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Issues and Challenges in contemporary Social work

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Editorial

We are happy to bring out the current issue of Social Work Journal of Department of Social Work, Assam University. This issue is predominantly covering papers centered on the issues and challenges in contemporary social work.

The paper on "Inclusion of Persons with Disability in the Mainstream of Barak Valley of Assam'' by G. Albin Joseph , Molankal Gangabhushan M and Amlan Das focusses on the problems being faced by persons with disability and the contemporary plight of PWDs in the Barak valley of Assam State. It also aims to study the challenges of PWDs for social inclusion in the mainstream, availability, accessibility and barriers of the government and NGOs programs towards them.

In the paper on "Socio-Economic Profile of Zeme Naga in Tamenglong District of Manipur by Moses Newme, and Lalzo S. Thangjom the paper highlights to understand the demographic information, social structure, economy, culture, education, political and religion of Zeme Naga living in Tamenglong District of Manipur.

The article entitled "Regional Interests and the Unequal Use and Distribution of Educational Resources in Odisha, India" by Deepak Kumar Nanda and Bipin Jojo gives a brief analysis of regional disparities in Odisha. It discusses the regional interests and the unequal use and distribution of educational resources in the Odisha state. It argues that the beginning of modern education; making of official state language, the language of instruction; and the current distribution of important educational institutions are done considering the regional interests of the eastern Odisha.

Another paper entitled "Insurgency in North East India: With Special References to the State of Manipur'' by Mr. Abel Ariina and G. Albin Joseph describes about the issues of insurgency and the regional conflict in Manipur with its abundance of insurgency groups in the state.

The paper entitled "COVID-19: The Cost of Economic Crisis on Psychological Health'' by Sumana Majumdar and Patriot Debbarma focusses on the issue of covid-19 and how the novel corona virus has affected the psychological health of people due to financial problems during lockdown.

The paper on "Occupational Change in Urban Tribal Population: A Case of Kabuis in Imphal City" by Gangmei Akhuan Rongmei and MC Arunkumar discusses about the dynamics of occupational change vis-à-vis market extremism among the Kabuis of Imphal city.

"The Season of Work Money and Pain" by Pramod P. Lonarkar highlights that there is an urgent need to address the issues related to social security and living conditions of the sugarcane cutters in the state of Maharashtra and Karnataka.

Another paper entitled "Psychological State Of College Students During Covid-19 Pandemic In Assam'' by Ananya Bhuyan and Wandaia Syngkon examine the factors associated with increasing concern of mental health burden among Assam graduates and to look into for possible interventions.

Phyllis Haizeutuale Panme and Lalzo S. Thangjom in "The Migration and Rural livelihood: Social Work Interventions for Dima Hasao District of Assam" discusses about how the people move from rural areas to the urban areas in search of livelihood opportunities., it also talks about the Seasonal Migration as one of the most significant strategies adopted for livelihood by people in the rural hilly district of Dima Hasao in Assam. The authors suggested for Creation of employment opportunities by government and vocational training to impart skills to unemployed youth in the rural villages to overcome the crisis of unemployment and to avoid acute poverty in the Dima Hasao district.

The article entitled "Livelihood and Living Conditions of Traditional Cane and Bamboo Artisans in Aizawl and Kolasib Districts, Mizoram" by Malsawmtluangi and Easwaran Kanagaraj highlights about the various patterns of livelihood assets and living conditions of the poor bamboo and cane artisans of Mizoram. The findings reveal that there exists a huge difference between the living conditions of urban and rural artisans, the paper argues that though the urban artisans have better opportunities and good income but at the same time they produce less and spend less time on work. Finally the authors suggested for for policy making and social work practice towards livelihood promotion of tribal artisans in the state.

The joint paper on "Ginger cultivation as a source of Livelihood: A study of Asalu Village in Dima Hasao District of Assam" by Phyllis Haizeutuale Panme and Lalzo S. Thangjom explores the livelihood choices and strategies under practice by the rural population of Asalu Village in Dima Hasao district of Assam through ginger cultivation.

The paper "Foster Care in Manipur: Procedures and Challenges" by Evergreat Wanglar explains about the unravel procedures relating to identification and placement of children living in institutional care and to identify gaps in placing children in institutional care for foster care.

The paper entitled "Approaches of Social Work Trainees towards Cancer Patients" by Jublina Medhi and Bijoy Das focusses on different approaches used by the trainees while dealing with cancer patients during their field work practice and need for social work intervention in terms of oncology, palliative care, in hospices, with patients and their family.

"Field Work in Social Work Education: An Onerous but Intrinsic Component" by Dr. Ratna Huirem and Kathiresan Loganathan talks about the pertinent and inherent character of field work in social work. It also emphasizes the need to consider geographical, cultural and ethnic variations in society. Hence, looking out for a unique and uniform way to conduct field work education may be a lofty ideal to uphold in contemporary times.

Field Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Are We Virtually and Digitally Ready? By Dr. Kathiresan Loganathan and Dr. Ratna Huirem, dwells on the suddenness of the pandemic and how lives were engulfed by the digital world. Amidst all these, the challenges of social work practice and field education are highlighted. The lack of adequate access to human sensitivities while functioning online, confidentiality, privacy, space etc. are brought to the fore. Nonetheless, technology being a part of the new world, is admitted but at the same time, the fear of digital capitalism is also highlighted.

–Prof. Gopalji Mishra
Mr. Ajit Kumar Jena

Inclusion of Persons with Disability in the Mainstream of Barak Valley of Assam

G. Albin Joseph[1], Molankal Gangabhushan M[2] & Amlan Das[3]

Abstract

Persons with Disability (PWDs) are marginalized and excluded from the mainstream developments. Discrimination and stigma are omnipresent. In everyday life, PWDs happen to face discrimination either in the family or in the community in the different forms like rejection, abuse, denial of rights, avoidance in the decision making process, and exclusion in employment, education and social participation. Efforts are being done to improve the quality of the life of PWDs globally and locally. Paradigm shift has been made from charity welfare model to right based model. The purpose of the research is to find out the contemporary plight of PWDs in the Barak valley of Assam State. It further aims to study the challenges of PWDs for social inclusion in the mainstream, availability, accessibility and barriers of the government and NGOs programmes to PWDs. A total of 400 respondents (PWDs and parents) are selected as samples from the three districts namely Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi of Barak Valley of Assam State. The research study is qualitative and quantitative in nature. Based on the objectives of the study, a structured interview schedule is designed to collect the data from the respondents. Apart from this, focus group discussion and case study method are employed to strengthen the research work. The findings give a vivid picture about the plight of PWDs and the loopholes in the development of PWDs in the Barak valley of Assam State. The Research paper is an outcome of the ICSSR sponsored major project. The completion of the study would certainly bring some changes in effective implementation of the programmes for PWDs in Assam.

Keywords: *Inclusion, Rehabilitation, Persons with disability, Barak Valley, Assam*

Introduction

Persons with disability are vulnerable and marginalized and treated as not equal to non –disabled in our society. Basically they are members and partners in the community. However, the acceptance among themselves, family members, neighbourhood and community is questioned. (Census of

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India, 2011)The total population of India is 1.21 billion and the latest figures on disabilities have shown only a marginal increase in the number of disabled in the country with the figure rising from 21.9 million in 2001 to 26.8 million in 10 years. In percentage terms, it has risen from 2.13 per cent to 2.21 per cent. There are 14.9 million men with disabilities as compared to 11.8 million women in the country with the total number of disabled people over 18 million in the rural areas and just 8.1 million enumerated in the urban settings. The percentage of men with disabilities is 2.41 as against 2.01 in women.

Assam is one of the seven sister states of North East India. It covers an area of 78438 square kilometres. It has 27 districts and the literacy rate of the State is 73.18% (Government of Assam 2016). There are 31,169,272 people in Assam. Out of these, there are 4,80,065 persons with disability (Census of India 2011). Barak valley of Assam consists of Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts. It has 56,012 of disabled population. It represents more than 1/10th of entire disabled population in Assam i.e., 4,80,065. The valley has important in its geographical location in North-East India. It shares boarder with Meghalaya, Mizoram, Manipur and Tripura. It shares international border with Bangladesh. The valley has its own disadvantage due to long distance to mainland, flood, and lack of transportation, health facilities and other basic amenities in the districts. It severally affects the persons with disability.

Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) are the members of the society. The rights of the PWDs are also the human rights. Unfortunately, in our society the PWDs are not treated as equal. They are vulnerable section in the society. They are discriminated deprived, denied and isolated by the society. They are not given recognition in the families and the communities. The UN and government of India understood the importance of Disabled policies to safeguard and protect them. In India there are five important Acts for persons with disability. They are as follow: Mental Health Act, 1987; Rehabilitation council of India Act, 1992; Persons with disabilities Act, 1995; National Trust Act, 1999 and the Rights of Persons with disabilities Act, 2016.

These are not effectively implemented in India. The attitudinal change must come from the disabled people themselves, families, and communities. The types of disabilities have been increased from existing 7 to 21 as per the Rights of Persons with disabilities Act 2016 and the Central Government will have the power to add more types of disabilities. Physical, psychological, educational, vocational advocacy, employment and networking rehabilitations are some of the rehabilitations for the persons with disabilities.

The rehabilitation of the disabled is continuous throughout their life span. The followings are the needs and challenges for the inclusion of PWDs in the mainstream:

- A compressive disability census / survey must be taken to assess and analysis the status of PWDs throughout the country.

- Inclusive education for all students without discrimination of disabled and non-disabled students

- Effective implementation of various disabled Acts

- Association and federation for PWDs at all levels

- Accessibility and availability of the resource for PWDs

- Awareness creation on disability rights using different methods

- Employment generation

- All the government and NGOs programme must be channelized properly for the rights and privileges of the PWDs

Review of Literature

Including people with disabilities in everyday activities and encouraging them to have roles similar to their peers who do not have a disability is *disability inclusion.* This involves more than simply encouraging people; it requires making sure that adequate policies and practices are in effect in a community or organization. Inclusion should lead to increased participation in socially expected life roles and activities such as being a student, worker, friend, community member, patient, spouse, partner, or parent.

Socially expected activities may also include engaging in social activities, using public resources such as transportation and libraries, moving about within communities, receiving adequate health care, having relationships, and enjoying other day-to-day activities. (Centres for Dieases Control and Prevention 2017)

Inclusion is a term used by people with disabilities and other disability rights advocates for the idea that all people should take action to freely, openly accommodate people with disability for example by providing ramps and accessible toilets in meeting facilities. (Wikepedia 2017). Sometimes, people with a disability are prevented from participating in community activities because their needs are not taken into account, or because of negative attitudes of others. (Family & Community Services 2016)

Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) focuses on enhancing the quality of life for people with disabilities and their families, meeting basic needs and ensuring inclusion and participation. CBR was initiated in the mid-1980s but has evolved to become a multi-sectoral strategy that empowers persons with disabilities to access and benefit from education, employment, health and social services. CBR is implemented through the combined efforts of people with disabilities, their families, organizations and communities, relevant government and non-government health, education, vocational, social and other services (World Health Organization 2014). The aim of community-based rehabilitation (CBR) is to help people with disabilities, by establishing community-based programs for social integration, equalization of opportunities, and rehabilitation programs for the disabled. The strength of CBR programs is that they can be made available in rural areas with limited infrastructure, as program leadership is not restricted to professionals in health care, education, vocational or social services. Rather, CBR programs involve the people with disabilities themselves, their families and communities, as well as appropriate professionals.

(Caritas India 2013)All the programmes in the CBR are cross disability – all types of disabilities as described in the Indian laws and multi-sectoral – Health, Education, Livelihood, Social and Empowerment. CBR is a strategy for empowerment and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society. Disability as a social concern is slowly but surely coming to acquire increasing public attention at the highest levels of government and policy-making in recent years, aided in no small measure by the efforts of grassroots groups and non-government organisations.

India has more than 20 million persons living with disability (Census 2001). But low literacy employment rates and widespread social stigma are making disabled people among the most excluded in society. Children with disabilities are less likely to be in school, disabled adults are more likely to be unemployed, and families with a disabled member are often worse off than average. (Sightsavers India 2011)

The rights of persons with disability due to mental illnesses have been neglected by the medical community as well as by the policy makers. We may be looking just the tip of iceberg as person with mental illness persons don't come forward to uphold their rights with fear of stigmatization and discrimination. Proper implementation of legislation and welfare schemes is essential without compromising the autonomy and privacy of these people. (Karkal and T.M 2014)

The NE Region does not have a common set of benefit schemes for PWDs. It is not always easy to identify the criteria for the award of the allowances paid to PWDs under different schemes in the different states. Thus, in terms of different schemes to help persons with disabilities and their families in the NE, each state has some specific programmes and there is little effort at arriving at some common minimum standards at the regional level. Documentation, reports, and research on the issues of disability and rehabilitation in the North Eastern Region are extremely limited. Even when produced, usually by NGOs, these are printed reports intended for private circulation and are difficult to access. Better information collection systems, sharing of information and systematic research studies are needed. In particular, participatory action research initiatives aimed at understanding gaps and challenges and to test innovative strategies are required. (Mobility India 2016)

The Sustainable Development Goals was unanimously adopted on 25th September, 2015 by the UN's 193 Member States, which address the needs of people in both developed and developing countries, emphasising that no one should be left behind. The SDGs are a set of goals to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all as part of a new sustainable development agenda. The SDGs calls for disability disaggregated data, inclusive and quality education, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, Reduce inequality and make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. Broad and ambitious in scope, the Agenda addresses the three dimensions of sustainable development: social, economic and environmental, as well as important aspects related to peace, justice and effective institutions. (Verma, et al. 2016)

The census gives a vivid picture that most of the PWDs are living in Rural India. The Institution based programmes will not reach the nook and corner of all the places since we are lacking rehabilitation professionals, fiancé, NGOs, and commitment. CBR is a low cost and effective programme and it includes community's participation in all the level. (Werner 1985)The rural disabled are at a disadvantage when compared with their access to resources, employment opportunities and rehabilitation is severely restricted. They often comprise the most neglected, marginalized and unlettered of their community. They are usually denied education and the right to enjoy normal social interactions and relationships. Families rarely take the trouble to educate their disabled daughters and disabled women are not given a change to find fulfilment in marriage and motherhood. Employment opportunities for

the uneducated and untrained disabled are so limited that the disabled person is considered a burden on the family, a drain on their meagre finances.

Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI), a statutory body, registers and maintains 16 categories of rehabilitation professionals. The persons registered with RCI shall be entitled to practice as a rehabilitation professionals/personnel in any part of India and to recover in due course of law in respect of such practice any expenses, charges in respect of medicaments or other appliances or any fees to which he/she may be entitled. No person, other than the rehabilitation professionals/ personnel who possess a recognized rehabilitation qualification and are enrolled on the Central Rehabilitation Register:

- shall hold office as rehabilitation professional or any such office (by whatever designation called) in Government or in any institution maintained by a local or other authority;

- shall practice as rehabilitation professional anywhere in India;

- shall be entitled to sign or authenticate any certificate required by any law to be signed or authenticated by a rehabilitation professional;

- shall be entitled to give any evidence in any court as an expert under Section 45 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 on any matter relating to the handicapped:

Any person who acts in contravention of any provision of above shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both (Rehabilitation Council of India Act, 1992).Education is free and compulsory for all school going children who are studying in the public schools up to 14 years. The PWD Act 1995 provides the privilege for the CWDs for their free education up to 18 years. Among 142 CWDs in the age category of 6-18 years, little more than two-fifth (42.95%) get inclusive education in public schools. Among 61 school going CWDs, just one-fifth (19.67%) got scholarships from the government. It is observed that most of CWDs do not have ID cards to apply scholarships. (Joseph and Raj, Community Based Rehabilitation Programme for Persons with disability in Cachar District of Assam, India 2014)

The social worker initiates Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Program for rehabilitation of persons with disability in their area. Social Action is a mass approach to fight for rights of disadvantaged section. The rehabilitation social worker acts as social activist and mobilizes PWDs as association and

federation to fight against the discrimination, exploitation, violence, injustice, etc. along with supporters of persons with disability. Social Welfare Administration is the process of transforming social policy into social services and the use of experience in evaluating and modifying policy. The social worker can plan and administer the rehabilitation programs of PWDs. Social Work Research helps to identify and evaluate the social problems and needs of PWDs, develop and evaluate the service delivery system and rehabilitation programs. (Joseph and William, Social Work with Disabled: An Integrated Social Work approach and practice for persons with disability 2014)

Livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets and activities required for the means of living with dignity. Focusing on accessing the rights related to livelihood of PWDs is one of the components of CBR programme. Among 302 PWDs in the project area, little more than one fourth (26.82%) of PWDs and their families obtained Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards. More than one-tenth (15.23%) PWDs and their families are benefitted with the various Government schemes - Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY), Swarnajayanti Grameen Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana (PMRY). It is observed that all the PWDs with old age get old age pension from the government. The Gram Panchayat Presidents and community members helped some PWDs by including them in MGNREA for getting 100 days work for their livelihood. (Joseph and Raj, Community Based Rehabilitation Programme for Persons with disability in Cachar District of Assam, India 2014)

Research Methodology

Barak valley of Assam is selected for the research. This valley consists of three districts viz., Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. Total disabled population of the Barak valley is 56012 as per 2011 census. Out of 56,012 PWDs, there are 27,457 PWDs (49.02%) in Cachar district, 18,832 PWDs (33.62%) are in Karimganj and 9,723 PWDs (17.36%) are in Hailakandi district. The purpose of the research is to find out the contemporary plight of PWDs in the Barak valley of Assam State. It further aims to study the challenges of PWDs for social inclusion in the mainstream, availability, accessibility and barriers of the government and NGOs programmes to PWDs. A total of 400 respondents (PWDs and parents) are selected as samples from the three districts namely Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi of Barak Valley of Assam State. The research study is qualitative and quantitative in nature. Based on the objectives of the study, a structured

interview schedule is designed to collect the data from the respondents. Apart from this, focus group discussion and case study method are employed to strengthen the research work.

Main findings

The followings are the main findings of the study;

Socio-economic Condition of PWDs

The present study reveals that majority of the respondents are between the age group of 11-20, they constitute 34.3% of the total respondents. Out of 400 respondents 56% of the respondents are male and 44 % are female respondents. A vast majority of the respondents (63%) are illiterate. Majority of the respondents (91.5%) are unmarried. It is found that the income of the majority of the respondents (32.8%) are between 5001- 8000. A vast majority of the respondents (96.8%) have their own house.

Health Conditions and Severity of Disability

The study is found that more than one-fifth of the respondents (23.5 %) live with loco motor disability. It is found that majority of the respondents (68.5%) have been affected with disability at the time of birth itself. Little more than two –third of the respondents (68.3%) expressed that due to birth deformities and medical problems during pregnancy, the disability is occurred. It is found that the majority of the respondents (68.8%) have disability certificate. The study is found that more than one-fifth of the respondents (22.5%) have the degree of disability between 70-80%.

Support System and Livelihood

The study highlights that majority of the respondents (62.3%) said the family atmosphere is supportive to a moderate extent. The little less than two-third of the respondents (65%) are satisfied with the respect given by their family/ guardian to a moderate extent. It is also found that more than half of the respondents (59.3%) agree that they receive support from their parents to resolve their difficulties to a moderate extent. The study explores that the parents and especially the mothers support their children. The study found that half of the respondents (50.3%) disagree with the statement that their family/ guardians have adequate resources to resolve their physical needs with regards to disability. It is also found that more than half of the respondents (53%) disagree with the statement that their family/ guardians have capacities to manage their disabilities. It is observed that majority of the respondents (64.3%) agree that their family members support their basic needs (foods, clothes etc.). Three-fourth of the respondents (76.5%) disagree

that their family/ guardians are not properly trained to manage their disability. A vast majority of the respondents (69%) do not receive any benefits/ facilities from the Government. Among the 124 respondents who receive the benefits, majority of them (91.7%) receive Deen Dayal Pension Scheme and the remaining (8.3%) get assistive devices.

Associations and Empowerment

The study is found that majority of the respondents (88.8%) are not the members of Disabled People Organization (DPO). It is found that only 20% of the respondents participate in Gram Sabha. It is found that less than half of the respondents (45.08%) of 244 eligible voters, do the democratic responsibility by casting vote regularly during the assembly elections.

Challenges of PWDs for social inclusion

The present study reveals that more than half of the respondent's (51%) condition permanently prevents them from working. It is found that more than one-third of respondents (35.8%) faced difficulties during admission at school. Surprisingly, a vast majority of the respondents (95%) do not continue their studies due to their poor socio-economic health condition and severity of disability. After completing L.P. school they find difficulties to go to high school as it is far away from their home and also difficult for them to travel. It is found that more than half of the respondents (59.75%) have no access to the learning opportunities. The study reveals that majority of the respondents (63.3%)are not able to access public transportation system and two-fifth of the respondents (41%)are not able to access public transportation because they find difficulties in boarding. It is observed that none of the respondents avail any concession in public transportation.

The study also reveals that people find difficulties to get disability certificate as the Medical College and other district hospitals are in the main town. PWDs and their family members have to travel far away to get certificate. It is another drawback that psychiatric disabled and multiple disabled people are depended on Silchar Medical College and Hospital where they have to come for screening to get disability certificate. The medical board have screening only once in the week which is on Friday. It is found that due to poor socio economic condition the family members are not able to compromise their daily wage to get certificate. It is quite difficult for them to spend whole day at hospitals for the screening.

The family members are quite depressed specially those having psychiatric disabled person in their family. They are worried about their future as there is no one after them to take care of person with psychiatric disability. It is also

found from study that people with loco-motor disabilities and blindness feel burden as they are deprived of economic participation because of their inability to work.

The study comes out with the fact that parents residing in the towns who have children with psychiatric disability are often worried and stressed as they go for the work, they have to keep their children under the custody of servants/ maids. They face difficulties in managing the family. It is also found that the parents face difficulties to foster or to take care of other non disabled children as they pay more attention to children with disability.

Perspectives of PWDs

The study reveals that majority of the respondents (65.3%) strongly agree that vocational training could make them productive .It is noted that little less than three-fourth of the respondents (74%) strongly agree that special education could promote the dignity of differently abled persons. A vast majority of the respondents (68.5%) strongly agree that awareness could help to remove the negative attitude of others about disability. Majority of the respondents (60%) strongly agree that social interaction can lead social skills. All the respondents and their family members expect civil society to accept them as they are and should spread awareness about the disability and also expect from the Government authority to provide comprehensive health care facilities, regular pension and other possible economic support, special schools in their localities, rehabilitation centres and livelihood opportunities.

Conclusion

The research paper is a new venture in the field of persons with disability in Barak Valley of state of Assam. Though there are the legislations, programs and policies for PWDs, it is necessary to design more accessible infrastructure and provide equal opportunities for PWDs to participate in all aspects of development for their social inclusion in the mainstream society.

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Socio-Economic Profile of Zeme Naga in Tamenglong District of Manipur

Moses Newme[1] & Lalzo S. Thangjom[2]

Abstract

This paper attempts to understand the demographic information, social structure, economy, culture, education, political and religion of Zeme Naga living in Tamenglong District of Manipur. The study is descriptive in nature and the data are collected from both primary and secondary sources. The Zeme Nagas are one of the cognate tribes of Zeliangrong Naga (comprises of Zeme, Liangmai Rongmei and Puimei). Racially, physically and linguistically the Zeme Nagas belong to Tibeto-Burman (Indo-Mongoloid) of Tibetan family of the Mongolian race. The Zeme Nagas lives in a hilly contiguous area in three north eastern states of India viz. Dima Hasao district (Assam), Tamenglong and Senapati districts (Manipur) and Peren district (Nagaland). Traditionally, the Zeme people follow patriarchal social system where male members enjoy the benefits of lineage and property inheritance. Shifting cultivation is the main occupation of the Zeme people. Besides, farming, artisans, fishing and hunting, carpentry and mistry, daily labourer, business are some of their subsidiary occupations. Thus, the main source of livelihood are agricultural and farming products, livestock, Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), etc.

Keywords: *Zeme Nagas, livelihood, economy, agriculture, religion*

Introduction

The Zeme Naga is one of cognate tribe of Zeliangrong Nagas which comprises of Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei Puimei. The Zeme Nagas racially, physically and linguistically belong to Tibeto-Burman (Indo-Mongoloid) of Sino-Tibetan family of the Mongolian race. The Zeme Nagas lives in a hilly contiguous area. During the Colonial rule, the Britishers placed them under three administrative divisions, viz. North Cachar district and Naga Hills district of Assam and Princely State of Manipur. Subsequently, the independent India demarcated following the colonial administrative units and they are placed in three North Eastern States, that is, Assam (in Dima Hasao district), Manipur (in Senapati and Tamenglong districts) and Nagaland (in Peren district). There are 206 Zeme Nagas villages with total population of 1,60,000 approximately in three North Eastern States of India (ZCNEI, 2012).

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Research Methodology

The researcher(s) used descriptive research methodology. The data are collected from both primary (using the semi-structured interview schedule) and secondary sources (such as Census Reports, articles and books).

Study Area

Tamenglong district (erstwhile known as Manipur West District prior to 1972) shares a border with Senapati district to the east, Peren district of Nagaland to the north, Dima Hasao district to the West, Churachandpur district to the South and Jiribam district and Cachar district of Assam to the South-West. The district covers an area of 4391 Sq. Km. which constitute 19.67 per cent of the geographical area of Manipur state (https://tamenglong.nic.in/). According to geography forest survey of India 2011, the district has 88.86% per cent of forestland from the total geographical area (India State of Forest Report 2011). According to 2011 Census, the district has a total population of 140,651 out of which 72,371 are males and 68,280 are females respectively. The district has four sub-divisions namely Tamenglong, Tamei, Noney and Tousem (Note: the existing Tamenglong district has been bifurcated by creating Noney sub-division as new district vide. Manipur Gazette No. 408 dated December, 9, 2016 Notification No. 16/20/2016-R dated December, 8, 2016).

The Zeliangrong Nagas are the dominant tribes of the district. Besides, few populations of other tribes such as Kuki, Hmar, Khasi, are also living in different parts of the district. Zeliangrong comprises the four cognate tribes - Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei and Puimei (Inpui) which have common origin, ethnic, cultural and linguistic affinity. These cognate tribes, the Zeliangrong, can be portrayed by their similarity in traditional songs, folk tales, folklores, legends, stories, naming of persons, etc. However, some dances, dresses, costumes, languages, etc. can reflect variations today due to their acculturation and assimilation with the neighbouring communities.

In this paper an attempt has been made to understand the socio-economic, political, educational, religion and cultural profile of Zeme Nagas living in Tamenglong district of Manipur.

Population

The Zeme people living in Manipur are mostly confined in Tamenglong and Senapati districts. According to Zeme Council North East India, there are 36 Villages with a population of 35,000 approximately in two districts of

Manipur. However, the present study mainly focuses in Tousem Sub-Division of Tamenglong district.

As per the Census 2011, there are 16 villages with a total of 1906 households of Zeme Naga in Tousem Sub-Division. However, there are 22 recognised Zeme Naga villages which are functioning for the administrative convenience in the district. For instance, the village Tousem has both New and Old and vice versa, but the census recorded as one village. It can be seen from the above table that there are 10,773 Zeme Naga population out of which 5417 are males and 5456 are females. Interestingly, the data shows that female's population are higher than the male counterpart. The Zeme Naga population accounts for 38.92% of the total sub-division population. Thus, it is confirmed that Zeme Naga is the single largest community in the region.

Social Structure

The Zeme Naga lives a simple and peaceful life. Most of the Zeme are living in upland areas and have a close interaction with nature. The Zeme society is based on traditional values, norms and culture. There is no class system among the Zeme community, every individual enjoys the equal status and opportunities. All the decision making for the community are based on democracy. By tradition, the Zeme Naga follow patriarchal system of family where male member enjoy the benefits of lineage and property inheritance legacy. The physical traits of Zeme are fair complexion, smaller eyes, black hair, sturdy, well-built and most of them are not very tall.

Clan and Lineage

The Zeme Naga adopts the patriarchal family system. The male member plays an important role in family affairs. In patriarchal system, the head of the family is father and all the important matters of family are bestowed upon the head. Most of the Zeme Naga practise nuclear family system, where the family consists of husband, wife and children. It is also observed the existence of joint family system among the Zeme Naga tribe, where grandparents, parents, children living together and sharing the same hearth. In the absence head of the family (father), then the eldest son become the head of the family provided he attain adulthood. On the other hand, if the son is minor, then the mother look after the family affairs until the son attain adulthood. In case of spinster or celibacy in the family, they would be under the control of the head of the family. Thus, the head of the family holds full responsibility for all family affairs, decision making, maintenance and looking after the welfare of the members of the family.

It is alleged that Pame and Newme were the original clans of the Zeme Naga. The same megaliths known as Stone of Pame and Newme at Makuilongdi proven the fact. The Zeme Nagas have the following clans and lineages with the original clans of Pame and Newme.

Original Clans: Pame (Mpame/Heu) and Newme (Haume/Hau)

New Lineages: Kuame/Nkuame, Riame/Ndaime, Daime/Ndaime, Panme/Mpanme and Zanme/Hezanme.

The new lineages of Zeme are believed to be rooted from the kindred tribes of Zeliangrong, that is Liangmai and Rongmei. It displays their original lineages such as Kuame/Nkuame (Kamei, Riame/Nriame(Remmei), Panme/Mpanme (Panmei), etc. of the Rongmei (AZSU, 2009).Generally, all the seven clans of Zeme Naga- Pame, Newme, Kuame/Nkuame, Riame/Ndaime, Daime/Ndaime, Panme/Mpanme and Zanme/Hezanme enjoy the equal status.

Marriage and Divorce

The Zeme Naga practises exogamy form of marriage where member choose their life partner outside their own clans. It is forbidden to enter into marital contract with the same blood line or clan. Marriage within the same clan may legally take place if the forefathers are distant relative or after ten generations. However, such incidents of marriages are rarely practised by the Zeme Community. Generally, the Zeme practises marriage by negotiation and consent. There is no such restriction to marry within the village, anyone can marry outside their villages and also other tribes. According to Zeme tradition, the specific season for marriage is Winter (preferably December and January). It was told that marriage during summer season is traditionally forbidden for the Zeme people but eloping and impregnated marriage do take place exceptionally. In some cases, the boy chooses the bride for himself and inform their parents after they agreed to marry. On the other hand, the boy's family member looks for the groom. The boy's family will send a word to the girl's family seeking with a proposal seeking hand of the girls and if the girl's family responded positively. Then, the boy's parents along with the elders and relatives would negotiate with the girl's parents for marriage. The elder would discuss about the bride price (where the boy has to pay a fixed amount to the girl family) and other conditions of the marriage. Upon mutually agreed on the terms and conditions of the marriage, the marriage would take place at the bride residence, where all the kins and relatives would be invited. There would be exchange of gifts (traditional shawls and handicrafts) between the bride and groom families. There are different types of marriages

practiced by Zeme people since time immemorial, they are: Holy marriage *(Mpaumei)*, normal marriage *(Naurang)*, simple marriage *(Macheu),* love marriage or elope *(Puipakbe)*and impregnated marriage *(Rehanena)*(Newme, 2015).

Divorce is permissible in Zeme custom; however, such cases are very rarely practising. Divorce may be granted on the grounds of breaching trusts, adultery, incompetent, impotent, abusive, etc. If he or she wish to enter into second or third contract of marriage, it is traditionally acceptable to do so. In case the husband or wife predeceased, the widower or widow may allow to remarry again if willing provided he/she should complete one year of mourning period (ZCNEI, 2012).

Settlement

Most of the Zeme Naga villages are located on the slopes of the hills and hills top. Only few hamlets are found near the river beds. It was believed that building houses in the hilly areas provide better advantage during the enemy raids. Thus, settlements were mostly built on the hill's tops. In olden days, the Zeme Naga like other Nagas tribes were known for headhunting. During those times the villagers build barricades or defensive stone or wooden walls on the main entry to the villages in order to restrict the movement of the other tribal groups. However, in the present day, most of the villages are gradually adopting the modern way of living. Traditionally, the villagers built their houses using raw materials available in the forest such as thatch for roofs, bamboo for walls and timber for pillars.

The study observed that since the Zeme people lives proximity to the forest, they mostly rely on forest resources such as timber, bamboo and thatch for construction of their houses. Many villagers opined that the transportation charge of construction materials such as tin, iron rod, bricks and cements are very high due to deplorable road connectivity. Some of the households benefitted from the government housing scheme known as PMAY-G (Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana Grameen) erstwhile Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY) which provide financial assistance or housing materials for constructing houses.

Economy

Agriculture is the backbone of Zeme Nagas' economy. Most of the people settled in the hilly areas are practising shifting and terraced cultivation as their main source of livelihoods. They are primarily dependent on agricultural production. They cultivate different varieties of crops (mostly indigenous crops) such as paddy, chilly, yam, maize, ginger, brinjal, beans, cucumber,

pumpkin, mustard leaves, etc. Apart from agricultural products, horticulture such as orange, banana, litchi, mango, etc identified as the important source of income. As Zeme Nagas are living in hilly areas, proximity to forest, they are dependent on forest for cultivation, timber and also Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) which add significant amount to their economy.

Livestock is also one of the major sources of income. They domesticated animals such as pig, poultry, cow, mithun (gayal), buffalo, dog, goat, duck, etc. for selling and consumption. People who have more livestock are generally known to have better economic status.

Weaving is one of the important economic activity of women folks, they followed traditional way of weaving shawls, mufflers, bags, etc. for household uses and also for selling in the market. Handicrafts is one of the activities that man folk (mostly elder people) practise. They use bamboo, cane and woods to carve / make different types of handicrafts such as baskets, bamboo cups, spoons, and many other traditional uses for household needs as well as for commercial purposes. The general occupations of the Zeme Naga tribes in the study are cultivator, farming (plantation and livestock), artisans, weaving and knitting, fishing, hunting and gathering, business, carpentry and mistry, etc.

Religion

The Zeme Naga followed the *Paupaise* (ancestral faith) and believed in almighty God, the creator of universe called *Tingwang (Herakandingpeu)*. Before the advent of Christianity, there was only one ancestral (forefather) religion called *Paupaise*. They were bound to strictly adhered the rituals and rites. The priest (*in Zeme'Tingkupeu'*) performed the consecrated sacrificial in any religious events, festivals and rites.

In the early 19th Century, the Christianity reached to the Zeme people in Tamenglong district of Manipur. The first Christian convert from the Zeme Community was Mr. Lungniambe from Mandeu village in the year 1940. Later, Christianity was spread to different villages and many people were converted to Christianity. Presently, all the Zeme villages in Tamenglong district are converted to Christianity.

Culture

The Zeme Naga is one of ethnic groups of North East India with rich and unique cultural heritages. The cultural traditions have been passing through the ages from their ancestors. They have diverse form of dresses, clothes and ornaments wear in various occasions for different age-groups. Their culture is

enriched with traditional attires, festivals, folk songs and dances, food and drinks, etc. All the festivals of Zeme Nagas are based on different stages of agricultural operations like before sowing of seeds, after completion of sowing, before harvesting, after harvesting, etc. Some of the important festivals are *HegaNgi, HeleikannabeNgi, PuakpetNgi, NchangNgi, 'NsimNgi*, etc. The religious rituals of all the festivals are performed by the village priest *Tingkupeu.*

Political

In olden days, the village chief priest *(Tingkupau)* is the head of the village, where he would call and performed all the genna rituals and the sole responsibility of the village lies on him. Other decision-making members in the village include the eldest person from each clan called *Hangkiame* would assist the chief priest. The chief priest is selected from the oldest among the village and he would remain till his death.

In the present times, all the villages are gradually adopted to modern administrative system which is based on democracy. The village council comprises of Chairman, Secretary and other authority members elected or selected by the village people govern the village administration. The village council is accountable for all the village development and other socio-cultural activities of the villages. The Village Chairman is the head of the village, all the decisions related to village development and other matters are taken on his behalf. Despite the functioning of the modern administrative system in the village, the customary laws are widely used by all the Zeme people in dealing with dispute cases and other problems in the village.

Education

Informal education system was observed even prior to the advancement of modern education, people do get education about the societal norms, practices and mores from their parents at home and from their villages elders at *morung* (youth dormitory). The modern education system came along with Christianity where people started getting formal education from the missionary school established by the Britishers. In the present day, many Zeme young people are gradually getting modern education in different parts of the country.

According to Census 2011, the literacy rate of Zeme people stands at 54 per cent of which 55.22 per cent for males and 44.78 per cent for females.Tousem village has the highest number of literate persons, followed by Magulong and Ketang villages. While Ketiang villages has the least number of literate persons. The reasons for low literacy rate are due to

poverty, lack of quality and higher educational institutes in the region. Though many villages have Lower Primary and Upper Primary School up-to Class V, nonetheless, many parents registered their children in private institutions due to lack of trust and quality education in government schools. The study also observed that there is only one government high school functioning in the sub-divisional headquarter, besides, one Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) exclusively for girls operating at New Mandeu Village. There is a huge demand for higher educational and quality institutes in the region.

Conclusion

The Zeme Naga is one of four cognate tribes of Zeliangrong Nagas which comprises of Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei Puimei. Racially and linguistically, they belong to Tibeto-Burman (Indo-Mongoloid) of Sino-Tibetan family of the Mongolian race. The Zeme Nagas are living in compact areas with a total population of 1,60,000 approximately inhabiting 206 villages in three North Eastern States viz. Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. In the context of Tamenglong district, the Zeme Nagas population accounted for about 10,773 with 1901 total households residing in 16 Census recorded villages (22 recognised villages for administrative purposes).

The Zeme Nagas are peaceful loving people mostly reside in upland areas and have a close interaction with nature. Their society is based on traditional values, norms and culture. There is no class system among the Zeme community, every individual enjoys the equal status and opportunities. All the decision making for the community are based on democracy. By tradition, the Zeme Naga follow patriarchal social system where male member enjoy the benefits of lineage and property inheritance legacy. The Zeme people practises exogamy form of marriage where member choose their life partner outside their own clans. It is forbidden to enter into marital contract with the same blood line or clan.

Agriculture is the backbone of Zeme Nagas' economy. Their major sources of livelihoods are agriculture, farming (plantation, horticulture and livestocks), handicrafts, weaving and knitting, fishing, hunting and gathering Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), etc. The Zeme Nagas rely on forest for all their economic activities (shifting or terraced cultivation, farming, gathering forest products, etc.) and construction of houses.

Before the advent of Christianity, the Zeme Nagas followed ancestral faith or religion called *paupaise*. Their ancestors or forefather believed in one supreme God; the creator of universe called *Tingwang (Herakandingpeu)*.

Even in the present day, some Zeme Nagas residing in Dima Hasao district still follow the ancestral religion. In the early 19th Century, the Christianity reached to the Zeme people in Tamenglong district of Manipur and presently, all the Zeme villages in Tamenglong district are converted are converted to Christianity.

The Zeme Naga is one of ethnic groups of North East India with rich and unique cultural heritages. The cultural traditions have been passing through the ages from their ancestors. They have diverse form of dresses, clothes and ornaments wear in various occasions for different age-groups. All the festivals of Zeme Nagas are based on different stages of agricultural operations like before sowing of seeds, after completion of sowing, before harvesting, after harvesting, etc. Some of the important festivals are *HegaNgi, HeleikannabeNgi, PuakpetNgi, NchangNgi, 'NsimNgi*, etc. The religious rituals of all the festivals are performed by the village priest *Tingkupeu.*

In olden days, the village chief priest *(Tingkupau)* is the head of the village, where he would call and performed all the genna rituals and the sole responsibility of the village lies on him. In the present day, all the villages are gradually adopted to modern administrative system which is based on democracy. The village council is accountable for all the village development and other socio-cultural activities of the villages. Despite the functioning of the modern administrative system in the village, the customary laws are widely used by all the Zeme people in dealing with dispute cases and other problems in the village.

Informal education system was observed even much prior to the advancement of modern education, people do get education about the societal norms, practices and mores from their parents at home and from their villages elders at *morung* (youth dormitory). The modern education system came along with Christianity where people started getting formal education from the missionary school established by the Britishers. As per the Census 2011, the literacy rate of Zeme people stands at 54 per cent of which 55.22 per cent for males and 44.78 per cent for females. The literacy rate is very low as compared to the other blocks due to lack of quality and higher educational institutions in the region. There is a huge cry for higher educational institutes, the concerned government department should intervened and provide necessary requisite infrastructures.

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Regional Interests and the Unequal Use and Distribution of Educational Resources in Odisha, India

Deepak Kumar Nanda[1] & Bipin Jojo[2]

Abstract

Reducing inequality is one of the goals of sustainable development and a growing concern for policy research. Moreover, ever since India's independence, reducing disparities has been the attention in planning and development but there are still both structural and causal issues continue. This paper contributes to the study of regional disparities in Odisha. It discusses the regional interests and the unequal use and distribution of educational resources in the Odisha state. In doing so it adopts a descriptive and analytical research design using a theoretical perspective of politics of development. It argues that the beginning of modern education; making of official state language, the language of instruction; and the current distribution of important educational institutions are done considering the regional interests of the eastern Odisha. That further resulted in the unequal use and distribution of educational resources between the eastern and western regions. Besides, there is an inevitable dispute due to their dissimilar preference and ideology or the competition between the regions on how to use, create and distribute the educational resources.

Keywords: *Regional Interest; Regional Disparities; Education; Politics of Development; Odisha*

Introduction

Ever since India's independence, it has evolved from a British imperial rule to a democratic ruling state and progressed significantly throughout its initial statist developmental model to the current day neo-liberalism. It has transformed into a parliamentary form of democracy with the blending of both central and federalist structure of government and governance. Besides, on the development front, the rate of poverty has decreased substantially, peoples' standard of living has improved, but when it comes to equity, a few reaped the benefits of growth exceptionally. In contrast, the most disadvantaged sections continue to live with deprivation and poverty (Drèze & Sen, 2013). Thus, the development it has achieved since independence has become polarised in the lines of caste, class and regions.

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Similarly, the regional disparities between the eastern and western regions in Odisha portray the accounts of India's uneven development in contemporary time. It is reflected in terms of income poverty and other human development dimensions like health, and education between the regions and various social groups (Government of Orissa, 2004; De Haan & Dubey, 2005). The state has registered a high growth rate in the last one-decade with above the rate of the national average in industrial and agricultural sectors (Government of Odisha, 2019). The average per capita income has increased and is highest among some of the lower-income states. The monthly per capita consumption expenditure (MPCE) among the bottom 30 per cent population in rural Odisha shows a positive trend. However, still, a large population lives in poverty despite the progress (The World Bank, 2016).

The progress has become polarised between the regions and social groups. The eastern region of the state has taken maximum benefits while sizable populations from the western and southern, northern and central regions live with limited choices and opportunities in human development. The regional imbalance inquiry commission revealed that the eastern region is more "developed" than the western, southern, central, and northern regions in "overall development" (Government of Odisha, 2008). In human development, all the districts of the eastern region except Balasore and Nayagarh were "developed". In contrast, only the district of Sonepur from the western region and no other districts from southern, northern and central region are "developed". The situation is further similar with infrastructural development where five districts out of nine from the eastern region are "developed" while other two districts from the rest of Odisha are developed and remaining districts are either developing or backward. Again to address the regional backwardness there is a separate development council called Western Odisha Development Council (WODC) (wodcodisha.nic.in). And the area of the development council can be seen in Figure No. 1.

Figure No. 1 Western Odisha Development Council Area
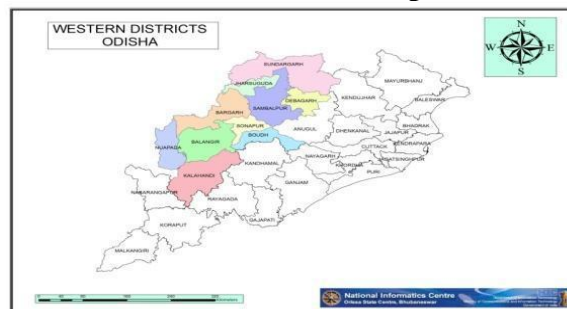
(Source: www.wodcodisha.nic.in)

Further, to be specific in the literacy rates, the eastern region is far better and advanced than the western region. According to census 2011, the eastern region is 13.43 per cent more literate than the western region. The gap between the two minimum literacy rate districts between both the parts is too high at 22.5 per cent. Another glaring fact is that even the minimum literacy rate of the eastern region is 0.9 per cent higher than the maximum rate of the western region. According to the census 2011, the mean average of the literacy rate in the eastern region is 83.56 per cent where the minimum literacy rate is 79.80 per cent in Balasore and the maximum rate is 86.90 per cent in Khurdha (see Table No. 1). Similarly, according to census 2001, the mean average of the literacy rate in the eastern region is 75.18 per cent where the minimum rate was 70.50 in Nayagarh, and the maximum literacy rate was 79.60 per cent in Khurdha.

Table No. 1 District-wise literacy rate in the eastern region

	District	Census 2011	Census 2001
Eastern Region	Balasore	79.8	70.6
	Bhadrak	82.8	73.9
	Jajpur	80.1	71.4
	Kendrapada	85.2	76.8
	Jgatsinghpur	86.6	79.1
	Cuttack	85.5	76.7
	Puri	84.7	78
	Khurdha	86.9	79.6
	Nayagarh	80.4	70.5

(Note: According to Census 2011; Minimum-79.80; maximum- 86.90, mean average- 83.56 and as per Census 2001; Minimum- 70.50 and maximum- 79.60, mean average-75.18)

(Source: Census of India 2011, Odisha Report)

On the other hand, in the western Odisha, according to the census 2011, the mean average literacy rate is 70.13 per cent where the minimum rate is 57.30 per cent in Nuapada, and the maximum rate is 78.90 in Jharsuguda district (see Table No. 2). Similarly, according to the census 2001, the mean average of literacy rate was 59.28 per cent where the minimum rate was 42.00 in Nuapada, and the maximum rate was 70.60 per cent in Jharsuguda.

Table No. 2 District-wise literacy rate in the western region

	Districts	Census 2011	Census 2001
Western region	Sudargarh	73.30	64.90
	Jharsuguda	78.90	70.60
	Sambalpur	76.20	67.30
	Bargarh	74.60	64.00
	Deogarh	72.60	60.40
	Sonepur	74.40	62.80
	Balangir	64.70	55.70
	Nuapada	57.30	42.00
	Kalahandi	59.20	45.90

(Note: According to Census 2011; Minimum- 57.30; maximum- 78.90, mean average- 70.13 and as per Census 2001; Minimum- 42.00 and maximum- 70.60, mean average-59.28)

(Source: Census of India 2011, Odisha Report)

Hence, according to census 2011, the difference between the costal and western regions in its mean average of literacy rate is 13.43 per cent while in minimum and maximum literacy rate it is 22.5 and 8 per cent. Again, according to the census 2001, the gap between the two regions in its mean average literacy rate was 15.9 per cent. While the difference in minimum and the maximum rate between the two regions was 28.5 per cent and 9 per cent.

However, the general notions of regional discrimination and bias in the distribution of public resources and infrastructures have led to multiple resistance and protests at various times. The demand for the creation of a separate *Koshal* state, and the establishment of various institutions including medical and judiciary in the western regions are some of its manifestations (Dixit, 2013). There were also protests and demands for the establishment of educational institutions in western, northern and southern regions on various occasions. In that context, the paper analyses and discusses the regional interests of the eastern region and the unequal use and distribution of educational resources in the state.

Regional disparities and underlying multiple factors

The spatial dimension of inequality is the growing concern for policy interest in recent times in China, Mexico, Russia, India, South Africa and many developing and transition economic countries (Kanbur & Venables, 2005). According to Shah & Guru (2003) "low level of a geographical capital and social-political marginalisation" is the reason for backwardness in both western-southern and central-eastern regions in India. Again, Shah (2010) suggests having four categories of backward regions—like "remote, low potential or marginal, less favoured, and weakly integrated". That includes the factors of topographical, socio-cultural, political, and governance. Similarly, Kurian (2000) suggests the backwardness of various states is due to "scarcity of water", "particular living style of the inhabitants—mostly the tribal"—and "the neglect of ruling elites". However, he further believes that the constraint of resources may be a major issue, but the role of the state and the ruling elites of the respective state are essential in balanced development.

Similarly, Kohli (2010) stresses the limited success of the redistribution system in BIMARU[i] states which are rooted in both society and politics in his comparative study between the states in India. Therein the Brahminical domination in state power is continued or challenged very recently, but the social characteristics have not been changed. On the other hand, in the southern states, the Brahmanical domination in state power was challenged in the early twentieth century, and the power was transferred to the hand of backward classes. Thereby seen the transformative changes in policy and a good investment in education and human development taking the states out of poverty and backwardness, but it is opposite in BIMARU states.

Similarly, according to Kanbur & Venables (2005), even if geographical factors affect the economic activities like distribution of industries, that doesn't impact the distributions of wellbeing especially the "infrastructure and public services" which are considered as the key determinants of household wellbeing in a region. That means the numbers and the quality of infrastructures in the area matter more than the household-specific characteristics. Here they indicate the role of the state in removing regional disparities than the mere explanation of neoclassical economy that does not recognise the inequality.

Again De Haan & Dubey (2005) attributed "entitlement failure" and "social discrimination and deprivation in access to education, economy, and the markets, arising out of exploitative social and economic processes" for the regional disparities in Odisha. That has historical and colonial roots arising

due to the "continued dominance of traditional elites, extremely heterogeneous population, limited development of decentralisation, low level of political awareness among poor people, and the role played by NGOs, civil society" (De Haan A., 2004).

Thus, the above introduced literature and mainly the multiple factors of politics, power, governance, society and people calls for a multidisciplinary conceptual framework to study and understand regional disparities. Therefore the current paper has adopted a theoretical perspective of politics of development to understand the unequal creation, utilisation and distribution of educational resources.

Unequal use and distribution of resources and the perspective of politics of development

To understand the unequal use and distribution of resources in development, especially the role of the state and the ruling elites in balanced development, the politics of development is one of the theoretical perspectives. It is based on the ideas that 'all development is political and not managerial or administrative in the conceived technical sense' (Leftwich, 2000). That is, the process of development in any human society involves the organisation, mobilisation, combination, in the use and distribution of resources—material and non-materials—in new ways. However, that leads to inevitable disputes among individuals and groups or their combination on the way of using resources. That is because of the calculation of gain and loss as a result of different configurations. It is applicable in all the spheres from the grass-roots or national level in both developed and developing societies. In short, the perspective of politics of development enables thinking that there are various ways of promoting development based on interest and ideology. However, the selected ways/path of development depends upon who is in power and the possibility of future benefits (Tornquist, 1999). Since the "public contestations of organised and unorganised powers over access to resources, that are created and distributed in a particular way benefiting one group over another at one or some point of time" (Wolin, 1996).

Hence, after putting the disparities into perspective, it can be assumed that educational development vis-à-vis the inequality in the distribution of educational opportunities is political and not managerial or administrative in the technical sense. There are inevitable disputes in the use, production and distribution of educational resources on how that would be used based on the calculation of gain and loss. Moreover, the disputes are both for tangible and intangible in use, production and distribution of resources. That resulted in
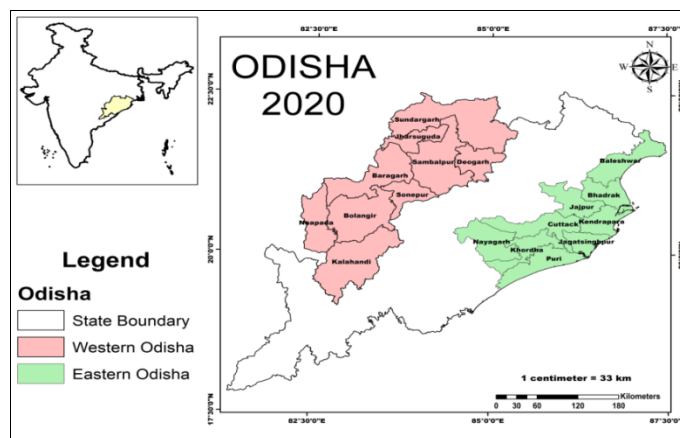
unequal use and distributions of educational resources between the regions and social groups, leading to inequality of outcome in education.

Moreover, in the political analysis of development, Leftwich (2004) finds three broader inter-connected and inter-dependent analytical themes of "people", "power" and "resources". Nevertheless, the paper has confined its analysis of resources—educational resources—and the regional interests concerning the eastern and the western region in Odisha.

Methodology

The objective of the paper is to understand the eastern regional interests in the unequal use and distribution of educational resources in Odisha. In doing so it has used a descriptive and analytical approach using both historical analyses supported with narratives from the field. The analytical focus is on the eastern and western regions of Odisha based on the geographical divisions of Regional Imbalance Inquiry Commission (Government of Odisha, 2008). The eastern region includes the districts of Balasore, Bhadrak, Jajpur, Kendrapara, Jagatsinghpur, Cuttack, Puri, Khurda, and Nayagarh; whereas the Western region includes the districts of Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur, Bargarh, Deogarh, Sonepur, Bolangir, Nuapada, and Kalahandi (Figure No. 2). Further, "politics of development" as the theoretical framework has been used which is multidisciplinary in its approach.

Figure No. 2 Location map of eastern and western Odisha in India

Regional politics in the distribution of educational resources

The eastern regional interest is very much seen with the unequal use and distribution of state educational resources. In this respect three major interests

are been discussed in this section. First, is the imparting of first modern education in the eastern region; second, are the eastern regional language and the making of the state official language and the language of instruction in school and colleges. The third one is the current regional interests and unequal distribution of educational institutions between the regions. That is, historically the interests of eastern region have been made as the state resources leading to unequal use and distribution of resources between the regions. This has been the advantage for eastern region while the disadvantage for the western region.

Imparting first modern education in the eastern region

Historically the centre of education was the eastern districts of Cuttack, Puri and Balasore during the British rule. In contrast, the western region was under the feudal rulings and joined the state after India's independence in 1948. That is seen with the first school was established in Cuttack in 1822 by the Christian missionaries operating from Calcutta. By the year 1858-59, the number of schools was 30, which became 63 in 1868 and 95 in 1870. The first college of Orissa was established in Cuttack in 1876 which was renamed as Ravenshaw College in 1979. Other institutions like teacher training school were established in 1869; a medical school was established in 1875 in Cuttack (Samal, 2009). That means Cuttack being the capital of the British government became the centre of education in primary, middle school, college, and medical education. Furthermore, by the beginning of twentieth-century education was already spread among the rural masses, and there were good public responses towards the initial education (Acharya, 2011).

On the other hand, modern formal education was introduced in the early twentieth century with the encouragement of the British government in the western region (Cobden-Ramsay, 1910). In 1901 only 2.7 per cent (5.3 males and 0.19 females) of its population could read and write. The total number of students in both primary and middle schools increased to 47,468 against the number of students 22,622 in 1901-02. In 1907-08, there were only three high schools present in this region—in the district headquarters of Bamara, Dhenkanal, and Mayurbanj states. There were 20 Middle schools in English medium, 7 in vernacular medium, 145 Upper Primary, and 1,415 Primary Schools. The students of High and Middle schools were 3110 while 41,788 in Primary schools (*Ibid*).

It can be said that those territories or regions that came early under the British regime got early modern and formal education than the province or region that came later. That is the reason; the eastern districts of Cuttack, Puri, and Balasoregot introduced the modern formal education in the second decades of

the nineteenth century while the western region got introduced in the early twentieth century. There are around four decades of gaps or can be said as one generational gap between the eastern and western regions in introducing modern formal education. The feudal rulers were educated but did not emphasise the education for ordinary people like in the eastern districts. As a result the eastern region took the maximum benefits of early education in the creation of human resources than the other areas of western and southern regions. Hence, the disparities between the regions in educational attainments are unequivocal. This 'historical disadvantage of the western region' and the 'inadequate presence of women and SC & ST teachers among teachers in comparison to the total SC & ST students' are the reasons of low literacy rate among the SC-STs and in the western region (Khora, 2005) .

Unequal distribution of educational institutions across regions

There are significant differences in the educational infrastructures and level of accessibility between the eastern and western regions. In every level of education, the eastern area has more number of schools and colleges than the west region; therefore, it can be said the accessibility is likely to be more than the western part. Hence, the disparities at a higher level of education are more explicit.

As per the number of schools is a concern, there were a total of 36399 primaries and 21945 upper primary schools in the state (Government of Odisha, 2015). However, the eastern region has a total of 10,831 primary schools, and 465habitations are still without primary schools. It has a total of 7486 upper primary schools in the region, and 175 habitations are still without upper primary schools. In terms of high schools, the region has 2952 in its nine districts altogether (Table No. 3). On the other hand, the western region has a total of 8857 primary schools, and still, 886 habitations are without any primary schools. Similarly, it has a total of 5432 upper primary schools, and 461 dwellings are without the upper primary schools. Again the region has 1720 high schools.

Table No. 3 Distribution of Primary, Upper Primary and High schools in the eastern and western region

Sl. No.	Region	Primary schools	Habitations without primary schools	Upper primary schools	Habitations without upper primary schools	High schools
1	Eastern	10,831	465	7486	175	2952
2	Western	8857	886	5432	461	1720

Source:(Government of Odisha, 2015)

In terms of the number of colleges, the data shows that the eastern region has a total of 660 junior colleges. Hence the total number of colleges per each ten thousand populations in the region is 0.41. On the other hand, the western region has a total of 423 numbers of junior colleges that amounts to 0.42 per cent to each ten thousand populations (Table No. 4). So in terms of population, the situation is almost the same in both the regions.

Table No. 4 Number of +2 colleges in the eastern and western region

Sl. No.	Region	No. of colleges	No of colleges per each 10,000 population
1	Eastern	660	0.41
2	Western	423	0.42

Source: (dheodisha.gov.in, 2019)

However, the eastern region has more opportunities for higher education. The eastern region has more and reputed universities and institutions than the western region. The first college of Odisha called Ravenshaw College was established in Cuttack (ravenshawuniversity.ac.in). The first university of Odisha called Utkal University was established in Bhubaneswar in 1943 (utkaluniversity.nic.in). Currently, the region has some other universities and institutions like Fakir Mohan University at Balasore; Ramadevi Women's University at Bhubaneswar; Sri Jagannath Sanskrit University at Puri and National Law University at Cuttack. Furthermore, out of a total five private universities in the state, four are situated in the eastern region that is Sri Sri University at Cuttack; Xavier University at Bhubaneswar; Birla Global University at Bhubaneswar; and ICFAI University at Bhubaneswar. There are also two deemed to be universities, namely Siksha 'O' Anusandhan University (SOA) and Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology University (KIIT), and both are situated in Bhubaneswar. Again as many as eight

institutes of national importance are established only in the national capital of the state.

On the other hand, the first university in the western region was established in 1966 at Sambalpur (www.suniv.ac.in). The region was completely dependent upon Sambalpur University for its higher education, but later, Gangadhar Meher University was established in 2015 by upgrading the earlier autonomous college (gmuniversity.ac.in, 2015). Another two universities namely, Rajendra University, at Balangir, and Kalahandi University at Bhawanipatna, are yet to function after its declaration for the up-gradation from the previous autonomous colleges to universities in 2019. Again the western region has not even a single private university in any field of study compared to the four universities in the eastern region.

Language of instruction in school and colleges

Odia is the official language of the state after it became a separate state and after independence. However, there is also *Sambalpuri* language (dialect) in the western region, and at least other 62 tribal languages in the state excluding the language of Dalits and Other Backward Classes.

Thus, with the making of Odia as the official language and the medium of instruction in school education, the students of the eastern region took significant benefits as it has been their mother tongue. That could have been different situation, had there been *Sambalpuri* as the medium of instruction - says the retired teacher-cum-Koshal activist[ii]. He further says:

Yes, a student in this area will get low scores. Students of Cuttack, Puri, and Balasore or that area will get more scores than our students. Let them examine their mother tongue. I will tell them they will fail because they are passing out with cheating. Why am I an activist now? Because I know what is happening. When I came to know such things, I do not hate them, but they are so nonsense that they behave very indifferently (A retired teacher and a Koshal movement activist).

Moreover, the differences of language among the regions and communities made it difficult for all to be fluent in Odia language equally. In this regard, the editor[iii] Samadrusti Odia journal said that "in the southern and western region, language is one of the barriers in education" because the medium of education is Odia. Differences can be observed that in the southern region, the natives address the people from the eastern region i.e. the Cuttack, Puri, Bhubaneswar region as "Odia people", says a development professional and high court advocate[iv]. Similarly, people from the western region address the people of the eastern region as "*Katakia*"(people from Cuttack). Therefore he

further added that "people from the southern and western regions have to learn Odia language to be an Odia. For them, Odia is the second language even if it is an official mother tongue in Odisha". He further said that "in the southern region, people who speak Odia are considered as educated and belong to high class as Odia speaking people would look at the English speaking person as educated and from high class".

Similarly, another retired teacher[v] from western region opines that "students of western region are passing out since there is the provision of up-gradation in the education system till high schools; otherwise they would fail in Odia subject because of the difference in languages. On the other hand, it is easy for the students from the coastal region to grasp the language because of their mother tongue".

On the difficulties of language, Meher (2002) also argues for separate education material in local dialects/language in the tribal-dominated districts to retain the interest in learning. For him, the present situation is painful and difficult for tribal students. There are provisions of multi-language teaching, but that is neglected. To which a political and social activist[vi] says that 'the government neglects multi-language teachers without regularising their positions in thr job. According to him, they should be given the credit of reducing the dropout rate in Odisha, but they would sit for demonstrations at master canteen square at Bhubaneswar for their demands to regularise their job'.

That shows the conflict between the eastern and western region in the making of the state language. There are multilingual people in the north-west and southern regions but the language spoken in the eastern region has been recognised as the official language of the state and so the medium of instruction in the state run schools. The eastern region has influenced the language policy according to their preference which has an advantage for their accessibility and benefits. As the idea of politics of development entails the process of development in any human society with the organisation, mobilisation which combines the use and distribution of resources—material and non-materials—in new ways. However, that leads to inevitable disputes among individuals and groups on the use of resources. That is because of the calculation of gain and loss as a result of different configurations (Leftwich, 2000). Hence, the unequal distribution of educational resources can be explained with the idea of politics of development (Leftwich, 2000; 2004) in terms of the conflict between the eastern and western region. That is arising due to the calculation of profit and loss like the easy accessibility of the resources physically. However, the existence of more educational institutions

at higher-level education in the eastern region portrays its dominant position and influencing capacity in the state's decision making process for easy accessibility.

Conclusion

Interests of eastern region and the unequal use and distribution of educational resources have been historically advantaged. It is attributed as political and not technical or managerial. There is a historical disadvantage to the western region due to the late introduction of the modern education system compared to the eastern region. That means, there is a historical advantage to the eastern region which has "historical and colonial roots" (De Haan, 2004). However, that is also applicable in the case of making Odia language as the official language and the medium of instruction in school education. That became a language barrier in the western region while benefits for the eastern region. That means, historically, the interests of the eastern region have become a priority in the use and production of state educational resources.

Further, the current unequal distribution of educational institutions between the eastern and western region is creating unequal access to education between both the regions. That may be because of "low level of geographical capital" (Shah & Guru, 2003) or the "remote" and "less favoured region" (Shah, 2010). In other words, it can be also inferred that the western region is less favoured in the distributions of educational institutions at a higher level of education due to the interest of eastern region. There could be reasons like "entitlement failure" and "social discrimination and deprivation in access to education" (De Haan & Dubey, 2005) or could be the "limited success in redistribution system" (Kohli, 2010). However, there is the role of the state in bringing balanced development (Kurian, 2000; Kanbur & Venables, 2005). The role of the state is supposed to create equal priorities between the regions and different sections of society. That has failed somewhere or not been addressed adequately in the past as well as in the present time and has compromised the state interests with the interests of eastern region.

That shows the inevitable disputes due to their dissimilar preferences and interests between the eastern and western regions on how to use, create and distribute the educational resources (Leftwich, 2000; 2004). The preference or the interests is the motive of benefits with easy accessibility in their respective region. For instance, the most and the reputed higher educational institutions are located in the eastern region; the first modern education was also started in the eastern region, and the medium of instruction in the state is also the language of the eastern region. As a result, the conflict is apparent

because of the diverse nature and preference of people and regions, and the state policy has favoured the eastern regional preference and interests. On the other hand, there is no balance between the preference and interests of the eastern and western regions in creation, utilisation and distribution of educational resources—both tangible and intangible.

Endnotes:

[i] Abbreviation of the states together called Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh which is known as one of the poorest states in India.

[ii] The participant is a retired teacher and Koshal movement activist. He was also a state resource person. The interview was conducted on 8th September 2018 between 4.00 pm to 5.00 pm at his residence at Sonepur.

[iii] The participant is an editor of an Odia magazine based in Bhubaneswar. The interview was conducted on 1st March 2019 between 1.00 – 1.30 pm at his office at Bhubaneswar.

[iv] The participant is an experienced development professional and a High Court advocate based in Cuttack. The interview was conducted on 25th February 2019 between 7.30 – 8.15 pm at Cuttack.

[v] The participant is a retired teacher from Balangir, and the interview was conducted on 5th September 2018 between 5.30 – 6.00 pm at his residence.

[vi] The participant is a social and political activist from Bhubaneswar. The interview was conducted on 23rd November 2018 between 11.30 am to 1.00 pm at his residence.

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Insurgency in North East India: With Special References to the State of Manipur

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Abstract

Every Northeastern State in India shares an International boundary with the neighboring countries. North Eastern Region is well known for its natural beauty and its abundance of unexplored resources. This brings to the NE both development and destruction as well. It is also a hot breeding ground for Insurgencies. Ethnic conflicts and Insecurity is the talk of this region be it tribal or non-tribal of states. This paper will mainly deal with the regional conflict in Manipur with its abundance of insurgency groups in the state. Although Manipur is India's "Gate way to the East" it has lots of unique challenges due to poor infrastructure, low economic development, unemployment, law and order problems and above all the insurgency problems. The state needs to come out with concrete solution to the threat and insecurity that is faced both by the civil and government servants especially from the insurgency groups, so that economic development would be dealt presumably.

Key words: *Insurgency, Manipur, North East India.*

Introduction

The Northeast India refers the easternmost region which comprises the states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and Sikkim. All the eight states lies along the international borders surrounded by five neighboring countries viz. China, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh. This NE region is connected to the mainland through a small corridor commonly known as the Chicken's Neck, a narrow passage.

Northeastern States of India known as homeland for large number of ethnic groups who came to the region from different directions at different historical times. These groups belong to the different racial stocks, speak different languages, and have varied socio-cultural traditions. As a result, the region has become the epicenter of numerous ethnic nationalities, especially the society, in the hills of Northeast reflects a high degree of diversity as each community living there has its distinct characteristics.

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Manipur is a progressive, multi-ethnic, and culturally rich state blessed with abundant natural resources that could have been a model for other neibhouring states but it has been caught in the cross-road of violence unleashed by multi-ethnic insurgency for the past decades which has created a poor picture for the state. It is a heart pinching moment to hear Manipur state as a picture of violence, corruption, poor governance, ethnic conflicts and an unforgettable insurgency problems which is a major root to all the above.

Insurgency in Northeast

The Northeastern states of India have an advantage as each State shares at least one or more International boundaries giving easy access to other countries for various purposes. The unwanted activities which may endanger the country with peaceful existence. Although, NE is known for its rich natural resources like the wonderful scenic beauty fertile soil, wide rivers, blue hills, pollution free environment and many other special features with high scope of developing the culture of entrepreneurship particularly in the rural areas in the states. But due to insurgency groups which are active in most of the Northeast states with the exception to Sikkim, Mizoram, and Arunachal Pradesh.

It is difficult to carry on various developing activities in the states. We can witness a periodic incident of violence, extortion, bomb blast, kidnapping happening in all the States. The unwanted activities of insurgency has somewhat subsided in Northeast India over the years due to various groups coming over ground and signing peace treaty or cease fire. A good e.g. Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN-IM) signed a peace accord on 3rd August 2015 with the Government of India.

Militancy in Manipur

Manipur one of the Northeastern states situated along the eastern part of the Indo-Myanmar border. The state settled by so many ethnic groups of people who practice different traditions, cultural, religion etc. Manipur is one of the most disturbed states in Northeast region with a large number of insurgents groups operating in the state since its different ethnic groups demand their own rights. Many political leaders explain saying that the rise of insurgency in Manipur is due to unemployment among the educated youths and the low economic development in the state. But, the history of the rise of insurgency in Manipur shows that it was due to the demand for their own rights and also protecting themselves from the various problems arising, due to ethnic groups of people from different tribes.

In Manipur there are more than 40 insurgence groups operating in the state,of which some of the insurgence groups are: United National Liberation Front (UNLF) November 24[th]1964. People Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) 1977. Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) September 25th 1978. Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP) 1980. Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) 1980s. Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-K)April 30,1988.Kuki Liberation Army (KLA)1992, Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL)1994. Zeliangrong United Front (ZUF)2012.

Manipur

Manipur state is the Gate way to the East as it shears an international boundary with Myanmar that connects with other countries to the East. There are a lot of businesses scopes in Manipur as the goods that comes from the Southeast Asia continent are brought through it. Many young entrepreneurs take up different trade of business in the state; But Infrastructure, especially the road condition, transportation; the network that connects the state is very poor which slower the growth of entrepreneurship in the State.

There are other reasons that do not create an environment for the growth of entrepreneurship in the state as there are insurgents of different groups wanting to control the market and create lot of fear in the minds of the people by imposing different kinds of taxes. Since Manipur is inhabited by many ethnic groups; when the government doesn't satisfy them the only steps is road blockage or call for a bandhs which is one of the main reason which deteriorate the interest of the young aspirant entrepreneurs in the state as law and order is never stable in the state.

In Manipur the insurgent group can be divided into three major heads. In the valleys mostly the Meitie underground groups and in the hills there are two groups one belonging to the Naga and the other Kuki. Under which they have their own territorial area of their control. Most of the insurgent groups almost run as a parallel to the government.

The most prominent outfits operating in Manipur are the People's Liberation Army (PLA). People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak (PREPAK), Kangleipak Communist Party (KCP), Kuki National Organization (KNO/KDF) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (Singh, 2000)

Reasons for the rise of Insurgency in Manipur

Manipur was ruled by the kings before the Kingdom was conquered by the British following the brief Anglo-Manipur War of 1891, becoming a British protectorate. The Kingdom of Manipur was merged with the Indian Union on 15 October 1949. After a protracted agitation it was declared a separate state in 1972. The alleged 'forced' merger of Manipur and the delay in the conferring of full-fledged statehood to it was greatly resented by the people of Manipur. (Sasikala, 2020)

If we look back to the history as to how the insurgencies have started it will be worthwhile reflecting on their aspirations and motives behind the origin. The founders of various insurgency groups have a particular objective which was worthy fighting for it. For e.g. Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) who just signed a peace accord with the Government of India on August 3rd, 2015. They have a particular objective to bring all the Naga inhabitant area under one umbrella. Likewise every insurgency groups have their own aspiration to fight for their rights their Ideologies. Some wanted to have a separate state while others want regional autonomy or a complete independent state. In addition, the followings are also causes for the rise of militancy in Manipur.

1. **Individualism:-** Manipur is divided into two main geographical features viz. the Hills and the Valleys. In the valley there are Meitie insurgents cover up as most of them live in the plain and in the Hills there are two fractions one is NSCN that belongs to the Naga and the other is Kuki People Army. These insurgent groups are fighting to protect their individual rights, territory, tradition, custom and language.

2. **Unemployment:-** With the growing demand for more jobs the government is unable to provide job opportunity to all. However, the youth need something to sustain them. Therefore the unemployed youth join the insurgency group as it is one of the easiest ways of earning for themselves.

3. **Lack of education:-** Many of the youth who join the insurgencies are either they are school drop-out or not educated properly which results the situation worse as they rule with ignorance making the society un-adjustable for them in working for the good of the common people. But there are many educated unemployed youth have joined in these recent times due to lack of availability of employment.

4. **Lack of finance:-** Finance is one of the most important aspects of life and the easiest way to earn money and have financial sustenance for

self is be one of them. Since the common people are very much frightened and insecure of the undergrounds, it makes it easy for them to collect money through various ways like kidnapping, threatening and taxes etc.

5. **Revengeful thought:-** Some of the youths join the insurgency groups for taking revenge of various reasons like many of their serious cases left unbothered, ignored and unsolved; land dispute, not given job opportunity available for them, insult to the family or mistreated by rich people etc. In this way they try to fulfill their wishes.

6. **Orphan:-** There are many young orphans who join the insurgency groups as they have no one to look after them and support them. Out of helplessness they join the groups to earn their living.

7. **Peer groups influence:-** The peer group's influence is one of the most effective elements that make them join the insurgence group. There is a close bond of friend circle and that brings lots of harm if their peer groups are not in the right track.

8. **Depression:-** Many of the youths join because they find themselves useless and rejected by the society. Some frustrated and unemployed Youth due to corruption and mal-practices in the state also join insurgency groups. Therefore to survive in the society they need some source and influences of this kind of group and join them.

9. **Easy money:-** The youth of today are looking only for money and they know that in joining insurgency group, they can have everything. They want by utilizing all the power they have. The common people are very much scare of the insurgencies from any group and give whatever is demanded by them. It attracts more people to join those groups to get easy money.

10. **Poverty:-** Due to poverty and unable to get education some youths join this insurgence groups for survival in the society. Survival is a must however ways a person follow for that reason people join insurgency to attain their aim.

Some of the negative impact of insurgency

It is observed that the formation of various insurgent and radical groups was initiated with some genuine reasons. But later many of them have forgotten what they are really supposed to work for it. Instead they have taken up some activities that are disliked by the common people at large. The following are some of the points of negative impacts of insurgency brought to the society.

a) **Forgotten ideology:-**The saddest parts of the insurgence groups are that most of the insurgency group had forgotten their ideology that they are fighting for or required to follow. At present they are looking only for Money and Power. They have overlooked their ideology that was set for them by their founder leaders: who favour for a separate state, seek for a regional autonomy and fight for complete independence, which is a genuine fight for the groups.

b) **Slow development:** The government has implemented many projects and schemes for the development and improvement of the state but there the development seems to be in a very slow pace. One of the reasons is when the schemes and projects that come to the state, the insurgency groups in one way or the other in the form of taxes or percentage take certain amount of money which makes the development a very slow in the state.

c) **Create insecurity:-**Security in one of the most important elements of every citizen to live, settle and move freely without any fear. But the presences of insurgent groups have created insecurity in the minds of the common people. As cases like kidnapping for a ransom or looting happens every now and then.

d) **Bribery and Corruption:** Bribery and corruption have increased with the increase of insurgency groups in Manipur because the more the insurgence groups the more different types of taxes to be paid; as a consequence more capital is needed. Therefore extra money is taken for a particular work.

e) **Election:-**At the time of election some of the insurgents group take active part in it. Where in many cases it observed that people are even force at gunpoint to vote for a particular candidate which is a crime in a democratic country like India.

f) **Poor investment in the state:-**For fear of demand from the insurgence groups many of the rich people hide their wealth instead of investing to some profitable work. Hence to invest or start an entrepreneurship a person should have good connection with both the underground groups and the over ground.

g) **Tax to insurgents groups:-**Business people who come to Manipur for trade or to start a business must have good relations with everyone especially with all the available in that area and be ready to pay taxes. It is common amongst the government employee to give compulsory contribution to the insurgent groups. Even the contractors should pay

certain percentage in order to implement certain projects. The percentages may be different and vary from one to another.

Social changes claimed by the insurgent groups in their territorial areas

There are always negative and positive of every issue so also the insurgent groups have also several positive things in them. Many insurgent groups have also contributed to the growth of the various communities in the state. Below are some points to be noted.

i. **Protect the society identity and territorial areas**:-Many of the insurgencies try to protect their own traditional identities like their cultural, traditional activities. They fight for their territorial area from the other tribes or communities and keep up their land keep under their control.

ii. **Control the trouble makers**:- It is observed that in the communities there are many trouble makers who are not able to control by the societies and communities especially in the hilly areas. This insurgencies help in bringing them to the main stream of life. Especially interior places where

iii. **Land and property disputes**:-There are many case especially in the Hills of Manipur With regards to land dispute when both groups finds unable to draw a healthy conclusion especially in hilly region; cases are being forwarded to them for solving it.

iv. **Improvement in offices and institutions**:-Many of the offices and institution runs well due to the threat of undergrounds. There are many instances where this insurgent group does a yeomen's work by visiting and inspecting offices and schools so that they run well with all the facilities available to them.

Suggestions

The followings are some of the suggestions to minimize insurgencies in north east with special reference to the state of Manipur.

a) **National Integration:** The youths of today should be taught about various nation building with activities like National Service Scheme (NSS). National Cadet Crops (NCC) in school and collages so that the younger generation would be exposed to outside state and join hands in building democratic society.

b) **Peace Studies:** The Higher educational institutions like the University and colleges and School Board must offer course on Peace Studies to the

student youths and emphasize the peace among different ethnic groups and the development of Manipur State.

c) **Create awareness among the public**: - The common people of the state should be made aware of the ill effect of insurgencies in the society.

d) **Negotiation and Reconciliation**:-The government must initiate a peaceful and correct step in bringing all the insurgency groups to come over to the table for negotiation and bring a peaceful solution. It is always good to reconcile the past mistakes for the common interest of the people.

e) **Special Recruitment**: The state and central governments must recruit the youths as a special drive in the areas of insurgencies into various departments including arm force to bring them in the main stream for nation building.

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COVID-19: The Cost of Economic Crisis on Psychological Health

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Abstract

The world has changed dramatically in the last couple of months due to COVID-19. To fight against this deadly virus all the countries in the world including India has implemented necessary quarantines and social distancing practices by putting the world in a great lockdown. Many countries are now facing multiple crises—physiological and psychological health crisis, economic crisis which interact in complex ways. Hence, the Coronavirus pandemic is a threat not only to human physiological life and ensuing economic crisis, but also to apparently invisible psychological health. This is a truly global crisis as no country is spared. Countries reliant on tourism, travel, hospitality, and entertainment for their growth are experiencing particularly large disruptions (Gopinath, G., 2020). This in turn will affect the socio-economic decline of the citizen of respective countries. People's mental health is influenced by socio-economic decline through loss of jobs and hurdles in income. The previous studies have documented that unemployment, increased workload, wages reduction and staff reduction/ golden handshake, were associated to an increased rate of mood disorders, anxiety, depression, stress and suicide. The present study tries to explore the effect of financial crisis on psychological health during lockdown period.

Key words*: Lockdown, Financial crises, Depression, Anxiety, and Stress.*

Introduction

India was put under a lockdown from March 25, 2020 to arrest the spread of coronavirus infections. Since then, the human race is witnessing an unprecedented financial, physical, and psychological health crises brought by corona virus across the earth. As a result the world has changed dramatically in the last couple of months. A sharp decline has been found in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). $180-billion Information Technology (IT) sector faced a huge challenge for business continuity (Business Standard, 2020). The market is falling, the production units are standing still, and millions of people are suffering the wreck of unemployment (Mandurnekar, 2020). Many of the companies are not prepared to work from home set up.

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The healthcare sector is at the epicenter of this pandemic challenge, and the private sector has risen to the occasion, by offering to the government all the support it needs, be it testing support, preparing isolation beds for the treatment of Covid-19 positive patients or deploying equipment and staff in identified nodal hospitals (The Economic Times, 2020). While the private healthcare sector is fully prepared for every eventuality, it is also a matter of fact that, unlike other sectors, the health sector is facing a pain too. The industry has been witnessing loss of business and is expected that it would take time to rejuvenate. The medical devices industry has also taken a hit. The country imports consumables, disposables and capital equipment including orthopaedic implants, gloves, syringes, bandages, computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging devices from China. In case of Pharma, Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API) is largely produced by China. Disruption in supply chains may occur as India is the largest supplier of generic drugs worldwide and nearly 70% of its API requirements are fulfilled by imports from China (Mandurnekar, 2020). Due to the current crisis in China, the medical device manufacturers and Pharma companies across India are finding it difficult to import important raw materials and electronic components from Chinese factories. This crisis comes at a time when India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth was already slowing down, and unemployment was on the rise owing to poor economic performance over the last several years (Dev & Sengupta, 2020). In this juncture we can expect a sharp decline in the country's GDP. Whether the decline will be V-shaped or U-shaped will depend on the length of the lockdown and the effect of the fiscal stimulus package enacted by the government (Sen, 2020). In the stake of economic crisis unemployment and loss of job is a main concern.

Economic crisis has detrimental impact on psychological health. Everytime the employees or labourer from various sector are in fear of job loss. Anxiety about job insecurity complicates existing depression and acts as a chronic stressor with cumulative effects over time (Kien et al, 2013).According to Mucci et al. (2016) 'the economic crisis was an important stressor that had a negative impact on workers' mental health. A rise in unemployment, increased workload, staff reduction, and wages reduction were linked to an increased rate of mood disorders, anxiety, depression, dysthymia, and suicide'. The ultimate impact of the current crisis on mental health and its associated services will not be known immediately, but from history we can predict that the outcomes are not likely to be positive (Kien et al, 2013). Although it is too early to speak about a relationship between the economic crisis and a rise in mental health problems, still this paper intends to study the

effect of economic crisis on psychological health especially depression, anxiety and stress among the employees serving in IT & Health sector.

Materials and Method

Data were collected through Google form. All the respondents were given assurance that the data is being collected for academic purpose only.

Sample:

A sample of 50 employees from all over India was included in this study. Among them 50% are from IT sector and 50% from health sector. Their age ranges from 25-55 years. Majority (72%) of them are married followed by 24% are unmarried and the rest (4%) are unmarried. 52% of the total respondents are post graduate and 48% are from graduate level. Among the 50 respondents majority (84%) are male.

Tools:

Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS): DASS is made up of 42 self report items, each reflecting a negative emotional symptom. In the present study short version of DASS has been used. The short version of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) was developed to provide a self-report measure of anxiety, depression and stress signals over the last week. Each of these is rated on a four- point Likert scale of frequency or severity of the participants' experiences over the last week with the intention of emphasizing states over traits. The reliability scores of the scales in terms Cronbach's alpha scores rate the Depression scale at 0.91, the Anxiety scale at 0.84 and the Stress scale at 0.90 in the normative sample. Furthermore, depression, anxiety and stress were categorized in five levels by using cut off score viz., normal, mild, moderate, severe and extremely severe. DASS were developed by the researchers at the University of New South Wales (Australia).

Hypothesis:

The following three hypotheses are formulated.

1) Depression of the employees of IT sector does not differ significantly from the employees of the Health sector.

2) Anxiety of the employees of IT sector does not differ significantly from the employees of the Health sector.

3) Stress of the employees of IT sector does not differ significantly from the employees of the Health sector.

Results

The length of the service for all the employees has been divided into three categories. Fig-1 shows that majority (50%) of them are working for 5-10 years, where as 42% of them are working for more than 10 years and only 8% are for less than 5 years.

Fig-1: Length of Service
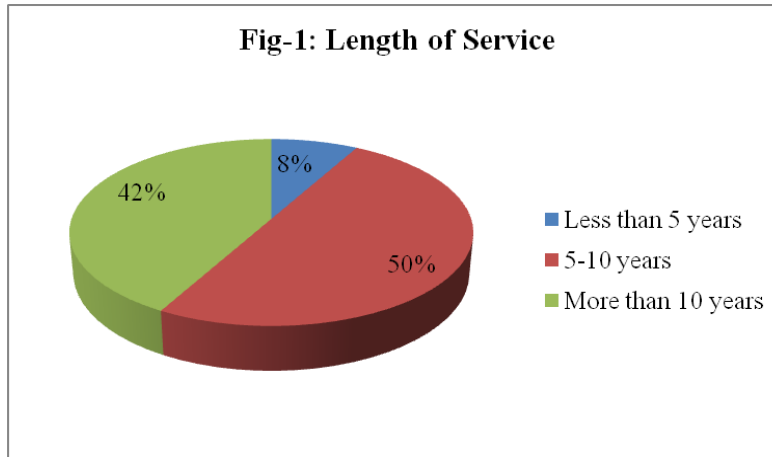
Level of depression, anxiety and stress was studied in 5 categories as DAS Scale permits- normal, mild, moderate, severe and extremely severe. Fig-2 shows the levels of depression, anxiety & stress of the employees serving in the IT and health sector. The said figure reveals that 27/50 (54%) participants are suffering from depression where as the number is 28/50 (56%) in anxiety and 17/50 (34%) participants are in stress.

Fig-2: Levels of Depression, Anxiety & Stress
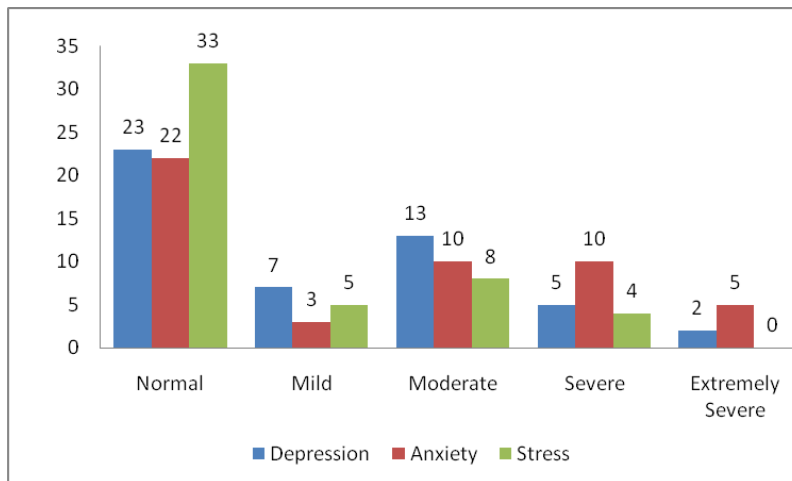
The Table-1 shows the Mean, SD & t-value of score of depression, anxiety and stress. From the mean of the scores of depression, anxiety and stress it is found that employees serving in health sector have more depression, anxiety, and stress than their counterparts.

Table-1: Mean, SD & t- value of depression, anxiety and stress scores of employees from IT sector and Health sector.

Variables	IT Sector (N=25)		Health Sector (N=25)		df	t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Depression	9.64	7.4	13.52	7.9	48	1.80
Anxiety	7.6	6.5	11.84	5.4	48	4.8*
Stress	10.64	7.1	15.68	7.8	48	2.4**

*p<.01, **p<.05

In order to level wise analysis of the mean of the three variables as per scoring technique, regarding depression, it is found from the Table-1 that employees of IT sector has mild depression where as it is moderate for health sector's employees. For anxiety the result is as same as depression. In case of the scores for stress it is found that employees of IT are at normal level but health employees have mild stress. The t- value shows that for the scores of depression it is statistically insignificant. That means there is no significant difference between the employees of said two sectors regarding depression. Hence the first null hypothesis is accepted. The result also infers that employees of health sector are significantly more anxious (p<.01) and stressed (p<.05) than that of employees serving in IT sector. In other words t-value is significant at 1% level for the score of anxiety and significant at 5% level for stress score. Therefore the second and third null hypotheses are rejected at 1% and 5% level respectively.

Discussion

This was the first ever study undertaken in Tripura to determine the prevalence rate of depression, anxiety and stress amongst the employees of IT & health sector. The result of the present study reveals that more or less both the employees of the health and IT sectors are suffering from mental health problem. It is inevitable that the global pandemic, compounded by financial crisis, will have an impact on the mental health of the people (Coe, & Enomoto, 2020). It is to be noted that to keep oneself safe from the Corona Virus people are maintaining social distancing and people are

encouraged to stay their homes. This led to separation from friends, relatives, family and colleagues. So the absence of human social and emotional connection or contact is also a factor of mental health problems. The result of the present study also shows that the employees of the health sectors are suffering from depression, anxiety and stress more than that of the employees of IT sector. It is to be mentioned here that there may be various reason behind the result. And also all the reasons may be associated with lockdown due to COVID-19. Except the above emotional and social difficulty, there are many employees who are in fear about loss of job and some have already experienced pay cut. In health sector work from home is also not so possible. Hence they are anxious and worried about their future. It can be presumed that at its worst, mental health problem can lead to suicide.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 epidemic is also associated economic crisis which in turn increases the psychological health problems such as depression, anxiety, stress, post traumatic disorder etc in the people. During this stage of the pandemic in India, the present study was focused mainly to assess its economic impact on psychological health. The lives of people were drastically affected with lock-down and fear related to the transmission of the disease along with financial crisis. The findings of the present study suggest the respective authority to provide mental health interventions to those who are in need. The study also suggests to those respondents whose score fall in the severe and extremely severe category, to consult a doctor whom they trust or whom they can share their feelings. People should keep in mind that they are not only person who are going through the odds of lockdown. People have to learn to accept the challenge positively and for that they have to engage themselves in meditation or Yoga. Again, for the government part, to bounce back economically, it would be necessary for the government to consult all the key stakeholders.

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The Season of Work Money and Pain

Pramod P. Lonarkar[1]

Introduction

The migrant workers play an important role in balancing the seasonal and temporary labour demand shocks in countries domestic market. Hence, they are called backbone of labour market especially for unorganised sector. It is also been part of the livelihood portfolio of poor people across India. There are several fields in unorganised sector where poor workers find their livelihood by migrating from one place to another. Migrants are the casual labour they receive wages according to the terms of the daily or periodic work contract (ATLMRI Discussion Paper 9). These casual labours comprise labours from farm and nonfarm activities. Among the seasonal employment in farm sector, the sugarcane cutters comprise the significant share because single factory area requires thousands of workers. For these migrant workers there are several issues on their social security and exposures to health hazards too. Their living condition, terms in wage contract are also important issues. This paper explores some field based observations on the work and work conditions of the sugar cane cutter migrant workers.

The sugarcane cutters are the workers who migrate from the drought prone backward rural area to the sugar belt of Maharashtra and Karnataka. There are different forms of work called Koyta (The working couple comprising male and female is called), and Toli (A group of cane cutter workers). The harvesting season for sugar cane starts in October and ends in April. However in some places where there is abundant water availability the harvesting period gets extended. This seasonal job provides them money but the work of six to seven months is very difficult in terms of physical pains. Unfortunately their shift from native place deprives them from governmental assistance available through different schemes. This paper explores such field observations to explore the real situations of sugarcane cutters in Migration Area.

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Statement of the Problem

Sugar industry in Maharashatra is a huge agro based industry which employs large number of poor workers. The workers form the drought prone area specifically choose this occupation for their livelihood. The sugarcane cutters are obedient and hard workers and their work is very tough and exposed to much vulnerability. It is important to mention the irony that the problems faced by sugar cane cutter workers are not same for all and for all the areas of work. The working conditions and amenities available at the work place are subject to the location of the factory and willingness of factory management. But unfortunately the adequate and intensive information and data is not available on the ground level realities of the sugarcane cutter workers. Hence this paper explores the ground realities on the livelihood of these workers for the field.

Review of Literature

Since there is no any governmental mechanism to track the move of such seasonal workers, their numbers, their gender composition, age composition and time records for sugarcane migrant workers. So most of the research work on the issue of sugarcane migrant workers is based on the primary data and it is mainly highlighting the causes of migration, nature of wage contract, employability of the seasonal sugar industry, the working condition and the issue of rights of these cane cutters.

Following are the some reviews of the paper published in journal.

1) The work of Kumar Shiralkar, Mukta Kulkarni, Vivek Ghotale, Sominath Gholwe (2019) highlighted the realities of sugar cane cutters from Beed district. It is observed that people generally choose the job of sugarcane cutting is because of high wages offered in this work than the wages provided by the Employment Guarantee Scheme. They prefer this job for its advance payment system. But the study found that choosing the work of sugarcane cutting provides only minimum livelihood. This study also explored the gender perspective and found, the over work burden on female than men due to house hold activities and care of children.

2) Kumar Kavi K.S. & Viswanathan Brinda (2012) Weather variability & Agriculture -Implications for Long &Short Term Migration in India: The paper mainly focuses on impact of weather on agricultural productivity and subsequently on rural urban migration. Due to poor and uneven weather conditions, agricultural productivity suffered a lot, hence affecting the productivity. This leads to lack of income in rural

areas and hence migration takes place. Although various types of socio economic factors responsible for rural urban migration, still weather condition plays a pivotal role in this case

3) Imran Faisal, Nawaz Yasir, Asim Muhammad & Hashmi H. Arshad (2013) Socio Economic Determinants of Rural Migrants in Urban Setting − A Study Conducted at City Sargodha, Pakistan: The study designed to identify the socio economic determinants of rural urban migration. The paper observed that poor educational facilities, health, entertainment and limited income opportunities create the rural urban migration. On the other hand, this migration leads to poor sanitation, environmental pollution, crowded housing and over population in urban areas.

4) Abdul Jaleel C P, Aparajita Chattopadhay (2019), This study is based on the cross sectional survey results of seasonal migrant households in Beed district. The study reported that after rabi season the severe seasonal unemployment problem are faced by the labourers in the district, that causes them to migrate for gainful employment for their livelihood. This seasonal migration works as a balancing factor to counter check the unemployment during the dry season and to provide for the income variability. This research work also explores the religion wise and category wise composition of migrants where Hindus, Buddhist and Muslims in religion and STs, SCs and OBCs are chronologically more in migration.

5) Debasish Nandy (2014), uncover the multiple deprivations of children of seasonal migrants of sugarcane cutters in western Maharashtra. It is reported that apart from male and female the children are also involved in sugarcane cutting and binding work along with their parents. There are several issues of children deprivation from their rights to education and security that are highlighted by the study and a roadmap is suggested to protect child rights of the children affected by seasonal migration.

6) The discussion paper of Piu Mukherjee, Bino Paul G D and Pathan J.I., analyses the socio-economic status of the migrant labour in urban India. The method used for study is the field study. The paper examined the impact of migration in urban area specially the changes in their living and working conditions, and the human development. The study concludes that the rural to urban movement whether it is a short term or long term made the migrants disadvantaged in terms of human development and in terms of lack of rights needed for a decent living.

Research Objectives

1) To explore the daily working life of the sugarcane cutter workers.

2) To discuss on their wage contract made with.

3) To highlight the ground level realities on the living conditions at work place during season.

Methodology

To satisfy the above objectives case study method is used where field based observations and group discussion are reported. A single factory from backward region of Marathwada is chosen i.e. Bhaurao Chavan Sahakarisakhar Karkhana, located Degaon, Nanded as a case for this study.

Research Results

The research results of the field based observations reported and group discussions made on the field are as follows.

Sugarcane Production and Sugar Industry

Marathwada for being a region of water scarcity do not support for sugar cane production and hence the sugar factory but still the villages located near River bank and having Canal or Underground water facility produce the sugarcane as a cash crop. There are 24 sugar factories in Marathwada of which 14 are co-operative and 10 are private. The total Crushing capacity of the factories in the region is 87.34 L.M.T. and sugar production is 8.72 LMT as on 2017-18 (Sugar Commissionarate Maharashtra, Pune).

Period Employment

Despite of being a region of water scarcity there are sugar factories in Marathwada that are extracting water from the available resources and production the sugar crop. The season of sugarcane harvesting starts immediately after the rainy season i.e. winter. To mention specifically the period of sugar cane cutting in Marathwada starts from October and generally ends in middle of the April.

Source of Labour Supply

Marathwada is a resource poor region where there are very less employment opportunities are available. The opportunities available are of short period forces the workers to migrate from this region to other parts of the Maharashtra. Hence the district like Beed is a huge supplier of seasonal labours to sugarcane industry in Maharashtra and Karnataka. This shows the very short seasonal employment made available to the cane cutter workers.

But it is interesting to note that the block and village level disparities in water availability also creates intra region migration. Like the villages near river bank and having canal or ground water extraction facility produces the sugarcane and the purely draught prone villages supplies the labours to them. So it is observed that there are several workers that are migrating from the nearby draught prone villages to the water available factory area. To mention here there is a migration from 'Kandhar' Block to 'Nanded' Block i.e. intra district migration and there is a migration from 'Kej' block of Beed district to Nanded district i.e. the intra region migration.

Nature of Employment

As mentioned earlier the sugarcane cutters are the migrant workers so they are the unorganised casual labours. Their employment is a seasonal employment. They generally get six to seven months of employment in a year as a sugarcane cutter. In remaining period of the year they work for different sectors as an informal casual labour. A couple of male and female sugarcane cutter is called 'Koyta' where as a single cane cutter (male or female) becomes the part of 'Toli' (group of cane cutters).

Social Section of Labour

Most of the sugarcane cutters are the workers coming from the poor social and economic background. The landless ness or a marginal holding of a land and in the water scarcity area the causes of choosing this occupation and to migrate. Herein this study most of the respondents are belongs to 'Vanjari' cast of NT category. However there are workers from SC, ST, BOC and General category too. The respondents from general category are from 'Maratha' the politically powerful cast in Maharashtra.

The Wage Contract

The work contract for money is done with 'Mukadam'. Usually 'koyta' take the advance money before joining the work and repayment is made in the form of work. So it is clear that work contract and the advance money payment for it, is decided based on age of the koyta i.e. the cane cutting capacity of the couple. Higher the age lower the money for koyta and vice versa. Hence the koyta rate ranges from 50 thousands to 150 thousands in one season. At the end of season actual cutting is measured in tones and total money is given with the rate of 250 to 750 per ton depending upon the distance of cutting area from the sugar factory. If the total sum of money gets higher than the advance money paid then the difference will be paid by the Mukadam. If total sum gets lower than the advance money paid then the gap will be born by the koyta in the form of work in next season. There is no

written contract system in between Mukadam and Koyta for this work for money system. In case of 'Toli' the wage contract is decided based on the member numbers included in the toil. Suppose there are seven members in the 'Toli' it is called three and half 'Koita' and the wage contract is made accordingly.

Living Condition of Workers

The observations on the field (factory area) shows that workers are living in a small sized and round shaped hut of around 5 to 6 feet length, width and hight. The hut is made-up of very simple traditional material, that include 'bambu mat' (called tatta), bambu sticks, sticks of other wood, plastick liner sheet, top part of sugarcane (that is used for cattle feeding) and the rope.

The factory owner provide only 10 bambu sticks of small size and 6 bambu mats (Tatta) of an average quality. Remaining items the koyta has to arrange by their own.

Most of the daily household activities they do at the outer surrounding part of the hut, like cooking, cleaning of baked-on items, washing and drying the cloths, restuff in leisure time, bullock cart parking and tying the bulls and other animals etc.

The huts made from above material are very loose and not capable to protect them from any little harsh seasonal variation like wind and rain. But still the use of hut is made for keeping the important belongings safe from stray animals like dogs and pigs in their absence. Like cooked items, dried cloths, bed sheets and other stuff and for women restuff in a day time and sleeping at night.

The source of water

The water is made available at a common tanker and large sized basin made available by factory owners. The maximum length of this common water place is around 100 to 150 meters. Mostly the women members of the couples has to carry this extra body burdon to bring this water from this common place in barrels and in steel pots for their daily needs, especially for cooking and drinking. Sometimes men and children's also contributes in carrying the water.

Absolutely this is not a filtered water. But still respondents seems to be cautious for drinking the same water at their different work places of sugarcane cutting during the whole season. Based on their experience, they believe that frequent change in drinking water or the use of untreated well

water at different work places will cause them to suffer from diarrhea or loose motion and throat infection.

Fuel for Cooking

The cow dung cake and woods collected from the farm and surrounded area is used as a fuel for cooking. This work is mostly done by the women's. This type of cooking highlight the reek inhalation for a whole (season) migration period. Many times due to winter and sometimes due to unexpected rain cause to wet the woods and cow dung, and make it difficult to generate adequate fire for cooking.

Sanitation Facility

Since the seasonal migrants are temporary residents of the place, the sanitation facility is looked for availability latrine and bathroom. The latrines are not available in the place so the open defection is obvious feature of this place. But they prefer to go at a very long distance from their residence so as they will not face any bad fetor. This kind of act is unanimously followed by all the labourers. Temporary arrangements for bathrooms are made available for women members of the couple. These bathrooms are very simple only suffices to hide the body during bath.

Work and Body Burdon

The work of sugarcane cutters comprises cane cutting, binding, lifting and carrying, loading and unloading the sugarcane from the farm to the factory. All this work is a tough physical work which requires the strength, concentration, readiness for hard work and patience. It is observed that all this work is equally done by the male and female counterparts except the unloading the trolley in the factory. The actual cutting starts nearly 4 to 5 am in morning and generally cutting ends around 11 am in the afternoon. Then the binding the bundles, lifting, carrying and loading it in to the trolley ends till 2 pm. All this work creates body pain and consumes their energy. The body pain requires compensation in the form of adequate sleep but sometimes the long queue at factory for unloading the bundles also creates extra pain to them. Due to this sometimes they have to stay in queue for a long time without food.

Health Hazard and Compensation

Sugar cane cutting work is not only tough but also largely exposed to health hazards. Each day starts with journey towards farm field in accurate darkness at around 3 o'clock. It takes one to two hours to reach the farm place. They start the cane cutting immidiately in the same darkness. The sharp cutting

instrument called 'Katti' sometimes causes to injury during the work it concentration is loosed by the worker. The sharp edges of cutted sugarcane rooted in the soil also causes to injury. The dusty farm area sometimes cause to eye injury too. These workers are also exposed to the attacks of wild animals like pig, fox, snake etc.

It is observed that there is a lack of proximate medical facility available for workers in factory area. They have to travel at least 10 km for medical facility. There is no provision of compensation for small but expensive medical treatment. The workers has to bear these expenses by their own money.

There is a provision of insurance amounting up to 1.5 lakh but it works only in case of permanent disability or mortality during work. The insurance provision is also available for permanent disability of death of bools during work. But no medical facility is provided to animals carried by workers. The expenses on small injuries and injuries causing to temporary disability has to borne by the workers by their own.

Conclusion

Sugarcane cutter workers are the backbone of sugar industry in the country. Since they are the seasonal migrant workers they play a crucial role in balancing the demand shocks of labours in different regions in different time periods. This work provide them advance money hence it is preferred by the labours from poor resource area. The work of sugarcane cutter is very tough and hazardous too. The work and living conditions at work place the poor and inadequate facilities makes them very vulnerable. Hence this paper highlights that there is an urgent need to address the issues related to social security and living conditions of the sugarcane cutters.

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Psychological State of College Students During Covid-19 Pandemic in Assam

Ananya Bhuyan Dr[1] & Wandaia Syngkon[2]

Abstract

This study is based on the psychological state of students during COVID-19. The psychological health of students has increased concern with a significant number of students suffering from psychological distress. Psychological problems can significantly affect students' academic success. The COVID-19 crisis has become a huge problem for everyone. Students, in particular, are affected by the closure of colleges, social isolation and fears about their future and health. An online cross-sectional survey was conducted using a linear scale. The survey was administered in December 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic for students in Assam with seventy-two (72) respondents. Students from different government, private and central universities and colleges were included.The main aim and objective of this study is to examine the factors associated with increasing concern of mental health burden among Assam graduates and to look for possible interventions.

Keywords: *COVID-19; Anxiety; Stress; Depression; Students; Survey.*

Introduction

Coronavirus disease is a contagious disease. It is also known as COVID-19. A large number of people have become infected with the COVID-19 virus, which causes mild to moderate airway disease. Due to the global development of the outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), psychological problems such as stress, trauma, boredom, fear, inadequate supply, depression and anxiety have accompanied the burden of public health.

The mental health of education students has long been a concern, and the COVID-19 pandemic has only brought these high-risk people to focus.

Students mental health of has increased concern with a significant number of students suffering from psychological distress. Mental health issues can

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affect students' academic success. The lack of social interactions also affects the university student's career and personal opportunities.

COVID-19 outbreak and pandemics have the potential to affects college students physically, emotionally, academically, financially and psychologically. COVID-19 has recognized as a heightened prevalence of moderate-to-server self-reported depressive and anxiety distinct among the public. (Wang et al., 2020), reflecting the widespread effects of unreliability and health-related fears.

College Students are suffering heightened levels of psychological and mental discomforts, and the downstream negative academic outcome is prevalent under normal circumstances (American college health association, 2019).

According to the perception from research examining the impact of academic disturbance on students (Wickens, 2011) mentioned that students may experience reduced inspiration and motivation toward studies, extension pressure to learn independently, low self-esteem, abandonment of regular routines and potentiality, higher rates of dropout as direct consequences of these compute.

(American college health association, 2019) stated that approximately 25% of their respondents reported experiencing fear and anxiety symptoms, which were directly related to increased concerns about their academic changes, the economic problem that arises due to the loss of jobs, insecurity, and drastic impacts on daily life.

However, among the largest student surveys around the world, a survey conducted by Young Minds reported that 83% of young respondents admitted that the epidemic exacerbated existing mental health conditions, largely due to loss of the system, school closures, and restrictions on communication (Young Minds, 2020).

This pandemic situation was a frustrating time for students. Therefore, strong efforts are needed to support the mental health and well-being of students during the COVID-19 pandemic, as it has the potential to affect students physically, mentally, academically, financially and psychologically. Students need constant support to overcome fear, anxiety and depression. Students' mental health is particularly affected when they face a public health emergency and need guidance, attention, help and support from the community, family, educational institutions and friends.
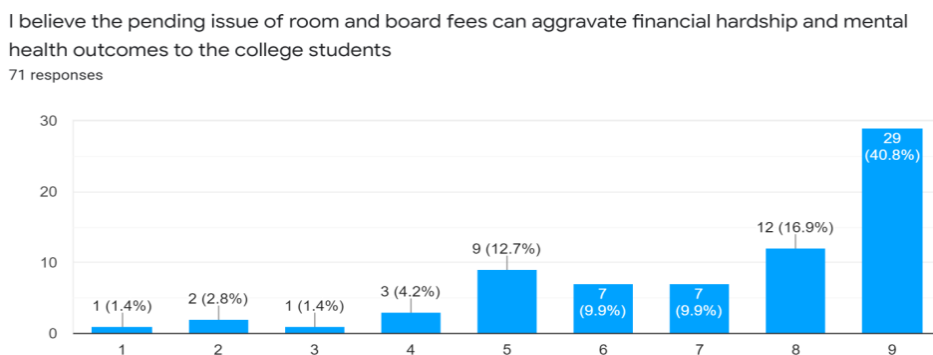
Research Methodology

An online cross-sectional survey was conducted using a linear scale. The survey was administered in December 2020 with the use of Google Form during the COVID-19 pandemic for students in Assam with seventy-one (71) respondents. Purposive sampling of Non-Probability technique was used to select respondents and questionnaire tool was used to collect primary data from students of different private, state or central government colleges and universities.

Factors contributed to psychological state of Students during the COVID-19 pandemic

a. Financial Hardship- Financial hardship is one of the major concerns identified in this study. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic many of the respondents shared of their financial distress as their parents were unable to earn as they used to.

Figure1.1 Financial Hardship

I believe the pending issue of room and board fees can aggravate financial hardship and mental health outcomes to the college students
71 responses

The above chart (Figure 1.1) shows that nearly half of the students' that is 40.8 percent believe that the pending college fees, house rent or hostel fee can aggravate financial hardship and mental health outcomes to the students' fraternity. With this drawing, the researchers interpret that the expected rented room or hostel fee and board fees can increase the financial and mental health problems of college students and their families.

b. Financial insecurity- COVID 19 pandemic has brought extreme financial pressure on families. Financial insecurity is putting college students in an unpleasant situation that is affecting their psychological well-being.

Figure 1.2 Financial insecurity causes stress

I believe this pandemic has brought extreme financial pressure on families and financial insecurity are putting the college students in an unpleasant ...ecting their socio-economic and mental well-being

71 responses
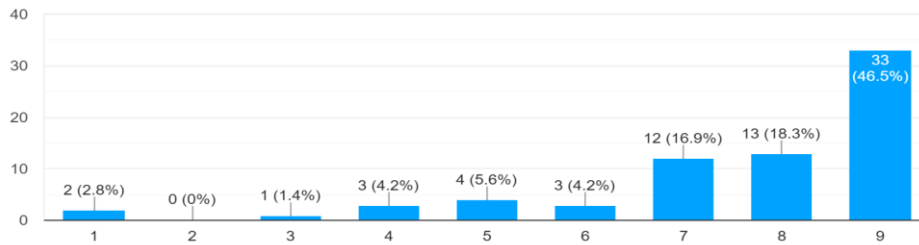
The above chart (Figure 1.2) shows that almost half of the respondents that is 46.5% believe that this pandemic has brought extreme financial pressure on their families and financial insecurities are putting them in an unpleasant situation where their socio-economic insecurities lead to psychological imbalance.

c. Constant fear and feeling of uncertainty- Students feel stressed and depressed whenever they think about their career after their graduation/post-graduation. College-going students have fear and worry about their physical and psychological health and they cannot concentrate on a particular topic of study.

Figure 1.3 Constant fear and feeling of uncertainty

I believe college students experience distress contributed by the uncertainty and abrupt disruption of the semester in addition to the anxiety caused by college closure

71 responses
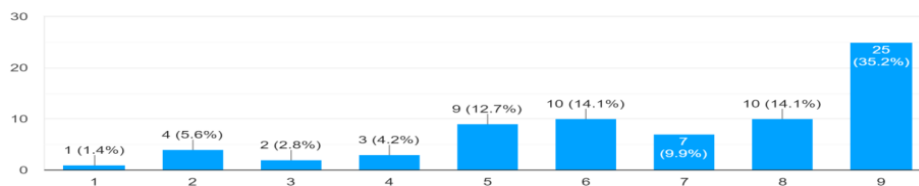
The above chart (Figure 1.3) shows that about 35.2% of students experience distress contributed by the uncertainty and disruption of the semester in addition to the anxiety caused by the sudden closure of colleges.

d. Lockdown and stay at home order

COVID-19 is leading towards sitting down at homes. Thus, social distancing and lack of physical activities are making them sick and inactive. The college-going student feels stressed and depressed whenever they think about their academic performances. Many college-going students feel demotivated most of the time and they are in no mood to study.

Figure 1.4 Negative impacts of Lockdown and stay at home order

Due to the long-lasting pandemic situation and onerous measures such as lockdown and stay-at-home orders, the COVID pandemic brings negative impact on my higher education
71 responses
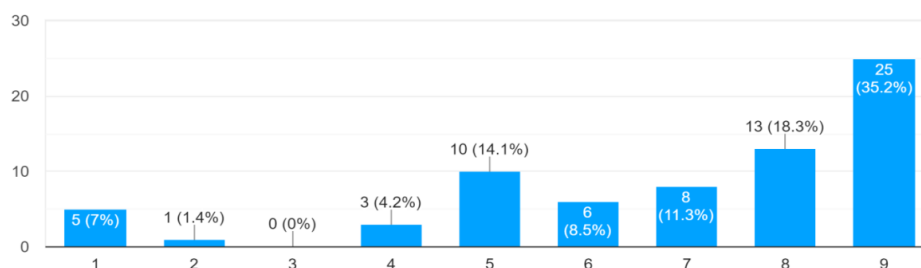
The above chart (Figure 1.4) highlights that the majority of the students that is 35.2% believe that the long-lasting pandemic situation and the lockdown with the stay-at-home orders has a severe negative impact on the higher education of the students.

e. Online classes-The sudden shift to distance learning or online classes, students lost social and emotional support from teachers, friends and peer groups. Teachers are solving queries from different websites such as Google Meet, Skype, Zoom, etc but unfortunately some student's face internet connectivity issues and thus this causes difficulties to understand certain topics. Students also shared about their inability to pay attention during online classes due to the disturbing mindset.

Figure 1.5 De-motivation to study

I feel demotivated most of the time when I make my mood to study
71 responses
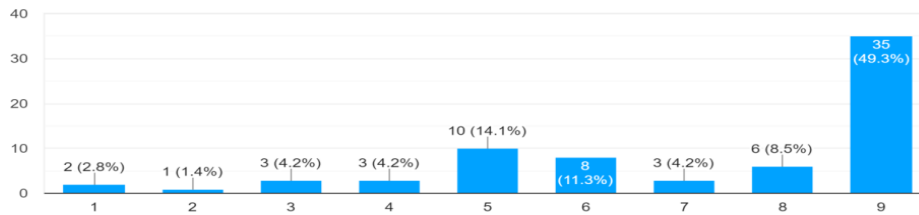
The above chart (Figure 1.5) shows that almost half of the population that is 49.3% of students gets demotivated to study because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

f. Inability to access the library is causing anxiety

Many students are dependent on library reading and the college environment. This pandemic forced the students to leave the college and unable to access the library and other college facilities.

Figure 1.6 Inability **to access library is causing anxiety**

Many students are dependent on library reading and college environment. This pandemic forced the students to leave the college and unable to acc...ivities is leading towards anxiety and depressions
71 responses
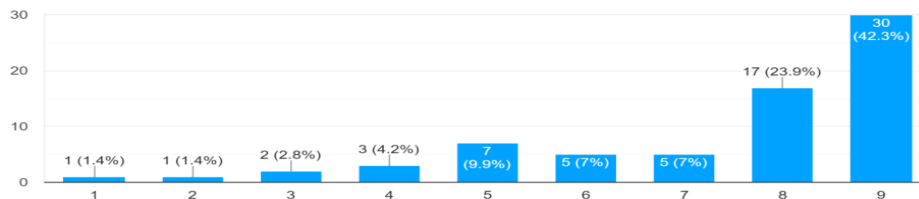
The above chart (Figure 1.6) shows that almost half of the population that is 42.3% of the students depends on the library and also the environment of their college. The sudden closure of colleges and other institutions are leading to anxiety and depression. There are students who do not have access to the Internet and, as a result, rely directly or indirectly on library books to read and prepare for the course.

g. Inability to access counselling services leads to suicidal thoughts-
Due to the sudden closure of colleges, students are enabled to access

counselling services which exacerbate their psychological symptoms and increase some students risk for suicide and substance abuse.

Figure 1.7 Inability to access counselling services lead to suicidal thoughts

I believe those who receive counselling services on campus, they can no longer access counselling services, which exacerbate their psychological sy...ome students risk for suicide and substance abuse
71 responses
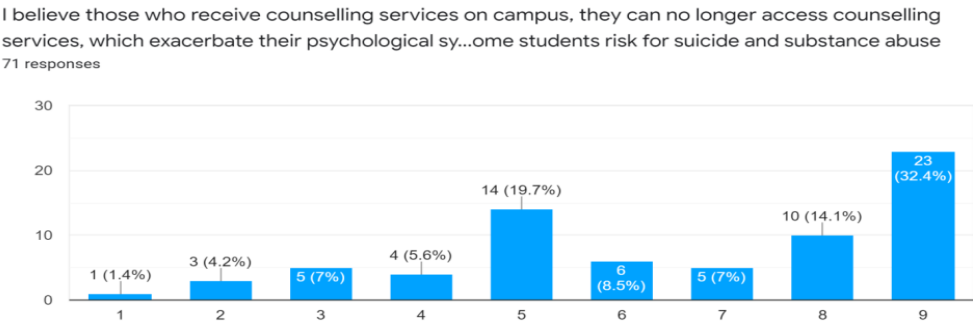
The above chart (Figure 1.7) shows that 32.4% of the students are going through psychological disturbance which exacerbates the risk of committing suicides and substance abuse.

h.   Inability to maintain a healthy Routine- The sudden closure of colleges and removal from the educational support system leads to anxiety. It is hard for many students to maintain a healthy routine and to set a goal for the day during the pandemic.

Figure 1.8 Inability to maintain a healthy Routine

It is hard to maintain a healthy routine and to set a goal for the day during the pandemic
71 responses
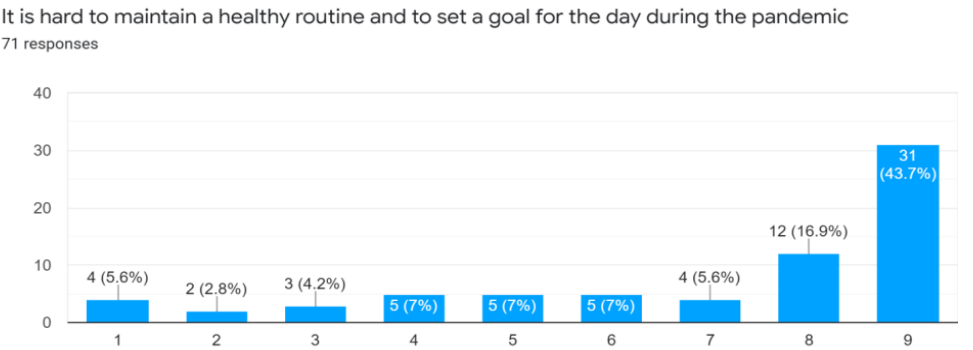
The above chart (Figure 1.8) shows that half of the population that is 43.7% of the students fail to maintain a healthy routine. Through this chart, the

researcher also interprets that the students failed to set a goal during the pandemic.

i.   Lack of Family support -Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the self-esteem of the students got affected due to lack family support.

Figure 1.9 COVID-19 pandemic affecting students' self-esteem

I believe self-Esteem could also be affected by the loss of studies and lack of family support
71 responses
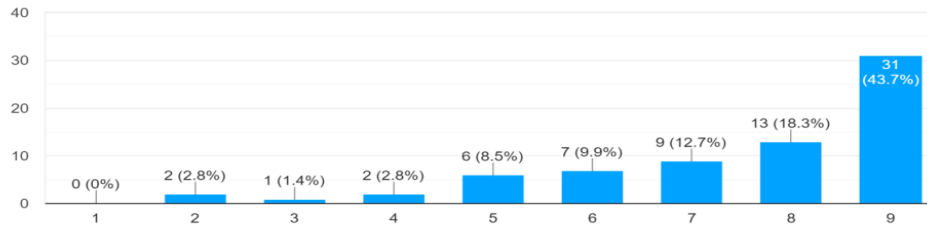
The above chart (Figure 1.9) shows that nearly half of the students that is 43.7% of students admit that their self-esteem is affected by the loss of studies and lack of family support during covid-19.

j.   Tailor coping strategies to meet specific needs- COVID-19 and its accompanying effects will continue impacting collegiate mental health and well-being profoundly. Therefore college students should tailor coping strategies to meet their specific need and promote their psychological resilience.

Figure 1.10 Tailor coping strategies to meet specific needs

COVID-19 and its accompanying effects will continue impacting collegiate mental health and well-being profoundly. I believe college students s...ic need and promote their psychological resilience
71 responses
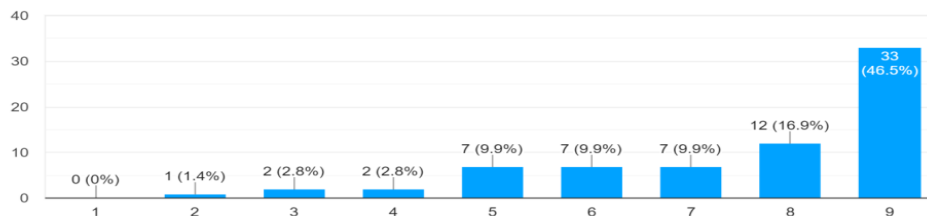
The above chart (Figure 1.10) shows that the majority of the students that is 46.5% of the students are aware of the need for coping strategies to meet their

specific needs and promote their psychological resilience to overcome problems, financial stress, tragedy and threats.

Conclusion

Online learning limits physical interaction and lack of social support leads to boredom and restless feelings amongst the college and university. They are stressed by their educational arrangements and face fear, frustration and discouragement in seeking psychological help. Many students in Assam suffer from mental illness during this pandemic, but the level of psychological support has still been low. Therefore, it is importance to closely monitor the situation of students, by providing psychosocial interventions and improving opportunities for seeking psychological help. The government, civil society and educational institutions should work together to address these issues by providing psychosocial services and other services required by the students.

Educational institutions should indulge students with some creative online exercise to get rid of anxiety. Meditation, yoga, awareness programs, telecounselling, online sharing sessions, etc,. should be initiated by all universities and colleges.

Extending the duration of college or university fees of students will help students' financial difficulties, as many of their parents were unable to earn as usual during the pandemic. Educational institutions together with heads of institutions, teachers and staff can work with government and non-governmental agencies to reach out to these students and provide the necessary support and guidance. Online services should be provided to students to overcome the psychological effects of COVID-19 and they should be regularly communicated or updated to avoid unnecessary stress and anxiety.

The current condition of COVID-19 has affected the mental health of students. Although students find ways to deal with this uncertainty by planning a daily routine, engaging in capacity building, increasing the use of social media, and gaining information about safety measures, the consequences of uncertainty, feelings of depression, and diversity of male and female students in urban and rural areas can be seen in various parameters.

Majority of the respondents were going through anxiety and half of the respondents was going through financial hardships. The students are going through the various types of psychological problem during the pandemic and the majority of the respondents were depressed because of online learnings.

The psychological state of any individual plays an important role but unluckily the importance of psychological state cannot be seen as there were less interventions and concerns for the psychological well being of the colleges and universities students. More researches should be conducted on the psychological well being of students during this unprecedented time and the psychological needs of students needs to be taken care by the state, civil societies, institutions and community as a whole.

Most respondents went through anxiety and half of the respondents went through financial difficulties. Students go through different types of psychological problems during the pandemic and most respondents were depressed due to online learning. The psychological state of any individual plays an important role, but unfortunately the importance of the psychological state cannot be seen, because there have been fewer interventions and concerns for the psychological well-being of colleges and university students. More research should be carried out on the psychological well-being of students during this unprecedented time, and the psychological needs of students should be taken care of by the state, civil society, institutions and the community.

Also the role and importance of family and friends cannot be underestimated and remains an important factor in solving problems. Increased mental health awareness, gender-based interventions, appropriate coping strategies in a variety of disciplines can be designed to help students cope with mental health issues during a pandemic or otherwise.

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Migration and Rural livelihood: Social Work Interventions for Dima Hasao District of Assam

Phyllis Haizeutuale Panme[1] and Dr. Lalzo S. Thangjom[2]

Abstract

Livelihood is directly linked to human capability, the strategies adopted by mankind for their livelihood is based on those capabilities. Quality of life is seen in terms of valued activities and the capability to perform these valued activities. In earlier days in the tribal inhabited rural areas, people depended mainly on agricultural practices for livelihood but insufficient agricultural outcome along with uneconomic holdings due to lack of facilities in the past decade have forced a good number of population for seasonal migration in search for better livelihood opportunities. Seasonal Migration is one of the most significant strategies adopted for livelihood by people in the rural hilly district of Dima Hasao in Assam. The people move from rural areas to the urban areas in search of livelihood opportunities. The different unorganized sectors in the urban cities offer handsome packages for these migrants and the remittances helps in securing the need of their family. However the global pandemic resulting from the novel Coronavirus has created a universal havoc by crippling the economies and livelihood options around the globe. Business closures and restrictions to movement as precautionary measure imposed by government of India, and access to all forms of social protection have triggered reverse migration. The sudden rush of the crisis has also increased migrants' vulnerability to poverty and livelihood insecurity. Creation of employment opportunities by government and vocational training to impart skills to unemployed youth in the rural villages is a primary concern to overcome the crisis of unemployment and avoid acute poverty. Identification of capabilities and assets along with prospects and constraints are a prerequisite for rebuilding assets for livelihood. Rebuilding assets for livelihood, requires different and multiple intervention at different levels including social work interventions.

Key Words: Livelihood, Migration, Human capital, Financial Capital, Agriculture

Introduction

A livelihood in simple words can be described as 'making a living, supporting a family, doing a job which in return helps one to feed himself and his family. The basic components of a livelihood are assets, capabilities and activities. Livelihood assets can be categorized into five different groups-human capital, social capital, natural capital, physical capital and financial capital. A livelihood is formed within social, economical, political and

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environmental contexts and when there is a change or imbalance in any of these contexts, a new livelihood obstacle or opportunity can be created. These livelihood contexts can also affect a person's ability to access the livelihood assets for a favorable outcome. How a person access and use the available assets within a given social, economical, political and environmental contexts is defined as a livelihood strategy. One of the important characteristics of a livelihood is its vulnerability because when any of the assets or contexts of livelihood becomes unfavorable due to seasonal changes and trends, the impact can be severe and people must find a way to adapt to the existing strategies or find a new strategy in order to survive.

*'A **livelihood** comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base'. (Chambers & Conway, 1991)*

It is known that agriculture is the backbone of the Indian economy and a significant portion of the total Indian population is dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Agriculture in Northeast India play an important role in providing livelihood for the people living in rural areas and the same trend is also seen in the small district of Dima Hasao of Assam. Majority of the total population inhabiting Dima Hasao District are Scheduled Tribes and scheduled tribes are backwards and located at the bottom of the economy pyramid. In order to eradicate regional disparities and promote overall growth and development in the country, the concerns related to livelihood securities faced by rural farmers needs to be addressed. The prospects of the means for their livelihood as well as the constraints that inhibit or pose an obstacle to their livelihood opportunities must be ascertained in order to bring about social equality and help each section of the society to lead a life of dignity.

Since the past decade, with the expansion in means of communication and transportation and with the advent of technology and rapid development in the metropolitan cities of India, a good population from the rural district of Assam has migrated to cities within India. The push-factor for the population migration is due to poor economic activity, infrastructure and lack of job opportunities in the region which has driven the population to the big cities to earn their livelihood. The pull-factor is the good employment opportunities in the metropolitan cities which provided jobs for all groups of people irrespective of the quality of education and level of skills attained by them.

Moreover, seasonal migration became inevitable when the level of competition and the survival of the fittest like phenomenon in respect of permanent jobs and low level of education and skills required for permanent jobs in the organized sector.

Materials and Methods

The present paper is descriptive in character and is based on secondary data collected from prior livelihood research studies and materials from the internet. Since the concept of livelihood is derived from asset and capabilities, this paper is aimed at provoking discussion by exploring means and strategies necessary to derive livelihood for the people in the rural district of Dima Hasao. The present paper aims to explore alternative livelihood strategies for rebuilding livelihood opportunities due to impact of global pandemic on the rural livelihood in Dima Hasao District of Assam. The present paper focuses on seasonal migration from the livelihood generation perspective and the study will not delve into other aspects or linkage of migration. The present paper is also limited to adequate data which could not be collected due to the present covid-19 pandemic as a result of which field visit and live interaction with stakeholders could not be made possible and also limited to resources on the topic and prior studies on this particular district.

Objectives

1. To make a brief profile of Dima Hasao district

2. To identify areas for creation of job opportunities and generation of employment in the district.

3. To identify different constraints

Brief Profile of the Study Area

Dima Hasao district or which was earlier known as North Cachar Hills District is a beautiful hilly district in Assam. The district has its headquarter at Haflong and the district has an area of 4888.00 sq. kms out of which 4866.23Sq.Kms is rural and 21.77 sq. kms urban. According to the Census 2011 out of the total population of 214,102, rural population is 151,613 and urban population is 62,489. The total percentage of population of Scheduled Tribes in the district is 70.9. The major tribal groups inhabiting DimaHasao are Dimasa, Zeme, Hmar, Kuki, and Karbis besides other smaller tribes like the Khelma, Hrangkhol, Biates etc.

The district has 4 Revenue Circles and has two subdivisions namely Haflong and Maibong subdivisions. Four towns under this district are namely- Haflong, Mahur, Maibang and Umrangso. The district has five Community Development Blocks spread over a total of 695 villages in the district which are namely-1) Jatinga Valley Development Block, 2) Diyung Valley Development Block, 3) Harangajao ITD Block, 4) Diyungbra ITD Block, and 5) New Sangbar Development Block, Sangbar.

The district was constituted under the provisions of the sixth schedule to the constitution of India where N.C. Hills Autonomous District Council administer the autonomous district. The Autonomous Council is a powerful body and decisions for almost all wings and departments of government are under its control except the police and Law and Order is under the control of the state government.

There are four important roads which connects Dima Hasao district with other parts of the state or region. They are –(1) Haflong-Garampani Jowai-Shillong-Guwahati, (2) Haflong- Silchar (3) Haflong-Lumding, (4) Garampani-Lanka- Nagaon roads. The climate in the district is characterized by humidity and abundant rainfall nearly all the year round. The district is rich in forest wealth as a result of which its economy greatly depends on forest. By default, the agriculture practice adopted by the people in the district is organic farming.

Migration

Migration is the movement of people to a new area in order to find work or better living conditions. Of the many streams of migration, the most significant is internal migration, i.e. the migration of people from rural to urban areas in which transition from transfer of manpower and labour force from the traditional agricultural sector to urban industrial sector is indicative of urbanization. In the last two decades of the 20th century in India, remarkable changes and development in social and political set up and advancement of technological sector, the movement of people within the country especially from rural to urban areas have witnessed a dynamic trend like never before. The main reason for the migration from rural to urban areas can be attributed to income differentials between the two and with the rapid population growth agriculture alone could no longer sustain for livelihood with the slow progress in job creation and wages in agriculture sector especially in the backward rural areas. The seasonal migration of people within the country, from rural to urban areas for livelihood opportunities and economic stability specifically for the small district of Dima Hasao in Assam,

ability to cope with livelihood vulnerability and social work interventions have been the major attention in the present study.

Those people who live in the rural villages with no proper education in this rural hilly district have only depended on agriculture resources for their livelihood. Rest of the people who were educated enough could only see the option of employment in the organized sector i.e Govt. services. Other employment opportunities in private enterprises or any private institutions were barely available. MNREGA schemes could not suffice for the well being of all the population. As such migration became inevitable and an important livelihood strategy for the poor in the rural hilly district of Assam when expansion in communication and transport system opened doors to the outside world. Lack of economic opportunities in the district drove the rural households to send their unemployed members most preferably youths with age ranging from 16 to 25 years old to the urban cities within India to cope with poverty or to improve their living standards or for additional income. The choices of destination for majority of the seasonal migrants from the district are Delhi, Bangalore, Chennai, and Thiruvanthapuram. Once these populations migrate to the urban cities, they are employed in the different unorganized employment industries such as Shopping Malls, Beauty Parlours & Day Spa, Restaurants, Hotels, Private Security Companies and sometimes in Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies based on their qualification and proficiency in language skills. The remittances from migration helps households in the rural villages in surviving the resourcelessness at the source.

Migration and Concerns about Inequality

From existing literature on migration, the effect of migration and impact of remittances on income distribution in the economy at source also depend critically on the well being among non-migrants. Despite a very strong relationship between migration and development, an important concern of the literature on migration is that the poorest are rarely found the major beneficiaries of remittances, at least directly. Due to very low level of education the poorest are incapable of migrating and again, opportunities to migrate are biased against those without social contacts or minimum resources. Thus many works point out to a difference in income level among the migrant and non migrant households at the source of origin. The well being and significant remittances of migrant villager's results in inequality at the origin but the effect can also be countered if positive spillover of remittances accrues to entire community.

Global Pandemic & Livelihood Shocks

The present day global crisis and pandemic i.e. Corona virus and its spread from the epicentre of Wuhan in China to worldwide is attributed to migration and mobility of people. Millions of people across the globe have been affected by this pandemic and economy of nations has been crippled. Migrants are most vulnerable to urban disasters and the present day pandemic has affected migrants largely. Following the out-break of the pandemic, lock down in the entire country was first announced in the month of March 2020 for a period of 21days. As a precautionary measure, borders were sealed, transportation services were stopped, factories, shops, restaurants and all type of the economic activities were shut, barring only the essential services which became a nightmare for hundreds of thousands of migrant workers, who lost their livelihoods overnight. (Bhagat, R.B. *et al*., 2020). This will be remembered as the worst humanitarian crisis the country has witnessed after independence. The suddenness of the crisis and the helplessness of the migrants for wanting to leave the urban cities for survival triggered reverse migration.

Reverse migration has affected the rural livelihoods in DimaHasao district too. Most of the seasonal migrants have returned to their homes safe and are relocated to their respective villages. However they are rendered jobless and scope of employment is very limited and there is very less possibility that situation will return back to normalcy anytime soon.

Our country has witnessed a crisis in the agriculture sector in the past decades. Agriculture in the rural areas is already overburdened due to small and marginal land holding by marginal farmers and a decline in productivity. Reverse migration significantly increased population size and lead to increased pressure on the agriculture sector. The income and wages continue to decline whereas price of commodities is rising considerably and this is affecting the poor at large. Rural unemployment and poverty will continue to pose a serious threat if this is left unresolved.

Even under normal conditions the rural people were deemed backward and struggling in dire disparities. The catastrophic event resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic has left this socially and economically backward section of the society more vulnerable than ever and this economic recession may leave a social stigma and a prolonged impact on the rural communities of the district.

Discussions

Unemployment pushes people from rural areas towards areas with greater livelihood and income opportunities. Generally, given their poor economic background and social status, majority of these migrants are not well educated and less qualified for most high profile jobs (Yadav, A. & Shinde, S., 2015). Social work interventions along with robust-rural focused policies are a necessity in order to enable the rural communities to combat the existing livelihood problems and empower these rural communities and ahead.

Feasible areas through which employment can be generated for the rural communities of Dima Hasao District under the circumstances resulting from the stress and shocks of migration from pandemic:

Creation of job opportunities in the unorganized sector can pave a way towards improving the economy of the district and development of the rural backward areas. Investment in the form of tiny units for manufacturing and small scale industries can provide employment for both the educated and uneducated rural people. With support from the state government and the existing departments under the district autonomous council following areas can be explored for creation of job opportunities and generation of employment in the district.

i. Organic farming, crop processing and entrepreneurship

Growth of the agricultural sector remains central for the economic stability in this district where majority of its population resides in the rural areas and are dependent on agriculture and farming practices to sustain their livelihood. Shifting cultivation or *jhum* cultivation is the traditional and predominant agriculture system in the district. From time immemorial, forest has provided shelter, food, fuel, medicines and building materials for the people living in the rural areas. The faring operation in *jhum* cultivation is purely manual using simple tools where farm animals or other advanced techniques are not involved and by default the method of farming in the district is an organic one.

The main crops grown by the farmers in this district are- rice, green leafy vegetables, ginger, pumpkin, brinjal, chillies, beans etc. Small scale start-ups in the agricultural sector in the form of storage and processing units can be taken up to generate income and livelihood. The rich fertile soil in the district supports cultivation of many farm crops and there is a potential to grow the crops on a mass scale. For instance, for the past few years ginger among many other crops is preferred by the rural farmers in the district. The

advantage of ginger cultivation over other crops is in its income which helps households to meet all the household needs and no skilled labour or technique is required for the cultivation of ginger. Ginger can also be grown in a mixed cropping pattern along with other crops like chilli and brinjal.

The agricultural products once harvested are taken to the local markets for sale but during unfavourable conditions the market surplus results in poor income and earnings. In the presence of a storage or processing unit, ginger or any other crop which is extensively grown can be stored with an option for sale when the market demand is high or processed for manufacture of variety of edible products in the form of pickle, powdered spices, etc.

So there is a need of access to storage and processing units in the hilly areas of the district. Proper channeling of the market is also desirable to promote the production of the agricultural crops without incurring loss by the rural farmers.

ii. Horticulture and Floriculture

Horticulture is the agriculture of plants, grown for food, for materials, and beauty for decoration. Using skills and technology combined, selective plants are grown intensively for human food, non-food uses and social needs. It involves cultivation of plants to give high yield, quality and nutritive value. Some studies has shown that Northeastern region in India is one of the richest reservoirs of genetic variability with variety of horticultural species growing in region and this small rural district of Assam is no exception. There is ample of scope for development of the district through the development of horticulture. The department of horticulture has been created within the district but do not have adequate work force and infrastructure to address the entire problem of horticulture from the development of livelihood security point of view. Certain factors pose as barrier in the production of good result which may include factors like lack of knowledge and skills by workers, negligence by the stakeholders and the concerned department. These issues and barriers needs to be addressed and resolved along with the expansion of the horticulture wing in the district before setting up the perimeters for entrepreneurship in horticulture.

Floriculture or which commonly known as flower farming is a discipline under horticulture which is concerned with cultivation of flowering plants and ornamental plants for gardens and floristry which comprises of the floral industry. Floriculture is also a diversification of agriculture which has emerged in many developing countries as an important tool utilized for

livelihood security and its integration in India especially in the northeastern region for sustainable livelihood is no exception. The demand for flowers especially orchids/ roses and other flowers is high outside and within India. Many studies have shown the potential of floriculture in empowering rural tribal women to enhance their livelihood, economy and local ecology. The climate of the district is perceived to be conducive to grow flowers and many wild species of orchids are available in the district. The sale of flowers and option of foreign exchange, floriculture will accelerate the pace of development in the district.

iii. Animal Husbandry and Dairy Farming:

Hunting and gathering has been an indispensable part of the tribal culture and rearing of livestock, piggeries, poultry, cattles, fishery etc have always been prominent among the rural tribals of this district. The climate conditions and the abundance of vegetation makes the district an ideal place for animal husbandry and dairy farming which in turn will generate employment and enhance the rural economy. The district has been spending a good sum of money on the import of these products such as eggs, fishes, dairy products etc so it is high time that intervention in this area to produce goods within the district is made. Promotion of animal husbandry and dairy farming has the potential to secure livelihood for the rural areas as well as cope during stress caused by disasters.

iv. Handloom/Handicrafts and Handicraft manufacturing based on traditional art, craft and culture:

Majority of the population living in Dima Hasao district of Assam are tribals and since time immemorial tribal people in general are known to be experts in making artifacts and handicrafts. Each ethnic tribe dwelling in the district is blessed with rich heritage in handloom and handicrafts and even the colorful traditional attire of tribes that dwell in the district is a pleasant sight to behold. Traditional shawls & muffler, wrappers for women (*Mekhla*) and other accessories are pride of the district and worn by the people on special occasions. With passage of time and advancement in technology the tribal people adapting with changing times and under the influence of the urban fringe have forgotten most of its rich tradition and culture. Valuable traits of the ancestors have diminished in the quest for a better life. Urbanization offers people with better livelihood choices and access to services and other things but poses a threat to culture and tradition and thereby diminishing traditional livelihood practices. Efforts can be made to restore the beauty of culture and traditions of the district by exploring the feasibility of Handloom and Handicrafts manufacturing on a commercial scale for sustaining

livelihood for the rural people. With proper guidance and aid from the state's Handloom and Textile Department, refined and more improved tools and techniques i.e. shifting from traditional weaving method to modern techniques can be applied for the manufacture of crafts on a commercial scale. The market of the products can also be expanded outside the district and state on a permanent basis if proper channeling of the market can be done to promote the sale outside the district.

v. Apparel entrepreneurship

There exists a common widespread perception that entrepreneurial ventures are risky, unstable and lack social security benefits as compared to having jobs in the organized sector, many people have opted for entrepreneurship, started from scratch and many have succeeded in achieving more than their targeted goal. It is considered as a source of self-employment, innovation-oriented, self-financing, self-sustainability and incremental economic growth. Ventures in fashion and apparel is no different from the other kind of entrepreneurial ventures. Blending the beauty of the multi cultural traditions and the global trend in fashion industry, there exists scope for venture in apparel business for Dima Hasao District. Innovation through apparel and clothing line is one of the options for improving livelihood of the people by generating income and at the same time promote the district economy. With the right business plan for entrepreneurship, financial assistance and help from technological tools, the earnings and income for livelihood from this kind of innovative venture looks promising in the long run. For every prospect in the search for success there always lie constraints and obstacles so it is desirable that thorough investigation may be included in the business plan to be prepared to deal with any obstacle in the venture.

Constraints

i. **Motivational & Skill Constraint:** Out of the total population in the district, the percentage of the scheduled tribes in the population is 70.9 which accounts for majority of the population. Lack of education and adequate knowledge is one major setback to the developmental process. Many people living in the far flung hilly remote areas of the district have very less advantage of getting a good education while many households cannot afford education expenses for their children. These results in a great number of uneducated people with very less knowledge or awareness about the importance of development in its true sense and these people are devoid of motivation for any kind of developmental approach. Due to poor educational background rural communities are not

even aware of schemes and facilities that can be availed from financial institutions to aid in asset building. Vocational training aimed at capacity building for the unemployed youths will impart skill as well as motivate the youths today and the future generation and bring about changes in the developmental process of the rural economy.

ii. **Capital Constraint:** One of the main constraints for entrepreneurship or any start up required for livelihood securities is capital to start up the process. Majority of the rural people in the district are small scale farmers and do not have the capacity to start up any innovative step on their own. Lack of capital is a factor which fails to establish a proper infrastructure and due to lack of a proper infrastructure even the enterprise that exists does not make much profit.

iii. **Market Constraint:** Ease of access to markets is also an important factor which affects the developmental process. In absence of rural markets most of the products are sold through brokers and very less profit is achieved in this manner. Proper channeling of the market is therefore an ideal requirement for any enterprise or entrepreneurship to sustain livelihood security.

iv. **Loan Constraint:** Credit facility and its accessibility by the rural farmers is a necessity if the rural population has to progress towards development. Some of the rural banks and state run co-operative societies exists yet, the rural farmers are not able to fully access some of the privileges from these financial institutions. More policies and schemes for financial inclusion of the rural farmers are desirable in order to develop the rural economy in the district.

v. **Transportation and networking constraint**: Most of the villages in the district are located in the remote areas the hilly terrain in which majority of the people reside lacks proper transportation. Lack of proper transportation and networking largely affects the supply chain for entrepreneurship and other allied activities. Entrepreneurs are discouraged by the difficulties to get desirable inputs from the markets and for transport of outputs to the markets.

vi. **Less expenditure on research work**: Investments for research aimed atdevelopmentof the district always remained low when compared to the abundance of the resources for this district. This results in poor technological support. Research using ethnography is also desired in order to study the behaviors of each culture dwelling in the district to give better results in uplifting the social and rural economy.

Conclusion

Dima Hasao District of Assam is the abode of diverse multiethnic tribes with vibrant multicultural traditions and beliefs which lives in harmony and the district is rich in physical and natural resources, flora and fauna. From this we can draw an inference that if holistic approach towards the policies is made by the state government, the district autonomous council, financial institutions and stakeholders, a desired level of development can be achieved which can fuel the economy of district. Delayed and low wages, non-continuous employment, insufficient employment in MNREGA has resulted in making it less capable to support the need of every household in the rural villages of the district. Creation of employment opportunities by government and vocational training to impart skills to unemployed youth in the rural villages is a primary concern to overcome the crisis of employment. There is a need of proper intervention for start-ups, enterprises or entrepreneurship within the traditional framework for this rural district. The present day pandemic has almost already put a stop to seasonal migration of the population from the district to urban areas and as such start-ups and entrepreneurship or allied strategies can be made an option to recover from the stress and shocks of livelihood as well as provide livelihood on a sustainable basis. Social work interventions aimed at empowering the largely vulnerable rural communities and proper planning using sustainable livelihood perspectives to reinforce provision for effective social services is highly contended.

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Livelihood and Living Conditions of Traditional Cane and Bamboo Artisans in Aizawl and Kolasib Districts, Mizoram

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Abstract

India has several artisan communities dispersed across its states and regions. The declining production shows a decrease of artisans in every community. Most of the handicraft artisans belong to socially and economically weaker sections of the Indian society. The Mizos have many traditional handicraft products made from cane and bamboo. This skill had been passed on from one generation to the other until the machine-made products replaced them. However, there still are a few traditional handicraft items which machine-made items cannot replace and are highly socially valued. In this context, the present paper probes into the differential patterns of livelihood assets and living conditions of tribal bamboo and cane artisans in Mizoram between the rural and urban areas. Further, it explores the relationship between the livelihood assets and living conditions of them. Livelihood and living conditions of tribal artisans in rural areas and urban areas differ significantly. The urban artisans have comparatively better chances and better opportunities in all walks of life, and have better livelihood assets and enjoy better living conditions. However, urban artisans produce less and spend less time on work but their income and expenditure are very much higher than those of the hard-working rural artisans. In light of these findings, a few suggestions for policy making and social work practice towards livelihood promotion of tribal artisans in the state are put forth.

Key Words: Livelihood, living conditions, handicrafts, artisans

Introduction

In India, the artisan communities are dispersed, often inaccessible, and almost invariably unorganized with low levels of literacy, education and living conditions. Because of their dispersed profile, they cannot band together and, as a consequence lack political weight and clout (Planning Commission**,** 2005). Yet, the declining production shows a decrease of artisans in every community. With modernization and industrialization, there is a gradual decline in handicrafts as they cannot compete with machine-made articles but this does not lead to a complete demise of handicrafts. The problem is that what had happened during the transitional period affects the mind of the

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younger generation leading to dependence on machine-made goods and unconsciously letting go of one's traditional and cultural heritage.

Most of the handicraft artisans belong to socially and economically weaker sections of the society in India (Muraleedharan, Anitha and Rugmini, 2009; Sundriyal & Sundriyal, 2009). According to the 2001 census, there were 15 million artisans in the country (Narasaiah & Naidu, 2006). The number of artisans in the country is difficult to obtain as they are much unorganized and mostly home-based workers (Das & Das, 2011). Indian Labour yearbook 2011 and 2012 reported that there is no authentic data on home base workers, it has been estimated that there are 48 lakh artisans and craft persons in India.

India has the largest area and the second-largest reserve of bamboo in the world. Forest resources and their usage is a major skill among many tribes (Thakur, 2009; Sahadevan, 2009). The North-Eastern region of India has the largest bamboo stock in the country which accounts for fifty-four per cent of the bamboo resources in India (Kakra & Bhattacharjee, 2009). A huge number of artisans in the North-Eastern part of India are still very much dependent on handicrafts. Mizoram, one of the North-Eastern regions of India has utilized bamboo in everyday life. Just like every other tribal state of India, Mizoram also produces many types of craft items but the number of artisans is not known. The interactional pattern and livelihood strategies have changed from the traditional ones, and social control mechanisms have also declined. Many tribes started migrating to other states in search of jobs and this has also accelerated their interaction with other castes and communities resulting in culture change (Sahadevan, 2009; Samal, 2006).

Several studies on artisans had been carried out by many researchers, however; these studies focus mainly on the traditional handicrafts such as pottery, blacksmithy, carpentry, silk weaving and basket weaving (Dutta & Ghose, 2010; Sahadevan, 2009; SEED, 2006; Narasaiah & Naidu, 2006; Scrase, 2005; Das & Sachdeva, 1993; Qureshi, 1990) which increased after the year 2000. An important section of artisans the bamboo and cane artisans have not gained adequate attention in most of these studies.

Therefore, a study on livelihood and living conditions of tribal artisans in Mizoram was carried out so that it might help the development of tribal artisans. It identifies their needs and problems so that these artisan communities can help themselves in achieving their full potential.

An Overview of Literature

Rural and tribal artisans constitute a notable proportion of India's population, the literature on their crafts, and their living condition is scarce. Among them, some studies had been focused on social aspects of tribal arts and crafts. Anthropologists and sociologists have attempted studies on tribal life, their culture, their relation with forest and their artistic skill with which they have decorated their simple life (Thakur, 2009; Sahadevan, 2009; Narasaiah & Naidu, 2006).

There are some studies which focus on commercial and economic aspects of tribal handicrafts (Narasaiah & Naidu, 2006). Tribal people have almost forgotten the technology and skill of their traditional occupations, and now these groups are engaged as wage labourers under local landlords and estates (Sahadevan, 2009).

Significantly, with the emergence of a globalised economy, coupled with postmodern consumer sentiments, crafts represent a traditional (or homely) form of consumer goods, which, for some buyers, gives them great appeal. In other words, the consumption of crafts allows for a symbolic (imagined) reconnection back to earlier, (traditional) and more "earthly" forms and designs in a fragmented, fractured and technological world (Scrase, 2005; Timothy, 2003).

The above overview of the literature suggests a few gaps. Firstly, there has not been any substantial study on artisans in North East India and the context of Mizoram tribal artisans; the relationship between livelihood and living has yet to be explored. Secondly, studies on tribal and rural artisans lack theoretical and empirical rigour. This present study addresses these research gaps with an application of Sustainable Livelihood Approach and probes into livelihood and living condition of artisans

Theoretical Framework: Sustainable Livelihood Framework

The Sustainable Livelihood approach is a tool for planning interventions, reviewing and evaluating projects, research, policy analysis and development. As Ellis(2000) wrote, the livelihoods approach is based on the premise that the asset status of the poor is fundamental to understanding the options open to them, the strategies they adopt to attain livelihoods, the outcomes they aspire to and the vulnerability context under which they operate. Department For International Development (DFID) distinguishes five categories of assets (or capital) – natural, social, human, physical and financial.

Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway (1992) in Krantz(2001) defined Livelihood as a livelihood comprising the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.

Statement of the Problem

The Mizos have many traditional handicraft products made from cane and bamboo. This skill had been passed on from one generation to the other until the machine-made products replaced them. However, there still are a few traditional handicraft items which machine-made items cannot replace and are highly socially valued. Unfortunately, there are only a few artisans left in Mizoram especially in Aizawl, who are engaged in such callings. Most of these artisans are recognized as the protectors of traditional handicrafts as they are the only means of preventing these handicrafts from extinction in the present industrialized world. Despite their importance and their value in the life of Mizo, artisans are decreasing and many of the traditional handicraft items might have gone forever along with the artisans. There are only a few central and state government programmes for the promotion of rural handicrafts and the living conditions of rural artisans. In this context, the study probes into the differential patterns of livelihood assets and living conditions of tribal bamboo and cane artisans in Mizoram between the rural and urban areas. Further, it explores the relationship between the livelihood assets and living conditions of them. In light of the findings, the study proposes a few suggestions for policy making and social work practice towards livelihood promotion of tribal artisans in the state.

Methodology

The current study has been conducted in two districts of Mizoram. Aizawl and Kolasib Districts. It is cross-sectional in nature and descriptive in design, and based on primary data collected mainly through field survey. The unit of the study is artisan household while the population of the study includes all the Cane and Bamboo handicraft artisan households in the districts of Aizawl and Kolasib.

The sampling procedure used was purposive. The sample size is 74 artisan households in which 58 artisan households are from the Rural Area and 16 are from the Urban Area. A pretested structured household interview

schedule was used for the collection of primary data. The interview schedule included sections on the demographic, social and economic profile, livelihood and living conditions of the artisans. The quantitative data collected through field survey was processed and analyzed with the help of MS Excel and SPSS and presented in the form of simple averages, percentages, cross-tabulation, and co-relation tables (Karl Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficients).

Limitations of the Study

The target population is sparsely scattered all over the State considering the importance of the handicraft item. But those who sell and generate income from handicrafts are hard to find which create difficulties for the study. There can be no selection based on geographical area for the study as there is no record of the artisan population in Mizoram. There is a high possibility of unreached and left out artisans in the study as handicrafts consist of home-based work, and artisans are not visible for identification. Most of the respondents are identified through the market. The rural respondents are identified during their product sale in Aizawl and by directly visiting their village, while urban artisans are identified from their work in the Government sector, through their product sale in the market. Data collection was limited as communication is difficult due to language barrier in some areas where the interviewer has a chance of not obtaining the exact information s/he had in mind because of the need for interpretation by a translator. Time consumption rate is high in collecting data due to the artisan usually being engaged in agricultural or other work.

Results and Discussion

The results of the present study are presented in three sections. The first section is devoted to discussing the pattern of livelihood assets (natural capital, physical capital, financial capital, human capital and social capital). The pattern of living Conditions of the artisans is discussed in the second section while the relationship between the Livelihood and Living Conditions of the Tribal artisans is discussed in the last section.

Patterns of Natural Capital and Physical Capital

According to DFID (2000), natural capital is the natural resource stocks from which resource flows and services viz. land, water, forest, biodiversity degree, etc. useful for livelihoods are derived. The physical capital comprises the basic infrastructure and producer goods needed to support livelihoods, such as affordable transport, secure shelter and buildings, adequate water supply and sanitation, clean, affordable energy and access to information. In

the present paper, the size of landholding and the value of livestock owned by the household was considered as two indicators of the natural capital endowment. In the present study physical capital is assessed in terms of house, television, radio, utensils, furniture, solar plate, vehicle, cell phone and Jewelry. The total value of these assets was considered as the physical capital (see Table 1).

In terms both the natural and physical assets endowments, the urban artisans are better than those in the rural areas. There is not much difference in land ownership between rural and urban artisans. The analysed mean area owned by the artisan households shows that the access to land is slightly higher for the rural artisans (1.5 Acres) as compared to the urban artisans (1.3 Acres).

Table1 Pattern of Natural and Physical Assets

Sl. No.	Livelihood Asset	Location				Total N = 74	
		Urban n = 16		Rural n = 58			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
I	Natural Capital						
	Size of Land (In Acres)	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.4	1.3
	Live Stock (In Rs)	25063	79495	10778	13718	13866	38477
II	Physical Capital (In Rs)	169241	174239	5001	2925	40512	104302

Source: Computed

However, the monetary value of livestock owned by the urban artisan households was significantly greater than those owned by the rural artisans The mean value of livestock owned by the urban artisan households was worked out to Rs. 25,063/- while the value of the rural household is Rs. 10,778/-. The physical assets owned by the urban artisan household were also significantly higher than those of the rural artisans. The urban artisan households own an average Rs. 16924/- worth of physical assets, that is three times higher than those of the rural artisans (Rs. 5001/-).

Table 2 Patterns of Financial Capital: Household Savings

(In Rs)

Form of Saving	Location				Total N = 74	
	Urban n = 16		Rural n = 58			
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Cash in Hand	22750 (29.4)	15674	4560 (92)	3745	8493 (41.3)	10875
Commercial Banks	54500 (70)	55124	397 (8)	2649	12095 (58.7)	33656
Household Saving	77250(100)	63429	4957 (100)	4452	20588 (100)	41713

Source: Computed   Figures in parentheses are percentages

Patterns of Financial Capital

In the present study, financial capital is assessed in terms of total household saving (see Table 2) and household debt (see Table 3). Household saving includes cash in hand and commercial bank savings/deposits while household debt includes money borrowed from friends and relatives, commercial banks, brokers, missionaries and grocery shop owners.

Concerning household saving, there is a significant difference between rural and urban artisan households. For the urban artisans, 71% of the savings was with the commercial banks while 92% of the savings of the rural artisans were in the form of cash in hand. Further, the total mean value of household savings of the urban artisans (Rs. 77,250/-) was far greater than Rs. 4,957/- savings of the rural artisans. The savings in the form of cash in hand, as well as deposits in commercial banks, were far greater for the urban artisan households as compared to the rural artisans (see Table 2).

Table 3 Patterns of Financial Capital: Household Debt

(In Rs)

Sl. No.	Form of Debt	Location				Total N = 74	
		Urban n = 16		Rural n = 58			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
	Friends and Relatives	0 (0.0)	0	34 (9.8)	184	27 (0.8)	163
	Commercial Banks	13438 (100)	23001	0 (0.0)	0	2905 (91.3)	11821
	Broker	0 (0.0)	0	224 (63.4)	586	176 (5.5)	526
	Missionaries	0 (0.0)	0	52 (14.6)	292	41 (1.3)	259
	Grocery shop	0 (0.0)	0	43 (12.2)	146	34 (1.1)	131
	Household Debt	13438 (100)	23001	353 (100)	683	3182 (100)	11768
	Financial Capital (Saving – Debt)	63813	68955	4603	4542	17405	39942

Source: Computed   Figures in parentheses are percentages

As regards household debt too, there is a significant difference between rural and urban artisan households (see table 3). Artisan households in the urban are indebted mostly which is not so in rural areas, 63% of their debts in rural areas were with the brokers who help them sell their products. Household debt as a whole was greater for the urban artisans as compared to the rural artisans. The artisan households in the urban area had thirteen times (Rs. 13,438/-) higher amount of household debt as compared to those in the rural artisans (Rs. 353/-).

The net savings of the artisan households were considered as the financial capital endowment. There is a wide gap in the financial capital endowment between urban and rural artisan households. The mean value of the financial capital of the urban artisans was worked out to Rs. 63813/- while it was just Rs. 4603/- for the rural artisan households.

Patterns of Social Capital

Social Capital refers to the social resources upon which people draw in seeking for their livelihood outcomes, such as networks and contentedness, that increase people's trust and ability to cooperate or membership in more formalized groups and their systems of rules, norms and sanctions (DFID, 2000). In the present study, Social Capital was assessed in terms of three sets of indicators viz., Political participation (voting in elections), and Community participation (see Table 4).

Table 4 Patterns of Social Capital

Sl. No.	Indicators	Location				Total N = 74	
		Urban n = 16		Rural n = 58			
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
I	**Voting in Elections**						
	General Election	3.0	0.0	2.8	0.8	2.8	0.7
	Assembly Election	3.0	0.0	2.9	0.6	2.9	0.5
	Village/Locality Council Election	3.0	0.0	2.9	0.6	2.9	0.5
	Voting	3.0	0.0	2.9	0.6	2.9	0.5
II	**Community Participation**						
	Village Council/Local Council	2.1	0.6	2.6	0.6	2.5	0.6
	Church-Based Organisations	1.7	0.6	2.0	1.2	1.9	1.1
	Young Mizo Association	2.1	0.9	0.0	0.0	0.5	1.0
	Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl	0.8	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.4
	Mizoram Upa Pawl	0.7	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.5
	Community Participation	1.5	0.3	0.9	0.3	1.0	0.4

Source: Computed

The first component of social capital is political participation assessed in terms of the frequency of voting in elections or electoral participation.

Voting in Elections included General election, Assembly Election and Village/Local Council Election. There is no significant difference in the patterns of political participation between rural and urban artisans. The Artisan households across the rural and urban areas have voted in all the general election, Assembly Elections and Local Council Elections.

There is no significant difference between the rural and urban artisans not only in modes of participation but also in the magnitude of political participation. In both locations, all of the respondent households had 'mostly' participated. There is no notable difference between the rural and urban artisan households in the pattern of political participation assessed in terms of voting in elections.

The second component of social capital is that of Community participation. It was assessed in terms of the frequency of the households' participation in Village Council/Local council, Church-Based Organisation, YMA, MHIP and MUP. The pattern of community participation of the urban artisan household was observed to be significantly different from those in rural areas. The artisans in the urban areas could participate in volunteering activities of all the community organisations such as Village Council/Local Council, Church-Based Organisations, Young Mizo Association, Mizo Hmeichhe Insuihkhawm Pawl (Mizo Women Association), Mizoram Upa Pawl (Association of Mizo Senior Citizens). The rural artisans could participate in only two modes of community volunteering through the Village Council/Local Council, and Church-Based Organisations. Hence, the community participation of artisan households is better in the urban area than in the rural area.

Patterns of Human Capital

In the context of a sustainable livelihood framework, human capital represents the skills, knowledge, ability to labour and good health that together enable people to pursue different livelihood strategies and achieve their livelihood objectives (DFID, 2000). In the present study, the human capital endowment of the artisan households has been assessed in terms of three discrete indicators- mean years of adult education, the proportion of earners and the number of artisans (see table 5).

Table 5 Patterns of Human Capital

Sl. No	Indicator	Location				Total N = 74	
		Urban n = 16		Rural n = 58			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Mean Years of Adult Education	5.6	2.2	1.7	2.0	2.6	2.6
2	Proportion of Earners	0.6	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.2
3	Number of Artisans	1.5	0.7	1.1	0.3	1.2	0.5

Source: Computed

The results of the analyses of the mean difference between the three indicators of human capital show that the artisans located in the urban areas have better endowment as compared those in the rural areas. The mean years of education of the adult members of the urban artisans (5.6) are significantly greater than that of the rural artisans (1.7). The proportion of earners in urban households (0.6) is also greater than that of the rural artisan households (0.3). Likewise, the number of artisans in urban artisan households (1.5) is also greater than that of the rural artisan households (1.1).

Patterns of Living Conditions of Artisans

Two indicators of the living conditions were used to assess the livelihood outcomes of the tribal artisans. They are household income and household expenditure. The pattern of household income of the artisan households was analysed in terms of its distribution across their sources. The common sources of Income for artisan households are Arts and crafts, Wage labour, Cultivation and others (see Table 6).

Table 6 Pattern of Household Income

Sl. No.	Source	Location				Total N = 74	
		Urban n = 16		Rural n = 58			
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D
1	Arts and Crafts	42888 (22.5)	56546	34482 (60.2)	17972	36300 (42.2)	30354
2	Wage Labour	37125 (19.5)	38260	7169 (12.5)	13668	13646 (15.9)	24512
3	Cultivation	0 (0)	0	9497 (16.6)	11104	7443 (8.7)	10572
4	Others	110250 (57.9)	111194	6097 (10.6)	19111	28616 (33.3)	68479
5	Annual Household Income	190263 (100)	96752	57245 (100)	27790	86005 (100)	74606
	Per capita Annual Household Income	42046	20310	12253	8340	18695	17075

Source: Computed   Figures in parentheses are percentages

The results show that there is a significant difference in the pattern of household income of the artisans between rural and urban areas. Arts and crafts constituted the predominant source of income for the rural artisans (60.2%) while for the urban artisans, they form the secondary source (22.5%).

Rural and urban artisan households differed significantly in the annual household income as well as per capita annual household income. The income from crafts and arts to the urban artisan households (Rs. 1, 90,263) was still greater as compared to the rural artisans (Rs. 57,245). Mean per capita annual income of the urban artisan households (Rs 42046) was significantly greater than that of the rural artisans (Rs 12253).

The pattern of household expenditure was analysed in terms of its distribution across the Food and Non-Food components (see Table 7) for its difference between rural and urban artisans.

There is a marked difference between the pattern of the household income of rural and urban artisan households. Most of the expenditure of urban artisan households was incurred on non-food items (68%), while most of the expenditure of the rural artisan households was incurred on the food items (53%). This finding is consistent with the Engel's Law of family expenditure which states that as household income increases, the share of that income spent on food declines on a relative basis (Zimmerman, 1932). This finding also reveals the relatively better living condition of the urban artisans as compared to the rural artisans.

Table 7 Pattern of Household Expenditure

Sl. No.	Form of Expenditure	Location				Total N = 74	
		Urban n = 16		Rural n = 58			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1	Food	2144 (32.4)	700	1524 (53.2)	1028	1658 (45.1)	996
2	Non Food	4475 (67.6)	2298	1340 (46.8)	777	2018 (54.9)	1801
	Monthly Household Expenditure	6619 (100)	2719	2864 (100)	1602	3676 (100)	2438
	Per capita Monthly Expenditure	1543	830	574	302	783	612

Source: Computed   Figures in parentheses are percentages

The total monthly expenditure and per capita monthly expenditure of the urban households were significantly greater than those of the rural artisans. The total monthly expenditure of the urban artisan households (Rs. 6619) is three times greater than that of the rural artisan household expenditure (Rs. 2864). In both the food and non-food components of household expenditure, urban artisans have spent a greater amount as compared to the rural artisans.

Relationship between Livelihood and Living Conditions

The pattern of the relationship between Livelihood Assets and Living conditions of the artisans is presented in this section. Karl Pearson's Product

Moment correlation coefficients are used to assess the relationship between the indicators of livelihood and living conditions of artisans (see Table 8).

All forms of Livelihood assets viz., Human, Natural, Physical, Financial and Social capitals have a significant and mostly positive bearing on the living conditions consistently on both per capita annual household income and expenditure.

All indicators of Human Capital viz. mean years of adult education, the proportion of earners, and the number artisans in the family, have positive relationships with both the indicators of living conditions. As expected, the household expenditure and household income are increasing with the increased human capital endowment of the household in terms of education, the number of earners and artisans in the household.

In the case of Natural Capital, only livestock has a significant positive relationship with living conditions. Land size has no significant relationship with the living condition due to the non-transferability of the land possessed by the rural artisans. Physical and Financial Capital have positive and significant relationships with living conditions.

Table 8 Livelihood and Living Conditions: Pearson's R

N = 74

Sl. No.	Livelihood Asset	Living Condition	
		Per capita Annual Household Income	Per capita Monthly Household Expenditure
I	Human Capital		
	Mean Years of Adult Education	0.64**	0.40**
	Proportion of Earners	0.59**	0.51**
	No. of Artisans in Family	0.23*	0.25*
II	Natural Capital		
	Size of Landholding	0.08	0.13
	Live Stock	0.28**	0.23*
III	Physical Capital	0.67**	0.48**

IV	Financial Capital	0.67**	0.58**
V	Social Capital		
	Voting	0.11	0.12
	Community Participation	0.31**	0.36**

Source: Computed   * P < 0.05   ** P< 0.01

Social capital in the form of community participation has a positive relationship with both the indicators of living conditions while voting has no significant relationship with them.

Conclusion

Artisans all over India earn minimum wage from Handicrafts that barely suffice their living. There is no division of sex or age to for handicraft work yet these crafts are vanishing in every tribal community despite their continuing significance in the cultural and economic life of the specific communities and the nation as a whole. Mahatma Gandhi's Swadeshi legacy attempted to stop imperialism and transform the process, leading free India to include handicraft within the framework of national planning. Official support schemes, often indifferently designed and reluctantly implemented, today touch only a fraction of possibly 200 million or more engaged in craft activity (Crafts Council of India, 2011). The present study attempts to understand the pattern of livelihoods and living conditions of traditional cane and bamboo artisans in Mizoram from a Sustainable Livelihood approach. The results of the study show significant differences in the social and economic characteristics of traditional cane and bamboo artisans between rural and urban areas. The rural artisans are more in number but have lesser years of experience in handicraft. Majority of the artisans are illiterate whether urban or rural. Throughout the year, rural artisans work on handicraft and produce more even though they produce only a few selected items; and urban artisans with four selected item producers cannot compete with them. Thus, Handicraft is the main occupation for rural artisans while urban artisans have other sources of income.

Livelihood and living conditions of tribal artisans in rural areas and urban areas differ significantly. The urban artisans have comparatively better chances and better opportunities in all walks of life, and have better livelihood assets and enjoy better living conditions. However, urban artisans produce less and spend less time on work but their income and expenditure are very much higher than those of the hard-working rural artisans.

Livelihood assets have a significant positive bearing on the living conditions of the tribal artisans. All forms of Livelihood assets viz., Human, Natural, Physical, Financial and Social capitals have a significant and positive effect on living conditions consistently on both per capita annual household income and expenditure. Among them, more pertinent are human capital endowments. All the indicators of Human Capital viz. mean years of education, the proportion of earners and the number of artisans in the family has positive relationships with both the indicators of living conditions. Size of the family has no significance because there is only one artisan each in the majority of the respondent households. Social capital in terms of participation in community volunteering is a contributing factor to the livelihood outcomes of the artisans.

For preserving the cane and bamboo handicrafts as well as promoting the livelihood and living conditions of tribal artisan households in the study area, greater financial support in terms of subsidized loans is required. The artisans need to be provided with more training in the use of electrical tools for making their crafts along with subsidized provision for purchase of the electrical equipment. Marketing of the products and non-remunerative price to the bamboo crafts were reported as major challenges of the artisans. Hence, appropriate mechanisms for better marketing of the bamboo handicrafts are required.

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Ginger cultivation as a source of Livelihood: A study of Asalu Village in Dima Hasao District of Assam

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Abstract

The present study is an attempt to explore the livelihood strategies of Asalu village in Dima Hasao district of Assam. Livelihood of the rural ethnic minorities in North-East India are still dependent on farming activities and this paper is focused on understanding the livelihood choices and strategies under practice by the rural population of Asalu Village. Ginger cultivation is a preferred livelihood strategy in the study area. But although majority of the population is engaged in ginger cultivation, the ginger growers are facing disincentives and there is high chance for the ginger growers to shift to other crops in the future if more sustainable approach for cultivation of ginger is not met. In the study area, ginger is sold in the fresh form and under unfavorable market condition there is often loss from surplus. Lack of warehousing, cold storage facilities also pose a threat for post harvest and spoilage. Skill training for the ginger growers, change of land holding system and conversion of jhum cultivation to permanent settlement cultivation to stop and prevent further loss of soil fertility can help improve the livelihood outcome. Approach and implementations for sustainable development with the right means for this rural village can be helpful for achievingsecured livelihood outcome for both the present and in the future.

Keywords: Livelihood, Ginger cultivation, sustainable development, Natural Capital, Social Capital

Introduction

Livelihood is a term which is often used rather than "a job" or "source of living". In simple terms a livelihood is the means of living. From development point of view, a livelihood refers to the way people make a living and in order to analyze the livelihood system it is important that the factors involved in the way in which people make a living is analyzed. Livelihood is composed of assets and capabilities. The assets can be any useful thing or person.

The Sustainable Livelihood Framework (SLF) broadly categorizes livelihood assets into- Human capital, social capital, natural capital, physical capital,

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and financial capital. The livelihood of rural India is not secure and their rural economy is at crossroads due to improper livelihood management. Issues such as literacy, basic infrastructure, capital constraints, motivational skills and trainings are required to be addressed properly. Expenditures on research and development in generation and improvement of livelihood along with conventional skills and training is the need of the hour.

Agriculture has always been the main economic pursuit and the backbone of the Indian economy. Agriculture dominates the economy of our country to such an extent that a very large proportion of the population is engaged in agriculture and allied farming activities. Agriculture plays a big role in India such that any change in the agriculture sector - positive or negative has a multiplier effect on the entire economy.

Assam is an agricultural based state and majority of the population is actually engaged in agricultural activities. The present scenario of the state agriculture exhibits most of underdeveloped agriculture that features high dependency on agriculture for their livelihood, extensive practice of traditional farming techniques and low usage of farm inputs with low level in productivity. The same trend in agriculture is seen in the rural hilly districts of the state where almost all of its population depend on agriculture for their livelihood.

Materials and Methods

The present paper is descriptive in character and is based on primary data collected from stakeholders as well as secondary data collected from prior research studies and materials from the internet. Since the concept of livelihood is derived from asset and capabilities, this paper is aimed at exploring the ginger cultivation as a livelihood strategywith special context to Asalu village. The present paper focuses only on the ginger cultivation for securing livelihood and does not take into account the other livelihood strategies adopted by the people of Asalu village. The present paper is also limited to adequate data,limited resources on the topic as a result of limited prior studies on this part of the district.

Objective of the Study

1. To understand the brief profile of Asalu village
2. To find out how ginger cultivation act as a source of securing livelihood

Brief Profile of the Study Area

Asalu is a small village situated about 45 Kms from Haflong town, the district headquarter of Dima Hasao District earlier known as North Cachar Hills district in Assam. The inhabitants of the village are the indigenous (Scheduled) tribe called Zeme Nagas. According to the Population Census 2011,the total population of the village is 362 with a total of 64 household. The village is administrated by Sarpanch elected representative of village, who is commonly referred to as the Gaon Bura. The total literacy rate as per the population census 2011 stands at 90.37%. There is one Government (Lower Primary) school in the village and one private (Don Bosco) school for classes Nursery to Class V. Majority of the population still live in Kutcha house. About 5% of the total population are employed in formal sector however a large proportion of the population are cultivators. No distinct difference is known in the participation of gender in farming activities resulting in income and livelihood. Both the men and women are equally involved in farming and manual labor activities.

Asalu is a rural village with a historical importance famous for the first British Administrative headquarters of NC Hills. It is said that the British occupied the southern part of Dimasa Kachari kingdom in 1832 and formed a Sub Divisional head quarter at Asalu for their administration in 1837. They had constructed an administrative building at Asalu village which is known as Asalu Fort and the ruin of the building is still present at the village in a striking location.

Asalu village is also known for its stone structures and megaliths in the form of pillars, and tomb like structures called Asa N'seu, Asa N'sung and others which are located at different locations in and around the village which is believed to have belonged to the ancient demigod from the ancestral myths popularly known to all the Zeme Nagas as 'Asa'. The enchanting and pleasing landscape of the surrounding mountains and hills adds more beauty to the village. With the right developmental approach there is potential for the village to become a tourist attraction and a hotspot for leisure seekers.

Livelihood Asset and Strategies

Land: There is a strong relationship between land and people since land is generally understood as the main source of life. Land is considered as a gift and is sacred to the people as their ancestors have lived and worked on the same land which is handed down to be passed on to the future generations. By tradition, land in the Zeme society either belong to an individual or a community. Community here may be referred to as "a family", "a clan" or a

group of people. The socio-cultural and economic life of these people revolves around land and its resources. However for shifting cultivation, the village council reigns supreme and one must follow the decision of the village council or sometimes the owner of the land for site selection and slashing and burning of the forest vegetation in order to grow their crops. The habitat of the tribal people are mostly located in the far remote hilly areas either on the top of a hill or below a hill. These tribal societies surround themselves with nature including water bodies and forest resources on which they depend for their livelihood. The Zeme Naga people inhabiting Asalu village is no different from these tribal societies.

Farming Method: While shifting cultivation continue to be the dominant land-use form in many of the hilly North Eastern region, the same pattern is followed by the people of Asalu village for agricultural farming. Every year, the village council selects a block to be cultivated by the community and certain rules are set in order to avoid spread of fire outside the designated areas. Strong penalties in terms of monetary values or in kind is imposed in case of uncontrolled fire or spread of fire. The entire shifting cultivation land is divided into blocks and for this village there usually is 5-10 blocks which includes fallow land. Like all the conventional indigenous tribal societies, the Zeme Naga of Asalu village avoid cultivation of rice or any other crops beyond two years in order to allow the land to recoup its fertility including maintaining a good fallow cycle. After site selection of land for cultivation on the designated blocks, the *jhum* cycle starts with slash and burn after which the land is tilled and seeds are sown. Weeding occurs at intervals or as and when necessary till the crops are ready to be harvested. The period from one slash to the next slash is called a *jhum* cycle. After two years of cultivation, the land is left fallow to regain its fertility.

Cultivation of Ginger as a livelihood strategy: Ginger is a spice crop for its aromatic properties and choice of farmers in the study area. It is a commercial crop and a great livelihood asset. All the parts of the ginger plant is edible from the rhizomes to the stems, the leaves and the buds. Ginger can be used fresh, dried or powdered, as a juice or as oil.

The land for cultivation of ginger follows the same pattern as for any other crop by slash and burn method. The method is purely traditional and in the *jhum* lands the farming technique is purely organic which requires no fertilizers. After the land is tilled and when the early monsoon rain commences, the seed rhizomes are cut into small pieces and are sown as early as February and the sowing continue till the month of April. The choice of land and soil for cultivation of ginger is bamboo covered forests. It is

believed that ginger grows best when cultivated in bamboo filled forest cover. Ginger is grown as a mix crop along with other major crops like rice which is the main staple food and other vegetables like brinjal, chili, pumpkin, etc. The mixed cropping pattern produces desired quality from the ginger cultivation. Weeding is done at regular intervals depending on the intensity of the weeds. Since the cultivation follows a rain fed process, the crops depend on rainfall during crop cycle. The tender ginger buds are sometimes plucked once the budding starts which are then taken to the local market for sale as a fresh vegetable.

Harvesting of ginger depend on the prevailing market demand, market price and purpose for use. The peek harvesting time is 10-12 months after sowing. Once harvested the soil from harvested rhizomes is removed and transported to the nearest market, i.e.Mahur, one of the town under Dima Hasao District which is at a distance of 10 Kms (approx.) from the village. The cost of ginger may vary from Rs. 15/kg when the demand is low and it may go up as high as Rs. 80/kg when the demand is high. The harvested ginger is taken to the nearest market from where it is sold to the brokers and suppliers who then transports the commodity to different places.

Health Benefit of ginger

Ginger has been used widely as a spice and as a medicine over centuries by people all over the world. It occupies an important place in traditional medicine as well as modern medicine for its medicinal properties and composition. Some of the important use of ginger in the field of both traditional and modern medicine is listed as under:

i. Ginger is used in the treatment of bacterial infections for its direct anti-microbial activity.

ii. Ginger extract can help remove disorders caused by oxidative stresses as a strong anti-oxidant.

iii. Other benefits of ginger are reducing pain, rheumatoid arthritis, as an anti inflammatory, antioxidant effects and as well as an antipyretic.

iv. The phenolic compounds and other components of ginger had many neuro protective effects such as analgesic effects, memory improvement, and learning caused by the aging process.

v. Ginger is used in the United States as a remedy to alleviate motion sickness as well as morning sickness during pregnancy and to reduce cramps.

vi.   Ginger is one of the most widely used spices in India and has been utilized frequently in traditional oriental medicine for common cold, indigestion and rheumatism.

vii. In light of the recent global pandemic, i.e Covid-19 it is reported that fresh ginger in high concentrations helps in stimulating mucosal cells to secrete compounds which is expected to contribute in reducing the viral infection. The antiviral effectiveness of fresh ginger against respiratory syncytial virus RSV virus is also reported.

Discussion

The climate and soil condition at Asalu village is ideal for cultivation of ginger. Since the people grow ginger on sloppy jhum lands, there is no need of systematic practice like ploughing, leveling and tillage and ginger can be grown successfully without the use of manures or fertilizers. However, the present livelihood practices and the strategies are not free from disadvantages. Many factors contribute to loss of production as well as loss of income. Maximum utilization of production and income can be achieved through adoption of the following points:

Landholding system: The present system of operational land holding having a tenure of two years for jhum cultivation poses a serious threat to the fertility of the soil that can ultimately leave the land barren. This method of farming encourages continuity of jhum cultivation. It is a known fact that jhum cultivation hampers the soil's fertility and extensive practice of this method will destruct forest cover and is not viable for a sustainable approach. Construction of terraces across the hilly terrain and mulching techniques to conserve moisture and check soil erosion must be encouraged.

Disease and Pests: Cultivation of ginger in the hilly areas is done without proper irrigation, without use of manures or fertilizers, so the ginger grown is organic by default however it is not free from diseases. The disease of the rhizome, the stems and the leaves affect the yield of ginger considerably. Interventions for improved varieties having her performances in disease resistance can be introduced for high end uses.

Natural calamity constraint: Under unfavorable conditions nature's fury triggers fear among all farmers and which cannot be escaped. Nature's fury can take the form of drought and unseasonal and excessive rain which cause extensive damage to the ginger and other major crops. It is a known fact that very minimal institutional support is extended to the marginal farmers and these farmers find difficulties under unfavorable climatic conditions. Heavy

loss is incurred by farmers due to lack of proper storage resulting from the spoilage of crops.

Lack of infrastructure: Ginger is marketed by the ginger cultivators under the study area in fresh form. Post harvest fresh ginger offers a serious problem during storage and transport due to its highly perishable nature. Lack of post harvesting and handling facilities like storage, warehousing, cold storage in the region under study is a serious issue which has to be addressed properly in order to sustain the livelihood of the rural ginger cultivators and prevent spoilage and loss of income.

Lack of Education: The majority of the population under the study area faces a serious issue due to low level of education. There are only two schools running in the village (one government run and the other private) which offers education upto standard V. In such case, the villagers has to send their children to other nearby towns for higher education and most of the families cannot afford sending their children to study outside.

Lack of motivational & skill constraint: Due to lack of education the villagers especially faces a serious threat from lack of motivation and skills. Due to lack of education, many are unaware of the schemes and facilities that can aid in providing income as well as in developing the rural economy. There is a need of government aided skill training programs aimed at capacity building to enable the village youths to develop themselves in order to perform at a greater capacity.

Lack of capital & institutional support: One of the major disadvantages faced by the rural farmers is lack of capital and institutional support to participate in any kind of productive activities that can promote the community as well as the rural economy. Financial and capital support for these rural folks can help them participate in self employment opportunities and other allied start up activities.

Marketing & Networking constraint: There is no organized market information and marketing of ginger in this part of the district. Traders, brokers and commission agents collect all the commodities produced by the village from the local market from where it is then exported to other parts of the region via Lumding or Silchar to other states and regions. In such circumstances there is very less profit for the villagers and these rural people are left indebted due to defective marketing structure. There is also a need for an improved networking and communication route including better transport system to open up better and profitable trade routes and market channeling for the remote hilly areas of the district.

Conclusion

Poverty and social exclusion is reflected in all aspects of life of the rural people and the people strive to earn their livelihood in order to sustain all their needs. Asalu village is a village where a community strives in harmony and hope to secure their future and that of their future generations by way of participating in all profitable livelihood opportunities. Ginger cultivation is seen as a profitable livelihood opportunity and preferred by most of the farmers in the village and the income derived from ginger cultivation has help achieved a certain benchmark for some families to be able to meet the need of the household expenses. However, the efficiency of ginger in improving livelihood of all the people is still to be ascertained. In absence of the correct tools and farm equipments and proper aid from the government or other agencies, the traditional system of *jhum* technique cannot be compared to the pace of progress made in the other parts of the state. The community is vulnerable and ignorant in many ways however they have coped with all of life's uncertainties so far and long to see better days with developmental changes in the days to come.

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Foster Care in Manipur: Procedures and Challenges

Evergreat Wanglar[1]

Abstract

Foster care, a family-based care non-institutional care provides children in need of care and protection a right to family and home. It is an arrangement for a child with an extended or unrelated family for a certain period of time.This paper aims to unravel the procedures relating to identification and placement of children living in institutional care and to identify gaps in placing children in institutional care for foster care. This study is carried out in 22 child care institutions working for children in need of care and protection of Chandel, Churachanpur, Imphal East, Imphal West and Ukhrul districts. In Manipur, there is no report and concrete data of children from institutional care and outside institutions placed in for foster care. However, there are reports of children placed in foster care though a non-formal agreement in the family/neighbor/community but not through legal procedure. There is no state policy that suits the needs for a simple and effective foster care therefore takes time in placing a child in foster care thus, violating the rights of both the child and parents. Based on the findings, the researcher calls for an immediate state policy and suggested some points which can be considered while framing the policy for effective implementation of foster care in Manipur.

Key Words: *Child, Child Care Institutions, Foster Care, Non Institutional Care, Children in need of care and protection, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act.*

Introduction

Children are considered are to be a priceless resource of the country as the future of the nations depends on them. As such nations can only develop when children are taken care and protected. Every child has a right to family and home. However, not every child has a family and an environment conducive for his all round development. So the country has a huge responsibility in protecting those children without parents and who cannot be taken care by their families. Although there is an increasing awareness of the fact that home is the best and right place for children to grow and develop in, at times, home becomes functionally incapable to cater to the needs of the children due to inevitable circumstances.

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In spite of having all the measures, one may come across instances where parents are in continued financial strain, where the family is broken and relatives are unable to take care of the children, where children are suffering from severe disabilities, and where adequate housing conditions cannot be maintained. As a result, a number of children may be left uncared and unprotected, unless they are given timely care and protection through any form of substitute care.

Given this scenario, institutional care remains to be the easiest and practical mode of care and protection for deprived and vulnerable children. Child care institutions; such as children homes, shelter homes and Specialized Adoption Agency (SAA) commonly recognized as child welfare programs, provides substitute care to those children who are in need of care and protection. These include children whose parents are unable to fulfill their parental roles due to certain situation and children who are orphan, abandoned and surrendered. Though the child care institutions are providing the basic necessities like food, shelter, clothing, etc., Studies have revealed that children in institutional care are easily exploited, ill-treated and directed into undesirable channels. Children instead of being given love, care, attention, they are neglected, abuse, and subjected to ill-treatment. Children do not only need physical care but also love, attention and attachment. This calls for a family based non institutional care.

Foster Care

Foster care is a family based and non-intuitional care whereby the child lives with foster parents for a certain period of time. It provides children who don't have responsible parents or a family to live in a right to family and home which is the right place for child's development. Children who are not declared legally free for adoption by Child Welfare Committee and whose parents are separated or parents are not in position to cater their parental responsibilities can be placed in foster care. This is an arrangement for a child to live with a family which can be extended or unrelated family preferably families that are familiar to the child on a temporary basis. This ensures both the child and parents have the right to a family. Further prepares and paves way for a successful rehabilitation of children to biological or extended family. Unlike child care institutions, foster care supports and promotes a family like atmosphere which is congenial and conducive for a child to grow and develop. As the child is on a temporary stay, foster care does not terminate the rights of the biological parents on the child's control. The national Policy for children, 2013 recognizes that children have the right to live to live in a family where he gets love, happiness and understanding.

However, the child should not be separated from their parents unless it is in the best interest of the child.

Foster care is a type of rights based approach, as it provides a child who has been deprived of a family or a home because of various reasons, an alternative family and home to live for a certain period of time. Placing a child in a foster care is an ideal choice and place for a child to live and grow, as the family the child will live in are selected, and approved by child welfare committee for providing care to the child as laid down in the guidelines of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. Further foster care provides the child a safe environment to grow. The child can be placed in foster care until the biological parents of the child's family circumstances improves or till permanent rehabilitation and social integration of the child is carried out. Foster care is to be carried out in line with provisions laid down under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act. The foster parents shall receive Rs. 2000 per month per child and would be subjected to guidelines prepare by respective states. The foster family shall bear all the expenses related to child's education, health and nutrition. The selection is to be carried out based on family's ability, intent, capacity, and their experiences in taking care of children. The committee should make efforts that the siblings live in the same family (Section 44 of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015). While placing a child in a foster care, cultural, tribe or community should be taken into considerations. Foster care can of short term or long term and can individual or group foster care.

Historically, in India foster care can be traced way back in 1960. In the same year the government first initiated the program. In 1972, the first non-institutional care was initiated and started in Maharashtra. Later in the year 2005, the scheme was amended and name as 'Bal Sangopal Scheme-Non Institutional Services'. In Karnataka, foster care was also implemented in the year 1990's. However the foster care program was only limited to destitute children. In the year 2001, after an earthquake in Gujarat, the state emergency schemes were carried out, where just about 350 children were rehabilitated including the children's relatives and neighbors in the community. In the beginning, foster care was incorporated under Section 42 of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000. In this act, the scope of foster care was limited only to temporary placement of children who are ultimately to be given for adoption. It was like preparing children for adoption. However unlike Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000, the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 under Section 44 provides a wider form of foster care where it is not just limited to

children going for adoption. Presently Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), 2009 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 incorporates the foster care in its provisions. In Manipur, Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS), 2009, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 and Model Guidelines for Foster Care, 2015 are followed while carrying out foster care.

Statement of the Problem

Placing children in foster care is extremely rare in Manipur. It is only exercise when a crisis happens in the family and where extended family steps in to help the children until the crisis is solve. For instance, both the child's parents died and there is no one to take care of the child, the uncle or aunty volunteers to look after the child which is not made through legal procedure. Most of the people are not aware of what foster care is, and those who have heard of it often confuses with adoption. Further foster care is not utilized as majority of the people used adoption.

There is no report of children from institutional care placed in foster care and there is no concrete data available for institutional cares that are registered for foster care. Moreover the rules laid down in Model Guidelines for Foster Care, 2015 and Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 are stringent and sometimes not applicable to the local context. Though the Act calls for respective state government to define or expand the Act in their own context, there is no state policy that suits the needs for a simple and effective foster care therefore takes time in placing a child in foster care thus, violating the rights of both the child and parents.

Objectives

1. To understand the procedures relating to identification and placement of children living in child care institutions in foster care.

2. To identify various shortcomings in placing children for the foster care in Manipur.

Review of Literature

Foster care is a means to let children live with a family on a short-term basis. This allows the child to live in a family based environment and which give chance to a couple to have parental rights and responsibilities. These categories of children are those who are not declared legally free for adoption and whose parents are unable to provide to provide the basic necessities of life such as food, clothing, shelter, education, etc. because of various reasons such as; poverty, illness, death, abandoned or surrendered, desertion, etc.

Thus, foster care prevents children from being institutionalized. The program is jointly managed by Child welfare Committee (CWC), District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) and Child care institutions (*Integrated Child Protection Scheme, 2009*).

Colton (1992) in his study, *'Carers of children: A comparative study of the practices of residential and foster care'* finds out that care givers in institutional care use tools and techniques which were not appropriate and effective when compare to foster parents. The study also reveals that comparing to foster homes; the institutional care was found to be less child-oriented. Kanbur et al. (2011) in his study of *'psychiatric symptoms of adolescents reared in an orphanage in Ankara'* found out that the children in orphanage home had more institutionalized problems. The researchers suggested that "there is an urgent need to develop alternative care models and routine screening of mental health in children and adolescents in institutional care" (Kanbur et al. 2011:283). John Williamson and Aaron Greenberg (2010) were of the opinion that, foster care can be a suitable place for children to be care if foster care are well planed, equip and monitored as it provides children favorable environment for their emotional, mental and physical growth and development, this can even prepared children for long term placement. Nelson, C., N. Fox, C. Zeanah and D.Johnson (2007) in their study found out that, children below 2 years of age when shifted from institutional care to foster care shows positive changes in their emotional and cognitive development when compared to children who are living in an institutional care.

In India, especially in Manipur there is not much study conducted and where institutional care because of its viability are considered to be the best options for children. However, the National Commission of Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) recommends non-institutional care for both children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection. This shows that, in India, foster care is recognized as the best for children's alternative care to institutional care.

Methodology

This paper is a part of the researcher doctoral research study on Child care institutions in Manipur with special reference to rehabilitation of children. The qualitative research method with a descriptive design was used to have inclusive learning and understanding of the procedures relating to identification and placement of children for foster care and also to identify the gaps in placing children for the foster care in Manipur. This helps in

carrying out the study systematically and better understanding of the concepts of the study.

The study was carried out after receiving permission from the Department of Social Welfare, Government of Manipur, concerned Child Welfare Committee (CWC) and Head/secretary of all the institutions. It was carried out in 5 districts of Manipur namely; Chandel, Churachandpur, Imphal East, Imphal West, and Ukhrul.Twenty two (22) Child care institutions which works with children in need of care and protection were selected for the study. A purposive sampling and tools like interview and questionnaires were used in collecting data which includes both the primary and secondary data.

Interviews were carried out with at least two staffs of the organizations which include the Superintendent or Project Manager and Case Worker or Social Worker. The interviews were noted down for after getting from the interviewee. The author also referred to secondary data like legal provisions, annual reports and documents related to the study. Thereafter the data was transcribed and analyze.

Findings and Analysis

A. The procedures related to identification and placement of children from institutional care to foster care.

1. Categories of Children for foster care.

Generally, children who are in need of care and protection can be placed for foster care. For those children who are residing in institutional care viz; Children Home, Specialized Adoption Agency and Open Shelter and who are between the age of 6-18 can also be placed in foster care. These types of children can be either orphan, semi-orphan or whose parents are still alive. Children whose parents are ill and unable to provide the child's needs and whose parents had requested to the Child Welfare committee (CWC) or District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) can also go for foster care. Children who are legally declared for adoption can also be placed for foster care. This helps in preparing the child for adoption (living with adoptive parents).

2. Preparation and Recommendation of Child for foster care.

In the child care institutions, an individual care plan for every child is to be prepared child welfare officer/social worker. This has to be review periodically and adjusted as per the child's needs and interests. Moreover a detailed study of the child's background, education, health is also to be prepared. So, accordingly the Child Welfare officer/Social Worker can recommend children for foster care.

3. Identification and selection of Foster Parents.

After the recommendation of a child/children by the child welfare officer/case worker/social worker, foster parents are identified by District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) in line with the preference of the child opted by parents. Advertisement in local newspapers should be made by DCPU, calling for application for foster care which can be group or individual foster care. After short listing the applicants, the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU)are to interview and make assessment report of the prospective foster parents which includes their economic status and after final orders from Child Welfare Committee (CWC) a recommendation to be send to Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC). The selection of foster parents needs to be based on certain criteria such as family's ability, its intention, capacity and previous experience of looking and taking care of children.

4. Home Study and Matching.

The District Child Protection Unit when asked by Child Welfare Committee shall conduct Home study of the foster parents. The study will include; family's income, medical reports (should be free from Human Immuno Deficiency Virus (HIV), Tuberculosis (TB), and Hepatitis B and are physically, mentally and emotionally stable), experience, adequate space and facilities, Based on the report the DCPU will recommend the child for foster care with prospective foster care parents. Accordingly, the Child Welfare Committee will initiate the process of giving order for placement of the child in foster care.

5. Pre-Foster Care Interim Order.

The Child Welfare Committee after matching a child with prospective foster parents will issue an interim order, where in the presence of Social Worker the foster parents and child can interact in a restricted environment for a period of one month. This will be follow by outing, child's visit to prospective foster parent's home as to family members. The placement of the child will be handled by specially trained person in a child-friendly approach.

If financial support is requested, the District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) shall needs to submit relevant documents to Sponsorship and Foster Care Approval Committee (SFCAC), if found justify the financial support will be approve. The District Child Protection Unit (DCPU) within 15 days will again refer to Child Welfare Committee (CWC) for final order.

6. Final Placement Order.

The Child Welfare Committee after reviewing the compatibility report submitted by District Child Protection Unit will make a final order and the copy to be sent to DCPU for further necessary actions. The final order by the CWC shall be given within 60 days after interim order if financial assistance is not involved or required by the prospective foster parents. However it will take 75 days after the interim order of financial assistance if requested by Prospective foster parents.

7. Undertaking by Foster Parents.

An undertaking for foster care of the child needs to be sign by the foster parents in the prescribed form, where the foster parents shall make available all the provisions of the child's care, health, food, clothing, education.

B. The following shortcomings were identified in relation to placing of children for the foster care in Manipur.

1. There is no state policy that suits the needs for a simple and effective foster care.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 mentioned foster care or foster parents seven times and the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 mentioned it thirty-eight times where even the entire sections were solely committed on the topic foster care. This shows the importance of foster care and the progress made by the government in the foster care. Both the 2000 and 2015 Acts calls for states to develop the Act in to their own contexts. Every state has its own customs and traditions which makes unique and different from other states. However, the state government has not develop any rules for the functioning of defining the foster care procedure, criteria, and services related to the foster care that suits the needs for effective implementation of foster care in the state. This shows that there is no incentive from the government on foster care.

2. There is no concrete data available for foster care.

As per the study and findings, there is not a single child place in for foster care through the institutions or parents registered for foster care. However, there are children in foster care or parents fostering a child in the state. For instance, when the child's parents died or unable to cater the responsibilities towards the child, the family members; uncle, aunty or any other relatives takes in the child. These parents do not receive any incentives or support in cash or kind from the government. The children are not legally placed or through proper channel through the concerned authority nor were these

parents are registered. In fact how can these parents registered when the state is yet to implement effectively with proper rules and guidelines on foster care.

3. No awareness

The institutions and not even the concerned authority from the state government are taking any initiative in making people aware of the foster care and its importance to the child and the family. Most of the people are not aware of what foster care is and sometimes confuses with that of adoption. This leads to children to be kept in foster care though family members or neighbour's without financial support from the government. This can even lead to trafficking of children as they can easily lure from the mere promise of free education, jobs etc. from outside (individuals or groups).

4. No child care institutions working for children in need of care protection are registered for foster care.

There is not a single child care institutions working for children in need of care protection who is registered for implementing foster care (the reason of which is best known by the govt. and institution). Not a single specific institution is devoted to working for the placement of children in foster care. Moreover not a single institutional care is looking for a foster care parents. This shows the lack of concerns and interest for those children in the child care institutions to be non-institutionalized which clearly violates the rights of children to be with parents.

5. Parents denied for foster care.

There are parents who want to foster a child for a year or two but could not because of various reasons. Some of which are; they don't know whom to approach, where to go, where to register. Moreover, the state still not having a policy of its own creates the biggest hurdles for the foster parents. These clearly violate the rights of the parents in fostering a child and have a family.

6. Adoption -the only method used.

Adoption is the only major method used for protecting the right of the child in the state. Here the child who is declared free for adoption by child welfare committee can only be the one who can have a family. However, it is not adequate and not in conventionality with the international convention. In India, the rules and guidelines attached to adoption involves a stringent practice where legal procedure are quite time consuming and tedious. This in the process leads more woe in the institutional care. Moreover, the rates of adoption has been low and been dropping in the past few years. According to

the government's Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) adoption statistics there were only 3,276 in-country adoptions in 2017-2018 as compared to 5,693 in-country adoption in 2010.

Suggestions

The following points are suggested for effective implementation of foster care system in the state;

1. The state government should frame its own rules and guidelines for the functioning of defining the foster care procedure, criteria, and services related to the foster care that will suits the needs for effective implementation of foster care in the state.

2. Organizing and providing training to Child Welfare Committee's (CWCs), Institutional care, District Child Protection Unit (DCPU), Social Workers and other related to foster care.

3. The concerned authority and the institutions can organize seminars and workshops in the community on the importance of foster care. It can be advertise in news both in print and electronic media and even radio. Poster campaign can be also one of the options. Further ASHA workers can be assigned to find prospective parents and help them in counseling it. This also calls for a proper training of the ASHA workers.

4. Awareness on de-institutionalizing of children should be organized as to minimize keeping children in the institutional care. This will help the parents in shifting to non-institutional care.

5. The government should shortlist Child Care Institutions for proving the services of foster care where the parents who wants to foster can get themselves registered. Non-Governmental Organization should take initiative in implementation of foster care both in urban and rural areas. A place where foster parents can have an access to foster care services like registering themselves, counseling, etc.

6. The CWC though has the highest and sole responsibility in fostering a child, the CWCs need to be strengthened and support for fast and effective of carrying out a foster care services.

7. The concerned authority through Child Welfare Committee and with the help of Child care Institutions can identify families and counsel them for foster care.

8. The state needs a systematization of licensing, procedures of foster care and counseling of both the child and the parents.

9. To fixed a timeframe for investigation and proving remedy as to avoid delay in placing a child for foster care.

10. To classify foster care and placement on time frames for emergency or temporary foster care, short term and long term foster care.

11. Foster parents should undergo training on foster care and it should be a mandatory to every foster parents. They should be provided with adequate financial support for the maintenance of child's care, food, clothing, education, etc.

12. The concerned department can develop a web based system for the parents to register themselves. And monitoring mechanisms should be maintained so as to check the children in foster care so that they are not abuse and has all the necessities of life.

13. The community leaders should also be encourage in identifying, assessing and monitoring the perspectives foster parents for effective implementation of foster care.

Conclusion

In a state with thousands of children residing in child care institutions and not even 50 children adopted in a year and thousand of parents waiting for their call for adoption. And even the children's development in the institutional are delay because of various reason such as, no proper love, care, affection, encouragement and poor diet. Our collective responsibility towards these children seems to be diminishing to government indifference and neglect.

There are thousands of children still in institutional care; many children who do not have anyone are still not adopted, parents waiting for their chance in adoption. This calls for a non institutional care, a family based care for children which is his/her basic right. Child care institution provides children the basic necessities of life. However, children need more than food, shelter, clothing and a good physical care. They also need the care, protection, love, attention, a family environment where the child's happiness, growth and development are not compromise. This calls for a non-institutional which has more advantage than institutional care for proper child's growth and development. However, there is no proper functioning of foster care and sponsorship. The children's belongs to the state and we are indebted to at least providing them family environment. It is therefore a high time that the state government develops rules and guidelines accordingly in the line with the states context for proper and effective implementation of foster care.

For foster care to be improved and effective, few suggestions have been made. However, since the suggestions are based only on the study conducted in the institutional care, it would be appealing to look outside the perspectives of child care institutions for further investigation in strengthening the findings

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Approaches of Social Work Trainees towards Cancer Patients

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Abstract

Issue of cancer is becoming a serious threat to the society irrespective of any age group. Despite of several treatment processes, recovery of patients has been found to be very less. Hence, there is a need for social work intervention in terms of oncology, palliative care, in hospices, with patients and their family too. Numbers of social work trainees now a day are offering care and support through field work practicum and academic course work in across the country. Learned theories, skills and techniques allow the trainees to deal with different situation of cancer patients especially in hospital settings through providing psycho social support to them. Thus, this paper made an attempt to identify different approaches used by the trainees while dealing with cancer patients during their field work practice.

Key Words*: Cancer, Social Work Approaches and Social Work Trainees*

Introduction

Issue of Cancer is badly threatening the lives of human as one of the most vulnerable disease across the world. Every aspects of the person's life get affected when they are diagnosed with cancer initially. The journey is both challenging and costly, and many experiencing it for the first time and feel lost about how they should handle the changes cancer brings. Dr. G. K. Rath (2016), an Oncologist from AIIMS stated that there are different types of cancers like oral, breast, cervical, esophageal and gall bladder, etc. High rate of tobacco consumption (57.0 percent among males and 28.0 percent among females) and dependency on western and junk food are major reason of cancer. It is further mentioned that all types of cancer forms together 33.5 percent in north-east and 33.8 percent among women includes breast cancer followed by cervix and esophageal (Shelar, 2017).

Cancer statistics by World Health Organization states that one woman dies of cervical cancer in every 8 minutes. Every two women diagnosed newly with breast cancer. The reason of mortality of cancer is due to high consumption of tobacco which is also estimated that more than 3500 persons are affected with the disease per day (Jha et al, 2008). Around 2.25 million of people in

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India are living with the disease in every year (ICMR, 2020). There has been registered of 11, 57,294 lakh cancer patients and cancer related death is 7, 84,821 during the year 2018. (India Medtoday, 2020)

Table 1: Few statistics on the issues of cancer

Parameters	Male	Female
Risk of Developing cancer before the age of 75 years	9.81%	9.42%
Risk of Dying cancer before the age of 75 years	7.34%	6.28%
Total death due to cancer in (2018)	4,13,519	3,71,302

Source: Global Cancer Statistics, 2018.

Social Work and Cancer

Social workers are there to help people with practical needs, like finding resources in the institution and the community, and with such complex needs such as adjusting to an illness, dealing with transitions and decision-making, navigating cultural issues, and communicating with family members, friends, and health care providers. Social workers meet with patients and family members individually and/or as a family, run support and education groups, and work as part of oncology care teams. Oncology social workers are becoming more involved in research, designing, conducting, and leading studies that aim to advance knowledge that ultimately will help improve people's quality of life. According to O'Donnell (2004, p.172, cited in Kwan 2009), Social work is a value-based profession and is particularly suited to addressing value-laden decisions that patients and families face in modern health care. As patients and families struggle with understanding the parameters of care and accepting the limitations of interventions, social workers can help resolve these difficult issues and manage their consequences. Further, Ziberfein and Hurwitz (2004, p. 320, cited in Kwan 2009) describe, Social workers are trained to be self reflective, to have a high degree of self awareness, and to provide crisis intervention with family members. Clinically trained social workers are aware of transference/counter transference phenomena, maintain strong boundaries, understand the patient and family from a bio-psycho-social and cultural perspective, and perhaps most importantly, are skilled in the therapeutic use of self. Hence, social workers' ability to facilitate communication among patients, families, and the medical team is one of their crucial roles in the interdisciplinary treatment team. Social workers' consistent support, hopeful approach and the on-going discussions with their patients promote understanding and readiness as patients' experiences with their illnesses evolves.

Statement of the Problem

There are number of evidences that reflect people with cancer suffering from psychosocial distress not only in the early stages following the diagnosis but during the entire course of the disease. Psychosocial distress includes emotional, cognitive, social, and functional problems those have been documented in various studies. Concerns with their physical health, alterations to their normal development, emotional or mental health problems, and social problems (e.g., financial issues, economic burden, reemployment or early retirement, stigma of disability, social and spiritual support issues) have been identified. Not only the patients but also their families are affected and often experiencing emotional distress, shifting of roles, financial burden, caregiver stress and fear of losing their loved one. Psychosocial distress is understood as a continuum ranging from normal distress levels such as fear, grief etc. up to high levels of distress and psychiatric co-morbidity. Psychosocial care of cancer patients in acute hospitals is based on the model of psychosocial liaison or councilor services delivered by the internal or external departments of psychosomatic medicine or psychiatry. Psychosocial care must be delivered to every patient who needs it. Thus, this paper is an attempt to identify different approaches used by the trainees while dealing with cancer patients during their field work practice.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to understand the different approaches and roles of social work trainees towards cancer patients.

Methodology

The study was based on qualitative nature of study within the North East Cancer Hospital and Research Institute (NECHRI). To fulfill the purpose of the study, the researcher selected the students of first and third semester of Masters of Social Work from the different institutions such as; Assam Don Bosco University (ADBU); University of Science and Technology, Meghalaya (USTM); and NERIM Group of Institutions, Guwahati. Purposive sampling method has been used for the present study. Further, semi-structured open-ended questions were used to collect relevant information. The researcher has chosen four participants from each of the institutions those are placed in NECHRI for their concurrent field work. The qualitative data was transcribed from field notes and recordings. The transcribed data was properly read and then each data for all the samples was coded. The coding allowed the researcher to identify different meaning units and themes

that emerge as important from the perspectives of the participants. The selective coding highlighted thematic categories relevant to a particular topic area.

Discussion

A total of 12 social work trainees have been selected from these three institutions those are working in NECHRI through purposive sampling process. They are informed about the interview and they agreed and participated fully in the study. Three social work trainees are in their first year of Masters of Social Work degree and the rest are in their second year of Masters of Social Work degree. They all mentioned that they have been placed in NECHRI by their respective Institutions for the purpose of concurrent fieldwork. The findings of the study have been discussed in the following different themes:

1. *Application of Social Work Skills and techniques:*

The present study found that, the Social Work Trainees have been applying various skills and techniques to build good rapport with the patients. Most of the trainees tried to build a rapport by showing concerned behavior towards the patients. They interacted casually by taking consent from the patients basically to build a rapport with the patients. A participant told, *"I didn't ask personal questions to them. I asked casual questions like how they are feeling, eating, sleeping, how they are finding the services from the hospital and so on. For my case study I asked the patient whether he is undergoing any counseling services or not. I enquired about their mental state of mind and how he is dealing with disease."* This participant focused on interaction with the patients and their family members in more casual form and avoided asking personal questions to them.

Another participant stated that *First day I went to do ward visit. I got a female patient going through breast cancer. I introduced myself as an intern working here from Assam Don Bosco University and that we have been placed in this hospital for purpose of fieldwork practicum. I talked to her nicely and she began telling me how the disease was diagnosed, the number of days she had been here and she shared about her treatment process."* She clearly gives her introduction to the patient on her first day ward visit. Then she continued the conversation nicely in turn which made the patient to build trust upon her.

2. *Making Favorable Environment for Interaction:*

The social work trainees found patients friendly and showed interest to interact. They tried to create such environment where the patients could feel

better to respond the trainees. Through this research work it was found that patients were friendly. They mentioned that the patients in NECHRI bothered to know about them and as a result after building a good rapport they showed their interest in talking with the Social Work trainee. For exampleanother participant mentioned,

*"The patients are interactive and friendly. It is good experience for us because this is my first time interacting with the cancer patients in terms of fieldwork."*This participant found the patients to be friendly and that he too has liked interacting with them. For him working in NECHRI was a good learning experience to have known the patients as an individual.

3. ***Other Roles played by the trainees while dealing with the cancer patients:***

The Social Work trainees played different roles while dealing with patients. The Social Work trainees played the roles of advisor, educator, motivator, and counselor and tried to deal with the patients by motivating and advising them to follow healthy habits good for health and mental state. For example the third participant focused more on the psychological factor of the cancer patients and stated that, *"I asked the patient about his mental state. I offered him some advice on the importance of being mentally strong and stress free and to eat well and accompany it with light good exercise. I advised the patients to adopt healthy food habits, cleanliness and living a stress free life like avoiding tensions and conflicts."* This participant advised the patient during case study to be mentally strong and stress-free because it would help the patient cope up with the treatment process. He also advised his client to do exercise for better health.

Another participant played the role of a motivator to the cancer patients in NECHRI during her ward visits. She said, *"During my ward visits I tried to motivate the patients to overcome the challenges to be stress free with a positive attitude. I tried to motivate them to bring positivity towards the life and reality."*Another trainee played the role as an advisor and also she has helped a patient to solve their problem personally. Like she stated, *"I interacted with a patient and the attendants during my ward visit where they said that the patient is in her last stage of breast cancer and they did not want to continue the treatment in this hospital. I think that's for their satisfaction of giving the patient the best of treatment. So they asked me how they would do the discharge and other formalities before discharge planning. So I helped to find out best hospitals in India for cancer treatment and directed them the ways to fill up the admission form in the new hospital and helped them to find the help-line numbers. I advised them to talk to the*

doctors treating their patient about the discharge planning and for other important decisions to be taken for the patient." The participant tried understanding the situation of the patient and the family members and she has positively succeeded in building a rapport with them as a result they trusted her shared their problems and asked for her help. She helped them as far as possible which in turn has helped them.

4. *Principles used by the Social Work trainees:*

The Social Work Trainees used or they followed the principles of Individuality, Acceptance, Communication, Purposeful and Meaningful relationships. All the Social Work trainees' encountered different situations that they had dealt with along with patients with different types of cancer disease having different problems like back pain resulting from treatment procedure or body pain. They have accepted the patients as individuals suffering from disease who have been admitted in the hospital to get treatment to recover from their sufferings. They visited wards for many times and so they have been able to build good rapport with the patients and communicated properly with them and helped their best to make the patients and their family members cope up with their psychosocial and emotional problems.

Challenges Faced by the Trainees

Few Social work trainees found it difficult to deal with patients or with themselves to do their work at NECHRI. But they did not lose hope or gave up and instead they dealt the situations in a positive way. The first participant found problem to interact with the patients. She stated that, *"I found that the patients first did not like to respond and after introducing me to them they are friendly. It was difficult for me to interact since they were unknown to me. I have communication problems with them."* The participant somehow managed to collect information from the patients for case study. She encountered the patients to be least bothered to talk to her. She had communication problem with them. Other participants (n=5) mentioned that they encountered a problem with a co-worker for which they could not implement an awareness program on 'quitting bad habits and adopting good healthy food habits' as planned by all the Social Work trainees. Another participant encountered difficulty within herself to first approach and interact with patients. She was nervous at first and tried to patiently build a rapport with the patients. When the patients responded and talked to her nicely she got her confidence back. She said, *"It was a good experience. I was nervous at first. I introduced myself that I am an intern here from NERIM Institution*

that is in Jayanagar and that I have come here to inquire your health status. But the attendant talked very nicely. I got comfortable." The participant was a bit nervous at first to start the conversation but after the good response from the patient she got back her confidence.

Conclusion and Future Scopes for Social Work

The study is carried out in NECHRI during the fieldwork duration from 17th august to 22nd November, 2018 where total numbers of 13 Social Work trainees of three different Institutions are working as they have been placed there for concurrent fieldwork. The researcher has chosen 9 trainees and accordingly the interview is carried out. The researcher got good responses from all the participants. The participants tried to build a rapport with the cancer patients and their family members by visiting wards many times. They have applied their own skill to build rapport. Few tried showing concern behavior towards the patients with care and support. While others at their first meet with the patients introduced themselves as social work trainees that have come to interact with them and enquire about the patient's health condition. The patients also showed interest in talking with them after knowing who they are and their purpose of visiting the patients. Two participants mentioned that they found difficulty to interact with the patients and their family member as they are both English speaking students. They somehow managed to interact in Hindi language with the patients. They also took a long time to build rapport with them and collect information from them for case study during the fieldwork. All the participants played the role of an educator, advisor, counselor and they followed the principles of Social work. Few participants encountered difficult situations which they have handled very well and worked with patience. They mentioned that they faced a problem with a co-worker for which they could not implement the awareness program. This means that proper teamwork is not done. It can also be seen that they have given importance to the feelings and emotions of the family members of patients. They motivated and helped the family members to hope for the best. Trainees also focused on the follow-up services over telephone to know the status of the children. Some of the areas the trainees/social worker can help that includes:

- Social worker can facilitate the patients through support group techniques to influence their group behavior.

- Social worker can provide counseling for anxiety and depression, and, on the deepest level of face-to-face contact, help with all the complicated emotional and psychosocial aspects of cancer diagnosis, treatment, and survivorship.

- Social worker can motivate the client to explain the status of the disease to friends and family to get support from the friends and family.

- Social worker can provide information on different services related to the financial assistance and support meant for the cancer patients and referrals to financial assistance organizations.

- Information on spiritual counseling and counseling for physical changes and body image and identity issues.

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Field Work in Social Work Education: An Onerous but Intrinsic Component

Ratna Huirem[1] & Kathiresan Loganathan[2]

Abstract

Much water has flown under the bridge regarding field work component as a part of social work education. However, despite the deluge, questions prevail. Not of its requirement, but of the nature and formats of field work. This paper takes the Indian setting as the base for a major part of its arguments, supported by evidence that makes the case for field work by a range of scholars of social work. It describes the complex character of field work and rationalizes how and why it maybe an onerous task to even presume that we can have a uniform or unique way of doing field work. Societies are positioned differently at different times in different places. The consequent issues requiring social work interventions are therefore vastly distinct and unique, being governed by multiple factors ranging from polity and economy, to religion and ethnicity. Thus, trying to etch out unique and uniform ways of practicing field work may perhaps have to wait for a little longer.

Keywords: *Field work, practice, profession, reflexivity, social work, situational learning*

Introduction

The Social Work curriculum is incomplete without its other half, i.e., field work. Marion Bogo (2005) observes how it is referred by various nomenclatures across the world. They range from field education, field instruction, field practicum, student supervision, practice learning etc. It is a very significant and essential component of social work education programs. Students gain first hand exposure for practice in government as well as non-government settings via educational programs. The aim of this component is onerous and cannot be taken lightly. Its extreme significance had been advocated by Mary Richmond (1917) in the early days of social work, when there were raging debates about formulating the social work curriculum and incorporating it as a university program (Austin, 1983). The rich field experience was what set social work apart.

Katherine A. Kendall (1959) points out the irrevocable and age-old tussle between practitioners and theorists amongst all professions. She notes that when practicum is a component of any learning program, the costs are high.

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Such is the fate of social work that it is ill placed to bolster itself to counter the intimidating forces of the other professions such as medicine or law, as questions about its professional status still abound. David Austin (1983) had rightfully rued that trying to measure up to the Flexner criteria also has added to its hassles of acquiring a professional status. Kendall (1959) additionally notes that much research has also not been done on the costs involved in field work and pushes for it. It would in fact open up a wide spectrum of information and justification as to why field work continues to be an overwhelming essence in social work education.

Reflexivity in Social Work

Field work seeks to enhance skill-based training and understanding of social work practice. The towering notion of field-based education in social work is to enmesh theory and practice and look at it as an integrated whole (Richmond, 1917). It seeks to provide students the scope to thus apply their classroom learnings in the field and vice versa. Reflexivity is thus embedded in the social work curriculum. Heather D'Cruz, Philip Gillingham, & Sebastian Melendez (2005) however caution us that confusion over reflexivity, critical reflection, and reflectivity must be avoided. They explain reflexivity in three variations. The first looks at reflexivity as an individual's response and situational decision making. The second variant talks about the individual's ability to process information and involves being self-critical and question the process of knowledge creation. Thirdly, it deals with the role of emotions in social work practice. They exemplify that power and knowledge are intricately interwoven and hence have a crucial role in influencing emancipatory practices in social work. They attribute such influence to social researchers Humphries and Truman (1994) and feminist sociologists, Stanley and Wise (1993).

Michael Sheppard (1998) additionally explains how reflexivity must engage the social worker in thinking, assessing, responding and acting; and must also participate actively in any social situation of their practice. Thus, reflexivity induces awareness of their roles and purpose in a situational context. Assessment and intervention in social work is in turn affected by reflexivity as their own assumptions influence practice situations.

Social Work Education

Social work has often been referred to as the human rights profession. It stands for social justice to all, and seeks to help the most marginalized and the underprivileged. Social Work education programs in India offer a range of specializations. Community development, family and child welfare, social welfare and correctional administration, human resource management, medical and psychiatric social work are the very common ones. Such information can be easily gleaned and confirmed by reviewing the curriculum of various schools of social work in India.

The social work program is also conducted in varying formats across institutions. It can be in the form of a separate bachelor's and master's program or an integrated five-year program, leading to a post graduate degree, with provision for lateral exits after the bachelor's degree. Likewise, field work also is carried out in different formats to suit the academic schedule and the place where the training program is being offered. It may be a concurrent field work program on pre-designated days, running parallel with routine classes. Consecutive two days, or select two separate days may be fixed in order to not disturb the theory classes. Students report to the concerned field agency/ community supervisor on the specified field work days, while the other days are devoted to classroom learning. It may also be a semester-end block placement field work program.

Kendall (1959) asserts that having a clear purpose and goal of field instruction will help social work educators to design the curriculum and also instruct them well. Although currently there are no disputes about field work being an integral part of social work education, she questions the ruminations that prevail about field work and highlights two basic concerns. They are: i) extent and type of skills; and ii) time to be spent on field work. She notes critics who argue that too much time is dedicated to field work, which otherwise could have been used in classroom learning. On the other hand, she also notes practitioners of social work voicing that field work time must be enhanced. The latter, in fact, have pointed out the huge gaps between "knowing" and "doing", owing to shortfalls of the field work component.

Thus, intense debates persist about turning around the curriculum in terms of being fair to classroom learning vis-a-vis field learning. In the midst of all these, different formats of field work practice prevail in different university programs. Kendall (1959) notes evidence about the advantages of a field work inclusive curriculum, as it caters to the emotional aspects of learning as well. What is disturbing according to her is a lack of uniformity and uniqueness of the practicum. Is it best left to the freedom of supervisors and

educational institutions? Or must we underscore the commonalities between classroom learning and field work learning? Will more precision and uniformity in the field work curriculum across geographies resolve some of these conflicts? Considering all these, she advocates working towards greater integration of the two components of class room and field; while simultaneously looking at all the methods of social work practice.

Field Work Methods

The various field work methods give ample scope to the social work student to hone his or her skills further while applying them in the variety of settings. Whether it is individual centred, or focussed on larger groups and communities, the range of services that social work can offer is very wide. Students can be engaged in research, administration, or even policy-making activities. Such a kind of engagement helps the trainees to prepare themselves well for the professional world. They not only get exposed to the problems that communities and agencies have to tackle with but also get accustomed to the routine functioning of agencies and the organisational climate. Likewise, placement in communities, whether rural or urban, exposes the trainees first hand to community dynamics.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the significance of all the methods here. However, an instance of the need for social welfare training in social work is cited here. Bernard Neugeboren (1971) had since emphasized that without inculcating the requisite knowledge and skill sets via such training, efficiency will be hampered. Moreover, social workers are no more only engaged in service delivery but administration as well. He also notes the shortcomings of formal social work administration training and emphasizes the requirement of such training to be on par with those in public administration and business administration. Planning, organizing, evaluating, analysing, controlling etc. are the skill sets he proposes for a social worker as essential. According to him, managing complex bureaucratic welfare organizations necessitate knowledge and skills to deal with, and comprehend the requirements of all the stakeholders, ranging from beneficiaries to staff as well as the sponsors. Such skills can be honed during field placements.

Additional Field Based Activities

Varieties of activities are incorporated into the curriculum to facilitate and promote field-based exposure and learning. Observation visits, rural camps, summer placements, educational tours, and block field placements, are the most commonly adopted formats in India. Within these activities, the trainee is encouraged to learn and further advance his/ her skills. Problem

identification and solving, listening, observation, interviewing, collating information, analysis, documentation, networking, co-operation, resource mobilization, advocacy etc. are some of the skills which the student learner is expected to demonstrate as an outcome of the field work process. A community exposure besides agency exposure also helps them to familiarize themselves with people from different backgrounds. Sensitivity about grassroots problems is thus inculcated. Therefore, exposing the trainees to the various dynamics of rural and urban settings via community placements in a multi-cultural country like India carries a lot of weight in the social work education program. The set of skills learned and sharpened may vary depending upon the placement setting, and of course upon other impinging factors like intrinsic motivation of the learner.

Planning the Field Work Process

Field work being integral to the social work curriculum, it is envisaged right at the beginning as an essential curriculum component. Agencies and communities with potential are identified right at the outset and liaised with. Experienced employees of the agencies, preferably with social work training, are sought as agency advisers. Where there are no social workers, a key person is identified as the adviser, who is in a suitably responsible position to mentor the students. The services of the trainees are solicited to assist and simultaneously learn from the agency. Depending upon the nature of the agency, a range of tasks may be assigned. However, the learning process must be kept paramount.

In the academic setting, faculty supervisors are assigned a set of students who will work and learn under such guidance. Besides an overall task plan at the outset, minute tasks are planned as per trainee inputs upon their return from the field visits. Achievement of task plans and overall student learning and progress is continually evaluated via field work reports after each visit. This not only keeps the trainees in sync with the work done in the field and the academic setting; but also endows a sense of responsibility and achievement. The regular necessity of reports ensures low absenteeism as well as enhances their analytical and reporting skills. 'Learning by doing' is heightened as they not only learn a range of activities in the field but are also encouraged to be reflexive and critical in their thinking. Such field learnings are internalised and they integrate with their classroom learnings.

It is pertinent to point out that an orientation program comprises the first step towards field work curriculum in any University program. Trainees are inducted by explaining the various merits and nuances of field work. They are also explained how various unforeseen hurdles may come along such as

lack of support from the agency supervisor, assignment of non-learning based "exploitative" tasks, and various other types of non-cooperation. Likewise, community dynamics can get volatile at different points in time. Or simply they may be inert and non-responsive to the social work trainees' ideas and activities.

What is important is that field work is not an arbitrarily designed component of the curriculum. Fixed tasks which are to be systematically carried out under the supervision of both the agency guide and the faculty guide are specified well in advance. In community settings, key contact persons are identified and liaised with. Field work seminars with agency and community supervisors are conducted to enhance the mutual learning process. In social work, instruction and guidance from field instructors are of extreme importance. They help the students to not only learn theory and practice skill sets but also to internalise them. Attitudes, values, and ethics which can shape professional behaviour are learnt (Papouli, 2014).

Field work facilitates the understanding of social development issues. They can then be understood and tackled well by the trainees in their future professional lives. Human relationships, work environments, and various other skill-sets that are required in professional life can be developed during field work. Hager (2005) notes two ways of classifying learning theories. One views workplace-based learning as an outcome, and the other views it as a practice-based participatory process. Thus, the significance of field work is heightened in social work education.

Identifying Suitable Agencies

In most instances, social welfare and public service agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, are identified as it conforms to the kind of organisational settings that social work professionals would eventually be engaged with. However, this is certainly not a limiting factor. A range of other public sector and private sector organisations can also be liaised with. This is determined by the curriculum as well as the availability and response of such organisations. It is also to be noted that in industrialised places like Tamil Nadu, industrial establishments are also liaised with for student field placements. This is an outcome of student interest and the availability of these establishments. Specialisation courses like personnel management and industrial relations are offered in the education program to match these interests and geographical suitability. Contrarily, a less industrialised region like Northeast India would not be in a position to offer these kinds of establishments for field work placement. The choices will be confined to

government and non-government establishments. Such variations in geographies and their concomitant placement possibilities also impose themselves on the curriculum in intangible ways, and hence can affect the teaching learning process positively or negatively.

Kendall (1959) argues that the challenges of social work many times impose upon the academic program to make do with placement agencies which may not be equipped with the wherewithal to undertake student trainees. Hence, the teaching learning process gets affected. Staff shortages in welfare agencies are a common phenomenon and student services are often extracted to fulfil the agency's needs; such as running errands where no learning takes place. Student intake beyond the infrastructural capacity of the placement agency setting can also hamper the teaching learning process. The outcome, naturally, is a questionable quality of training and education. She therefore strongly advocates that deserving field placement agencies and field instructors must be given their share of glory by recognising them as partners of the academic programs. This could serve as motivators to the agencies.

Evaluation of Field Work

In Indian settings, as can be observed from a review of the social work education curriculum, individual counselling (IC) and group counselling (GC) are an essential and extremely significant component. A fixed number of students are assigned to a concerned faculty supervisor and the onus lies on the faculty to adopt the requisite mechanism to ensure that the students fully benefit from such counselling. During such counselling, discussions range from tentative work plan to be carried out in the field, resources mobilised, problems faced, and any other feedback from the agency/ community supervisor. The reports submitted earlier are also discussed to ensure that there is continuous improvement in collating information, analysing and reporting them. Fieldwork diaries are maintained by the students and inspected by the faculty supervisor to ensure avoidance of absenteeism and proper conduct. Besides such evaluation of regular reports by the concerned faculty supervisor, there is also continuous feedback sought from the agency/ community supervisor via faculty visits to the setting, and other means of correspondence. This ensures an integrated as well as harmonious learning environment. At the end of each semester of learning, a viva voce is conducted, where an external examiner is invited to join the panel. They are thus continuously evaluated in this manner throughout the academic program. Recording, documentation, social mapping, resource mapping etc. are also learnt.

Anne E. Fortune, Mingun Lee and Alonzo Cavazos (2005) had conducted a study on 188 students from 4 social work programs to assess how motivation and field work performance are interrelated. According to them, students' intrinsic motivation and task value influenced their performance. They pointed out that field instructor evaluation did not influence motivation. This latter assumption is a limitation of the study. More studies on this account are warranted, where we can examine how extrinsic factors can also influence intrinsic motivation. However, their arguments have to be understood in a larger and suitable context, which is outside the scope of this paper.

It is likewise important to note that while students' personal zeal may be understood as intrinsic motivation, and the evaluators comments may be taken as extrinsic motivation, performance cannot be assessed via such a simple dichotomy. Varying degrees of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation will prevail up on an individual. Marylene Gagne and Edward L. (2005) talk about cognitive evaluation theory and self-determination theory as theories of work motivation. They cite Porter and Lawler (1968), who pointed out that intrinsic and extrinsic motivators go hand in hand. Negative feedback or negative evaluative outcome can demotivate self-driven learners and hamper their intrinsic motivation.

Making the Case for Field Based Learning

Papouli (2014), emphasizes the significance of field work education and how and why faculty as well as agency supervisors need to constantly monitor the learning process and provide requisite guidance. She looks at two learning approaches, namely; individual approaches and sociocultural learning approaches. She explains how sociocultural learning and field learning are interlinked, and thus emphasizes field work in social work education.

The global definition of social work profession further reiterates the significance of field work. It defines social work as a practiced-based profession, where theory and practice must go hand in hand; and both are equally significant. It combines classroom learning and field-based learning to enhance the overalls education experience. The social work profession seeks to promote social change, problem solving in human relationships, and the overall enhancement of human well-being. Theories of human behaviour and social systems play a pertinent role in its practice. The principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (International Federation of Social Workers, 2014).

Papouli (2014) highlights the lifelong impact of learning, where education is not merely for the sake of information but also transformation. Hence, there

is a need to focus on the learning process rather than solely on learning tasks. In social work education particularly, the student engages with field work and gradually forms his/ her professional identities. She also talks about how formal and informal learning types dominate social work literature; where the former is associated primarily with classroom-based learning, while the latter is associated with field situations and other experiential instances. However, both types of learning are affected by the socio-cultural, political, economic and historical space, within or around which such learning takes place. Hence, the 'person-in-environment' factor is very significant in the learning process. She further notes how Garrick (1998) points out that informal learning is influenced by one's social positioning, and can also in turn influence one's identity. Polanyi's (1976) distinction between explicit and implicit dimensions of learning is also noted. Such tacit or implicit knowledge also influence the learner in terms of values and attitudes. Experiential learning is thus accorded a high premium in social work education. Albert Bandura (1978) had also stressed upon how the person and the environment mutually influence one another (as cited in Papouli, 2014).

Since students get actively involved in field work, it opens new pathways for them to enhance their knowledge base. They interact with clients, peer groups, as well as other professionals. Noble (2001) adds that such field exposure helps initiate them early into professionalism and decision-making. Schneck (1995) even describes theory and practice as the two essential legs that must walk together. Lager and Robbins (2004) note that field work gives students the opportunity to evaluate interventions, develop cultural sensitivity, hone ethical values, and increases self-worth as a professional. Eraut (1994, 2000) underlines that practical knowledge and classroom-based learning together make up professional knowledge.

Factors Affecting Learning

Bogo observes that students' learnings are also affected by demography, keenness to learn, personal learning styles, and psychiatric disability as well. Being engaged in the learning process, proactiveness, and one's life experiences also influence learning. Fieldwork also exposes them to real-world problems and hence is advantageous (Bogo, 2010).

Sociocultural approaches to learning and the inherent situational learning, are also very vital to social work education. Learning via communities of practice, as expounded by Lave and Wenger (1991), necessitates involving the whole person and emphasizes the practice context. They advocate that the new learner observes the community of professionals and situates himself/ herself within that culture of practice. The learners thus observe their peers,

instructors, and others around them in the situational environment. Behaviours, values and attitudes learnt here will also influence the new learner. Wenger (1999) further added that situational and experiential learning helps students to connect themselves well with their profession. He also believes that being a part of a community of practice influences us and our professionalism in many ways. Vygotsky (1978) spoke about proximate zones of development where he emphasizes the influence of social interactions in learning. Rogoff (1990) also refers to how learners enhance self-competence through guided participation.

Papouli (2014), however notes some very specific criticisms of the socio-cultural approaches to learning. She observes how Hay (1993) and Hager (2005) are doubtful of Lave and Wenger's view that learning is the outcome of participating with a community of experts. The power dynamics within an existing group would exert a different set of influence on the new learner. Guile and Griffiths (2001) also add that fully engaging with a community of practice must ensure learning opportunities endowed with room for a range of observations and discussions. This may not be the case everywhere.

Nonetheless, the entire process of learning to become a skilled social worker is a complex developmental journey. Different learners will have different learning needs and abilities; and hence present different outlooks towards learning. The strengths or weaknesses of learning theories apart, the truth remains that field work is integral to social work education; and learning does take place in many ways in the field. In order to facilitate this, the environment of learning must be given special attention. The faculty supervisor and agency supervisor must continuously monitor and evaluate the learning being exhibited by the students, and intervene wherever necessary. Steps must be taken to ensure that they are unduly not taken advantage of and exploited. A conducive environment induces the zeal to learn.

Cultural and Ethnic Diversity in Field Work

Field work must be designed keeping in mind the diversity of a place. Muriel Gladstein and Mildred Mailick (1986) talk about the need for meticulously planning the placement process, the agency context, and the agency/ community/ faculty advisor, keeping ethnic students' and the communities' needs in mind. Although not much literature is available on keeping ethnic students' needs in mind, they report that the Council on Social Work Education in 1968 constituted task forces to initiate minority contents to be incorporated in the curriculum. They note Kagwa's (1976) observation, which says that the objective was to gain familiarity with the history, culture,

and value systems of various ethnic groups and be sensitive to their unique needs and issues. Thus, efforts were always on to understand the ethnic minorities within the social work curriculum. However, they inform us that there is very scanty literature on ethnic students' needs as an important consideration for field work.

Gladstein and Mailick (1986) also discuss how issues like traveling, both in terms of time and costs, are important considerations. The placement setting also becomes an issue in terms of acceptance of the student social worker by the individual/ community belonging to another ethnic group, especially a majority group. Student placement preferences are difficult to estimate as they may not necessarily want to work among the same ethnic group, contrary to common notions. However, institutions do try to make efforts to suitably place them so that learning is enhanced.

Another aspect emphasized by Gladstein and Mailick (1986) is the culture of the agency, i.e., the placement setting. Expected behaviour in the agency setting may involve dress code, relationship with the staff, use of office space, communication patterns etc. They cite Hicks and Gullet (1975) to illustrate these observations and further add that such factors may either isolate the students or be supportive of them. The faculty advisor's unique position as a liaison between the institution, agency, student and field instructor is thus emphasized. An ethnic-sensitive approach must consider the strengths and weaknesses of these students and incorporate them while planning placements. They also underline Kagwa's (1976) opinion that the classroom faculty can facilitate by encouraging classroom discussions on ethnicity issues and their impact on class and field learning.

Summing Up

Kendall (1959) had noted that given the multiple factors that must be taken into consideration while incorporating field work as a curriculum component of social work education, a rationale versus rationalization dilemma for the pattern of field work continues. She notes how social work had its roots in agency-based training and was largely practice-oriented. University teaching and research were added to it later to give it a further edge as a profession. However, over time, field instruction as an essential component of the social work program was being continuously questioned by some. This is because it marks a departure from the curriculum of other professional courses. She adds that professionalism is expected of the student right from this point of contact with agencies/ communities via the field work process.

Such guided field practicum is one of the unique strengths of social work education. It creates opportunities for integrating theory with practice and pushes the student learners' motivations ahead. Contrarily, others are of the viewpoint that such a burden of professionalism in these early stages on the student are not feasible, as his/ her knowledge levels are at a very rudimentary stage and they may act on hunches instead. In such a scenario, she questions the rationale behind the student being expected to represent the agency. She further raises the question of whether a prolonged practice of such a pattern has rationalized the practice or does a strong rationale indeed exist. The varying range of opinions to this vexing question is noted by her (Kendall, 1959).

Therefore, to conclude, field work indeed remains an intrinsic character of social work education; keeping in mind the evolution of the discipline from its practice-based setting. There may be much jostling around for space to fit in varying formats of field work and to declare a typical format as a gamechanger. However, conventional wisdom will continue to prevail for a while and typologies of field work will have to be accommodated within the social work education program. So long as societies and cultures are dynamic and continue to be in motion, field work perhaps cannot take a static uniform stand. This is the uniqueness of the practice.

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Field Practice During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Are We Virtually and Digitally Ready?

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Abstract

Immense literature is available on advocating the significance of field work and there are no divided opinions about it. However, societal problems that require intervention never exhibit a set pattern. They not only take different forms but also increase in magnitude and complexity. The latest adversary to social work practice has been the COVID-19 pandemic. The reeling effect it has had on global economies who had been positioning themselves as almost indomitable, were also not spared. Social work is practiced across nations, irrespective of power or impoverishment. The new challenge owing to the pandemic was felt most in the field work component of social work education. This is not to deny that the practice itself was inundated with the challenges of technology and its accompanying issues. Digital inequalities, practitioners' own mental health issues, the fear of the slowly unfolding mystery of the virus and its unending mutations challenged one and all. The degrees were different as societies belong to different economies. This paper explores how social work practice and social work education was affected during the pandemic and how the digital route was adopted to flow with the tide. It underlines the requirements of emotional connect, confidentiality ethics, and private physical space to engage in digital conferencing with the clients. It also highlights the unique problems of field work education in remotely located places, where digital access is further impeded poor data receptivity.

Keywords: *Field work, social work practice, social work education, digital inequality, pandemic*

Introduction

The centrality of field work in social work education across the world needs no further scrutiny. It has always had a crucially defining place in its history, until today. The approach and criteria adopted may vary across geographies and institutions. Eleni Papouli (2014) says that the much-valued experiential learning actually takes place during field work. Shardlow & Doel (1996) have also pointed out that such experiential learning takes places in the classroom too via a range of interactions. Social work education thus necessarily banks on theories in the classroom as well as practice learning in the field. It can therefore be understood that field work education cannot be

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undermined and the pandemic induced challenges must not impinge itself upon the teaching learning quality and process.

As the pandemic ensued, a host of unforeseen challenges emerged in social work practice as well as education. The reasons are several. The digital divide was the most paramount amongst all. Across the world, hopping on to the online route was presented as the only solace towards 'being safe'. As physical distancing became the most preferred mode of social interaction, field work in social work education was being challenged by the virus on all fronts. Student learning has to take place within given time frames as per a given academic schedule. They are then to be assessed under given rigorous conditions. When the space for performing the given activity is itself inaccessible, how does one evaluate the performance? To make up for the lost physical space, the digital space was brought in. But how did it measure up as an alternative space for learning? Was it accessible? Was it equitable? Was it sufficient? These are the questions we seek to examine in this paper. It will also contextualise the Northeast region of India where internet connectivity is many times a woeful scenario. Additionally, the poverty levels here also impede access to the internet. To better understand the significance of the nuances and need for human connectivity in social work practice, we look at a few empirical studies. We then look at how field work education per se, which is an essential skill training for future practitioners, were carried out and the challenges faced therein.

Home Visits During the Pandemic

Home visits are a very essential practice measure in social work. Laura L. Cook and Danny Zschomler (2020) emphasize this, particularly in child and family social work. Working with children necessitates being closely engaged with them "physically, emotionally and cognitively" and be "intimate" with them. Ferguson (2018) and Baeza et al (2019) emphasizes the need for professional touch. Ferguson (2018), Cook (2020) and Saltiel and Lakey (2020) have also opined that the physical home environment is a pertinent factor that can influence the intervention work. Sensory perceptions and emotions together also play a vital role during home visits. Thus, it played hugely upon the professional capabilities of the social worker as the shift of engagement for intervention was extremely profound and sudden as well owing to the pandemic. Nonetheless, they talk about both the pros and cons of such a medium of practice.

Cook and Zschomler (2020) present their study in the aftermath of the sudden lockdown that was imposed in England. Except for very urgent visits, the

social workers had to make do with online interactions as per prevailing government protocols. They conducted in-depth interviews with 31 such social workers who had to undertake virtual home visits, and examined the avenues as well as challenges. As the digital replaced the physical world of contact, they report that initially the social workers expressed due concern regarding rapport building as they were not keen to let the computer screen come in between their relationships. But visible changes gradually occurred in their perspective towards online interaction. All the usual social media interactive platforms were used. Although such virtual visits could not completely serve as a mainstay, it no doubt helped a lot. They describe it as a "little and often" approach. An intermeshing of phone calls, texts, and video calls provided support to each format. It was also supplemented with necessary exchange of hard copy documents. Virtual sessions drew some unanticipated rewards too in terms of a wider engagement with the clients' routine lives. Travel time being nullified helped the workers to remain enthused.

The emotional distance in the digital world of not being able to see, touch, and feel the subject of practice, inability to access the actual environment, which has a tremendous effect upon the person, were the limitations of the digital practice. Non-verbal cues were missed out. Confidentiality issues arose as one could not monitor the privacy or lack of it in such a platform. Besides, some issues could never garner the kind of response and results in an online mode as it required multiple sensitivities. Cases of trauma or personal shame could just not be dealt with effectively online. Besides all these, the problem of digital exclusion was also noted by Cook and Zschomler (2020).

Another very pertinent concern raised was that such virtual practices should not feed themselves into routine social work practice; and thus, give way to austerity measures, thereby impacting welfare aid. Lack of face-to-face interaction with colleagues, shortage of work space at home with full confidentiality ethics were additional problems. Their own mental fatigue was highlighted, owing to which performance may have been hampered. Noting the above findings, Cook and Zschomler (2020), therefore suggest that a hybrid model of virtual and face-to-face practice is best adopted in the wake of the pandemic.

Technology, The Pandemic, and Social Work Education

Kourgiantakis and Lee (2020) emphasize upon the need to acquire social work practice competencies that encompass self-awareness, self-reflection, cross-cultural understanding, integrating theory and practice, and adopting

the principles of social justice. Similarly, they too highlight the essence of field work in social work education. They also mention how cost-cutting measures were already affecting social work practice prior to the pandemic. With the sudden onset of the pandemic and the subsequently imposed lockdown, they cite the Canadian Association for Social Work Education (CASWE) 2020, where some had to discontinue field supervision while some others went digital. These resulted in a host of unforeseen challenges. Besides having to overhaul the field work component of the curriculum, other harsh realities ranged from overall general health to mental health issues of students, faculty, family members etc. People were grappling with economic upturns in the family, caregiving, loss and grief. They report that access to healthcare was also disturbingly inequitable.

They cite Knowles (2007) and Levin et al. (2018) to exemplify that the digital platform had always been an interface for learning earlier too. What was newly challenging was doing field work online. Such a platform lacked the necessary capacity to provide practice opportunities to the students. It consequently affected the evaluation formats and interactive spaces between the faculty and the learner. Levin et al. (2018) had also conducted a survey and found that although pathbreaking technological advancements are being made, the mood is still low towards online practice. They substantiate preference for faculty evaluation where physical learning was found more rewarding to the students.

Knowles (2007) raised several issues faced by educators and administrators in engaging with online practice. They categorised them into four groups: (1) pedagogical challenges (e.g. online relationship building, redesigning curricula and teaching methods), (2) professional challenges (e.g. alignment of e-learning with SW education, ethics, professionalism, and e-equity), (3) faculty challenges (e.g. time, workload, compensation, professional development, and technical support), and (4) administrative challenges (e.g. program structure and academic policies). Meanwhile, East et al. (2014) advocate developing online communities of practice to keep up with the changing times and stress upon necessary infrastructure and pedagogy modifications to suit the practice.

Kourgiantakis and Lee (2020) discuss the findings of the CASWE (2020) survey (N=3564), where 80% preferred the old style of physical interactive classroom spaces and 61% expressed that learning is hindered in the online mode. During the pandemic, when all normal things appeared most abnormal, students and faculty alike were also grappling with health issues. Training was affected while the need for the services of social workers were on the

rise. They therefore conclude that online social work practice education must: (1) necessarily consider time, workload, curriculum, digital infra structure; (2) advance more research on the effectiveness of digital practice and how to enhance it; (3) adopt the blended mode to counter the changing requirements of the times.

The Digital Shove

Pink, Ferguson and Kelly (2021) do not deny the advent of technology in everyone's lives and in all the professions. But the rapidity and magnitude with which it took over all forms of human interaction during the pandemic and how social work practice was impacted is what they dwell upon. They discuss issues of child protection within the digital framework and make the case for a hybrid practice. They advocate that social work practice must not be encumbered by such uncertainties like the pandemic in future and work towards improvisation to counter all challenges as technology is an inevitable component of advancement. They also emphasize the conventional practice of face-to-face interaction and how in the process, intimate feelings and emotions are encountered. They discuss how in such practices, a continuous engagement with one's sensitivities are essential as the social worker has to anticipate both anxieties as well as risks. Home visits during the pandemic was one that instilled fear to both the practitioner as well as the service recipient. New ways of interaction via digital media were the norm of practice. This challenged their evaluation and practice measures considerably.

With this background, they advocate the hybrid mode of practice, where the home-visit is woven into such a practice. They reiterate that even when digital platforms serve as the interface, there is no denying that the physical world influences it. They distinguish between 'virtual' and 'digital' and cite Hine (2015) to underline how the internet is irrevocably enmeshed with our lives. Hence flexibility and anticipatory social work practice is underlined; where the physical home visit is ingrained within digital practice. This would change the way social work practice can navigate itself in the technology driven future.

A digital ready social work practice is therefore necessary as adopting such online practices are not new despite the advantages and disadvantages. Such new-age practices have also influenced policy making (Cooner et al., 2020; Megele & Buzzi, 2020; Mishna et al., 2012; Reamer, 2013). There is also e-social work which encompasses online research and patient therapy (Lopez Pela´ez and Marcuello-Servos, (2018). Meanwhile Philips (2019) notes the necessity of the digital platform, yet stresses the equal need for a uniform

manner of adopting it in social work practice to avoid discrepancies. Turner (2016) and Taylor (2017) talk about digital literacy amongst practitioners. Mois and Fortuna (2020) make important observations about digital social work in the context of gerontology, where the challenges faced may be quite stark, as against working with young people, who are internet and technology savvy. Jeyashingham (2020) talks about human beings, machines, and digital ware, being all innately wired together in contemporary times.

Nonetheless, Madianou (2020) notes very aptly that hopping on to the digital world brought to the fore a spate of social inequalities and reveals the stark contrast of computer access between the rich and the poor. Humber (2020) also talks about digital inequalities that are influenced by global equations. Golightley and Holloway (2020) discuss how social distancing impeded relationship building and the intimacy requisite in social work practice. Munro (2020) brings in the concept of e-mentoring.

Pink, Ferguson and Kelly (2021) reveal from their empirical studies that since being digitally wired became the norm during the pandemic, the social workers started appreciating how video calls and in-person home visits blended themselves to facilitate the practice. Thus "digital social work" exhibited trust and other emotions that are so essential to the practice. "Digital intimacy" was hence being garnered, where users were showing lesser reluctance to display their emotions on camera. It is however, to be noted that physical home visits necessitated wearing protective cover, face shields, masks etc. during the pandemic. This barrier was withdrawn temporarily, at least in the digital world, where the video call users could see each other clearly. Travel time being done away with, digital interactions were more prolonged and this also gave momentum to building relationships. Simpson et al. (2021) talks about video calls as safer sites to open up for counselling as users shed inhibitions. Thus, the hybrid approach managed to win over the hesitant clients. However, it was also observed that teenagers were more interactive on social media as most of them are already so entwined with it. They even preferred it to a social worker's physical visit at times. Overall, a hybrid practice was proving fruitful in terms of not being stuck with a case, and also to evade the dangers that the virus posed.

What must be noted is that social workers were upset about the lack of access to the physical world of feel, touch, and smell. Whether the video call or the messaging was not being prompted by someone else besides the client, who was also present in the room simultaneously without the social worker's knowledge, were matters of concern. In order to fill this vital lacuna in the digital world, in-person contacts were essential. Pink, Ferguson and Kelly

(2021) therefore highlight how hybrid digital social work is the way to go towards the future. They however caution that the experience and potential of the social worker must be considered to assess the outcomes of such a digital practice. Standalone digital social work cannot take down the conventional ways of practice but certainly hybridising the practice will pave the way for social work amidst all contingencies. They nonetheless cite Morozov (2013) to underline the lurking dangers of the tendency to look at technology as the only solace. Madianou (2020) also cautions that everyone must beware of 'digital capitalism'.

Transformation Within Social Work

So far, we have discussed how social work interventive measures like home visits, for instance, was challenged owing to COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown, using Cook and Zschomler's study. Such practice measures necessitate working with distinct human sensitivities to enhance performance and outcome. How the pandemic caught everyone off guard and social work education programs had to restrategize the field work component has also been discussed (Kourgiantakis & Lee, 2020). Pink, Ferguson & Kelly (2021) also talk about the advent of hybrid field practice. They additionally highlight media inaccessibility and digital inequalities and also caution us about digital capitalism. Thus, the literature review presented here, although limited, advocate a blended pattern of conducting field practice and education. We must also note that these studies were conducted during the pandemic, when lockdowns and "staying away" from physical human contact was best advised. In the face of no other option for contact, the digital world was a panacea for all. What makes it worse is that this panacea was inequitably accessed across geographies. So, the question arises as to whether we are truly digitally ready to transform our practices to suit the changing times even after the pandemic? Are we ready to go hybrid even if not fully digital? These are questions we must weigh seriously. To help us think further, we will look at some typical formats of field practice education used during the pandemic. We shall now look at the Indian scenario, and specifically, with respect to field work education as a university program component. We will also dwell particularly on student-faculty experiences and community perceptions, confined to the department of social work, Assam University, Silchar.

Formats of Field Practice Education During the Pandemic

During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools of social work adopted various contingency measures to cater to the fieldwork practicum. Various formats were practised by the Department of Social Work, Assam University, Silchar, to counter the overwhelming onslaught of the virus on education. These continuity and contingency plans included the following activities.

Online Practice Conversations: Since direct field placement was not possible due to lockdown and social/ physical distancing protocols, experts and practitioners were invited and student trainees were encouraged to discuss the issues and challenges of social work practice in various settings with them. This kind of experience sharing was aimed to inculcate social work competencies among students.

Self-care: Social work trainees as paramedics worked in the frontline helping people in need. Through online platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, etc. student trainees were oriented by faculty to be safe from any form of risk, avoid burn-out, stay connected with family, friends and other support systems. This was extremely important in the context of mental health issues.

Skill Training: Online skill labs have been very helpful in imparting skills that are required to develop social work competencies. Although student trainees could not have hands-on experience in applying skills and techniques of social work directly in the field during the pandemic, these skill development programmes enabled them to understand the values of social work (anti-oppressive, equity, human rights etc). The skills and techniques needed for evidence-based practices in various settings were also imparted.

Use of Case Studies: Although it is one of the regular and conventional teaching-learning methods, it has been a very useful tool during the pandemic in facilitating students to acquire a critical understanding of the complexities of practising social work as a profession.

Select Remote Field Activities: Trainees were encouraged to use online tools such as video calls, and various other social media to reach out to their clients and communities.

Tele-counselling: Trainees were involved in tele-counselling activities after receiving due training in the counselling process. Faculties ensured that the do's and don'ts of counselling were well adhered to, as the pandemic was a new challenge to humankind itself.

Online Supervision: Through online individual counselling (IC) and group counselling (GC), trainees were constantly supervised by social work faculties as well as field/agency level supervisors for ethical and professional practices. Apart from practice skills, trainees were encouraged to have reflective and critical thinking about their fieldwork activities through regular report submissions and online IC/GC.

Volunteering: Students also liaised with various non-governmental organisations at local and national levels on the digital platform and rendered their services in multiple ways such as sharing COVID-19 protocol, demystifying the vaccination dilemma, counselling etc.

The various possible practices that were engaged in has been presented above. We have also discussed how a hybrid method is being advocated by other social work scholars. We shall now look at how such a deviation from the physical world on to the digital world affected the teaching learning process. It will help us to reflect whether the digital medium can indeed fill up the vacuum left by physical interactions during the pre-pandemic times, in a remotely placed region like Northeast India.

The Challenges of Digital Field Work

In an environment of no physical interaction being permitted, the digital medium undoubtedly served as a boon to keep the practice going. Likewise, various modalities as discussed above were used to keep the field practice curriculum covered and comply with the rigors of academic programs with minimal compromises.

Counselling is a grand function of social work. However, the perils of reaching out physically either for counselling or for home visits owing to the fear of COVID-19 was high. The initial stigma associated with it also induced people to conceal. The accompanying distrust and fear did not help at all. The steadfast promotion of online learning overlooked the impracticalities of implementing the practical aspects of any curriculum. This was applicable to the physical sciences as well as to social work. The former anyway have confined physical laboratory structures and could tide over the pandemic somehow to an extent. But what of social work? The world is our field. When humans were advised to best remain holed up, where does one practice field work? These were mammoth challenges that had never been countered or envisaged before.

The Additional Problem in the Northeast

Assam University, Silchar, is located in Cachar district in the state of Assam in Northeast India. Effective field work necessitates an abundance of agencies both governmental and non-governmental. Adequately responsive ones are scarce in the region owing to a host of factors. The pandemic made it worse, as most of them were ill prepared to adopt any kind of mentoring for the students. Internet connectivity is another issue. As per the Government of India report (2019), total internet subscribers per 100 population was 48.48%. Rural urban showed a yawning gap with 25.36 for rural and 97.94 for urban in 2019. India's overall position among internet users in the world stood at 141 in 2017. TRAI (2020) notes the total numbers of wireless and wired subscribers at 1,160.52 million as on June 30, 2020. Urban subscribers were pegged at 636.83 million, while rural subscribers were 523.69 million. Down To Earth reports the low numbers of male internet users in the country in the states of Meghalaya (42.1%) and in Assam (42.3%). Female internet users in Assam were just 28.2% (Chari et al., 2020).

Are We Ready for Digital Social Work?

As already indicated above, a multitude of webinars were conducted on a range of topics where practitioners were invited from across India by the department, to share their knowledge and experiences. Department alumni also chipped in to share their practice experiences. It covered very unique and contemporary issues. Some of them are listed here. Design thinking for social innovation, Policy and planning in rural development, Importance of GIS application in rural development with special focus on Adarsh Gram Yojana Project in Assam, Community based disaster risk reduction strategies for local resilience, Field work opportunities for social workers at NIPCCD, Woman and child development with special focus on Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana and POSHAN Abhiyan, Assam, Social entrepreneurship: Leadership & risk management, Nation-wide youth-led movement to strengthen India's battle against COVID-19, Sustainability and future readiness for Grassroots Organisation, Strengthening the vision for National Council for Social Work Education, Border disputes in Northeast India, Emergent challenges in social work, Immunity and health, Pratham's work approach – pre and post covid 19 and Psycho social support &counselling.

Reports on all such webinars were submitted by the students for evaluation. This was in addition to the mandatory IC and GC. Besides this, the volunteering work in any form rendered by the students were also to be submitted as field reports for evaluation. The vexing question was whether it

was sufficient to replace the physical mode of field work. Unfortunately, it did not seem so and the students also expressed how they missed "the feel" of the field. The regular placement agencies for routine field work prior to the pandemic, were either thoroughly embroiled in their own activities, or did not have the wherewithal to mentor students online. The series of lockdowns and the fear of the virus did not help at all to even venture into a hybrid mode.

Field work operates to intersect practice, theory and research. Essential professional training is to be imparted during the process. A homogenised view of all the social sciences does not help the social work curriculum, especially field work. The UGC (2020) proposes a blended mode of teaching learning. It had already launched e-learning platforms such as SWAYAM, MOOCS, e-pathshala, SWAYAMPRABHA, CEC-UGC YouTube channel, National Digital Library, Shodhganga, e-Shodh Sindhu, Vidwan, etc. much before the pandemic. Use of ICTs were also being advocated. Thus, it talks about digital education transforming the teaching learning process in terms of imparting flexibility and quality, catering to students needs and interests, and learning as and when ready, owing to the flexibility implicit in the e-platforms.

What demands attention in social work is the field practicum component. Cook & Zschomler (2020), Kourgiantakis & Lee (2020), and Pink, Ferguson & Kelly (2021) have through empirical studies advocated a blended mode of practice too. Online repositories hardly showed any empirical studies on how field work was taught as a curriculum component during the pandemic. However, webinars and panel discussions were plenty at the local, national and international levels. Research papers on how social work professionals countered their practice challenges during the pandemic were quite large in number, although just a handful has been reviewed in this paper. It must be noted that nations at an advanced stage of development as presented here, namely, England, Canada, etc. will exhibit lesser digital challenges. Studies in the Indian setting were next to unavailable except for one by Dash and Gulalia (2020). They talk about networking amongst schools and departments of social work across the country and sharing experiences amongst faculty and students alike. They also advocate social work journals to encourage documentation of field work experiences during the pandemic, so that it serves as a knowledge base. However, such views are generic and also do not cater to the unique accompanying problems of the digital divide.

Keeping in mind the diversity of the country with huge inequalities between the rich and the poor, the digital inequalities are an inherent characteristic. The northeast problem is even more unique with its typical geographies of

mountainous ranges which interfere with data receptivity. Therefore, merely having an internet subscription as per the TRAI records does not suffice. Besides the problem of data reception, there is also the problem of poverty. According to the economic survey report of the Government of Assam, the gap between the per capita incomes of Assam and India is Rupees 43,468 in current prices, and Rupees 32,158 in constant prices which is quite substantial (G Plus News, 2021). Besides this, rural urban dynamics also play out upsetting any kind of balance. Grinding poverty exists in several parts of the northeast and particularly in Assam. Unfortunately, there is no recorded empirical studies available on the socio-economic background of students pursuing social work in the region. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that a majority of the students pursuing social work are from a lower socio-economic background, barring a few exceptions.

Who will Fill the Learning Gap?

In the eventuality of such counter-currents towards learning, particularly in the field work component, a learning gap is created. How do we fill this up in real time? Do we look at 'Time' itself as a solace? Will it be experience? Or compassion? Whatever one may want to attribute it to, the pandemic has created upheavals in the teaching learning process without a doubt. It has further widened the learning divide between those inhabiting the richer worlds outside the northeast. Do we blame technology? Or the virus? Or accept geography and poverty as the culprit? The tragedy is that such a gap may be carried forward with reeling repercussions to the student community and future social work professionals of the region if we advocate the lion's share of imparting education via digital media. Certainly, it will usher in digital capitalism. Hence, we must exercise due caution while adopting the digital world, whether in the hybrid mode or as a standalone mode, the latter of which appears very inequitable in the current scenario. Digitally induced inequalities should not become intrinsic to the practice, which is against the very ethos of social work practice.

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