



Extent of Awareness and Various Challenges Faced by the Rural People Due to Pandemic of COVID-19

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author BM designed the study, carried out field survey and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author TKD performed the statistical analyses and literature searches. Authors BM and KP managed the overall study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 is an infectious disease which caused severe pandemic to the whole world. Due to its effect of various agricultural sectors such as crop, livestock and fishery have been smash hard by pandemic. The study was conducted to get perception of extent of awareness and its effect due to pandemic of COVID-19 by the rural people in Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. There were 80 respondents from four villages who experienced the negative impact of lockdown due to COVID-19 were selected for the study. The data were collected through well-structured interview schedule with the help of online google form as well as verbal communication in mobile phone. Collected data were compiled and analyzed with simple statistical tools to draw a specific conclusion. The results show that 41.25 per cent of the respondent had high level of awareness on COVID-19 followed by 20.0 per cent had lower level of awareness on corona virus disease. The finding also said that 82.50 per cent of the respondent had faced challenges of lack of opportunities for earning money followed by 72.50 per cent had scarcity of food materials or insufficient of food items in the

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locality during pandemic of COVID-19. Due to lockdown, the movement of agriculture produces from its place of production to the ultimate consumer has been also affected. It is suggested that some more specific and need based income generating measure is required to be taken by the various existing government and non-government organization to reduce the pandemic situation among rural communities.

Keywords: COVID-19; awareness; effect; rural people.

1. INTRODUCTION

India is the country, where the major population lives in rural areas. Agriculture and Allied sectors are the major sources of livelihood of the people. Globally the pandemic caused several economic and non-economic crises. COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2 and Mayo Clinic, 2020) [1]. Global pandemic is not a new scenario for mankind. Every pandemic have affected the human deed and economic growth of the world [2]. With the transmission of the COVID-19 epidemic, massive infodemic has undermined and unsettled global efforts to fight epidemic. COVID-19 has affected all the activities and its chain which are connected to farm production to final consumer. The negative impact of pandemic on supply and demand for food might lead food safety at risk [3].

Agriculture and its allied sectors such as crop, livestock and fishery have been smash hard by pandemic. In china, COVID-19 has caused higher effect on livestock farming due to limited access to animal feed and shortage of labours [4]. Agriculture is indispensable to food security and human development [5]. FAO has estimated that more than 60% of the world population relies on agriculture for survival [6]. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), out of total employer population in 2019, 26.85% of employers are in agricultural sector [7]. Travel prohibited in many countries has affected delivery of breeding stock of poultry. Fish farmers are unable to sell their yield as well as there is difficulty in aquaculture production due to shortage of seed and feed. Agriculture products are mostly perishable in nature, so farmers are bound to store their unsold produce for longer period of time which leads to decrease in food quality as well as increase in cost of production [8]. Farmers of Terai region-face lots of problem on the marketing of vegetable crops, seed availability and other inputs, transportation, and communication problem with a different organization [9]. The supply of milk and dairy

product has been smash hardest by COVID-19. Dairy farmers are compelled to dump milk and milk product after significant decrease in supply of milk and closure of milk processing company. The lockdown has disappointed off almost all economic activity. In urban areas, leading to the widespread damage of jobs and earnings for informal workers and the poor. Estimates by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy express that unemployment shot up from 8.4% in mid-March to 23% in the first week of April. In India, many places of urban areas the people are joblessness soared to 30.9%. The lockdown will cause untold misery for informal employees and the poor, who lead precarious lives facing hunger and malnutrition. Food insecurity was raises due to COVID-19, which highly affect the poorest and the most vulnerable segments of the population [10]. At present, 820 million people are facing chronic hunger and 113 million are facing acute severe insecurity [11]. Workers in low and middle income countries, lack proper health service, social protection and little saving or no saving, many informal workers are obligate to work despite the self-isolation protocol during COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, these workers are at high risk of corona virus [12]. Most of the farm producers are facing the manpower shortage. Restriction in movement of the people made the shortage of seasonal of the informal farm workers [13]. International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that COVID-19 has affected the 81% (2.7 billion workers) global work force due to full or partial closure of the work place [14]. The central government's relief package, called Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (Prime Minister's plan for well-being of the poor), is expected at providing safety nets for those hit the hardest by the COVID-19 lockdown. However, it is inadequate compared to the massive scale of the problem.

Several state governments have started advanced programs to help informal workers and the poor. Unemployed informal workers need cash income support. The government has provided 500 per month to the bank accounts of 200 million women via the Jan Dhan financial

addition programme with a minimum of INR 3000 per month in cash allocations for the next three months.

In present days, global media have broadcast images of hundreds of thousands of migrant workers from numerous states trudging for miles and miles on highways; some walked more than 1000 kilometers to come back to their home villages. There would be demand and supply shocks because of trade restriction and labour mobility. They should be given both money transfers and nutritious food.

COVID-19 is an extraordinary challenge for India; its large population and the economy's dependence on informal labour make lockdowns and other social separation measures hugely disruptive. The central and state governments have familiar the challenge and responded aggressively—but this reaction should be just the beginning. India must be prepared to scale it up as events unfold, easing the economic impacts through even better public program support and policies that retain markets functioning. The

return or reverse migration amid the agrarian crisis in the agricultural sector from urban to rural areas pose big challenges on the rural economy.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in four villages namely Dakhin Kalaraikuthi, Gopalpur, Dhandingguri and Singimari villages of Cooch Behar district of West Bengal. In India, Fig 1, on June, 2020. 80 no. of respondents who experienced the negative impact of lockdown due to COVID-19 were selected for the study. 20 no. of respondents from each village.

Having android mobile phone were selected purposively for the study. A well-structured interview schedule was prepared in the online google form. The data were collected through verbal communication in mobile phone and online Google form. Collected data were compiled and analyzed with simple statistical tools to draw a specific conclusion.

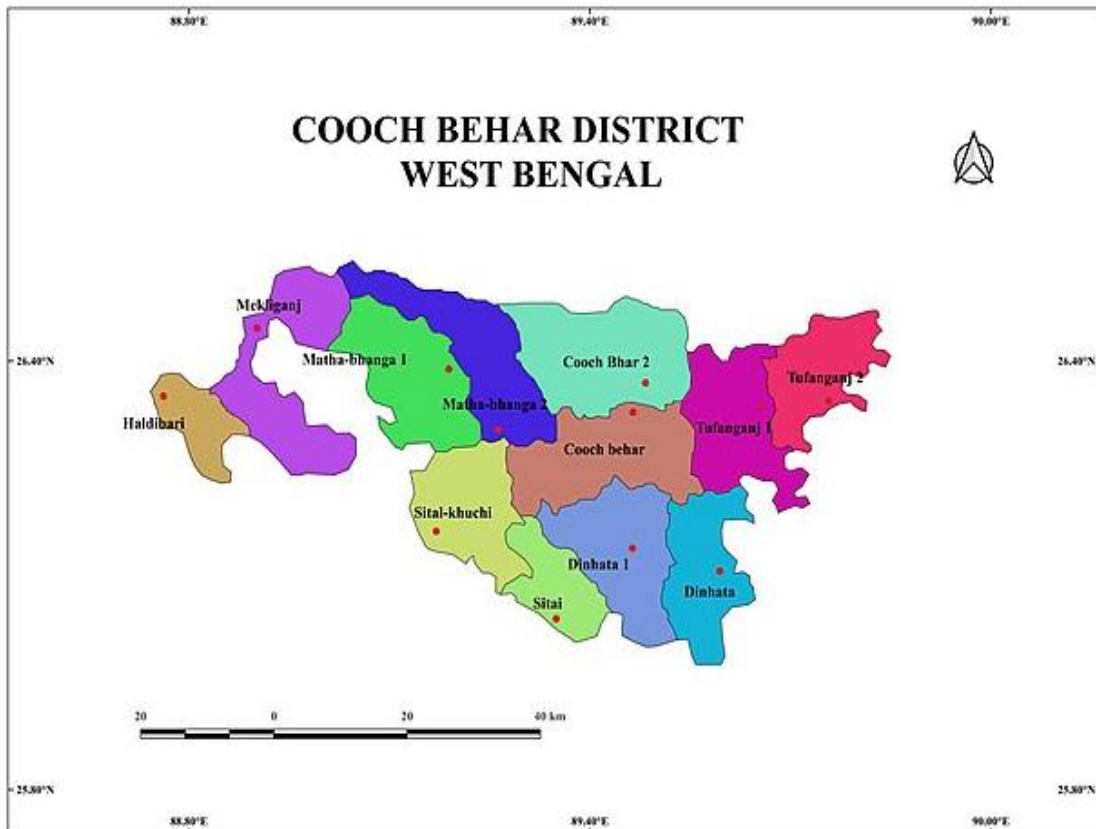


Fig. 1. Area under study

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The above Table 1 shows that 41.25 per cent of the respondent had high level of awareness on COVID-19 followed by 20.0 per cent had lower level of awareness on corona virus disease.

The above Table 2 shows the ranking of various problems faced by the respondents and ranked them based on their RBQ value. The finding reveals that 83.80 per cent of the respondent faced the problems of unavailability of medical facilities for collateral diseases followed by 65.75 per cent on shortage of food items due to corona virus lockdown.

The above Table 3 shows that 84.50 per cent of the respondent and my their family members are getting food items through rationing system

followed by 68.50 per cent of the respondent and my their family members are availing special transportation facility for going outside during critical situation on COVID-19.

The above Table 4 shows that due to pandemic of COVID-19, 83.50 per cent of the respondent had risen fear among themselves and within their locality followed by 72.50 per cent of the respondent Diversified existing enterprises to other enterprise.

The above Table 5 shows that 82.50 per cent of the respondent had faced challenges of lack of opportunities for earning money followed by 72.50 per cent of scarcity of food materials or in sufficient of food items in the locality during pandemic of COVID-19.

Table 1. Perception of the respondent on awareness of COVID-19

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Low (less than 7)	16	20.00
Medium (8-20)	31	38.75
High (above 20)	33	41.25
Total	80	100.00

Table 2. Problem faced by the respondents during lockdown

Sl.	Statement	RBQ	Ranking
1.	Scarcity in availability of labour	69.75	7 th
2.	Shortage of food items	65.75	8 th
3.	Unavailability of transport facility	74.80	5 th
4.	Problems in selling agricultural outputs	81.50	2 nd
5.	Unavailability of market, value chain actors and remunerative prices of the agricultural products	80.50	3 rd
5.	Problem in harvesting of existing crop or sowing of new crop	70.50	6 th
6.	Price fluctuation in domestic market	79.75	4 th
7.	Unavailability of medical facilities for collateral diseases	83.80	1 st

RBQ= Rank Based Quotient

Table 3. Different Governmental support acquired during lock down period

Sl.	Statement	RBQ	Ranking
1.	Myself and my family members are getting financial packages during lockdown	78.75	3 rd
2.	Myself and my family members are availing special transportation facility for going outside	68.50	6 th
3.	Proper marketing arrangement by the Govt. is helping for selling the agricultural outputs to get remunerative prices	72.35	5 th
4.	Govt. officials are visiting the villages frequently to create more awareness	82.80	2 nd
5.	Myself and my family members are getting food items through rationing system	84.50	1 st
6.	Myself and my family members are getting mask, sanitizer and medicines time to time from the Govt.	75.80	4 th

Table 4. Major changes taken place due to lockdown

Sl.	Statement	RBQ	Ranking
1.	Diversified from existing enterprises to other enterprise	72.80	5 th
2.	High price of food items	80.75	3 rd
3.	Unavailability of some raw materials	75.20	4 th
4.	Generate of unemployment	82.35	2 nd
5.	Rises fear among the people in their locality	83.50	1 st

Table 5. Major challenges arise due to return of migrant labours

Sl.	Challenges	RBQ	Ranking
1.	Scarcity of food materials	72.50	4 th
2.	Lack of opportunities for earning money	82.50	1 st
3.	Family income reduces	81.75	2 nd
4.	House hold expenditure rises	78.80	3 rd

4. CONCLUSION

The cultivation sector is the backbone of our nation which is most responsive with the externalities of COVID-19 outburst. Due to lockdown, the movement of agriculture produces from its place of production to the ultimate consumer has been affected. The scarcity of labour force affected harvesting raw materials, mainly fruits and vegetables which are perishable in nature. Lockdown of the nation created dark opening for the cultivating network. Many migrant, seasonal farm laborer are losing jobs and distress the demand for food in the nation. The supports which are provided by the government are not fulfilling the needs of the rural community. It is suggested that some more specific and need based income generating measure is required to taken by the various existing government and non-government organization to reduce the pandemic situation among rural community of the villages.

CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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