

# Effect of The COVID-19 Pandemic On Social Aspects of Rural and Urban Community

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**Abstract:** COVID-19 had greatly affected the social life of the people. The objective of the study was to examine the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social aspects of the rural and urban community in the Banaskantha district "during and post-lockdown. The study sample consisted of 200 randomly selected respondents from ten rural and ten urban areas of Banaskantha district. An interview schedule was developed to collect primary data from respondents. The result showed that urban respondents were moderately affected socially as compared to the rural respondents during and post-lockdown. A significant difference between lockdown and post-lockdown for social effects was found due to the COVID-19 pandemic between rural and urban respondents. Overall, it can be concluded that COVID-19 adversely affected the social aspects of rural and urban communities during and post-lockdown. Thus, better management by the government against the COVID-19 pandemic is essential to mitigate the financial crisis.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, COVID-19, Effect, Social aspects, Rural and urban community, Lockdown

## I. INTRODUCTION

The pandemic was not the only serious public health concern; this led to a devastating socio-economic crisis in the infected countries. Man is a social animal by nature, and social relationships and interactions are integral to human civilization. Still, due to the rapid pandemic spread of the virus and the increase of social distancing measures, this web of relationships was severely impacted. Corona virus was affecting the social life of individuals as many of the schools, colleges, universities, pubs, restaurants, cafes, etc., have been closed. Many festivals, religious and social ceremonies were suddenly canceled or postponed. As a result, loneliness, anxiety drives, depression, panic states, mental disorders, health hazards, and many other issues impact the lives of the individual and society.

Lockdown and social distancing initiatives had led millions of people globally to stay in their homes, abruptly forcing individuals to rely on their household members for their overall sense of social connection. This change can lead to the risk of lonesome feelings experienced by those who live alone under normal circumstances. Living in a bigger house could save people from declining social interactions during the pandemic. But, sharing a space, day in and day out, with the same people in larger homes can lead to more stress, conflict, and feelings of overcrowding.

The COVID-19 outbreak affects all segments of the population. It is particularly detrimental to members of those social groups in the most vulnerable situations. It affects populations, including people living in poverty, older persons, and persons with disabilities, youth, and indigenous peoples. In general, for many, the paradigm shifts from "normal life from before" caused by the pandemic created a sense of uncertainty and hopelessness about the future among many. In addition, another threat to the response to lockdown has been the spread of misinformation amongst the public driven by panic, stigma, and blame. The social impacts on the daily life of the people during COVID 19 are presented as follows:

- The service sector was not being able to provide their proper service.
- Cancellation or postponement of large-scale sports and tournaments
- Avoiding the national and international traveling and cancellation of services
- Disruption of celebration of cultural, religious, and festive events
- Undue stress among the population
- Social distancing and self-isolation

- Closure of the hotels, restaurants, and religious places
- Closure of places for entertainment such as movie and play theatres, sports clubs, gymnasiums, swimming pools etc.
- “Infodemic”: The spread of panic and fear through social media
- Postponement/ cancellation of examinations

Thus all the social consequences adversely affected social integrity and attachment among the society.

### 1.1 Objective

To study the social effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the rural and urban communities of the Banaskantha District

## II. METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted in Banaskantha district of Gujarat. There are 14 talukas in Banaskantha district; out of them, two talukas were chosen purposively. A multistage random sampling method was used to determine the location and respondents for the study. From each taluka, 50 respondents from the urban community (10 respondents from five-zone of a selected city) and 50 respondents from the rural community (5 villages were chosen randomly, and ten respondents from each village at random) were selected randomly. In all, 200 adults (100 from each taluka) working for the populations were considered as respondents in the study. The interview schedule provided information regarding the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social aspects of respondents during and post-lockdown. Personal interview technique was adopted for data collection. The collected data were categorized, coded, and analyzed using frequency, percentage, means, standard deviation, mean percent score, and independent-sample t-test methods.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected the lives of people, particularly during lockdown (23 March 2020 to 8 June 2020) and post-lockdown. Lockdown seriously hampered people's social life (i.e., public interaction and participation in social gatherings) along with economic situation. It is expected that the extent of impact and its consequences might be diverse on different strata of society. Therefore, an attempt has been made here to find out the effect of COVID-19 on the social aspects of the respondents. For evaluating the COVID-19 effect, this study considered the lockdown and post-lockdown scenarios.

### 3.1 Distribution of the respondents based on the effect of COVID-19 on social aspects during lockdown and post lockdown

For getting an overview of the effect of COVID-19 on the social aspects, the respondents were divided into three categories: extremely affected, moderately affected, and slightly/not affected with the weightage of 3,2,1, respectively. This stratification was prepared based on the percentage of COVID-19 effect on the respondents regarding social aspects.

**Table 3.1:** Distribution of the respondents based on the effect of Covid 19 on social aspects during and post lockdown.

n=200

Sr. No	Category	During Lockdown		Post lockdown	
		Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
		<i>f (%)</i>		<i>f (%)</i>	
1.	Slightly/ Not affected (<15.4 )	08	00	61	00
2.	Moderately affected ( 16 – 27)	87	10	39	100
3.	Extremely affected (> 28.4)	05	90	00	00
<b>Mean = 21.95SD= 6.50.</b>					

The data presented in Table 4.10 show that 5% of the rural and 90% urban respondents were extremely affected during the lockdown. In comparison, 87% of the rural and 10% of the urban respondents were moderately affected. It means lockdown severely impacted the urban residents. Besides, data suggest that each respondent was affected during the



lockdown. Once we look into the post-lockdown data, no rural or urban respondents accepted to be extremely affected. However, 39% rural and 100% urban respondents admitted to be moderately affected. Most rural respondents (61%) were back to the normal situation(not affected). Overall, data shows that everyone is affected during the lockdown, albeit by varying degrees. It is also clear that in post-lockdown urban residents were greatly affected compared to the rural respondents socially.

The results are in concordance with the finding of Bhattacharya (2020) and Simon and Helter(2021).

3.2 Effects of COVID-19 on the social aspect of rural and urban respondents during lockdown and post-lockdown

The data presented in Table 4.11 show the statement-wise response of the rural and urban respondents for lockdown and post lockdown periods. These statements were designed to capture the feeling and experiences of the rural and urban respondents considering their pre-lockdown status as a reference point. All activities or practices followed pre-lockdown period were considered as a normal. Hence, in this study, respondents were asked to register their responses with reference to their pre - COVID-19 social behaviors in terms of personal interaction, participation in the social gathering, and outside movements. Lockdown and post-lockdown restrictions brought a remarkable and never experienced change in most of the respondents' daily routine and social conduct. It impacted people's physical and mental health and family and social relations.

Table 3.2: Effects of COVID 19 on the social aspect of rural and urban respondents during lockdown and post lockdown

Table with 6 columns: Sr. No, Statements, Rural MPS (During lockdown, Post lockdown), Urban MPS (During lockdown, Post lockdown). It contains 14 rows of data regarding social impacts of COVID-19.



	social discrimination.				
15.	News related to COVID-19 spread has caused fear, anxiety, and uncertainty.	72.0	44.5	88.5	55.5
16.	COVID-19 has changed lifestyles like wearing a mask, use of sanitizer, social distancing.	86.5	81.5	96.5	93.5
17.	COVID-19 has led to an increase in domestic violence (physical, emotional & sexual abuse).	64.0	47.5	80.0	51.5
18.	Government health guidelines for COVID-19 are challenging to follow.	60.5	56.0	40.5	37.0

All statements suggest that the lockdown and post-lockdown restrictions on the urban population had a more significant impact than rural folks. Most urban respondents expressed that lockdown (87.0 MPS) and post-lockdown restriction (54.0 MPS) impacted their social engagements. However, the effect of Corona pandemic on social interaction during lockdown (49.5 MPS) and post-lockdown (29.5 MPS) was found less among the rural respondents. Similar responses to the lockdown and post-lockdown restrictions were received from urban and rural respondents with respect to mental anguish (depression, boredom, stress & anxiety) and future plans.

The fear of the spread of COVID-19 and lockdown and other restrictions compelled people to postpone their outstation travel, conduct and participate in marriage and other ceremonies, and open new businesses. Social gatherings during religious events like Navaratri and Holi drastically reduced, and these events were not publicly celebrated at many places. Even post-lockdown, police permission had to be sought before conducting a social event. Urban respondents during (89.5MPS) and post lockdown (54.0 MPS) and rural respondents during (46.5MPS) and post lockdown (26.0 MPS) faced problems due to restricted religious, social, and work-related mobility. Travel/outside movement-related restrictions were particularly irritating to children from rural (lockdown - 53.5 MPS and post-lockdown – 28.2 MPS) and urban (lockdown - 93.5 MPS and post-lockdown – 71.5 MPS) backgrounds. All urban and two-thirds of rural respondents expressed their anguish for not organising and participating in social ceremonies and festivals during the lockdown(100 MPS,65.5 MPS). Now people prefer to organize religious events and festivals at home with no or minor gatherings of close relatives and friends. This agony reduced to two-third for urban and one-third for rural participants during the post-lockdown period with 63.5 MPS and (33.0 MPS) respectively. However, due to government restrictions and fear of COVID-19 spread, people organized and participated in the social event but at a much smaller scale with small gatherings.

In pre-COVID-19 time, it was routine for many respondents to go for morning and/or evening walks, bring milk, play games, visit temples, and chat with friends. Many youngsters, young couples, and children from the city enjoyed watching movies during the weekend and having ice-creams, soda, etc. However, during lockdown and post-lockdown, it was changed. Interestingly, most urban (95.0 MPS) and three-fourth rural respondents (76.0MPS) endorsed the concept of self-quarantine and self-isolation during the lockdown. Self-quarantine and self-isolation guidelines were even followed by urban and rural respondents in post- lockdown with 80.0MPS and 49.5 MPS respectively. However, urban and rural respondents during the lockdown (86.5 MPS, 46.5 MPS) and post-lockdown (48.5 MPS, 21.0 MPS) felt isolated or alone at home.

Spending long hours using the internet (i.e., social media, chats/calls, and games) during lockdown and post-lockdown was 73.0, and 72.0 mean percent score in rural participants and 89.5 and 84.5 mean percent score in urban areas participants, respectively. As a result, the majority of people are now using smartphones. In the past, the use of social media was limited. However, during the lockdown use of social media increased remarkably; the internet was used for online games, chatting, and video classes. Even homemakers used social media and YouTube to learn new recipes. Besides, about one-third of urban and rural respondents spent their time doing household chores during lockdown (27.5 and 37.5 MPS) and post lockdown ((29.0 and 24.5 MPS). All urban and three fourth of the rural respondents felt that stigma and social discrimination increased during the lockdown with 100 and 74.5 MPS, respectively. Over three-fourth of urban and two-third of rural respondents felt the same during the post-lockdown (67.5 MPS and 76.5 MPS) period.

People started keeping distance from people from other places and anyone having viral symptoms (i.e., cold and cough).

Interestingly, the majority of urban (lockdown – 88.5MPS and post-lockdown – 55.5MPS) and rural (lockdown – 72.0MPS and post-lockdown – 44.5MPS) respondents sensed that news related COVID-19 caused fear, anxiety, and uncertainty in the minds of the public. These people felt that the 24x7 channel exaggerated the COVID-19 related negative information and created fear. Both urban and rural respondents felt that wearing masks, using sanitizer, and maintaining social distance become an essential part of life. According to urban respondents, in the past, it was usual practice to make sure that mobile is charged; however, now they make sure that they have masks and sanitizers with them while leaving for outside. A large section of urban (lockdown – 80.0 MPS and post-lockdown – 51.5MPS) and rural (lockdown – 64.0 MPS and post-lockdown – 47.5MPS) accepted that extended stay, mental stress, and financial uncertainties, and many other minor issues led to an increase in domestic violence. The government health guideline on COVID-19 was challenging to follow for rural and urban respondents during lockdown (60.5 and 40.5 MPS ) and post-lockdown (56.0 MPS and 37.0 MPS ). There were a lot of restrictions and different rules for the movement of people from one district to another district and one state to another state. Changing quarantine rules and the number of people allowed to travel in a car or two-wheelers kept people confused. Fear of penalties for not having masks made people avoid nonessential travel for personal and business purposes.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Overall, it can be concluded that COVID-19 adversely affected the social aspects of rural and urban communities during lockdown. Social aspects of rural and urban respondents due to COVID 19 were moderately and extremely affected during the lockdown respectively. The study found that social aspects of urban and rural respondents were affected more during a lockdown instead of post-lockdown due to COVID 19. In Post-lockdown, all urban respondents were moderately affected as compared to rural respondents. The pandemic has increased social consequences such as social isolation, loneliness, stress, anxiety etc. Thus there is need for the government, policy planners, and other related institutions to address this issue and implement immediate relief measures for sufferers. In addition, better management by the Government against COVID-19 pandemic is necessary to reduce the social crisis.