to their cultural beliefs, and economic and educational status (Sumpter and Belen, 2013). The unhygienic practices include the usage of rags, cotton, or old cloth, and the reuse of the old cloth without properly washing it. The usage of unsuitable material for absorption increases the risk of health problems (Das et al., 2015). Another study by Dingra, et. al. (2019) revealed that respondents lacked prior knowledge about menstruation before experiencing it due to which they faced various health-related problems. So, poor menstrual health becomes the obstacle to accomplishing the Sustainable development goal (SDG3). **SDG 4: *Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong opportunities for all.*** Good education is a prerequisite for women's rights and gender equality. Education is one of the main keys that empowering women and girls. It must be available to them across their lifetime. But the actual condition is quite different, due to the non-availability of menstrual material, and the lack of sanitation facilities in school forces many adolescent girls to dropout of school (Naughton, Weiss, and Vargas, 2017). A study conducted by Ndlovu and Ednah, (2016) shows that 20% of primary school girls miss their school during periods because of fear and shame. Ultimately if girls leave their education because of menstruation, their carrier stops, and parents force them into early marriage and they become the victim of violence and forced sexual relations (ibid, 2016). Consequently fails to achieve Sustainable Development (SDG 4). **SDG 5: *Ensuring Gender equality and empowering women and girls.*** This Goal addresses the key challenges like poverty, violence, and inequality against women. The taboos around menstruation and insufficient menstrual hygiene practices often portray women are inferior to men and are not involved in social and cultural events of life during periods (Tiwary, 2018). A qualitative study conducted by Narayan et al., (2001) revealed that half of the South Indian girls admitted that their periods are terrible and shocking. Menstruating girls often miss school because of experiences of harassment by male students in schools during periods (ibid, 2016). Menstruating women still face all these issues that become hurdles for them. Somewhere fails to attain this SDG4. **SDG 6: *Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.*** This goal ensures the availability of water and sanitation for all. Knowingly women manage menses in unhygienic ways because they deal with it in secrecy. So, clean water and sanitation are the utmost need of women for cleaning themselves. Accessibility to these facilities will help the girls during their periods and it also reduced the

dropout of girls from school (Tiwary, 2018). Scanty disposal management in schools continuously becomes a barrier to menstrual hygiene management and causes environmental issues (UN Women and WSSCC, 2015). Ultimately this act will become the barrier to SDG6. Menstruation is a topic that society often deals with concealment. Menstruation is a symbol of healthy women and it should be no longer covered under the blanket of fear, embarrassment, and shame. Disbelieving myths, taboos, and stigma around menses have been proven to empower women and girls, change menstrual hygiene practices and remove restrictions. This supports the self-esteem of women and is also essential for them to reach their full capability. For this alteration to happen, it is necessary to inculcate menstrual hygiene in policies. These policies must be supported by resources and dedicated budgets for smooth implementation (Tiwary, 2018). The challenges in achieving menstrual health are fundamental to the equality, rights, and dignity of all individuals who menstruate. But still, menstrual health is not a priority for anyone (Babar, et al.2022). Till now women and girls continuously suffer and it infringes their human rights. The main problem is that women are still bound by such myths and taboos that restrict them from getting accurate knowledge about menstrual hygiene. It is the right of every woman to access awareness about it. Women and girls are not aware of their rights, although these rights are universal. With this background, the present research paper shall examine basic human rights in the context of menstrual hygiene. This research paper will be divided into three sections. The first section illustrates the Introduction, Objective, (To examine the basic Human rights in the context of menstrual health and hygiene), and Methodology (The research paper used a descriptive research design and it is based on secondary sources like Research papers, Reports, books, Internet sources, Articles, etc. The second section deals with findings and discussions. The third section unfolds the inferences and Conclusion.

### **Findings and Discussion**

According to the United Nations (UN), “human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion or any other status”. To sum up, every individual all over the globe is entitled to human rights. Moreover, human rights are interlinked and interdependent: the refutation of one right will directly disturb the ability to enjoy other rights (Roche, and Veerdonk, 2019). Understanding menstrual health and hygiene in terms of human rights entails a holistic approach to women’s and girls’ rights. Working on menstrual health and hygiene from a human rights perspective, will require observing systematic problems and acting effectively and

thoroughly in improving the conditions of women and girls as these problems frequently constitute barriers to the realization of human rights (Wardana, 2020). Human rights are mentioned in every constitution, law, and policy. But the real struggle is whether these human rights are enjoyed by the citizen or not. Knowingly, these rights exist all over the globe, and the state here must address the barriers that women face in managing their periods. Menstruating women and girls face problems in managing hygiene during periods (HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, 2017). The term menstrual health and hygiene is used to state the requirement of menstruators encompasses menstrual products supplies, infrastructure, and easy access to the information needed to deal with periods comfortably and also with dignity (Guide to Menstrual hygiene material, 2019). But women and girls encounter difficulties when they don't avail sufficient facilities like sanitation, water, and health. Due to this, they fail to manage their menstruation easily which automatically leads to a negative impact on certain rights of women like the Right to work, the right to education as well as health (Human rights WATCH, 2017). MHH was discussed for the first time by the UN human rights council. Here the council said the inadequate menstrual hygiene management and stigma related to menses leads not so a positive impact on gender equality. In addition to this, WHO demands three actions: The first one is to recognize and frame menstrual health as a health and human right issue, not a hygiene issue. The second one is to recognize menstrual health: which means that people who menstruate have access to education, information, sanitation facilities, disposal facilities, and the place where they live or study in which menstruation is seen in a positive way or not something that makes menstruators embarrassed. The last one is to guarantee all these activities encompassed in budgets and sectoral work plans and their actions are to be analyzed (WHO, 2022). The advantage of framing MHH as a human rights issue, it attracts attention to the plea of women and girls who face hurdles in managing menstruation carefully and adequately by recognizing the failure of states and other actors in accomplishing the duties concerning MHH (Wardana, 2020). The problems faced by menstruating women and girls in the management of menstruation could be framed as human rights violations (United nation human rights, 2014). MHH is related to human rights: observing human rights treaties such as CEDAW (Convention on the elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women) and CRC (Convention of the rights of the Child) and ICESCR (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) these treaties need to take action on menstrual health and hygiene (Wardana, 2020). Menstrual health and hygiene are the results of the fulfillment of numerous human rights like rights related

to sanitation, housing, health, education sanitation facilities, and clean water. More importantly, these rights are extended to all menstruators irrespective of age, religion, gender, and socio-economic status (Guide to menstrual hygiene materials, 2019).

### **The Right to work**

The two fundamental aspects include the Right to work;

- The first one is the right to freely choose or admit work
- The other one is the right to a safe and favorable working environment or conditions. Both these rights are guaranteed by ICESCR (International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) in articles 6 and 7. The Committee of Economic Social and Cultural rights particularly emphasized the importance of facilities that require in work to “meet the women’s specific hygiene needs” (CESCR, 2016), which means that adequate sanitation facilities must be provided to the employer in the workplace (ILO Convention No 161, 1985). Importance of the right to work upsurges, when considering MHH from a human rights point of view (Wardana, 2020 and Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Concerning the Right to work and a safe healthy working environment, it is specifically to be clear that the state’s duties apply to all workers in both formal and informal workplaces. States' duties are entrenched in the articles in ICESCR and CEDAW. The state’s role is to monitor, generate and enforce suitable standards in the workplace that encompasses all these components that require an employee of the workplace for safe and healthy working conditions and most importantly which meet women’s requirement during menstruation. In reality, women workers face many health-related problems, as for as menstrual hygiene is concerned many women face the issue of unhygienic conditions for menstrual management. As they face cultural norms and taboos that make it difficult to manage good menstrual hygiene (Human RIGHT WATCH, 2017) Here must quote the example of the daily wagger’s wives, who work along with their husbands on roadsides or constructions side, where they don’t have an appropriate place for cleaning themselves or changing menstrual products. If they don’t have a safe place for dealing with menses, it will increase the chances of reproductive tract infections. Menses are the natural reproductive process experienced by every woman, since it is a natural process society should not consider it taboo. With such poor conditions in workplaces, menstruating women may drop out of their job or may miss their work during menstrual days, which results in a decrease in their ability to earn wages. Such hurdles lead to discrimination in workplaces and are also one of the broader

features of gender inequality (Human Rights Watch, 2017). Through the lens of the human right to work, workplace space should be organized in a way, where the women can easily choose their work and with this, where they can effortlessly look after their health.

### **The Right to Education**

The human right to education is included in numerous human rights contexts. Article 13 and 10 of ICESCR and CEDAW, states the right to free and compulsory education and accessible secondary education to all. Moreover, CEDAW has elaborated that “States parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women to ensure their equal rights with men in the field of education”. In addition to this, CRC (Committee on the Rights of the Child) indicated that “initiating and supporting measures, attitudes, and activities that promote healthy behaviour by including relevant topics in school curricula” is mainly crucial in the framework of adolescent health and development. Education is not only a human right but one of the central tools that empower girls (Human Rights WATCH, 2017; Wardana, 2020). UNICEF Report of 2018 on Menstrual Hygiene Management in South Asian Schools reveals that India has the highest number of adolescent girls in the world. With the increasing rate of the adolescent girl population, there is a requirement to spread awareness about menstrual health and hygiene. Insufficient proper knowledge, illiteracy, and financial issues lead to unhygienic practices, which results in various health problems. Later on, these practices lead to adolescent girls dropping out of school (UNICEF, 2018-2020). Menstruation is surrounded by myths and taboos in India. It blocked the right access to knowledge and information and is also one of the neglected topics. Most of the girls who belong to the early adolescent age group drop out of school because of inadequate resources that contribute to menstrual hygiene practices (Bansal, 2021). Due to the negligence of menstrual issues, many adolescent girls are deprived of accessing their fundamental **Right to Education** (Article 21 A: states that: the State shall provide free and Compulsory education to all the children of the age of six to fourteen years.), and even **the Right to life** (Article 21: Protection of life and personal liberty: No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to the procedure established by law) (Lakshmikant, 2019). The UNICEF, 2018 report also indicates that 52% of adolescent girls are those who don’t have any prior knowledge about menstruation before menarche. Most of their mothers believe in taboos related to menstruation and considered menstruation impure. Not focusing much on this, the natural cycle becomes a barrier to empowering women and girls, and also because of this, they don’t get the

benefit under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 which gives free education to children till 14 years of age (Bansal, 2021). A study conducted by Van Eijk et al., (2016) reveals that in India about a quarter of adolescent girls miss school during periods. Inadequate sanitation facilities become the reason for this. A survey conducted in Bangladesh shows that only 36 percent of adolescent girls had prior knowledge about periods (The World Bank, 2022). In addition to this, through the perspective of human rights there is a need to emphasize the quality of infrastructure of the school: neat and clean washroom with proper sanitation facilities (soap and Water), proper disposal mechanism of used Sanitary Napkins, Spread awareness about menstruation and menstrual hygiene practices. The chapter on menstruation should be included in School books, and workshops related to menstruation should be conducted on School premises. If all of this will be encompassing in school curricula the dropout rate of girls will decrease and they easily enjoy the human right to education.

### **The Right to Health**

The Human right to health also plays an important role in practicing good menstrual hygiene. It contains the right to medicine and health care. According to World Health Organization "achieving the right to health is both central to, and dependent upon, the realization of other human rights, to food, housing, work, education, information, and participation." No one can fully enjoy their rights if they do not have health. The human right to health creates a legal obligation for countries, "to ensure access to timely, acceptable, and affordable health care of appropriate quality as well as to provide for the underlying determinants of health, such as safe and potable water, sanitation, food, and housing, health-related information and education, and gender equality" (Roche, and Veerdonk, 2019). Moreover, Article 12 of the ICESCR states that every person has the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. Later it has been focused on Article 12 of CEDAW; it states that "States parties shall take all the appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care to ensure on a basis of equality of men and women, access to health care services, including those relative to family planning" (Elimination of Discrimination against women, 1999). Under the Indian Constitution Article 47 of the Directive Principles of State Policy ensures that the state must maximize the nutrition level, to improve the public health and living standard of people (Lakshmikant, 2019). The right to health means the accessibility of all the health services to the people they require without any financial hardship. No person

should die or get sick because of financial problems. Good health is also determined by other basic human rights like proper sanitation facilities, safe and hygienic workplaces, healthy food, and clean drinking water. Many girls experience fear during the first bleeding cycle because they don't have enough knowledge regarding it. The stigma that surrounds menstruation blocks the right to access information, and knowledge about the management of menstrual hygiene (WHO, 2020). Subsequently, it affects the health of women and girls. Understanding menstruation and menstrual hygienic practices is completely a normal process. When women don't have sufficient awareness about the management of periods, for instance, women use unhealthy sanitary materials for absorption of menstrual blood they may experience different health issues. Therefore, enabling them to manage periods easily there is an utmost need for the right knowledge and information. It is their right to feel healthy. Here is the duty of the state to ensure that women can enjoy their right to health to the fullest without any hindrance.

### **The right to non-discrimination and gender equality**

The definition of non-discrimination is contained in Article 1 (1) ILO 111, which provides that discrimination includes 'Any distinction, exclusion or preference made based on race, Colour, sex, religion, political opinion, natural extraction or social origin, which has the effect of nullifying or impairing equality of opportunity or treatment in the employment of occupation'. Thus, the right to equality requires that all persons be treated equally without any discrimination. The principle of equality and discrimination assures that those in equal situations dealt with equality in law and practice (ILO Convention, 1958). Moreover, article 3 of CEDAW state that "all appropriate measures including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, to guarantee them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men". The main point here to notice is that equality doesn't mean being identical. For achieving equality, the state would take all the necessary measures that would help a person in achieving equality (Wardana, 2020). To focus on the point of gender equality the CEDAW Committee has further elaborated its point: "It is not enough to guarantee women treatment that is identical to that of men. Rather, biological as well as socially and culturally constructed differences between men and women must be taken into account. Under certain circumstances, non-identical treatment of women and men will be required to address such differences" (UN.CEDAW, 2004). A study conducted in Nepal shows that during periods women are forced to stay in a hut even though the government of Nepal announced this practice illegal (The World Bank,



2022). Equality and non-discrimination form the basis of human rights. All individuals should enjoy human rights and therefore it is required that existing inequalities be identified and removed. Any form of discrimination that becomes a hurdle in the way of enjoyment of human rights amounts to a violation of human rights and should be addressed immediately. States must remove discrimination in the realization of human rights. For practitioners, it is important that if they find any form of discrimination or any unsuitable effect on the women and girls they are working with, then they may have further advocacy leverage with the state by highlighting the discrimination and making recommendations on how the state may deal with it (HUMAN RIGHT WATCH, 2017). Menstrual health and hygiene practical barriers in managing menstruation may become the reason for not enjoying human rights properly. Cultural norms that surround periods may further root discriminatory practices. Myths and taboos related to menstruation are entrenched in the perception that menstruation is impure or something that to be ashamed of or to keep secret. This can lead to discriminatory practices against women and girls, hindering gender equality and impacting the dignity of women and girls.

### **Inferences and Conclusion**

Viewing menstrual health and hygiene through the human rights framework, studies show that women and girls don't enjoy their human rights to the fullest. The poor practice of MHH (menstrual health and hygiene) threatens their human rights. A study which was conducted in Goa by Patel, Vernekar, and Desai (2019) shows that 71.4% of respondents admitted that various restrictions are imposed on them during periods. These restrictions are mostly related to religion. About 63.2% are those who followed these restrictions like not entering the prayer room when menstruating. 91.8% of Hindu girls, 90.4% of Muslim girls, and 8.1 % are Catholic girls who followed these restrictions. Another study which was conducted by Sultan and Sahu (2017) revealed that 76% of girls are not allowed to attend any religious prayer or function and they are forced to sleep separately. Menstruation and menstrual practices allow many barriers even in modern times like social, cultural, and religious restrictions are still imposed on menstruations that lead to creating an immense problem in the path of menstrual hygiene management (Kaur, Kaur, and Kaur, 2018). Results of these studies show that these restrictions lead to discrimination and inequality. Menstruating women and girls are not enjoying the human rights to non-discrimination and gender Equality. Furthermore, a study conducted by Dingra, Kumar,

and Kaur (2009) in Jammu and Kashmir revealed that girls don't have sufficient knowledge about periods before menarche, due to which they face several health issues. This study also highlights hygiene level among girls is quite unsatisfactory. 98% of respondents believed that there should be no regular bath during menstruation. These girls don't have proper knowledge about periods. Another study which was conducted by Maniar and Mehta (2017) illustrated major findings that school-going girls usually miss school because of the fear of strains of menstrual blood. Girls use clothes also there are no proper mechanisms for disposal of this used menstrual material. One more study conducted in Navi Mumbai by Thakur, et. al. (2017) revealed that 25% of girls use reusable cloth, because of the poor economic condition of their families. Women don't have much knowledge about menstrual hygiene and usage of reused clothes will lead to health issues like reproductive tract infection, and vaginal infections. The inadequate knowledge mostly hampers the right to health and education. Based on the above illustration, menstruation is a normal reproductive cycle experienced by almost all menstruators. But still, people who menstruate all over the world face hurdles in the context of its management. Menstruation often inhibits them from recognizing their basic human rights. Instead of considering menstrual health as a separate issue, it is important to recognize menstruation is a prerequisite for the accomplishment of human rights. It is crucial to keep in mind menstrual health is a matter of human rights.

### **Recommendations**

Based on above-discussed literature following are the recommendations:

- The state has to find out the ground-level problems that become the stone in the way of menstrual hygiene management and also endeavor to address these problems immediately.
- In the school curriculum, the chapter on menstruation must be included. A workshop related to menstruation would be organized at school as well as community level. The students will get awareness about MHH will help the students. Most importantly there is a need to keep in check the sanitation facilities of schools. There should be a neat and clean washroom with a proper mechanism for the disposal of sanitary napkins, where they can change their sanitary product with dignity and comfort.
- At workplaces, there is a need for a safe and healthy working environment. There is a requirement for complete sanitation facilities (soap, water) in the restroom of workplaces, where menstruating women easily met their hygienic needs.

- The state must chalk out health policies that easily fulfill the need of menstruating women. There is a necessity to include in the health policies distribution of free napkins to poor women. For practitioners, it is important to view how these policies work at the ground level.
- Practitioners engaged in programming advocacy related to menstrual hygiene management should know myths, taboos, and cultural norms where they are working, to enable girls and women to overcome these menstrual-related obstacles.

### References

- Babbar, K., Martin, J., Ruiz, J., Parray, A, A., and Sommer, M. (2022). Menstrual health is a public health and human rights issue. *The Lancet Public Health*,7(1) Retrieve from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2468266721002127?via%3Dihub>
- Bansal, O. (2021). Raising awareness about menstrual hygiene and right to education for adolescent females: Role of Indian Judiciary. Retrieve from <https://blog.ipleaders.in/raising-awareness-about-menstrual-hygiene-right-education-adolescent-females-role-indian-judiciar/>
- Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). General Comment No. 23 on the right to just and favourable conditions of work (article 7 of the International Convention on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights). (2016). E/C.12/GC/23, Retrieve from <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5550a0b14.html>
- Das, P., Baker, K., Dutta, A., Swain, T., Sahoo, S., Das, B., Panda, B., Nayak, A., Bara, M., Bilung, B., Mishra, P., Panigrahi, P., Cairncross, S. and Torondel, B. (2015). Menstrual Hygiene Practices, WASH Access And The Risk Of Urogenital Infection In Women From Odisha, India. *PLOS ONE*,10(6), Retrieve from <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0130777>
- Dhingra, R., Kumar, A., and Kour, M. (2017). Knowledge and Practices related to Menstruation among Tribal (Gujjar) Adolescent Girls. *Studies on Ethno-Medicine*, 3(1), 43-48.
- Garg, R., Goyal, S., and Gupta, S. (2011). India moves towards menstrual hygiene: Subsidized sanitary Napkins for Rural Adolescent Girls—Issues and Challenges. *Modern Child Health*, 16:767-774.
- Gill, R. (2019). *Gender, Culture and Honour*, Rawat Publications

- Greetz, A., Iyer, L., Kasen, P., Mazzola, F., and Peterson, K. (2016). Menstrual Health in India- Country Landscape Analysis. FSG. Retrieve from [https://menstrualhygieneday.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/FSG-Menstrual-Health-Landscape\\_India](https://menstrualhygieneday.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/FSG-Menstrual-Health-Landscape_India).
- HUMAN RIGHTS WASH. (2017). Understanding Menstrual Hygiene Management and Human rights. Retrieve from <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/understanding-menstrual-hygiene-management-human-rights>
- HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH. (2017). Menstrual hygiene a human right issue. Retrieve from <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/understanding-menstrual-hygiene-management-human-rights>
- ILO Convention No. 111. (1958). C111- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention. Retrieve from [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C111](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C111)
- ILO Convention No. 161 (1985). C161- Occupational Health Services Convention. Retrieve from [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C161](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C161)
- Kaur, R., Kaur, K., Kaur, R. (2018). Menstrual Hygiene, Management, and waste Disposal: Practices and Challenges Faced by Girls/Women of Developing Countries. *Journal Environmental and Public Health*, Retrieve from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29675047/>
- Lakshmikant, M. (2019). *Indian Polity*, McGraw Hill India
- Manhas, S., Asmat, S., and Dolker, T. (2017). Knowledge about Menarche and Menstruation among Tribal Females of Kargil. *International Journal of Agriculture*, 7(5), 605-612.
- Maniar, A., and Mehta, S. (2017). Menstrual Hygiene Practices: Myths and Taboos, *International Journal of Research social sciences*. 7(12). Retrieve from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321608691\\_Menstrual\\_Hygiene\\_Practices\\_Myths\\_and\\_Taboo](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321608691_Menstrual_Hygiene_Practices_Myths_and_Taboo)
- Narayan, K., Srinivas, D., Pelto, J. P. and Veerammal, S. (2001). Puberty Rituals, Reproductive knowledge and health of adolescent schoolgirls in South India. *Asia Pacific Population Journal*, 16(2):225-38. Retrieve from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279948385\\_Puberty\\_Rituals\\_Reproductive\\_Knowledge\\_and\\_Heal](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279948385_Puberty_Rituals_Reproductive_Knowledge_and_Heal)

- Naughton, M., Weiss, P. P. L., L. and Ramirez, V. M. (2017). Providing Sustainable Sanitation Services for all in WASH Interventions through a menstrual hygiene management approach. *WaterGlobalPractice*. Retrieve from <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Providing-sustainable-sanitation-services-for-all-a-Naughton-Weiss/641df629ef1b7e>
- Ndlovu, E., and Ednah, B. (2016). Menstrual Hygiene - A Salient Hazard In Rural Schools: A Case Of Masvingo District Of Zimbabwe. *Jamba: Journal Of Disaster Risk Studies*,8(2),Retrieve from <https://jamba.org.za/index.php/jamba/article/view/204>
- Pandey, A. (2014). Challenges Experienced by Adolescent Girls while Menstruation in Kathmandu, Valley: A Qualitative Study. *Journal of Community medicine and Public health*, Retrieve from <https://www.omicsonline.org/open-access/challenges-experienced-by-adolescent-girls-while-menstruation-in-kathmandu-valley-a-qualitative-study-2161-0711.1000285.php?aid=25564>
- Patel, M.S., Vernekar, P. S., and Desai, M.A. (2019). A Study on the knowledge, Attitude and Practices Regarding Menstrual Hygiene among Adolescent Girls in Schools in a Rural Goa. *Journal of Clinical and Diagnostic Research*, 13(6):7-10.
- Roche, D. I. M., and Veerdonk, V.D. N. (2019). Menstrual health and hygiene is a matter of rights, not a human right. Retrieve from <https://madamithoughts.medium.com/menstrual-health-and-hygiene-is-a-matter-of-human-rights-not-a-human-right-747afd24ec11>
- Spot On! Improving Menstrual Management in India. (2015). Retrieved from <https://www.dasra.org/assets/uploads/resources/Spot%20On%20%20Improving%20Menstrual%20Management%20in%20India.pdf> on 6<sup>th</sup> July, 2021.
- Sumpter, C. and Belen, T. (2013).A Systematic Review of the Health and Social Effects of Menstrual Hygiene Management. *PLOS ONE*, 8(4). Retrieve from <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0062004>
- Thakur, H., Aronsson, A., Bansode, S., and Lundborg, S.C. (2014). Knowledge, Practices, and Restrictions related to Menstruation among Young Women from low economic community in Mumbai, India. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 2(2):72.Retrieve from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4080761/>

- The World Bank. (2022). Menstrual Health and Hygiene. Retrieve from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/water/brief/menstrual-health-and-hygiene>
- Tiwary, R. A. (2018). Role of Menstrual Hygiene in Sustainable Development Goals. *International Journal of Health Sciences and Research*, 8(5): 377-386.
- U.N. Comm. on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. (1999.) Retrieve from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports/21report.pdf>
- UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, "General Recommendation No. 25, on Article 4. (2004). Retrieve from <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/>
- UNICEF. (2018-2020). Menstrual Hygiene in Schools in South Asia. Retrieve from <https://washmatters.wateraid.org/sites/g/files/jkxoof256/files/menstrual-hygiene-management-in-schools-in-south-asia---synthesis-report.pdf>
- UNICEF. (2018-2020). Menstrual Hygiene in Schools in South Asia.
- UNICEF. (2019). Guidance on Menstrual Health and Hygiene, UNICEF for every child. Retrieve from <https://www.unicef.org/documents/guidance-menstrual-health-and-hygiene>
- UNICEF. (2019). Guidance on Menstrual Health and Hygiene, UNICEF for every child.
- UNICEF. (2019). Guide to Menstrual Hygiene Materials. *UNICEF for every Child*, Retrieve from <https://www.unicef.org/media/91346/file/UNICEF-Guide-menstrual-hygiene-materials-2019.pdf>
- UNICEF. (2019). Guide to Menstrual Hygiene Materials. UNICEF for every Child.
- UNICEF. (2019). Guide to Menstrual Hygiene Materials. UNICEF for every Child.
- United Nations (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. *United Nations*,1-35. Retrieve from <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20S>

- United Nations (2015). Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. *United Nations*, 1-35.
- United Nations Human Rights. (2014). Realizing the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation: A Handbook
- United Nations Human Rights. (2014). Realizing the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation: A Handbook. Retrieve from [https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/ohchr\\_realizing\\_the\\_human\\_rights\\_to\\_water\\_and\\_sanitation\\_a\\_handbook\\_2014.pdf](https://www.pseau.org/outils/ouvrages/ohchr_realizing_the_human_rights_to_water_and_sanitation_a_handbook_2014.pdf)
- United Nations. (1999) U.N. Comm. on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.
- United Nations. (NA). UN Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women, "General Recommendation No. 25, on Article 4.
- Van Ejik, M.A., et al. (2016). Menstrual hygiene management among adolescent girls in India: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMJ Open*, <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/bmjopen/6/3/e010290.full.pdf>
- Wardana, A. K. (2020). Human Rights Framework on Menstrual Health and Hygiene. *Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research*, 140. Published in International conference on law economic and health
- WHO. (2020). World Health Statement on menstrual health and hygiene. Retrieve from <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-06-2022-who-statement-on-menstrual-health-and-rights>
- WSSCC. And UN Women. (2015). Menstrual Hygiene Management: behaviour and practices in the Kedougou Region, Senegal. *Gender, Hygiene and Sanitation*, 1-72. Retrieve from <https://africa.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Africa/Attachments/Publications/2015/07/kedougou>

Ajaz Ahmad Gilani\*

#### Abstract

*The notions of diversity and pluralism have always been challenging for scholars across disciplines both conceptually as well as methodologically. While conventionally, diversity implies 'existence of many' however this understanding of the term is superseded due to the scholars' disagreement over such connotations. Part of the reason for such disagreement is that diversity is most often used synonymously with pluralism. This paper addresses the issues in the usages of the terms diversity and pluralism and argues that diversity is a precondition for pluralism. It provides a model for approaching pluralism within media and communication studies through examining its usages across disciplines. This paper also offers the ways of mapping diversity within news media through the analytical inputs about how various scholars have approached this phenomenon. It simultaneously tries to explore the inter-linkages between diversity, news framing and how it contributes to quality journalism. This paper is believed to steer the researchers into empirically exploring diversity and pluralism in news media.*

#### Keywords

Diversity, Pluralism, Democracy, Journalism, News Framing

#### Introduction:

The notions of diversity can be traced from the Constitution itself which provides for the equality and freedom to its citizens in a variety of forms. Considered as one of the largest democracies in the world in terms of its plurality, India comprises of people with "different religious, cultural or linguistic traditions [are] treated as equal citizens and [are] subject to no disability because they did not share the tradition that happens to be that of a numerical majority of the population" (Redmond 1978, p. 40). All these existent groups in the country have their own cultural patterns

---

\* Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K  
Email: [ajaz.gilani@gmail.com](mailto:ajaz.gilani@gmail.com)



which differ from others based on their geographical locations and ethnicity. Owing to such multicultural disposition, the usage of the term diversity in daily discourses has become a common practice. The common connotations of the term diversity implies the existence of many within a given setting, but this conventional understanding of diversity is obsolete owing to the disputes among scholars in considering it merely as the existence of many. Part of the reason for this dispute is the fact that diversity has most often been used synonymously with pluralism – a phenomenon which will be dealt in the latter sections of this paper. Scholars across disciplines have attached different meanings to the term diversity which keeps swinging from one to the other. However those who engage with these terms, more particularly scholars from media and communication studies as well as social sciences, have since long been concerned with conceptualizing the notions of diversity. While social scientists define diversity in terms of the factors such as race, culture, region and so on, but the determining factors of diversity for scholars from media and communication studies include parameters such as sources, resources, contents, speakers, language and so on (Maltese et al., 2009). Karppinen (2006) emphasizes that “...diversity clearly denotes heterogeneity on some level, it can be defined in any number of ways and it can refer to any aspect of the media: sources, outlets, opinions as well as genres and representations” (p.60). Here diversity denotes a variety of contents presented by multiple numbers of speakers to a variety of audiences reflecting diverse opinions and focussing on different issues. While Karppinen (2006) used the term heterogeneity in defining the term diversity but the term heterogeneity does not point towards a variety of opinions. Nevertheless it does encompass most of the dimensions mentioned above. However this does not suffice for the democratic functioning of media, if it otherwise guarantees that media is fair and unbiased in disseminating variety of information, through a variety of media sources on a variety of issues in a variety of languages and so on, to cater to the needs of a variety of people spread across different geographical locations and this is one prerequisite of media pluralism. Pluralism *per se* implies existence of diverse social groups wherein there is “acceptance, recognition and tolerance” which ensures “peace and tranquillity” among these social groups (Das & Gilani, n. d). Amartya Sen (1993) out rightly enunciated: “experiencing pluralism is, for us Indians, an easy virtue (it is all around us), but practising it is a different matter altogether – it demands much more of us. Being born as Indians, we find ourselves in a culture that has had thousands of years of flourishing diversity, in a community that is proud of its major languages and literatures, in a polity that tolerates dissent and a substantial

heterogeneity of political ideas, and in a country that has persistently tried to make room for different religious beliefs" (p. 37). This is one way of understanding pluralism which is common among scholars from social science disciplines. However considering this principle to delineate pluralism in media and communication studies especially news media, one may aptly define news pluralism in terms of "fair distribution" (Rescher, 2002) of, or equal treatment to, a variety of news forms as pointed out by Das & Gilani (n. d) such as social, cultural, religious, political, geographical, linguistic and so on.

Scholars within the disciplines of media and communication studies have used an array of terms to epitomize the prevailing media milieu such as "communicative abundance" (Keane, 1999), "cultural chaos" (McNair, 2006), "multiculturalism" (Taylor et al., 1994). Taking into consideration these terms informing the profusion of information being made available to the masses, diversity and pluralism are becoming a common discourse among academicians within these disciplines. However social science researchers, particularly sociologists and anthropologists, have employed pluralism model as a framework to the study of culture. Scholars from media and communication studies in India have embraced the concept apprehensively owing to its limited usage within the discipline. The idea is not to engage much in offering the conventional understanding of diversity or pluralism; instead emphasis will be laid on the issues of diversity and pluralism within Indian news media. In the following section, focus will be laid more on how the notions of diversity and pluralism have been understood in social sciences considering various dimensions and its subsequent transformation in media and communication studies particularly news media.

### **Notions of news pluralism and the trajectories**

Pluralism as a concept in media and communication studies has seemingly to do with broadcasting varieties however its usage across disciplines is a dispute. Scholars contend the importance of media pluralism in the modern societies in terms of the plurality and heterogeneity of contents, sources, ownership, and so on within the news media, which they believe is a condition for the sound functioning of democracy (McQuail, 1992; Stirling, 1998; Cuilenburg, 1998, 1999; Napoli, 1999; Karppinen, 2006). The Republic of India, which is considered as the world's largest democracy, is inhabited by people characterized by greater level of differences identified through factors such as language, religion, culture, ethnicity, geographical location and so on. These factors gauge the diversity of the country wherein, despite differences on varied grounds, people exchange information and opinions among each other

which they think will serve the society (Doyle, 2002). People tend to accept and value information and opinions exchanged thus creating an atmosphere of coherence which in turn increases the level of acceptance, recognition and tolerance among people with differing socio-cultural, socio-economic and socio-political traits (See: Chavez & Weisinger, 2008). This is one way of understanding the notions of pluralism especially within the disciplines of social sciences. However, scholars from media and communication studies generally associated pluralism with media diversity, which they believe is linked to the fundamental rights as mentioned in the Constitution of India.

In trying to determine how pluralism can be arrived at or the ways of determining the level of pluralism in media, scholars argue that the notions of pluralism are completely ubiquitous. In news media, pluralism deals more with the dissemination of information to the audiences. It also deals with reflection and representation through media contents disseminated to the public. While there are constitutional provisions for promoting diversity, in general, but there are also provisions for promoting media diversity through various regulatory agencies which can broadly be categorised at three levels – executive level, judicial level and legislative level. Though, I may not delve into the regulatory aspects of news media which *per se* invites discourses on a broader level, however with the advancement of technology and also when the world has stepped into an era of abundance (of news sources available through digital media), the conventional understanding of pluralism within media has seen a drastic change in terms of the expansion of sources. Scholars however differ over a variety of factors such as ownership patterns, control, contents, actors, voices, audiences, disparities, balance, and so on as the measures of diversity (McQuail, 1992; Stirling, 1998; Cuilenburg, 1998, 1999; Napoli, 1999; Doyle, 2002; Karppinen, 2006). All these factors come broadly under internal and external pluralism (Gibbons 1998, Karppinen, 2006, 2013). Some scholars went beyond such contestations and argue that while these can be used to determine the level of diversity, they fail to inform about what constitutes pluralism. They claim that within diversity is the idea of recognition, acceptance, and tolerance, having its roots on the principle of justice and fairness, which inform about the levels of pluralism (*see*: Das & Gilani, n. d.). Recognition implies identification of the contents based on differences; acceptance involves an act of receiving without any bias; and tolerance involves the power to endure the differences. Now keeping all these three aspects into consideration while imagining of diversity within the news media, pluralism involves the “proportionate representation of issues within the news media”. News media though is obliged to promote democracy, but

it is also “charged with a duty to provide the necessary resources for effective citizenship” (Murdock and Golding 1989, p.183).

To support their claim that news media is under an obligation to promote democracy, Murdock and Golding (1989) identified three kinds of relations between communications and citizenship i.e. ‘access to information’, ‘access to broadest possible range of information’ and recognition through ‘representation’. ‘Access to information’ enables citizens to get familiar with the ‘fundamental rights’ and also ‘allows them to pursue their rights effectively’ thus ensuring freedom of ‘information and expression’; the second kind of relation i.e. ‘access to broadest possible range of information’ allows citizens to debate on political issues for making choices through offering diversity of contents and also using communication facilities to file their criticism or to propose further courses of action; and the third relation is concerned with the idea of recognition through ‘representation’, according to which citizens ‘must be able to recognize themselves and their aspirations in the range of representations offered within the central communications sectors and be able to contribute to developing those representations’ (Murdock and Golding 1989, p. 183-84). These three forms of relations between citizens and communication system, which inform about the obligations of the communication system as well the rights of the citizens’, suggest that the operational mechanism of communication system must be two-fold: one, that it must ‘offer maximum possible diversity of provision and provide mechanisms for user feedback and participation’ at the ‘production level’; and secondly, it must ‘guarantee universal access to the services that can ensure the exercise of citizenship’ irrespective of the ‘income’ or geographical boundaries at the ‘consumption level’ (Murdock and Golding 1989, p. 184).

While the debate is on news diversity and pluralism, one can then ask whether every media outlet should supply the same contents to its audiences and in the same way as other media outlets do. Since diversity is a precondition for pluralism and the roots of diversity can be traced through differences in the media contents, news media must reflect such differences through ‘voices, ideas and opinions’ (Das & Gilani, n. d.). For example, if audiences use only one channel during a certain period of time when other news channels broadcast the similar contents during the same time, then audiences may subscribe only one news channel; if otherwise the different channels broadcast different contents or if the format of the news is different which involves a process called news-framing, discussed in the latter sections. Subscription of more than one news channels requires that the audiences are exposed to a variety of news items and that such variety of news contents reflect different voices,

perspectives, viewpoints, ideas and opinions (See: Balcytiene, 2009). These various elements reflecting diversity have been categorized by scholars under two broad perspectives as mentioned earlier i.e. internal and external pluralism (Gibbons 1998, Karppinen, 2006, 2013).

Internal pluralism can be arrived through the diversity of contents within the single media outlet and can be determined through analysing news media contents at two levels - micro level and macro level. At micro level, news contents of one particular media outlet can be analysed to gauge pluralism through mapping the proportion of all contents broadcast. For instance considering an Indian bi-lingual television news channel Aaj Tak, if this channel presents a variety of news contents each different from the other, then Aaj Tak presents the diversity of contents to audiences regardless of the exposure diversity. At the same time, if diversity of contents are proportionally presented (in terms of the time given to each content for representation), one can conclude that there is pluralism in Aaj Tak. At the macro-level, internal pluralism can be measured within various media outlets, say for instance NDTV, Aaj Tak and Zee News. Suppose these three channels broadcast news containing similar contents but if the format of the news broadcast on each of these channels is different from the rest, it can be said that there is pluralism (internal) provided that other contents are presented fairly and in the similar format. Therefore differences and fair representation are two key elements that determine internal pluralism within the news media. Or in other words, internal pluralism can be reached through equal representation of a variety of contents through diverse voices (Doyle, 2002). Also while internal pluralism contains the diversity of contents, but such diversity must cover/reflect/represent the issues of diverse sections of a larger society (Wauters et al., 2012). Thomas Gibbons (2015) advocates that despite 'media organizations' taking active role in the manifestation of a highest level of internal pluralism, however, they must also ensure that not a single 'institutional perspective' predominates, which helps create spaces for new ideas and opinions to emerge (p. 1394). External pluralism is realized through the existence of a multiple number of news media outlets. Hallin and Mancini defined external pluralism as "pluralism achieved at the level of the media system as a whole, through the existence of a range of media outlets or organizations reflecting the points of view of different groups or tendencies in society" (2004, p. 29). This definition suggests that external pluralism is concerned with the diversity of media structures such as ownership diversity, media outlet diversity, channel diversity, and so on. Also, external pluralism exists when there is the diversity of news owners i.e. the news suppliers (Doyle, 2002). Scholars argue that the demand to promote external pluralism in

news media is running down the scale due to the evolution of digital media where audiences are free to choose any source and the internet also allows freedom of expression to the users (See: Humphreys, 2009).

### **News and the criteria for news framing**

News is perhaps as old as 'Man' itself. As a primal concept free from any concrete definition in its conventional usage, news is assimilated in our lives to such an extent that it would be unjust to enquire about its existence. However in attempting to trace the origin of news within the media, one has to go back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the first news account appeared in Johannes Gutenberg's printing press (Campbell et al., 2011). By the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, news has been understood only as a means of getting information about the daily occurrences within and outside of the country. These were brought to us through print media. The construction of news and the intrinsic practices of its making have been bluntly frowned upon by the scholars from media and communication studies (Schudson, 1989). There is no precise operational definition of news in social science disciplines either. However if one quests for a substantial definition of the term news, one would arrive at Gitlin's (1980) definition who stated that news is "a routine, universalizable definition - comes to naught" (p. 268).

During 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dissemination of news witnessed a major shift from the previously press operating as the news-making institution to other means such as television, radio (Shoemaker, 2006) as well as digital media, social media and so on during the beginning of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Also, while the term 'news' is still existent but 'current affairs' appeared as an extension to the parent term 'news'. The usage of the phrase 'current affairs' can vary from discipline to discipline, however for the sake of providing a deeper insight into what constitutes news and the inclusion of the phrase 'current affairs' within it stands as a justification to the fact that news can appear in its various forms. While conventionally, the term 'current' may inform the 'flow' of something; but in media and communication studies, the term 'affairs' is always correlated with the affairs of a nation-state that affects not only the nation, but the communities and even people individually. Online news as well as news through portable devices can be the sources providing quick access to current affairs. These sources have gone beyond the precincts of the national network and turning world into a 'network society' (Castells, 2004). Thus if there is absence of the forms of news media as they existed primarily, the flow of information from person to person or from nation to nation will not be thwarted. It will sustain in its alternative forms in the contemporary times. But whether online sources affect the context of the news depends largely on how news is framed. The concept of news frame

was initially introduced by Erving Goffman (1974) to mean an organized set of contexts which provides audiences with a sense of what reality is, however it later came to be considered as “one of the most fertile areas of current research in journalism and mass communication” (Riffe 2004, p. 2). Entman (1993) points out:

Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described (p. 52).

Jennings & Miron (2004) argue that the underlying idea of framing is that it controls and shapes the perceptions and representations of reality for its audiences – the two fundamental components informing the psychological and sociological foundations of framing. Sociological foundations of news framing point towards structural components utilized in the making of news frames such as “words, images, phrases, and presentation styles” (Druckman, 2001; p.227). On the other hand, psychological perspective suggests how audiences react to the news frames through their ‘cognitive schemata’ (Goffman, 1974). Scholars such as Kahneman and Tversky (1984) fervently studied the methods of constructing the audience frames to explore how news framing persuades decision-making among its audiences. They exhibited how the diversity of news frames offering the same news can manipulate people’s decisions in making a selection. This psychological influence of news informs that framing is most often coupled with certain agenda (*see* McCombs & Shaw (1972; *also see* McCombs & Ghanem, 2001). Opposing McCombs’ claim that news framing entails certain kind of agenda, scholars such as de Vreese (2005) and Maher (2001) argue that framing predominantly involves the presentation of the issues and deals with the context of the news rather than salience. de Vreese (2005) points out that “a frame is an emphasis in salience of different aspects of a topic” (p. 53). They are only the ‘alternative ways’ to delineate problems that are endogenous to audiences both politically and socially. Therefore how audiences think about the news frame is largely based on the ‘activation model’ unlike the ‘accessibility model’ which identifies the audiences interested in locating agenda within the frame (*See*: Scheufele, 2000). The diversity of news frames entails the diversity of ideas *per se* or as scholars call it ‘internal diversity’ (Gibbons 1998, Komorek 2009, Karppinen, 2006, 2013), ensuring the standardized flow of information from media towards its audiences. The diversity of sources as well as the diversity of news frames enables its audiences to widen their coherent inclinations. On the contrary, Porto

(2007, p.314) argues, "When the range of cues in citizens' environment is restricted, serious obstacles emerge for citizen competence". The citizen competence largely depends upon the 'instinctive attributes' of the events or of the information which makes news newsworthy. These instinctive attributes have been termed by scholars as 'news values' (See, for example, Galtung and Ruge, 1965). John Galtung and Mari Ruge (1965) pointed out certain values (such as frequency, threshold, interpretation, cultural proximity, mental pre-image or predicted, unexpected or rare) that are a precondition for an event, information or people to be considered as news. However, the selection of news as per its values does not correspond to its framing which is more about the presentation of news.

Within the discipline of mass communication, Entman (1993) has offered 'four illustrations of theoretical debates' of news framing (p.56). The first illustration is the 'audience autonomy'. Considering 'dominant meaning' central to framing, it consists of "problem, causal, evaluative, and treatment interpretations with the highest probability of being noticed, processed, and accepted by the most people" (Entman 1993, p. 56). A particular frame can be considered as dominant only if the frequency of certain text is high within the frame and "congruent with the most common audience schemata" (p. 56). The second illustration is the 'journalistic objectivity' according to which "Journalists may follow the rules for "objective" reporting and yet convey a dominant framing of the news text that prevents most audience members from making a balanced assessment of a situation" (Entman 1993, p. 56). Entman (1993) argues that since journalists lack the common understanding about framing, naively they can inflict their 'dominant frames' on the news. The well versed the journalists with the objectivity, the reporting will be in equilibrium throughout the media environment. The third illustration is content analysis, one of the key functions of which is to determine the 'textual meaning' of and identify and describe the frames in the news. It thus informs the coders of drawing conclusions about the dominant meanings without measuring the salience of the objects and claims that content analysis, due to being unguided by the framing paradigm, often yield data that 'misrepresent' those media messages that are mostly picked up by the 'audience members'. The fourth and the last illustration is the 'public opinion and normative democratic theory'. The framing of events or other issues in the news media influences the democratic process which in turn affects the events being presented in the media. All these four illustrations suggested by Robert Entman (1993) can co-exist in one media presentation however they may or may not be found in all the frames (Abdullah & Hamid, 2010).



Framing for journalists signifies a process of simplifying intricate information for the public to comprehend (Scheufele and Tewksbury, 2007). It insinuates how news frames offered to the audiences affects their way of interpreting the frames for which scholars (such as McCombs & Shaw, 1972) call framing as a second-level agenda-setting i.e. how to think about some specific matter. Such a discourse on media framing tells about two levels of the construction of news – the ‘macro-level’ and the ‘micro-level’ news construction (Scheufele, 1999; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Considering framing as a ‘macroconstruct’ entails the ways in which news is communicated by journalists and other communicators to the audiences in a way to ‘resonate’ with the audiences’ prior knowledge about the issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Shoemaker & Reese, 2014). It indicates that framing is a way to trim down the intricacies of the news for the better understanding of and interpretation by the audiences as pointed out earlier. On the contrary, framing as microconstruct, according to Scheufele & Tewksbury (2007), illustrates “how people use information and presentation features regarding issues as they form impressions” (p. 12). These two levels within the journalistic standards of news framing empower journalists to produce information and present it to the audiences in such a way that it stimulates a specific reaction from the public. But beyond the framing of news, what are the possible ways through which diversity can be monitored and mapped within the news media is a question that requires exploration.

### **Nexus between diversity and quality journalism**

How one defines quality journalism is a question coupled with the criteria for quality journalism within news media. Before attempting to deal with the principles of quality journalism, emphasis will initially be laid on the notions of journalism; subsequently the focus will shift towards quality journalism as well as its allied aspects. Journalism *per se* is the practice of collecting information, assessing, filtering and presenting it to the audiences. But how does this sort of communication differ from other forms of communication depends largely upon the elements of journalism which makes it a vital organ of democracy. Scholars argue that the democracy of a country is reflected through the variety of information and news that media possesses and presents to its viewers (See for example, Coronel, n. d.).

Ramananda Chatterjee long back in 1929 wrote:

It is obvious that the spread of literacy and education has greatly to do with the progress of journalism and journalistic success. Political freedom and economic prosperity are other factors in

such progress and success. Religious and social freedom also are indispensable for progress in journalism (1929, p. 165).

Thus, while journalism contains supplying of information and ideas to the masses, it also requires maintaining transparency, which is vital to any democracy. In addition to this, as Chatterjee (1929) pointed out, political freedom and economic prosperity are the keys to ensuring quality journalism in media and communications. Now delving into the idea of 'quality' within journalism, it reflects the capabilities of journalism to positively play its role in disseminating information that will mould the thinking capabilities of citizens towards making decisions. Picard (2000) points out: "the issue of the quality of journalism is not merely a question of increasing the value of a product to consumers. Rather, quality is a central element in achieving the social, political, and cultural goals asserted for journalism in democratic societies" (p. 97). Dennis McQuail looked at the idea of 'quality' within the media through 'media performance', which according to him "set[s] out and examine[s] the record of a particular, though very broad, tradition of enquiry into the working of the mass media in their potential 'public interest' capacity" (1992, p. 11; Also see Czepek, 2009). McQuail (1992) hypothesized that the assessment of the diversity of news contents is essential to evaluate media performance in a democracy. Napoli (1999) considers diversity an essential element to advocate broader objectives of our societies. His diversity approach, which represents an effective democracy, is purely based on the marketplace of ideas, which "has served as a guiding principle" for various diversity enhancing policies (Napoli, 1999; p.9). His three-fold diversity approach serves to determine the quality of journalism but what is of significance to the audiences is how contents are framed for presentation to them, which is again an issue concerned with how the journalists perform their roles in framing the news. The studies conducted by Phillip Napoli (1999) and Dennis McQuail (1992), in principle, point towards the contribution of source diversity and content diversity in measuring news quality.

There are several ways to assess quality journalism within news media. Cuilenburg (2000) pointed out four levels which help evaluate the diversity in news journalism which further helps measure the quality in journalism. These are (a) *content units* – a level through which reflective and open diversity can be studied within individual content units of information such as television program or a newspaper article where focus will be on difference preferences and opinions presented in the programs or articles; (b) *content bundles* – a level through which reflective and open diversity can be understood within a large volume of contents such as broadcasting channel or a newspaper through which a multitude

of programmes/articles are presented to the audiences as a 'total package' by individual media outlet; (c) *medium type* - a level through which reflective and open diversity can be measured through certain medium such as radio, television or any daily newspaper by focussing on the diversity of content supply within their respective markets; and (d) *society's communications system* - wherein reflective and open diversity can be gauged within the broader system of a society as a whole such as broadcasting, newspapers, internet, and so on (Cuilenburg, 2000; p. 55).

Going beyond the four levels mentioned above, Cuilenburg (2000) has offered yet another way of dealing with the content diversity in the media market, which informs about another dimension of measuring quality within the news media contents thus differentiating between '*intra medium diversity*' and '*inter media diversity*' as forms of diversity in the media contents characterized by 'diversity within a specific content package' and diversity 'between all content packages' respectively within the media market (Cuilenburg, 2000; p. 56). Considering 'intra-diversity' as important from a 'societal point of view', Cuilenburg (2000) accentuated this will vouch that the diversity of ideas and opinions will be confronted by the audiences. Inter diversity on the other hand is important for individual users in the sense that it facilitates selection of a content package as per their preferences among other packages. McQuail (1992) believes that in addition to diversity being the goal of media outlets, it equally is thought of as a means to accomplish the societal goals. Napoli (1999) considers diversity as a 'policy objective' conferring a sense of 'social responsibility' to the media. Thus while one speaks of quality journalism within media, one might specify content diversity and source diversity as the means of measuring it (Napoli, 1999; Cuilenburg, 2000, McQuail, 1992). Though, for instance, one specific content may not probably reflect the diversity of sources, however if one attempts to measure the diversity, one needs to evaluate all the contents presented to the audiences during the day, which invites reactions from the audiences. In fact, the criteria for quality journalism can be arrived at through the journalistic practices such as offering diversity of contents to audiences through diversity of sources. Diversity of contents or sources can be understood in terms of the degree of proportionality in the representation of various dimensions of news contents such as social, political, economic, geographic, and so on which, as mentioned earlier, reflects the robust functioning of democracy.

### **Conclusion:**

While diversity is a self-existing character in a variety of fields including media and communication studies but pluralism within news media has

remained an ambiguous concept among scholars across disciplines and both these terms have been understood synonymously depending largely on the usage of the terms. But whether academicians or scholars should worry about news pluralism given the diversity of sources in the age of digitalization and evolution of convergence media is a debatable issue and also requires exploration. This chapter offers an integrated understanding of diversity through identifying various elements such as contents, outlets, sources, audiences, exposure, frames, and so on thus opening up the horizons to evaluate the degree of diversity within the news media. Concurrently, the chapter informs about the notions of pluralism and the disparities in how scholars have used this phenomenon in social sciences and media studies, taking into consideration the parameters, which differ from discipline to discipline. Journalists are always under an obligation to ensure the functioning of democracy within the operational capacities of the media outlets through maintaining diversity of news frames and thus emphasis is laid towards maintaining quality within the journalistic profession. While the debates on news diversity and pluralism have been a common discourse in Europe and other western countries, but in India, such debates are still in its infancy stage. This chapter is an attempt to channel the researchers and academicians to empirically explore diversity and pluralism in news media.

#### References:

- Abdullah, S. A. & Hamid, H. (2010) *“Media framing of waste issues in selected Malaysian Newspapers”*, Journal of Human Capital Development, Vol. 3, No.1; pp. 41-54
- Balcytiene, A. (2009) *“Assessing Pluralism and the Democratic Performance of the Media in a Small Country: Setting a Comparative Research Agenda for the Baltic States”*, In Czepek, A., Hellwig, M. & Nowak, E. (Eds.) *“Press freedom and pluralism in Europe: Concepts and conditions”*, (pp. 129-139), UK, US: Intellect
- Campbell, R., et al., (2011) *“Media essentials: A brief introduction”*, Bedford press
- Castells, M. (2004) *“Informationalism, networks, and the network society: A Theoretical Blueprint”*, In Manuel Castells (Ed.) *“The network society: A cross-cultural perspective”* (pp. 3-45), Edward Elgar
- Chatterjee, R. (1929) *“Origin and growth of journalism among Indians”*, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 145, Part 2; pp. 161-168

- Chavez, C. I. & Weisinger, J. Y. (2008) *"Beyond diversity training: A social infusion for cultural inclusion"*, Human Resource Management, Vol. 47, No. 2; pp. 331-350
- Coronel, S. S. (n. d.) *"The role of the media in deepening democracy"*; Retrieved from: <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan010194.pdf>
- Cuilenburg, J. V. (1998) *"Diversity revisited: Towards a critical rational model of media diversity"*; In K. Brants, J. Hermes and L. Van Zoonen (eds.), *"The Media in Question: Popular cultures and public interests"*, (pp. 38-49), London: Sage
- Cuilenburg, J. V. (1999) *"On competition, access and diversity in media, old and new: Some remarks for communications policy in the information age"*, New Media & Society, Vol. 1, No. 2; pp. 183-207
- Cuilenburg, J. V. (2000) *"On measuring media competition and media diversity: Concepts, theories and methods"*, In Robert G. Picard, (ed.), *"Measuring media content, quality and diversity: Approaches and issues in content research"*, (pp. 51-84), Business and Research Development Centre, Turku School of Economics and Business Administration; Turku, Finland
- Czepek, A. (2009) *"Pluralism and Participation as Desired Results of Press Freedom: Measuring Media System Performance"*, In Czepek, A., Hellwig, M. & Nowak, E. (Eds.) *"Press freedom and pluralism in Europe: Concepts and conditions"*, (pp. 37-44), UK, US: Intellect
- Das, B. & Gilani, A. A. (n. d.) *"News diversity and pluralism"*, An epg-pathshala module in Media and Communication Studies; Retrieved from: <http://epgp.inflibnet.ac.in>
- De Vreese, C. H. (2005). *"News framing: Theory and typology"*, Information Design Journal + Document Design, Vol. 13, No. 1; pp. 51 - 62
- Doyle, G. (2002) *"Media ownership: The economics and politics of convergence and concentration in the UK and European media"*, London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage
- Druckman, J. (2001) *"The implications of framing effects for citizen competence"*, Political Behavior, Vol. 23, No. 3; pp. 225-256
- Entman, R. M. (1993) *"Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm"*, Journal of Communication, Vol. 43, No. 4; pp. 51-58
- Galtung, J. & Ruge, M. (1965) *"The structure of foreign news: The presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus crises in four Norwegian newspapers"*, Journal of International Peace Research, Vol. 1; pp. 64-91

- Gibbons, T. (1998) *“Regulating the media”*, (2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition), London, UK: Sweet & Maxwell
- Gibbons, T. (2015) *“Active pluralism: Dialogue and engagement as basic media policy principles”*, International journal of communication, Vol. 9; pp. 1382-1399; Available at: <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/2762/1371>
- Gitlin, T. (1980) *“The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the New Left”* Vol. XIV, Berkeley: The University of California Press
- Goffman, E. (1974) *“Frame Analysis: An essay on the organization of experience”*, NY: Harper & Row
- Hallin, D. C. & Mancini, P. (2004) *“Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics”*, Cambridge University Press
- Humphreys, P. (2009) *“Media freedom and pluralism in the United Kingdom (UK)”*, In Czepek, A., Hellwig, M. & Nowak, E. (Eds.) *“Press freedom and pluralism in Europe: Concepts and conditions”*, (pp. 197-211), UK, US: Intellect
- Jennings, B. & Miron, D. (2004) *“Theory and research in mass communication”*, Journal of Communication, Vol. 54, No. 4; pp. 662 – 704
- Kahneman, D. & Tversky, A. (1984) *“Choices, values, and frames”*, American Psychologist, Vol. 39, No. 4; pp. 341-350
- Karppinen, K. (2006) *“Media diversity and the politics of criteria: Diversity assessment and technocratisation of European media policy”*, Nordicom Review; Vol.27, No.2, pp. 53-68
- Karppinen, K. (2013) *“Rethinking media pluralism”*, New York: Fordham University Press
- Keane, J. (1999) *“Public life in the era of communicative abundance”*, Canadian Journal of Communication, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 165 – 78
- Komorek, E. (2009). *“Is media pluralism a human right”*, The European Court of Human Rights, The Council of Europe and the Issue of Media Pluralism; Issue 3, European Human Rights Law Review; pp. 395-414
- Maher, M. (2001) *“Framing: An emerging paradigm or a phase of agenda setting? In S.D. Reese, O.H. Gandy & A.E. Grant (Eds.), Framing Public Life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world, (pp. 83-94), New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum*
- Maltese, V. et al., (2009) *“On the interdisciplinary foundations of diversity”*, Paper presented at 1<sup>st</sup> international workshop on living web: making web diversity a true asset, 25<sup>th</sup> October, 2009;

Washington DC: USA; Available at:  
<http://eprints.biblio.unitn.it/1651/1/040.pdf>

- McCombs, M. E. & Ghanem, S. I. (2001) "*The convergence of agenda setting and framing*", In S.D. Reese, O.H. Gandy & A.E. Grant (Eds.), *Framing Public Life: Perspectives on media and our understanding of the social world*, (pp. 67-81), New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum
- McCombs, M. E. & Shaw, D. L. (1972) "*The agenda-setting function of mass media*", *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 2; pp. 176-187
- McNair, B. (2006) "*Cultural chaos – Journalism, news and power in a globalised world*", London: Routledge
- McQuail, D. (1992) "*Media performance: Mass communication and the public interest*", London, Sage
- Murdock, G. and Golding, P. (1989) "*Information poverty and political inequality: Citizenship in the age of privatized communications*", *Journal of Communication*, Vol.39, No. 3; pp. 180-95.
- Napoli, P. M. (1999) "*Deconstructing the diversity principle*", *Journal of communication*, Vol. 49, Issue 44, pp. 7-34
- Picard, R. G. (2000) "*Measuring quality by journalistic activity*", In Robert G. Picard, (ed.), "*Measuring media content, quality and diversity: Approaches and issues in content research*", (pp. 97-103), Business and Research Development Centre, Turku School of Economics and Business Administration; Turku, Finland
- Porto, M. P. (2007) "*Frame diversity and citizen competence: Towards a critical approach to news quality*", *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, Vol. 24 No. 4; pp. 303-321
- Redmond, M. (1978) "*Constitutional Aspects of Pluralism*", *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, Vol. 67, No. 265/266, pp. 40-58
- Rescher, N. (2002) "*Fairness: Theory and practice of distributive justice*", US, UK: Transaction Publishers
- Riffe, D. (2004) "*An editorial comment*", *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, Vol. 81, No. 1; pp. 2-3
- Scheufele, D. A. (1999) "*Framing as a theory of media effects*", *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 49, No. 1; pp. 103-122
- Scheufele, D. A. (2000) "*Agenda-setting, priming, and framing revisited: Another look at cognitive effects of political communication*", *Mass communication & Society*, Vol. 3, No. 2-3; pp. 297-316

- Scheufele, D. A. & Tewksbury, D. (2007) "*Framing, agenda setting, and priming: The evolution of three media effects models*", Journal of Communication; Vol. 57, No. 1, pp. 9-20
- Schudson, M. (1989) "*The Sociology of News Production*", In D. Berkowitz (Ed.) "*Social Meanings of News*", (pp. 7-30). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Sen, A. (1993) "*Indian Pluralism*", India International Centre Quarterly, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 37 - 46
- Shoemaker, P. J., & Reese, S. D. (2014) "*Mediating the Message in the 21st Century: A Media Sociology Perspective*" (3<sup>rd</sup> edition). NY, London: Routledge
- Shoemaker, P. J. (2006) "*News and newsworthiness: A commentary*", Communications, Vol. 31, pp. 105-111
- Stirling, A. (1998) "*On the economics and analysis of diversity*", Science Policy Research Unit, Electronic working papers series, Paper no.28, University of Sussex; Available at: <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.144.8865&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Taylor, C. et al., (1994) "*Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition*", New Jersey, Princeton University Press
- Wauters, E., Lievens, E. & Valcke, P. (2012) "*Guaranteeing media pluralism and protecting minors in social media: The current legal framework*", ICL & ICT. Available at: [https://lirias.kuleuven.be/bitstream/123456789/350783/1/EMS\\_OC\\_ICRI\\_D+1+2+2\\_2012.pdf](https://lirias.kuleuven.be/bitstream/123456789/350783/1/EMS_OC_ICRI_D+1+2+2_2012.pdf)



**Impact of income, healthcare facility and female literacy on infant mortality rate – A comparative analysis of South Asian and Central Asian Countries**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**

**12(1) 61 - 72**

**ISSN: 2249-667X**

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/336dd7f3-b28b-4dfc-b261-eaeb735e090d.pdf>

**Adnan Hussain Lone\***

**G. M. Rather\***

**Aijaz Ahmad Khanday\***

**Abstract**

*The present research paper on Spatiotemporal variation in infant mortality rate – a comparative analysis of central Asian and South Asian regions, reveals a significant variation in infant mortality rate because of various socio-economic and political reasons. Five countries of central Asia Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were selected; similarly six countries of South Asia i.e. India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka were selected. The paper is based on a secondary source of data. Time series analysis of the last six decades (1950-2010) was used to analyze the trend of IMR. Data for the last three years i.e., 2016, 2017, and 2018 was used to analyze the annual pattern of IMR pattern. The analysis shows that Central Asian countries have a low IMR rate (25/1000) in comparison to south Asian countries (30.6). Among The south Asian Countries, Pakistan has highest IMR rate (50 /1000 in 2018) followed by India (38/1000) Bangladesh( 31/1000), Bhutan (30/1000), Nepal(27/1000) and Srilanka (8/1000) While as Turkmenistan from central Asia has highest IMR rate (33/1000 in 2018) followed by Tajikistan(31/1000), Kyrgyzstan (25/1000), Kazakhstan ( 19/1000) and Uzbekistan ( 17/1000). So there is a wide range of IMR within the countries as well as between these two regions. An attempt has been made to suggest a planning strategy for decreasing IMR in both the regions.*

**Keywords**

IMR (infant mortality rate), Spatio-temporal, central Asia, South Asia

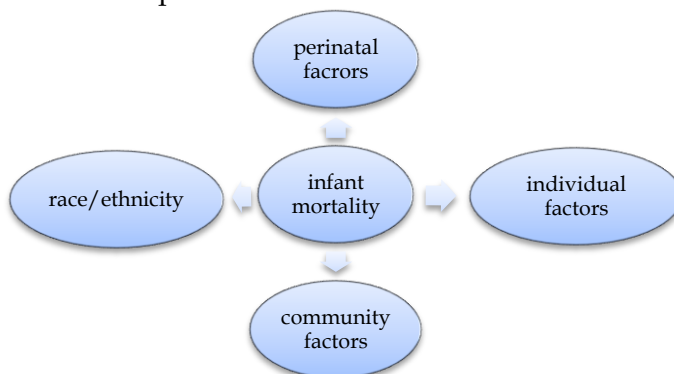
**Introduction:**

Infant mortality rate is defined as number of children who die before reaching their first birthday in a given year and it is expressed per 1000

---

\* Department of Geography & Regional Development, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K  
Email: [gmrather@rediffmail.com](mailto:gmrather@rediffmail.com)

live births. Factors which effect infant mortality are mothers' health, birth weight of child and feeding practices. Diseases like pneumonia, diarrhea and malaria are leading cause of death in infants. Sustainable development goals are targeting to reduce infant mortality rate to 12 deaths per thousand live births by 2030. Asia -pacific region has shown tremendous decline in infant mortality rate that is up to 50 per cent (Haas et al., 2013). Infant mortality can be reduced by promoting best breast feeding practices by mothers, management and treatment of neonatal infections, pneumonia, diarrhea and other child birth diseases (UNICEF, 2013) Objectives of millennium development goal 4 cannot be attained without reducing infant mortality. On an average 130 million babies are born each year out of these 6.3 million prenatal deaths occur each year. 70 per cent of deaths take place in first month of birth.



**Figure 1:**  
**Conceptual framework of factors influencing infant mortality rate**

Low education attainment, less income, young maternal age and short inter pregnancy interval, low health consciousness behavior including use of drugs, cigarette smoking, alcohol consumption and inadequate prenatal care are factors responsible for preterm birth and low birth weight (LBW) in children in the Asian countries (Collins, 1990; Kleinman, 1987). 60 per cent of neonatal deaths occur in Asia, it is because of low birth weight and lack of skilled health care delivery. It has been observed that 1/3 of neonatal deaths occur in three countries of south Asia, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Singh, 2006). Infant mortality can be reduced by promoting best breast feeding practices by mothers, management and treatment of neonatal infections, pneumonia, diarrhea and other child birth diseases (UNESCO, 2018). Infant mortality trends in central Asia are showing varied behavior in space and time. To understand the fertility trends and demographic transition we have to analyze demographic data for longer period of time to understand demographic transition in region (Sporenborg, 2000). A reflection on child and infant mortality in selected

south Asian countries, the study tried to understand relationship between infant mortality rates in relation to literacy rates, cultural factors. And facilities like electricity, safe drinking water. Results of study showed there was need of better cesarean section delivery and empowerment of women(Personal & Archive, 2018). South Asia has shown minimal progress in development of child and maternal health, When we compare with other regions of world. In south Asia India's progress was very low in reduction of infant mortality rate. Bangladesh and Nepal despite of their problems and low socioeconomic status have performed well (Gangbar & Gayathri, 2014). Social determinants of health risk factors for infant mortality among African American demonstrated association between determinant of health and infant mortality. Findings of study showed most policies focus on individual and public policy levels and fail to understand the complexity of issue. so additional research is required(Reno & Hyder, 2018). In a study of racial disparity in infant mortality, to understand African -American women's birth outcome disadvantages. the study found factors such as crime, segregation , built environment , structured institutional racism , are factors responsible for poor outcome of African -American women(Europe et al., 2010). In a study related to factors shaping mother-child interaction in post-soviet countries of Eastern Europe and central Asia. It was observed mother-child interaction was highest in Georgia and lowest in Kyrgyzstan. Interaction was lower for younger children, older mothers and poorer households. parental child programs are required to improve the quality of maternal time (Zainiddinov & Habibov, 2019). A study on public health insurance and child health in United States showed that subsidized health insurance opportunities for low-income people has improved child healthcare scenario in country. Maternal health condition has improved because of timely prenatal visits and in turn pregnancy behaviors and outcomes (Palmer, 2018). There is a negative relationship between income and mortality, if the GDP per capita PPP increases by 10 per cent in a country where the infant mortality is 50/1000 live births, the infant mortality would be expected to decrease by 10 per cent to 45/1000 live births(Bernadette et al 2013). The infant mortality rate of the countries decreased as countries became rich and powerful and new levels of strategic thinking, which will find innovative solutions, have an important role in decreasing infant mortality rate and growing economic power of the countries. It reveals that there is a significant and negative relationship between infant mortality rate and real per capita GDP (Erdegon et al 2013).Economic shocks in the developing world generally lead to more infant deaths, especially of girls, and especially when these shocks are severe. Of course, there is variation across countries (Sarah

Baird et al 2009). The infant mortality rate is not only seen as a measure of the risk of infant death but it is used more broadly as a crude indicator of Community health status, Poverty and socioeconomic status levels in a community, Availability and quality of health services and medical technology. The health and well-being of children and families across the globe are measured by infant mortality rates.( Association of Maternal and Child Health Washington, 2013). Infant mortality rate is one of the most sensitive indicators of the socioeconomic and health status of a community. This is because more than any other age group of a population, infant's survival depends on the socio economic conditions of their environment (Masise et. al., 2003). South Asian countries are developing faster but south Asian countries are facing lots of internal problems. Out of them infant mortality plays a vital role and it is one of the most important items in the Millennium Development Goals (UNICEF, 2005; Mustafa and Odimegwu, 2008). The causes of infant mortality are strongly related to those structural factors like economic development, general living conditions, social well-being, and the quality of the environment, that affect the health of entire populations. (Reidpath, Allotey 2003)

#### **Study Area:**

Central Asia has a total area of 4003451 km<sup>2</sup>. The total population of central Asia as per 2019 data is 72,960,000 persons. Population density is 17.43/km<sup>2</sup>. It includes five countries i.e., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. Central Asia has historically been closely tied to Silk Road; Silk Road connects south Asia and East Asia. Central Asia is an extremely large region of varied geography; it includes mountains like tian shan, vast deserts Kyzyl Kum, Taklamakan, and grassy steppes. Major rivers of the region include the Amu Darya, Syr Darya, Irtys, and Murghab River. Major water bodies include the Aral Sea and Lake Balkhash. The climate of central Asia is dry and continental with hot summers and cool to cold winters, with occasional snowfall. Central Asia also contains the montane grasslands and shrublands, deserts and xeric shrublands. Central Asia has long been a strategic location merely because of its proximity to several great powers on the Eurasian landmass. South Asia is the southern region of the Asian continent. The total area of south Asia is 5,134,641 km<sup>2</sup>. Total population of region is 1,814,014,121 persons in 2018. Population density is 362.3/km<sup>2</sup>. South Asia includes seven countries i.e., Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. South Asia alone accounts for 98.47 per cent population of Hindus, 90.5 per cent global Sikh population, and 31 per cent of the global Muslim population. The

region is home to a variety of geographical features, such as glaciers, rainforests, valleys, deserts, and grasslands. It is surrounded by three water bodies, Bay of Bengal, the Indian Ocean, and the Arabian Sea. Most of this region is resting on the Indian Plate, the northerly portion of the indo-Australian plate, separated from the rest of the Eurasian plate. The climate of this vast region varies considerably from area to area from tropical monsoon in the south to temperate in the north. As Himalayas block, the north- Asian bitter cold winds, the temperatures are considerably moderate.

### Objectives of Study:

- To analyze infant mortality rate and its Spatio-temporal variation between south Asia and central Asia.
- To analyze the relationship between infant mortality rate (IMR), health expenditure per capita in U.S dollars

### Data Base and Methodology:

**Sources of data:** Central intelligence agency (CIA) 2000 for infant mortality rate and WHO (2000) for health expenditure per capita in U.S dollars.

**Methodology:** In present study three indicators of infant mortality has been used

1. Per capita income in US dollars
2. Female literacy rate
3. Infant mortality rate.

Time series analysis of the last six decades (1950-2010) was used to analyze the trend of IMR in last six decades. Data for the last three years i.e., 2016, 2017, and 2018 was used to analyze the annual pattern of IMR pattern.

### Results and Discussions:

#### Infant mortality rate and scenario of south Asian countries:-

**Table 1: Infant mortality data in south Asia from (1950-2015) number/1000**

COUNTRY	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2015	AVERAGE
INDIA	178.33	152.16	256.3	99.37	76.47	55.02	41.36	122.71
BHUTAN	254.4	200.38	144.96	101	68.69	45.72	30.49	120.8
NEPAL	226.31	200	159.5	120.03	78.04	47.08	32.36	123.33
BANGLADESH	204.8	159.13	161.4	117.33	81.43	49.66	33.1	115.26
SRI LANKA	81.39	56.75	40.11	26.73	18.1	11.56	8.23	34.69
PAKISTAN	230.95	160.01	129.8	114.46	97.18	80.64	69.84	126.12

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2000

From the above data it was analyzed that in all south Asian countries infant mortality has declined from 1950 to 2015. Countries like Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Nepal have shown a significant decline from 226.31 in 1950 to 30.49 in 2015 in Bhutan .in Nepal it has declined from 226.31 in 1950 to 32.36 in 2015. In comparison to this country like India and Pakistan there is not so much significant decline, in India IMR in 1950 was 178.33 in 1950, and in 2015 it was 41.36, and in Pakistan IMR was 230.95 in 1950 and this has declined to 69.84 in 2015. The above analysis clearly shows that India and Pakistan have not improved so much in comparison to small neighboring countries like Bhutan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Pakistan from this region has still the highest IMR in 2015 that is 69.84. Only county in this which had the lowest IMR rate in 1950 is Srilanka. In Sri Lanka IMR in 1950 was 81.39 and it has declined to 8.23 in 2105. In 2015 Sri Lanka had the lowest infant mortality rate in the South Asian region.

### Healthcare expenditure and its impact on infant mortality rate in south Asian countries

**Table 2: Relation between infant mortality rate and health expenditure**

INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN NUMBER / 1000					HEALTH EXPENDITURE PER CAPITA IN U.S DOLLARS				
	2016	2017	2018	AVERAGE	2000	2005	2010	2015	AVERAGE
INDIA	40.5	39.1	38	39.2	19	28	45	63	38.75
PAKISTAN	53.9	52.1	50	52	16	21	27	38	25.5
NEPAL	28.9	27.9	27	27.93	9	15	30	44	24.5
BHUTAN	33.9	32.1	30	32	32	42	69	91	58.5
BANGLADESH	32.9	31.7	31	95.6	8	11	20	32	17.75
SRILANKA	8.6	8.4	8	8.33	36	47	83	118	71

Source: - Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2000 for infant mortality rate and WHO (2000) for health expenditure per capita in U.S dollars

From the above data it was analyzed that Srilanka has the highest expenditure on health (71 U.S dollars) and lowest infant mortality rate (8.33 /1000). So it directly shows that an increase in health expenditure decreases infant mortality rate of country or region. Pakistan has the lowest expenditure in health (25.5 U.S dollars) and the highest infant mortality rate in the region (52/1000). And it has been analyzed that there is a continuous decrease in infant mortality rate with increased expenditure on health. So these countries should increase their expenditure on health to reduce their infant mortality rates.

### Factors influencing infant mortality in central Asian countries and its regional variation:

South Asia constitutes 20 per cent population of world and region has high population density. Due to high population density and low socio

economic conditions health sector could not develop in these countries when we compare with central Asian countries, where socioeconomic conditions are better and low population density. When we compare countries of south Asia among themselves there are regional variations in south Asia. These regional variations are due to various socioeconomic and political reasons. Mundle in (2011) found that low performance of India in reducing infant mortality rate was due to lack of adequate medical and health infrastructure, low transport infrastructure and less access to health care facility. Maternal and child health are also affected by gender factors. In countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan it was observed that females have less autonomy related to decisions of their health care especially more in rural areas in comparison to urban areas. Because of these factors limited health care access is available to women. (Babar, 2015; Mashal, 2007), The persisting high burdens of diarrheal disorders, acute respiratory infections, and hepatitis A and E in South Asia reflect the poor state of basic public health services, especially clean water and sanitation, and a general lack of hygiene awareness.

### **Infant mortality rate and scenario of central Asian countries:**

**Table 3: Infant mortality data in central Asia from (1950-2015) number/1000**

COUNTRY	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2015	AVERAGE
KAZAKHSTAN	105.95	89.315	72.74	56.16	47.26	29.52	14.12	59.29
KYRGYZTAN	135.17	115.06	95	75.03	54.10	38.36	19.56	76.04
TAJIKISTAN	155.73	137.98	119.83	102.49	83.92	54.1	39.88	99.13
TURKMENISTAN	145.23	125.48	105.72	85.9	68.39	51.12	46.7	89.79
UZBEKISTAN	120.05	99.61	81.1	68.24	57.11	48.52	44.02	74.09

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2000

From the analysis of the above data, it was observed that all central Asian countries have shown a Continuous decline in IMR from 1950 to 2015. Countries like Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Have shown a moderate decline, and the rate of decline is almost the same in these three countries. Tajikistan has shown a decline from 155.73 in 1950 to 39.88 in 2015. Turkmenistan has shown a decline from 145.23 in 1950 to 46.7 in 2015. Uzbekistan has shown a decline from 132.72 in 1950 to 44.02 in 2015. Two countries of central Asia that is Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have shown a decline from 1950 to 2015. Kyrgyzstan has shown a decline from 135.17 in 1950 to 19.56 in 2015. Similarly Kazakhstan has shown a decline from 105.95 in 1950 to 14.12 in 2015.

### **Healthcare expenditure and its impact on infant mortality rate in central Asian countries**

**Table 4: Relation between infant mortality rate and health expenditure**

INFANT MORTALITY RATE IN NO/1000					HEALTH EXPENDITURE PER CAPITA IN U.S DOLLARS				
	2016	2017	2018	AVERAGE	2000	2005	2010	2015	AVERAGE
KAZAKHSTAN	20.3	19.6	19	19.63	51	150	364	379	236
KYRGYZTAN	26.8	25.9	25	25.9	12	36	63	92	50.75
TAJKISTAN	32.8	31.8	31	31.86	6	18	43	63	32.5
TURKMENISTAN	35.5	34.3	33	34.26	77	345	222	405	262
UZBEKISTAN	18.6	18	17	17.86	29	29	74	134	66.5

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) 2000 for infant mortality rate and WHO (2000) for health expenditure per capita in U.S dollars.

From the above data it was analyzed that Kazakhstan has the lowest infant mortality rate of 19.63 and the highest expenditure on health (236 U.S dollars per capita). Uzbekistan has an average infant mortality rate of 17.86 and health expenditure (66.5 U.S DOLLARS). So we can conclude that an increase in health expenditure decreases infant mortality rate in a country. In health expenditure Kazakhstan showed a significant improvement from 51 U.S dollars in 2000 to 379 U.S dollars in 2015, because of this health and medical facilities has improved tremendously in-country and because of this Kazakhstan has one of lowest infant mortality rate in the region. Turkmenistan despite height expenditure in health 262 U.S dollars but has still height infant mortality rate in the region. Turkmenistan should focus on health care expenditure on children and females to improve infant mortality rates in the region. The infant mortality rate has continuously declined in all south Asian countries from 2016 to 2018. From the analysis of the above data we can see India and Bhutan have shown significant improvement in the last three years. The reason was the increased focus on health care spending and improvement in health and medical facilities. Pakistan also has shown a significant improvement from 53.9 in 2016 to 50 in 2018, but Pakistan still has the highest infant mortality rate in South Asian countries and it was 50 in 2018. Sri Lanka has the lowest infant mortality rate in the region and is lowest both from the central Asia region and south Asia region.

#### **Impact of female literacy, health expenditure, and per capita on infant mortality between south and central Asia:**

From the data in table 5, it was analyzed that both average infant mortality from 1950-2015 and 2016-2018 were highest in south Asian countries than in central Asian countries. Sri Lanka from South Asia has shown significant improvement.



**Table 5: Relation between infant mortality, health expenditure and per capita income**

Country	Average IMR 1950-2015	Average IMR 2016-2018	Average per capita health expenditure in U.S dollars	Female literacy rate - 2008	Country	Average IMR 1950-2015	Average IMR 2016-2018	Average per capita health expenditure in U.S dollars	Female Literacy rate 2008
India	122.71	39.2	38.75	66	Kazakhstan	59.29	19.63	236	100
Pakistan	120.8	52	25.56	46	Kyrgyzstan	76.04	25.9	50.75	99
Nepal	123.33	27.93	24.5	60	Tajikistan	99.13	31.86	32.5	100
Bhutan	120.8	32	58.5	63.9	TURKMENISTAN	89.79	17.86	26.2	100
Bangladesh	115.26	31.86	17.75	71	UZBEKISTAN	74.69	34.69	66.5	100
Sri lanka	126.12	8.33	71	91	-	-	-	-	-
Total	121.5	31.8	39.3	66.31		79.78	25.98	82.39	99.8

Source: Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 2000

### Conclusions and Recommendations

Inconsistent policies, weak infrastructure, governance issues, and financial constraints do greatly affect countries such as Bangladesh and Nepal, but instead of these challenges, both countries have managed to make great strides in terms of MDG achievement relative to India's performance. Specifically looking at the issue of funding, it is evident that increasing funding will not ensure progress in this field, but rather, success is contingent upon whether the resources are adequate, and how well they are allocated and used. This issue of resources is compounded by the fact that such programs have not been directly linked with improving malnutrition rates across these countries. A major reason for the lack of progress could be attributed to issues of poor governance - lack of political will, the divergence of effort, and the lack of a transparent dedicated health system that is pro-child and maternal health and nutrition. Further research is required to examine the state of child and maternal health and nutrition and to examine how resources are being allocated and utilized to address the issues that are the reason for the height infant mortality rate in these countries. In both regions there is need to extend institutional and professional capabilities in public health policy to remove inequities in access to health care. Technical healthcare also needs improvement.

**References:**

- Pandey A, K C Minja, N Y Luther, D Sahu and J Chand. (1998) *Infant and Child mortality in India. National Family Health Survey Subject Reports 11, 1998*. International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai and East-West centre program on population, Hawaii.
- OECD/World Health Organization (2018), “*Infant mortality*”, in *Health at a Glance: Asia/Pacific 2018: Measuring Progress towards Universal Health Coverage*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Shaikh, B. T., & Hatcher, J. (2005). Health seeking behaviour and health service utilization in Pakistan: challenging the policy makers. *Journal of public health (Oxford, England)*, 27(1), 49–54. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdh207>
- Mashal T, Nakamura K, Kizuki M, et al. Impact of conflict on infant immunisation coverage in Afghanistan: a countrywide study 2000–2003. *Int J Health Geogr.* 2007;6:23.
- Collins, J. W., Jr, & David, R. J. (1990). The differential effect of traditional risk factors on infant birthweight among blacks and whites in Chicago. *American journal of public health*, 80(6), 679–681. <https://doi.org/10.2105/ajph.80.6.679>
- Kleinman, J. C., & Kessel, S. S. (1987). Racial differences in low birth weight. Trends and risk factors. *The New England journal of medicine*, 317(12), 749–753. <https://doi.org/10.1056/NEJM198709173171207>
- Europe, E., Asia, C., & Report, T. (2010). *Regional overview : Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia*. 1–20.
- Gangbar, J., & Gayathri, K. (2016). *Child and Maternal Health and Nutrition in South Asia - Lessons for India*. <[https:// www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Child-and-Maternal-Health-and-Nutrition-in-South-Gayathri-Gangbar/08c3ae781341dd28162f13962f71142e4866f03e](https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Child-and-Maternal-Health-and-Nutrition-in-South-Gayathri-Gangbar/08c3ae781341dd28162f13962f71142e4866f03e)>
- Haas, E. J., Bilenko, N., Shoham-Vardi, I., Dukhan, L., & Gdalevich, M. (2013). *Infant mortality. Bedouin Health: Perspectives from Israel*, 115–124. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt6wp5p1.8>
- Palmer, M. (2018). *Essays on Public Health Insurance and Child Health*. Georgia State University, doi: <https://doi.org/10.57709/12531278>
- Personal, M., & Archive, R. (2018). *Munich Personal RePEc Archive A Reflection on Child and Infant Mortality in Selected South Asian Countries*. 86309.

- Reno, R., & Hyder, A. (2018). The Evidence Base for Social Determinants of Health as Risk Factors for Infant Mortality: A Systematic Scoping Review. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 29(4), 1188-1208. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hpu.2018.0091>
- Singh, M. (2006). *Neonatal Mortality in South Asia: Trends, Differentials and Determinants*. 1995(IIPS, Mumbai, India), 1-24.
- Habibov, N. (2019). Factors shaping mother-child interaction in post-Soviet countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. *Early Child Development and Care*, 0(0), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2019.1572133>.
- Chandra J. (2020). Infant mortality on the rise again post 2016: study, *The Hindu*, November
- Madise, N. J., Banda, E. M., & Benaya, K. W. (2003). Infant mortality in Zambia: socioeconomic and demographic correlates. *Social biology*, 50(1-2), 148-166. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19485565.2003.9989069>
- Mustafa. H. E. & Odimegwu, C. (2008). Socioeconomic determinants of infant mortality in Kenya: analysis of Kenya DHS 2003. *J.Humanit Soc Sci*, 2(8), 1934-722
- OECD/World Health Organization (2018), *Infant Mortality* <[https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-asia-pacific-2018/infant-mortality\\_health\\_glance\\_ap-2018-8-en#page1](https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/social-issues-migration-health/health-at-a-glance-asia-pacific-2018/infant-mortality_health_glance_ap-2018-8-en#page1)>
- Sabrina Maria Sarkar, Bablu Kumar Dhar, Hatem Mohammed Rouhoma: A cross sectional analysis of socio-economic determinants on infant mortality in south Asian regions 2018, *International Journal of Business society*, 2(2), 1-6s
- Kiross, G. T., Chojenta, C., Barker, D. et al. The effects of health expenditure on infant mortality in sub-Saharan Africa: evidence from panel data analysis. *Health Econ Rev* 10, 5 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13561-020-00262-3>
- Reidpath D. D. and Allotey P. (2003) Infant mortality rate as an indicator of population health, *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health*, 57: 344-346.
- Linnan M., Giersing M., Cox R., Linnan H., Williams M. K., Voumard C. and Hatfield R. (2007). *Child mortality and injury in Asia: an overview*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre
- Chakrabarty T. K. (2013). *Forecasting Rate of Decline in Infant Mortality in South Asia Using Random Walk Approximation*, <

[https://www.iussp.org/sites/default/files/event\\_call\\_for\\_papers/Infant%20and%20child%20mortality\\_Final\\_1.pdf](https://www.iussp.org/sites/default/files/event_call_for_papers/Infant%20and%20child%20mortality_Final_1.pdf)

- Bernadette H O, Innocent M, Levison C & Naor B Z. (2013). Income and child mortality in developing countries: a systematic review and meta-analysis, *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine* 408-414
- E Erdogan, M Ener, F Arica (2013). The Strategic Role of infant mortality in the process of economic growth: An application for high income OECD countries, *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Science* 99(2013): 19-25
- Baird S, Friedman J, Schandy N: (2009) Aggregate income shockd and infant mortality in the developing world, Institute for international economic policy

**Significance of Marriage Practices in Kashmir Valley with Special Reference to Srinagar City**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**  
12(1) 73 - 81

ISSN: 2249-667X

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/295678f7-d9b8-436b-9067-4ccf519cec9b.pdf>

**Khushboo Jan\***  
**Manzoor Hussain\***

**Abstract**

*Marriage is the deepest and most complex human relations because it is very difficult task for men and women to live a life together when their mindset and culture is different that is why the study is carried out to know why marriage is most important for men and women and their family. The main objective of this research article is to study the importance of marriage among Muslims in Srinagar City. The study was exploratory in nature and random sampling method was used for analyzing the data. For collecting the data a framed schedule was prepared and 50 respondents were interviewed for the purpose of collection of data. The study found that 92 percent are in favor that marriage is most significant not only for the husband and wife and their family but also equally important for whole society.*

**Keywords**

Marriage Practices, Significance, Family, Srinagar City

**Introduction:**

The study of marriage practices has special importance in every religion of the world so in Muslim religion, as marriage in Islam is not considered merely a relationship between a man and a woman; it also serves a wide variety of personal, economic, social and psychological function. It is the only form of socially recognized institution for the procreation and continuation of human race.

Marriage is the closet and most intimate relationship in life. It addresses the two basic needs in the life of human being, that is live and life. A marriage is a legally recognized union between two people, generally a man and a woman, in which they are united sexually, cooperate

---

\* Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K  
Email: [khushoojan00@gmail.com](mailto:khushoojan00@gmail.com)

economically, and may give birth to, adopt, or rear children. The union is assumed to be permanent although it may be dissolved by separation or divorce (Strong & Cohen, 2016). Marriage is the union of two different surnames, in friendship and in love, in order to continue the posterity of the former sages, and to furnish those who shall preside at the sacrifices to heaven and earth, at those in the ancestral temple, and at those at the altars to the spirits of the land and grain (Confucius).

Marriage is one of the oldest socially recognized institutions. "Burgess opines that marriage is a system of roles and is a process through which primary relations are established". Edward Westermarck defined marriage as "a more or less durable connection between male and female lasting beyond the mere act of propagation till after the birth of the offspring" Westermarck stated marriage, "as a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognized by custom or law, and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of parties entering the union and in the case of children born out of it." This definition includes polygamy and polyandry and lays emphasis on the rights and duties resulting from the ties of marriage. Thus, Westermarck's definition contains both biological and social aspects of marriage

### **Review of literature**

**Ayalon et al., (2013)** suggested that subjective appraisals of the relationship with spouse play a major role in one's sense of loneliness. In addition, loneliness in men and women shares reciprocal associations. The study revealed that 24 percent and 29 percent of the variability in loneliness reported by married men and women, respectively. The study further revealed that capitalizing and enhancing one's social life might also be beneficial for his or her partner. Any intervention to alleviate loneliness in married couples has to take into consideration their perceived marital relationship as well as the reciprocal associations of loneliness in married men and women. The author's further study examines the association between coping behavior and their relationship satisfaction in older spousal dyads. Examined N = 132 couples age ranged from 53–84 years (M age = 68 years) and found that their dyadic coping strategies a prime indicator of functional adaptation to daily stress in marital context were significantly linked to relationship satisfaction. It is also found in the study that the partner's subjective perception of their spouse's supportive behavior was more strongly linked to their relationship satisfaction than to their self-reported support. Furthermore, individual support perception was more important for marital satisfaction than coping congruency. Overall, the dyadic coping of older adults may serve as an effective tool to stabilize relationship satisfaction

when facing the challenges of older age and long-term marriage. So far as the status of the women is concerned, the dominant role of a man as a bread winner is evident. The women have, however, the right of inheritance in the properties of their parents. The women are mainly confined to the kitchen and in household activities almost throughout the day. The women look after the children and have to entertain her husband after the day's hard work. Though at times, she has to face even physical torture and abuse by the husband if he is unhappy. Elderly woman have some role in family management but it is also under male instruction.

**Arif et. al., (2012)** in their study revealed that the quality of marital satisfaction depends on three dimensions which are Marital Relationship, Marital Adjustment and Marital Intimacy. The study found that marital relationship is the first priority since this dimension has the lowest level of satisfaction, followed by marital intimacy then marital adjustment as the third priority needs to be improved. The study further shows that marital adjustment, mental health and frustration reactions in males and females of middle age showed high level of recreational adjustment as compared to males but males were having better group oriented attitude than females. The study further showed that family functioning; marital adjustment and intimacy in two groups (middle-aged and young spouses) were not significant. For subjects compared by educational status, their mean in family functioning and marital adjustment were significant, but on the intimacy scale they were the same. Evident also show significant positive correlation between marital adjustment and intimacy (0.71), between family functioning and marital adjustment (0.68) and between family functioning and intimacy (0.50), (0.01).

**Guney (2011)** in his study revealed an overall picture of the marriage and relationship studies conducted in Turkish culture. According to the results, the studies give the general impression of a well-educated Turkish population living in urban areas. Unfortunately, this situation severely limits the size of the population whose marriage, marital relationships and marital satisfaction were brought to light. Although there are some studies dealing with other populations, they are very few. This handicap may come from the obligation of using self report scales in the studies, which may force the researcher to work with a limited sample. What can be said about the populations constituting a large part of the Turkish community, being poorly educated, living in a rural/urban area, having considerable economical difficulties and suffering from severe marital dysfunctions and psychological disturbances resulting from this pathological marital relationship? With few exceptions, studies on marital and intimate relationships have been conducted in Turkish

universities. The subjects of these studies, typically few in number, were from the university population or university graduates living in cities. Some were found to be at least high school graduates, while the population of Turkey consists of many more primary, middle school graduates.

**Mohammed (2011)** in his study has stated that traditional and unrealistic expectations about marriage and male- female roles and relationships almost always lead to subsequent dissatisfaction. This dissatisfaction tends to exist in proportion to the expectation – the more one expects and the greater the need to have the expectation met, the more disillusioned one is likely to be when the expectations are not realized. He further found that there is more or less a uniform response in favor of divorce irrespective of the age, sex, rural or urban residence, or literacy of the respondents. In recent years, though no scientific study on attitudes towards divorce has been conducted by any scholar of repute, yet it appears from the articles in the popular magazines of women and from a few doctoral theses on his theme that a large number of women as well as men are not against divorce found that 21 per cent of divorces was because of the irresponsible attitude of husbands or wives and the overall average divorce rate among Muslims in the country was 10 to 15 percent.

**Ani et. al., (2009)** in his study observed that Marriage is a sacred institution and the parties to the agreement need to handle it carefully since the success or failure of any marriage has consequences. For a marriage to succeed, the man and wife must patiently adhere and cooperate with each other. The author further found that marriage has become more complicated as it is manifested in high divorce rates and remarriages and many children are not raised in the traditional family unit. He further suggested that marriage may be in crisis if one or more of the four purposes of marriage namely childbearing, sexual satisfaction, companionship and economic satisfaction are not satisfactorily achieved. Crisis is a crucial time, the turning point in a marriage that is a decision moment that varies from person to person according to individual experiences and the way people view situations. The way a particular crisis situation among married couples is handled determines greatly whether marital failure occurs or not. Westlake also added that anything that disturbs the mutual sympathy and love between a husband and wife creates serious tension and if happiness is not attained that marriage is regarded as a failure. Marriage is a social institution buttressed by law, social support and expectations, as well as the potential for spousal support and relationship-specific investments and yet, half of all marriages dissolve. Again, despite the potential benefits of marriage, are clearly not experienced equally or persistently for many marriages as



factors supporting marriages vary across marriage unions and may be absent altogether in some. The absence of supporting factors in a marriage may however signal failure. In a purely African setting, the status of a wife in her husband's family remains shaky and unpredictable until she begets a child. She becomes really secure after the birth of a male child. At this stage she is especially welcome as a responsible housewife in her husband's extended family. The birth of the child gives her the title- wife, prior to this time she may simply be referred to as a wife only in anticipation. This sub-section of this article examines the main factors associated with marriage failure. These factors constitute critical issues that this paper focuses on.

### **Objectives and Methodology**

The main objective of the present study was to study the significance of marriage practices among Muslims of Kashmir in Srinagar City. The other objectives were to understand the importance of *mehar* and marriage documents and age gap between husband and wife among Muslims of Kashmir in Srinagar City.

The study was exploratory in nature. The study includes both primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected by using interview schedules. 50 respondents were interviewed about the importance of marriage. The study design which was used was descriptive in nature as the researcher describing the facts occurs at present. Both simple random sampling and multi-stage sampling method were used to select the respondents in different areas of Srinagar City. Due representation has been given to both men and women proportionally in different areas in Srinagar City.

### **Results and discussion**

#### **Significance of Marriage among Muslims**

Marriage is universal among the Muslims as it discourages celibacy. Islam has almost made it compulsory. Prophet Mohammad also stressed that married life is preferable to unmarried life. Both the main sects within Islam called "*Sunnis*" and "*Shias*" consider marriage almost as obligatory. Marriage among Muslims is regarded not as a religious sacrament but as a secular bond. According to Roland Wilson (1941), "Muslim marriage is a contract for the purpose of legalising sexual intercourse and the procreation of children". According to S. C. Sarkar (1948), "Marriage among Muslims is not a sacrament but purely a civil contract". Muslim marriages not only have a religious significance but in Muslim society it is considered as a religious duty. It is devotion and an act of "*Ibadat*" [or religious duty]. It is believed that a person who does

comply with it is rewarded in the next world, and he who does not, commits a sin. Hence, Jang (1952) has maintained that "*Nikah*", though essentially a contract, is also a *devotional* act. Marriage is highly valued and regarded as being half of one's faith according to saying of Mohammed. Why marriage is important it is being highlighted in the given tables suggested by the different respondents in the study area.

**Table 1: Marriage as an important aim in life**

S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
1.	Do you consider marriage an important aim in life?	Yes	46	92.0
		No	4	8.0
Total			50	100.00

**Source:** Field work, carried out in 2021

In every society, marriage is an important event of life, both for male and female. To this query, as to whether marriage is or is not an important aim in life, 92 percent i.e., 46 respondents replied in the affirmative while for 8 percent i.e., 4 respondents do not consider marriage as an important aim in life.

**Table 2: Fixation of Mehr**

S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
2.	Do you consider fixation of <i>Mehr</i> essential for marriage?	Very important	41	82.00
		Somewhat important	6	12.00
		Partially important	3	6.00
Total			50	100.00

**Source:** Field work, carried out in 2021

The purpose of *Mehr* is to provide wife with the independent financial security whereby this amount becomes his exclusive property. Table 2 depicts that 82 percent (41) respondents are of the opinion that *Mehr* is very important for marriage, while 12 percent (6) respondents consider *Mehr* somewhat important for marriage and 6 percent (i.e., 3) respondents consider *Mehr* partially important for marriage.

The marriage document is an official declaration that states that two people are married. In 2006, the Supreme Court made it mandatory to register the marriage for safeguarding the women's rights.

**Table 3: Compilation of Marriage Documents**

S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
3.	Do you think that compilation of marriage document at the time of marriage is necessary?	Yes	44	88.00
		No	6	12.00
Total			50	100.00

**Source:** Field work, carried out in 2021

Marriage certificate is important for applying a passport or an bank account with a new surname post wedding. Table 3 depicts that 44 respondents i.e., (88 percent) consider compilation of marriage documents necessary at the time of marriage while 50 respondents i.e., (12.5 percent) consider it not as necessary.

**Table 4: Age gap between Husband and Wife**

S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
4.	Is an age difference between husband and wife acceptable if husband is much older?	Yes	38	76.00
		No	12	24.00
Total			50	100.00

**Source:** Field work, carried out in 2021

The Table 4 depicts that a majority of respondents i.e., 38 respondent (76 percent) do not accept much age gap because with the large age gap between husband and wife experience clashes, misunderstanding and arguments and the biggest difference in their thinking can be one of the biggest drawback and 12 percent i.e., 24 respondents accept age gap between husband and wife because one of the partner in the marriage will always be mature and will keep marriage away from crumbling.

In this context , it was found that out of 50 respondents, 47 respondents, i.e. 94 percent respondents agree that married partners should be equal in decision making powers whereas 3 respondents i.e., 6 percent did not consider that married partners should be equal in decision making power.

**Table 5: Decision making powers**

S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
4.	Do you think married partners should be equal in decision-making power?	Yes	47	94.00
		No	3	6.00
Total			50	100.00

**Source:** Field work, carried out in 2021

### Conclusion

Marriage is a sacred duty in Islam, imposed upon everyone who can afford it. It is a permanent civil contract made between two persons of opposite sex, with a view to mutual enjoyment, procreation and legalizing of children. The contract of marriage also confers some rights and duties on both the parties, which they are expected to observe faithfully for a happy and prosperous life. The study found that the majority of respondents are in favor that marriage is most significant not only for the husband and wife and their family but also equally important for whole society. Marriage is highly valued among Muslims and Islam advocates marriage as the foundation for families and channeling the fulfillment of a base need and a companionship.

### Suggestions

- Marriage has become day by day increasingly important for every section of society as marriage may have wide range of benefits including individual's economic wellbeing, mental and physical wellbeing of the children so it is to suggest that marriage should be done at an appropriate age by every individual.
- Marriage is one of the important decisions in life when people decide to get married they think of having lovely family and raising their children together.

### Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the respondents of the study area who passionately shared their views with us.

### References

- Ani. et al.,(2009). Failed Marriage crises in Nigeria: A Case Study of married indigenes of Benin City. Unpublished Thesis.
- Arif, N., & Fatima, I.(2015). Marital Satisfaction in Different Types of Marriage. *Pakistan Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*,13(1),36-40.

- Ayalon, L . Shiovitz - Ezra, S & P, Yuval. (2012). Associations of Loneliness in Older Married Men And Women, *Aging & Mental Health*, 17, 1-7 doi: 10.1080/13607863.2012.702725
- anka and Bangladesh. *Asian Population Studies*,1(3),283-301.
- Guney, S.(2011).A Review Study on the Marriage And Relationship Research In Turkey. *Psychology*,2,497-501.doi:10.4326/psych2011.25077
- Jaafar-Mohammad, I., &Lehmann,C.(2011).Women's Rights in Islam Regarding Marriage and Divorce. *Journal of Law and Practice*, 4,(3),1-13.
- Shankar Rao. C.N. (2005). Principles of Sociology with an Introduction to Social Thought. New Delhi: S. Chand & Company Ltd. Ram Nagar.
- Strong, B., &Cohen,T. F. (2016).The Marriage and Family Experience: Intimate Relationships in a Changing Society. Cengage Learning.

**A study of 'children in conflict with law' in Kashmir**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**

12(1) 82 - 98

ISSN: 2249-667X

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/c77f9b34-07e4-4dc2-8459-9c0cdd5adc85.pdf>

**Asima Hassan\***

**Abstract**

*Juvenile delinquency is one of the most serious problems in present times in Kashmir. There is evidence of a universal increase in juvenile crime taking place especially in the conflict-ridden states and Kashmir is no exception. A study of juvenile delinquency is very vast and to study its various aspects is also very comprehensive and can be studied from various angles. The intensity and severity of juvenile offences are generally determined by the social, economic and cultural conditions prevailing in a society. The present study focuses on stone-pelting in Kashmir in which hundreds of juveniles are involved. The data obtained from Lone Observation Home in Kashmir establishes that a large number of stone pelters in Kashmir were juveniles mainly till 2019. A major chunk of juveniles in conflict with law, who have been apprehended in recent years by the police and who were brought before Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs) in Kashmir were stone pelters. In the present study, 200 juveniles were selected who were involved in stone-pelting whose cases are registered in JJBs of different districts of Kashmir division.*

**Keywords**

Conflict, Kashmir, juveniles, observation homes, detention

**Introduction:**

India known as the Republic of India is the 7th largest country in size and the 2<sup>nd</sup> most populated country with more than 1.2 billion people, it is the most populous democracy in the world. According to census 2001, the Indian population of minors (those below 18) stood at 41.1%, which is a majority of the population in the county. India considers children as the gift from God and as national assets. The directive principle of State Policy ensures that children receive equal opportunities for development during the period of the growth, which will reduce inequality and make sure that Social Justice is achieved. However, due to various

---

\* Member, Juvenile Justice Board, Srinagar, J&K  
Email: [asima.hassan2019@gmail.com](mailto:asima.hassan2019@gmail.com)

shortcomings, a certain number of children fail to follow social and legal laws and they get involved in delinquent behaviour which is also known as Juvenile delinquency or Juvenile crime. Crime by juveniles is a harsh reality in India and across the globe. (Srivastava, 2015)

In India, children are known to be the greatest asset of the nation which means they are also the future resources which will help to shape the country for the times to come. According to the ministry of statistics and programme implementation 2012, one third of the Indian population constitutes of children aged between 0 to 18 years. In the light of the circumstances and conditions and children belonging to the vulnerable section of the society and going through immaturity of age, mental makeup and understanding this particular age and the adverb or unfavourable social, economic and environmental context the children could fall prey to activities that may be termed as criminal or illegal in nature (Adenwalla, 2006). Therefore, in this context, those children who violate the law are referred to as "children in conflict with law" or "juvenile delinquents" The word Juvenile originated from the Latin word "Juvenis", which signifies a young person. Therefore, a Juvenile/Child refers to an individual who has not completed 18 years of age and this is a variable parameter because in different nations the cut-off age to identify an individual as a child or an adult differs. Juvenile crime also known as Juvenile delinquency is a term that defines a minor or child's participation or accusations in any activity that may be defined as offensive or goes against the legal established system. This legal system also determines the kind of preventive and corrective measures that are needed for the child keeping in mind the interest of the child the state and society. The term child in conflict with law refers to a person/individual under 18 who encountered justice system because of being suspected or accused or abetting a crime or participating in any offenses legally (Fraser, 1973). The Law that guides the entire process of dealing with Children in conflict with Law is called the Juvenile Justice (care and protection of Children) Act 2015. This act consolidates and amended the law relating to children who are alleged and found to be in trouble with the law and those children in need of care and protection. This is done by addressing their basic needs through proper care, protection, development and social re-integration. They adopt child-friendly approaches in addressing the issues and disposal of matters in the life of the child, while keeping the best interest of children. They work with the rehabilitation system, institutions and other bodies which were set up to address the same issues. The Juvenile Justice Act also incorporates the process of rehabilitating and reintegrating the child back into society. The rationale is the fact that the child has the capacity to reform because of the

learning phase of the child and so is able to reform and respond appropriately to situations and this is also possible because of the tender age of the child and the apparent lack of maturity. This places the state in a power to protect, rehabilitate and reform the child. The Juvenile Justice System also assumes that a child offender is a product of unfavourable environment and is entitled to a fresh chance to begin his life. The offences may have been committed without any criminal intent on certain occasions. The child probably lacks foresight on the repercussions/consequences of his actions. It is accepted that a child offender should not be given punishment based on the kind of offence he/she has committed but should be given an individual treatment which is reformatory in nature and which is based on his/her need, psychological and social background. According to National Crime Record Bureau, a total of 31,396 cases of "children in conflict with law" (CCL) were reported in 2015 and the rate of crime committed by them was 2.1 per cent. However, a majority of these cases are petty crimes and are preventable by providing proper guidance and counselling to children and economic strengthening of their families. An analysis of children who were in conflict with law shows that majority of them belonged to economically weaker section (42.5 per cent). Around 11.5 per cent of them were illiterate while another 43.4 per cent were educated up to primary level only (NRCB, 2015).

### **Impact of Kashmir Conflict on Children:**

Children are considered the wealth of a nation and their progress and development are the priority of every nation. But unfortunately in several countries their progress and development have been halted by armed conflicts. They became directly victims of conflicts, firing, and mine blasts. In armed conflicts children suffer most as according to United Nations, some 20 million people have been killed in over 150 armed conflicts in developing countries since the Second World War, the majority being the children and women (Boyden et. al., 2005). UN Security Council resolution on "Children and Armed Conflict" states that armed conflict creates harmful and widespread impact on children and has also long-term consequences for durable peace, security and development (UN Security Council Resolution, 2001). In present ethno-political conflicts children are being used as political actors and are victimized on a massive scale by attack, landmines, displacement and sexual violence (Wessels, 1998). According to the UN General Assembly study, out of the world's 27.4 million refugees and 30 million displaced people, nearly half are children. Children in conflict areas develop many psycho-social problems like stress, trauma, nightmares, depression and



mental problems due to killing of parents, loss of home and other violent incidents. In Kashmir children have suffered mostly by armed conflict as in other parts of the world. It has disturbed their innocent minds as they have witnessed the conflict when they are in their childhood period. They have gone through trauma, depression, and other psycho-social problems. They have seen their fathers, brothers, mothers and sisters killed by firing of security persons and militants. In Kashmir large number of children became orphans either their father or mother got killed. According to the study done by Save the Children, there are 2, 14,000 orphan children in Kashmir and 37 percent of them became orphan due to Kashmir conflict. These orphan children are going through a difficult phase. They are suffering from many psycho-social problems and are facing economic problems. Many orphan children could not continue their education and some of them are studying in orphanages. Armed conflict has disturbed the education system due to frequent Hartals, Curfews, Killings and Crackdowns which led to the closure of schools. Kashmiri school children got less schooling facilities as compared to other states of India which became responsible for their less exposure to extra-curricular issues. The children who got birth after 1990 have spent less time in schools and more time in homes. Kashmir conflict also kept schools in a very poor condition which have a negative impact on mental development of children. Children in Kashmir are socialized in a state of confusion and chaos, where excessive obsession breeds fear and nervousness, where physical, mental, cultural, intellectual or emotional well-being is endangered and where the bigotry and hegemony have claimed the lives of thousands of children. Defective socialization may result in sever retardation in physical, social and moral growth and development; the effects on the development on personality and behaviour appear to be even more severe. Delinquency has emerged as a common feature among the children in Kashmir. There may be several factors responsible for delinquency. Broadly, they may be divided under two categories: individual factors and situational factors. Individual factors consist of personality traits like hostility, feeling of insecurity, fear, emotional conflict, defiance etc. The situational factors include family environment, peer group influence, school environment, and influence of movies and so on. While individual factors are no doubt important, the changing social environment has become more significant in inducting young people to delinquency. The harmful and immoral acts like smoking, drinking, drug abuse, violence and brutality depicted in everyday life, movies, and story books leave a lasting impression on the fragile minds of the children. They learn new techniques of violence and crime directly or indirectly supported by disorganized social system of

Kashmir. The violent environment over a period of 30 years effected in-family situation in a way that changed the traditional inter-generational relations, patterns of socialization, and prevailing patriarchal authority and aggression in overall behaviour. A significant number of children commit minor and major crimes {from theft to murder} In comparison to the traditional Kashmiri society about 50 years back, hardly any case of minor or major crime was committed or reported, but the situation has changed radically to such an extent that every kind/type of crime is committed in Kashmir today.

The Juvenile Justice Act (JJA) guides the entire process of dealing with Children in conflict with Law. The JJA 2015 has now become applicable in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, following the abrogation of Article 370 and the erstwhile state becoming a Union Territory. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) are based on the philosophy that children need to be reformed and reintegrated into society. The best interest of the child along with child friendly procedures is incorporated across the provisions and is the primary consideration. the JJBs decided the intensity of the corrective programs recommended for the child and place them in the relevant setting. Table 1.1 shows the details of the cases in the JJBs of Kashmir Division w.e.f. 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2018 to 31 December 2020.

**Table 1.1: Total Number of Cases**

S. No	District	No. of Registered cases of crime	No. of cases disposed off	No. of cases pending
1.	Srinagar	597	211	369
2.	Anantnag	343	176	167
3.	Bandipora	176	76	185
4.	Baramulla	385	193	322
5.	Budgam	247	119	259
6.	Ganderbal	145	77	68
7.	Kulgam	218	118	201
8.	Kupwara	194	120	178
9.	Pulwama	97	69	103
10.	Shopain	153	41	122

### **Stone pelting:**

Stone pelting in Kashmir can be described as a culture that has been actually manufactured by a number of actors (both state and non-state actors) this culture has spread even to Valley's children, who practice stone pelting for fun. By encouraging small children to engage in stone pelting, the child is being giving unconsciously full discretionary powers that are unaware of its manifestations. Actually child is being prepared to

be delinquent and to go against any controlling agency leading to a culture of non-conformity.

Stone pelting in Kashmir refers to stone throwing by Kashmiri Muslims on the Indian forces and Jammu and Kashmir Police deployed for crowd control to express their anger. In the local language, it is termed as "Kanni Jung", which means fighting with stones and the stone pelters are called as Sangbaaz or 'Pathraw Player'. After the rise of insurgency and separatist movement in Kashmir conflict, the stone pelting incidents became prominent in Kashmir from the 2008 Kashmir protests in which the separatist movement had taken a new dimension from gun-fighting with armed forces to the pelting of stones on them. After the year 2008, stone pelting incidents in the valley were reported on regular basis, the prominent among them were recorded in 2010 Kashmir Unrest and 2016-17 Kashmir Unrest, nevertheless minor skirmishes were also reported in those intermediate years. Prior to 2008, Kashmir did not see direct involvement of youth or children in the dissent against the State at such a scale. But post 2008, children felt a sense of belonging to the collective expression of dissent against the state. More and more children and youth took to the roads to assert their disagreement against the political scenario of the state. And which resulted in extensive detentions of the children as a consequence. Of the 182 juveniles in conflict with law kept in Juvenile Home (Srinagar) from September 23, 2011 to September 30 2013, over 60 percent which is 110 were stone pelters. From 1st September 2018 to 31st November 2019, out of 520 juveniles in conflict with law majority (311) were involved in stone pelting and other unlawful activities and were placed under protective Custody in Observation Home (Srinagar).

**Table 1.2: stone pelting cases registered before JJBs in Kashmir**

S. No.	Name of District	Total no. of cases and pendency of stone pelting cases registered in JJBs as on 30-10-2021		
		No of pending cases	No. of stone pelting and ULA(P) cases	Other crimes
1.	Srinagar	365	231	134
2.	Anantnag	111	40	71
3.	Pulwama	86	35	51
4.	Kulgam	127	16	111
5.	Budgam	177	70	107
6.	Baramullah	343	207	136
7.	Kupwara	71	11	60
8	Shopain	130	86	44
9.	Bandipora	121	36	85
10.	Ganderbal	66	45	21

**Source:** JJBs of Kashmir Division

However, from 2020 onwards, as the stone pelting ebbed, the cases of juveniles involved in stone throwing saw a decline. In the year 2020, out of 246 juveniles in conflict with law on 47 which is just over 19 percent were stone pelters. In the first 10 months of 2021, out of 373 juveniles in conflict with law only 86 which is over 23 percent were involved in stone pelting. The below table shows the district wise data of stone pelting cases registered before JJBs in 10 districts of Kashmir:

### **Methodology:**

**Research Design:** A Research Design is the specification of methods and procedures for acquiring the information needed for a study. A quantitative and qualitative design was undertaken to explore the information, regarding the stone pelters & reasons that prompt them to pelt stones, the researcher used the survey method of JJBs of district Srinagar, Budgam and Ganderbal where the juveniles have been brought for rehabilitation. In the present study, the researcher selected 200 samples (stone pelters) as respondents for the study. The respondents would first be explained the details of the research and get their consent, secondly the respondents would complete the socio demographic detail questionnaire in a natural setting and then interview was conducted after explaining to the juveniles that they have the right to withhold information if they don't feel comfortable and to also withdraw them-self from the research at any time.

**Methods of data Collection:** The researcher used the following methods of data collection.

**Questionnaire** cum interview schedule was prepared by the researcher. The respondents were personally interviewed by the researcher.

**Secondary method** of collecting data was through discussion and observation as well books, journals, internet, magazines, news papers etc. to have complete view on the existing pattern of stone pelting, who the stone pelters are and why they resort to stone pelting different aspects were studied like age, education, reasons of stone pelting etc.

The questionnaire had details of the Juveniles and his family and backgrounds that may have influenced the life of the child. This was done to find out the reasons by which the child may have chosen deviant behavior. These socio demographic details gave insights about the social standing and the economic status of the family. These details also helped to understand the type of environment that the child grew up in. An in-depth interview was conducted using an interview guide to cover relevant points and this was determined from the review of literatures and the other studies from the fields.

**Table 1.3: Age of the juveniles at the time of commission of the offence**

S. No	Age at time of commission of offence	Responses	Percentage
1	11 years - 13 years	14	7
2	14 years - 16 years	120	60
3	17 years - 18 years	66	33
Total:		200	100

Table 1.3 reveals that 60 percent of the juveniles, who indulge in stone-pelting, in Kashmir are in the age group of 14 years to 16-years while 33 percent are 17 year and old year olds. The above data clearly reveals that even boys as young as 11 years have been also found involved in stone-pelting.

While carrying the study, it was analyzed by the researcher that these young boys do not fear the law and do not fear guns as they are too young to understand such issues. They do not even care for their lives or others' lives, as it has been reported widely in media over the years that not only most of the people who become militants in Kashmir, but stone-pelters too are from lower socio-economic background. In current study on checking the father's occupation of the juvenile offender, following results were found:

**Table 1.4: Father's occupation of juvenile offender**

S. No.	Father's occupation	Responses	Percentage
1	Business	58	29
2	Daily Labour	68	34
3	Government Employee	30	15
4	Private Employee	12	6
5	Others	32	16
Total		200	100

Table 1.4 clearly reveals that 34 percent of the juvenile stone pelters were sons of daily labourers while fathers of 29% were doing business, which included running tea stalls to small shops. 15 percent of juvenile offenders were sons of class IV or class III government employees while fathers of 6 percent were working as private sector employees. In 16% cases, fathers of juvenile offenders belonged to other category which included skilled labour like carpenter, mason and carpet or shawl weavers. The family per month income of the juvenile stone pelters is as follows:

**Table 1.5: Family income per month**

S. No	Family income per month	Responses	Percentage
1	Upto Rs 10000	82	41
2	Rs 10000 to Rs 20000	62	31
3	Rs 20000 to Rs 30000	30	15
4	Above Rs 30000	26	13
Total:		200	100

Table 1.5 points out that majority of the juvenile stone pelters are from poor families with 41 percent among them having monthly income of less than Rs 10000 while 31 percent were from Rs 10000 to Rs 20000 per month income group. 15 percent juveniles were from Rs 20000 to Rs 30000 per month income group while 13 percent had a family income of above Rs 30000. The data clearly indicates that a majority of juvenile stone-pelters are from economically backward families.

**Table 1.6: Current occupation of Juvenile**

S. No	Current occupation of juvenile	Responses	Percentage
1	Student	106	53
2	Labour	50	25
3	Running family business	14	7
4	Others	30	15
<b>Total:</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1.6 shows that 53 percent of the juveniles, who were detained on stone pelting charges, are still studying while 25 percent had to leave studies and are engaged in labour jobs to earn for their families. 7 percent among them were engaged in running small family businesses while 15 % were working as sales boys.

**Table 1.7: Educational status of juvenile**

S. No	Educational status of juvenile	Responses	Percentage
1	Illiterate	0	0
2	Primary	38	19
3	Middle	24	12
4	10 <sup>th</sup>	58	29
5	12 <sup>th</sup>	36	18
6	12 <sup>th</sup> & above	44	22
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

The above table reveals that none of the juveniles apprehended by the police on stone pelting charges was illiterate as at least all of them had been to school. 19 percent of the juveniles had studied in school upto primary level while 12 percent continued till middle level. 29 percent among them had studied upto 10<sup>th</sup> class while 18 percent were either studying in 12<sup>th</sup> class or had studied upto 12<sup>th</sup>. 22 percent of the juveniles had completed their 12<sup>th</sup> and were in college as despite being detained for stone pelting charges, they had not discontinued their studies.

**Table 1.8: Type of school in which juvenile was studying/studied**

S. No	Type of school in which juvenile was studying/studied	Responses	Percentage
1	Government school	70	35
2	Private school	130	65
<b>Total</b>		<b>200</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 1.8 shows that 35 percent of the juveniles, who were detained by police on stone pelting charges, had either studied or were studying in government run schools while as 65 percent were students of private schools.

**Table 1.9: Reasons for leaving school (Yes/No as applicable)**

S. No.	Reasons for leaving school	Responses	Percentage
1	Didn't leave school	98	49
2	Left education to earn for family	64	32
3	Left education due to registration of FIR	38	19
Total		200	100

On being enquired about the reasons for leaving school after being apprehended by police on stone pelting charges, 44 percent of the respondents said they continued the studies even after the incident. 32 percent of the respondents revealed that they had to discontinue studies after the incident and earn for their families. 18 percent of the respondents couldn't continue the studies as they said registration of FIR against them was the reason for leaving schools. They said that after being called time and again by police for enquiries even after their release, they lost interest in studies as they were told that neither they will be able to get any government job now nor they will be issued passports. 6 percent of respondents said they left studies due to peer-group influence.

**Table 1.10: Type of Family**

S. No.	Type of family living in	Responses	Percentage
1	Nuclear family	148	74
2	Joint family	52	26
Total		200	100

The above table reveals that 74 percent of juveniles detained by the police on the charges of stone-pelting were living in nuclear families while 26 percent were from joint families. The figures reveal that there is higher family control in joint families as compare to nuclear ones. As in most of the families father leaves the home during the day for earning, the children take advantage of it and indulge in stone-pelting, while in joint families; either grandfather or other elders keep a watch on the activities of their kids.

**Table 1.11: History of involvement in stone pelting/militancy offence in family**

S. No.	Any history of involvement in stone pelting/militancy offence in family	Responses	Percentage
1	Yes	14	7
2	No	186	93
Total		200	100

The table 1.11 reveals that in 7 percent cases, one or multiple family members of the juvenile offender had a history of involvement in stone pelting or militancy cases. As primary influence on children is from the family, such juveniles were attracted towards stone pelting after seeing their elders indulging in similar activities. Thus it can be inferred that these juveniles had tactical support from their families to indulge in stone-pelting. 7 percent respondents (14 respondents out of 200), whose family members were involved in stone pelting /militancy offences when further, asked about the nature of their crime their elders were involved, gave responses which are in the table 1.11.1

**Table 1.11.1: Nature of Crime**

S. No.	Nature of crime of family member of juvenile	Responses	Percentage
1	Heinous	2	14.29
2	Serious	10	71.43
3	Petty	2	14.29
Total		14	100

The above table reveals that a majority of the family members of the juvenile offender, who had a crime history, had a case registered in serious offences like stone pelting while 14.29 percent were involved in heinous crimes like involvement in militant activities. 14.29 percent of these family members were involved in petty crimes which have less than three years imprisonment punishment, if proven guilty.

**Table 1.12: Nature of crime of juvenile offender**

S. No.	Nature of crime of juvenile offender	Responses	Percentage
1	Heinous	14	7
2	Serious	142	71
3	Petty	44	22
Total		200	100

In 7 percent cases, the juvenile offender had a case registered in heinous crime which includes section 302 (murder) of Indian Penal Code (IPC). Majority of the respondents were booked under serious offence category which includes section 307 (attempt to murder), section 146, 147, 148 of IPC (rioting, armed with deadly weapon) and section 336 of IPC (to endanger human life or the personal safety of others). 22 percent juvenile offenders had cases registered under petty crimes which include section 147 and 336 of the IPC.

**Table 1.12: Political/militant affiliations of juvenile offender, if any**

S. No.	Political affiliations of juvenile offender	Responses	Percentage
1	Separatist/Militants	70	35
2	None	118	59
3	Others	12	6
Total		200	100



Table 1.12 clearly shows that 35 percent of juvenile stone pelters had either links with separatist leaders or militant organizations and were directly or indirectly taking orders from them for pelting stones on security forces. 59 percent of the respondents said that they were not affiliated with any political party of militant organizations and got involved into stone pelting on their own. However, 6 percent of the juveniles booked for stone pelting said that they were innocents and were implicated by the police in the case.

On being asked further what motivated/forced them to indulge in stone-pelting, the respondents gave answers as shown in Table 1.13.

**Table 1.13: Reasons for indulging into stone pelting**

S. No.	Reasons for indulging into stone pelting	Responses	Percentage
1	For "freedom" of Kashmir	62	31
2	Anger against government/police	46	23
3	Injustice	20	10
4	Peer-group influence	28	14
5	Entertainment/fun	12	6
6	Other reasons	32	16
Total		200	100

The above table reveals that 31 percent of the juveniles involved in stone pelting cases believe that their actions will bring "freedom" to Kashmir from India. They said they were fighting for a "cause" and had no other alternative to struggle for their "rights." 23 percent of the respondents said that they pelted stones as they were angry against the government of the day or police. The juveniles mainly do it as protest mark against the human rights violation. The juveniles do it just to oppose the government, not happy with the government. 10 percent believed that injustice with them was the reason for them to indulge in such activities. 14 percent of the juveniles were attracted towards the stone-pelting due to peer-group influence while for 6 percent it was a source of entertainment or fun. 16 percent of the respondents either revealed that they were not at all involved in stone-pelting or they did so after killing of a militant or civilian by security forces in their area.

An important and surprising finding that the researcher stumbled across during the fieldwork was that stone pelting started as a violent protest against repression and poor socio-political conditions in the Valley but, it has gradually turned to a social practice. It was found during the study that the act of stone pelting has slowly turned to a habit/ leisure act among many youths. Sometimes people pelt stones for fun too. It was further revealed that the youth now consider stone pelting not less than a leisure exercise in lieu of gossip and loitering around the markets. They

think they can have fun with the armed forces by provoking them via stone pelting. To them its taste is no less than a cricket match because, when a cop hurls a fire bottle at them, they hit it back either with a bat or a stick, giving them a lot of pleasure and fun. The above mixed answers reveal that there is no definite single reason for youngsters to indulge in stone-pelting in Kashmir.

On being investigated further as how many times the juvenile offender pelted stones, the answers are tabulated below:

**Table 1.14: Number of times involved in stone-pelting**

S. No	Number of times involved in stone-pelting	Responses	Percentage
1	Once	150	75
2	Twice	22	11
3	Thrice	6	3
4	Frequently	10	5
5	We were false implicated	12	6
Total		200	100

A majority of the juveniles offenders said that they pelted stones only once for varying reasons. 11 percent said that they pelted stones twice while 6 percent had indulged in the crime thrice. 5 percent among the juvenile offenders were habitual stone pelters and had been booked multiple times for the crime while 6 percent said that they were false implicated by the police in stone pelting.

On being asked how many times they had been apprehended for stone-pelting, the answers are given in table 1.15

**Table 1.15: Number of times apprehended in stone-pelting**

S. No.	Number of times apprehended in stone-pelting	Responses	Percentage
1	Once	168	84
2	Twice	18	9
3	Thrice	12	6
4	More than thrice	2	1
Total		200	100

A majority of the respondents 84 percent had been apprehended once for stone pelting charges while 9 percent of the juvenile offenders had been arrested twice for the crime. 6 percent of the juvenile offenders had been arrested three times for the crime while 1 percent respondents were arrested multiple times.

On further investigations, it was revealed that in 52 percent of the cases, adults were also involved/ arrested in the same FIR as the juvenile. This reveals that juveniles indulge in stone pelting along with adults. In 48 percent of the cases, the respondents said that there was no adult

involved or arrested in the same FIR as they were. The figures are tabulated below:

**Table 1.16: Any adult involved in the same FIR**

S. No.	Involvement of any adult in the same FIR	Responses	Percentage
1	Yes	104	52
2	No	96	48
Total		200	100

On being asked where from the juvenile offenders were arrested by the police, the responses are given in table 1.17

**Table 1.17: Place of Arrest**

S. No.	Place of Arrest	Responses	Percentage
1	From home	110	55
2	From stone pelting incident place	52	26
3	From school/tuition center	8	4
4	Other place	30	15
Total		200	100

A majority 55 percent of the juvenile offenders involved in stone pelting were apprehended from their homes by the police. Most of them said that police and security forces raided their houses during night and harassed the families before apprehending the juvenile. 26 percent of the respondents said that they were apprehended from the stone-pelting incident. However, some of them said that they were not involved in the stone pelting and were passing off through the area when police/paramilitary forces apprehended them. 8 percent of the respondents had been apprehended from schools or tuition centers while 15 percent said they presented themselves to police after they were called for investigations. 47 percent of juvenile offenders had been detained in police stations in contravention to Juvenile Justice Act under which such offenders have to be kept in observation homes. However, 44 percent respondents said that police shifted them to the observation home after keeping them in police custody for some time. 9 percent of the offenders were immediately shifted to observation home as per Juvenile Justice Law. The responses are tabulated below:

**Table 1.18: Place of detention**

S. No.	Place of detention	Responses	Percentage
1	Police station	94	47
2	Observation Home	18	9
3	Both	88	44
Total		200	100

On being enquired further for how much time the juvenile was kept in custody, the responses are given in table 1.19

**Table 1.19: Average stay of juvenile in custody**

S. No.	Average stay of juvenile in custody	Responses	Percentage
1	Less than a month	162	81
2	More than a month	38	19
Total		200	100

A majority of the juveniles detained by the police on charges of stone pelting were released by the concerned courts on bail in less than a month's time. However 19 percent of the respondents said that they had to remain in custody for more than a month. These cases included the offenders who were involved in heinous crimes.

**Table 1.20: Any educational or vocational training in Observation Home**

S. No.	Any educational or vocational training in Observation Home	Responses	Percentage
1	Yes	62	31
2	No	138	69
Total		200	100

31 percent of the respondents who were detained in observation homes said that they were imparted educational/vocational training during their detention. However, 69% of the respondents could not get such trainings as either they were detained in police stations or their stay at the observations home was short. A majority of the juveniles said that they had bad experience with police as they were beaten, humiliated or tortured during their detention. The responses are given in table 1.21

**Table 1.21: Behaviour of police with juvenile during detention**

S. No.	Behaviour of police with juvenile during detention	Responses	Percentage
1	Good	10	5
2	Bad	110	55
3	Very bad	80	40
Total		200	100

A mere 5 percent of the respondents said that police behaved well with them during their detention while a huge majority had a bad experience with the police. While 55% of the respondents said that their experience with the police during their detention was bad, 40% said they had to face terrible time with the police.

### **Conclusion:**

Juvenile delinquency being it is common in world; it has very deep roots in Kashmir also. The participation of the children in the

environment they belong and live in, are unavoidable. The environment affects the development of children and they can't grow in isolation to the cultural, economical, social and political developments that happen around the children. With the introduction of violence and other effects of militancy after 1989, social deviance among the Children and youth is on rise, observed never before. It is a matter of concern for a society and is becoming a menace. Juvenile delinquency is a type of antisocial behaviour by a juvenile who is under 18 years. It is a social problem that arises out of for a varied number of reasons. There are a number of reasons that impel a child to commit a crime or become criminal minded. After the rise of insurgency and separatist movement in Kashmir conflict, the stone pelting incidents became prominent in Kashmir from the 2008 Kashmir protests in which the separatist movement had taken a new dimension from gun-fighting with armed forces to the pelting of stones on them. After the year 2008, stone pelting incidents in the valley were reported on regular basis in which large participation of youth and children were seen. In the present study it has been found that the socio-economic condition of the juveniles was major reasons for their criminal background, Majority of the juveniles in the study were found to have come from a poor background. This could be an indicator that poverty is one of the causes which has a lot of implication on the behaviour of the children. The findings that the researcher stumbled across during the fieldwork was that stone pelting started as a violent protest against repression and poor socio-political conditions in the Valley but, it has gradually turned to a social practice. It was found during the study that the act of stone pelting has slowly turned to a habit/ leisure act among many youths/children. Sometimes juveniles pelt stones for fun too. It was found that many juveniles now consider stone pelting not less than a leisure exercise in lieu of gossip and loitering around the markets. They think they can have fun with the armed forces by provoking them via stone pelting. To them its taste is no less than a cricket match because, when a cop hurls a fire bottle at them, they hit it back either with a bat or a stick, giving them a lot of pleasure and fun. Many of the Juveniles stated that they had aggression and anger against the armed forces as they are killing Kashmiri people.. The juveniles also reported that their study has got disrupted and the reasons of disruption in their studies mentioned by the juveniles were detention and lack of economic resources. The stories of mistreatment by the police were common among the Juveniles, during the study; it was found that majority of the juveniles have bad experience with police. Juveniles were badly treated by the police after being caught. The juveniles end up being lodged in police lock-ups which compounds the problem. If

children involved in stone pelting are locked in jails, there is every apprehension that some of them might become militants later. It is high time that we take steps to sensitize police officers, give them proper training and ensure that we deal with our children who are in conflict with law with due care and love. Delinquency in the broad sense has grasped the society firmly as criminal, or other antisocial activities are at great risk factors so prevention efforts need to be comprehensive in scope this may include activities such as family counselling, youth mentoring, parenting education and educational support. The stone pelting is too complex process, rather a psycho-social phenomenon, to understand. From expressing the sentiment, to vulgarity, deviance and fun, it is a multifaceted mob action that needs to be put in a proper framework to ponder over a changed but perilous mass psyche.

#### References:

- Adenwalla, M. (2006). *Child protection and juvenile justice system for juveniles in conflict with law*. Worli: CHILDLINE India Foundation.
- Boyden, Jo. et. al. (2002). *Children affected by armed conflict in south Asia: A Review of trends and Issues identified through secondary research*. Regional Office South Asia.: UNICEF
- Fraser, M. (1973). *Children in conflict*. London: Secker and Warburg.
- NRCB. (2015). *Crime in India*. New Delhi: Ministry of Home Affairs
- Srivastava, N. K. (2015). *Juvenile crimes in India and the law*. Retrieved from <<https://www.indiacelebrating.com/social-issues/juvenile-crimes/>>
- Wessells, M. G. (1998). Humanitarian intervention, psychosocial assistance, and peacekeeping. In H. J. Langholtz (Ed.), *the psychology of peacekeeping*, USA: Greenwood Publishing Group.

**Impact of Covid-19 on the  
Mental Health: A  
Sociological Study of  
University Students of  
Kashmir**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**

**12(1) 99 - 115**

**ISSN: 2249-667X**

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/dd3c836c-aa39-4ae6-9ffd-898b1d0a7e56.pdf>

**Junaid ul Rashid\***

**Abstract**

*The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the life-style of almost every human settlement of the world in one way or the other. The research traces the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational and familial aspects of the lives of university students of Kashmir and finally on their psychological and mental well-being. The paper starts with the introduction which gets the reader to the problem addressed by the study. It is followed by the literature review and methodology. The results and discussion section discusses the findings of the study and the final outcomes. The conclusion sums up the findings and the results of the research.*

**Keywords**

COVID-19, education, online classes, role conflict, mental health

**Introduction**

The global health emergency, spawned by the COVID-19 global pandemic, has affected almost every human society. This abnormal and unwanted stimulus that threatened the technologically most-advanced and most-evolved human generation correspondingly demanded an unprecedented response. Although, governments of different countries and various social organizations worked very hard to minimize its effects, the pandemic affected every sector of our life so badly that we aren't yet able to even imagine the intensity of the destruction it has caused.

Since the disease is highly infectious, lockdowns were implemented in most of the countries of the world to stop its spread. Lockdowns and physical social-distancing measures were strictly followed and major social activities came to a standstill. People spent months in the

---

\* Postgraduate Student, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K (Batch 2018; Enrollment No. 18080118005)  
Email: [junaidrashid93@gmail.com](mailto:junaidrashid93@gmail.com)

confinement of their houses, some lost their jobs, some got stuck at their working places away from their families and these things impacted their physical as well as mental health. Although the impact on physical health is predominantly direct, the impact on the mental health is indirect rather than direct. The main objective of the research is *to explore and study the impact of educational and familial changes created by the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of Kashmir's university students.*

### **What do we mean by *mental health*?**

Mental health is defined in various contexts on different bases. A particular society defines it one way and another one the other way. The cultural values and ideas of a particular society determines the way its members perceive different phenomena. The meaning of mental health varies on the same grounds. The meaning of the term even varies from one person to another. But, to study mental health at the academic and research level, we need to have a consensual idea about its meaning and scope. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), **mental health** is defined as:

"a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (World Health Organization, 2004).

An important component of mental health is 'to cope up with the normal stresses of life'. This signifies that stresses and worries are the part of life but you need to cope up with these for your mental well-being. *Mental well-being* is what is the point of focus here. Mental health, in earlier traditions, was defined to mean the absence of mental illness or disorder. In simpler terms, the focus was on *pathogenic* factors. The traditions have now changed and mental health is meant to refer to the positive aspect, i.e., mental well-being and the ways through which it is maintained. In technical terms, mental health is viewed in *salutogenic* terms. '*Salutogenesis*' (Latin *salus* = health and the Greek *genesis* = origin) is a term coined by the 20th century Israeli American sociologist, Aaron Antonovsky. *Salutogenesis* is an approach that views health as the presence of human capacities and functioning in cognition, affect, and behavior (Keyes, 2014). This approach focuses on the characters supporting human well-being and human health rather than those focusing on the illness, disorders, diseases and their causes (pathogenic). Mental health is studied through the prism of subjective evaluation, where an individual evaluates the qualitative well-being of his life.



Corey Keyes, an American psychologist and sociologist, identifies three components of mental health: emotional well-being, psychological well-being and social well-being (Keyes, 2014).

Psychological well-being includes liking most parts of one's own personality, being good at managing the responsibilities of daily life, having good relationships with others, and being satisfied with one's own life;

Emotional well-being includes perceiving the mental well-being as happiness and feeling good;

Social well-being refers to positive functioning and involves having something to contribute to society (social contribution), feeling part of a community (social integration), believing that society is becoming a better place for all people (social actualization), and that the way society works makes sense to them (social coherence) (Keyes, 2014).

Mental health is measured in terms of whether the positive feelings or emotions like satisfaction, happiness etc. are present or not and whether the social and psychological well-being (positive functioning) is present in different domains of life.

### **Educational scenario before the COVID-19 pandemic**

Before the advent of COVID-19 global pandemic in the early months of 2020, the mode of schooling was offline, i.e., the formal teaching-learning process was based upon the face-to-face social interaction between the teacher(s) and the learner(s) in a common physical environment we call *classroom*. It is also known as classroom learning or more precisely physical-classroom learning. This way of teaching-learning has continued from times immemorial, although, there have been changes in the physical set-up in different periods. However, the mode of distance education has emerged gradually as an alternative but hasn't dominated the scenario completely and absolutely. The advancements in science and technology have always aimed to make the human lives more comfortable and easier to live. The development of internet technology as a medium of interaction and communication has boosted the use of distance mode of education but at the same time, technology hasn't overcome the conventional mode of teaching-learning process the way it has done in other aspects of our lives. Industrial revolution deformed the face of the earth and traditional practices of production have vanished almost completely. Similar advancements have taken place in the medical sciences; even such robotic surgeries are done nowadays which don't involve the physical presence of a human surgeon around the patient in the theatre. But, the conventional mode of schooling or physical-

classroom learning is still considered as more important a mode of learning and is practiced everywhere.

### **What COVID-19 did to the teaching-learning process of students?**

The COVID-19 pandemic created a massive shift from the activities and social interactions of real living to the virtual living. People were directed to maintain distance from one another physically to prevent the spread of the infection. Some people physically remained away from their families for months and remained connected only virtually. Some others remained confined to their houses along with their families but away from their friends and people with whom they work and a new trend of '*work from home*' started, in which internet became the main source of connectivity and interaction. The educational processes took the same shift. The teaching-learning process found itself completely in the lap of virtual social world. It became a trend to continue the teaching process through online mode and with the help of internet, virtual classes were created.

Every student has a school life (or college life/university life) and a family life. His/her school life has its own values, its own ideological setup and the family life at home has its own ideological and social space. In simpler terms, we can say that both these social settings have different and particular content of 'time and space'. Online classes or online schooling at home during the COVID-19 pandemic has brought both these spheres and fields of a student's life together in a common domain of time and space. The research precisely studies the consequences of this new set-up on the mental health of the students.

### **The Context of Kashmir**

The region of Kashmir has never been new to uncertainties. The political turmoil and uncertainties have affected every aspect of the lives of the inhabitants. There have been immense effects on the education and mental health of the people due to the political uncertainties and disturbances. The COVID-19 lockdown was imposed by the government in March 2020. "*Authorities in Kashmir on Monday (March 23, 2020) started enforcing a lockdown to help check the spread of coronavirus in the Valley*" (Coronavirus: Authorities..., 2020). The condition of the education was quite difficult in the Kashmir valley that time. The universities had opened only in February 2020 after six months closure by the government of India (Classwork in Kashmir University..., 2020). So, the situation of the education was already pathetic. The lockdown imposed with the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic made the universities non-functional for educational work. The closure of the educational institutions for months

have been a common thing in Kashmir from last more than a decade now, but online schooling flourished in the valley only during the COVID-19 lockdown due to the availability of internet facility (although with slow connectivity) unlike the shutdowns and lockdowns before. The internet connectivity made the functioning of online classes possible during the COVID-19 pandemic and this gave rise to a new trend of learning in Kashmir.

### **Relevance of the research**

The context of Kashmir discussed above clearly demonstrates the relevance of this research. The COVID-19 brought massive social changes. To study changes in social phenomena and social institutions is the main job of the discipline of sociology. The more relevance of this research is in the field of social psychology. When different social set-ups born out of the trend of online schooling affect the mental health of the students or general people, it is a matter of social psychology.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought massive changes as already mentioned above. To study the changes in various social variables due to this pandemic and their implications on the mental health is the domain where my research finds itself. To be more precise, the rising trend of online schooling (in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic) as a change is studied in relation to its implications on the mental health of university students. The relation is studied through different social factors.

The research paves way for framing the policies to help the university students to manage their mental health conditions. Also, it generates the ideas to cope up with the tough challenges like pandemics in the future. Finally, it provides opportunities for further research on the mental health topic in Kashmir.

### **Literature Review**

**Saladino, Algeri & Auriemma (2020)** assert that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the interpersonal relationships among the people and this has raised the psychological and mental health issues among the exposed social groups like children, college students, etc.

**Bhat (2020)**, while quoting Dr. Mohammad Maqbool Dar, head & professor at the Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS) Srinagar, writes that a long lockdown has triggered mental health problems, and despite Kashmiris having good resilience to live in tough social and political situations, the mental health problems and cases are increasing drastically.

**Gura (2020)**, while quoting Dr. Zaid Ahmad Wani who works at the Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (IMHANS), Srinagar,

writes that schooling is important for the overall development of students especially children, and being away from educational institutions for long periods increases the prevalence of psychological disorders among students like increased episodes of anxiety, increased boredom, stress, etc.

**Shoib & Arafat (2020)** remarked that COVID-19 pandemic has added more problems to the mental health of the people living in Kashmir who have already been affected deeply by the geo-political situations in the region.

According to the **Kashmir Mental Health Survey Report (2015)**, which describes the findings of a survey conducted by *Médecins Sans Frontières* in collaboration with *IMHANS Kashmir* and *Kashmir University* in 2015, the prevalence of probable anxiety disorders among adults in the Kashmir Valley was estimated at 26 per cent; it also showed a very high prevalence of mental distress in adults living in the Kashmir Valley, with approximately 1.8 million people affected (45 per cent of adults).

### **Objectives**

The main objectives of the research are:

- To explore and find the impact of the education related changes, especially change in the mode of education from offline to online, on the mental health of university students of Kashmir.
- To find whether there have been the situation of role conflict among students while participating in online classes at home and living in a family at the same time.
- To find what kind of psychological attitude the students have developed in response to the new way of online teaching-learning process.

### **Universe of the Study**

This paper studies the impact of online classes on the mental health of university students. The field of study is Kashmir. The study focusses on the students who study in the four university campuses of Kashmir. They are: University Of Kashmir, Hazratbal Srinagar (KU), Central University Of Kashmir, Ganderbal (CU-K), Sher-I-Kashmir University Of Agricultural Sciences And Technology, Shalimar Srinagar (SKUAST-K) and Islamic University Of Science And Technology, Awantipora (IUST). The rationale behind choosing only these four universities is that each of these universities have a specific campus of their own and students from different areas of Kashmir study in these universities and predominantly

remain away from their families at temporary residences. The Cluster University Srinagar was excluded only because of this reason. The said university is just an amalgam of some colleges and doesn't have a university campus of its own. Therefore, the universe of this study is the student population of the four universities of Kashmir.

### Methodology

The research is of mixed nature. It is predominantly *qualitative* but some traits of *quantitative* analysis is also there in this study. The research addresses a practical problem, not a theoretical one, as is evident from the beginning part of the paper. The mixed approach was chosen in accordance with the main theme of the research. The mental health is to be viewed through the influence of social changes. The research demands to study the **attitude** and **behavior** of the subjects. This study belongs more to the domain of *social psychology*. It was supposed to be purely *qualitative*, but the use of *ordinal* responses and *Likert scale* made it somewhat *quantitative*. These scales were used not to get numerical data, but the responses were used through *Likert scale* procedure and they were codified into numbers for obtaining some statistical results. This was done only to understand the **attitudinal** and **behavioral** condition of the respondents. Moreover, the quantitative mode of data analysis is more reliable and less biased.

### Sampling

The sampling process was of non-probability type. The sample was chosen on the basis of the convenience of the researcher. The types of non-probability sampling used were **convenience sampling** and **purposive sampling**. These sampling methods were used because the researcher was less free to move in the field due to COVID-19 related restrictions. The elements of the sample were chosen on the basis of researcher's judgement. Some elements were chosen haphazardly from different universities.

### Tools and Techniques of Data Collection

The tools of data collection used were *questionnaires* and *semi-structured interviews*. *Observations* were also used. *Purposive sampling* was used. A sample of **26** participants was used in total. Questionnaire draft was formed firstly and it was cross-checked to remove any mistake and to correct it. The questionnaire was then structured in the *GOOGLE FORMS* because it was easy to use this facility and it was more feasible for the respondents to fill the questionnaire. The '*GOOGLE FORMS*' has got more advantages as it summarizes the data automatically in graphical

form. The questionnaire was sent through social media to different university students. A total of **20** respondents filled the questionnaire. The response rate was around **75 per cent - 80 per cent**. After getting the responses, the questionnaire was not further shared to prevent more time consumption. In case of interviews, the face-to-face interviews were held at University of Kashmir and SKUAST (K), although it was a tough job to contact people directly for interviews when COVID-19 related preventive measures like physical social distancing were to be followed. The interviews were held in Urdu and Kashmiri languages. *Telephonic interviews* were not preferred due to less reliability of the data as you are unaware about the attitude of the respondent and his physical condition. Moreover, you find it hard to guess the mood of the respondent and this data can have a lot of respondent-bias. Due to all this, the researcher tried to get some respondents for face-to-face interviews and they were made comfortable first up to talk about the topic. The interviews were recorded using mobile phone voice recorder. A small interview guide was used but most of the questions asked were developed during the interviews. Therefore, the interviews were *semi-structured*. The researcher himself belonged to the population of the research. The personal experiences helped in framing and designing the questions.

Using the *questionnaire* tool, a total of **20** participants (**10** males and **10** females) provided their responses. These respondents were numbered from **1** to **20**. The questionnaire was of survey type. A single form of questionnaire was mailed to the respondents. It was a mixed type of questionnaire with no specific order of general and particular questions. The questionnaire consisted of 20 questions, numbered from 1-20. Five (5) questions were open-ended while rest of the questions were close-ended. Out of the 15 close-ended questions, the measuring responses of six (6) questions were of *nominal* kind with the responses being of 'Yes/No' type. The remaining nine (9) questions were framed with *ordinal* measuring responses. Four (4) questions in the questionnaire were of *contingency* type.

Using the *interview* tool, a total of **6** participants provided their responses from 4 interviews. Three (3) interviews were of *individual* type and a *group* interview of three (3) respondents was also conducted. The interviewees were coded as **I-1, I-2 (A), I-2 (B), I-2 (C), I-3** and **I-4**.

The *group* interview was coded as **I-2** with **A,B** and **C** as its participants.

### Data Analysis

The data collected from the questionnaires was first tabulated. The tabulated data was then thoroughly viewed to get the idea about the basic trend. The questions were then divided in two categories on the basis of

the information they would provide and the content the questions possess. The first category (*category A*) included the questions which were related to both *changes in educational process* and the *family and familial relationships*. This category included 9 questions – Q.3, Q.5, Q.6, Q.7, Q.9, Q.10, Q.11, Q.18 and Q.19. The other category (*category B*) included the questions related specifically to the *changes in educational process* only. This category also included 9 questions – Q.1, Q.2, Q.4, Q.8, Q.12, Q.13, Q.14, Q.15 and Q.16. Two questions (Q.17 and Q.20) were not specifically much relevant to the research topic. They were asked just to keep the respondents unaware about the main research objectives to avoid respondent bias.

The data was analyzed and studied on the basis of *correlation* among different *variables*. The *number of family members* was taken as a basic *independent variable* and other changes were observed in the data in accordance with this *variable*. On the basis of this *variable*, two groups of respondents were formed. The first group (*group A*) included those respondents with *less than or equal to 5* members in their families. A total of 11 respondents belonged to this group which included 5 males and 6 females. The other group (*group B*) included those respondents with *more than 5* members in their family members. A total of 9 respondents belonged to this group with 5 males and 4 females. The relation between the *number of family members* (as an independent variable) and other variables which different questions manifest was studied through tables. Four tables were formed between – group A and category A (Table 1.1), group A and category B (Table 1.3), group B and category A (Table 1.2) and group B and category B (Table 1.4).

After tabulating the data between different groups and categories in four separate tables, the data was analyzed using the **Likert scale**. This is because around 9 questions used *ordinal* type of measuring responses. The scales in these questions were either **4-point** or **5-point**. In the *4-point scale*, the numbering was coded in the following way: **Never (No) = 1**, **Sometimes = 2**, **Often = 3** and **Always (Yes) = 4**. In the *5-point scale*, the numbering was coded in the following way: **Never = 1**, **Rarely = 2**, **Sometimes = 3**, **Often = 4** and **Always = 5**. For a specific question in a *group* of respondents, the codes of the responses were calculated and *mean* was derived. This gave the overall average response for that question. This method was applied to all these questions. For questions with *nominal scale*, percentage method was used. Also, for descriptive questions, the responses were recorded and inferences were drawn after thoroughly analyzing the responses. Same method was done with the responses from interviews because the questions asked in the interviews were mainly descriptive and open-ended.

## Results and Discussion

Firstly, the results are presented from the questionnaires and then from interviews separately. In the discussion section, the results will be discussed separately for questionnaires and interviews.

### Results and Discussions of the Data obtained from Questionnaires

As already mentioned in the previous section, the *Likert scale* was used in the *ordinal* scaled questions. Firstly, we examined the questions asked from *category A*, i.e., those questions which were related to both *changes in educational process* and the *family and familial relationships*. This was done in two phases each time taking either of the groups of the respondents (*group A* and *group B*).

We'll use *Likert scale* to find the **mean** for the responses of **4-point** and **5-point** scaled questions and those with *nominal scale*, we'll use percentages.

#### Discussion for category A results:

As already mentioned, the analysis was done in accordance with the relation of concepts in the questions with that of an *independent variable-number of family members*. The *comparative analysis* will be done between the responses of *group A* respondents (Table A) and *group B* respondents (Table B) on the basis of the questions belonging to *category A* of questions. The comparative analysis of the results for *category A* of questions is understood from the following table:

**Table A**

Question No.	Average Score ( <i>Mean</i> ) of Group A	Average Score ( <i>Mean</i> ) of Group B
Q.3	4 (OFTEN)	4.33 (OFTEN)
Q.5	Yes -45.45 per cent No - 54.55 per cent	Yes - 77.78 per cent No -22.22 per cent
Q.6	3.4 (SOMETIMES)	3.71 (OFTEN)
Q.7	1.9 (RARELY)	2.44 (RARELY)
Q.9	2.36 (SOMETIMES)	3.11 (OFTEN)
Q.10	2.36 (SOMETIMES)	3 (OFTEN)
Q.11	2.45 (SOMETIMES)	2.22 (SOMETIMES)
Q.18	Yes - 18.18 per cent No - 81.82 per cent	Yes - 55.56 per cent No - 44.44 per cent

Now taking the questions one by one.

**Q.3** asks '*How often do your family members support you in attending the online classes?*'. The *average* response of both the groups for this question is 'OFTEN' with *group B* having slightly more average score. Here, we don't find any big difference. The parents of almost all respondents *often* supported their sons / daughters in attending the online classes, but not always.



**Q.5** asks '*Are you anytime directed by your parents to go to market (or do any other family work) while you're attending the online class?*'. The percentage of 'Yes' response is very high (**77.78 per cent**) for group **B** respondents. This shows that those students with larger families (more than 5 family members) were more vulnerable to be called for any family work during their online classes than those with smaller families (less than or equal to 5 family members).

**Q.6** asks '*How often do you obey your parents, if you've chosen 'Yes' in Q.5?*'. Here, the *average* response for group **A** is 'SOMETIMES' while that of group **B**, it is 'OFTEN'. This means that the students with more family members could obey their parents more often than those with less family members.

**Q.7** asks '*How often do you feel nervous when you attend the classes in presence of any of your family members?*'. To this question, the *average* response for both the groups is 'RARELY', but the *average* score for group **B** (**2.44**) is more than group **A** (**1.9**). This indicates that more students with large families feel nervous while attending online classes at home.

**Q.9** asks '*Do you feel psychologically overburdened while you're being expected to perform the roles of a student and a family member at the same time?*'. This question is the main indicator for the relation between the prevalence and intensity of **role conflict** and **number of family members** (as a variable). For group **A**, the *average* response for this relation comes out to be 'SOMETIMES' with *average* score **2.36**, while as for group **B**, the *average* response comes out to be 'OFTEN' with *average* score **3.11**. This shows that **there has been more role conflict for students with more than 5 family members than for those with less than or equal to 5 family members**.

**Q.10** asks '*Did you ever feel the need to remain in isolation in your house during the COVID-19 pandemic specifically to give more time to your study so that no one from your family could disturb you?*'. Group **A's** *average* response for this question is 'SOMETIMES' with *average* score **2.36** while group **B's** *average* response is 'OFTEN' with *average* score **3**. This signifies that more students with larger families were feeling the need to study at isolated places in their homes to prevent any disturbance from their family members. This is also an indicator for the relation between **role conflict** and **number of family members**. It gives the same inclination of the relation between the two variables as is given by the responses of the previous question.

**Q.11** asks '*Do you feel that you could've lived more comfortably and studied more efficiently if you could've been away from your family (like in hostel or rented room)?*'. For group **A**, the *average* response here comes out to be 'SOMETIMES' with *average* score **2.45** while for group **B**, it comes out to be

'SOMETIMES' as well but *average* score is slightly lesser at **2.22**. This indicates that there is no such variation of the variable (*the wish to remain outside the family*), that the question represents, in relation with the *independent variable* already taken (*number of family members*).

**Q.18** asks 'Do you feel that being engaged with online learning (schooling) at home has anyhow affected your relation with your family members?'. This is also an important indicator for the relation between **role conflict** and the **number of family members**. The data suggested that just **18.18 per cent** of the respondents from group **A** chose the 'Yes' option for this question while as a percentage of **55 per cent** chose the same option from group **B**. This again shows that in large families, there have been more chances of **role conflict** taking place for students during the continuation of online classes in the COVID-19 pandemic and this has ultimately somehow affected their social relations or more precisely their relationships with their family members.

**Q.19** asks the reason behind the affirmation given in the previous question and the data suggests that all those students who responded in affirmative to the previous question give the reason of busy and irregular schedule of the online classes. This indicates that the reason for the effect of online classes on social relations is basically same for all such cases and that is the irregular schedule of the classes that made the students to spend more time with their electronic gadgets (mobile phones, laptops etc.) rather than with their family members.

#### Discussion for category B results:

The comparative analysis of the results for category **B** of questions is understood from the following table:

**Table B**

Question No.	Average Score (Mean) of Group A	Average Score (Mean) of Group B
Q.2	Yes - 0 per cent No - 100 per cent	Yes - 11.11 per cent No - 88.89 per cent
Q.4	3.63 (OFTEN)	3.44 (SOMETIMES)
Q.8	2.72 (SOMETIMES)	2.44 (RARELY)
Q.12	2.81 (OFTEN)	3.22 (OFTEN)
Q.13	Yes - 72.73 per cent No - 27.27 per cent	Yes - 88.89 per cent No - 11.11 per cent
Q.15	Yes - 63.64 per cent No - 36.36 per cent	Yes - 77.78 per cent No - 22.22 per cent

Now we'll take the questions of category **B** one by one.

**Q.1** asks 'What were the feelings your mind came up with regarding your studies, when offline classes were suspended early on during the initial phase of COVID-19 pandemic and you were directed to attend online classes from home?'. The responses were almost similar from the students of both the

groups. The students have been concerned about their studies. From their responses, it could be said that some political reasons in the region that accumulated with the COVID-19 lockdown created concerns in the minds of the students regarding their studies.

**Q.2** asks '*Are you able to concentrate on the lessons delivered to you through online mode more clearly than what it was through offline or physical-classroom mode?*' The response for this question is predominantly 'No', although some respondents from group **B** chose 'Yes' but it was a meager rate of just **11.11 per cent**. All the respondents from group **A** chose 'No'. This shows that online classes have been less effective than offline classes and if we can be more precise, we can conclude from the data that online classes can not be a good alternative for offline classes according to the students.

**Q.4** asks '*How often do you follow the online class schedule (or time table) designed/framed by your teachers?*'. For group **A**, the average response comes out to be 'OFTEN' with average score **3.63**. For group **B**, the average response comes out to be 'SOMETIMES' with average score **3.44**. This means that students with larger families (with more than 5 family members) follow the online class time table less occasionally than those with smaller families. This also indicates that **role conflict** has taken place more in larger families.

**Q.8** asks '*How often do you leave the class meeting before the scheduled time?*'. For group **A**, the average response for this question is calculated as 'SOMETIMES' with average score **2.72**, while for group **B**, the average response is 'RARELY' with average score **2.44**. The data for this question indicates that students used to leave the class meeting before the scheduled time, although it was not always. There was no big difference found between the responses of group **A** and group **B** but group **B** respondents used to leave the class meeting before the scheduled time less often than group **A** respondents.

**Q.12** asks '*Do you ever feel hopeless or discouraged to do well in your studies during the COVID-19 lockdown?*'. For group **A**, the average response for this question is 'OFTEN' with average score **2.81**, while for group **B**, the average response is also 'OFTEN' but the average score is **3.22** which is higher than that of group **A**. This suggests that the students have suffered psychologically due to their concern for their studies. Most of them have felt hopeless about the future of their academic careers. This way their mental health has been affected.

**Q.13** asks '*Did you miss the classroom learning while being at home during the lockdown?*'. It was a 'Yes/No' type question. From group **A**, **72.73 per cent** respondents chose 'Yes' option while **27.27 per cent** of the respondents said 'No'. From group **B**, **88.89 per cent** of respondents chose 'Yes' option

while **11.11 per cent** respondents chose 'No'. This signifies that majority of the students were missing the offline classroom learning during the pandemic. They gave the reasons in the responses of next question.

**Q.14** is a descriptive question and asks about the reason of missing the offline classroom learning. The respondents in their responses showed the importance of offline classes over online classes suggesting that most of the students were missing the offline classes and they think that online classes can't match offline classroom learning.

**Q.15** asks 'Do you want offline classes to be resumed?'. From group **A**, **63.64 per cent** respondents chose 'Yes' option while from group **B**, **77.78 per cent** of respondents answered in affirmation to this question. As already understood in previous two questions that most of the respondents were missing their offline classes, therefore they are in the favor of resumption of their offline class-work to continue their studies. This suggests that students are concerned about their studies and their education is suffering according to their views. This might have affected their mental health.

**Q.16** asks the reason behind the view that offline classes should be resumed. No student has answered this question. This doesn't suggest that they don't know the reasons, but **Q.14** was somewhat similar to this one and they might have thought that they have already put forward their response in this context.

The results from the questionnaires indicate that the education related changes have made the students' careers suffer and ultimately it has taken a toll on their mental health. In addition to that, the students are now gradually trying to cope up with the changes and they are now finding it feasible to adapt in these changed situations through all these months of pandemic, although they have developed a negative attitude towards the progress of their academic careers.

### **Discussion of the data obtained from Interviews**

The data from interviews suggested almost the same thing but the main *independent variable* here was the *gender* of the respondents. The response data of the interviewees was analyzed keeping in view their gender. When female interviewees were asked about the **role conflict** at home during online classes, when they were supposed to perform the role of a student and a family member at the same time, they confirmed that **role conflict** has obviously taken place.

One of the female interviewees **[I-2 (B)]** said: "Our parents would give us some work at home while we were having our online classes in progress, we used to plug in headphones and go for that work..." Another female interviewee **[I-2 (A)]** said: "We were physically in our homes but mentally we were busy with

*our phones (online classes) to study. They (parents) were thinking that we were physically present with them and whatever job they'll assign us we'll follow, but it was not like that... "*

Although, the male interviewees agreed upon the view that online classes have disturbed the role expectations of the students but female respondents were putting more emphasize on this point. When a male interviewee was asked about the need of performing some family work during the online classes, he [I-1] said: "Yes, this (role conflict) would happen sometime." This shows that role conflict has been prevalent but mostly among female students.

### **Compiled Analysis and Discussion**

From all the data gathered, it was analyzed that online classes at home have definitely created **role conflict** and this has eventually affected the mental health of the students. Large or extended families created more chances of **role conflict** for the students than smaller ones. Online classes have affected the education of the students and ultimately it has taken a toll on their mental health. On the basis of gender, female students have been more prone to **role conflict** phenomenon during the COVID-19 lockdown than male students. Most of the university students are going through a state of *psychological distress*.

### **Conclusion**

From this study, it is concluded that the lockdown implemented due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has done two things for students. Firstly, it has affected their education and has put them in a state of *psychological distress*. Secondly, the continuation of teaching process through online classes at home has created the phenomenon of *role conflict* in the social lives of the students. This has added more power to the psychological stress. This situation accumulated with some political orders of the government like the previous lockdown in 2019 and the continuation of the slow internet connectivity have made the situation more complex and students are finding it hard to cope up with all these stresses of their academic career.

On top of this, the students have developed a *negative psychological attitude* towards their academic careers. They *often* feel hopeless and discouraged about their careers due to the unending development of hurdles in the ways of their academic progress.

The research has tried to grab all the elements of the research topic. This study will serve as a literature work for the future researchers. This research can be used by the educationists and sociologists of education to know the loopholes of the educational structure re-shaped by the COVID-

19 pandemic and they can suggest policies to restructure the organization of teaching-learning process for better outcomes. Even educational psychologists can use this research report to find how education related changes by the COVID-19 have taken a toll on the psychological well-being of the university students of Kashmir.

**Table 1.1: Between group A and category A (No. of respondents (N) = 11)**

Respondent (Sex)	Q.3 (5-point)	Q.5	Q.6 (5-point)	Q.7 (5-point)	Q.9 (4-point)	Q.10 (4-point)	Q.11 (4-point)	Q.18
01 (F)	5	Yes	4	1	1	1	1	Yes
02 (M)	5	Yes	2	2	1	3	4	No
03 (M)	3	No	-	1	2	3	3	No
04 (M)	2	Yes	3	1	1	1	4	No
06 (M)	5	No	-	2	4	4	1	No
07 (F)	4	Yes	4	4	4	4	4	No
12 (F)	4	No	-	2	3	1	1	No
15 (M)	1	Yes	4	3	4	4	4	Yes
16 (F)	5	No	-	2	2	2	2	No
17 (F)	5	No	-	1	2	1	1	No
18 (F)	5	No	-	2	2	2	2	No

- For Q.3, Q.6 and Q.7, 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often and 5 = Always
- For Q.9, Q.10 and Q.11, 1 = Never (No), 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = Always

**Table 1.2. Between group B and category A (No. of respondents (N) = 09)**

Respondent (Sex)	Q.3 (5-point)	Q.5	Q.6 (5-point)	Q.7 (5-point)	Q.9 (4-point)	Q.10 (4-point)	Q.11 (4-point)	Q.18
05 (M)	4	Yes	3	3	4	4	2	Yes
08 (M)	3	Yes	5	1	3	2	2	No
09 (M)	5	Yes	4	5	4	4	2	No
10 (F)	4	Yes	4	4	4	4	4	Yes
11 (M)	5	Yes	5	1	4	4	1	No
13 (F)	5	No	-	1	2	1	1	Yes
14 (F)	5	Yes	2	3	4	3	4	Yes
19 (F)	5	No	-	2	1	2	1	No
20 (M)	3	Yes	3	2	2	3	3	Yes

- For Q.3, Q.6 and Q.7, 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often and 5 = Always
- For Q.9, Q.10 and Q.11, 1 = Never (No), 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = Always

**Table 1.3. Between group A and category B (No. of respondents (N) = 11)**

Respondent (Sex)	Q.2	Q.4 (5-point)	Q.8 (5-point)	Q.12 (4-point)	Q.13	Q.15
01 (F)	No	5	1	4	Yes	Yes
02 (M)	No	4	3	2	Yes	Yes
03 (M)	No	5	2	2	Yes	Yes
04 (M)	No	2	3	4	Yes	Yes
06 (M)	No	3	3	2	Yes	No
07 (F)	No	4	2	4	Yes	Yes
12 (F)	No	3	4	1	No	No
15 (M)	No	2	2	4	Yes	Yes
16 (F)	No	4	4	4	No	No
17 (F)	No	4	3	2	No	No
18 (F)	No	4	3	2	Yes	Yes

- For Q.4 and Q.8, 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often and 5 = Always
- For Q.12, 1 = Never (No), 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = Always

**Table 1.4. Between group B and category B (No. of respondents (N) = 09)**

Respondent (Sex)	Q.2	Q.4 (5-point)	Q.8 (5-point)	Q.12 (4-point)	Q.13	Q.15
05 (M)	No	4	2	3	Yes	Yes
08 (M)	No	3	4	3	Yes	Yes
09 (M)	No	2	2	4	Yes	Yes
10 (F)	No	3	3	4	Yes	Yes
11 (M)	No	5	2	3	Yes	Yes
13 (F)	No	2	3	4	Yes	No
14 (F)	No	4	2	4	Yes	Yes
19 (F)	Yes	5	2	2	No	No
20 (M)	No	3	2	2	Yes	Yes

• For Q.4 and Q.8, 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often and 5 = Always

• For Q.12, 1 = Never (No), 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often and 4 = Always

## References

- Bhat, S. (2020, July 24). CoviDepression. *Kashmir Life*. <https://kashmirlife.net/covidepression-issue-16-vol-12-240814/amp/>
- Britannica. (n.d.). Universe (Statistics)". <https://www.britannica.com/topic/universe-statistics>
- Class work in Kashmir University to resume from 3 February. (2020, Jan 29). The Kashmir Walla. <https://thekashmirwalla.com/2020/01/class-work-in-kashmiruniversity-to-resume-from-3-february/>
- Coronavirus: Authorities in Kashmir enforce lockdown. (2020, Mar 23). The Tribune. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jk/coronavirus-authorities-in-kashmir-enforce-lockdown-60018>
- Gura, K. B. (2020, Dec 24). Boredom Has Resulted In Depression, Trauma And Suicide Tendencies. *Kashmir Life*. <https://kashmirlife.net/boredom-has-resulted-in-depression-traumaand-suicide-tendencies-vol-12-issue-36-253905/amp/>
- Kashmir Mental Health Survey Report (2015). *Médecins Sans Frontières in collaboration with Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences, Kashmir and Kashmir University*.
- Keyes, C.L.M. (2014). Mental Health as a Complete State: How the Salutogenic Perspective Completes the Picture. In: *Bridging Occupational, Organizational and Public Health*. Springer, Dordrecht. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5640-3\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-5640-3_11)
- Saladino, V., Algeri, D. & Auriemma, V. (2020). The Psychological and Social Impact of Covid-19: New Perspectives of Well-Being. *Front Psychol*. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.577684.
- Shoib, S. & Arafat S.M.Y. (2020). Mental Health in Kashmir: Conflict to COVID-19. *Public Health - An official journal of the Royal Society for Public Health*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2020.07.034>
- World Health Organization. (2004). Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice (Summary Report). *Geneva: World Health Organization*.

**Marrying in the times of Covid-19: Understanding the transitory changes in the associated practices thereof**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**  
12(1) 116 - 133

ISSN: 2249-667X

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/94e53d9f-4abd-4baf-9a0b-a77c265234b3.pdf>

**Irfan Ahmad Hajam\***

**Abstract**

*Using a qualitative approach, the research aims to gain a deeper understanding of how the pandemic has affected traditional marriage practices and how people have navigated these changes in the Kashmir region. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with individuals involved in marriage ceremonies and rituals to understand the changes and adaptations made by communities in response to the restrictions and challenges brought about by the pandemic. The study finds that the pandemic has caused significant changes to traditional marriage practices, rituals and ceremonies - dampened marriage practices, reduced celebrations and alterations to traditions and rituals. The study also found that the pandemic has had an impact on gift-giving practices and led to the emergence of novel adaptations in weddings. This research provides insights into how these changes have significant cultural and social implications and have reshaped the way marriage ceremonies are performed in the region.*

**Keywords**

Marriage, Kashmir, Covid-19, religion, novelty, wedding

**Introduction**

Marriage has remained one of the most intense relationships which human civilization has witnessed and sustained over centuries. Loosely, it can be defined as a culturally recognized union between two people that establishes various rights and responsibilities between them, their extended family (including their family of origin), and children born out of the union. Marriage is a universal institution that serves various functions in society, including the creation of a legal and social contract between two individuals, the regulation of sexual behavior, the transfer and preservation of property, and the foundation of the family. The

---

\* Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K  
Email: [irfan.soscholar@kashmiruniversity.net](mailto:irfan.soscholar@kashmiruniversity.net)



expectations and social functions of marriage vary between cultures and societies, but it is typically considered a permanent bond between two people that involves legal, economic, social and spiritual/religious aspects. The Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted traditional marriage practices and rituals, leading to changes in the way weddings are planned and carried out.

American sociologist Talcott Parsons wrote on this topic and outlined a theory of roles within a marriage and household, wherein wives/mothers play the expressive role of a caregiver who takes care of socialization and emotional needs of others in the family, while the husband/father is responsible for the task role of earning money to support the family. In keeping with this thinking, a marriage often serves the function of dictating the social status of the spouses and the couple, and of creating a hierarchy of power between the couple. Societies in which the husband/father holds the most power in the marriage are known as patriarchies. Conversely, matriarchal societies are those in which wives/mothers hold the most power. Marriage also serves the social function of determining family names and lines of familial descent. In Western world, a common practice is patrilineal descent, meaning the family name follows that of the husband/father. However, many cultures, including some within Europe and many in Central and Latin America, follow matrilineal descent. Today, it is common for newly married couples to create a hyphenated family name that preserves the named lineage of both sides, and for children to bear the surnames of both parents.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the wedding industry worldwide. Many couples have been forced to postpone or cancel their weddings due to restrictions on gatherings and social distancing measures. A survey of 2,500 couples by wedding planning website WedMeGood.com showed that close to half of those planning to get married in the coming quarter have had to make changes to their plans. In India, where lavish and extravagant weddings are an integral part of the culture, the industry has been severely impacted by the lockdowns and restrictions. Many couples have opted for simple online weddings during the lockdown and wedding planners are now finding new ways to make the grand affair intimate yet extravagant as the restrictions are relaxed. Overall, the pandemic has forced people to re-evaluate the importance of large gatherings and celebrations and the focus has shifted to smaller, more intimate ceremonies. The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the wedding industry worldwide, including in India and Kashmir. The complete shutdown and lockdown of the country to halt the spread of the virus led to the

postponing of many marriages originally scheduled to take place in the first half of 2020. This has resulted in a significant economic impact on the Indian wedding industry, which is estimated to be worth around rupees three lakh crores, and many people associated with the industry have lost their jobs. In addition to the economic impact, the pandemic has also affected the way weddings are being held, with many families opting for smaller, more intimate ceremonies and reducing the number of guests in attendance to adhere to social distancing guidelines. The pandemic has also caused a change in the way people think about and plan their weddings, with many couples opting for simpler and more low-key ceremonies. The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic has had a direct and indirect effect on marriage practices and rituals globally.

### **Muslim Marriages in Kashmir**

The dynamics in the social structure is an inevitable universal social reality, and the maturity of a society is directly proportional to the consciousness and awareness of the general masses. In the case of Kashmiri society, the dynamics in social patterns affect the fundamental bottom-line of every aspect of life, including the practices, rituals, values and norms of marriage. Marriage is an important institution in Kashmiri society, and it is considered as a cornerstone in one's pursuit of existence. The marriage ceremony is a ritual that announces and signifies the recognition of both the husband and wife of their new status in the community. The institution of marriage has evolved over time and the concept of marriage psychology in Kashmir has passed the stringent test of time. The processes of urbanization and liberalization have catalyzed many socio-psychological changes in the beliefs and practices of marriage, leading to a new era in Kashmir. Marriages are now considered as value addition processes in the endless pursuit of self-actualization. Traditionally, the Kashmiri weddings used to be an uncomplicated affair, the weddings used to be conducted in a simple manner with the groom's side taking care of nearly all the expenses, a trend that went on till the 1950's. Thereafter, the trend of carrying out the lavish and extraordinary weddings in Kashmir started and it assumed a dangerous proportion. From expensive clothes and Jewellery for the bride and the groom to an extravagant feast- the *wazwan*, prepared in traditional Kashmiri style for the guests, Kashmiri weddings are a unique entity of fashion and passion of extravaganza. Although considered to be an occasion that strengthens the bonds of kinship, but over the years this social event has become more about show boding and lavish spending, thus, transforming the Kashmiri weddings into a burlesque that has become too expensive for common masses to afford. Starting from elaborate pre-wedding functions

to customary post-wedding rituals, Kashmiri weddings are spaced through several days. Events - vibrant and full of ardour such as traditional Kashmiri songs and dances are integral part of the celebration. And every event incurs substantive costs of resources (tangible and intangible). Kashmiri weddings are truly the celebration of tradition and beauty. Kashmiri wedding are a thing to behold, with the bride and groom resplendent in tasteful traditional dresses and oodles of glittering gold jewelry. From rituals to décor to food, Kashmiris take high pride in their traditions.

The customs and ceremonies connected with marriage in Kashmir are interesting. The customs vary according to the position and wealth of families and there is some difference between the observances of the city people and the villages. Muslims generally marry their daughters to some relative, and if the marriage can't be arranged so, the father of the son hires the services of a *ManzimYor*, *Dralor Mianja* (Boddha,2004). He is not necessarily one who undertakes this as an occupation, but is one who is known for his powers of persuasion. He visits the homes of families with marriageable daughters, tells them highly colored stories of the wealth, good looks, high birth and connections of his client, and suggests a marriage. From that time the selected girls is no longer allowed to go out of her house or compound. The *ManzimYor* arranges an informal meeting of both the fathers, at which is settled the day for the *Nishani*. (Gervis, 2004)

*Nishayn* - *Nishayn* or engagement may be a simple one or may be a "*Nikah Nishayn*". In *Nikha Nishayn*, *Nikah* is read, and the relation is fully legalized. In *Nishayn* close relatives both men and women from the boy's side come to the girl's house. The girl side also invites close relatives, friends and neighbors. Since the boy does not come to the function the girl's side sends a *trami*, *Kokur-daeg* (cooked chicken) to the boy's side along with *Chochi* special bread to groom. The boy's family distributes this among their relatives, neighbors etc. this is reciprocated by sweets from the boy's side. The girl's family distributes these sweets to its kith and kin. After *Nishayn* it is ok for the bride to be and groom to be to go for dates officially. Post *Nishayn* is followed by customs like "*Roz-Kushad*" - which is something sent (like money, gold, wazwan etc.) by the boy's family to girl's family during Ramdhan, Eid visits where the girl/boy get tons of *eidi* by the in-laws and other customs like exchanging *Halwas* and *Harissas*. Throughout the engagement period, the girl's family does shop for *Wardan* items like shoes, bags, clothes, shawls -things that the bride would take to her new home, while as grooms family purchases gold to be gifted to bride during wedding.

*Saatnaam* - When the families finalize the dates for the wedding then a get together called *Saatnaam* is held at their respective places. It's a function to announce the wedding dates amongst close relatives and is celebrated with the women showering blessings on the couple in the form of *Wanwun* (Kashmiri songs sung on auspicious occasions) and a feast.

Shortly after, the boy's father goes with a small party of relatives and friends with *bog* to the girl's house, and the party is entertained by the girl's father. After the feast, the betrothals are announced in the presence of the party, and *Moulvi* asks a blessing, and sometimes commits the contract to writing. The party stays the night, and next morning the boy's father receives a blanket or a turban from the girl's father, and taking back half of the cash, sugar and salt set off to his home. (Lawrence, 1967)

Afterwards on the four chief Muslim holy days, viz. *Id*, *Ramzan*, *Id-Qurban*, *Miraj-Sharif* and *Urs-Nabi*, the boy's father sends presents to the girl. When the day for the final marriage is fixed, the boy's father sends a *Laganchirto* the girl's father. (Iqbal, 1978)

Preliminaries are arranged, and *Dapani* (invitation) are issued to relatives and friends. For a week before the marriage, the girl sits indoors with her hair down and at both her house and boy's house singing and drumming go on day and night. The day before the marriage, the boy's father sends a quantity of *Mehendito* the bride's house and she prints her hands and feet with the red-color (Gervis, 2004).

*Tomul-Tchatun* - "Quintals" of rice is bought a few months before the wedding. The females of the family sit together and clear the rice of all kinds of impurities. This is done on traditional Kashmiri *shups'* (Wired planks made out of wood from willow trees to separate edible rice from impurities).

*Malmaenz* - The *Malmaenz'* (Also called *Mayun'* and *Haldi'* in other countries of South Asia) starts off the main celebration of the wedding. It is characterized by the traditional *Mas-Traavun'* (Letting down the bride's hair). The elder women of the family oil the bride's hair and tie it into various tiny braids (locally called *Waankh'*) and wrap them with colorful ribbons. Then these women sing the famous Kashmiri wedding songs and undo these fancy braids one by one. *Maenzraat* - The night before the *Nikah* is called the *Maenzraat'*. The bride's hair is tied in many tiny braids. In a ritual called *Mas-Muchrawun*, her friends and family members start to open the braids and comb her hair. On this night, the bride applies henna on her hands and feet while near and dear ones apply a teeny-weeny amount of henna on the groom's little finger too which is followed by wrapping it with a 500 or a 2000 currency note as a sign of good omen.

The local wedding singers are called and songs are sung throughout the night until dawn.

*Aab-Shehrun* - On the morning of the *nikah* the bride does *ghusl* that is, she takes a bath and cleanses herself for the new beginning of her life. She is usually accompanied by her mother or an elder sister or a friend. After the bath, she wears the traditional Kashmiri *Pheran* with *tilla* work done.

*Nikah-Khwaani* - The *Nikah* is carried out modestly and can be done both *asaalatan'* (in the presence of both the bride and the groom in close proximity) and *wakalatan'* (in the presence of their witnesses). The *Qazi* recites the Quranic verses and makes dua for the newlywed couple. Usually the *Nikah-Khwaani* is carried out on the morning of the wedding lunch but some do it the first thing after the *Mahraaz* (groom) arrives.

*Yini-Wol* - The "*Yini-Wol*" is the day when a large number of people including relatives, friends, neighbors, colleagues and acquaintances gather for lunch/dinner and bless the couple. The guests are served a magnanimous feast called the Kashmiri *Wazwan* which consists of a long list of mainly non-vegetarian delicacies.

*Mahraaz Saal* - The groom and the people with him are together known as the *Baraat*s and they're given a very royal treatment. On the marriage day the bridegroom, after a bath, dresses himself up like a *Maharaja*, and decks himself out with all the Jewellery he can afford. His relatives give him presents of money and then he and his party set off, riding or walking. First they visit some neighboring shrine and say their prayers, then do reverence to the graves of the bridegroom's father (if he is dead) or grandfather, and after that they make for the bride's house, sending on ahead the presents and the palanquin in which the bride will return. As they draw near the bride's house the women of the bride's party come out, singing the song of "*WaniWani*" and praising the bridegroom's beauty, and when they come to the door the village barber pours out a jar of water into the empty jar the *Yezman* (leading man of marriage) tosses a rupee. This custom is known as *Aab-Dul*, and is repeated when the bridegroom takes his bride back to his father's house. When the whole party is assembled the gorgeous groom sits on cushions and they take *Wazwan* (rich meal) which is prepared by special *Waza*. After the feast, the *Moulvi* proceeds to business and if the marriage contract was not written before, he writes it out, receiving a few rupees for his pains.

The traditional wedding customs and rituals in Kashmir involve several ceremonies and events, starting from the engagement ceremony, known as '*Sheeth-e-Khurma*', to the final feast known as '*Phirraa-Khaber*'. The most significant rituals include the '*Mahraaz-Saal*', where the groom and his family are served a grand feast, '*Ruksati*,' where the bride has to bid farewell to her family and move to her new home with her husband.

*Kadal-e-Taar*, - where the groom's friends stop his vehicle and demand money, '*Muhar-Tullen*,' where the bride's veil is lifted by her mother-in-law, and '*Walima*,' where the groom's family holds a feast to invite family, friends, and community members. Other rituals include '*Khabri-Gasun*,' where the bride's relatives visit and give gifts, '*Quran-Booznavun*,' where the bride is tested for her Quranic recitation skills, '*Phiri-Saal*,' where the couple is invited for a meal at the bride's family's house, '*Satum-Doh*,' where the couple is invited for a feast at the groom's house, and '*Phirraa-Khaber*,' where the bride's family visits her to ensure she is doing well. These rituals are an integral part of the rich culture and tradition of Kashmir and are cherished by the people. Before this, however, the two fathers of the contracting parties fix the amount of *Mehr* or money for bride, according to the custom of the family. Meanwhile the bride and her friends are examining the wedding presents and when all is ready the bride with her hair done up and in her best dress is carried by her brother or maternal uncle into the palanquin and followed by a party of singing women, departs with her husband. (Naresh,1978).

When the bride reaches her in-law's houses she sits with down-cast head until her mother-in-law comes and raises her face. On this occasion the bride hands over some gift to her mother-in-law. This gift is called *Hash Kant* (Itoo & Bodha 2004).

Then all the women of the bridegroom's family kiss the bride's hand and place rupees in it. The *Wazwan* is given on the marriage night and the next day the guests depart (Itoo & Bodha 2004). The bride remains for seven days in her new home after which she returns to her father's house. It generally takes months before the father of the girl is able to invite his son-in-law to a feast at his house where he receives cash presents etc. The bride also generally goes with him and then there is no bar to their coming or going (Itoo & Bodha 2004). Father besides giving away the daughter in marriage, the father brings a boy for his daughter who is to reside in his in-law's home. Such a daughter is called *Khana-Nishin* and her husband who is made to stay in her house and to help and manage his in-law's property is called *Khana-Damad* or *Garipeth-Zamtur*. Generally a person who has not his own male issue adopts a child from another person who is usually a close relative and treats him as his own son such an adopted son is called *Mungta*. Polygamy is common among Muslims. Remarriage is common in both men and women.

### **Methodology**

The current study used a qualitative research approach to investigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on marriage practices, arrangements and gift giving in Kashmir. The qualitative approach was deemed most

appropriate in the quest for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A purposeful sampling technique was employed to recruit participants. The study was restricted to Muslim marriages in Kashmir only. A total of 17 participants were approached, of which 14 agreed to participate and 3 rejected the invitation. The 14 respondents interviewed, 8 of whom lived in cities and the rest in rural areas, Out of 14 respondents, 8 were men and 6 were women. The table below contains participant demographic information. The semi-structured interview guide was prepared to collect the data from participants. The questions were mostly open-ended in order to avoid forcing data into the researchers' preconceived notions. Some of the questions asked were: "How did the groom and bride select each other?" Did they meet offline or through any dating websites? How many pre-wedding ceremonies were witnessed? What was your family's level of involvement? How many of your close kin attended the different marriage ceremonies, and how many were invited? Did you witness a "*thap-traavun*" (pre-wedding cup ceremony)? How many people were invited, and how many of them attended the "*Nishayn*" engagement? How many people were invited, and how many of them attended the "*Saatnam*"? How many people were invited, and how many of them attended the "*Maenzraat*"? Were you able to get the priest to say "*Nikah-Khawani*"? For how many days did the "main ceremony" (*Malmaez, Maezraat, etc.*) last? For the day of "*Yini-Wol*," the feast, how many people were expected to come, and how many exactly came? How was the feast (*Mahraaz-Saal*) served? Was the *Muhar-tullun* ritual performed? How many people attended the *Muhar-Tullun* ritual? *Gulmouth*, how much "gift money" were you expecting, and how many people were you expecting to give? How much of a wedding gift you expected to give to the groom's family on "*ruksati*" did you actually give? How much wedding gifts or gift money did you expect to receive from the groom's family during the various wedding rituals, and how much did you actually receive? What were the occasions on which the gifts were exchanged? Was your marriage celebrated as you had expected? Did the change in marriage practice impact you in any way? HOW? Are you happy with the way your marriage was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic? If yes, how? If no how? Did this change save on marriage expenses?

During the interview, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and permission was sought from them. After getting consent, their interview was taken. Interviewers assured the participants that their data would not be used for anything other than academic purposes and that their information would be kept confidential. Each interview lasted for approximately two hours and 30 minutes. Interviews

were recorded through a call recorder with the prior permission of the participants. All interviews were conducted in the local language, Kashmiri. At the end of the interview, each participant was thanked for her or his valuable time and cooperation. Apart from the interviews, local newspapers were also used as a primary source of data in this study.

To facilitate data analysis, the qualitative software Nvivo 12 was used. The interviews were uploaded and coded in an Nvivo 12 project. Data was then analyzed using the techniques of Braun and Clarke (2006), which included getting familiarized with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally producing the report. The analysis of the data resulted in the generation of five themes that described the participants' experiences of how Covid-19 affected marriage rituals and practices. Formal consent was received from all the participants before starting the interview. In order to maintain privacy, every participant was assigned a number, and names were not disclosed. However, the names (if any) used in the paper are fictional and not real.

**Table: Demographic Information of Respondents**

S No:	Gender	Residence	Respondents	Marriage decided pre-Covid19	Marriage decided post-Covid19
1	Male	Urban	Bridegroom	NO	Yes
2	Male	Urban	Bridegroom's Father	NO	Yes
3	Female	Rural	Bride	Yes	NO
4	Male	Urban	Bride's brother	NO	Yes
5	Female	Urban	Bride	NO	Yes
6	Female	Rural	Bride's cousin	Yes	NO
7	Female	Urban	Bridegroom's sister	NO	Yes
8	Male	Rural	Bridegroom's father	Yes	NO
9	Male	Urban	Bridegroom	Yes	NO
10	Female	Urban	Bride	NO	Yes
11	Male	Rural	Bride's brother	Yes	NO
12	Female	Urban	Bride	Yes	NO
13	Male	Rural	Bridegroom	NO	Yes
14	Male	Rural	Bridegroom	NO	Yes

## Major Findings

### Change in Wedding rituals practices and ceremonies

As the season of big fat wedding season sets in Kashmir, the pandemic and the new norms has cut its size and dulled down the traditional



flavor. Wedding ceremonies require prior permission from the authorities, and limits on the number of guests and physical distancing rules are mandatory. Most *Wazwans* are restricted to 10 dishes and the chefs are advised to wear protective suits and gloves. The new norms, which have been set in place, restrict the number of guests between 30 and 50— depending on the threat perception based zones. The norms, however, will dramatically change the idea of wedding ceremonies in Kashmir, where such occasions are rare coming together of extended families and friends for several days of feasting.

The pandemic has dampened the traditional wedding rituals. Within months, the centuries-old, lavish marriage tradition for which Kashmir is known has changed drastically in a region that already suffered months-long security lockdown last year. The three days of feasting, elaborate rituals and huge gatherings have been replaced by muted ceremonies attended by a limited number of close relatives and neighbors.

*“Months before the pandemic, I had drawn up a guest list of hundreds of guests and made grand plans for celebrating his wedding in May. But then the pandemic prevented him from going back home for his wedding from Dubai, where he has an engineering job. When I finally arrived for his postponed wedding in September, I was only able to invite about 100 people, mostly from his extended family and close friends. Marriage is a once-in-a-lifetime affair and I feel really bad that we couldn’t invite most of our relatives, friends and neighbors. One of my friends, who works in Saudi Arabia, was unable to travel home for his own marriage and had to postpone it to next year”.*(R1)

Kashmiris normally hold elaborate marriage feasts, with meals cooked over open fires through the night by teams of chefs called *Wazas*. Hundreds of guests are invited for lunch and dinner and served up to 30-course meals. The feast is called a *Wazwan*. The peculiarity of a *Wazwan* is that every part of a lamb, except the hide, head and hooves, is used to make different dishes. In the past, guests would gather in groups of four around large copper platters heaped with rice and various mutton and chicken dishes. The *Wazas* move among the guests, dressed in crisp white baggy trousers and tunics, serving more food.

The *nikkah* ceremony (One of significant ritual in Kashmiri marriages). The *nikah* sermon is read by a *molvi* (Islamic preacher) at the bride’s place. Earlier Bride’s family used to arrange the feast for people participating in *nikkah* ceremony. But now it was done, in a room that had only five people sitting while maintaining social distance. Now the bride is at her husband’s home but no party has been held yet.

The performance of the marriage is more important than inviting guests, We have planned to throw the feast when the situation becomes normal. That will happen, for sure.”(R6).

**The chefs** who cook Kashmir's traditional wedding feasts are known as *Wazas*. Normally, more than a dozen *Wazas* do the cooking; but now reduced team prepares an unusually small amount of mutton for the *Wazwan* wedding feast. With restrictions in place and many weddings cancelled, the traditional wedding chefs have little or no work.

### **Reduced Celebration; Wedding practices reduced to formality**

The pandemic has changed the way people celebrate weddings in Kashmir. In Kashmiri tradition, there are some times, which are known for the enjoyment and celebration which includes "*Malmaez, Maezraat*, etc. The '*Malmaenz*' (Also called '*Mayun*' and '*Haldi*' in other countries of South Asia) starts off the main celebration of the wedding. It is characterized by the traditional '*Mas-Traavun*' (Letting down the bride's hair). The elder women of the family oil the bride's hair and tie it into various tiny braids (Locally called '*Waankh*') and wrap them with colorful ribbons. Then these women sing the famous Kashmiri wedding songs and undo these fancy braids one by one. The night before the *Nikah* is called the '*Maenzraat*'. The bride's hair is tied in many tiny braids. In a ritual called *Mas-Muchrawun*, her friends and family members start to open the braids and comb her hair. On this night, the bride applies henna on her hands and feet while near and dear ones apply a teeny-weeny amount of henna on the groom's little finger too which is followed by wrapping it with a 500 or a 2000 rupee note as a sign of good omen. The local wedding singers are called and songs are sung throughout the night until dawn.

Since the people were apprehensive of getting infected due to Covid-19. Most of the neighbors, relatives and friends invited decided not to attend these wedding ceremonies. Those who attended were always preoccupied with the thought of making distances from one another. This resulted in witnessing these ceremonies but lacked in spirit and essence.

One of the respondent (bride) from Srinagar said, "*My family was always apprehensive about me, that they didn't even let any relative come closer to me ,even for a greeting. Throughout the course of these two days (maelmaenz and maenzraat, seemed like one after another practice –be it cake cut or be it taking me to tent,...was happening for the sake of formality. Earlier cake was being cut, and distributed among the people in the tent, now cake was cut but immediately removed from there ,nor people was interested n having it, It was like happening was happening too fast and people didn't enjoy much with such hastiness".(R10)*

Another Respondent from Anantnag said, "*We didn't prefer to hire any Kashmiri folk singer as we thought it wastage of money because we didn't invited much relatives ,and those who invited wouldn't also expected to come, due to*

*prevailing Covid crises. Had Covid not been here ,we would have called some Kashmiri folk singers for our guests.”(R2)*

A respondent from Srinagar said, “*We were early waiting for the “maenzraat” as it is night when the songs and celebration goes on whole night, but it happened for hardly an hour. It was a kind of a formality in the name of celebration.” (R6)*

Respondent from zakura “*It was an important day of our life. I had an idea what I wanted it to be. I wanted a month of music and dance rehearsals, a gala celebration; I wanted my family and friends to be there to witness our big day. Sadly It didn’t happen that way”.*(R6)

Earlier, Kashmiri weddings were great pomp and show. The huge amount of money was spent on grand tents dressed in fairy lights and decorated with flowers and balloons. Also much money is spend on stage prepared for the groom .But marriages during this Covid people didn’t prefer such spending on decoration of tents and in some cases their living hall became the wedding venue. A respondent from Lal-bazer said “*the grand and beautiful tents used to be so beautiful ,that people used to take pictures and selfies keeping as background picture, But now we are missing such things in marriages.”(R6).*

### **Traditions and rituals: changes due to Covid.**

Kashmiris normally hold elaborate marriage feasts, with meals cooked over open fires through the night by teams of chefs called *Wazas*. Hundreds of guests are invited for lunch and dinner and served up to 30-course meals. The feast is called a *Wazwan*. The peculiarity of a *Wazwan* is that every part of a lamb, except the hide, head and hooves, is used to make different dishes. In the past, guests would gather in groups of four around large copper platters heaped with rice and various mutton and chicken dishes. The *Wazas* move among the guests, dressed in crisp white baggy trousers and tunics, serving more food. The *Wazwan* tradition is so entrenched across all classes in Kashmir that numerous attempts by social groups and the government to raise awareness around food waste have failed to result in any significant restraint. The pandemic has largely achieved that in a matter of months. Affluence attained by locals during the Sultan period, especially during eighth Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, between 1418 and 1470, saw popularization of ‘*Trami*’. Since then, it has become central to weddings, with very minor changes in the sequencing of dishes over the centuries. Serving of ‘*Wazwan*’ (array of meat dishes) on ‘*Trami*’ during weddings was adopted increasingly by the local population during the Sultan period in the 14th century and it became a unique feature.

'Trami' epitomized a unique space, which brought down the walls of class and caste divide in society. In a wedding, 'Trami' sees people sitting around and eating from one plate irrespective of their class and caste. It symbolized brotherhood and sharing. It also created intimate spaces where people discussed politics, social issues and religion as the 'Waza' served the elaborate dishes.

A respondent from Srinagar's Lal-Bazaar area, was in a fix about his daughter's wedding in August as Covid-19 cases peaked in the Valley said *"I had already postponed the marriage twice since August last year due to the tumultuous situation. This time, the challenge was Covid-19. We decided to go ahead and ensure that the guests maintain social distancing,"* he said.(R6)

And replacing 'trami' with individual copper utensils was the only option, he noted. *"It was praised by the guests as it reduced their close contact with each other,"* he added. The trend seems to be picking up fast. Respondent , a resident of Peerbagh, ensured that the invitation card of his son's wedding had a line on serving the lunch: *"No 'trami', the lunch will be served separately on copper plates,"*

She further added *"There were instances where guests would enquire about how the food will be served. If it was a 'trami', people would avoid the function for obvious reasons,"* (R3)

Respondent , from Shalimar said, *"I found this new trend more comfortable. A guest is bound by the 'trami' culture to start at a particular time. Anyone who misses a 'trami' is supposed to wait. However, the copper utensil gives flexibility. In Covid-19 crisis, it is a healthy alternative too,"*(R4)

*"It is sad to see our hundreds of years of tradition changing in few months due to the pandemic. We used to eat from one big platter and now we have a small plate for each guest,.It looks like a small change, but this kind of change saddens me".*(R7)

In rare scenes in Kashmiri weddings this year, the 'dastarkhan' (long cloth spread on the floor), saw guests with face-shields and masks holding their own copper utensils around three meters away, as seven dishes were served by 'Wazas' (chef) from one utensil to another.

A Respondent from Anantnag said *"This pandemic is now threatening to take off 'Trami' from the 'dastarkhan'. This prolonged pandemic in fact has threatened cultural moorings across the globe and Kashmir is not immune."* (R8)

Many fears that the pandemic may wipe off this slice of culture from Kashmir.

During the Afghan rule, people of Kashmir saw Muslims switching from daytime weddings to late-night weddings to escape raids by the unbridled sepoys of the rulers. Eventually, weddings became a silent late-night affair. Now, due to pandemic ,It has again turned to daytime affair, which was prior to Afghan rule. The possible reasons may be the

sensitive management required to cope with challenges posed by pandemic, and these challenges can be better managed during daytime. Since these Covid time marriages has cut down our multi-stage wedding into few-stage wedding. It not only cut down certain rituals, which used to have great significance in our Kashmiri wedding but also altered some traditions and rituals in a great way. Usually On the day of *walima*, before visiting the brides house ,the groom used to visit graveyard first to pray for the deceased, now this ritual has been completely ignored during this Covid time.

Respondents from Anantnag said ,” *We consciously ignored this ritual ,as we didn’t want people to follow and go closer to groom ,as it was risky, we wanted to keep it as small as possible ,even though there has been much disagreement on it in our family members.*”(R13)

One more ritual that has been abandoned is the “applying of ‘hand’ on the head” on the day of *Ruksati*. It is believed in Muslim marriages that when groom/bride take a bath, on their wedding day, their past sins till that moment is completely erased. And according to Kashmiri traditional practice, if a bride and groom applies hand on the heads of children ,their wishes are supposed to be true. Now due to Covid crises, it was not possible to go near to bride and groom and have this physical touch, so this too was thought to abandon.

Earlier, before groom would leave to visit bride’s house on “*Ruksti*” day, neighbours and family would assemble in a line and sing traditional folk songs for the groom. This would make celebration even bigger. But due to Covid-19, these things were restricted by the elderly of the family fearing of groom getting infection by any gathering. Not only at his leave but on his arrival in the bride’s house would mark such singing of traditional folk songs in his welcome. This was also not found in most of the cases in this study. One more traditional practice that was cut down due to this pandemic was when groom would reach the brides house on *Ruksati* day. The bride’s family would offer him “Glass of milk with dry fruit mixture”, And children related to the family would offer presents and garland of money. This too was felt unsafe due to thus pandemic.

### **Gift exchange; Expectation and reality**

Gift exchange, also called the ceremonial exchange, has been an integral part of Kashmiri marriages. Kashmiri marriages usually happen in multi-stages and in each stage, there is some kind of exchange between the two parties. The exchange is done both in the form of payments (cash) and presents (kind). The exchange happens from both sides.

The mode of gift exchange is a two way process in Kashmiri marriages.

- Gifts from bride's side

- Gifts from groom's side

#### Gifts Given From Bride's Side

- Gold for bride
- Clothes including shawls, woolens for bride
- Household items, electronic goods, gadgetry furniture etc
- Copper utensils called *tram*
- Sometimes cash for couple
- Gifts for groom (gold, clothes, cash etc.)
- Gifts for the mother of groom (gold) called *hashi kanth*
- Gifts for the sister of groom (gold or clothes) called *zaemdaij* in local language
- Gifts (clothes) for groom's father
- Gifts (clothes) for groom's brother
- Gifts for other members of the groom's household if any
- Gifts (gold or clothes) for those who had visited bride house on *nikah* ceremony.

Gifts given from groom's side are Gold for bride, Clothes for bride, makeup items for bride, Gifts presented to her on different occasions like *Eid* etc. before marriage.

These gifts and payments are exchanged on various occasions ,like *Nishain, Hazirkhana, khandar, kabher* etc. Since due to Covid the stages in these multi-stage marriages have been cut down, and the gist exchange which was associated with these have also been cut down. Second, the major change that has been evident in Covid time marriages is that either parties expected less gifts from the other one. The decrease in the expectations can be associated with the fact that, it was self-explanatory to both the parties ,to get the gifts from the market is difficult due to Covid restrictions. Due to reduction in expectations, people from both the parties seemed carrying no grudges on a small exchange. The fact that, this so called gift exchange (dowry) is seen as evil in our society, as it is the major cause for domestic violence and late marriages in Kashmir. Neither govt. Laws in place nor religious influence has been so effective to reduce the dowry exchange in Kashmir .It is due to this pandemic, this dowry exchange has been reduced to such a level where it made our marriages economical and affordable.

A respondent from Shalimar, said *"I m personally very happy with the marriages are being carried out in Kashmir. It excused the poor from spending a lot on gift exchanges, nothing can excuse them as cutting it(multi-stage marriages) down to few stages ."*(R3)

A respondent from Bouzehouma said, *"I wish this way of marrying continues in future. May God forbid, i m not telling this pandemic should*

*continue but the way it offers us to have weddings with little pomp and show and less exchanges, is adorable.”(R2)*

### **Novelty in weddings: Covid linked Adaption**

The unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, which is wreaking havoc the world over, has hit the Kashmir Valley’s centuries-old culinary tradition of ‘trami’—eating together from one plate during weddings. But Kashmiris have learnt to adapt to the situation, understanding what social distancing means.

In ‘trami’, four guests join in simultaneously to have their portion of food from around a circular 2X2 ft decorated copper plate. So, guests now no more would gather in groups of four around a common dish to eat together. Now, *Wazas* in protective clothing serve a much-reduced number of guests on individual plates at the *Wazwan*. The *Wazwan* is served in both the bride and the groom's homes, but in both locations, guests had to sit observing physical distancing rules to eat. In rare scenes in Kashmiri weddings this year, the ‘*dastarkhan*’ (long cloth spread on the floor), saw guests with face-shields and masks holding their own copper utensils around three meters away, as seven dishes were served by ‘*Wazas*’ (chef) from one utensil to another. This pandemic not only contracted the marriages in term of size, spirit and stages but also posed a challenge for those closed near and dear ones who caught this *Covid* infection. It was obvious for them not to be physically present in these weddings, everything was planned in sync with other party, it got difficult for most of the families not to postpone. Those who couldn’t attend were streamed online through different video calling apps.

A respondent (groom) from Srinagar said, “*My close cousin couldn’t attend the main wedding ceremony (maenzraat). I never imagined my wedding without him. It was very saddening in our part, that we have to continue without him. But we found a way of sharing lighter moments of our wedding through Video Call with my cousin”.*(R5).

One more grave challenge which the new lockdown norms posed to Big fat wedding in Kashmir, was to restrict the number of guests between 30 and 50— depending on the threat perception based zones. The people found “Online medium “to compensate the lacunae brought be the absence of close relatives. A couple in Srinagar waited, hoping that the restrictions would be eased and they would be able to have their perfect wedding. But when no signs of the lockdown being lifted were seen, on 15 April, they decided to marry with the limited no. of guests recommended. The groom's uncle took the photographs, his aunt set up a Zoom link and did a running commentary as friends and relatives tuned in from different regions of Kashmir. “*I am pretty content. I like the idea of a*

*much more personal, intimate wedding, but my husband has plenty of regrets, he's got a laundry list," (R1)*

The ceremony (*maenzraat*) was attended by 16 people. A Zoom link was created to let friends and relatives watch across Kashmir. *I am not happy that my extended family of cousins, aunts and uncles missed my wedding and we are now planning a "grand reception" later in the year if the Covid-19 threat abates. (R4)*

This challenge was addressed and compensated by post wedding public appearances through social media websites like face book, instagram etc. to share the lighter moments of marriage with friends and relatives who couldn't make it to attend.

### **Conclusion**

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on traditional marriage practices and rituals in Kashmiri society. The pandemic has forced the restriction of guests at weddings, which has resulted in a change of the centuries-long traditional marriage rituals and practices that were known for the gathering of all relatives to spend quality time together. This has turned loud and joyous marriages into muted and essence-less ones. Additionally, the pandemic has disrupted the unique "*trami* culture" which brought down the walls of class and caste division in society, and created intimate spaces for people to discuss politics, social issues, and religion. The "*trami*" culture symbolized brotherhood and sharing, but due to the pandemic, it has become overburdening for the host, as they need to arrange separate dishes and spaces for the guests. People often inquired about the cleanliness of things that were offered to them to eat at different times. However, the pandemic has also brought some positive changes to marriages in Kashmiri society. It has made marriages more affordable and economical by reducing them to a few stages and reducing expectations in gift exchange on both sides. This has made it more excusable for the poor not to spend a lot of money on their marriages during the pandemic. Despite this, people are still worried about how their century-long marriage traditions are being compromised and, by virtue of it, their essence is being diminished. Overall, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about a mix of changes to traditional marriage practices and rituals in Kashmiri society, some of which have had a negative impact, while others have had a positive impact.

### **References**

- Itoo, G. N. and Bodha, S. A. (2004). *Jammu and Kashmir At A Glance*. Srinagar: Haroon Publications



- Gervis, P. (1974). *This Is Kashmir*. Delhi: A Universal Publication
- Iqbal, S. M. and Nirash, K. L. (1978). *The Culture of Kashmir*, New Delhi: Marwah Publications
- Mohd, W. (2003) *Aseer Kishtwari, Focus on Jammu and Kashmir*, Jammu: Crescent House Publications
- Lawrence, W. R. (1967). *The Valley of Kashmir*, Srinagar: Kesar Publishers

**Practicing religion in the  
times of COVID-19:  
Experiences from Srinagar  
city of Jammu and Kashmir**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir  
12(1) 134 - 156**

**ISSN: 2249-667X**

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/363cb1aa-272a-45d9-b2ac-994fe639aacf.pdf>

**Hibat U Noor\***

**Abstract**

*The Coronavirus pandemic thumped the world intensely and brought most of the world's institutions to a halt. One such social institution is the religious establishment. This article investigates the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on religious practices, rituals and faith. Religious institutions, because of the pandemic had cancelled worship services and pilgrimages. Religious festivals and religious ceremonies were affected by the pandemic in diverse forms. This study traces the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on religion in the society of Kashmir. The study was conducted in Srinagar city and includes pluralistic religious groups and attempts to examine the overall impact of COVID-19 on religion in Srinagar. This study is in line to examine social phenomena i.e., religion, with a qualitative understanding. Thus, a qualitative inquiry was conducted in order to get in-depth information regarding experiences of general public about the impact of COVID-19 on their lives with respect to religion.*

**Keywords**

Religion, faith, practices, rituals, congregations, charity, COVID-19

**Introduction**

The boutade of a mutated strain of Coronavirus - COVID-19, brought the whole world down on its knees. The virus caused a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and presented an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV'. The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold. (Impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods, 2020). COVID-19 brought

---

\* Postgraduate Student, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K (Batch 2018; Enrollment No. 18080118055  
Email: [nurhibat294@icloud.com](mailto:nurhibat294@icloud.com)

disruption to the globalized and interconnected world. (Will COVID Kill Globalization, 2020).

Worldwide pandemics, diseases, epidemics, as well as other pestilence routinely affect the humankind and a similar situation arose in December 2019. First human cases of COVID-19, the disease caused by the novel coronavirus causing COVID-19, subsequently named SARS-CoV-2 were first reported by officials in Wuhan City, China in December 2019 (World Health Organization Report, 2020). On 1 January 2020 WHO set up IMST (Incident Management Support Team) putting the organization on an emergency footing for dealing with the outbreak. On 4 January 2020, WHO reported on social media that there was a cluster of pneumonia cases with no deaths in Wuhan, Hubei province. On 5 January 2020 WHO published the news of outbreak with the flagship of technical publication to the scientific and public health community as well as global media. On 11 March 2020, deeply concerned, both by the alarming levels of spread and severity, and by the alarming levels of inaction, WHO made the assessment that COVID-19 can be characterized as a pandemic (World Health Organization Timeline, 2020) .

As soon as COVID-19 was announced as the pandemic, the situation around the world became fraught. The virus was raging and devastating throughout the year 2020 killing in millions. Human contact was the main reason for the transmission and as a result social life was put on hold, physical contact between the people was restricted and there was a global lockdown. These guidelines recommend practical actions that countries can take at national, sub regional and local levels to reorganize and safely maintain access to high-quality, essential health services in the pandemic context. Multitudinous restrictions were implemented worldwide (World Health Organization Guidelines, 2020).

The virus rammed through almost every segment of human life like economy, politics, education, family, globalization, as well as religion. Coronavirus has caused the worst recession since Great Depression of 1980's. (Covid-19: What will happen to the Global Economy, 2020).

The COVID-19 virus effected each and every social institution, religion being one among the major social institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted religion in various ways, including the cancellation of the worship services of various faiths and the closure of Sunday schools, as well as the cancellation of pilgrimages, ceremonies and festivals. (Burke, 2020). The religious places were closed down, faith institutions were locked, congregational prayers were banned and all religion related activities that required physical human interaction were stopped. Churches, Mosques Synagogues and Temples offered worship through live stream. (Park, 2020). COVID-19 generated a global emergency and

impacted religion in every aspect. Many religions gathered together to pray for an end to the COVID-19 pandemic, for those affected by it, as well as for wisdom for physicians and scientists to combat the disease. (Sheva and Solovy, 2020).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Contemporary times are brimming with secular and modern ideas, less belief in religion (Pew Research Study 2018) and more trust in science and technological advancements and a better healthcare system. "The results of a recent study showed that "belief in scientific-technological progress is a stronger predictor of life satisfaction than religious beliefs." (Zed, 2017). But whenever a calamity hits humans hard they turn to a supernatural force. A calamity disastrous to such an extent that even science and technology have no answers for. In the situations where answers are beyond human comprehension, belief and faith in supernatural entities transpire among the mankind. The impact of COVID-19 has been immense throughout the world.

This paper studies the impact of COVID-19 on religion- faith, practices and rituals in Kashmir, Srinagar in particular. The analysis of the impact will be unearthed through this study. The sociological study will help us to analyze the situation of religion and secularism in the lives of the people of Srinagar city.

### **Literature Review**

The literature has been reviewed thematically. Different themes have been developed in this literature review and discussed separately under different sub-headings.

### **History of Deadliest Pandemics and Religion**

Pandemics are as old as human settlements and well dwelled societal build ups. Worldwide pandemics and other diseases have routinely effected the human kind. According to **Chandra(2020)**,Thucydides has talked about the helplessness of his fellow citizens in the face of mass and imminent death due to a plague in Athens, and as a result of this, some people believed that Gods had abandoned Athenians which led them to give up the pretense of morality. During the Antonine Plague among Romans six centuries later, a similar kind of reaction was witnessed. **Chandra (2020)** also writes that people in the eastern India have been worshipping the goddesses like the leaf-clad *Parnashabari* and the snake-goddess *Manasa* for seeking help for the snake bites and smallpox for at least a millennium. Pandemics change and transform societies, cultures, traditions, political scenarios and religious scenarios as well.

**Chandra (2020)** says that the response of the religious people during pandemics was that their imperfect and sinful ways of humanity seemed to match the capriciousness of God's will. Islamic scholars saw the plague as Allah's will. During 15th-17th centuries, a contagious disease called smallpox killed around 30% of those who were infected. Smallpox claimed the lives of approximately 90% of American population and even resulted in European invasion into America (Bose, 2020).

### **Religion and Pandemics**

Religions affect the pandemics in the best possible way because religious beliefs and practices shape the conduct of the believers. **Pennisi (2011)**, while quoting David Hughes, an evolutionary biologist at Pennsylvania State University writes that religious beliefs can shape key behaviors in ways that evolutionary theory would not predict, particularly when it comes to dealing with disease, and all the religions had a different take on the disease, and belief systems influenced the take whether people would flee or help the sick at the time of need. **Chandra (2020)** believes that this pandemic has drawn people closer to prospect of death and compelled them to contemplate and anticipate the meaning of life, thus making them to move towards their religious beliefs.

### **COVID-19 and Major Religions of the World**

**Dijkstra (2020)** writes that during the times of COVID-19, the need for religion is very high as it has provided spiritual solace, but in the lockdown, the Dutch Christian community's attempt of live streaming congregational prayers via the internet is a widespread method used for worship at the time of COVID-19. In many churches around the world, the same method was used for the Christian worshippers. In Washington, National Cathedral closed its doors until March 26, 2020 and Sunday sermons were offered through live stream (Norris, 2020).

**Ibrahim (2020)** reported that Muslim worshippers were not allowed to enter the two main mosques for Muslims - Mecca's Grand Mosque as well as Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. Saudi authorities banned the worshippers from praying close to *Kaaba*, and *Umrah* and *Hajj* pilgrimages were also forbidden. **Ibrahim (2020)** also reported that some of the Mecca city's smaller mosques live streamed their sermons through internet. The congregational prayers of Muslims were similarly suspended in majority of the mosques around the world.

Hindus were also unable to visit their temples. According to **Srinivas (2020)**, when it comes to fighting the pandemic among Hindus, in India, many goddesses come to the rescue, e.g. a goddess known as "*Amman*" or the Divine Mother-goddess of contagion. The author during his cultural

anthropological study witnessed small shrines in India dedicated to these goddesses. These goddesses act as “celestial epidemiologists” curing the illness. **Srinivas (2020)** also witnessed that in a temple of India, a new deity, has been installed that has been crafted from polystyrene and called “Corona Devi”. The pilgrimages were suspended among Hindus also like *Amarnath Yatra* (*Amarnath Yatra cancelled ...*, 2020). **Sherwood (2021)** reported that a grand Hindu pilgrimage called *Kumbh Mela* in North India was allowed by the authorities.

The Sikh pilgrimage to Sri Kartarpur Sahib was cancelled due to COVID-19 outbreak by the Indian Home Ministry (Coronavirus update, 2020). The Gurudwaras were closed throughout India. Quoting Roop Singh, the Shiromani Gurudwar Parbandhak Committee Secretary, **Kaur (2020)** writes that closing gurudwaras down is out of question.

### COVID-19 and Religious Charity

Faith based organizations help in fund raising, offered concrete types of support and charity. *Livemint* wrote, In India, Dawoodi Bohra community has been helping people whatever the religion may be. They distributed medicines as well as food items to the needy. The Powai Bengali Welfare Association worked quickly to divert their attention and resources to help those affected by COVID-19. The funds that were used to help people in need were raised for *Durga Puja*. The Buddhists of Tibetan community in India contributed to relief work and fundraising. Tashi Lhunpo, a monastery in Bylakuppe, Karnataka, donated Rs1.5 lakh to the PM Cares Fund and Rs1 lakh to the state CM relief fund. The Buddhist monastery also helped people of poorer households with ration. The Sikhs of Indian Humanity Assistance Foundation’s chairman said, “*Our pledge is to not let anyone in Kolkata go hungry during the lockdown*”(Humanity over hate: Religious organizations, 2020).

**Niazi(2020)** writes, “*The Humanitarian Relief Society, in Karnataka was continuously involved providing the relief items during the testing times.*” Its general secretary, Mohammed Makakada, said that they have distributed \$200,000 worth of food items to the poor.

Many Christian Foundations have also been working for the relief globally throughout the pandemic including the American Red Cross, Americares, CDC Foundation, Convoy of hope, Crisis Aid International Direct relief, Giving Children Hope, Global Giving, HOPE International, World Relief, Project Hope etc. All of these organizations have been working for the relief effort to the people in need globally. World relief provided cash assistance, food and other supplies in U.S. Internationally, they tried to allocate the health and nutrition

emergency funds for the areas expected to be hit hardest by the pandemic. (Turner, 2020).

In Kashmir many NGO's helped people financially during the coronavirus pandemic. Bashir Nadwi, chairman of NGO Athrout, distributed more than 5000 masks. Hamid Rahim, owner of an automobile company donated 10 lakh rupees to the administration in their efforts to provide medical assistance to COVID-19 positive patients and gave an ambulance to the Srinagar district administration. Javid Parsa, a young entrepreneur in Srinagar distributed over a thousand masks among doctors at various hospitals in the city. The General Secretary of J&K Hoteliers Club Tariq Ghani has given 67 hotels to the administration which were used as quarantine centers. (Bhukhtiyar, 2020)

### COVID-19, Faith, Rituals and Practices

Religious traditions, beliefs and institutions play important roles in everyday life for the majority of people worldwide. People always turn to God in situations when there are no answers available to them, when science and technology fails in all aspects. Faith institutions and belief systems remain the last resort. (Oliwia, Krzysztof, Anna, 2020). They say religion has always played a role of the balm for the soul. According to the research conducted, people experiencing fear, suffering or illness often experience a **"spiritual renewal."** *"Perhaps a new "generation of coronavirus" is being shaped, in which the development of spirituality will create the mature attitude based on truth and freedom."* (Oliwia, Krzysztof, Anna, 2020). As the community grapples with challenges brought by the novel coronavirus, many people are turning to the clergy for guidance. (Jamie Ostroff, 2020).

"From the Black Death and AIDS to COVID-19, whenever societies have suffered outbreaks of disease, there have always been those who are quick to seek both religious explanations and solutions." (Rebecca Yearling, 2020). Katherine Marshall cited an article of Bangladesh's newspaper, *Daily Star*, that argued, "religious actors play a *"vital stabilizing role"* during such global crises and can *"offer a beacon of hope"* amid *"the ravages of this pandemic."*

Religious communities play an important role on all dimensions. "The wisdom of ancient faith traditions, their practical experience and reach to communities, the solace they provide at a time of crisis, and their social teachings—all are needed now more than ever." (Katherine Marshall, 2020)

### Religion in Srinagar with a COVID-scenario

Kashmir has a religious population of 96.41% Islam, 2.45% Hinduism, 0.81% Sikhism, 0.17% Christianity. (Religion Data of Census 2011). In Kashmir, Srinagar is Muslim majority city in India with approximately 95.97 % of city population following Islam as their religion. Hinduism is second most popular religion in city of Srinagar with approximately 2.75 % following it. In Srinagar city, Christianity is followed by 0.21 %, Jainism by 0.01 %, Buddhism by 0.02 % and Sikhism by 0.92 %. Around 0.00 % stated 'Other Religion', approximately 0.13 % stated 'No Particular Religion'. (Srinagar City Population 2011 – 2021). In Kashmir, religion has been a part and parcel of social life. People have always been driven by religion. In Kashmir, religion pervades through all the spheres social, cultural and political life. The patterns of religious discourses, proliferating of number of mosques, madrasas and increase in the percentage of Muslims performing *Hajj* (pilgrimage) show the renewal of Muslims in Kashmir which is largely influenced by the media (Mir, 2018). In Srinagar, the summer capital of union territory Jammu & Kashmir a number of religious shrines exist. With Temples Gurdwaras, Masjids a Church all functioning in a well manner. The top religious places in Srinagar include, Kheer Bhawani Temple, Jamia Masjid, Hazratbal Shrine, Shah-e-Hamdan Khanqah-e-Molla, Chatti Padshahi Gurudwara, Charar-e-Sharif, Durga Nag Temple, Pathar, Masjid, Makhdoom Sahib Shrine, Holy Family Catholic church, Roza Bal Shrine and a few others. (Khan, 2019). Mehreen writes, *"the aspect is the mystical and spiritual vibe that surrounds the whole valley and binds different religions together"*. People visit these religious places to experience such soul healing experience (Khan, 2019).

The pandemic hit the whole world really hard and Srinagar city was affected with the same intensity. In Srinagar, on March 18, the city recorded its first positive case for the novel coronavirus (*"Coronavirus | Kashmir Valley records..."*, 2020). Rohit Kansal, Principal Secretary to the Government, Planning, Development and Monitoring Department tweeted, confirming the first case that was observed in Khanyar Srinagar, with a history of foreign travel and a surveillance around the 300m area was started. Srinagar city had the negligible health facilities available to cope up with the virus. Hospitals soon were flooded with the patients. *"Greater Kashmir reported, "Despite a spike in COVID19 patients requiring oxygen support, SMHS hospital here is facing oxygen supply shortage, hampering treatment of patients."*(Greater Kashmir, 2020). As of 30 January, 2021, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir had recorded a total of 1,933 COVID-related deaths, while 1,21,617 of the total 1,24,373 cases recovered (Doda becomes first district in Jammu & Kashmir, 2021).



The religious institutions remained under lockdown throughout the whole world as well as in Srinagar Kashmir. Srinagar administration closed all the religious places to prevent the spread of Coronavirus. (Coronavirus: All religious places...", 2020). Whole of the Kashmir including the people of Srinagar had to celebrate the pious month of Ramadan during the pandemic. There were no religious gatherings and many religious leaders appealed people to pray at home and not go out to Masjids and local shrines. ("Jammu and Kashmir religious leaders urge...", 2020). "Anjuman-e-Auqaf Jama Masjid, Srinagar, suspended the Friday and the "Taravih" (special Ramadan prayers) prayers. Mufti Nasir ul Islam, the Grand Mufti, also appealed the people to say the prayers in their homes. To curb mass congregation as a measure to limit the spread of COVID-19, the Jammu and Kashmir administration on Wednesday announced the suspension of the "Vaishno Devi yatra" and inter-state bus operations. (Kaur, 2020). "The religious places were closed, Dastgeer Saheb, Gurdwara Saheb Chhati Padshahi, Hazratbal, Naqshband Saheb and other places of worship will be closed amid the lockdown, tweeted, District Magistrate Shahid Choudhary. ("Combating COVID-19: Places of worship Report...", 2020). No Eid prayers were offered in Major Masjids and Shrines. The police had enforced restrictions in most parts of the Kashmir Valley. ("Lockdown casts shadow on Eid celebrations in Kashmir valley", 2020). Christmas was celebrated with gaiety and full spirit in Kashmir with people praying for peace in region. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the night prayers were kept limited to only a few devotees. The main prayer meet was done in Holy Family Church on Moulana Azad road church as well as the famous ski resort in Gulmarg. (Christmas celebrated with religious fervor, gaiety in Kashmir, 2020). Greater Jammu, reported All Parties Sikh Coordination Committee (APSCC) appealed to the members of Sikh community to celebrate "Baisakhi" at homes and avoid public gatherings to maintain social distancing and curtail spread of Coronavirus. Gurudwara Parbandhak Committees also advised people to refrain from crowding. The Amarnath yatra one of the famous Hindu pilgrimages in Kashmir that took place every year was also cancelled. The religious places in Kashmir have been open since August but government has asked to follow the COVID-19 protocols strictly. In a report published by Kashmir Life, on the opening of religious places, they wrote, "When the doors opened, emotions ran high. While praying and paying obeisance, people were seen crying and consoling each other.". As Kashmir Life talked to few, saying "there was a sense of solace around." (Bahadur ,2020).

## Rationale

COVID-19 affected every aspect of human life throughout the world. The study will accentuate the relevance of religious faith and other related activities during the times of COVID-19. The study tries to find out if religion actually provides the solace and it also deals with the questions that will enable us to understand how much religious people are in Kashmir. The main point of focus of the sociological studies is to study the social change in the social institutions. The reason for doing this research is to understand if any changes actually occurred in the belief system or the stance remained the same or may be the religious belief weakened, and people tried to question the divine and supernatural powers. This research tries to contribute to the literature on the research topic.

### **Universe of the Study**

The research is of qualitative type. The universe of the study is the population of religious people in the Srinagar city of Kashmir. Since the study is all about the impact of COVID-19 on religious practices and rituals in the Srinagar city, therefore the universe in this study includes all the pluralistic religious groups of the city.

### **Objectives**

The main objective of this research is to find out how COVID-19 impacted the life of people around the lines of religion. The main objectives of the research are as follows:

- To study the impact of Covid-19 on congregational prayers, rituals done (in collectivity to individualistic religious practices).
- To study the impact of Covid-19 on religious faith (intensified or weakened during pandemic).
- To find out the impact of pandemic and its influence on religious activities in relation to digital media.
- To find out the consequences of Covid-19 on religious festivals, ceremonies, rituals and charity and charity organizations.

### **Sampling Strategy**

While doing the sampling in this research, the *non-probability* method was used. In the Non-probability sampling, both *convenience sampling* and *purposive sampling* were used. The reason for choosing these sampling methods in this research study is that the study was to be done on general public, so some of the participants were chosen randomly and some of the participants were chosen purposely, like religious authorities, and religious officials etc. in purposive sampling. The samples included both

male and female, literate and illiterate participants of Srinagar belonging to different religious groups.

### **Tools and Techniques**

Data collection was carried out through questionnaires, interviews and observation at religious places. Participants were approached at religious places randomly for interviews and in some cases the questionnaires were handed over to the authorities at religious places to be filled by the participants.

The questionnaires were distributed among the general population via 'GOOGLEFORMS'. Some were hand-delivered to be filled by respondents. The questions in the questionnaire were mostly closed-ended and a few were open-ended. The people who were to fill the questionnaires involved 19 respondents belonging to different religious groups and areas of Srinagar city.

The interviews were *descriptive* as well as *exploratory*. Some of the dimensions of the research topic that couldn't have been touched by using questionnaires were explored by interviews. The interviewees were chosen randomly. A set of structured questions were asked to the respondents and in a few other cases unstructured interview questions were developed randomly according to the need of the situation. The respondents whose interviews were conducted were 18 in number.

In some cases non-participant observation was also used as a methodology to study the situation that was in favor of the information to be collected for the research.

### **Data Analysis**

The research is qualitative in nature. In the questionnaires, the questions asked were predominantly of 'Yes/No' type. The respondents who filled questionnaires are coded in numbers from 1 to 19.) The six participants (or respondents) who were interviewed using the interview schedule are coded as **R-1, R-2, R3, R-4, R-5** and **R-6** and other random interviews are coded as **R-7, R-8, R-9, R-10, R-11, R-12, R-13, R-14, R-15, R-16, R-17** and **R-18**.

The responses were first arranged in a tabulated form. The tabulated data includes the personal information (religion, age, sex, educational level, occupation and residential area). The next step that was followed was the distribution of the questions into four categories in accordance with the four aims of the study. Some questions occupied more than one categories. This categorization was done after thoroughly examining the information these questions could deliver. The responses were then summarized in percentages and the numbers were noted down.

The participants belonged to the different religious groups - Muslims (60%), Christians (16%), Sikhs (20%) and Hindus (4%). The participants were all of different age group from 23- 25 (40%), 26-32 (20%), 33-45 (20%), 46-55 (12%), 56-67 (8%). The male to female ratio of respondents for the questionnaires and interview schedule remained equal- males (50%) and females (50%). The residential area included an urban population of 64%, semi-urban 28% and rural 8%. Although for those who were interviewed in an unstructured manner male to female ratio was 13:3. These interviewees are denoted as **R-7, R-8, R-9, R-10, R-11, R-12, R-13, R-14, R-15, R-16, R-17** and **R-18**. After the tabulation of the data, the data was thoroughly overviewed to get the know-how of the data.

The questions that were asked were analyzed and the results are discussed theme-wise, and the responses were thoroughly analyzed. Then, the themes were developed in such a way that particular themes would fulfill the results related to the aim and objectives of this research.

The results will be discussed in accordance with the objectives the research favors. By using the thematic analysis, we can deduce the general themes of these objectives. They are : "Impact on faith", "Impact on congregational prayers", "Influence on religious activities in relation to digital media" and "Impact on religious ceremonies, rituals and charity". The influence and impact is to be seen with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Results and Discussion**

The interviews were conducted from 14 December, 2020 to 24 December, 2020 a time period predominantly influenced by COVID-19 pandemic. Permission was sought from all the participants and interviews were conducted as per the convenience of the participants in the local, Urdu, Hindi, or English languages. The order of the questions in both the interviews and the questionnaires was kept simple, free of technical terms and were often altered following the course of the discussion. Mostly the interviews were recorded after taking permission from the participants and others who did not give the permission to record, their interviews were written on a notebook. Names of participants highlighted in the research are pseudonyms and some identifying details have been changed to protect their identities.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on the Religious Faith**

Faith is an important aspect of religion. Faith is personal and mysterious and individualistic and inexpressible and indefinable. (Capretto, 2016). Predominantly, no change was seen in the religious faith among the people. A direct question related to this theme was asked like, "how was

*your religious faith affected during the COVID-19 pandemic?"* with three options (*intensified, weakened and no change*). The 'no change' option was chosen by the 76% of the respondents, 20% people said that their religious faith intensified and 4% claimed that their faith weakened with the advent of the COVID-19 threat. Mostly, people on being interviewed said that they were religious before the pandemic as well.

"We are God fearing people, death is the ultimate truth of this world. Why are you asking this question if my faith intensified or weakened. I used to pray five times a day and I still pray five times a day. I have been very religious since my childhood. It does not matter to me whether the disease is deadly or not, as long as Allah is with me I believe I will be fine" (R-7).

The faith element supposedly remained unchanged but the fear of God filled the hearts of the believers. One of the important questions asked was "*Did you start praying more due to the fear of the COVID-19?"* A 36% of people said they started praying more while as other 64% said no they did not. A Granthi at a Gurudwara said, "*People started praying more in the catastrophic times. They would call me early in the morning and say that we wake up early and do ardaas (pray) these days. They would ask me prayer related questions on phone, as Gurudwara remained fully closed for a week, during the lockdown"*(R-8). Some participants responded to intensification of religious faith and said that their faith in God intensified during the coronavirus pandemic. "*I will only talk for myself. When COVID happened everyone felt that something is wrong, wrong in a sense that we need to introspect and reflect on ourselves. I usually did not pray much, may be rarely 2 or 3 times a day. But now I pray 5 times a day. I even wanted to pray "Tahajjud" (special night prayer in Islam) and I tried but I could not remain consistent. Although I now pray 5 times prayer with consistency."*(R-3) said a respondent. On being asked, "*What do you think is the cause of the disease (COVID-19)?"* with options (*Punishment of God, Scientific Reason, Biological Warfare, and Human intervention with natural processes*), a majority (56%) of the respondents believe that human intervention with natural processes is the main cause of the rise of this infection while 36% of them believed that punishment from God is the reason and 12% chose biological warfare for the same question.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Religious Practices and Rituals**

The religious places remained closed due to the lockdown that was caused by the pandemic. Participants were asked a few questions in relation to it. Some of the questions asked were: "*Do you support closure of religious places?"* When asked about the closure of religious places, 80% of the participants responded in affirmative. On asking the question, "*Do*

*you support the cancellation of religious pilgrimages?"*, 76% of them favored the cancellation of pilgrimages and others did not. People mostly said that whatever was required for saving the life of people should be done. A respondent said, *"it is important to close the religious places, if Kabah (a building at the center of Islam's most important mosque, the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, Saudi Arabia)(Azraqi, 2003) has been closed and Hajj (a Muslim pilgrimage) has been cancelled how can we keep our Masjids open? Our religion says if the plague breaks out in a region do not go there, but if you are already there, do not come out of it."* So, it's not only for me but for others help also. I cannot harm others." **(R-3)** In addition to this, another respondent said, *"We are all brothers, I cannot even think of harming others for my satisfaction."* Being a Christian himself he said, *"even if I have to be cremated rather than being buried I will give the permission. We must take care of ourselves as well as others."* **(R-1).**

Some of the respondents believed that religious places should be kept open. Those who answered negatively were lesser in number (20%). They said the religious places should not be closed for anything. *"We totally do not support the closure of religious places we believe in god, and the pandemic has been brought by God and God will take it away. Many researchers have been done people have reached on moon but no scientist has come who gave us the vaccination. On a daily basis we are hearing that vaccine will come today or tomorrow. God knows if the vaccine will work or not"*, said a participant **(R-8)**. On interviewing a priest at Gurudwara the response to the question was given in a negative manner. The priest said, *"We are not in support of the closure of religious places, these people have become arrogant. Who are these people to close the religious place?"* **(R-16).**

Muslims would usually go to the shrines for birth rituals like "Aqiqah" (ceremony involves shaving the child's head seven days after birth). *"I was at home my work was affected as well. The shrine was fully closed. I would do Aqiqah of 10-15 children per day."* **(R-10)** said the barber at Makhdoom Sahib shrine. A devotee who had come with his mother, wife and a new born baby said, *"It gives us happiness and joy to do Aqiqah at this shrine. My mother had already decided before the birth of the child that Aqiqah would be done at Makhdoom Sahib's Shrine. We had to do the Aqiqah of one baby at home only, but we really wanted to come here. It was impossible for us to come during lockdown. But now we are happy that the shrine has finally opened."* **(R-9)** The festivities like Eid were celebrated inside the homes only. An interviewee said, *"I can't tell you what joy congregational prayers in Ramadan bring, Taraweeh (special ramadan prayers) especially."* **(R-11).** The Ramadan for Muslims as well as Eid celebrations did not take place as they usually did before COVID-19 pandemic.

People would go to *Dargah* (a shrine located at Hazratbal Srinagar) on special annual occasions but this year the attendance of the devotees was very low. *"We would have attendees of 25000 people on the day of showing of religious relic of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) but this year people were only in hundreds and the religious relic that would be shown outside of the masjid to everyone was shown inside of the Masjid"*, said a worker at Dargah Hazratbal Masjid. **(R-15)**

The Sikhs would usually celebrate the birthdays of their children at Gurdwara, get married at Gurdwara, celebrate their festivals at Gurdwara, but during the pandemic all these activities were affected. *"No marriage ceremonies took place in our Gurudwara, We have days of our Guru's (saints) those were not celebrated, even on Baisakhi people were negligible in number at Gurdwara and we have a ritual of celebrating birthdays of our children at Gurdwara. Its a tradition, langar (feast) would take place for the people who would visit the Gurdwara"*, said a respondent **(R-8)** working as a Granthi at Gurdwara. The Catechist of the Holy Family Catholic Church, the only Church in Srinagar, Kashmir said, *"no marriages took place at the church, no birth related rituals like baptism, or any other religious ritual took place at the Church."* **(R-12)**. The priest of Church said, *"Easter celebrations were cancelled but we are planning to celebrate Christmas this month."* as of December, 2020. **(R-1)** On asking, *"Did you take part in any marriage related religious ceremony during the pandemic?"* A majority (68% of them) said that they took part in marriage related religious ceremonies during the pandemic. Some of the interviewees said they did take part in the marriage ceremonies but a small group of people was invited in all the cases.

Festivals are a social event but due to COVID no festival was celebrated as usually would have been celebrated. The other small rituals and celebrations did not take place. People did not attend marriages or any other celebrations mostly. People did not visit the religious places. People were mostly in support of religious places being closed. The followers of Sikhism did not support the closure of religious places at all. The study analysis showed that people did not feel that kind of solace by praying at home that they would usually feel by praying at religious places. Although the pandemic is still with us but people have started to follow the rituals in the same manner as before. The religious places are opening up but people mostly want to practice their religion in the same manner as before.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on the Congregational Prayers**

During COVID-19 pandemic, congregational prayers were banned throughout the whole world. Congregational prayers are an important

part of religious activities in almost every religion. A question was asked in the questionnaire: "What means/modes have you used for performing religious activities (especially prayers)?" To this question a 92% of the respondents chose the *home* option for using the means to perform religious activities, 28% said they used the *digital media* while 36% of them went to the religious places for performing religious activities. People mostly prayed at home and avoided religious gatherings. Some people took advantage of technology and did the prayer related activities through online medium. "All the members of the Church would come online at 5:30 in the evening and pray to Mother Mary together. Rosary has become a thing that we do on daily basis", (R-1) said the priest of the Holy Family Catholic Church. Another question that was asked was "How often do you go to your religious place?" The response about the regularity of going to their religious places, include 40% of the respondents saying that they *never visited* their religious places during the COVID-19 lockdown while 32% of them said that they used to go there on *weekly* basis and 28% on *daily* basis. "We used to have huge gatherings, sometimes in thousands on a normal Friday but due to COVID the shrine was closed for three months you can yourself see that this Friday the gathering is in hundreds only, even when the shrines and other religious places have been opened people are not coming to pray", said a participant (R-11) working at a religious shrine. A group of women were sitting by the stairs of Dargah Hazratbal and one (R-12) among them said, "We pray in congregations at this Masjid. It gives solace to our souls". Another one interrupted saying "this is Kabah for the poor like us." (R-13). A lady at the Gurudwara said, "I visit Gurdwara on weekly basis, so does my family. We all come together and pray" (R-6). "We did our prayers on a daily basis, we closed the Gurdwara only for a week during COVID. People would come and pay visits. We even had special prayers that were organized in order to get rid of the coronavirus" said a respondent (R-8). Another question that was asked regarding this objective is, "Do you believe congregational prayers were the reason for the spread of the virus?" A 60% of the participants said that congregational prayers were not the reason for the spread of the COVID-19 while the remaining 40% favored the statement of congregational prayers being a reason for this. Some other questions were, "Did you attend any religious gathering specially organized for praying to get rid of the infection?" and "Do you believe any religion should be blamed for the spread of virus?" About attending the special prayers, 76% of the participants answered in negative while 24% of them responded in affirmative and these were mainly those people who work at religious places and to the later question a 4% of people said 'yes' while as a majority of 96% said 'no', religion was not the reason for the spread of virus respectively.



Two questions related to prayer being affected were asked in a direct manner, "Do you think your regular prayers got affected in any way?" and "Do you believe congregational prayers gave you more spiritual strength". To the former question a 52% of people said 'no' their prayers were not affected and 48% of people said 'yes' their regular prayers were affected due to the pandemic and to the later 76% of peoples said 'yes' congregational prayers bring more spiritual strength while as a 24% of participants said 'no' respectively. Mostly being Muslim women who do not pray in congregations. "yes we believe in god and it is obvious that not being able to visit the religious places to pray would affect us. Congregational prayers bring more spiritual strength" said a respondent (R-7).

### **Influence of COVID-19 on the Religious Activities in relation to the use of Digital Media and Technology**

Only two questions were asked about this objective. These were the following: "Did your religious preachers or the religious leaders use digital media to help people get access to religious activities?" and "Did you use digital media platform to get your religious doubts solved rather than having a face-to-face meetings with a religious scholar?" In the former question, 60% of them said their religious leaders didn't use the digital media while 40% said 'yes' to this. Christians mainly constituted these 40%. In the later question, 64% said that they used the digital media to get their religious doubts solved. "Digital media has played an important role. The support of technology ensured that faith was enhanced at the time of need otherwise a vacuum would have been created. Lapses can be filled with the help of technology but vacuum is very hard to fill", said the priest(R1) of a Church.

In case of Muslims, no online program was organized by the religious authorities. Among Sikhs, similar kind of response as Muslims was witnessed. Although a small chunk of people would call the *Granthi* asking for help with the daily prayers as already mentioned in the above section. For religious activities, Christians predominantly used digital media to continue their congregational religious ceremonies. The followers would take part in the virtually held congregational prayers through digital media at the scheduled time. To get their religious doubts solved, the majority of the people responded that they used digital media.

### **Impact of COVID-19 on Charity**

In this category, two questions were asked first one being. "Did you give more religious charity during the COVID-19 pandemic than before?" A 64% of the people said that they gave more religious charity during the

pandemic. *"I would always give out charity but this time I gave more due to the fear of COVID-19."*, said a respondent (R-11). 36% of the respondents said 'no' for this question.

Secondly, *"Do you think charity funding of religious places lessened during the pandemic?"* For this a majority of 68% of the participants believe that the charity funding of religious places lessened during the pandemic and 32% believed that the charity funding did not decrease. *"We would get more charity usually, tourists would come. We are a small group of 30 -35 families under the membership of this Church. Usually tourists used to come and donate. We would get a good amount of charity but now it has lessened due to COVID-19"*, said the priest (R-1) of the Church. A question that was asked randomly to the priest was, *"If other religious groups helped in donations during the lockdown?"* The answer came in affirmation. The priest (R-1) said, *"there were a few Muslims who donated to the Church in times of COVID-19."* The condition was same at the Gurdwaras that were visited at the time of fieldwork. The donations were lessened as no tourists from outside had come. Moreover both the Church authorities and the Gurudwara authorities said that they helped people and donated irrespective of the religion, although no donations were made by any other religious group to the Gurdwaras.

Among Muslims a shocking result related to donations came out regarding shrines. *"A large amount of money was collected from the donation boxes. According to my sources an amount of 45 lakh rupees and 5kgs of gold with a small amount of silver was collected from the donation box"*, a local (R-4) working at Dastgeer Sahib Shrine, Khanyar Srinagar. *"Dargah was totally under lockdown. No one was allowed inside. People would come and request to be allowed inside to donate in the boxes. As a result, two additional donation boxes had to be put outside the Dargah."* said a local (R-3), working at a Dargah Hazratbal. On visiting the Wakf Board Office, Mr. Showkat Ahmed Beigh, Secretary J&K Wakf Board said that there has been an increase in the charity during the Coronavirus pandemic. *"We witnessed a 5-6% of increase in the charity during this period (pandemic period). It has never happened before."* said the Wakf Board Secretary. Although a person working at the Wakf Board office said, *"I have never seen such huge amounts of money coming out from the donation boxes. The increase must have been 10-15%"*. (R-13).

A question related to the economic status of clergy during the lockdown was asked and the question was, *"Do you think the income of clergy members got affected during the pandemic?"* To which a 64% of people said "yes" and 36% of people said no. Although on interviewing most of clergy members in the field, no such evidences were found in most of the

cases. The Secretary of Wakf Board J&K said that, *"They paid each and every single working member."* Another respondent (R-18) said, *"I believe the fund raising of Masjids decreased during the COVID pandemic because lesser number of people attended the prayers in the Masjids and therefore the funding was low"*. In comparison to the shrines, the fund raising of Masjids saw a steep decline during the pandemic.

The results clearly suggest that people used to give more charity during the pandemic, although, the places of worship of the religious minorities in Srinagar faced a decline in the fund raising.

### **Religious Places and SOPs related to Pandemic**

One question related to (SOPs) was asked in the questionnaire as well as interviews that was,

*"Are you following SOP's related to COVID-19?"* A 96% of people said that the SOPs were followed and the rest answered negatively. On observations made during the field work many of the Shrines had sanitizers available at the entry. A guard at Dargah Hazratbal said, *"they were provided with sanitizers from the hospital authorities. But he didn't know which hospital they were from. He added that "a team of health workers was sent to sanitize the Masjid from inside"*. (R-15) Although on making an observation not even at a single masjid or shrine that was visited during the fieldwork SOP's were followed. No social distance was maintained at Masjids. At Churches and Gurdwaras each and every single person coming in and going out was seen wearing masks and maintaining social distance. The Temples that were visited during the fieldwork were locked or deserted.

Other questions related to the main topic were asked like, *"have you started visiting your religious places?"* To this a 64% of people said "yes" to this while as 36% of people said "no" to this. The people who said no were mostly Muslim women.

### **Conclusion**

This study was dominantly about the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the religious faith, rituals and practices specifically in Srinagar, Kashmir. The pandemic has had an immense effect on the routinized and normal organization of religious practices and traditions due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The prayers that would usually be congregational, were individualized. The faith aspect didn't change much. The daily practical activities and rituals were pummeled down due to the pandemic.

The fieldwork regarding this study was done when the religious institutions started to open again after a long time of lockdown. The

results indicated that the lockdown may have impacted the normal religious routines but, the rituals and practices are coming around again. Although the practices and rituals had a huge impact during the peak time of the pandemic, the impact has not been permanent but rather momentary.

In a modern secular world, religion seems to lose its significance but on studying a general population in this research the faith aspect of the believers remained unchanged. People were equally religious before the pandemic. This is only possible when a society is highly religious. However, a small chunk of the population started to pray more but no significant change in faith in the Divine was witnessed.

On examining the charity and donations made to religious organizations, the amount had increased enormously in Muslim shrines. But, in case of Masjids, the donations have decreased. Among the minority religious groups (Sikhs, Hindus and Christians) in Srinagar the charity was affected in a negative manner. The religious places saw a steep decrease in donations in the case of religious minorities in Srinagar. This again shows the sample society is deeply religious as the increase in charity shows the faith in the Divine.

Participation in the use of technology by religious leaders in imparting religious sermons or other religion-related activities was negligible. Only Christians relied on the use of online congregations and daily sermons. When we study all these results keenly we develop a dominant understanding regarding the research topic. The society that was taken as the area of study is highly religious. Even in the testing times of the pandemic, faith remained predominantly unchanged, charities increased, the rituals and practices may have been affected but people are normalizing the situation at religious places as well as in other customary religious activities.

## References

- Al-Azraqi (2003). *Akhbar Mecca: History of Mecca*.
- Amarnath Yatra cancelled in light of COVID-19 pandemic, Times of India. July 22, 2020, Accessible at: [https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/travel-news/amarnath-yatracancelled-in-light-of-covid-19-pandemic/amp\\_articleshow/77104455.cms](https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/timesofindia.indiatimes.com/travel/travel-news/amarnath-yatracancelled-in-light-of-covid-19-pandemic/amp_articleshow/77104455.cms) Accessed on: 21 Jan 2021.
- Bahadur, B. (2020), *In Pictures: Religious Places Reopen In Kashmir*. August 16, 2020, [https://kashmirlife.net/in-pictures-religious-places-reopen-in-kashmir243113/amp/?\\_\\_twitter\\_impression=true](https://kashmirlife.net/in-pictures-religious-places-reopen-in-kashmir243113/amp/?__twitter_impression=true)
- Bose, D. (2020). How 11 of the world's most momentous pandemics changed the course of human history, *Business Insider* September 30,

- 2020 Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.businessinsider.com/pandemics-that-changed-the-courseof-human-history-coronavirus-flu-aids-plague%3famp,>
- Bhukhtiyar, I. (2020) Donations pour in for COVID-19 relief in J&K. Srinagar *Hindustan Times*, Mar 29, 2020 Accessible at: [https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.hindustantimes.com/cities/donations-pour-in-for-covid19-relief-in-j-k/story-eFcqAxYcTO3F2fpANCaOjN\\_amp.html](https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.hindustantimes.com/cities/donations-pour-in-for-covid19-relief-in-j-k/story-eFcqAxYcTO3F2fpANCaOjN_amp.html)
  - Burke, D. (2020). "What churches, mosques and temples are doing to fight the spread of coronavirus". *CNN*, 14 March 2020. Accessible at: <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/03/14/world/churches-mosques-temples-coronavirusspread/index.html>.
  - Capretto L. (2020). The Biggest Difference Between Faith And Religion, According To This Religious Scholar, Religious scholar Reza Aslan says one matters more than the other. *Huffpost*. 11 April, 2016. Accessible at: [https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/us\\_581ce83fe4b0d9ce6fbc02ca](https://m.huffpost.com/us/entry/us_581ce83fe4b0d9ce6fbc02ca)
  - Chandra, U. (July 2020). Thinking theologically with pandemics. For millennia, infectious outbreaks have affected religions. So how will this pandemic change our beliefs today, *Aljazeera*, 28 July, 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/opinions/2020/7/28/thinkingtheologically-with-pandemics>.
  - Christmas celebrated with religious fervor, gaiety in Kashmir, (2020) *United News of India*. Dec 25, 2020. Accessible at: <http://www.uniindia.com/news/north/christmas-celebrated-withreligious-fervor-gaiety-in-kashmir/2274335.html>
  - Combating COVID-19: Places of worship being closed, Srinagar DM asks people to stay home, (2020). *Business Standard*, (ANI) March 26, 2020.
  - Coronavirus | Kashmir Valley records its first case, say officials (2020). *The Hindu*, March 18, 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/otherstates/coronavirus-kashmir-valley-records-its-first-case-say-officials/article31101852.ece/amp/>
  - Coronavirus update: Pilgrimage to Kartarpur Sahib suspended. (2020), *Mint*, e-paper. 15 Mar 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.livemint.com/news/india/coronavirus-update-pilgrimage-to-kartarpur-sahib-suspended/amp-11584247582506.html#ampf=>
  - Dijkstra, V. (2020), Going Online: How Corona Transforms Christian Worship., *TRAFO- Blog for Transregional Research*, 12 June 2020. Accessible at: <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/24166>

- Doda becomes first district in Jammu & Kashmir with no active COVID-19 case, (2021). *The Economic Times*, 30 January 2021. Accessible at: [https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/m.economictimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/doda-becomesfirst-district-in-jammu-kashmir-with-no-active-covid-19-case/amp\\_articleshow/80604407.cms](https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/m.economictimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/doda-becomesfirst-district-in-jammu-kashmir-with-no-active-covid-19-case/amp_articleshow/80604407.cms)
- Humanity over hate: Religious organizations help out with covid-19 relief, (2020). *Mint e-papers*. 16 April, 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.livemint.com/c/s/www.livemint.com/amp#ampf=>
- Ibrahim, A. (2020). Praying in time of COVID-19: How world's largest mosques adapted. *AlJazeera*. (2020, Apr 6) Available at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2020/4/6/praying-in-time-ofcovid-19-how-worlds-largest-mosques-adapted>
- Impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods, their health and our food systems, Joint statement by ILO, FAO, IFAD and WHO, (2020). *WorldHealthOrganization*, 13 October 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people-s-livelihoodstheir-health-and-our-food-systems>
- Jammu and Kashmir religious leaders urge people to pray at home in Ramazan (2020). *The Hindu*, April 24, 2020. Accessible at: [https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.hindustantimes.com/morelifestyle/ramazan-2020-jammu-and-kashmir-religious-leaders-urge-people-to-pray-at-home-inramazan/story-81oJcNUdkJhBtC4DNCIHI\\_amp.html](https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.hindustantimes.com/morelifestyle/ramazan-2020-jammu-and-kashmir-religious-leaders-urge-people-to-pray-at-home-inramazan/story-81oJcNUdkJhBtC4DNCIHI_amp.html)
- Katherine, M. (2020) What Religion Can Offer in the Response to COVID-19, *World Politics Review* Tuesday, May 26, 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.worldpoliticsreview.com/amp/insights/28789/religionand-covid-19-faith-during-a-pandemic>
- Kaur, T, Jatinder. (2020), Amid Coronavirus fears, Gurudwaras remain open and administrators refuse to shut shrines. *The Caravan*. (2020, Mar 19). Accessible at: <https://caravanmagazine.in/amp/health/gurudwaras-shrines-remain-open-amid-coronavirus-fears>
- Khan, M. (2019). Top Religious Places To Visit in Kashmir, *Gyawun*, 2019. Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.gyawun.com/top-religious-places-to-visit-in-kashmir/>
- Lockdown casts shadow on Eid celebrations in Kashmir valley, (2020) *Times of India*, May 24, 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/m.timesofindia.com/india/lockd>

own-castshadow-on-eid-celebrations-in-kashmir-valley/amp\_article\_show/75937242.cms

- Mir, R. (2018). Communicating Islam in Kashmir Intersection of Religion and Media, Research Article, July 30, 2018, Accessible at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/2393861718787871>
- Niazi, S. (2020). Muslim charities aid needy in India amid COVID-19, *Asia - Pacific, Latest on Coronavirus Outbreak*. 16 April, 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asiapacific/muslim-charities-aid-needy-in-india-amid-covid-19/1806934>
- Norris, C. (2020),, Places of worship try to keep the faith during the COVID-19 pandemic. *PBSNewsHour*. (2020, Mar 19). Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/www.pbs.org/newshour/amp/nation/places-of-worship-try-tokeep-the-faith-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>
- Ostroff, J. (KTBS) March 27, 2020. Faith leaders overcome hurdles to comfort during unprecedented times, [https://www.ktbs.com/news/faith-leaders-overcome-hurdles-to-comfortduring-unprecedented-times/article\\_ebc1818e-6faa-11ea-b1ec-934e437a08f4.html#utm\\_campaign=blox&utm\\_source=twitter&utm\\_medium=social](https://www.ktbs.com/news/faith-leaders-overcome-hurdles-to-comfortduring-unprecedented-times/article_ebc1818e-6faa-11ea-b1ec-934e437a08f4.html#utm_campaign=blox&utm_source=twitter&utm_medium=social)
- Pennisi, E. (2011). Does Religion Influence Epidemics? Aug. 23, 2011, accessible at:<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2011/08/does-religion-influence-epidemics>
- Rebecca, Y. (2020), Keele University, Why people believe that religious faith will save them from disease, May 21, 2020. <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/theconversation.com/amp/why-peoplebelieve-that-religious-faith-will-save-them-from-disease-138901>
- Religion Data of Census 2011: XV Jammu and Kashmir. <https://blog.cpsindia.org/2016/02/religion-data-of-census-2011-xv-jammu.html?m=1>
- Sherwood, H. (2021), Up to 1m Hindus gather in India as festival goes ahead amid COVIDfears. *The Guardian*, 14 January, 2021. Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/amp.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/14/hindus-gather-indiakumbh-mela-festival-covid-fears>
- Sheva, A. (15 February 2020). "Thousands to pray at Western Wall for end to COVID-19 epidemic". *Israel National News*, 18 March 2020. Accessible at:<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/276027>
- Solovy, A. (2020). "Coronavirus: A Prayer for Medical Scientists". *Union for Reform Judaism*, 27 February, 2020. Accessible at:

<https://reformjudaism.org/blog/coronavirus-prayer-medical-scientists>.

- Srinagar City Population 2011 - 2021, Census Population 2021 Data. Accessible at: <https://www.census2011.co.in/census/city/1-srinagar.html>
- Srinivas, T. (2020). India's goddesses of contagion provide protection in the pandemic - just don't make them angry, *The Conversation*, June 15, 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.google.co.in/amp/s/theconversation.com/amp/indias-goddesses-of-contagion-provide-protection-in-the-pandemic-just-dont-make-them-angry-139745>
- Turner, F. Jill, (2020), 20+ charities on the frontlines of the COVID-19 battle, *National Christian Foundation*. March 26, 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.ncfgiving.com/stories/20-charities-onthe-frontlines-of-the-covid-19-battle/>
- Will COVID kill Globalization, (2020). *The Economist*, 30 September
- World Health Organization Report, 23 April, 2020, *Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) Situation Report - 94*. Accessible at: <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/situation-reports/20200423-sitrep-94-covid-19.pdf>
- World Health Organization, (2020). WHO releases guidelines to help countries maintain essential health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. World Health organization Guidelines. 30 March 2020. Accessible at: <https://www.who.int/news/item/30-03-2020-who-releases-guidelines-tohelp-countries-maintain-essential-health-services-during-the-covid-19-pandemic>
- World Health Organization Timeline (2020). *WHO Timeline - COVID-19*. Accessible at: <https://www.who.int/news/item/27-04-2020-who-timeline---covid-19>



**Attendance of devotees at religious places amid Covid-19: A qualitative study in district Srinagar**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**

**12(1) 157 - 176**

**ISSN: 2249-667X**

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/79a105ee-618b-45a5-9645-45ed72a228db.pdf>

**Mudasir Shafi\***

**Abstract**

*Covid-19 has affected every aspect of people's daily lives and religion being part of daily life has not remained immune to the impact of Covid-19. With excessive social distancing norms, Covid-19 has restricted the functioning of religious life as well. It has reshaped and restructured the routine religious practices which have affected the emotional and psychological well-being of people, who feel disconnected spiritually due to these changes. This study has tried to explore the impact of Covid-19 on the attendance of devotees at religious places in the district of Srinagar of Kashmir valley. Using a qualitative approach, in-depth case studies have been carried out at religious places of district Srinagar, representative of all major religious faiths present in Srinagar district. The study has tried to gain insight into the impact Covid-19 is having on the religious lives of people and the coping strategies people of different religions are following to overcome this impact. The study found that Covid-19 has drastically impacted the regular attendance of devotees at all religious places of Srinagar and it has impacted people emotionally and psychologically, but people are also making certain coping strategies like increasing charity, praying at homes, online prayer meetings, etc. to overcome and minimize the impact of Covid-19 on their religious life.*

**Keywords**

Covid-19, religion, Kashmir, rituals, impact, prayers, shrines

**Introduction**

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is defined as an illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. It was initially reported to the WHO on

---

\* Research Scholar, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K  
Email: [mirmudasirshafi@gmail.com](mailto:mirmudasirshafi@gmail.com)

December 31, 2019. On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, its first such designation since declaring H1N1 influenza a pandemic in 2009. Illness caused by SARS-CoV-2 was termed COVID-19 by the WHO, the acronym derived from "coronavirus disease 2019." The name was chosen to avoid stigmatizing the virus's origins in terms of populations, geography, or animal associations.

The impact of Covid-19 has been immense. It affected every aspect of human life and society. It disrupted the total social life and these disruptions in turn lead to certain practices which were unheard of ever before. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought sizeable costs for societies across the globe. A pandemic of this size potentially changes our societies for years to come, especially if it impacts our ingrained values and beliefs. This research asks how the COVID-19 crisis impacts one of the deepest roots of human behaviors: Religion. Since the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in December 2019, governments have begun implementing various public health interventions to control the spread of the illness. These interventions have impacted billions of people worldwide and often involve large public programs, restrictions on freedom of movement, and government management of critical resources. The coronavirus pandemic developed very rapidly on a global scale. Understandably, it has a very significant impact on the whole social life, including religious life. Religious practices, which have, by their very nature, a community dimension in almost all religions are also changing under the influence of the pandemic. One of the fundamental methods of limiting the spreading out of COVID-19 is social distancing. This means quarantine and a radical change in contacts between people, which goes towards virtualization and online contacts. In most religious communities it is obligatory to attend a religious gathering or religious place like Mosque, Church, Temple, Gurudwara, and so on. Religious attendance is considered fundamental to following one's religion. However, due to the pandemic, this fundamental practice got affected as well. This study revolves around this particular topic of religious attendance during the pandemic and its consequences for society as a whole. Although humanity has lived through the emergence of new diseases and pandemics before, Covid-19 is proving to be different from previous outbreaks of newly identified viral illnesses such as SARS, MERS, or HIV/AIDS. These differences have biological and social consequences. In the initial stages, as with the recently evolved viruses just listed, we had neither immunity nor medications proven to be effective against it. However, COVID-19 differs in several respects, including that it is highly

contagious with almost everyone at risk of infection; in a few months, it has spread to every corner of the globe. None of us can truly see ourselves as outside its biological frame of influence, with the possible exception, though still unproven, of those who have succumbed to infection (whether or not they know this) and survived and those with natural immunity. Its mechanisms of action, at least initially, were poorly understood, and despite massive international efforts and research, many biological unknowns will remain for a considerable period. This is a cause of fear that has prompted huge changes in the way in which societies operate, and with these, great changes to religious practices. It seems very possible that the unknowns regarding COVID-19 will leave a legacy that is likely to persist long after we have (hopefully) found effective means for combating the disease itself, with a new approach to human-embodied life becoming normative.

In India, as the established COVID-19 cases had also been huge, various communities had taken different approaches to control the spread of the virus. Most mosques and temples had restricted entry and cleaning of the mosques with disinfectants being done along with providing information about the transmission of this disease. Community members had been advised to stop congregational prayers at the mosques and temples and pray at home to reduce the person-to-person transmission, the head religious body of Muslims, Muslim Waqf Board announced a suspension of congregational as well as regular prayers in shrines and mosques affiliated to it. The prayers and congregational gatherings on the occasion of *Ramadhaan* were also stopped. Similarly, other temples and churches across the country had been closed. In the places where temples have restricted entry of people, live streaming of rituals was done to allow worshippers to take part in *Puja* prayer rituals and see deities from home. The study of religious behaviors and religious places should be a topic of interest for controlling an outbreak like COVID-19. By sharing scientific information about COVID-19, religious and faith-based leaders can endorse that information, prevent and reduce fear and stigma about the disease, and provide reassurance to people in their communities including promoting healthy practices. Religious leaders can under their influence convince the masses by using religious idioms regarding what must be done in dealing with any outbreak from a religious perspective and hence be more effective than civil servants in delivering messages to the community. This outbreak like any highly transmissible disease extends beyond the control of the respective governments, so it requires all members of society to fight it together.

## Literature Review

Covid-19 has been a new phenomenon so the amount of social research done on it is limited although a huge amount of scientific research is continuously done to get human society rid of it. The disruptions caused by Covid-19 in the organization of human social life have been immense so social scientists have started researching it, although by now a little amount of research has been carried out to comprehend the changes this worldwide pandemic has brought in human social life. The changes brought by this pandemic, particularly the social distancing and quarantine have affected the daily functioning of human life to a very large extent. These changes have affected every aspect of human life economic, social, religious, spiritual, etc. Social scientists have started to research these changes and their consequences on human society. Religion being part of human social life has been no exception to the disruptions due to Covid-19. Being a community affair, the religious practices have got affected most and thus affected the followers of different religious faiths, though at varied rates. The religions most affected are those that require the assembly of followers for making the religious practices or those religions where the attendance of followers is considered obligatory like Islam, Christianity, etc. Given that the viral pandemic has existed only for 11 months or so, there is a dearth of empirical research, and currently, there is little information available on this topic. According to Dein Lewis & Pargament (2020), we are currently facing a worldwide pandemic of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) for which there is yet no effective treatment or vaccination. This has resulted in the world being turned "upside-down" where many of our "normal" social behavior has undergone dramatic changes. First identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019, the virus has spread to most parts of the world. At the time of writing, the United States, the United Kingdom, Italy, and Spain have been the four countries worse affected by the pandemic. At present, there is an almost global lockdown, and social distancing appears to be having some effect on reducing the prevalence of infection. One aspect of the lockdown is that places of worship have been temporarily closed and the internet has become the primary locus of religious activity. The pandemic has affected religious practice in significant ways, including the cancellation of live religious services, the closing of religious schools, canceling pilgrimages, and prohibiting group interactions during festivals and celebrations. Some religious organizations have been involved in the process of providing disinfectants with ventilators, face shields, gloves, and food to affected areas while others have offered COVID-19 tests to the general public. As an alternative, churches, mosques, and synagogues have provided creative ways of providing services online through live streaming, radio,

and television. This lacks the communal dimensions of live face-to-face interactions and Christians do not provide the opportunity to partake in the Eucharist. Some Christian denominations have started up drive-in church services in church parking lots. In other instances, Christians deploy online apps for prayer and daily devotionals. This suggests that many forms of religious activity have changed in response to the demands of the pandemic. In particular, collective worship has become difficult, online worship is increasing, and private worship/prayer appears to have been considered on the increase.

According to Kumar & Sharma (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on religious festivals, requiring the attendance of devotees across the world. However, as religious events are celebrated only on a fixed date of the year, postponement or cancellation was mostly no option for policymakers. While many religious events were celebrated with minimum devotees, others were celebrated in a secluded environment. The COVID-19 crisis has adversely impacted Hajj pilgrims this year. As per the guidelines set by WHO, restrictions are imposed on event gatherings. In consideration of the COVID-19 impact, Umrah and the Ministry of Hajj announced strict precautionary measures for Hajj Pilgrimage 2020. The Ministry of Hajj and Umrah had also imposed limits on the pilgrim allowed on the premises. The Holy week event is a blend of mourning and joy, which is mostly celebrated by Christians worldwide.

Due to the outburst of COVID-19 and imposed restrictions on the mass gathering, Holy week was celebrated without attendees. Similarly, after the permit of the Supreme Court, the *Jagannath Rath Yatra* among the followers of Hinduism commenced amidst COVID-19. The holy festival is connected with the beliefs and faith of thousands of people across the world. The *Rath Yatra* was allowed by Supreme Court with strict guidelines and measure as only 500 people were allowed to pull the gigantic chariot of Lord *Jagannatha*, *Balbhadra*, and *Subhadra*. For more than 1000 years, Holy Fire is celebrated in Jerusalem and symbolizes Jesus' resurrecting. Every year approx 10000 Christian pilgrims assemble and celebrate Holy Fire in Jerusalem. This year the Holy fire was celebrated in an unprecedented way due to the enforced strict restrictions. Virtual platforms like Facebook Live and other websites were used for sermons and Seders to the pilgrims.

According to Bentzen (2021), In March 2020, the share of Google searches for prayer surged to the highest level ever recorded, surpassing all other major events that otherwise call for prayer, such as Christmas, (Easter), and Muslims (Ramadan). The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The level of prayer search

shares in March 2020 was more than 50% higher than the average during February 2020 using daily data on Google searches for prayer for 95 countries across the globe, this research documents that the rise is not driven by a few countries, but instead is a global phenomenon. Google searches for prayer surged after March 11 for most countries, and even more so after their populations had been infected. Prayer searches were raised more for religious countries, especially the country having a population of Christians and Muslims. Searches for topics related to God, Allah, Muhammad, Quran, Bible, and Jesus, and a lesser extent Buddha, Vishnu, and Shiva, also rose. Last, prayer search shares rose more in poorer, more insecure, and more unequal countries, but this impact is exclusively due to these countries being more religious. Using the results and the Pew (2020b) survey, a back-of-the-envelope calculation shows that more than half of the global population has prayed to end the coronavirus. The main reason for the rising interest in prayer on the internet is religious coping: People use their religion to cope with adversity. They pray for relief, understanding, and comfort. Research has documented that people struggling with cancer, death in a close family, or severe illness are more religious, and also that adversity in the form of natural disasters causes people to use their religion more intensely. People may Google prayer for a reason unrelated to religious coping. They may be searching for online forums to replace their physical churches that closed down in an attempt to enforce social distancing. Theoretically, we would not expect this to be the main explanation for the rising search shares for prayer. People tend to use mainly their intrinsic religiosity (such as private prayer) rather than their extrinsic religiosity (such as churchgoing) to cope with adversity. This means that prayer shares rose in all countries, independent of their economic status, whether or not they are unequal, fragile, or mortal. Religion is not used more for coping in poor and uncertain societies may be because these populations do not feel more emotional distress when faced with COVID-19 compared to richer countries. One observation speaks for this explanation: COVID-19 arrived earlier in Western societies and thus the initial fear may have been larger in these societies. Alternatively, the availability of religion as a coping tool may be more important than the need for such a tool. Either way, the finding is consistent with previous research documenting that people use religion to cope with natural disasters at all levels of income and education (Bentzen, 2019). On a more technical note, studies documenting differential effects of religious coping for poor and insecure societies should be aware that these differential effects could be simply a result of higher religiosity levels in these societies. Alzahrani et al. (2020), in their Autoregressive Integrated

Moving Average (ARIMA) model, had forecast the expected daily number of COVID-19 cases in Saudi Arabia over the ensuing weeks before the 2020 Hajj. They forecasted that the number of COVID-19 cases in Saudi Arabia would continue growing and could reach up to 7,668 new cases per day, with over 127,129 cumulative daily cases in a matter of weeks if stringent precautionary and control measures were not implemented to limit the spread of COVID-19. They suggested that the Saudi authorities faced very difficult decisions regarding the 2020 Hajj Pilgrimage which was scheduled for the last week of July 2020 and they had two options: cancellation of the Hajj or implementation of extreme preventive and control measures in the cities of Mecca and Madinah required to avoid a COVID-19 catastrophe of widespread national and international spread. With the global spread of COVID-19 showing no signs of abating, the national and global public health impact, the risk to livelihoods and economic costs, religious rulings and sensitivities, and the pros and cons of holding the Hajj were discussed and debated leading to the final prudent decision by the Saudi government to hold a scaled-down 2020 Hajj (Ebrahim & Memish, 2020; McCloskey et al., 2020; Memish et al., 2020a). Introducing and maintaining social distancing measures and a safe public health environment for the Hajj rites to be completed by all pilgrims had become a major public health challenge and seemed near impossible. All Muslim religious leaders across the board were unified in concluding that the preservation of life during pandemics needs to prioritize over practicing religious rituals like Hajj. The 2020 Hajj was scaled down considerably, and participation in Hajj rituals was restricted to only 1000 people with a negative COVID-19 test, residing within the Kingdom of which 'foreign' residents would comprise two-thirds of all selected pilgrims from a pool of local workers, health care workers, and security personnel, - especially those who had recovered from COVID-19. Those aged 65 years and over and those with comorbid conditions would be barred. While all holy sites would remain open, adequate physical distancing and disinfection measures were put in place with oversight and assistance at regular intervals during the pilgrim's journey. Wearing masks was mandatory, and pilgrims would be subject to temperature checks and placed in quarantine if required. All pilgrims were given well-thought-out kits that include disinfectants, masks, a prayer rug, the *ihram* (a seamless white garment required to be worn by pilgrims), and sterilized pebbles for the stoning ritual at *Jamaraat*. Throughout the Hajj, the pilgrims would have to keep a social distance of one and a half meters and were guided by well-laid-out markers and Hajj coordinators. No pilgrims would be allowed to touch

the Kaaba or kiss the black stone at its corner-both of which are regular customs during the Hajj.

Snoib et al., (2020) concludes that from ancient times, whenever mankind faces any kind of adversity or crisis, they tend to invoke/cite and mix religion and the current pandemic is no exception. As the COVID-19 pandemic progresses, the intensity of the demand for the involvement of religion will increase because of the tendency to drift towards religion in times of crisis and because of financial hardships (Bentzen 2019). Ever since the onset of this pandemic, the religiosity of people has increased as political and religious leaders across the world came out with advice and suggestions for their respective countrymen and communities to pray (Bentzen 2020). Myths and misconceptions have deep-seated origins in culture, and religion and are frequently substantiated by religious leaders or rulers. Myths are usually linked to an old tradition in society and represent the true descriptions of their past. They often lead to taboos and different customs and rituals in society and are frequently very complex (Bascom 1965 & Dundes 1984). There are different myths and misconceptions across the world associated with the spread of COVID-19. These religious beliefs and practices can have serious implications for the spread of the COVID-19 disease. As learned from previous pandemics like Ebola pandemics, religion, traditions, and culture had a wide range of influences on the transmission of pandemics (Ebrahim et al. 2020). Some groups of Hindus believe COVID-19 occurred due to the consumption of non-vegetarian foods by the Chinese people and that is responsible for the spread of the disease. Some people in India also proclaimed that drinking cow urine (*gaumutra*) will cure or prevent COVID-19, although scientific evidence for that is lacking. Even one group of people jointly hosted a cow urine drinking party to 'neutralize' the effects of coronavirus in India. While the people belonging to the Islamic faith attribute COVID-19 to the wrath of God upon Chinese people for mistreating Muslims in China. It is also a common ritual in some religions to kiss the walls of shrines and burial places of their religious figures. Religious gatherings can be the breeding places for the COVID-19 virus and this can be amplified because of the practice of kissing as a greeting at such gatherings. Mass gatherings commonly happen during pilgrimages and other religious rituals and not all the devotees have the required knowledge about the prevention of the spread of COVID-19 (Huremovic 2019). In some places where there was a failure to restrain mass gatherings, the recent example being the congregation in Delhi's Nizamuddin area in March of this year. Recently Saudi Arabia's suspension of the Umrah pilgrimage has shielded against the massive spread of COVID-19 considering the millions of people that would have



otherwise attended, whereas Iran's pronouncement to allow mass gatherings in Mashhad and Qom has been disadvantageous for the containment of the virus. Having said that some religious rituals like a hand, face, and foot washing as a part of the Muslim practice of wudu (five times a day) are very advantageous to halt the spread of COVID-19, but still, the mass gathering may overshadow any such benefit (Ebrahim& Mehmish 2020). Coyle and Holt (2020) examine religious practices, beliefs, and traditions that are related to the epidemic and its operational response in different ways. Religion is a broad and multi-faceted subject to discuss concerning COVID-19. There are many impacts to consider from changes to communal praying in mosques, to burial practices that might change in the event of mass fatalities, or to the engagement of religious leaders in COVID-19 awareness and response programming.

### **Methodological stance**

The collection of data depends upon the nature of the problem and the socio-economic settings in which the researcher is collecting his data. Thus the data collection must be linked to the problem which is under the consideration and also the social situation in which a researcher is carrying out his research. The primary, as well as secondary data relevant to the study, has been collected. This study utilized a multiple-case study design. Case studies are an exploration of a 'bounded system of a case or multiple cases over time through detail, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). Stake (1995) explains that case studies are investigated because we are interested in the case studies for both their uniqueness and commonality. We would like to hear their stories. We may have reservations about some things the people tell us, just as they will question some of the things we will tell about them. But we enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn. The multiple case study design or collective case studies investigate several cases to gain insight into a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2002; Stake, 2006; Yin, 2003). Besides the above-mentioned data, qualitative and quantitative methods were used for the present study. The study is empirically based on the primary data collected with the help of an interview schedule. The respondents under study were both literate and illiterate thus the interview schedule was the most suitable technique for the collection of data. The questions in the interview schedule were both open and closed-ended questions. Open-ended questions were used to collect opinion-based information from the

respondents and closed-ended questions were used to collect fact-based information from the respondents. As the study was empirical non-participating observation was also used to obtain information. After collecting the information from the field, the data was edited and rechecked to put all the information in suitable and proper order. The data aggregation was done based on themes and sub-themes and the themes-based tables in the findings. The data were analyzed systematically with logic and in the light of the facts. The discussion of the findings was presented according to the themes identified from the data provided in response to each question. Thereafter the findings were related to the theoretical framework for this study. The information collected through semi-structured interviews was consolidated and was used to substantiate the findings in the shape of narratives and case studies. Tentative official data was also put in use which was presented according to the themes collected from the Jammu and Kashmir Wakf Board office to supplement the already collected data from different shrines of Srinagar. Anjuman-1-Auqaf Jamia Masjid Srinagar was also contacted to get an overview of the impact of Covid-19 on Jamia Masjid Srinagar as it doesn't come under the jurisdiction of the Jammu and Kashmir Wakf Board. Data regarding other religious places about non-Muslim faiths were collected unofficially from their respective managements. All the data has been collected in an objective way keeping all the necessary research ethics in mind.

### **Limitations**

Though full care has been taken for the efficiency and objectivity of the problem undertaken, it would not be rational to assert that the present work is utterly perfect. The challenge of conducting a study of this nature lies in identifying the sample and securing their consent for an interview. Like any research or field investigation, this was also accompanied by a lot of challenges that ranged from identifying the affected persons to developing rapport with them. It was quite difficult to motivate the respondents to talk on such an issue which is having both religious and social sanctity. The most challenging task for any researcher is to get the consent of the respondents in the collection of data. In the present study, most of the respondents were working under the supervision of the management. The management was often reluctant to give access to the information. Even if access was granted in rare cases the researcher had to wait for free time, lunch, or a while to elicit the maximum possible information which indeed was a challenging job. The investigator had to fix the appointment for the convenience of the workers because they were already burdened with their work. Even after getting an appointment, the

workers were unavailable sometimes. In some cases, the management put some restrictions in areas within the religious areas thus becoming difficult to understand the objective settings. Access to the official records was generally not facilitated thus it became difficult to understand the genesis of the religious place concerned. Formal permission for the study is next impossible to get and no management can give access to the official record. The investigator tried to solve the above limitations by employing the technique of non-participant observation. Whenever the researcher found that the respondents were reluctant to express their responses, such responses were observed during the administering of the interview schedule wherever it was possible.

### **Data analysis and Interpretation**

The relevance of the case study method relies on the fact that it comprehends all the relevant aspects of a case and to achieve the objective eight case studies involving eight major religious places were carried out. Each case study provided an in-depth understanding of the challenges faced due to Covid-19 and the impact it had on the religious places as well as devotees, irrespective of the religious affiliation of the devotees. At the same time, these case studies provided the much-required detailed analysis of the objective conditions in these religious places and thus helped in determining the loopholes and shortcomings which could be overcome by taking certain corrective measures. These case studies complement the empirical study by providing an opportunity to move closer to the social reality and have added an important element of validity to the current study by using observation and detailed interviews of the devotees and workers working in these places.

### **Case Study 1: Dargah (Hazratbal)**

Dargah is located at Hazratbal on the western side of Srinagar city on the banks of world famous Dal Lake. It is the largest Muslim shrine in Kashmir valley. More than thirty thousand people attended the shrine every Friday and three to five thousand devotees attended the shrine on daily basis before Covid-19. After the imposition of the lockdown, all the attendance of devotees stopped at once. All the government orders were followed in letter and spirit. As per the management of the shrine, all the religious activities at the shrine were stopped on the orders of the government. Even *Adhaan* (call for prayer) was not allowed inside the shrine. The *Jammat* (praying in groups five times a day) was also not conducted in the shrine. During the lockdown due to Covid-19 only, the security guards present inside the shrine offered prayers five times a day

inside the shrine premises and that too followed all the necessary protocols in place. The situation had remained the same for about eight months as nobody was allowed inside the shrine premises. All the gates were closed denying entry to everyone except a few employees who look after the cleanliness and watch and ward inside the shrine. During this period police security was also increased to counter the chances of devotees breaching the standard operational procedures (SOPs) in place due to the imposition of lockdown due to Covid-19. *Imam Sahab* was also asked not to come to the shrine during this period. Every kind of prayer was stopped but according to the gatekeeper present there, during this lockdown period still about two hundred to four hundred (approx) devotees came to the shrine regularly, but as per protocol they were denied entry inside the shrine and these devotees returned from the gates of the shrine. During the annual Urs (festival), held every year during the Islamic month of Rabi-ul-Awal for about 12 days, no major prayers were organized as used to be done before Covid. *Ziyarat* (a holy relic of the Prophet-saw) was also not displayed inside the shrine, however, on the insistence of devotees the *Ziyarat* was displayed outside the shrine keeping social distancing norms in mind. The charity counters inside the shrine were also closed for about four months. Only one counter at the main entrance of the shrine was open. However, as per employees working here, it didn't affect the amount of charity people offered as devotees continued to offer *nazr-0-niyaz* (charity) in the donation boxes and present it to the shrine. So the salary of employees working here did not get affected, but the construction was stopped in the shrine based on government orders that were in place during the lockdown to contain Covid-19. An employee Syed Shafiq (name changed) narrated:

*'I belong to a village in Pulwama district which is more than 45 kilometers far from here. I came to the shrine twice a week during Covid-19 lockdown even though I Was not supposed to come as only six employees belonging to nearby areas were asked to come and look after the shrine, I still came as I am emotionally and spiritually attached to this shrine. I came to this shrine when I was eighteen years old and even during Covid-19, I couldn't resist coming here at least twice a week. I came in a milk van from my home to Dalgate and then caught some lift or even came walking from there to the shrine every Friday and Monday.'*

As per information provided by management, no employee working in the shrine has got affected by Covid-19 and the lockdown restrictions are also eased now but the government has not kept any testing facilities for the employees or devotees coming to the shrine. The wearing of masks is not followed in letter and spirit inside the shrine premises which makes the employees as well as devotees coming here prone to Covid infection.

### Case study 2: Dastgeer Sahab (Khanyar)

The shrine of *Dastgeer Sahab* is one of the oldest shrines of Kashmir valley located in the Old Town area of Khanyar, Srinagar. It is one of the major shrines of Kashmir and people come to this shrine in huge numbers. Due to Covid, the shrine was closed for eight months and every kind of prayer was stopped inside the shrine premises. The *Adhaan* (call for prayer), as well as five times prayer (*Namaz*), was also stopped at once as soon as the government ordered a lockdown in Kashmir. No one was allowed to pray inside the shrine premises as per the shrine as per protocol to contain Covid-19. During this period only two chowkidars from Jammu and Kashmir Wakf board were allowed inside the shrine. No police security increased for the shrine during Covid-19 which even lead to theft inside the shrine and some cash was stolen from the cash locker present inside the shrine. During the Covid-19 lockdown period although no prayers were allowed in the shrine but as per the local eye witnesses women still came to the shrine in large numbers and entered the shrine lawns by trespassing the gate from the side of the shrine building, however, the main building of the shrine was kept locked and nobody was allowed to enter inside. One of the employees Sarhan Shah (name changed) working in the shrine narrated:

*People particularly women folk are very much attached to this shrine. Before Covid-19 about four thousand people came to the shrine on daily basis. More than two thousand devotees prayed Namaz five times a day inside the shrine. Besides this devotees from every part of Kashmir came here for paying obeisance at the shrine and for certain rituals like Zar kasin (cutting a child's first hair), after the imposition of the lockdown due to Covid all these practices were stopped half of about 40 employees working here are directly dependent on the Nazr-ouniyaz (charity funding) for their salary. Due to Covid, their livelihood got affected, however, other employees about 22 in number are Jammu and Kashmir Wakf Board employees and hence it didn't have any impact on them as they were fully paid their salary during this period.*

As per the information provided by the management of the shrine the annual *Urs* was held as per past precedence although the *Shab* (night-long prayers) was not allowed by the administration of the district Srinagar as per Covid-19 protocol. *Ziyarat* (the holy relic) was displayed both inside and outside the shrine as used to be done before Covid-19 and social distancing protocols were violated to a large extent during the *Urs* period. The attendance of devotees during *Urs* had dropped by about 40 percent. The charity counters were closed during the lockdown period however it didn't affect the volume of charity as people continued to offer in cash and kind through the cash lockers kept at the main gate of the

shrine. No employee working in the shrine has any Covid history so far and the health authorities conduct Covid tests occasionally at the shrine.

### **Case Study 3: Jamia Masjid (Nowhatta)**

Jamia Masjid is located in the heart of the old town of Srinagar city at. It is the largest mosque in Kashmir. It is located in a busy market hub and the footfall of people here is enormous. Before Covid-19 more than two thousand people offered *Namaz* five times a day daily here and on Fridays the number of devotees offering congregational prayers has been about ten to fifteen thousand. After the imposition of lockdown due to Covid the *Masjid* (Mosque) was closed fully. Nobody was allowed entry into the Mosque. Any kind of prayer was not allowed, *Adhaan* (call for prayer) and *Namaz* were also halted as per the orders of the government. Besides the daily prayers, before Covid, many congregational prayers like *Eid Namaz*, *Jumat-u-Vida*, *Shab-e-Qadar*, etc. used to be held here but during Covid, all these congregational prayers were stopped. Asif Ahmed (name changed) narrated:

*The Masjid was fully closed as soon as the government ordered lockdown in march. All the construction activities in the Masjid were stopped, even the wudhu khana (bathrooms for ablution) was closed and no one even the local employees were allowed entry inside the premises of the Masjid to offer prayers of any kind here. We are thirty employees working here and our salary expenses come from Anjuman-i-Augaf headed by Imam sahib of the Masjid. All the charity counters were shut down however all of us got our salaries on time. Masjid has no online system for getting donations and many people insist to start the same.*

The Masjid remained closed for about six months, now management has opened the mosque and devotees have started to come here but keeping all safety measures in mind and every social distancing norm is followed while prayers are offered here though only about twenty percent of devotees come to pray as compared to before Covid-19 period. Now only two to three thousand people offer congregational prayers on Fridays as compared to ten to fifteen thousand before Covid-19.

### **Case Study 4: Makhdoom Sahab (Kathidarwaza)**

The shrine of Makhdoom Sahab is located on *Koh-i-Maran* hillock in the old town of Srinagar. It is one of the revered shrines of Kashmir valley. Devotees from every corner of Kashmir come here. The daily attendance of devotees before Covid-19 here has been around five to six thousand persons per day. During the lockdown imposed due to Covid-19 the shrine premises were closed which affected the rate of attendance of devotees drastically. The shrine has been a hub of many rituals usually

carried out at religious places like *Zar kasin*. Mohammad Azam (name changed) narrated;

*I and my brother have been carrying out the practice of Zar kasin for the last fifteen years here. Every day we jointly carried this practice for about twenty children per day, due to Covid all this stopped, and nobody comes here now and it affected our livelihood very badly as we have no other means of income. During Covid, I and my brother usually remained idle or worked as laborers in paddy fields. Before Covid-19 we earned two to three thousand per day but now hardly anyone comes here with exception of two or three children per week as compared to twenty children per day before Covid-19. Thus Covid affected us and people like me economically and emotionally as well as we hardly fit in any other profession.*

The charity counters were closed for about four months and were opened on the insistence of the devotees. As per the management of the shrine, Covid-19 did not affect the annual *Urs* celebrations at the shrine and all necessary preventive measures were taken for the safety of devotees as well as workers working in the shrine. However, the *langar* (community kitchen) which used to be organized on every *Urs* was not organized this year due to Covid. Despite Covid, a large number of people attended the *Urs* celebrations though the participation has been thin as compared to the previous year. One of the devotees Abrar Ahmed (name changed) who had come from far off village of Budgam district narrated:

*I and my family waited for five long months as my mother wished to come here for shaving head of my son she did not budge and did not allow it to be done at home and I was forced to violate the Covid-19 guidelines and come here all along from more than 45 kilometers away far off village of Budgam. It has been a legacy in our family to come here for shaving the head of the newborn child and we usually come here or Chrar-i-Sharif for carrying this practice.*

### **Case Study 5: Naqashband Sahab (Khwaja Bazar)**

This more than-century-old shrine of Khwaja Naqashband Sahib is located in the old city area of Khwaja Bazar, Nowhatta Srinagar. The shrine remained closed for about three months due to Covid, which affected the attendance of devotees coming here drastically. Before the lockdown imposed due to Covid, more than two thousand devotees attended the shrine on average per day including women. The shrine also houses a big mosque in which more than three thousand persons offered *Namaz* five times a day. Due to Covid, all this stopped as both the masjid and shrine building were locked down. No *Adhaan* (call for prayer) or *Jammat* was allowed at the shrine and no employee was allowed to stay at the shrine except one security guard who was the only person present there during these three months. The main entrance gate was closed and

hence nobody had access to the shrine or even the lawns in the front part of the shrine. No employee working in the shrine had any Covid history and government health authorities come for Covid testing occasionally to the shrine. Necessary Covid-19 preventive measures are followed inside the shrine premises. The annual *Urs* known as *Khali Digar* was conducted and it saw very huge participation of devotees as the lockdown was eased those days, however, before and even now, the shrine is seeing a very thin attendance of devotees and particularly women are attending more as compared to men as the Mosque inside the shrine premises remains still closed and is opened only on Fridays for offering congregational prayers in which the participation is less than sixty percent as compared to pre-Covid-19 period. The charity counters existing in the shrine were also closed during the lockdown and the only means of getting donations was the cash locker available outside the main entrance gate of the shrine. Among the six employees working here, three are dependent on the *Nazr-o-niyaz* offered by devotees and due to Covid, their livelihood got affected to a large extent, the other three employees working under Jammu and Kashmir Wakf board got their salary on time as per the information provided by the management of the shrine.

#### **Case Study 6: Gurudwara Chati Padshshah (Kathi Darwaza)**

Gurudwara Chati Padshshah is the largest gurudwara of Kashmir. It is located in the Kathi Darwaza area of the old city of Srinagar. It is a revered place of worship for the Sikh community seeing the attendance of Sikh devotees from every part of Kashmir. The average attendance of devotees here has been one thousand persons per day, however, due to Covid-19 it has dropped to less than fifty persons per day. The gurudwara remained open during the lockdown period and only the Langer (community kitchen) has been closed for a few days and then resumed again. The charity counters have not been closed however the volume of charity has suffered some loss as the attendance of devotees had dropped. The gurudwara also has an online system of charity available and the funding is also carried out by 'Sikh Sangathan'. The Babaji present in the shrine has remained present inside the gurudwara during the Covid lockdown as well and *Kirtan* (singing the praises) was continued without break. All the necessary Covid preventive measures have been followed inside the gurudwara premises. The construction activities have also been carried out smoothly during the lockdown period as well. One of the devotees Veera (name changed) narrated:

*I am from the uptown area of Jawahar Nagar area of Srinagar city. I come with my family every week here but due to Covid restrictions, it has become difficult to attend here every week we still try to attend once or twice every month. We come*



*here following necessary preventive measures to contain Covid-19. Most of our practices like death rituals, birth rituals, marriages, name taking, etc. are conducted in the gurudwara only so we necessarily have to attend here as these practices can't be conducted at home and have no alternative available.*

According to the management of the gurudwara, the gurudwara has remained open throughout the lockdown period, however, the number of marriages and name shakings taking place in the gurudwara has seen a tremendous drop. The death rituals are unavoidable so these are also conducted however with close relatives only with the participation of a very less number of people as compared to the pre-Covid period. The other religious festivals are also celebrated but with the participation of a very less number of devotees attending these festivals.

#### **Case Study 7: Hanuman Mandir (Amira Kadal)**

The temple of Panch Mukti Hanuman mandir is located in the Amira Kadal area in the heart of Srinagar city. It is one of the oldest temples of Srinagar city. Being centrally located the temple saw a good attendance of devotees from every area of Kashmir as also Hindu tourists and travelers. However, due to Covid-19 the attendance of devotees has fallen drastically. The temple has been fully closed for the devotees during the lockdown period. The attendance which has been ranging from one to two hundred persons per day during summers has reduced to just ten or fifteen devotees per day. During the lockdown period, only *Arti* has been conducted by *Pujari* only. The source of charity which has been the offerings and donations from devotees has also been affected tremendously as very few devotees attended the temple during Covid. All the standard operating procedures (SOPs) have been followed inside the temple. All the construction activities have also been halted at the time keeping the Covid-related restrictions in mind.

#### **Case Study 8: Holy Family Catholic Church (MA Road, Srinagar)**

The Holy Family Catholic Church is located in the heart of Srinagar city on the busy MA Road near the city center Lal Chowk. It is one of the oldest churches in Kashmir valley. The attendance of devotees at the church has been affected badly due to the lockdown imposed due to Covid-19. The usual attendance of devotees at the church has been one hundred and fifty on average per day before Covid, but due to the Covid-19 lockdown imposition, the attendance has seen a downward trend. It has come down to the level of forty to fifty on average per day. The church has been fully closed for about eight months, during which certain alternate measures were adopted to cope with this change. The regular group prayers have been suspended and devotees were advised to pray

at home. Devotees were advised to perform the rosary at home every day from 7.30 pm to 8.30 pm instead of attending church. It was made as a substitute for the practice of Divine mercy, conducted inside the church. During the Covid lockdown, no marriage or Baptism was conducted at the church. Proper arrangements and preventive measures are in place in the church to avoid the spread of Covid-19. The devotees below ten years and above sixty years of age are not allowed inside the church. Only devotees with necessary masks and following other social distancing norms are allowed inside the premises of the church and only two people are allowed to sit per seat. The charity has also been affected as all the charity boxes were closed and no online system of charity is available. The construction activities have also got affected and no construction activity has been carried out till now. The religious festivals celebrated at the church have also been affected. No Easter was celebrated this year, Christmas prayers were held in two shifts to avoid large gatherings of devotees and social distancing norms were maintained.

### **Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board Data**

As per Secretary Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board, Muhammad Saleem Beigh all the shrines of district Srinagar under the jurisdiction of Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board were closed during the lockdown period as per the orders of the district administration Srinagar. Thus it has affected attendance at these religious places to a very large extent; however, the amount of revenue generated from these shrines has seen an increase of five to ten percent (approx) as compared to the previous year. No online system of charity collection is present in these shrines however to counter the closing down of counters, the number of donation boxes has been increased at the shrines, which has led to an increased revenue generation from these shrines. The salary of the employees working under the board has seen no impact as the revenue of the board has increased instead of decreased as was feared due to the closure of charity collection counters at the shrines of district Srinagar.

### **Conclusion**

Every aspect of social life has been negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has altered daily life, transformed and reorganized social and religious customs, including how people pray, and hindered the widespread practice of religion. According to the current study, Covid-19 has had an impact on devotees' regular attendance at the sacred sites of all significant religions present in the Srinagar district. Covid-19 is emerging as a new challenge that is changing the traditional ways of carrying out religious practices and rituals all over the world and so is the

case with Kashmir. The results of our study suggest that the Covid-19 pandemic is proving to be very damaging to the way how people pray and attend to their religious duties. It is proving disastrous to death, marriage, and other rituals and religious practices and has turned upside down the traditional ways of carrying out these religious practices. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and social distancing measures, people are unable to offer their obligatory prayers and this in turn is affecting the people emotionally and psychologically. The normal procedures of prayer are being altered and thus adding to the already psychological and emotional strain present due to Covid-19. People, being unable to perform their religious practices in traditional ways, feel isolated and lonely which affected the overall well-being of people. Summing up, this study is quite modest concerning offering certain insights into the changes in the attendance level of devotees at religious places due to Covid-19 pandemic and its resultant consequences. I consider, however, that it can offer several guidelines for more systematic and rigorous research on the above question. The religious interpretations of the Covid-19 pandemic could be studied, as its ways and channels of reproduction and its relationship with daily practices and with political treatments of the problem. In addition to this, possible contrasts can be drawn between different religious groups to check if their response to this pandemic is similar or varied. The views on the pandemic could be correlated with the level of education and it will also be interesting to analyze the role of religious leaders and how they respond to this pandemic.

## References

- Bascom, W. (1965). The forms of folklore: Prose narratives. *The Journal of American Folklore*, 78(307), 3-20.
- Bentzen JS (2019) Acts of God? Religiosity and Natural Disasters Across Subnational World Districts. *The Economic Journal* 2019; 129:2295–2321 3.
- Bentzen JS (2020) In Crisis, We Pray: Religiosity and the COVID-19 Pandemic. Working Paper
- Bentzen, J. S. (2021). In crisis, we pray: Religiosity and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 192, 541-583.
- Coyle, D., & Holt, C. (2020). Rohingya perceptions of religion & COVID-4 summary: how Muslim Rohingya's beliefs interact with their perceptions of COVID-19. *IOM UN Migration*.

- Creswell, J. W. (2002). Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative (Vol. 7). Prentice Hall Upper Saddle River, NJ.
- Dein, S., Loewenthal, K., Lewis, C. A., & Pargament, K. I. (2020). COVID-19, mental health and religion: An agenda for future research. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture*, 23(1), 1-9.
- Dundes, A. (Ed.). (1984). *Sacred narrative: Readings in the theory of myth*. Univ of California Press.
- Ebrahim SH, Memish ZA (2020): COVID-19- the role of mass gatherings. *Travel Medicine and Infectious Disease*
- Ebrahim, S. H., & Memish, Z. A. (2020). Saudi Arabia's drastic measures to curb the COVID-19 outbreak: temporary suspension of the Umrah pilgrimage. *Journal of Travel Medicine*, 27(3), taaa029.
- Huremovic D, (2019): *Psychiatry of Pandemics: A Mental Health Response to Infection Outbreak*. Switzerland: Springer Nature;
- Kumar, A., Arora, A., Sharma, P., Anikhindi, S. A., Bansal, N., Singla, V., ... & Srivastava, A. (2020). Clinical features of COVID-19 and factors associated with severe clinical course: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Social Science Research Network*.
- McCloskey, B., Zumla, A., Ippolito, G., Blumberg, L., Arbon, P., Cicero, A. & Borodina, M. (2020). Mass gathering events and reducing further global spread of COVID-19: a political and public health dilemma. *The Lancet*, 395(10230), 1096-1099.
- Shoib, S., John Joseph, S., & Rashid, A. (2020). Is Religious Behavior Harbinger for COVID-19-Indian Perspective?. *Psychiatria Danubina*, 32(2), 305-306.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. sage.
- Williams, C. (2007). Research methods. *Journal of Business & Economics Research (JBER)*, 5(3).
- Yin, R. K. (2003). Designing case studies. *Qualitative research methods*, 5(14), 359-386.

**Back to Village Programme of Jammu and Kashmir - A platform for citizen engagement towards good governance and equitable development**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**

12(1) 177 - 197

ISSN: 2249-667X

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b27>

8-4cf7-49a5-9525-

[af5e352f2900/Journal/d60e3adb-e805-4ee3-](http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Journal/d60e3adb-e805-4ee3-af5e352f2900/Journal/d60e3adb-e805-4ee3-ac66-40568f24918e.pdf)

[ac66-40568f24918e.pdf](http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Journal/d60e3adb-e805-4ee3-ac66-40568f24918e.pdf)

**Bilal A. Bhat\***

**Jahan Ara Jabeen†**

**Waseem Amad Ganie‡**

**Abstract**

*Innovation is an important aspect of democracy. The most important part in any democratic set up is that how the basic issues of the people are accessed, assessed and addressed. Jammu and Kashmir has faced this problem the most as there exists a big gap between the governance and the government. Undoubtedly, the elected representatives have a clear responsibility to do the things that their constituents want, but over the decades it has been observed that the successive governments have ignored this vital concept of connect with the masses. Good governance demands respect for human rights, rule of law, strengthening of democracy, promoting transparency and accountability among others in the government. Democracy depends on the equality of all human beings, their right to participate in the social and political transformation, and the right to development. The true spirit of democracy lies in the active involvement of people in the decision-making processes to fulfill their area specific needs and with this in mind the Government of Jammu and Kashmir started the Back to Village-a community mobilization programme in June 2019 which has seen three phases till date. The absence of non-democratic government has also led to the invention of this innovative practice of mass people contact programme. The 'Back to Village' programme aims to involve the people and government officials in a joint effort to deliver the mission of equitable development. The programme is aimed at energizing Panchayats and directing development efforts in rural areas through community participation. As part of this programme, officers of the J&K administration had to reach out to each Panchayat of the Union Territory, where they will interact with the people and obtain feedback from them so as to tailor government efforts in improving the*

---

\* Assistant Professor, Centre for Social Justice, Institute of Management and Public Administration (IMPA), Govt. of J&K, Main Campus, Srinagar, J&K.

Email: [bilalccas@gmail.com](mailto:bilalccas@gmail.com)

† Director Trainings, Institute of Management and Public Administration, Govt. of J&K, Main Campus, Srinagar

‡ KAS Officer Trainee, Batch 2020-21, Institute of Management and Public Administration, Govt. of J&K, Main Campus, Srinagar

*delivery of village-specific services. The 'Back to Village' programme has been conceived with the objective of ensuring that developmental initiatives are built on the feedback and cooperation of the people, thus being more result-oriented with a greater probability of success.*

### **Keywords**

Good Governance, democracy, responsiveness, panchayats, Back to Village, community mobilization, cooperation.

### **Introduction**

Raja Bano-a 55-year-old widow from Kapran area of Anantnag has to walk for 17 kilometers to collect her monthly pension of Rs. 1,000 from the nearest bank branch where she stands in a long queue to receive the pension. To listen and redress the grievances of Raja Bano and the thousands like her, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir embarked on an ambitious and extensive programme of reaching out to the people at the grassroots level to create in the rural masses an earnest desire for decent standard of living. The good governance means listening to the people at their doorsteps, understanding the circumstances in which they are living, feeling a pinch of the difficulties that impact their lives, and finding a way out of it. To fill the vacuum created by the absence of elected government and declining governance the essence of the initiative of "Back to village" was realized. If continued in its present fashion with incremental modifications, this concept is aimed at changing the whole dynamic of the governance in the state (JKPR, 2022).

The 'Back to Village' programme which started in June 2019 aimed to involve the people of the state and government officials in a joint effort to deliver the mission of equitable development. The programme aimed at strengthening governance at the grassroots level and energizing Panchayats and directing development efforts in rural areas through community participation. As part of this programme, civil servants had to reach out to each Panchayat of the State, where they halted for a specific period to interact and obtain feedback from the grassroots so as to tailor government efforts in improving delivery of village-specific services. The 'Back to Village' programme has been conceived with the objective of ensuring that developmental initiatives are built on the feedback and cooperation of the people, thus being more result oriented with greater probability of success than those which are from top to down (Greater Kashmir, 2022). The programme revolves around the concept that while the official machinery has to guide and assist, the primary responsibility to improve the local conditions rests with the people

themselves. Therefore, they must be encouraged to own a programme so that the benefits are maximized. The life of a person living in a rural area is not cut into segments in the way the Government activities are prone to be (Roy and Saini, 2009). The approach at the village level, therefore, has to be a coordinated, touching all aspects of village life.

The essence of the 'Back to Village' programme is to emphasize the importance of ensuring, right from the beginning, people's participation, not merely as an agent in the execution of the development works but as owners of the entire programme.

The first phase of Back to Village Programme started in June 2019 which involved the visit of officers of J&K Government to every Panchayat and spending two days and a night there. It was seen as an opportunity to support and strengthen the newly constituted Panchayats. Encouraged by the response, the government organized the Back to Village-2 in November 2019 with the focus on ensuring that the funds, functions and functionaries devolved to the panchayats were used without any bottlenecks and that beneficiary-oriented schemes actually reached the last person in the queue. The follow up of the first two phases came in the form of Back to Village-3 in October 2020 which had the Jan Abhiyan (Awami Muhim) at its centre to assess government functioning and service delivery through an unprecedented proactive government-PRI interface (Kashmir Images, 2022).

### **Similar Programmes in the Past from which the Current Back to Village drew Inspiration**

The programme drew inspiration from the following initiatives:

- Back to the Village National Campaign (Go to Village) in Nepal from 1967 to 1975 with an aim to direct developmental efforts towards rural areas.
- Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah in 1970s launched the programme of single-line administration. His cabinet would sit in the districts and hear everyone out and decide the matters on the spot.
- Chhattisgarh government's Gram Suraj Abhiyan (Village Contact Programme) of April 2012 where different teams of government officers visited villages to note down the grievances of the people (Scoop News, 2022).

Encouraged by the spirit and success of these programmes, the J&K government decided to launch its own 'Back to Village' initiative to bring the almost "inaccessible" state bureaucracy to the villagers' doorsteps, rejuvenate the almost defunct Gram Panchayats and build a bridge

between the state administration, the local Panchayati Raj and the rural population in order to navigate towards village-specific, need-based development. Equitable development, in this way, would reach to the last mile by giving the local administration and population both agency and responsibility through the community-driven initiative (Desai, 1969).

### **Why Back to Village?**

The government of J&K had started the process of decentralization as early as 1935 in the form of the J&K Village Panchayat Regulation No.1; subsequently amended in 1941. The Naya Kashmir programme of 1947 had democratic decentralization as one of its main objectives. The Jammu and Kashmir village Panchayat Act 1958 aspired to make better provision for the administration of village Panchayats. The Jammu and Kashmir Panchayat Raj Act-1989 was to promote and develop Panchayati Raj system in Jammu and Kashmir as an instrument of vigorous local self-Government (JKPR, 2020). In spite of the constitutional and legal framework in place, the system of local governance failed to make an impression in the rural areas. This forced the policy makers and the government to think out of the box and hence came the idea of Back to Village-the festival of democracy, public awareness and public participation (Prime Minister of India in Mann Ki Baat) which was started across all the panchayats of J&K. The programme revolves around the concept that while the official machinery has to guide and assist, the primary responsibility to improve the local conditions rests with the people themselves. Therefore people must be encouraged to own the programmes so that benefits are maximized for them. The 'Back to Village' programme has been conceived with the objective of ensuring that developmental initiatives are built on the feedback and cooperation of the people, thus being more result-oriented with a greater probability of success.

The main objectives of the programme were:

- Energizing panchayats;
- Collecting feedback on delivery of government schemes/programmes;
- Capturing specific economic potential of the panchayats;
- Assessment of the needs of the villages;
- Community Participation in development;
- Energizing and strengthening the panchayats and directing development efforts in rural areas through community participation and to create in the rural masses an earnest desire for



- a decent standard of living;
- To move governance from its seat of operation to the doorsteps of the people in villages;
- Improve the citizen-administration interface;
- Convergence of the schemes of the different departments and synergize the scarce resources;
- Ensure the benefits of all the schemes reach the remotest of the areas;

### **A Brief Rundown of Phases I, II And III Of 'Back To Village' Programme**

The first phase of the 'Back to Village' initiative witnessed a flurry of activities carried out by the administration in consultation with the rural population of Jammu and Kashmir. The activities reportedly undertaken during the first phase were as follows:

- More than 4000 gazetted officers (*precisely 4189 officers, e-book by the Finance department*) including high-rank officers like the Principal Secretary were assigned a Panchayat halqa which they visited for two days and one night (Finance Department, 2020).
- The individual visiting officer was directed to speak to the Sarpanch, the Panchs and the villagers of the Panchayat area. He/She was assigned to learn in detail about their grievances and collect feedback on the delivery of government schemes.
- The officer also visited schools, primary healthcare centers, Anganwadi facilities and other public service institutions in the area.
- Basic living conditions like the availability of food, drinking water conditions and water supply, electricity and sanitation were reviewed.
- Specific economic potential was captured and village-specific need assessment was conducted.
- Camps were conducted by various departments (ex.: Agriculture, Horticulture) to raise awareness about individual beneficiary-oriented government schemes available.
- Financial Literacy Camps were organized.
- Competitions were held where sports kits, MGNREGA job cards and SC/ST certificates were distributed.
- After detailed discussions, five main areas of economic potential and five major problems confronting the people in every Gram Panchayat were identified and seven urgent public demands were prioritized.

- Two economic schemes benefitting landholding families and unorganized sector workers i.e. PM Kisan Yojana and Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan- dhan were introduced during the programme.

The second phase of 'B2V' was more about "assessment of progress in decisions taken by the administration" and "devolution of funds to Panchayats and understand how they are functioning and their grievances and demands". The B2V-2 was distinct than B2V-1 as the administration drew its experience of the latter to plan for the former. Although core highlights like officers visiting a Panchayat halqa remained, there were some significant differences such as:

- Rs 1,000 crore were devolved for Panchayats to aid development.
- The gazetted officers had the specific objectives of following up on B2V-1, empowering Panchayats and addressing objections on objectives such as doubling farmer income by 2022 and 100% coverage of individual beneficiary-oriented schemes (examples: scholarships, pensions and other individual assistance schemes).

The third phase of the Back to Village began with the pre-B2V Jan Abhiyan, the Unat Gram Abhiyan, and was focused on redressing the issues that could not be addressed during the previous two phases of B2V, suggests that the administration is demonstrating the ability and willingness to hold itself accountable.

### **Objectives**

The core objective of this study is to make an overall assessment of the Back to village programme, whether it was a paper tiger or a game changer in strengthening the grass root level governance in J&K. The other objectives include:

- Areas where the programme achieved its intended objectives.
- Grey areas where the government failed to focus.
- Assess the level of awareness the programme has created in the people.
- Offer suggestions in light of the finding of the project study.

### **Methodology**

The study is descriptive and analytical in nature with an overall emphasis on the critical assessment of the Back to Village Programme of the Government of J&K. The data used has been purely taken from secondary sources comprising mainly of the government agencies and officers besides the field visits.

**Back to Village - 1 (B2V1)**

The first phase of the programme was conducted from June 20-27 across all the Panchayats of J&K. It was a new experience aimed at revitalizing the system of grass root governance in the erstwhile state. The first B2V- focussed on interaction and information – getting to know the difficulties of the people and taking the administration to the grassroots, the second B2V focused on strengthening and institutionalizing panchayats, handholding the newly elected PRIs and focusing on saturation and 100% coverage of beneficiary- oriented schemes. In both phases, visiting officers participated in gram sabhas and learnt about people’s grousers.

The main aim was to collect the data of problems and complaints of the local populace by utilizing the services of the gazetted officers who would visit and interact with the people residing in 4,483 panchayats and in the meanwhile collect feedback from the panchayats representatives, elders and other locals about their concerns, developmental needs and economic potential of the area. The feedback so obtained will be used in future schemes and programmes for improved service delivery and improvement of village specific amenities and economic upliftment.

The programme witnessed discussions on the themes like How to strengthen panchayats, how to mobilize resources for them, social and economic issues in the panchayats among others. To make this programme even more interesting many other means were employed. Many sports competitions for kids were organized under the aegis of ‘Khelo India’. Sports Kits, MNREGA job cards and SC/ST certificates were distributed. There were Financial Literacy camps and Agriculture and Horticulture Department set up stalls where knowledge about govt. schemes was disseminated. In this manner, this programme became a festival celebrating development, a festival of people’s participation and a festival of people’s awakening.

**Back to Village -2 (B2V2)**

This phase was built on the experiences drew out of the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the programmed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> phase started from 25<sup>th</sup> November -30<sup>th</sup> November across all the panchayats of J&K. During this phase the officers visiting the various panchayats were to spend two days and one night in the panchayats assigned to them. This time the objective was to follow up on B2V1, focus on 100% implementation of individual beneficiary-oriented schemes, focus on schemes and activities that can be undertaken to double farmers’ income, assessment of implementation of all measures and schemes aimed at empowerment of panchayats and spread awareness about them. The Deputy Commissioners were also directed to have a night halt in one of the panchayats of their respective districts

alongside the visiting officers. The Lieutenant Governor, the advisors and the Chief Secretary and other senior officers also visited various panchayats.

During this phase the main focuses was on assessing the institutionalization of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) at the grass root level and whether, have got the necessary funds, functions and functionaries. An amount of Rs. 5 Crore was released to the districts for resolution of priority issues of the panchayats. Like phase 1<sup>st</sup> of the programme, its aim was also to assess the progress of various schemes and programmes of the government in the economic and social sectors.

The first two phases also witnessed the formulation of different committees in the panchayats like the Social Audit Committee, the Biodiversity Management committee among others.

### Back to Village-3 (B2V3)

The third phase of the Back to Village Programme started from 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 - 12<sup>th</sup> October 2020. Here also, the officers visited the panchayats across J&K and spent time with the locals. What made this phase different from the earlier two phases was the three week long Jan Abhiyan from 10<sup>th</sup> - 30<sup>th</sup> Sept., 2020 as a sort of preparation to the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the Back to Village Programme.

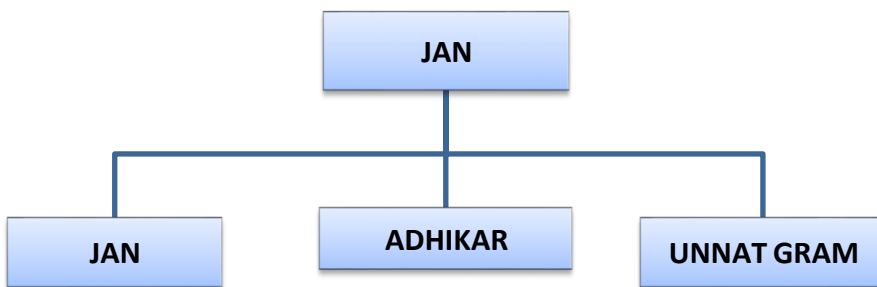


Figure- 1. Three Pillars of the Jan Abhiyan

The *Jan Sunwai Abhiyan* or *Awami Sunwai Muhim* focused to improve service delivery and redressal of public grievances by getting together all functionaries at pre-determined times and places and under the supervision of a senior officer. The Deputy Commissioner and other senior District Officers drew tour rosters to ensure that each and every block is visited by Deputy Commissioner along-with the District Superintendent of Police personally and at least one more senior officer (other than Nodal Officer) over the three-week Jan Abhiyan/Awami Muhim Period.

The *Adhikar Abhiyan or Muhim Barai-e-Haqooq* provisioned that the district administration should identify the target population for every service, individual beneficiary schemes and various certificates in order to ensure that 100% of target population is covered. Special camps were held for the purpose at District/Sub-division/Tehsil/Block/GP Levels. The services to be provided included (but not be limited to) issuance of Domicile, SC, ST, RBA, ALC, OBC certificates, Pensions, scholarships, Aadhar cards, KCC, Gold Cards, 3K health Scheme Cards, MGNREGA wage payments, PMAY sanctions and PMKISAN, Labour Cards, PM Matrutva Vandana Yojana, Ladli Beti, Construction Workers' Welfare Board benefits etc.; MVD services like driving license, registrations etc.; Any other important public oriented scheme or services to be covered such as revenue documents which a Deputy Commissioner may consider doable. For students, provision of SC/ST/Other Certificates and application for scholarships was set at 100 percent. No child should be left out.

*Ummat Gram Abhiyan/Dehi Taraqiyati Muhim* aimed for a mega push towards development activities by taking up of maximum possible MGNREGA works on ground, commencement of works already approved under the 14th FC plan, execution of District & UT plan works and also implementation of other Centrally Sponsored Schemes (Gretaer Kashmir, 2020).

The main components were 14th FC works and their payment; MGNREGA works and their payment; B2V works and their payment; CSS/ PMDP/ District Plan/ State Plan works and payments; PMAY payments and completion of houses(Greh Pravesh) Special thrust was laid on follow up of B2V1 and B2V2 for each panchayat which included; Taking up, completion and payment of at least two priority works identified during the two earlier phases for which money shall be separately released to the districts; Closing all complaints/ problems/ administrative issues raised during the earlier phases satisfactorily; Ensuring long term activities are prioritized and accommodated under UT plan/ CSS by concerned administrative department; Preparation of an ATR(Action Taken Report) regarding the B2V1 & B2V2 based on the above; Panchayat wise format for ATR mentioning Problems, Public Requirements and Complaints for earlier two phases (Rising Kashmir, 2020).

The Jan Abhiyan also witnessed the celebration of the Block Divas/ Youm-e- Block to take appraisal of local issues from the general public for accurate and on ground assessment and redressal of the same thereby providing governance to the public at their door steps. The officers including the Deputy Commissioners and the SSPs/SPs on the occasion

were directed to highlight the objectives of the Jan Abhiyan, Jan Sunwayi, Dehi Taraqiyaati and Poshan Abhiyan programmes informing the public that these grand public campaigns were aimed at reaching out to the people for redressal of their grievances and addressing developmental issues (Kashmir Images, 2022).

The third phase also witnessed the distribution of sports kits to the various sports clubs in the panchayats besides the earmarking of Rs.10 lakhs per panchayats for works of urgent nature. While the novel outreach programme (Block Divas) was to be held only on three Wednesdays of September falling in the period of Jan Abhiyan, the government has now decided to conduct it every Wednesday, owing to its grand success.



#### *Mega Block Divas during Back to Village -3*

The immediate outcomes of the Back to Village Programme and Jan Abhiyan in the short term are depicted in Tables 1 and 2 respectively. Table 3 shows the department wise demands projected during the Back to Village -III in respect of District Kulgam. From the list of projected demand, it is clear that people saw the programme as a panacea for registering their grievance and long pending demands (DC Office Kulgam, 2021). Table 5 shows the status of the works undertaken during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> phases of Back to Village programme.

During the first and second phase of the programme, five works had to be prioritized by the concerned Gram Sabha in every panchayats across Jammu and Kashmir. Out of these at least one prioritized work had to be completed before the start of the next phase of the B2V Programme. As per the statement of the official government spokesperson, 4129 works taken up in first two phases were completed and 1607 works are going on and it incurred an expenditure of Rs 165 crore on them.

**Table 1: Achievements under B2V3**

Division	PMAY		
	Sanctions	Installments Paid	Payments
Jammu	3337	6336	3702.65
Kashmir	34	74	27.92
Grand Total	3371	6410	3730.57
Division	MGNREGA		
	Works	Completed Works	Amount Paid
Jammu	1351	130	869.72
Kashmir	862	38	723.26
Grand Total	2213	168	1592.98
Division	14 <sup>th</sup> FC		
	Works	Completed Works	Amount Paid
Jammu	115	321	6.13
Kashmir	695	311	384.6
Grand Total	810	632	390.74
Community Sanitary Complex			
Division	Works Taken up		Works Completed
Jammu	222		2
Kashmir	82		36
Grand Total	304		38

**Table 2: Achievements under 21-Day Jan Abhiyan**

Division	PMAY		
	Sanctions	Instalments Paid	Payments
Jammu	7791	9103	3268.45
Kashmir	566	779	603.95
Grand Total	8357	9882	3872.39
Division	MGNREGA		
	Works	Completed Works	Amount Paid
Jammu	3902	390	3213.82
Kashmir	3129	358	3642.18
Grand Total	7031	748	6856
Division	14 <sup>th</sup> FC		
	Works	Completed Works	Amount Paid
Jammu	395	770	10.30
Kashmir	2488	1773	3127.5
Grand Total	2883	2543	3137.75
Community Sanitary Complex			
Division	Works Taken up		Works Completed
Jammu	341		32
Kashmir	365		159
Grand Total	706		191

**Table 3: Status of works taken up under B2V (B2V-I & B2V-II) Programme  
RDD Kulgam (rupees in Lakhs)**

S No	Name of the Block	No of Panchayat Halqas	No. of work Authorized B2V1	No of works completed	No. of work Authorized B2V-2	Funds released under B2V-2	No of works completed under B2V-II
1	Pombay	12	11	11	1	11.18	1
2	D.K. Marg	13	9	9	3	13.45	1
3	Behibagh	18	2	2	13	24.48	2
4	Frisal	7	7	7	1	4.00	0
5	Kund	10	6	4	1	11.71	0
6	Devsar	23	11	11	9	31.60	2
7	Kulgam	23	6	6	13	32.96	5
8	D.H Pora	19	15	14	1	7.77	1
9	Qaimoh	23	10	10	9	26.70	4
10	Pahloo	15	10	10	2	8.09	2
11	Manzgam	15	3	3	4	19.89	2
	Total	178	90	87	57	191.82	20

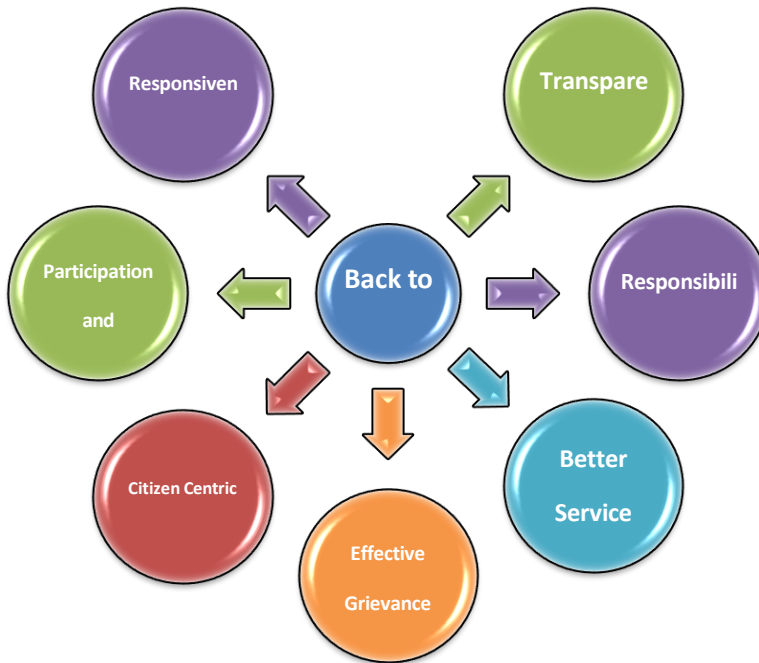
Back to Village and Jan Abhiyan is a step towards more transparent and accountable governance. The programme envisaged to provide Funds, Functions and Functionaries at people's doorstep.

During the Back to Village programme, 1.79 lakh beneficiaries have been linked with Jammu & Kashmir Health Insurance Scheme, 65 thousand farmers have been provided Kisan Credit Card, 1.55 lakh ration cards have been seeded with Aadhar and more than 55 thousand farmers have benefitted under PM KISAN initiative.

**Assets Created under Back to Village Programme**



The most heartening aspect of 'Back to village' programme is the fact, that it was organized in such remote villages, where even officials had to traverse difficult terrain and climb mountains while walking on foot over a period of day or day and a half. These officials also reached the panchayats on the border which live under the shadow of cross-border firing.



**Figure 2: How Back to Village lead to Good Governance**

Back to Village and Jan Abhiyan is a step towards more transparent and accountable governance. The programme envisaged to provide Funds, Functions and Functionaries at people's doorstep.

During the Back to Village programme, 1.79 lakh beneficiaries have been linked with Jammu & Kashmir Health Insurance Scheme, 65 thousand farmers have been provided Kisan Credit Card, 1.55 lakh ration cards have been seeded with Aadhar and more than 55 thousand farmers have benefitted under PM KISAN initiative.

The most heartening aspect of 'Back to village' programme is the fact, that it was organized in such remote villages, where even officials had to traverse difficult terrain and climb mountains while walking on foot over a period of day or day and a half. These officials also reached the panchayats on the border which live under the shadow of cross-border firing.

### **Merits of the programme**

'Back to Village' is an initiative with incredible potential for bridging the communication gap between administration and the common people. As the officials arrive at peoples' doorsteps to understand and address the grievances of villagers, they are providing a sense of agency to them in determining their own developmental future. This approach can build trust among the people and strengthen their ties with the government.

More to the point, policy planning built upon the bottom-up approach of village-specific needs is a far better approach than one based on a top-down approach. The availability of funds will make the Panchayats effective entities of local governance and therefore the participatory democracy will be strengthened on the grassroots level. The programme acted as a social audit of the existing schemes of the government where the local population gave a vivid account of the performance of the department responsible for operation of the schemes.

Back to Village programme led to the creation of a database of the existing physical and social infrastructure (Roads, Schools, and Hospitals etc) in the villages. This database will help the administration in prioritization of funds for the regions lacking on different fronts with respect to the existing physical and social infrastructure.

The programme gave an overall assessment of the local level governance structures (Panchayati Raj Institutions) whether they are empowered enough with all the necessary funds, functionaries and functions. It also assisted the Panchayats in areas where they faced impediments in using the funds and functions devolved to them based on the local priorities to further strengthen grass root democracy and participatory development.

The economic potential of various panchayats for generation of local employment and augmentation of the same was captured by the visiting officers besides highlighting the most pressing demands of the villages. The programme created in the rural masses an urge and desire for decent standard of living. How the various government departments and their functionaries are performing at the cutting-edge levels and people's perception of these departments was also recorded during the course of the programme. This gave the much-needed inputs to the policy think tanks within the government to chart out the reforms in the administrative machinery. The various Gram Sabha's - General Gram Sabha, Mahila Sabha, Bal Sabha etc. provided opportunities to all the sections of the society to voice their grievances before the concerned authorities which was otherwise a hectic task for them because they had to travel all the way to the district headquarters for redressal of even the petty issues. During the course of these Gram Sabhas held during the Back to Village programme many Information and Educational Activities

were carried out which made the village masses aware of the different government schemes which were hitherto unknown to them.



**Special Gram Sabhas held under B2V**

The distribution of Sports kits during the Back to Village programme under the aegis of Khelo India Mission provided youth with the necessary equipment's and encouraged them to participate in the field of games and sports and was seen as a way to prevent radicalization of youth besides weaning them away from the menace of substance abuse.



**Distribution of Sports Equipment's during B2V3**

During the third phase of Back to Village and the preceding Jan Abhiyan, the delivery of services at the doorstep provided by the different departments made it a real success in the eyes of the masses. The provision of prosthetic aids to the divyangs and the various certificates to the ones in need was an exemplary in the field of delivering governance at the doorsteps.

The awareness campaigns carried during the Back to Village programme helped in tackling the menace of substance abuse in many villages. In border areas of Baramulla district, set top boxes were given free of cost to households to connect them with digital networks and television connectivity. The inspection of public facilities by visiting officers helped the administration to get the real picture of the various goods and services provided in the villages and how the people in the rural areas rate the service delivery mechanisms of the government. This assessment will help in improving the delivery of services in future to the rural areas.

**Table 4: Block Diwas Achievements**

S. No	MONITORABLE PARAMETERS	Total
1	No. of Domicile Certificates issued	295140
2	No. of Category certificates issued	28821
3	No. of Revenue papers issued	41560
4	No. of Birth/ Death Certificates issued (for period beginning from April 1, 2020)	58113
5	No. of Disability Certificates issued (for period beginning from April 1, 2020)	7758
6	No. of Ration Cards Aadhaar seeded	76609
7	No. of Families covered under Ayushman Bharat	40488
8	Coverage under Universal Health Schemes	82594
9	No. of beneficiaries brought under Pensions under National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP)	14331
10	No. of beneficiaries brought under Pensions under Integrated Social Security Scheme (ISSS)	75412
11	No. of students covered under Scholarships to the students	299242
12	No. of Kissan Credit Cards Issued	44859
13	No. of New Works started on ground (MGNREGA, 14th FC, Capex, CSS etc)	25816
14	No. of applications/grievances received.	41353
15	No. of applications/grievances disposed off.	19923

### Shortcomings / Failures

Most of the people living in villages across Jammu & Kashmir thought that Back to Village programme was a new scheme introduced by the government for creation of physical infrastructure in the villages as depicted by the demands projected during the three phases of the programme. What they could not understand and where the administration failed was that it was basically a good governance

initiative for 360° analysis of the services being provided by the government and the problems faced by the people.

“Grievances have been scripted on paper. None of them have been addressed so far”, said one of the locals in a village of Kulgam district, recounting the post B2V situation in his village. There are Panchayat halqas which still lack educational infrastructure, proper water supply, and electricity, roads, transportation system, ATM facilities, Animal Husbandry, Agriculture and Horticulture departments. According to him, the gazetted officer recorded all these grievances during the first phase of B2V programme, but nothing has been done to address these grievances. Raja Banoo still has to walk on foot for 17 kilometers to get her monthly pension and due to non-fulfillment of their demands projected during the first phase of back to village, the residents of her village witnessed small number of people participating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of the programme.

People focused more on development of new infrastructure rather than assessment of the ongoing schemes and their progress. This made the programme asset creation oriented which defeated the real purpose of the programme i.e. good governance; focus on socio-economic issues and development. If people start believing Back to Village programme will ensure huge funding and execution of mega developmental works in villages, this is something that won't happen. Visiting Officers were given a long wish list by people which has a financial implication of at least Rs 1crore in each village. In J&K we have around 4500 village panchayats. Can Government afford to allocate Rs 4500 Crores or more to these villages?

This unresponsive approach of the administration and its disappearance from the rural areas after the conclusion of B2V-1 programme was witnessed across hundreds of villages in J&K, with people being disappointed by an almost defunct grievance redressal mechanism. Speaking of which, the people in Jammu and Kashmir complained about the lack of a swift bureaucratic response to their grievances in the form of redressal initiatives and termed the B2V-1 as one of the many broken promises.

The public service delivery forms the bulwark of any efficient administration. Services provided by a Government to its citizens are a part of social agreement between a voter and the elected. The cycle gets complete only when input to the system, in the form of support and votes and enthusiasm meets the output from the government side. The promises of the second phase of B2V are still licking dust on the papers of files that were seen as ray of hope. Foundation stones were laid but very few materialized into a proper outcome. Previous demands also included

the renewal of ration cards, inclusion of more BPL families, upgrading the APL list and many such related to PDS system but are yet to be addressed.

The B2V-2 programme (November 25-30, 2019), which was supposed to have a follow-up on the steps taken in the B2V-1, did not initiate any steps for the fulfilment of the promises made by the government. Areas like Simbal and Bhalwal in Jammu still await the fulfilment of the promises made by the officers more than a year ago.

Local politicians have alleged that the UT government has introduced the B2V programme only to create a bureaucratic alternative for the regular/elected government and thereby marginalizing the political workers operating on the ground. It was also alleged that the whole campaign disturbed the routine work of the district administration which had to make preparations for the various high profile officers visiting the panchayats in their respective districts.

### **Recommendations**

It becomes clear from the aforementioned facts that the implementation of the 'Back to Village' programme, a "potential path-breaker on the paper", faced a lot of challenges on the ground. In future the administration has to ensure the effective implementation of the programme. To fulfill that commitments made during the programme following recommendations may prove handy:

- Institutionalize Back to Village programme: The visits made by the officials to the rural areas during the B2V programme should become a routine exercise of the administration.
- The administration should designate one official for every village who would act as a bridge between the rural population/the local Panchayats and the bureaucracy.
- It should be the joint responsibility of the Panchayats and the designated official to ensure that the resources devolved to the Panchayats for the sake of development are used judiciously and effectively.
- The administration should identify the unfulfilled promises made during the B2V Programme and ensure their fulfillment in the future. Fast, effective and transparent redressal of public grievances is the only way to rebuild public trust in the administration.
- The administration should provide the far-flung villages with basic amenities, such as roads, running water, and electricity.

- A 'vision document' should be prepared, from the data collected during the B2V programme that would shape the current and future policies of the administration.
- The focus should be on providing all the necessary amenities in the villages and giving impetus to the rural economy so that distress migration is prevented from villages to cities.
- The visiting officers listening to the grievance at grassroot level, noting it down and forwarding it further will not suffice. Grievance redressal forms the backbone of a citizen centric administration. What a treat it would be for local people if officials visiting the area have atleast some namesake authority to address few grievances on the spot. Just few economic resources, no doubt properly scrutinized, at their disposal can make a huge difference. Say for example a locality have some problem with passenger shed or a pond nearby or a water tank, even if only few of these are addressed on the spot, the trust in the institutions and process will rise to new high.
- The biggest task is how to monitor the feedback and redress the problems of the people for which we need a dedicated dashboard to track the status of various demands and grievances registered by the people during the Back to Village programme. Also the achievements of the B2V Programme should be highlighted at dedicated spots in the form of hoardings and wall paintings as a tool of information dissemination for the information of the general public.

One of the aspects that should be added to Back to Village programme is to engage a team of community volunteers. These volunteers can be given training about planning, implementation and monitoring of development programmes. These community volunteers can be used to do community mobilization as well as capacity building. Community mobilisation through volunteers has to focus on capacity building and information dissemination and leave the leadership role to the members of the community themselves. They have to act more as facilitators than leaders or bosses for sustainability of such process.

The way forward for local development is the effective utilization of concept of Back to Village. It needs the fundamental change in the understanding of governance both by the officials as well as the people. If the concept of B2V is implemented in the letter and spirit, then there is a strong possibility of a shift from local government to local governance; and from top- down to bottom-up planning; and more importantly from bureaucracy led to community-led development. The role of Local Self-

governing structures like the Panchayati Raj Institutions comes here in ensuring that every single penny spent out of the exchequer is utilized effectively and efficiently for development at the grass root level. The PRI's should also ensure proper accountability of the government servants during such programmes before the public.

### **Conclusion**

Back to village programme connects government officers with the villagers directly and it gives a sense of belongingness and importance to the village people, besides helping in formulating plans for the transformation and development of the villages. It gives opportunity to the officers of the government to know the problems of the villages as they get first-hand information about the village life and problems. They then try to solve the problems and also take feedback from villagers, which later on help the administration in the formulation of plans and schemes for villages. B2V took governance to village level to take stock of the problems of villagers besides taking the feedback from the public about the government schemes and projects and giving such feedback in the form of a policy document to higher levels of bureaucracy for its further refinement in future. Back to Village has given an idea that can drill the grassroots democracy deeper into the landscape of Jammu and Kashmir - (a) this gives a sense to the people that they have a voice and that is heard out (b) Panchayats elected felt empowered, especially when they saw the officers rushing to their villages, sitting amidst them, and recording their problems. All this gives a sense of empowerment to the people, a crucial and critical element in the grassroots democracy.

One of the makers of modern India remarked years ago that real India lives in villages and the salvation of India lies in cottage and the soul of Indians lives in villages. India is an agrarian economy and J&K is no exception to it. Therefore, any transformation in India should begin at villages. So villages should be involved in governance. The maiden initiative of Back to Village Programme of the state government is a welcome and historical development. Back to Village is expected, would help in streamlining the developmental schemes and welfare initiatives of the government to maximize the impact and outreach. Even though Back to Village programme is aimed at involving people of the Jammu and Kashmir and government officials in a joint effort to deliver the mission of equitable development, it has to be led by the people at the grassroots than by the visiting officers and those at district and UT level. There is where the change is needed. The officials with the requisite task have to make sure that the grass shouldn't remain without roots. It will be a



challenge for the Government to develop comprehensive approach in order to balance the expectations and the outcome. The promises made in the three phases of B2V have to be fulfilled on a priority basis else the B2V programme would be reduced to a “festival of hollow promises”. At the same time, awareness also needs to be created in the public about people’s rights and welfare schemes that centre and UT administration has already approved for them. B2V is a right step towards good governance and empowering the local governance structures in the villages besides making them partners in the development process. It comes as step closer to the decentralization of development as well as planning. However it is to be seen whether administration returns back to village or it shows only its back to villages rather facing them.

### References

- *Back to the Basics, Back to the Village*, Retrieved from [www.risingkashmir.com/backtovillage](http://www.risingkashmir.com/backtovillage). Accessed on 23/05/2022.
- Desai, A.R. (1969). *Rural Sociology in India*. Bombay: Popular Prakashan.
- *J&K Government (2020), Pictorial Compendium of Projects/Works Completed During 2019-20, Finance Department, Govt. of J&K, Srinagar.*
- Jan Abhiyan-Back to Village, Retrieved from <http://scoopnews.in/det.aspx?> Accessed on 12/11/2022.
- Retrieved from <https://kulgam.nic.in/>. Accessed on 05/09/2022.
- Retrieved from <https://thekashmirimages.com/2020/09/28/what-to-expect-from-the-third-phase-of-back-to-village-programme>. Accessed on 27/07/2022.
- Retrieved from <https://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/opinion/back-to-village/>. Accessed on 28/02/2022.
- Retrieved from [https://www.jkpr.gov.in/web/department-of-panchayat-raj-jammu-and-kashmir/hidden//asset\\_publisher/ae1ekoD8IP9G/content/parivartan-panchayat-newsletter-english-version/112498710](https://www.jkpr.gov.in/web/department-of-panchayat-raj-jammu-and-kashmir/hidden//asset_publisher/ae1ekoD8IP9G/content/parivartan-panchayat-newsletter-english-version/112498710). Accessed on 25/06/2022/
- Roy, Upendra Nath and Sani, Jasmir Singh (2009). *People’s Empowerment and Sustainable Rural Development*. New Delhi, Rawat Publications.

**Impact of MGNERGA  
Scheme on Gujjar  
Community in Kashmir with  
Specific Reference to Food  
Security: A Sociological  
Study**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**  
12(1) 198 - 210  
ISSN: 2249-667X  
© 2022 Author(s)  
<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/e40c81bc-864c-4fa0-be1b-a1aafe9bb830.pdf>

**Mohd Anzar Warr\***

**Abstract**

*In Jammu and Kashmir Gujjars are mostly dependent on rearing of sheep and goat. Gujjars are the third largest ethnic group of the state. The culture of the community varies from other communities of the state. People belonged to Gujjar community are untouched with the pleasure of outside world. The political socialization of Gujjar in the state is not good as compared to other communities. Government has launched various schemes for the development of rural areas & upliftment of various deprived groups like MGNERGA Scheme is one of the important schemes which is beneficial for unskilled labourers. But most of the Gujjars are not so much aware about govt. scheme due to lack of awareness. This study has been carried out in Kashmir context based on a sample of 100 respondents and using an intensive approach through interview schedule and participant observation, the study has been carried out in the rural areas of Kupwara & Kulgam district of Kashmir. In this context, the present study has been prepared in order to know the impact of MGNERGA Scheme on tribal community of Kashmir i.e. Gujjars. Based on primary & secondary sources of data and other relevant sources wherever necessary the paper attempts to know the socio-economic conditions of Gujjars in Kashmir, it also intends to examine the impact of MGNERGA Scheme on their livelihood. This study is based on primary and secondary sources of data and other relevant literature wherever necessary and not any other test has been utilized to carry out the research.*

**Keywords**

Gujjars, MGNERGA, impact, socio-economic conditions, Kashmir

**Introduction**

The history of various tribes and cultural groups settled in Jammu and Kashmir are immigrants from the northwest, east and south. Gujjar and Bakerwals are two ethnic groups living in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. They are wandering peasantry living on grazing land near

---

\* Government Degree College, Kupwara, J&K  
Email: [waranzar@gmail.com](mailto:waranzar@gmail.com)

mountains and in high altitude valleys. The customs and traditions of Gujjar and Bakerwals and their economic activities are different from other ethnic groups of the state. The Gujjar and Bakerwals are usually tied to the flocks of sheep and goats and its products. The basic means of production of this tribal society (Gujjars) is the rearing of sheep and goats. Gujjar and Bakerwals fulfil their basic requirements from this production (Sofi, U. J. 2014). The constitution of Jammu and Kashmir has notified twelve tribal communities as the scheduled tribes. Among them Bakerwals and Gujjars were notified as the scheduled tribes vide the constitution scheduled tribes order amendment) Act, 1991 (Din, Azahar. 2015). These scheduled tribes of Jammu and Kashmir records the population of 1, 493, 299, comprising 11.90 percent of the total population of Jammu And Kashmir State. Ladakh region of the Jammu and Kashmir state constitute the most of these tribes. The Gujjar and Bakerwal tribes are much greater number in Kashmir valley. However these tribes are distributed in almost all districts but the districts of Anantnag, Budgam, Pulwama and Kupwara are mostly concentrated (Tufail, M. 2014). The Jammu and Kashmir Gujjars have no reliable historical story of their migration. It is true that the main reason of their migration were relentless drought, non- availability of pastures, over population; they assembled in the areas where pleasing opportunities are available for them. The families of Gujjars are living in the areas of Kutha, Poonch, Rajouri, Reasi, Jammu and Udhampur. The Gujjars have migrated in those regions after a sudden violent spontaneous occurrence of a serious famine. They also settled in the PirPanjal ranges of Kashmir (Warikoo, K. 2000). The occupations of the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir are arranged into classes as (1) cultivators; (2) the Dodhi Gujjars (milkman) and Bakerwal Gujjars (rearing of Sheep and Goats). The slopes and mountains of the Kashmir valley are dotted or adorned by the Gujjar settlements in the areas of Uri, Baramullah, Kupwara, Ganderbal, Kangan, Daksum, Kulgam, Pahalgam and Anantnag divisions. During the summers these people reaches the Pir Panchal and greater Himalayas of Kashmir. The houses are made of mud known as Kothas are different from Kashmir houses, are distributed on the slopes covered by maize fields (Rafaqi, M. 2015). However all the Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir teach or claim to be knowledgeable about Islam, still they keep the pastoral symbols, taboos and totems. Majority of Gujjar continue to believe in Pirs. The Gujjar holds on dead Pir than living Pir and believes upon will aid according to our aims and aspirations. Bakerwals are nomadic people travelling from place to place for work and in search of pastoral land. Bakerwals wears the same dress as of Gujjars except those who speak Pashto. Most of the Bakerwals living under temporary settlements until

the time of grazing is over. Majority of Bakerwals are dropouts from schools because of unavailability of educational and health facilities (Ahmad, Israr. et.al 2015). The Bakerwals belong to the same ethnicity as the Gujjars, and inter- marriage take place among them. Although, Bakerwals have same gotra or clan like Gujjars, many local shepherds, who may not essentially belong to the community, are often termed as Bakerwal economy and society. The basic unit of social structure among the Gujjar- Bakerwal is the dera unit (Tufail. M. 2014). A dera usually comes when a person is married and wants to have independent upon five to six members according to their age and sex. There is division of labour among them. The women of this caste are busy in domestic tasks of cooking, washing, fetching of water, upbringing of children, collection of wood and spinning and making of woolen garments (Sofi, U. J. 2014). The males are busy in rearing of cattle, collection of grass, ploughing and harvesting of crops. Several deras (households) constitute a lineage (dad-potra). The pastures are allotted to the lineage and not to the individuals. The lineage, thus, consists of several generations and includes cousins and distant relatives. The lineage unit is quit powerful administrative unit. Each lineage consists of head who secures the socio- economic and political activities of his group (Shahabaz. 2015).

### Literature review

**Hussain (2020)** has carried out research on Dard tribe of kargil district he suggests that despite the great efforts by the government for the overall development of the scheduled tribes, they are still far behind in almost all the standard measure of development. Mainly due to poverty, backwardness, illiteracy and very low status of education and lack of awareness of the various government programmes and policies made for their upliftment the tribal people/women are not able to participate in the process of development. If economic, educational and health aspects are given adequate attention, then these factors may contribute to an increase in the decision making abilities of the tribal women Moreover, if efforts are given to make women literate then that may help them to face the outside world in a confident manner, which in turn will enrich their lives. The author has carried out an extensive research on Dard tribe but in his study he has not given any suggestion for the upliftment of Dard tribe women and for the overall development of Dard tribe. **Khan, & Khan (2020)** in the study reveal that the health status of most of the Gujjar and Bakerwal women of J&K is very poor. These women live in utter deprivation due to poverty, illiteracy, early marriage, nomadic way of life, superstitions, traditional neglect and were facing various types of domestic violence, which adversely affects their health. They were

suffering from various diseases and infections but didn't take any medicinal treatment. Their health status is related to social condition, biological determinant, economic factor, malnutrition, domestic violence. The Gujjar and Bakerwal women are not aware of their rights and schemes launched by the government for their education, health and social uplift as they live in far-flung and difficult areas and are nomads moving from one place to another. Living in far away places in remote areas they hardly get any information regarding such schemes. Neither any full time women welfare NGO works for them nor the state government has started any specific welfare scheme for the Gujjar and Bakerwal women unless the state as well as the NGO's start a special and extensive welfare scheme for the Gujjar women, their progress shall remain a distant dream. They are putting a question mark on the tall claims of government and other agencies working for the welfare of women and for securing social change for all the women folk in 21st century. The author has carried out extensive research on tribal women but he fails to underline the reasons of early marriage of tribal in the present day changing society and he says that women are suffering from various disease but he didn't mention in the study that how they receive treatment. **Geelani (2016)** in the findings of the study admitted that most of the tribal populations are living below poverty line. The problems and challenges faced by tribal people are discussed respectively. (1) He points out that majority of the parents of school going children are illiterate. (2) No any Non-Govt. educational institution is present in all the areas where tribal people are living in District Shopian. (3) There is lack of learning facilities in schools. (4) All the tribal children of District Shopian are facing extreme educational problems. (5) The geographical and climatic conditions of the areas under study are harsh and are forcing authorities to reduce the daily school timings and the yearly academic calendars. As revealed by the results of the research it is found that the educational backwardness of tribal people has become a hurdle in the overall development of the state and concrete steps are needed to take up for removing the educational backwardness of the tribes. The author has carried out extensive research on tribal people but in his study he has not discussed the areas of intervention, challenges and appropriate measures and he has not suggested how to improve and promote the education of minorities/tribal.

### **Research methodology**

**Universe of the study:** The universe of the present study constitutes Kupwara and Kulgam district of Kashmir. Out of these two districts (20

villages) were taken into consideration randomly. As per census 2011, Kupwara district has 113929 households, population of 870354 of which 474190 are males and 396164 are females. There are 0.12 percent scheduled castes (SC) and 8.08 percent scheduled tribes (ST) of total population in Kupwara district. In Kulgam district scheduled caste (SC) constitutes 0 percent while scheduled tribes (ST) constitute 6.2 percent of the total population.

**Sampling plan and design of the study:** The sampling plan of the present study is based on a sample of 100 respondents selected through the stratified random and purposive sampling method from rural areas of Kupwara and Kulgam district of Kashmir. The descriptive research design was used to get information from the respondents within the study area and the information was collected through interview schedule. 10 villages from each district was taken for study and out of each village 05 respondents were chosen for study ( $5 \times 20 = 100$ ) which formed the sample of the study.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

- 1) To study the impact of MGNREGA Scheme on Gujjars livelihood. and
- 2) To analyze the socio-economic conditions of Gujjar community.

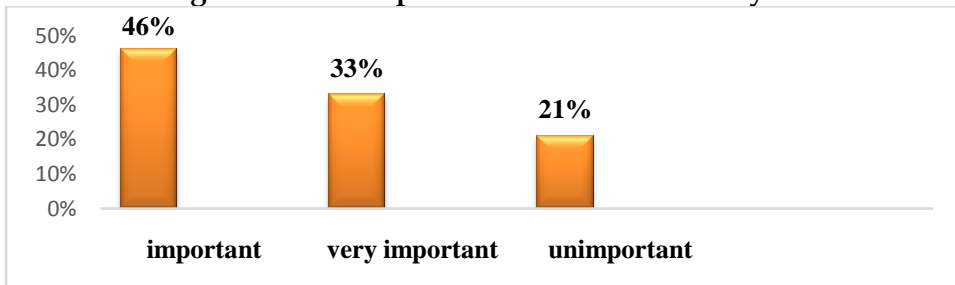
#### **Findings of the study**

The major findings of the study are as under:

#### **Perception of MGNREGA Scheme among Gujjars**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days wages employment in financial year to every household including Scheduled Tribe People. In this context, the respondents are asked to express their opinion regarding this scheme.

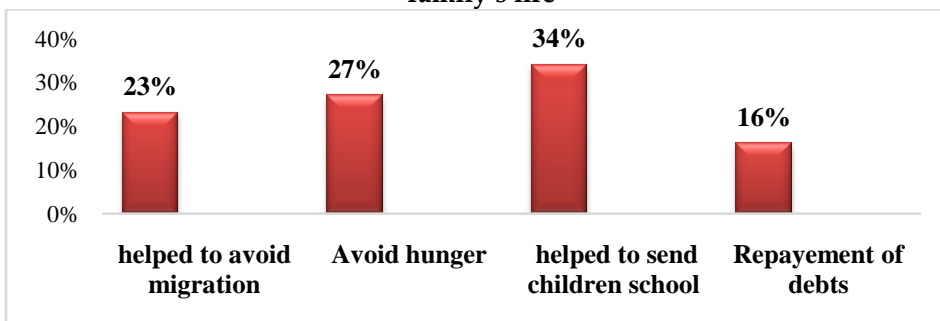
**Figure 1: How important is MGNREGA for you**



Source: Field study

The above figure indicates that out of 100 respondents, (46 percent) admitted that MGNREGA scheme is important for them, (33 percent) said that it's very important scheme and remaining (21 percent) acknowledged that it's unimportant. It has been observed in the field study that most of the unskilled and illiterate women as well as men generate their source of livelihood from this scheme and they are well aware about MGNREGA scheme.

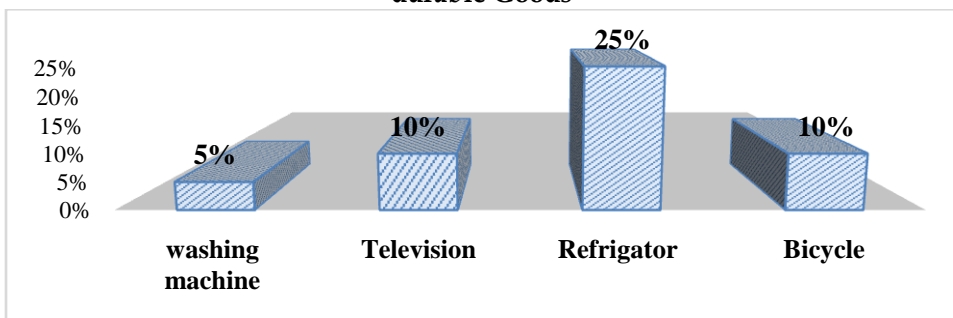
**Figure 2: MGNREGA has brought any significant changes in your life/ family's life**



Source: Field study

The above figure depicts that out of 100 respondents, (23 percent) admitted that MGNREGA scheme has brought significant changes in their life, the scheme has helped them to avoid migration, (27 percent) said that it helped them to avoid hunger, (34 percent) admitted that this scheme helped them to send their children to school and remaining (16 percent) admitted that it has tremendous role in repayment of their debts. It has been found from the field survey that most of the tribal (Gujjars) generate their income and run their home with the help of MGNREGA scheme.

**Figure 3: While working, have you ever used MGNREGA wages to buy any durable Goods**



Source: Field study

The above figure depicts that out of 100 respondents, (50 percent) admitted that they used MGNREGA scheme wages to buy durable goods for home. It has been observed in the study that most of the tribal (Gujjars) buy their basic necessary stuffs for their home like washing machine, television, refrigerator and bicycle for their children from the wages.

**Work application process**

Work application is a process in which government grant work to the beneficiaries. This is one of the basic /initial and important stage for an individual to apply for work otherwise he/she will not be sanctioned any work under MGNERGA scheme. In this context, the respondents are asked to express their views which are mentioned in the below:

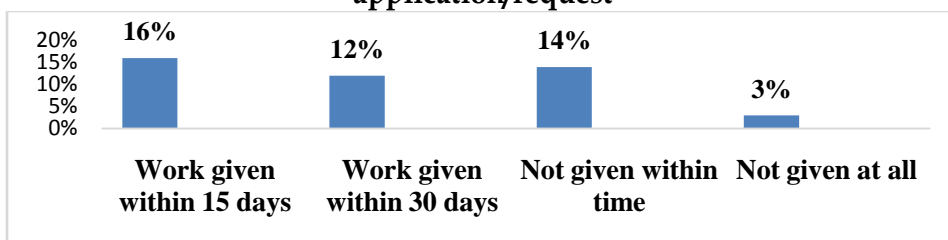
**Table 1: Ever make a written application for work under MGNREGA or make an informal request for work to Sarpanch, BDO or other responsible official**

Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
Written application for work under MGNREGA or make an informal request for work to Sarpanch, BDO or other responsible official?	Yes	45	45
	No	55	55
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field study

The above table reveals that out of 100 respondents, (55 percent) admitted that they have never make a written application neither informal request for work under MGNERGA scheme and remaining (45 percent) said that they have applied for grant of work several times. It is found that most of tribal (Gujjars) don't apply for work under this scheme due to discrimination, favoritism, Nepotism and lack of influence.

**Figure 4: Did you get work within the stipulated time of your application/request**



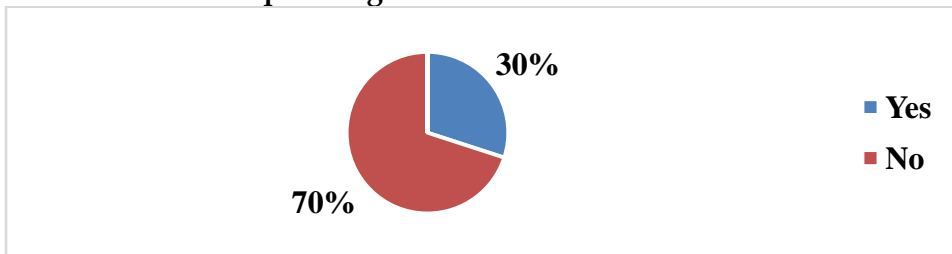
Source: Field study

The above study depicts out of 45 respondents, (16 percent) admitted that they get work within 15 days, (12 percent) said that they get work within



30 days, (14 percent) acknowledged that concerned authorities don't grant them work within the stipulated time sometimes they delay, and remaining (3 percent) said that they don't get work at all. It has been observed in the study that tribal (Gujjars) feel a kind of discrimination from the mainstream society. Government has launched various schemes for the welfare of all deprived communities irrespective of their caste, class, region and religion but still tribal feel a kind of discrimination in granting MGNREGA work.

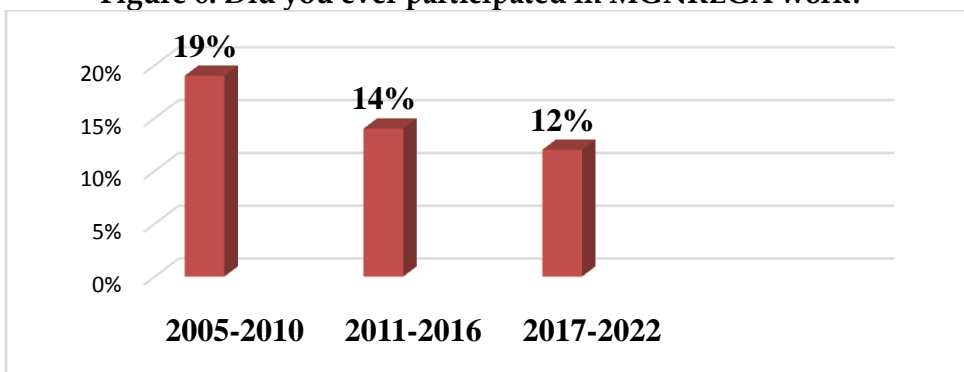
**Figure 5: MGNREGA decrease discrimination by providing equal work & equal Wages for both male and female**



Source: Field work

The above figure reveals that (70 percent) admitted that they still face discrimination in work and remaining (30 percent) said that they don't feel any discrimination. It has been observed in the field study that MGNREGA scheme work is still granted to male members and women do not allowed to work under these schemes by their husband or other relatives due to conservative approach of family members towards women. If the work is granted they don't get proper wages from the concern authorities, discrimination prevails, women get very less opportunity to work under such schemes.

**Figure 6: Did you ever participated in MGNREGA work?**



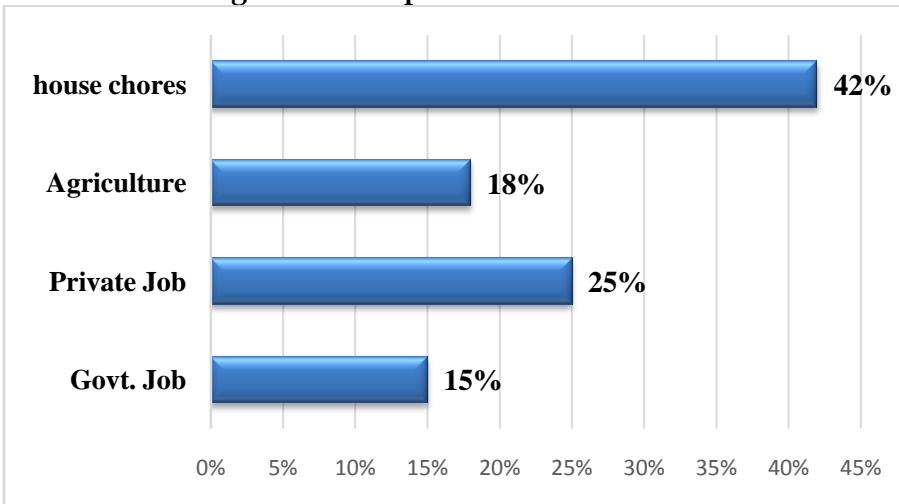
Source: Field study

The above figure depicts that out of 100 respondents, (45 percent) admitted that they participated in Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) work and remaining (55 percent) said that they don't participate. It has been observed in the field study that most of the tribal (Gujjars) ignored and don't get opportunity to work under such government schemes. Out of 45 percent, (19 percent) tribal (Gujjars) get work in 2005-2006, (14 percent) in 2011-2016 and only (12 percent) get work in 2017-2022. The study reveals that very less work has been granted in the year 2017-2022. No doubt, in the previous year covid-19 and lockdown has drastic impact on our economy and social life as well. But government should initiate policies for tribal people in these harsh situations so that they would survive.

### Occupation of the respondents

Occupation refers a person's usual or principal work or business, especially as a means of earning a living; vocation or any activity in which a person is engaged an occupation is a type of work people do such as carpentry, nursing, agriculture and so on. Kashmir is an industrially backward region with few or negligible numbers of industrial units. The majority of tribal, therefore, depend on either government jobs, agricultural land or private jobs for their livelihood. The occupations of the selected respondents are given below:

**Figure. 7: Occupation of the beneficiaries**



Source: Field work, 2022

The above figure depicts that out of 100 respondents, (42 percent) are doing house chores, (25 percent) are doing Private Job, (18 percent) are

associated with agricultural activities, and remaining (15 percent) are doing government job. It has been observed in the field study that majority of the respondents are unemployed due to lack of education, poverty, conservative approach of their parents towards education, social stigma, lack of educational facilities or poor educational facilities, lack of hostel facilities and other day to day obstacles and challenges in the life push them backward.

### **Conclusion and Suggestions**

After analyzing the responses of the beneficiaries it has been found that the present situation of Scheduled Tribe (Gujjars) in Kashmir is grim and distressing. It was found that Scheduled Tribes in Kashmir are still lagging far behind in terms of education, economic status and other livelihood benefits provided by the Government as compared to the general population of the state. The study also reveals that the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Tribes inhibiting in Jammu and Kashmir are unpleasant and critical. Although, both Central and State Government has launched various Scheme for the upliftment of tribal's in Kashmir but the benefits of these Schemes do not reach at the ground level to the right person. The reasons are many but the major reasons are illiteracy, corruption, favoritism, lack of information about various government schemes and policies, poverty, etc. Another important observation made during the course of study was that the share of Scheduled Tribe people in the total employment generated under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Generation Programmed (MGNREGA) Scheme has seen a sharp fall over last few years. Although, MGNREGA scheme is considered to be an important Scheme to eradicate poverty but in case of Scheduled Tribes, it has turned out to be unsatisfactory. In case of other Social Groups the effectiveness of these Schemes in bringing changes in rural area specifically the deprived groups is still up to the standard. Awareness and Mobilization Programmes can play a pivotal role in upliftment of Scheduled Tribes in Jammu and Kashmir. There are other so many schemes about which the tribal people don't have any awareness. Effort to generate awareness about various Government Schemes is required. Also, a change in behaviour and attitude towards Scheduled Tribes by other Social Groups, role of community leaders and media can bring colossal upliftment. Little has been achieved; a lot is yet to be achieved in the area of tribal development. The efforts of both Government and Civil Society are required to enhance their cultural, economic and educational status. If economic, educational and health aspects are given adequate attention, then these factors may contribute to an increase in the decision-making

abilities of the tribal women. The benefits of the Schemes have merely reached to the rightful beneficiaries. The Schemes launched seems to be only on papers as their implementation and the expected results are far away. The government, NGOs, Local Media and Local Leaders can jointly make a difference by creating awareness among Scheduled Tribes about their rights and then getting familiar with their ground realities, needs and demands so as inclusion in mainstream society can be achieved through mutual cooperation and assistance. It is found in the survey that most of the tribal (Gujjars) women as well as men are not well aware about the Government Schemes. Unemployment rate is increasing day by day due to lack of education, poor or no infrastructure available for Gujjars, lack of scholarships granted by the state government for education to poor tribal, lack of transparency in government jobs, influence and favoritism push tribal community in darkness. The study reveals that very less work has been granted in the year 2020-2021. It is very unfortunate that majority of the respondents admitted that they have not availed any benefit from Government Schemes in the year 2022. No doubt, in the previous year Covid-19 and lockdown has drastic impact on our economy, but the Scheduled Tribes have been impacted very badly. The Government should initiate Policies for Tribal people so that the life and their survival become easier.

The recommendations and policy measures necessary to be taken for the overall development of Tribal (Gujjars) are discussed respectively as under:

- It is suggested that government should initiate campaign process in far-flung areas to make aware tribal (Gujjars) about government schemes which are meant for their welfare.
- It is suggested that government must take strict legal action against corrupt officials and bring transparency at the ground level so that tribal can take full advantage of government schemes.
- It is suggested that “forced schools” should be opened to educate the nomadic children by removal of school fees, free textbooks and school uniforms, construction of schools closer to communities to lower transport costs, enhancement of admission quota in schools, colleges and professional institutions for tribal students.
- It is found in the study that tribal (Gujjars) faces discrimination, social inequality, consider inferior in the mainstream society. It is, therefore, suggested that the government should promote special care of the educational and economic interests of scheduled tribes

(Gujjars) and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

- There should be timely payment of wages, so that the labourers can fulfil their daily based needs.
- It is found in the study that the wages under MGNREGA scheme given to beneficiaries are not sufficient. It is therefore, suggested that payment of wages should be according to kind of works.
- It has been found in the survey that tribal (Gujjars) and people in general don't get MGNREGA scheme work on time due to lack of transparency, favoritism and sometimes it is not nearest to home. It is suggested that additional wages should be given for long distance work sites, payment of wages should be given in cash and there should be timely allotment of work.

### References

- Ahmad, Israr.et.al (2015). Socio-Economic and Educational Status of Tribal (Gujjar and Bakerwal) of Jammu and Kashmir. An over view, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Studies*. Vol. 2 (2).
- Din, Azahar. (2015). Socio-Economic Conditions of Gujjar and Bakerwal Tribes of Kashmir. *International Journal of Recent Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, Vol. 2 (1).
- Geelani, A. Z. S. (2016). Educationally Backward Tribes of Jammu and Kashmir: A Case Study of District Shopian. *The Communications*. Vol. 24 (1).
- Husain, A. (2020). Status of Dard Tribe in Kargil District: A Sociological Study. *Journal of Kashmir Society*. Vol. 10 (1).
- Khan, A. D & Khan, S. (2020). Health Status of Tribal Women in Jammu and Kashmir. *International Journal of Research Culture Society*. Vol. 4 (1).
- Razaqi, M. (2015). A Study of School Achievement among the Gujjar and Bakerwal Tribes of Jammu and Kashmir. *Bangladesh -e- Journal of Sociology*, Vol.12 (2).
- Shahabaz. (2015). Participation of Gujjar and Bakerwals in State Politics: Problems and Prospects. *Journal of Business Management and Social Science Research*. Vol.4 (3).
- Sofi, U. J. (2014). Educational status of tribal's of Jammu and Kashmir: A case of Gujjar and Bakerwals. *International Journal of Social Science* Vol. 3 (3).
- Tufail, M. (2014). An over view of the Economic Characteristics of the Gujjar and Bakerwals: A Case Study of Jammu and Kashmir.

*International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Invention*. Vol.3 (6).

- Warikoo, K. (2000). Tribal Gujjars of Jammu and Kashmir" *Journal of Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation*. Vol.4 (5).

**COVID-19 pandemic and the response of public schools: An empirical study of the primary schools of Shopian district of Jammu and Kashmir**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir**  
12(1) 211 - 231  
ISSN: 2249-667X  
© 2022 Author(s)  
<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/b388f328-00ed-4052-b821-6299b2b82f11.pdf>

**Tafaz-Ul-Hussain Ganaie\***

**Abstract**

*This study aims at exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the educational process in government primary schools of Shopian district. Face to face interviews were conducted with teachers of 17 schools spread across 14 villages. The findings of the study revealed that online classes were unsuccessful in government schools due to lack of electronic devices, weak network coverage. Loss of learning among the students due to the closure of schools was found to be the major impact of COVID-19 lockdown. The performance of students in examinations was greatly reduced.*

**Keywords**

Government schools, Learning Management System, examinations, online classes

**Introduction**

The harmonious and comprehensive development of the individual is the basic aim of the school. The purpose of the primary education is to enable pupils to acquire the fundamental knowledge and skills to develop the basic cultural competence. It has been defined as, “an initial education (formal and non-formal) extending in principle from around the age of 3 to at least 12” (UNESCO, 1996). Target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, Article 26 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 21-A of the Indian Constitution are, directly and indirectly, concerned with the provision for primary education. UNESCO and UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2012, defines primary education as that, “typically designed to provide students with fundamental skills as reading, writing and mathematics ( i.e. literary and numeracy) and

---

\* Postgraduate Student, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K (Batch 2019; Enrollment No. 19080118002)  
Email: [thg.socio.ku@gmail.com](mailto:thg.socio.ku@gmail.com)

establish a solid foundation for learning and understanding core areas of knowledge, personal and social development in preparation for lower secondary education, it focuses on learning at a basic level of complexity with little, if any, specialization". The main objective of the primary education is to bring awareness of among the children opens avenues of opportunities along with the self-development and reduces intergenerational poverty. It is the first step in making of welfare and society. It is an out-and-out pre-requisite for the continuous development. It has been found that, a large proportion of children in primary schools are not acquiring fundamental skills. Without foundational learning, students often fail to thrive later in school or when they join the work force (World Bank, 2021). This learning crisis undermines sustainable growth and poverty reduction. In order to address this learning crisis, World Bank and UNESCO Institute for Statistics, introduced the concept of LEARNING POVERTY defined as, "being unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10 years". Even before the COVID-19 pandemic more than half(53 per cent) of the 10 year children in low and middle income countries either had failed to learn to read with comprehension or were out of the school entirely. At its peak, the pandemic kept nearly 1.6 billion students out of school (World Bank, 2020a). The impact of this school closure, World Bank opines, is that "students currently in school stand to lose \$10 trillion in labour earnings over their working lives. That is almost one-tenth of the current global GDP" (World Bank, 2020b). Along with that the learning poverty could increase by 10 per centage points, from 53 per cent to 63 per cent, which will push an additional 72 million primary school age children into the learning poverty, taking the total number of such children to 454 million (See Figure 2). In South Asia, the pre-pandemic rate of learning poverty was already 63 per cent, thus the consequences will be even more severe in this part of the world. The estimated economic loss for South Asia due to school closure is projected between \$622 billion to \$ 880 billion in its best and worst case scenario (LANCET COVID-19 COMMISSION, April 2021). In another report (World Bank, 2020c), World Bank mentions that "COVID-19 could result in the loss of between 0.3 and 0.9 years of schooling adjusted for quality, bringing down the effective years of basic schooling that students achieve during their lifetime from 7.9 years to between 7.0 and 7.6 years, close to 7 million students could drop due to the income shock of the pandemic alone".

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of literature review is to present and to analyze, in a critical manner, that part of the published literature which is relevant to our



research topic and which acts as the basis for a fuller understanding of the context in which we are conducting our research; thus helping the reader to a more rounded appreciation of what we have completed. Some of the literature pertaining to the different facets of my research is discussed below:

**Reopening Schools After COVID-19 Closures- The LANCET COVID-19**

**COMMISSION INDIA TASK FORCE (APRIL 2021):** Talking about the widening learning inequalities, the report mentions that, “at the institutional level, around 1.2 million government and 400,000 private budget schools are not equipped, monetarily and infrastructure-wise, to provide technology-based learning to children. Pratham’s Annual State of Education Report (ASER) indicated that a mere 11 per cent of students enrolled in private and government schools countrywide logged into online classes and 21.5 per cent accessed oneway video recorded classes.” The same report while talking about the learning losses the report mentions, “Children, especially the younger ones, have forgotten what they had learnt earlier and are not ready in terms of their foundational skills to tackle the challenges of a grade based curriculum and perform in the classroom.” The report also mentions that, “In a country like India, with already low learning levels, these losses can be devastating, and can take a long time to reverse, especially in the early years of schooling. Even more worryingly, if immediate steps are not taken to ensure a “remedial” period where children can catch-up on the learning that has been lost, they may continue to falter and fall behind as the school year resumes. This faltering will be more pronounced among those who come from already disadvantaged backgrounds, thus further accentuating existing inequalities.” According to the report, “UNESCO has listed “interrupted learning” among the top adverse consequences of COVID-19 school closures worldwide. It estimates that COVID- 19 led school closures caused worldwide learning losses estimated at two thirds of an academic year on average.”

**Status Report- Government and Private Schools During COVID-19:**

**Findings of Rapid Surveys by OXFAM INDIA (SEPTEMBER 2020):** In September 2020, a survey was conducted by OXFAM INDIA -with an intention of understanding the impact of the pandemic on access of education, modes of education delivery and access to entitlements in both government and private schools. This survey was conducted across 5 states: Bihar, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand. While talking about the government schools, the survey report mentions that, “The ongoing closure of schools has affected 27 crore children in India. In government schools, however the impact of the pandemic is not restricted

to education delivery alone. In addition to being a site of learning, a government school also provides entitlements such as Mid-Day Meals (MDM), textbooks and other learning materials. Various governments have released orders regarding the continuation of MDM even during the lockdown and there have been efforts to continue delivery of education through various means, such as cable TV and the internet."

This shows that the students in government schools are dependent upon their schools not just for their education, but also the resources necessary for education. Apart from that the Mid-Day Meals scheme helps in fulfilling a significant proportion of children's nutritional needs.

Talking about the status of MDM delivery in government schools during the COVID-19 lockdown, the survey mentions that, "35 per cent children did not receive their mid-day meals. Of the remaining 65 per cent, only 8 per cent received cooked meals while 53 per cent received dry rations and 4 per cent received money (DBT) in lieu of the MDM." The report further mentions that, "115 million children are on the verge of malnourishment due to the interruption of mid-day meals, of which children from Dalit and Adivasi communities are most at risk, given their dependence on MDM for nutrition." These numbers bring to surface the impact that COVID-19 lockdown has had on just the educational process, but also on the physical well-being of the children studying in government schools.

As far as delivery of education during the lockdown is concerned, the report mentions that, "over 80 per cent parents reported that education is not being delivered during the lockdown; in Bihar, this figure was 100 per cent ... With education being delivered predominantly online, 85 per cent rural children will be excluded from its purview since only 15 per cent rural households have access to the internet - this figure is even lower for marginalized social groups such as Dalits, Adivasis and Muslims." Keeping in view these limitations the survey mentions the need for, "more inclusive, non-digital alternatives of education, particularly in districts/regions with low-infection rates. For instance, some teachers, of their own volition have begun Mohalla classes where they teach 4-5 students (while maintaining physical distancing) for a few hours in an open space in the village, reaching out to all students at least twice a week." As mentioned earlier, students in government schools are dependent on schools for the resources of education like books, the survey report found that, "over 80 per cent children have not received textbooks for the next academic year."

**Loss of learning during the Pandemic- AzemPremji University (February 2021):** "This study was conducted with 16067 children in 1137 public schools and covered 44 districts across 5 states—Chattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand." In the

'Executive Summary' of this field study, the report mentions that, "School closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to complete disconnect from education for the vast majority of children or inadequate alternatives like community-based classes or poor alternatives in the form of online education, including mobile phone-based learning." Talking about the repercussions of school closure on the future of children, the report opines that, "this overall loss of learning - loss (regression or forgetting) of what children had learnt in the previous class as well as what they did not get an opportunity to learn in the present class - is going to lead to a cumulative loss over the years, impacting not only the academic performance of children in their school years but also their adult lives." According to the report, it is not just the lack of curricular learning by children that is the only concern, but "Equally alarming is the widespread phenomenon of 'forgetting' by students of learning from the previous class - this is regression in their curricular learning. This includes losing foundational abilities such as reading with understanding and performing addition and multiplication, which they had learnt earlier and become proficient in, and which are the basis of further learning. These foundational abilities are such that their absence will impact not only learning of more complex abilities but also conceptual understanding across subjects." Perhaps the most important finding of this field report is that "92 per cent of the primary school students have lost at least one language ability from the previous year whereas 82 per cent of the children on an average have lost at least one specific mathematical ability from the previous ability."

**Covid-19: The Indian children who have forgotten how to read and write- BBC NEWS (28 August 2021):** The above news report, while talking about the divide between government and private schools mentions that, "Affluent private schools and their students switched to online classes seamlessly, but government-run schools have struggled. And their students - often with no laptops or smartphones and patchy access to the internet - have fallen behind." While talking about the 'No Stagnation Policy' of the government, the report mentions that, "It's compulsory under India's education laws for schools to keep passing enrolled children until class five. The aim was to relieve pressure on children while providing a supportive learning environment. Schools have followed the rule this year despite the disruption in learning for so many students." The report also mentions that since students are promoted to next class, irrespective of their performance in examination, some students drop-out of the school because "because you have been promoted to the next class, and you are actually below that."

**Locked Out: Emergency report on School Education, The SCHOOL (School Children's Online and Offline Learning)** survey took place in August 2021 in 15 states and UTs: Assam, Bihar, Chandigarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. The survey focused on relatively deprived hamlets and bastis, where children generally attend government schools. According to the report, "in rural areas, only 28 per cent of children were studying regularly at the time of the survey, and 37 per cent were not studying at all. The results of a simple reading test are particularly alarming: nearly half of all children in the sample were unable to read more than a few words" While focusing on the offline classes, report says that, "Among "offline children" (those who were not studying online at the time of the survey), there is little evidence of regular studying. A large majority are either not studying at all, or just studying on their own at home from time to time. In rural areas, nearly half of the offline children were not studying at all at the time of the survey". The survey gave the children a simple text to read, and it was observed that the children could read beyond few words.

Explaining this the survey mentions that, "the dismal results of the reading test reflect the poor quality of schooling prior to the lockdown. In addition to that, however, many children have forgotten much of whatever little they had learnt earlier."

Despite these dismal observations, the survey mentions that students are getting promoted to next without making any substantial progress in their previous class. "In spite of the mass decline of reading and writing abilities, children are being promoted to higher classes – two grades above their pre-lockout level. In the higher classes, textbooks are way out of gear with their current learning levels. In some states, for instance, children currently enrolled in Grade 2, who have never been to school, are now expected to read English textbooks!"

Going through the literature, it has been found that the impact of COVID-19 on children has not been directly on their health, as it has affected other age groups, but rather its impact has been on the different aspects of their social life. The surveys, reports and articles helped in understanding the various aspects that needed to be covered, of our study and in developing major themes. Since the phenomenon of COVID-19 is of recent origin, not much literature was found on its impact on the education of children in this part (Kashmir) of the world. The literature reviewed in this section paves the way to write about the topic chosen for this research.

**Measures taken to curb the transmission of corona virus:**

Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) have emerged as a first line of protection and mitigation in the face of the SARS-CoV-2 infection pandemic (Kantor and Kantor, 2020). Nonpharmaceutical Interventions (NPIs) are actions, apart from getting vaccinated and taking medicine, that people and communities can take to help slow the spread of illnesses like pandemic influenza (flu). NPIs are also known as community mitigation strategies (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention). During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic some commonly employed NPIs included social distancing, lockdown, travel ban (within and outside the country), closing public places and markets, and closing of educational institutions worldwide. It was in this regard that India underwent its first lockdown (designated as Lockdown 1.0) on March 24, 2020 (New York Times, 2020). Educational institutions, too, were closed for offline classes, as early as March 07, 2020 (Garda, 2020). In Jammu and Kashmir, educational institutions were closed on March 11, 2020 and as of Aug 09, 2021 their status remains as closed (See Figure 3).

#### **Educational scenario in India:**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the education sector in India was suffering from what has been called as “crisis in learning”. Although the objectives of Universal Access, Enrollment and Retention in elementary education were largely achieved, “the children were lagging even in basic grade-appropriate reading and arithmetic skills (Kalra & Jolad, 2021). ASER (Rural) 2020 Wave-I survey found that mere 18.3 per cent of the children in rural areas, enrolled in government schools, have accessed video recordings and 8.1 per cent have attended live classes. Further the NSS 2017-2018 showed that only 24 per cent of the households have access to the internet and the figure drops to a far lower 15 per cent for the rural areas (See Figure 5). In Jammu and Kashmir, the figure stands at 35.8 per cent and 28.57 per cent respectively.

#### **Educational scenario in Jammu and Kashmir:**

When we talk about the educational scenario in Jammu and Kashmir, “the situation is peculiar because everywhere else the populace suffered a single blow of COVID-19 but the effects of lockdown by State after 5th August 2019 was unprecedented. The schools remained shut and lifeless for months to come”(Bhat,2020), implying that while for students elsewhere this is only the second year of school closure, for the students of Kashmir valley this is the third year running when their educational process has been disrupted. While the educational process moved online all over the world due to COVID-19 pandemic, the erratic and slow

internet in the valley only added to miseries of the students following the snapping of internet in the wake of Aug 05, 2019 decision of Article 370 abrogation. On January 24, 2020, five months after being snapped 2G internet was restored in the valley (Indian Express, 2020) and after 17 months, on Feb 06, 2021 4G internet was restored (Hindustan Times, 2021). Thus, the students of the valley had to attend their online classes over 2G internet for nearly a year. Various initiatives were taken by administration for the education of students during the COVID-19 lockdown. On March 19, 2020 the Directorate of School Education Kashmir (DSEK) decided to conduct classes for students over television. AawoPadhe in-portal that is filled with E-content and video-based classes for children to continue studying during the lockdown- was also launched. The center is also equipped with a free Child-Line for children in need of aid and assistance (Borgen Project, 2020). On May 9, 2021 DSEK also launched the Learning Management System (LMS)- an online portal for students and teachers to access study material and video lectures and to mark their attendance. However as acknowledged by Union Minister of Education DHARMENDRA PRADHAN on Aug 02, 2021 in the parliament, lack of digital devices has been the major hindrance during the conduct of classes in Jammu and Kashmir with 70 per cent of students lacking the devices. DSEK also started open air "Community classes" for the students during 2020, which were still at the time of this study. This research, therefore, is an attempt to understand and highlight the impact of COVID-19 on the government primary schools of Shopian district. In doing so, the results of this study can provide insights into the various remedial measures that can be taken to make up for the loss that students have suffered due to COVID-19. This study also aims at evaluating the success of various initiatives taken by the DSEK and need of, if any, improvement in those initiatives.

### **Aims and Objectives**

The research is aimed at addressing the practical problem. The main aims and objectives of this research are:

- To explore the nature of educational process during COVID-19 lockdown.
- To explore various hindrances faced by teachers and students during the conduct of classes in COVID-19 lockdown.
- To explore the deliverance of various incentives, provided by government to the children, during COVID-19 lockdown.
- To explore the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on the attitude, behavior and performance of the children.

- To explore the impact of the initiative(s) taken by government for the conductance of classes during COVID-19 lockdown.

## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research approach was used in this study to understand the impact of COVID-19 on the educational process in government schools. Qualitative research was deemed necessary so as to get a deeper understanding of the topic. Apart from exploring the nature of educational process during COVID-19 lockdown, the research was also aimed at exploring various hindrances that were faced by government schools while conducting classes in the COVID-19 lockdown. The research is partially explanatory in nature as it tries to address the reasons for the failure of conducting online classes in government schools.

**Universe:** This research is aimed at studying the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown on the educational process of primary school children of Shopian district. This research covers the 17 government schools of rural areas of Shopian district spread across 14 villages. The villages were chosen as per the convenience. The names of all the schools have been mentioned in separate table. The research was conducted across 18 primary schools of Shopian district.

**Sampling:** The sampling process was on non-probability type. The sample was chosen on the basis of convenience of the researcher. Purposive and convenience sampling methods were employed during the course of sampling process. The two methods were employed as the universe of research was predetermined.

**Tools and techniques of data collection:** Interview schedules and semi-structured interviews were the main tools of data collection. Purposive sampling was used. The data was collected between 29th July to 13th August 2021, across 16 villages of Shopian.

A sample of 33 teachers was used in the research, which included 28 male and 5 female teachers. After finalizing the questions, the data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Individual interviews and group interviews were conducted with teachers. A total of 11 group interviews and 6 individual interviews were conducted with teachers. All the interviews were conducted in face-to-face manner in the respective schools of the participants, while following all the necessary COVID-19 SOPs. Each interview lasted for approximately 3540 minutes. Interviews were conducted in mixture of Kashmiri, Urdu and English languages.

Telephonic interviews were not prioritized as it is not possible to observe the attitude of the participants. Face-to-face interviews in schools were prioritized to observe: a) the attitude and behavior of both teachers and students as they were teaching and being taught respectively b) the facilities available to students and teachers in their schools. A total number of 18 questions were asked during the interview. All questions were open-ended, so as to have a deeper understanding of the research topic. Questions were not asked in any specific order, but randomly.

The group interviews have been numbered alphabetically (A- K), while as individual interviews have been numbered numerically (1-6). Consent was received from all the participants before interview. The participants were made aware of the aims and objectives of the research prior to interview. All the interviews have been recorded with prior consent of the participants. To maintain the privacy and secrecy of the participants, every participant has been assigned a number or a code. Names (where ever) used are fictional names and not the real ones. At the end of interview each participant was thanked for his/her valuable time and cooperation.

**Data Analysis:** The data collected from interview schedules was given a proper shape and then thoroughly analyzed to understand the know-how about it and to develop the main themes of the research. The questions were arranged according to the information they gave. Main subtypes of questions were:

- a) Questions that pertained to the educational process during the COVID-19 lockdown.
- b) Questions pertaining to the incentives given by government (like free books, free uniform and MDM).
- c) Questions pertaining to the initiatives taken by government in this lockdown.
- d) Questions regarding the attitude and behavior of students in COVID-19 lockdown.
- e) Questions regarding the examination process and performance of students.

At the end of each interview suggestions were sought from the participants regarding future of online education in government schools.

Group interviews have been assigned alphabetical codes (A-K) and response has been as a collective answer of all the participants in the group, while as individual interviews have been assigned numerical codes(1-6). As the data collected was qualitative in nature, therefore it was manually analyzed, and themes were developed accordingly.



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Educational Process during COVID-19 lockdown:

Globally COVID-19 has affected more than 1.5 billion children and youth in 188 countries (UN, 2020). Although children under 18 years formed about 8.5 per cent of the reported cases, with relatively few deaths compared to other age groups (WHO, 2020), schools were closed as a measure to curb the transmission rate of COVID-19. Apart from other consequences, COVID-19 has deep ramifications on the education sector. As already mentioned schools were closed in Jammu and Kashmir in March 2020.

As directed by the government, online classes were started in government schools during the initial period of COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. However, they were scrapped by the schools within a short span of time due to various reasons. "During initial days, we started online classes for the children. However only >10 per cent students used to attend those classes. We scrapped the online classes within 2 months and then we looked for alternate method of teaching" (Group D).

"We tried everything during first month of COVID-19 lockdown- online classes, WhatsApp groups, we even started our own YouTube channels- all our efforts proved to be futile as the student participation was >5 per cent. These children come from poor families, who cannot afford smartphones or other gadgets, so we scrapped the online classes within 1 month". (R4)

It was observed that majority of parents of the students were either engaged in farming or were working as daily wage labourers in unorganized sector. The primary reason their children were enrolled in government schools was that they could not afford the fees of private schools, and quite understandably when there arose the need of buying electronic gadgets for the classes of their children they could not afford them, and its impact was visible on the conduct of online classes. "Majority of the parents or the person who possesses the smart-phone here are daily wage labourers, and when they go to work they took the phone with themselves, then there was no means to connect to the students. Only 5-10 per cent of the students used to connect to classes, we had to scrap the online classes within 2 months" (Group I). The teachers also tried other means of connecting to the students,

"initially we started classes on phone calls wherein students would join through conference calls. But only 5-10 students would join the classes, as majority of our students belong to the Scheduled Tribe community. We then distributed the study material amongst the students. We continued the educational process in this manner till July 2020" (Group G).

Overall it was found that online classes were a failure in government schools especially for primary schools due to variety of reasons which include: very weak mobile network coverage (Group H): students not paying enough attention (R6): lack of mobile devices(R2): inability of parents/children to operate the mobile phone(R5): poor economic conditions of families(Group D). These were the main hindrances that more or less all participants mentioned, which contributed to the failure of online classes in government schools.

Since there were no clear-cut guidelines from the DSEK regarding alternative to online classes, till July 2020, many schools had started the 'community classes' for the students on their own, even before formal orders were issued by DSEK.

"We started the community classes right from March 2020 itself. During initial period only 15-20 per cent of the total students used to attend these classes. We were compelled to go for these classes, because of the weak network coverage in our area and very small percentage of students possessing the electronic gadgets" (Group G).

The duration of the community classes varied between 1-3 hrs. "When we first started the community classes, their duration was 1-2 hours. After formal order was issued we increased that duration to 3 hours" (R3). The percentage of students attending the community classes is significantly high, with more than 80 per cent students attending these classes in every school.

"Barring some ST students-who have not attended any class during these 2 years- all our students have joined the community classes" (Group J).

During the research it was found that a significant number of ST students have not attended the classes (either online or community classes) during these two years, as they accompany their parents in rearing the cattle in grazing meadows. "What these students do, they visit schools either to receive MDM and other incentives or when it is examination, they have never attended the classes during these two years" (Group G).

It was observed that while community classes have provided a better alternative to students as well as teachers. However the shortening of the class duration in community classes has affected both the quality and quantity of the education given in the government schools. The impact of this shortened duration of classes on the behaviour and performance of students has been separately discussed.

### **Learning Management System (LMS) – a government initiative**

Launched in May 2021, LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (LMS) is a web portal under which, ' the students have been able to access the study materials online and watching the video lectures on the portal after

logging into the system (Kashmir Horizon). Apart from that the portal 'helps in monitoring the online classes and keeping track of the attendance of teachers and students and the extent of daily learning through online classes'(JK NEWS SERVICE). The teaching-learning process on LMS is through the medium of assignments, PPTs, chats, texts and videos and content uploading by the teachers, with the students of their school. The student can access the material and watch the video on the portal after logging in into the system (JK NEWS SERVICE).

As already mentioned, lack of electronic gadgets has been the main hindrance in conducting online classes in government schools. It was found that LMS has not served any practical purposes to the teachers and/or students in any way. " Firstly, majority of our students come from poor families, who cannot afford to buy the gadget for his/her child. Even if the family does possess the electronic gadget, they are not able to operate the device and login into the portal.

Besides, primary school children, of government schools, are given least preference when it comes to use of mobile phones for classes"(P4) .

The majority of villages covered under this research are far flung areas; as such erratic network connection was another hindrance in accessing the portal.

"In our area, there is severe network problem, even we teachers travel 2-3kms outside our village to access the portal, mark our attendance and upload content for students. Everyday it takes us no less than 2 hours to access the portal, majority of times we return without marking our attendance or accessing the portal. Till now, not a single student from our school has accessed the portal".( Group H).

Similar reservations were expressed by Group F, " leave aside students, even we face difficulties in accessing the portal, sometimes we access the portal at 3-4 am just to mark our attendance, leave aside uploading the content".

It is found that although all students have been enrolled on the portal and assigned 'usernames', no one has ever accessed the portal either due to the non-functionality of the portal, or lack of devices. "I personally went to homes of the students and those (very few) who possessed the smart-phone, we created the accounts for students, but no student has ever logged into the portal". (R1)

The fact that LMS portal remains non-functional for the most parts of the day due to technical glitches, has also contributed to its failure in serving its purpose. " Totally useless! It takes more than 2 hours to upload the content and mark your attendance. Once in a week are we able to upload the same. Due to these technical issues, on the part of portal, we are

issued show-cause notices by the Zone office, for failing to mark attendance and upload content, although it is not our fault.”(Group G)

During the interview with Group B, that lasted around 50 minutes, a teacher tried to upload his content on the portal, but couldn't do so after repeated attempts.

“This happens everyday, this portal should be updated and these technical snags should be removed, only then can it prove to be fruitful for the students as well as teachers”.

Similar concerns have been shown by teachers from other parts of the valley as the 'initiative has turned topsy-turvy as the teachers are unable to use the new online application for holding online classes ...and the introduction of LMS has left teachers confused (Greater Kashmir).

Data was obtained from ZEO OFFICE VEHIL SHOPIAN on two specific days of August 2021 regarding the attendance of teachers, from the data following observations were made:

The total number of teachers is 86 across the 17 schools covered. On 04/August/2021, out of 86 teachers, only 12 were marked to have attended the classes on LMS portal and number of teachers to have attended community classes was 37. Similarly, On 09/ August/2021, out of 86 teachers only 16 were marked to have attended classes through LMS and on the same day 56 teachers were marked to have attended the community classes. So on 04/ Aug, a total of 18.60 per cent teachers could access and upload the content on LMS portal and on 09/Aug, only 13.95 per cent teachers were able to access the portal.

If we compare the number of teachers who attended the community classes and were then able to access the LMS portal (assuming that no absent teacher was able to access the portal) then, on 04/August only 28.57 per cent of the teachers were able to access the LMS portal after attending community classes, while on 09/Aug, the same could be done by only 32.43 per cent (see Table) Table 3. per centage of Classes attended, by teachers, via LMS and Community Classes.

### **Status of Mid-day Meals delivery and other incentives**

While the research found that both the quantity and quality of the teaching-learning process has been heavily affected, the delivery of Mid-day meals and other incentives has not been affected at all. As against the pre-COVID-19 lockdown routine of giving cooked food to the students, the institutions gave dry-ration to students. Also students were given money(DBT) in the lieu of the MDM. However, the mode of delivery of MDM to the students varied: in 59 per cent of the institutions, the teachers themselves had to deliver the ration to the students i.e. door-to-

door supply, while as in the rest of 7 institutions the students themselves visited the school to take the MDM supply.

**Table 1. Status Delivery of MDM during COVID-19 lockdown**

How was mid-day meal supplied	Percentage of the respondents
Door-to-door supply by teachers	59
Students themselves took the supply from school	41
Total	100

Source: Field Work

Other incentives like free books and uniform have also been delivered to students in similar pattern as that of MDM.

### **Changes in attitude and behaviour of children:**

The shortening of school duration from 6 hours in pre-COVID-19 period to mere 2-3 hours due to COVID-19 lockdown has negatively affected the behaviour of children. During the research, it was observed that attitude and behaviour of children has deteriorated, both in school and at home.

Voicing her concerns, Miss Shameema, a part of Group Dsaid,

“Children have become non-confirmists, they hardly comply with our orders. They hardly complete their homework that is assigned to them”.

The participants were of the opinion that since class duration has been squeezed to 2-3 hours, they had to scrap all extra-curricular activities like morning assembly, checking health and hygiene of children, engaging them in group works, engaging them in sports etc. It influence has been that it has made teachers just like “shopkeepers, who have only one job-distributing education to students”(R4). Similar opinion was put forward by R6,

“COVID-19 lockdown has massively changed the behaviour of students. Earlier (pre-COVID-19 period) educational process involved not just curriculum education, but children were taught discipline, made aware about hygiene, they were taught morality and social manners, but now their study time in school has been reduced to just 2 hours, which is not sufficient even for teaching, as such we do not get enough time to teach them extra-curricular knowledge, could not harness their sociability, could not give them proper moral education”.

All participants unequivocally said that children have become unhygienic. “Since children do not attend the morning assembly, they come and straightaway attend the classes, they don not wear the uniform, majority of times they attend the classes wearing unclean clothes”(R1).

During the research it was observed that in only 3 out the 17 schools the students were wearing uniform.

During the research it was found that shortened school duration has impact on the daily behaviour of students. The students have become impatient, they want to spent least time in schools. Manzoor Ahmed, a part of Group C said,

“Children have become impatient, and they are always in hurry. They study all subjects from a single teacher, so that they can finish early and leave. They do not want to spend time in school”.

Similar opinion was held by R4, “Students have become aggressive, impatient, alienated due to less time spent in schools. All-round development of students has been affected”.

Apart from becoming impatient, it was found that children have become aggressive, illmannered, alienated (from school, from friends and from family).

Zahoor Ahmed, part of Group F said,

“Social control and discipline is lacking in students. Children have become intolerant. This has happened due to the shortened school duration”.

During the interviews, the researcher constantly observed that while teachers were being interviewed, the students behaved in uncivilized manner and it was difficult for the teachers to control the class during interview.

This change in behaviour has had a direct impact on the performance of students which will be discussed in next section.

### **Examination and performance of students:**

Shortened school duration, poor economic background, illiterate families, loss of learning motivation, change in behaviour- all these factors have resulted in poor performance of students in examination during COVID-19 lockdown.

During the research, it was found that while teaching-learning has been affected by COVID-19 lockdown, examinations were conducted in uninterrupted manner in offline format and that all students took the examination. As far as midterm examinations were concerned, they were either conducted verbally (viva voce) or students were given assignments. Mohammad Ramzan, headmaster and part of Group F said, “For mid-term examinations, we gave assignments to the children, however the response rate was very low. About 30 per cent students completed the assignments”.

It was observed that while all the students had not attended the classes, examination was given by all. While exploring it was observed that “NO

STAGNATION POLICY" of government has played an important role. According to this policy, no student upto 8th standard should be failed in the examination. While giving details about the examination process in his school Manzoor Ahmed, Headmaster and part of GROUP G said,

" While the percentage of students, who attended the classes, was 60-70 per cent, all students took the examination. The children are aware that all they had to do is sit in examination, rest the NO STAGNATION POLICY will take care itself. Due to this policy we had to promote them to next class, irrespective of their performance or attendance".

Because students had not learned anything substantial, teachers said they were compelled to reduce the quality of question papers.

"We conducted namesake examination, we greatly reduced the quality of papers, but even then students performed badly in their examinations"(R5).

Expressing his displeasure for No Stagnation Policy, R3 said,

"This policy should be re-examined, students know that there answers scripts will not be assessed thoroughly, so they take these examinations lightly. Students will be motivated to study if they know that there papers will be thoroughly accessed".

During research, the researcher met Mohammad Altaf Famda- a Grade 4th student from Tangmarg area of Kulgam. During interaction it was found that Altaf has been working as maidservant in one of the houses in researcher's native village. It was found that he has not attended a single class in two years and only visits school for receiving the MDM supply, uniform and books or for examination.

As already mentioned in Literature Review, students have suffered 'loss of learning' in this pandemic ( ) and that "more and more children are likely to be pushed into 'learning poverty'- meaning that they are unable to read and understand a simple text by age 10" (World bank).

The impact of COVID-19 lockdown on the performance of primary school children was manifested during the research and it was also reflected in the end-term examinations. While the world has entered into second year of school closure, Kashmir division is running into third year of school closure. Lack of proper schooling has resulted in loss of learning in children. Tariq Ahmed- one of the participating teachers said,

"Learning ability of students has been severely affected. In terms of learning, students have gone back to the level they were 3 years ago"

Similar opinion was expressed by Shabir Ahmed- teacher of GROUP I,

"These students are first-generation learners, COVID-19 lockdown made students heavily dependent on family and since their family members themselves are illiterate, this has adversely affected the performance of these students".

It was observed that most of the students have lost the ability to solve basic mathematics problems. During one of the interactions, a 7th grade student was asked to solve a problem from 5th grade mathematics and it was observed that student failed, despite being guided at each step.

Teacher Manzoor Ahmed of GROUP G- the one who asked question to the student said,

“The student who was in admitted in 2019 is in 3rd standard today, but due to school closure and/or shortened school timing, the student has not learned anything substantial.

Although the student is in level 3, he has the learning ability of level 1 student”.

Also the poor economic background of these students has added to their loss of learning.

“These children has low mental pick-up, their cognitive ability is very weak. They cannot complete even homework on their own. This COVID-19 lockdown has pushed them further back”.

#### **Way forward:**

The COVID-19 induced “new normal” is technology driven. It has made people, irrespective of their age, dependent on technology more than anything else. The world has never seen an educational crisis of this magnitude and from all indications, how to manage the return of schooling will be a critical part of mitigating the crisis from this lost year (Lancet). Experts have been warning of 3rd wave of COVID-19, which might affect proposed and as such the education department should take immediate measures to prevent further regression of learning in children. From the research it was found that lack of technological know-how, among teachers and students, has contributed to the derailing of teaching-learning process in government schools. Lack of electronic gadgets was also one of the principle causes of the derailment. Having observed the teaching-learning process during the COVID-19 lockdown, having explored the reasons of failure of online classes in government primary schools and after exploring the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on behaviour and performance of children, following recommendations are proposed:

- Majority of the teachers in government schools are not trained for the use of technology and electronic gadgets. Like District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) gives training to teachers in other subjects, they should be given similar training in computer and technology.



- To address the issue of lack of devices, the government can provide electronic gadgets to the needy students, just like free uniform and books are provided.
- There should be a separate class in which students should be taught the know-how of different portals and applications necessary for online classes.
- Like in private schools, computer as a separate subject should be introduced from primary level in government schools.
- Syllabus of primary level should be restructured. Technology-oriented syllabus should be introduced, especially, Science and Mathematics syllabus should be framed in such a manner so as to enhance the cognitive ability of the children.

### **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the social life. It has restructured social interactions. The COVID-19 pandemic has deep ramifications on every social institution; education was no exception to it. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education has repercussions not only on present life of students, but its impact will be manifested more in future, as far as educational progress of students, their earning capabilities in future are concerned, unless some remedial measures are taken to make up for the loss students suffered during COVID-19 pandemic. Loss of learning among students, shortened class durations, change in attitude and behaviour of students, lack of technological devices, and if available, lack of technological know-how, near total absence of online classes and dismal performance of students in examinations emerged as main themes when impact of COVID-19 pandemic on education was studied. During this study, it was found that majority of children studying in government schools belonged to the poor families, therefore online classes could not be arranged due to lack of electronic gadgets. Even if the necessary gadgets were available, the inability of the students and/or their parents to operate the devices and weak network coverage proved to be major hindrances in the conduct of online classes. Class duration, in community classes, was shortened by more than 60 per cent, this had a direct impact on the quantity and quality of education that students received during COVID-19 lockdown. The performance of students in the examinations was very dismal, however the no-stagnation policy of government necessitated that students were promoted to next class, irrespective of their performance in examinations. The initiative taken by government for the conduct of classes during COVID-19 lockdown has proved to be ineffective for the same reasons as online classes, i.e. lack of devices and technological

know-how, weak network coverage and technical glitches within the portal (LMS) itself.

### References

- Al-Jazeera (2020). *Timeline: How the new coronavirus spread*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2020/12/31/timeline-howthe-new-coronavirus-spread>
- Bhat N. (2020). Education In Kashmir: Scenario Within Double Lockdown – Covid-19 & Conflict. *Palarch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 17(7)
- Garda (2020). *India: Delhi schools closed until March 31 due to COVID-19*. Retrieved from <https://www.garda.com/crisis24/news-alerts/320451/india-delhi-schools-closed-untilmarch-31-due-to-covid-19-update-7>
- Hasöksüz M, Kiliç S, Saraç F (2020). Coronaviruses and SARS-COV-2. *Turk J Med Sci* 50: 549-556.
- Hindustan Times (2020). *17 months on, 4G internet services restored in Jammu and Kashmir*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/17-months-on-4ginternet-services-restored-in-jammu-and-kashmir-101612564917419-amp.html>
- Indian Express (2021). *After 5 months, 2G mobile internet to be restored in Kashmir from Saturday*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2020/jan/24/after-5months-2g-mobile-internet-to-be-restored-in-kashmir-from-saturday--2094104.amp>
- Kantor B.N. & Kantor J. (2020). Non-pharmaceutical Interventions for Pandemic COVID19: A cross-Sectional Investigation of US general Public Beliefs, Attitudes, and actions. *Front. Med.* 7:384. doi: 10.3389/fmed.2020.00384
- Kalra M. & Jolad S. (2021). *Regression in Learning: The High Cost of COVID-19 for India's Children* ORF Issue Brief No. 484, August 2021, Observer Research Foundation.
- LANCET COVID-19 COMMISSION (2021, April). *Reopening Schools After COVID-19 Closures*.
- New York Times (2020). *Modi Orders 3-Week Total Lockdown for All 1.3 Billion Indians*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/24/world/asia/india-coronaviruslockdown.html>

- New York Times (2021). *A Timeline of the Coronavirus Pandemic*. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-timeline.amp.html>
- Shereen MA, Khan S., Kazmi A., Bashir N., & Siddique R. (2020). COVID-19 infection: Origin, transmission, and characteristics of human coronaviruses. *Journal of Advanced Research* 24 (2020) 91-98
- The Wire (2020). *Half a million COVID-19 cases in India: How we got to where we are*. Retrieved from <https://thewire.in/covid-19-india-timeline>
- UNESCO (1996). *Learning the treasure within. Report to UNESCO of the international commission on education for the twenty-first century*.
- WHO (2020). *Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Schools*. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-schools>
- World Bank (2020). *World Bank Education COVID-19 School Closures Map*. World Bank
- World Bank (2021, April 28). *What is learning poverty?* Retrieved from <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/brief/what-is-learning-poverty>

## Covid-19 and mental health of Adolescents: An empirical study

Journal of Society in Kashmir

12(1) 232 - 255

ISSN: 2249-667X

© 2022 Author(s)

<http://sociology.uok.edu.in/Files/c2d3b278-4cf7-49a5-9525-af5e352f2900/Journal/0ce23a50-023d-4e58-9e6f-b962fdb78a2.pdf>

Peerzada Saliq Hameed\*

### Abstract

*This paper presents the impact of covid pandemic on mental health of adolescents. In this paper the researcher had tried to provide sociological vent to this study. Since covid 19 had a direct bearing on the mental health of adolescents, mental health of adolescents got impacted in several ways. During this pandemic stress, anxiety was common among adolescents. This pandemic has led to short term as well as long term psychosocial and mental health implications for adolescents. This paper is aimed at narratively reviewing various articles related to mental health aspects of adolescents impacted by covid19 pandemic and enforcement of nationwide or regional lockdowns to prevent further spread of infection. This study will focus on overcoming the stress among adolescents during the pandemic.*

### Keywords

Mental health, adolescents, psychological impact, PTSD, GAD, ADHD, stress, quarantine,

### Introduction

#### Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak was first reported in Wuhan, China, and was later reported to have spread throughout the world to create a global pandemic. As of August 18th, 2020, the coronavirus had spread to more than 216 countries with at least 99,324,198 confirmed cases, resulting in 2,130,341 deaths globally. Several countries declared this pandemic as a national emergency, forcing millions of people to go into lockdown. The World Health Organization (WHO) acknowledged this coronavirus epidemic as a pandemic and declared the outbreak as a public health emergency of international

---

\* Postgraduate Student, Department of Sociology, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, J&K (Batch 2018; Enrollment No. 18080118053)  
Email: [peerzadasaliq@gmail.com](mailto:peerzadasaliq@gmail.com)

concern. Most regions around the world are affected severely, including the United States, Brazil, India, Russia, and Europe, which have seen an increasing number of cases and deaths than the rest of the world. The virus has caused global economic and social disruptions and has brutally overwhelmed the healthcare and educational systems. Previous coronavirus outbreaks include Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS), first reported in Saudi Arabia in September 2012, and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), identified in southern China in 2003. MERS infected around 2,500 people and led to more than 850 deaths while SARS infected more than 8,000 people and resulted in nearly 800 deaths. The case fatality rates for these conditions were 35 per cent and 10 per cent, respectively.

India reported its first COVID-19 case on 30 January 2020 from Kerala and ever since the numbers have increased each day. The current statistics from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare reveal that there are approximately 10,672,035 active cases and 153,525 deaths from COVID-19 in states and union territories. Soon after, WHO declared novel coronavirus disease a pandemic on 11 March 2020, it called the member states to take immediate actions and scale up response to disease which includes treat, detect and reduce transmission. Indian response to the pandemic was quick as the country sealed its international borders and enforced an immediate lockdown, this judicious move was applauded by WHO as 'tough and timely'. The lockdown time has provided the government machineries to organise towards its preparedness for a likely upsurge infection rate in subsequent weeks. At the same time the country combats with the unique pre-existing challenges, such as large population size of 1.35 billion across various states, broadening socioeconomic inequalities and health disparities. Generally, COVID-19 pandemic continues to take a considerable toll not just on healthcare needs, but also on numerous spheres of human life. A large proportion of Indian population have diverse and vulnerable life situations, such as elderly and poor with chronic or acute ailments, migrant labourers and people stranded in locations other than own home, senior citizens, quarantined individuals in their homes or public facility, and families of those suffering or quarantined. Such large number of individuals are vulnerable and may show signs and symptoms of mental distress and emotional problems.

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness. It is caused by a new virus (SARS-CoV-2). We are learning new things about this virus every day because it is new SARS-CoV-2 (Corona virus) belongs to a family of single-stranded RNA viruses known as coronaviridae, a common type of virus which affects mammals, birds and reptiles. In

humans, it commonly causes mild infections, similar to the common cold, and accounts for 10–30 per cent of upper respiratory tract infections in adults. More serious infections are rare, although coronaviruses can cause enteric and neurological disease. The incubation period of a coronavirus varies but is generally up to two weeks. SARS-CoV-2 is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. Although the incubation period of this strain is currently unknown, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that symptoms may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Chinese researchers have indicated that SARS-CoV-2 may be infectious during its incubation period. It is currently unclear where the virus has come from. Originally, the virus was understood to have originated in a food market in Wuhan and subsequently spread from animal to human. Some research has claimed that the cross-species transmission may be between snake and human; however, this claim has been contested. Mammals such as camels and bats have been implicated in previous coronavirus outbreaks, but it is not yet clear the exact animal origin, if any, of SARS-CoV-2.

Anyone of any age can get the disease. Some people may get sicker than others. People who are sick with COVID-19 can give it to others, even sometimes when they do not feel sick. Viruses don't discriminate so avoid assumptions about who you think may be sick.

Thus Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is defined as illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. It was initially reported to the WHO on December 31, 2019. On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, its first such designation since declaring H1N1 influenza a pandemic in 2009. Illness caused by SARS-CoV-2 was termed COVID-19 by the WHO, the acronym derived from "coronavirus disease 2019." The name was chosen to avoid stigmatizing the virus's origins in terms of populations, geography, or animal associations.

The covid 19 pandemic has impacted the mental health of children as well as adolescents. There are more than 2.2 billion children in the world who constitute approximately 28 per cent of the world's population. Those aged between 10 to 19 years make up 16 per cent of the world's population (UNICEF, 2019). COVID-19 has impacted the lives of people around the world including children and adolescents in an unprecedented manner. Throughout the world, an essential modus of

prevention from COVID- 19 infection has been isolation and social distancing strategies to protect from the risk of infection. On these grounds, since January, 2020, various countries started implementing regional and national containment measures or lockdowns. In this backdrop one of the principal measures taken during lockdown has been closure of schools, educational institutes and activity areas. These inexorable circumstances which are beyond normal experience, lead to stress, anxiety and a feeling of helplessness in all. It has been indicated that compared to adults, this pandemic may continue to have increased long term adverse consequences on children and adolescents. The nature and extent of impact on this age group depend on many vulnerability factors such as the developmental age, current educational status, having special needs, pre-existing mental health condition, being economically under privileged and child/ parent being quarantined due to infection or fear of infection.

Mental health refers to cognitive, behavioural, and emotional well-being. It is all about how people think, feel, and behave. People sometimes use the term “mental health” to mean the absence of a mental disorder. Mental health can affect daily living, relationships, and physical health. Conditions such as stress, depression, and anxiety can all affect mental health and disrupt a person’s routine. Although the term mental health is in common use, many conditions that doctors recognize as psychological disorders have physical roots.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO):

“Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”

The WHO stress that mental health is “more than just the absence of mental disorders or disabilities.” Peak mental health is about not only avoiding active conditions but also looking after on-going wellness and happiness. They also emphasize that preserving and restoring mental health is crucial on an individual basis, as well as throughout different communities and societies the world over. In the United States, the National Alliance on Mental Illness estimates that almost 1 in 5 adults experience mental health problems each year.

Most children grow up mentally healthy, but surveys suggest that more children and young people have problems with their mental health today than 30 years ago. That’s probably because of changes in the way we live now and how that affects the experience of growing up

## Literature Review

Conducting a literature review has many various purposes. In some instances, a literature review is done to have background information to a research paper. In scientific papers, it serves the purpose of letting readers know what type of similar research has already been conducted on a concerned topic, and why new research is necessary.

Children and adolescents infected with a novel corona virus experience severe acute respiratory syndrome having milder illness, low morbidity, rare cases of neonatal/ infantile infection, no definite documentation of vertical transmission, better prognosis and probably lesser susceptibility. It is expected that like in adults, children having pre-existing illnesses like cystic fibrosis, severe asthma, congenital heart diseases, malnutrition, obesity, children from antenatal smokers are at heightened risk for poorer outcome if infected with covid-19. Health care staffs and parents are genuinely worried for children as this is a novel disease with a weak evidence-base to formulate clinical decisions and everyone is virtually susceptible. Moreover, adolescents have been shown to shed the virus in feces beside naso-pharyngeal secretions, while being relatively asymptomatic, having an imminent potential for wide-transmission in the community. Although at first glance reports are reassuring for pediatric health care professionals, parents and families, there are challenges to risk stratify the children and adolescents, identify the asymptomatic carriers, ensure their proper general pediatric care including routine vaccination, nutrition and wholesome upbringing in this unprecedented time.. However, there is a fair chance that as the adolescents are having no-to-minimal symptoms of the disease, they are escaping detection. This might end up as an ice-berg phenomena and epidemiological disaster as the oligo-symptomatic adolescents will continue to shed virus, remaining undetected throughout. It is too early to commit about children having lesser susceptibility, as the pandemic is just a toddler, and rise in number may be just a matter of time. While the natural history and physical manifestations of cOvid-19 on adolescents are evolving as the pandemic progresses, its short-term and long-lasting psychosocial impact is increasingly being recognized all over the globe. Covid 19 impacted the mental health of adolescents. They got impacted via several ways.

**Psychosocial impact on quarantined children and adolescents:** Being quarantined bears a plethora of psychological burden, varied neuropsychiatric manifestations and psychosocial stigma. Home confinement imposes immediate and lingering psychosocial impact on adolescents due to drastic change in their lifestyle, physical activity and mental excursions. Adolescents who are being quarantined at institutions are the worst sufferers as it renders them isolated from their parents. Children's proper well-being depends not only on nutritional and



medical care, but also on proper parental companionship. Thus, getting detached from parents in this critical juncture may cause ever-lasting psychiatric consequences including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, psychosis, depression, delinquency and even suicidal tendency. Thus, the frontline physicians must be made aware of the psychosocial need of the quarantined adolescents. Hospital authorities need to make arrangements so that children and adolescents can communicate with parents via audiovisual devices. Government should make operational strategies to provide mental healthcare for the quarantined children. Moreover, children whose parents are detached from them due to quarantine will also be equally stressed, anxious, distressed and feel insecurity due to this forced distancing.

**Effect of school closure:** To say it with Audrey azoulay, director General of UnESVO, "While temporary school closures as a result of health and other crises are not new unfortunately, the global scale and speed of the current educational disruption is unparalleled and, if prolonged, could threaten the right to education." Amidst the ocean of doubt regarding the efficacy of school closure to contain a pandemic the administrations had no choice left but to close the schools nationwide to uphold the practice of social distancing as there is no other definite prevention and cure of SarS-cov2 infection. The experience from severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SarS-cov) and middleeast respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MerScov) suggest that the decision of school closure will not have similar effects on interruption of disease spread as seen in case of influenza pandemic due to different transmission dynamics. For adolescents, school is not only an educational hub, but also a home outside the home with plentiful free space. Schools offer window of freedom, scope of interaction with fellows and seniors, psychological solace besides providing pedagogy and scholastics. Schools play an edifying role in promoting importance of personal hygiene, physical activity, healthy food, and body habits. Even a short-term shutdown of educational institutions and home captivity for adolescents is indeed troublesome and anticipated to have detrimental effects on adolescent's physical and mental health and shatter the sense of normalcy that schools used to provide. Childhood obesity and reduced cardio-respiratory fitness will be the end result of this long-term physical inactivity, irregular sleep patterns, unfavourable diet plans, sedentary life style, longer smart-phone/television screen time that are being practiced during lockdown and school-closure. Perpetual termination of schooling, fear of being infected and spreading infection to grandparents at home, everlasting ennui, frustration, insufficient information, and lack of in-person contact with peers and teachers, lack of personal space at house,

and growing financial burden on parents are often unnoticed and forsaken, but these parameters have sustained consequences on children and adolescents. Jeopardizing the routine habits of school-going, task-oriented education, peer group interactions, teacher-student relationship, and fellow feeling amongst pupils will occur. Complex interplay between psychosocial stress and pandemic induced forced home-stay and lifestyle modifications will further worsen the malefic effects on child's overall health in a vicious cycle fashion. For many adolescents living in destitution both in developed, developing and underdeveloped countries, school is also a place for nutritional support and shutdown will intensify food insecurity which in turn can be correlated with low scholastic accomplishment and ample risks to general wellbeing of students. Prolonged shutdown hits the notion of right to education hard and educational inequalities stem from it. Learning gap will be widened between children from lower and higher-income families during this institute closure. Facilities for home schooling which need audio-visual systems and good internet connection are not available for children from low-income households. A substantial number of children do not have a stable residence, required books, a suitable place for homework, computers, smartphones, internet access, access to outdoor leisure activities even in developed countries. The accessibility of electronic gazettes, learning equipment, home conditions for studies among adolescents of developing or under-developed countries are even more meager and thus, they are likely to be worst affected. Child abuse, drop-out from formal education, indulgence into high-risk activities and proliferation of child labor could be potential socio-economic consequences of cOvid-19 pandemic. Appropriate articulation between classroom and online education, educational financial assistance to the needy students and ensuring zero drop-out from schools post-pandemic are the needs of the hour.

**Child abuse, domestic violence and teenage promiscuity:** Reports of child abuse, neglect, exploitation and domestic violence are on horrendous rise at the time of cOvid-19 pandemic and lockdown. Particularly anxieties over health, finance, partial inactivity of several welfare organizations due to lockdown and frustration encircling forced home-stay are factors behind this rapid soaring of domestic violence at the time of cOvid-19. Both direct and passive exposure of the children to abuse, psychological aggression and/or physical punishment by caregivers at a very early age leave permanent wounds in the form of impaired development of brain and psyche, higher rates of psychosomatic and neuro-psychiatric disorders, multiple substance abuse and suicidal thoughts. Covid-19 and its accompaniments i.e. loss of

parental affection and care, financial deadlock, school discontinuation will certainly outrage the risk of sexual exploitation, teenage pregnancy, transactional sex similar consequences that were faced by children from africa after ebola epidemic. Endangered girls had to undergo transactional sex for fulfillment of basic needs like food, drinking water and shelter. Without sufficient ingress to contraception and safe abortion, the heinous form of exploitation contributed to inflated numbers of childhood/teen pregnancies. Like cOvid-19 brews a internal “cytokine storm,” its cataclysm has heralded a perfect storm for the offenders to abuse children through several online platforms as schools are closed, children are playing excessive and uncensored time online with loneliness and humdrum daily routine. As most of the online social network companies have shifted their in-office employees to ‘work from home’ mode, the regulation and review of potentially harmful contents have gone automated from manual. This automated content moderation has multidimensional fallacies and the resultant response may be late or inapt. This window of opportunity is being used by offenders to abuse children online. COvid-19 has opened up avenues for more cybercrimes and criminals are taking advantage of suppressed cyber-security at this hour. “child-abuse materials” seeking activity is on the rise as children are expected to be more vulnerable, less supervised, having more online exposure and are thus easy targets. Strict parental vigilance along with monitoring from cyber cells is mandatory to prevent this psychosexual aberrancy.

Adolescents are extremely disheartened with abrupt stoppage of schooling, cancellation of scheduled trips, home-confinement and fear of uncertainty concerning the on-going pandemic. Although the graph of formal education is showing downtrend, adolescents will hopefully emerge from this misery with unmatched leniency, pliability, solicitude and cognizance. In his novel *Kafka on the shore*, Haruki Murakami wrote: “When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in. that’s what this storm’s all about.” Omni-tolerant mother earth has sustained so many disasters in the past, history divulges. Mother earth never proved futile in getting healed from those wounds. Conceivably, history will redo itself once more but will leave lessons for mankind and its future. Questions rise whether existence of human-race is essential or merely co-incidental. Humans have exploited earth in every possible way for so long; turned off its lights, poisoned its air, and unearthed its treasures. Mankind has to decide what kind of world they want for their children and adolescents to live in – “the answer, my friend, is blown’ in the wind” (Bob Dylan)

Stress starts showing its adverse effect on an adolescent even before he or she is born. During stress, parents particularly pregnant mothers are in a psychologically vulnerable state to experience anxiety and depression which is biologically linked to the wellbeing of the foetus (Biaggi et al., 2016; Kinsella and Monk, 2009). In young children and adolescents the pandemic and lockdown have a greater impact on emotional and social development compared to that in the grown-ups. In one of the preliminary studies during the on-going pandemic, it was found younger children (3-6years old) were more likely to manifest symptoms of clinginess and the fear of family members being infected than older children (6-18 years old). Whereas, the older children were more likely to experience inattention and were persistently inquiring regarding COVID-19. Although, severe psychological conditions of increased irritability, inattention and clinging behaviour were revealed by all children irrespective of their age groups (Viner et al., 2020a). Based on the questionnaires completed by the parents, findings reveal that children felt uncertain, fearful and isolated during current times. It was also shown that children experienced disturbed sleep, nightmares, poor appetite, agitation, inattention and separation related anxiety

**Impact on young children:** Stress starts showing its adverse effect on a child even before he or she is born. During stress, parent's particularly pregnant mothers are in a psychologically vulnerable state to experience anxiety and depression which is biologically linked to the wellbeing of the foetus (Biaggi et al., 2016; Kinsella and Monk, 2009). In young children and adolescents the pandemic and lockdown have a greater impact on emotional and social development compared to that in the grown-ups. In one of the preliminary studies during the on-going pandemic, it was found younger children (3-6years old) were more likely to manifest symptoms of clinginess and the fear of family members being infected than older children (6-18 years old). Whereas, the older children were more likely to experience inattention and were persistently inquiring regarding COVID-19. Although, severe psychological conditions of increased irritability, inattention and clinging behaviour were revealed by all children irrespective of their age groups (Viner et al., 2020a). Based on the questionnaires completed by the parents, findings reveal that children felt uncertain, fearful and isolated during current times. It was also shown that children experienced disturbed sleep, nightmares, poor appetite, agitation, inattention and separation related anxiety.

**Impact on school students:** Globally, the pre-lockdown learning of children and adolescents predominantly involved one-to-one interaction with their mentors and peer groups. Unfortunately, the nationwide

closures of schools and colleges have negatively impacted over 91 per cent of the world's student population (Lee, 2020). The home confinement of children and adolescents is associated with uncertainty and anxiety which is attributable to disruption in their education, physical activities and opportunities for socialization. Absence of structured setting of the school for a long duration result in disruption in routine, boredom and lack of innovative ideas for engaging in various academic and extracurricular activities. Some children have expressed lower levels of affect for not being able to play outdoors, not meeting friends and not engaging in the in-person school activities (Lee, 2020; Liu et al., 2020; Zhai and Du, 2020). These children have become more clingy, attention seeking and more dependent on their parents due to the long term shift in their routine. It is presumed that children and adolescents might resist going to school after the lockdown gets over and may face difficulty in establishing rapport with their mentors after the schools reopen. Consequently, the constraint of movement imposed on them can have a long term negative effect on their overall psychological wellbeing (Lee, 2020).

A study found that older adolescents and youth are anxious regarding cancellation of examinations, exchange programs and academic events (Lee, 2020). Current studies related to COVID-19 demonstrate that school shut downs in isolation prevent about 2-4 per cent additional deaths which is quite less if compared to usage of other measures of social distancing. Moreover, they suggest to the policy makers that other less disrupting social distancing strategies should be followed by schools if social distancing is recommended for a long duration (Lee, 2020; Sahu, 2020; Viner et al., 2020a). However, in current circumstances, it is controversial whether complete closure of school and colleges is warranted for a prolonged period.

It has been reported that panic buying in times of distress indicate an instinctual survival behaviour. In present pandemic era there has been a rise in the hoarding behaviour among the teenagers. It is also found that among youth social distancing is viewed primarily as a social responsibility and it is followed more sincerely if motivated by prosocial reasons to prevent others from getting sick. Further, due to prolonged confinement at home adolescent's increased use of internet and social media predisposes them to use internet compulsively, access objectionable content and also increases their vulnerability for getting bullied or abused (Cooper, 2020; UNICEF, 2020b). Worst of all, during lockdown when schools, when legal and preventative services do not functioning fully, children are rarely in a position to report violence, abuse and harm if they themselves have abusive homes.

**Impact on children and adolescents having special needs:** There are about 1 in every 6 children within the age group of 2-8 years who have some or the other neurodevelopmental, behavioural or emotional difficulty (CDC, 2019). These children with special needs [autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, cerebral palsy, learning disability, developmental delays and other behavioural and emotional difficulties] encounter challenges during the current pandemic and lockdown (CDC, 2019). They have intolerance for uncertainty and there is an aggravation in the symptoms due to the enforced restrictions and unfriendly environment which does not correspond with their regular routine. Also, they face difficulties in following instructions, understanding the complexity of the pandemic situation and doing their own work independently. With the closure of special schools and day care centres these children lack access to resource material, peer group interactions and opportunities of learning and developing important social and behavioural skills in due time may lead to regression to the past behaviour as they lose anchor in life, as a result of this their symptoms could relapse. These conditions also trigger outburst of temper tantrums, and conflict between parents and adolescents. Although prior to the pandemic, these children had been facing difficulties even while attending special schools, but in due course they had learnt to develop a schedule to adhere to for most of the time of the day (APA, 2020; Cortese et al., 2020; UNICEF, 2020a). To cater to these challenges, it is difficult for parents to handle the challenged children and adolescents on their own, as they lack professional expertise and they mostly relied on schools and therapists to help them out (Dalton et al., 2020).

Since every disorder is different, every child has different needs to be met. The children with autism find it very difficult to adapt to the changing environment. They become agitated and exasperated when anything is rearranged or shifted from its existing setup. They might show an increase in their behavioral problems and acts of self-harm. It is a huge challenge for parents to handle autistic children due to lockdown. The suspension of speech therapy and occupational therapy sessions could have a negative impact on their skill development and the achievement of the next milestone, as it is difficult for them to learn through online sessions (UNICEF, 2020a). The children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), struggle to make meaning of what is going around them from the cues they get from their caregivers. It is difficult for them to remain confined to a place and not to touch things, which might infect them. Due to being confined to one place the chances of their hyperactivity increases along with heightened impulses and it

becomes difficult for the caregivers to engage these children in meaningful activities.

Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) among the children and adolescents is estimated to be of 0.25 per cent–4 per cent among children and adolescents (CDC, 2019). Adolescents with OCD are suspected to be one of the most affected ones by this pandemic. Due to obsessions and compulsions related to contamination, hoarding, and somatic preoccupation, they are expected to experience heightened distress. Cleanliness is one key protective measure against the spread of COVID-19. According to United Nations' policy guidelines to fight the infection one has to be careful about washing their hands six times a day, and whenever they touch anything (APA, 2020; United Nations, 2020). The lockdown, which has made the healthy population distressed about possessing enough food and prevention related resources like masks and sanitizers, has made it worse for people with hoarding disorder

**Impact of lockdown on underprivileged adolescents:** Social inequality has been associated with the risk of developing mental health challenges. The pandemic and lockdown world has experienced global economic turn-down which has directly worsened the pre-existing social inequality. In developing countries, with the imposed lockdown, the underprivileged adolescents face acute deprivation of nutrition and overall protection. The prolonged period of stress could have a long term negative impact on their development. For instance, in India, which has the largest child population in the world with 472 million children, the lockdown has significantly impacted 40 million children and adolescents from poor families. These include children and adolescents working on farms, fields in rural areas, adolescents of migrants and street children. An increasing number of poor and street children now have no source of income, making them a high risk population to face abuse and mental health issues with greater vulnerability and exposure to unfavourable economic, social and environmental circumstances (Birla, 2019).

A home represents a source of security and safety in most families. However, for the poor and the underprivileged it is just the opposite. With the restriction of movement due to lockdown, these adolescents have increased risk of being exploited and become victims of violence and abuse. The Deputy Director of 'CHILDLINE 1098' India, announced that India saw a 50 per cent increase in the calls received on helpline for children since the lockdown began. This increase in rate is alarming and has made an increasing number of child victims in their own homes.

During the time of lockdown an increasing number of poor families have no source of daily wages which lead to frustration and feelings of helplessness. By the reason of displacement, the frustration and family

conflict may manifest itself in the form of violence towards children and adolescents. This can make the adolescent more vulnerable to depression, anxiety and suicide. School closure coupled with economic adversity may force children and adolescents into child labour. Likewise, adolescents without parents or guardians are more prone to exploitation (United Nations, 2020).

In order to cover up the loss of education during lockdown, many schools have offered distance learning or online courses to students. However, this opportunity is not available to underprivileged children and adolescents as a result of which they face a lack of stimulation and have no access to online resource material to study. A study pointed out that in underprivileged families, in comparison to boys, girls have decreased access to gadgets, this may diminish their involvement in digital platforms of education. Due to this gender inequality, increasing number of girls are prone to bear the consequences of school dropouts once the lockdown is lifted.

**Impact due to quarantine and separation from parents:** COVID-19 infection is expressed differently in children and adolescents. Yet the incidents of infection in the minors have been reported worldwide, which result in children being quarantined. Moreover, in many cases a single parent or both the parents are infected and quarantined. In either condition adolescents are separated from their parents. Many countries have laid down strict quarantine policies as a measure to fight COVID-19 pandemic. Such as in China several adults, adolescents and children have been put in complete isolation to control the spread of infection. Although quarantining measures are for the benefit of the community at large, its psychological effects cannot be ignored. The children and adolescents who are in isolation require special attention as these children might be at risk of developing mental health problems due to grief caused by parental separation. As during the formative years of life, the role of parents is very crucial, any disruption in the form of isolation from parents can have long term effects of perceived attachment of the child. It is found that separation from the primary caregivers can make a child more vulnerable and can pose a threat to a child's mental health. The children may develop feelings of sadness, anxiety, fear of death, fear of parents' death and fear of being isolated in the hospital which may have a very detrimental effect on their psychological development. Children have emotionally pent up feelings of distress which may turn inwards into emotional fear or outwards towards acting out behaviour. They might feel separated or alone as they have limited knowledge and level of maturity to understand the implications of the current pandemic situation in their limited world.



Thus the coronavirus disease 2019 has affected the lives of people across the globe. Although children are less physically affected by the disease, the same cannot be said for their mental health. Children and adolescents of front-line health care workers (HCW) being taken care of by their grandparents or relatives are subjected to separation anxiety and excessive worrying. Quarantined children and adolescents suffering from the disease or institutional children away from their family and siblings are likely to have adverse psychological effects. Those who have lost their parents to disease and are staying in foster homes, suffer grief, loneliness, adversity, and are quite susceptible to developing posttraumatic stress disorder. At the same time, adolescents are exposed to social media and gruesome pictures of disease and death may overwhelm them with fear, anxiety, clinginess, inattention, and irritability. During adverse childhood events (ACE's), the body's natural stress response may become dysregulated (toxic stress) leading to persistent elevation of cortisol and proinflammatory cytokines and predisposing children to negative health outcomes later in adult life. This stress can cause delay in cognitive development, somatic complaints, obesity, asthma, diabetes, recurrent infections, sleep disturbance, and even premature death. Other pertinent problems during these times are closure of schools, social distancing, lack of physical exercise, and outdoor activities. The electronic media did come to their rescue during home confinement but not without its own drawbacks. A few vulnerable ones may fall prey to the Internet and cell phone addiction and have difficulty readapting after the crisis passes. The stress of the parents who have lost their jobs directly affects children. The incidence of child abuse has increased while access to the support system has decreased because of the lockdown. The tendency to argue, addiction, self-harming activities, and even suicidal tendency may be seen to an extreme. To conclude I can say covid 19 put negative impact on mental health of children.

### **Objectives of the study**

- To find the impact of covid 19 on mental health of adolescents
- To find the factors responsible for the impact of covid 19 on mental health of adolescents
- To find the results and consequences of mental ailments of adolescents on society
- To make the sociological understanding of covid's impact on adolescents
- Finding the ways to overcome the impact caused due to this epidemic

### Research Methodology

This research paper is based on the major theme impact of covid 19 on mental health of adolescents. To carry out this research the researcher conducted several reviews and collected articles and advisories on mental health aspects of adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic. Researcher selected articles and thematically organized them and put up their major findings under the thematic areas of impact on adolescents , school going children and adolescents with mental health challenges, economically underprivileged children, impact due to quarantine and separation from parents.

*Research tool:* Questionnaire is the research instrument/technique used here. The questionnaire is both open ended as well as close ended.

*Pilot study:* - Before carrying out this research, the researcher opted for pilot study

Based on the purposive sampling, the sample for undertaking the present study was 23. The way these 23 respondents were chosen was determined by random sampling

### Data Interpretation and Analysis

Since the data has been collected via questionnaire, the questionnaire is both qualitative as well as quantitative. The questionnaire after data collection was not in summarized form. Hence data has been observed and tables were prepared to show the exact data collected from respondents. The demographic profile of the sample size is as follows:

S. No	Demographic variables	Frequency
1	<b>Gender</b>	
	Male	13
	Female	10
2	<b>Age group (years)</b>	
	10-13	1
	14-16	21
	17	0
	18	1
3	<b>Qualification</b>	
	Primary	1
	Secondary	22

Following are the major findings of the study elaborated question-wise. All the questions have been clearly, scientifically and sociologically analysed

#### 1. Do you think shutting down of school had impacted you?

Options	No. of respondents	Percentage
Yes	21	91.3
No	2	8.7
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that 91.3 per cent adolescents are completely affected by the closure of schools and 8.7 per cent adolescents are not affected by the same.

## 2. Do you think you got impacted due to covid 19?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	21	91.3
No	2	8.7
Total	23	100

The above data shows that 91.3 per cent adolescents are affected by the covid 19 virus. 8.7 per cent adolescents are not affected by the virus.

## 3. Do you find that your social interaction got impacted due to covid 19?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
yes	21	91.3
No	2	8.7
Total	23	100

The above data shows that 91.3 per cent adolescent's social interaction got affected due to covid 19 virus while 8.7 per cent adolescent's social interaction has not impacted by the same.

## 4. Do you find any kind of economic crunch in your family?

Questions	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	8	34.78
No	15	65.22
Total	23	100

The above data shows that 34.78 per cent adolescents found economic crunch in their family while as 65.22 per cent adolescents find no impact on their economy.

## 5. Since schools were closed, do you find emotional breakdown?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	13	56.53
No	10	43.47
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that 56.53 per cent adolescents were emotionally disturbed due to the closure of schools while as 43.47 per cent adolescents showed no emotional breakdown.

#### 6. Do you find online mode of education had negative impact on your mind?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	19	82.60
No	3	13.04
I don't study	1	4.36
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that 82.60 per cent adolescents find that online mode of education has negative impact on mind. 13.04 per cent adolescents mentioned that online mode of education has not affected their mind.

#### 7. During this period do you find loss of interest in doing things?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	21	91.30
No	2	8.70
Total	23	100

Maximum number of students find loss of interest in doing things. 91.30 per cent adolescents responded that due to covid 19 they found loss of interest in doing things while as 8.70 per cent adolescents believed that due to covid there was nothing like loss of interest.

#### 8. Do you think during this pandemic you felt mood swings, tiredness and aggressiveness?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	19	82.61
No	4	17.39
Total	23	100

The study revealed that mood swings, aggressiveness were found in majority of the adolescents

#### 9. Was your sleeping normal?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	22	95.65
No	1	4.35
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that 95.65 per cent respondents showed no sign of sleeping illness. The sleeping was normal for maximum adolescents.

#### 10. Do you wish to sleep in parents bed?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	2	8.7
No	21	91.3
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that certain adolescents were afraid of sleeping alone due to fear of covid. 8.7 per cent adolescents wished to sleep in parents bed.

#### 11. Do you find any change in your eating habits?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	60.87
No	9	39.13
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that 60.87 per cent respondents find change in their eating habits.

#### 12. Since your outdoor activities got halted, do you find it difficult?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	60.87
No	9	39.13
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that 60.87 per cent adolescents missed outdoor sports activities which they find very difficult. Rest 39.13 per cent adolescents revealed that due to halting of sports activities they did not get impacted. Mostly male students find it difficult.

#### 13. Do you think because of pandemic you start using your smartphone more frequently?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	22	95.65
No	1	4.35
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that 95.65 per cent adolescents started using smart phones more frequently because of the pandemic while only 4.35 per cent adolescents showed no inclination towards smartphones.

#### 14. Do you face any sort of violence from your parents?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	13	56.52
No	10	43.48
Total	23	100

Since due to covid almost everyone was stuck at home. Certain adolescents felt violence from their parents. The above data reveals that 56.62 per cent adolescents fall prey to violence from their parents .

#### 15. Do you find closing of religious places affect you mentally?

Options	Number of respondents	percentage
Yes	13	56.52
No	10	43.48
Total	23	100

56.53 per cent adolescents find closing of religious places affected them mentally.

#### 16. Have you missed important life events?

Options	Number of respondents	Percentage
Yes	8	34.78
No	15	65.22
Total	23	100

The above data reveals that 34.78 per cent adolescents missed their important life events like birthday etc.

### Discussion

A total of 23 (Males -13 and Females - 10) adolescents completed the questionnaire .This study points to a high prevalence of stresses as well as anxiety and depression among adolescents. It has been found that female adolescents seem to be more severely impacted.

The major findings of this study are as:

- Adolescents as well as children got impacted due to covid 19. Adolescents developed certain psychological complications,despite the fact that adolescents have a great understanding of covid 19. They know about this pandemic,its effects and the ways to come out of this pandemic. The most common type of psychological complications found among adolescents through this study are tension, stress, anxiety, fear and post traumatic stress disorder.
- The pandemic led adolescents to think more frequently about certain things.children started thinking about deaths that occurred and also

about the side effects and disorders caused by the virus. This led them in a state of mental trauma. Certain adolescents were of the opinion that they even started thinking about their own death.

- Adolescents were also emotionally impacted by the virus. Children were suffering from a feeling of missing their friends, relatives ,neighbours. This led to mood swings, tiredness and aggressiveness amongadolescents.
- Closing of schools is one of the main and fundamental reason which created chaos and confusion amongadolescents. Due to the closure of schools,children were emotionally breakdown.
- This pandemic has a direct bearing on the education of the adolescents. Switching from offline to online mode of education was really a challenging factor for adolescents. The overall study of the adolescents got impact.
- Adolescents find online mode of education difficult. They were not able to understand things easily during online class. They were not able to concentrate during the class. Also this system affected the health of adolescents. Adolescents talked about problems related to eyes because they spent more time on screen . Although they claim that teachers supported them via online mode of teaching but still adolescents suffered psychological loss. Teachers were not able to talk about mental health. Overall online system led children and adolescents in a state of trauma.
- The social interaction of adolescents got impacted. Adolescents got separated from their friends, relatives ,neighbours. They missed important life events like their birthday, birthday of their friends, marriage ceremonies. They were feeling bad about all this.
- Children’s outdoor sports activities got halted due to covid 19. Adolescents were more anxious about opening of lock down. They wanted to come out of quarantine. They wanted to play in the field. Restricting adolescents’s outdoor activities led them in a state of trauma.
- Social media, TV, and other sources which provided information related to covid had impacted manyadolescents. The rumours being spread via social media had put thrust on mental health of adolescents.
- Adolescents fall prey to domestic violence . certain adolescents were abused by their parents. They felt nervousness and fear.

The researcher found that the psychological health of adolescents got impacted. Tension and stress was common amongadolescents.

Fear and anxiety about their own health and the health of loved ones can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. In today's digital world, children and adolescents access different kinds of information and news through social media and digital platforms, some of them may not be factually true, causing further stress and anxiety. It is enhanced when adolescents are not able to go out, play, attend school or interact freely. For those adolescents and families who are subjected to quarantine or isolation there may be an increased risk of violence and abuse. When stress levels go up for adults and children, there is a greater risk of gender based violence and other forms of violence against children and adolescents.

The researcher find several ways to overcome this psychological disorder-

- To promote an environment where adolescents can grow up and develop their full potential having fun and being safe and healthy.
- To facilitate a space where adolescents are listened to, they can express their thoughts and feelings, and are free to ask any question and are answered honestly
- Listen: Give adolescents opportunities to talk about what they are feeling. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions
- Comfort: Use simple tools to comfort and calm adolescents, e.g. telling stories, singing with them and playing games. Praise them frequently for their strengths, such as showing courage, compassion and helpfulness
- Reassure children and adolescents that you are prepared to keep them safe. Provide them with correct information through valid sources.

Intervention programs to serve children and adolescents in these times should be drawn and implemented by local government agencies. For parents, programs should focus on improving their parenting skills, being responsive, understanding children, protecting them from negative experiences, problem solving, and mentoring them. Prolonged exposure therapy, skill-building opportunities, and cognitively-based compassion training for older children help to develop self-esteem, self-efficacy, and goals for the future. The need of the times is to listen, understand, reassure children, and make them feel loved and safe. Parents should closely monitor their kids for any signs of change in behavior and sensitively apprising them of the situation keeping in mind their naivety will lessen the apprehension and help to tide over these tough times. Parents should spend quality time with them, regularize their daily schedule, do fun activities together to take their minds off the crisis,



encourage them to do physical activity, and help them in their hobbies. Adolescents should be kept close to their parents and family as much as possible or at least ensuring regular contact in case of adverse circumstances (hospitalization or quarantine of parent or child). Children and adolescents may need extra love and attention. The future of the world depends on how strong and resilient we raise our next generation to be.

### **Conclusion**

As we know that the covid 19 virus has impacted every human being belonging from any age group. The children and adolescents too fall prey to this virus either directly or indirectly. The psychological health of the adolescents got more impacted due to this pandemic. Restricting adolescents inside their homes, closing of schools, separation from their peer groups, violence from their parents, economic crunch persisting in their families made them feel psychologically ill. The overall understanding of COVID-19 has expanded throughout the world, yet its immediate and long-term mental health impacts on the adolescents are challenging to estimate. Measures to prevent the virus from spreading and tackling the uncertain situations pose risks to the psychological well-being of the adolescents. The steps taken, such as closing schools, limiting social interactions, imposing travel restrictions, halting sports activities, and transitioning all to online classes, have engendered emotional distress, fear, and anxiety amongst the children and adolescents and their caregivers. It is essential that the guardians, educational institutions, and health authorities protect and guard the mental health of adolescents consistently through open communication and facilitate professional counselling to address stressors. Additional attention should be given to the adolescents who are more susceptible to the mental health crisis through a collaborative approach by involving their parents, educators, school administrators, counsellors, psychologists, and psychiatrists.

In summary, this study is an important addition to the growing body of literature that sheds light on the growing mental health crisis among adolescents. This study suggests that psychological wellbeing and mental health should be carefully monitored during the pandemic, and educational institutions should provide psychological support for adapting to these circumstances.

The results drawn via this research paper demonstrate that large proportions of adolescents are suffering from mental health disturbances. Mothers', as well as fathers' ability to forestall their emotional pain or manifestation of depression from influencing their role as a parent, might be a significant source of resilience for their children. Implementation of

proper psychological intervention strategies and improvement in household financial conditions, literacy of parents, taking proper care of children, and increasing job security and flexibility of parents may help in improving the psychological/mental status of children

## References

- Bai, Y., Yao, L., Wei, T., Tian, F., Jin, D. Y., Chen, L., & Wang, M. (2020). Presumed asymptomatic carrier transmission of COVID-19. *Jama*, 323(14), 1406-1407.
- Bai, Y., Yao, L., Wei, T., Tian, F., Jin, D. Y., Chen, L., & Wang, M. (2020). Presumed asymptomatic carrier transmission of COVID-19. *Jama*, 323(14), 1406-1407.
- Balasubramanian, S., Rao, N. M., Goenka, A., Roderick, M., & Ramanan, A. V. (2020). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in children-what we know so far and what we do not. *Indian pediatrics*, 57(5), 435-442.
- Banerjee, A., Kulcsar, K., Misra, V., Frieman, M., & Mossman, K. (2019). Bats and coronaviruses. *Viruses*, 11(1), 41.
- Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). Rapid review. *Lancet*, 395, 912-920.
- Callaway, E., Cyranoski, D., Mallapaty, S., Stoye, E., & Tollefson, J. (2020). The coronavirus pandemic in five powerful charts.
- England, N. H. S., & Improvement, N. H. S. (2020). Novel coronavirus (COVID-19) standard operating procedure-Community Pharmacy. Available on: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/20200305-COVID-19-PRIMARY-CARE-SOP-COMM-PHARM-PUBLICATION-V1>, 1.
- Esper, F., Ou, Z., & Huang, Y. T. (2010). Human coronaviruses are uncommon in patients with gastrointestinal illness. *Journal of Clinical Virology*, 48(2), 131-133.
- Fauci, A. S., Lane, H. C., & Redfield, R. R. (2020). Covid-19—navigating the uncharted. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 382(13), 1268-1269.
- Ji, W., Wang, W., & Zhao, X. (2020). Zai., & Li X. Cross-species transmission of the newly identified coronavirus 2019-nCoV. *J Med Virol*, 433-440.
- Lu, Q., & Shi, Y. (2020). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and neonate: What neonatologist need to know. *Journal of medical virology*, 92(6), 564-567.

- Ludvigsson, J. F. (2020). Systematic review of COVID-19 in children shows milder cases and a better prognosis than adults. *Acta paediatrica*, 109(6), 1088-1095.
- Mahase, E. (2020). Covid-19: WHO declares pandemic because of “alarming levels” of spread, severity, and inaction. *Bmj*, 368(8), 1036.
- Otrompke, J. (2014). Investigating treatment strategies for the Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus. *Pharm. J*, 293.
- Su, L., Ma, X., Yu, H., Zhang, Z., Bian, P., Han, Y., ... & Gai, Z. (2020). The different clinical characteristics of corona virus disease cases between children and their families in China—the character of children with COVID-19. *Emerging microbes & infections*, 9(1), 707-713.
- Tang, A. N., Tong, Z. D., Wang, H. L., Dai, Y. X., Li, K. F., Liu, J. N., ... & Yan, J. B. (2020). Detection of novel coronavirus by RT-PCR in stool specimen from asymptomatic child, China. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 26(6), 1337.
- Tezer, H., & Demirdağ, T. B. (2020). Novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in children. *Turkish journal of medical sciences*, 50(9), 592-603.
- Tracker, C. C. D. Centers for disease control and prevention 2020.
- Zhu, L., Lu, X., & Chen, L. (2020). Possible causes for decreased susceptibility of children to coronavirus. *Pediatric research*, 88(3), 342-342.

## Book Review

---

**Balmurli Natarajan (2012). *The Culturalization of Caste in India: Identity and Inequality in a Multicultural Age*. Abingdon: Routledge, 207 pages, ISBN 978-0-415-77997-5.**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir  
12(1) 255 - 258  
ISSN: 2249-667X**

Caste has inspired many attempts to its study as a total system. Balmurli Natarajan's book, a significant addition to the growing corpus of literature on caste, is one among those several efforts. It's assessment of caste is rooted in the multicultural contemporary realities of identity and inequality which place it in the realm of ethnic politics. It aims to answer as to what is the status of caste as it interacts with capitalist modernity and democracy.

Most scholars of caste distinguish between *Varna* and *Jati*. Natarajan takes it a step ahead and introduces the concept of *samaj*. Samaj is the outcome of culture and community. By employing the tool of samaj, the book shows how castes are social constructions that are naturalized in the process of group formation. Samaj stresses on cultural reproduction and reinforces casteism ensuring domination of certain castes on social and cultural capital. So, castes come to serve a utility function by marketing themselves as ethnicities in a hyper commoditized world. This understanding forms the core of both, culturalization of caste as a concept, and the impression of the book.

The author, in establishing his notion of culturalization of caste, criticizes current discourses on caste that claim an 'anti-casteist' label fastening onto the market, capitalism and modernity as positive influences in dismantling caste and casteism or turning it into a capital gaining resource. In this direction, three viewpoints colour the discourse of anti-casteism in his analysis. Firstly, in the political context the *democratized or modernized caste*, which he points out, is a vestige of the colonial modern perspective in which caste is equated with interest groups that add vitality to Indian democracy. This positive outlook completely brushes under the carpet the power imbalances that are intrinsic to caste. Secondly, in the economic context, *capitalized or productive caste* is equated with social capital that aids a risk-free development of capitalism in a country like India, completely disregarding the relations of exploitation and domination that also dictate how surplus is extracted and distributed and to whom it is distributed. Thirdly, in the cultural context,

*substantialised or ethnicised caste*, another vestige of the colonial perspective that sought to de-politicize and simultaneously culturalize caste, advances a view of caste groups as distinct identity based communities competing for recognition in a multicultural world that revels in cultural difference. In addition to these, the author identifies two other standpoints that provide credibility to the first three. The first of these, *benign-normal caste*, views caste as having being confined to the domestic sphere in a nonthreatening form, as a determinant of endogamy, disregarding how endogamy is itself a determinant of social reproduction. This is promoted as a normal viewpoint of caste contemporaneously. The second of these two, *brutal-abnormal caste* spotlights caste as an 'abominable aberration'- when incidents of caste brutality and caste-atrocity occur in an exceptionally sensational manner. These incidents are viewed as extrinsic to caste. All of these five 'tropes' taken together offer a mirage of commonsensical truth but are the constructions of the Indian liberal bourgeoisie in their discourses of the 'new'- polity, economy, and society.

In the author's viewpoint, the 'new' discourse floated by the liberal bourgeoisie has been adopted by the Indian 'new Right' too. The author presents various incidents and examples where this fact is clearly apparent, concluding that the liberal and the right-wing share the same discursive space on the issue of caste and casteism despite the claim of the liberals to the label of anti-casteism and anti-Hindutva. He demonstrates the same by employing Bourdieuan concepts of taste and distinction. In the culturalization of caste, casteism has two connotations, a fear of difference and simultaneously a Bourdieuan 'taste' for difference or preference. Differential casteism incorporates this taste for difference and ensures culturalization of caste. It is free of either annihilation or assimilation of the different and thrives on the reproduction of difference. As a first principle, difference is constructed and preserved. Cultural differences are valorized and caste is recast as cultural identity. Differential caste interaction, or as the author puts it - 'mixophobia' continues unchallenged. As the second principle, difference is made meaningful in social life. The concept of *aukad* provides the boundaries of meaningful social placement and forms the social capital. The culturalization of caste then ensures casteist practices of monopoly continue unrestricted in Indian society. The author brings to the fore this entire process by focusing on the caste community (samaj) *Kumhars* (potters) of Durg, Rajnandgaon and Raipur, the three districts of Chhattisgarh in Central India, in order to authenticate his notion of the culturalization of caste. He undertakes interviews and initiates conversations during his ethnographic study with the community

members. In the course of these interviews he is able to establish the existence of differences within the samaj having a bearing on commensality and marriage. The samaj is also subject to its own hierarchies, formations of middle-class groupings and subsequent de-politicisation. These formations take on the mantle of community making by establishing caste associations – *sabha*. The author stresses that it is with the establishment of these ethnicized associations that a shift occurs from “blood loyalty” towards “cultural community”. The labour of community making is put in by caste elites to move away from fetishized blood (*Jati*) towards fetishized culture (*Samaj*). The motivations of the caste elites to do so are not in alignment with the lived realities of the subaltern. Emphasising cultural differences and creating a cultural community benefit the caste elite at the cost of the subaltern who is increasingly subjected to brutal-abnormal caste.

The book, then, has two central theses- one that differential casteism operates as anti-casteism and second that caste elites do not necessarily represent the interests or share the identities of subaltern members within the caste community (*samaj*). The work exposes how anti-casteism can only work when it is committed to the annihilation of caste, and therefore must critique this idea of caste as culture and the claims of caste to be viewed as culture. The book is extensively researched and enriched with ethnographic data to support the analysis provided by the author of caste being ethnicised and culturalized. It critiques current scholarship for its valorisation of caste and points out how caste is not defanged. Though in its optimism for the annihilation of caste it overlooks the malleable nature of capitalized modernity and consequently caste - as it continues to not just survive but assume newer utilities. It is, nevertheless, a pioneering attempt at locating caste in the multicultural age as it interacts with politics, economy, culture and identities.

**Syeda Nousheen Fatima**

Department of Sociology

University of Kashmir

Email: [nousheen\\_fatima@outlook.com](mailto:nousheen_fatima@outlook.com)

## Book Review

---

A. K. Lal (1990). *The urban family: a study of Hindu social system*. New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company. 152 pages, ISBN 81-7022-295-8

Journal of Society in Kashmir  
12(1) 259 - 261  
ISSN: 2249-667X

In recent decades, India has experienced substantial social transformation, particularly in terms of family forms and dynamics. The shift from joint to nuclear family systems, as well as an increase in the number of single-parent and single-person households, has been one of the most significant shifts. This is largely due to factors such as urbanization, increased education and employment opportunities for women, and changing societal attitudes toward marriage and family. Additionally, there has been a decline in the birth rate and an increasingly aging population. These changes have also led to an increased emphasis on individualism and self-reliance, as well as a decrease in the extended family's involvement in day-to-day life. Overall, the family structure and dynamics in India are in a state of flux, with traditional norms and values coexisting alongside more modern and progressive attitudes. In this context, A K Lal's early attempt to understand family dynamics is a significant contribution. The work is an empirical attempt to contribute to the literature on the family in India. The author investigated the structures and internal processes of Hindu families in urban settings. The book is divided into 10 chapters, ranging from the structure of the family, and the interpersonal relationship in the family, to changing pattern of marriage. In the introduction (chapter first) of the book author provides the main objectives of the book to know a) compositional structure, division of labor, patterns of marriage, inter-relations between family and occupation, and correlation of the various dimensions of the family with caste and class. In the chapter second, the author argued out of the empirical inferences that the compositional structure of the present families is a mixture of modernity and tradition. Various traditions are now devalued especially by the nuclear families. Joint families are showing more conformity with traditionally prescribed norms than nuclear families. In chapter three, when discussing the division of labor, the author noted that there has been no significant shift in the institution of the family in India. However, in the division of labor within the domestic settings there occurred no big changes, as men continue to pursue demanding economic activity, while women care for

children and perform household duties. While discussing authority author stated that men's authority in the family is too firmly ingrained to change dramatically in response to outside stimuli. In chapter Fourth of the book author while discussing the interpersonal relationship, argued that modern conditions of life have failed to weaken the strongholds of Hindu tradition. However joint families are more conformist in norms, values, and religion than nuclear families. While discussing power and authority in the family structure of Hindu households in chapter five. The author stated that the traditional Hindu family is characterized by the prevalence of a centralized pattern of authority and norm making the eldest man the locus of corporate authority. However, various social processes brought changes in authority and power in family spaces. Chapter 6 is dedicated to work and family. The findings of this chapter revealed that the position of women related to work has not changed so far. The attitudes of families (joint and nuclear) toward unemployed members varied a little bit. Joint families showed much patience with the unemployed member as compared to nuclear families. Chapter 7 is dedicated to understanding, the patterns of marriage. The author discovers that the median marriage age for both males and females is rising. The author gives statistical data suggesting that the age of marriage is rising in Hindu urban areas. Furthermore, according to traditional Hindu belief, each individual must wed a member of the same caste. The offender of this rule received social punishment. It has been observed, however, that the adoption of legislative measures in pre-independent as well as post-independent Hindus to invalidate the significance of caste in marriage, as well as increased exposure to secular and modern ideas, as well as increased education, have completely changed the situation. The author also gets to know that only a small portion of respondents from both lower- and upper-class families support inter-caste marriage, demonstrating the stark contrast between the legal restrictions, secular environment, and modernization on the one hand, and the acceptance and promotion of inter-caste marriage on the other. Despite the progressive infiltration of liberal ideas, the majority of people are rejecting love marriage at the same time. The Hindu family appears to be heavily oriented toward the idea that it is the parent's sole responsibility to arrange a marriage. The Hindu pattern of marriage is now caught between religion and modernity. Chapter eight is dedicated to family and class, the social process such as urbanization, and industrialization changes some aspects of the caste system. These processes appear to run counter to caste and old patterns dictated by caste. However some dictates of the caste system are crumbling under the influence of current secular trends, yet eliminating caste is not an easy



task. Social class plays its role in a limited way. We might conclude that the economic force has permeated the social fabric, yet caste is not completely eradicated in family settings. The author stated in Chapter 9 of the book that education, by instilling secular principles and modern features in an individual, is antithetical to familial standards and tradition. The majority of educated people with a secular orientation are rebelling against tradition to some extent. Chapter 10 is about the book's summary and conclusion, which are built on the primary findings of the previous chapters.

Finally, the book has done an excellent job of exploring the institution of family in urban settings. The book offers a thorough grasp of urban families and could inspire the additional study of the family institution in urban contexts. The book, however, oversimplifies the outcome and ignores the idea of diversity in urban settings. The author made less attention to family dynamics and social stratification. Because of the sudden changes in society, the book has to be updated.

**Shameem Ahamad Ganayee**

Department of Sociology

University of Kashmir

Email: [ahmadsnazir19@gmail.com](mailto:ahmadsnazir19@gmail.com)

## Book Review

---

**Mathew Aerthayil. (2008). *Impact of globalization on tribals: In the Context of Kerala.* Jaipur: Rawat Publication, 180 pages, ISBN 81-316-0233-8**

**Journal of Society in Kashmir  
12(1) 262 - 263  
ISSN: 2249-667X**

India adopted the LPG model in 1991 which has impacted every aspect of human life. Tribals are the indigenous inhabitants of India who lived in forest lands but due to globalization and industrialization, they got displaced from their native lands. They faced multiple issues and problems in terms of losing their livelihood, homes, and culture, and pushes them into dire poverty. Aerthayil argues that globalization deteriorated the socio-cultural and economic life of tribal people. The book is divided into 7 chapters which highlighted the social, cultural, economic, health, and educational aspects of tribal people as well as strategies to overcome the effects of globalization. In the first chapter, the author used both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection. Stratified sampling was used in which 800 samples were selected from three districts of Kerala. The survey was the main source of data collection. In this chapter author also addressed that globalization has severely impacted the livelihood, social and cultural aspects of tribal people. The author stressed in 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of the book that tribals are the most marginalized group in Kerala and face myriads problems- land alienation, poor standard of living, and lack of health facilities. Since the advent of globalization, they got displaced from lands that affected their livelihood and uprooted their culture and lifestyle. Thus, the study reveals that poverty and misery increased as an outcome of globalization. The 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter examined the land and employment issue among tribals. After land deprivation, tribals started to work in farmlands of non-tribals and upper caste people which became a major challenge for them to earn their livelihood. In most circumstances, they were deprived of the necessities of life because upper-caste people called them primitive. One of the major issues in the reform period is unemployment among tribals and thousands of them died due to starvation because they are dependent on private shops for essential items, unlike in earlier times due to high prices and low quality. The study reveals after 1991 tribal life became more miserable as they lost one of the important sources of livelihood and were forced to become dependent on private shops for their essential commodities. In the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter, the author demonstrated

that tribals are the first victims of globalization and its impact does not become limited to economic aspects, but it draws negative effects on the socio-cultural life of tribals in Kerala. Their contact has increased with the mainstream society by which their traditional lifestyle got changed and lost their identity. He further stated that modern media and advertisements on television had developed consumerism among tribals which motivate them to buy more products in the market. The study reveals that the government diminished their livelihood, culture, and lifestyle pattern with the policy of globalization and drastically decreased their employment opportunities. The 5th chapter showed that with the advent of globalization and neo-liberalism, there has been increasing privatization in medical and educational institutions. In this scenario number of tribals died because there is a lack of medical facilities and less medical care in government hospitals while in private hospitals there are many facilities and proper medical care but tribals did not afford a huge amount of money to treat themselves in private hospitals and already they are dying due to lack of livelihood. The study showed that mainstream children get a quality education while tribal children are already most backward in education, so they cannot compete with others. In the last two chapters, the study shows that tribals can sustain their life in the era of globalization if government distributes land and makes special policies for the welfare of tribals. In present times it is necessary to provide modern and technical education to tribals, so they can cope with the challenges of globalization.

**Irshad Ahmad Shah**

Department of Sociology

University of Kashmir

Email: [shahirshad781@gmail.com](mailto:shahirshad781@gmail.com)