

# **POST COVID-19: A STUDY OF RICKSHAW PULLERS IN LUCKNOW CITY, UTTAR PRADESH, India**

**Milind Sen<sup>1</sup>**

## **Abstract**

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) SARS-CoV-2 was first identified in Wuhan City, China, in December 2019 (World Health Organization, 2020). In India first case has reported in Kerala on 30 January 2020. Even though India is the second world's most populous country after China. India is one of the emerging economies in the BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). However, India is celebrating @75 Azadi ka amarit Kal. But India still resists poverty and unemployment among the deprivation section, such as Scheduled castes/ scheduled tribes and weaker communities facing socioeconomic challenges. This paper investigates Post COVID-19: Impact on the marginalization of people such as Rickshaw pullers during the lockdown. The October-November 2021 study was conducted. Tools and techniques use direct interviews, case studies, observation, and participatory methods. The sample size was 30 respondents selected from Lucknow's different work sites. Even though, In-depth interviews through interview methods about the socio-economic status (SES) and COVID-19 impact on livelihood. The study found that RPs had suffered multiple hardships during the pandemic crisis. The study has revealed that RPs in low-income people and earnings drastically reduced during the pandemic crisis. They have suffered from low protein intake and increased hunger and poverty among them.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, SES, Health, RPs, Poverty, Livelihood

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## Introduction

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19), SARS-CoV-2, was first identified in Wuhan City, China, in December 2019 (World Health Organization, 2020). The pandemic has directly hit health, financial, social, and culture in recent history. (Study & States, n.d.). India's first case was reported in Kerala on 20 January 2020 (MHA, 2020). The government of India issued the first order under section 6(2)(i) of the Disaster Management Act, 2005, effective 21 days nationwide lockdown on 25 March 2020 (MHA, 2020). During the sudden lockdown, people lost jobs, shelters, food, and drinking water, such as informal workers, rickshaw pullers, street vendors, construction workers, and other menial workers. They pack whatever has to be ready back home. Mass mobility has converted into reverse migration tsunamis seen in India. All roads saw mass reverse migration without having food, drinking water, no means of transportation, cycles, rickshaws, and barefoot walking a thousand kilometers toward their native place. They play a significant role in India's economy; however, 80 percent of the workforce contributes over 70% to India's economy (Bhatt, 2020). They are migrating from neighboring districts to Lucknow city for livelihood. Lucknow is the capital city of Uttar Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh shares the borders of 8 states, a Union territory (New Delhi), and one international country (Nepal)<sup>2</sup>. Uttar Pradesh is the most populous state in India, with more than a 16 percent population of India. Lucknow is a historical place from ancient to the Freedom movement. People are migrating to the city for a livelihood because of Lucknow Tehzeeb, the Central Business hub, and fast infrastructure development. Unorganized sector workers, such as menial rickshaw pullers, are a vulnerable section of society. Thus, the Novel coronavirus crisis has disrupted economic activities and fear of infection; no passengers want to ride a rickshaw. They are single bread earners in the family. They lost their livelihood and shelter, compelled to return home without money, food, and water. Even though Rickshaw pullers are on the coming lower ladder of society, there are not in good condition in both places, either origin or destination. This article tries to understand COVID-19's impact on the rickshaw pullers' livelihood and socioeconomic conditions. The study has found that the pre-COVID-19 lockdown average daily income of rickshaw pullers was 100-150, and during the lockdown, no income. The study has revealed the truth about the rickshaw pullers. They are landless, agricultural laborers, casual workers, illiterates, unskilled, and non-local. The study has highlighted the SES of the rickshaw pullers pre-COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 lockdown as their livelihood.

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<sup>2</sup> Wikipedia

## **Tools and Techniques**

The study was conducted in October- November 2021 through an interview schedule, field observation, and face-face interaction. The purpose of this study is that both qualitative and quantitative research, in combination, provides a better understanding of a research problem. The study was conducted with 30 respondents and three respondents' in-depth interviews. The data have collected by simple random sampling of different places in Lucknow city, railway stations, bus stands, and shopping malls. The question has been asked based on an interview schedule about socioeconomic & demographic profiles, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on livelihood activities, health issues, and the perception and attitudes of the respondents about the COVID-19 crisis. The Data analysis was through descriptive sample statistics, pie charts, graphs, percentages, and frequency.

## **Area of the study**

Lucknow is located between  $26^{\circ} 30' N$  to  $27^{\circ} 10' N$  latitudes and  $80^{\circ} 30' E$  to  $81^{\circ} 13' E$  longitudes. Lucknow is the capital city of Uttar Pradesh. Lucknow situation river Gomati, a left-bank tributary of river Ganga. It spread the north by Sitapur, the southeast by Rae Bareli, the northeast by Barabanki, the northwest by Hardoi, and the southwest by Unnao district (Kumari, 2015). As fig.01. Lucknow attracts migrants seeking better employment opportunities and higher-order services like education and health (JNNURM and Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, 2006).

## Area of Study of the Lucknow city

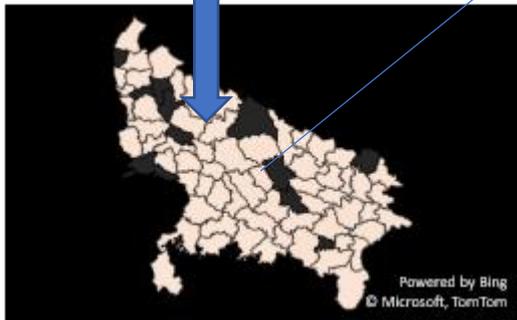
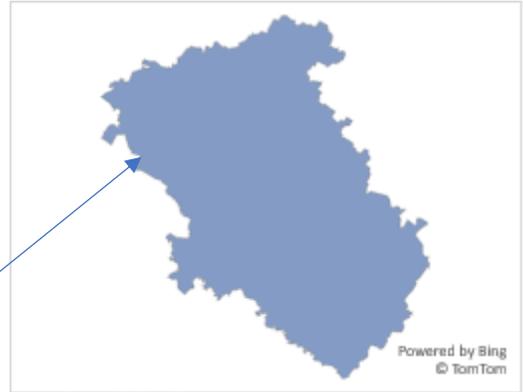
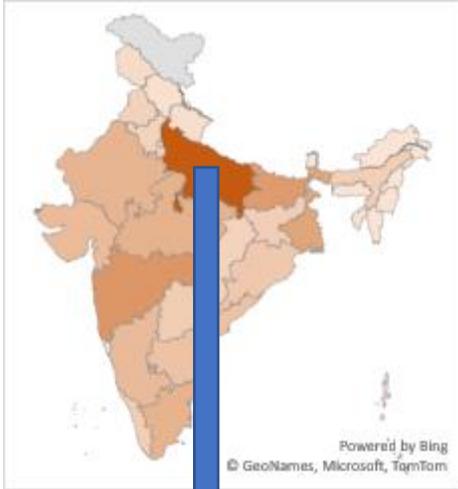


Fig.No.01. Location of the study area Lucknow,

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## Data Analysis and Finding

**Fig.02 Rickshaw pullers their origin places**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	migrated	25	83.3	83.3	83.3
	non-migrated	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

**Fig.03 Previous occupation of the respondents**

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Rickshaw pulling	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Daily wage workers	6	20.0	20.0	30.0
	Landless labour	14	46.7	46.7	76.7
	Agriculture workers	7	23.3	23.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Source: Field Survey, October-November, 2021

### Rickshaw pullers, by their origin places.

Rickshaw pullers are the most vulnerable section of society. Lucknow city pulls for their livelihood. Fig.02 shows that 83.3 percent of rickshaw pullers migrated to different places of the country or within states, and only 16.7 percent have an origin place of local residence. During the interaction, most of the respondents found that neighboring districts migrated to the city for the bread and butter of their family members. Research has revealed why? Rural-urban migration to Lucknow. Fig.03 shows the previous occupation of the respondents, who were landless, illiterate agriculture workers, and had no local job opportunities. Lucknow is the periphery of the center of neighboring districts: the north by Sitapur, the Rae Bareli, the northeast by Barabanki, the northwest by Hardoi, and the southwest by Unnao district. Fig.03 shows the respondents' previous occupations, most of whom (46.7%) were landless. The study has found intergenerational rickshaw pulling (10%) of the

respondents. Rickshaw pullers are opting for rickshaw pulling as their livelihood. The study has found intergenerational rickshaw pulling as their livelihood. Research has revealed hidden truths; today, the rickshaw profession is outdated, but until exitance in the city, Rickshaw

pullers are low-income people groups. They are on the lower ladder of society. They are migrating to urban cities like Lucknow. Rickshaw pulling, opting not needed formal education or skill training, is easily accessible in the city and instants income.

**Raju (35 Age, SCs, Rickshaw puller)** Narrated during the interaction in the field survey that he has been coming to Lucknow for three years from Hardoi district (Uttar Pradesh) for rickshaw pulling. Earlier my father pulled a rickshaw. Now, he is rickshaw pulling. Respondent narrated have a semi-pucca house in the village. He got early marriage and had three children, two boys and one daughter. The current condition is not good because, earlier, COVID-19, Lockdown, lost jobs, and fear of an uncertain future. The COVID-19 lockdown impacted negative behaviors toward rickshaw pullers because people were afraid of the coronavirus infection nobody want ride rickshaws.

**Religions and castes of the respondents**

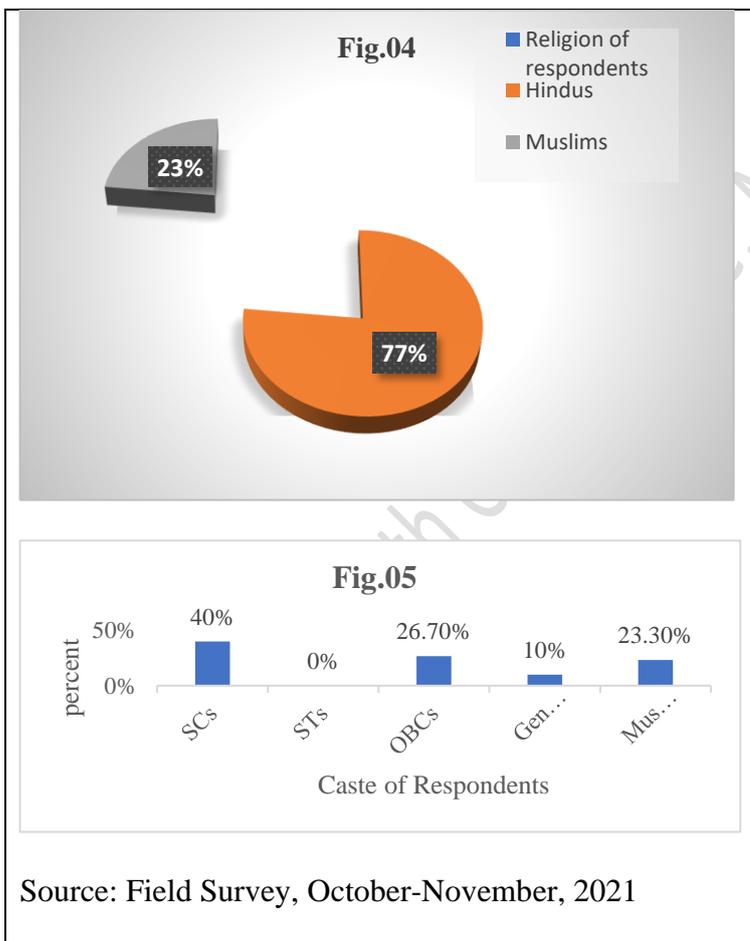
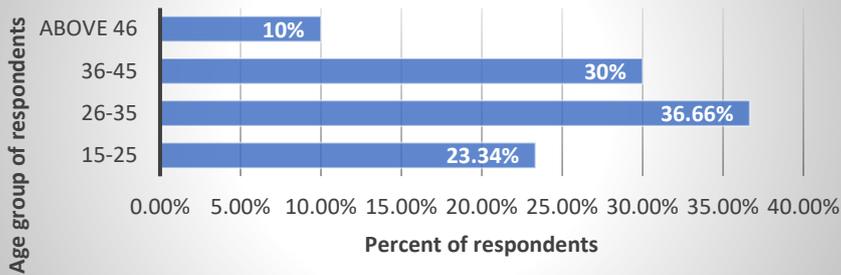


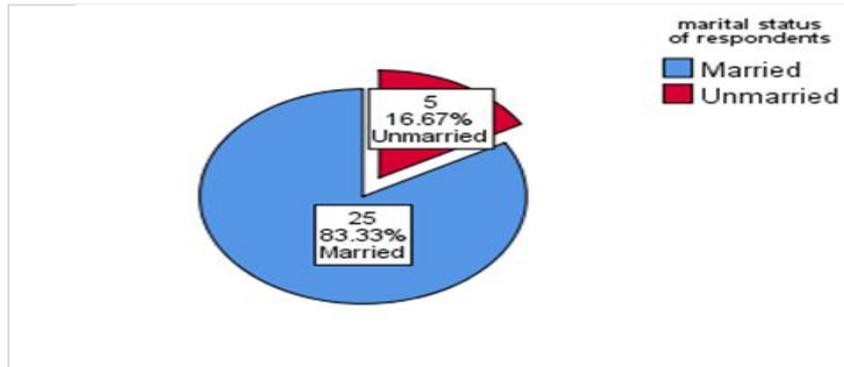
Fig.04 shows that 77% of respondents are Hindus and 23 % Muslim rickshaws. fig.05 shows caste-wise rickshaw pullers, 40 percent are Scheduled castes, 26.70% OBCs, 23.30 percent (Muslims, OBCs, mention in states castes status), and 10 % general categories, poverty, and unemployment are not an exception in general. They are vulnerable groups such as SCs, OBCs, Muslims, and other weaker sections. The study revealed that rickshaw pullers in low-income groups, and current COVID-19, increased the poor condition of rickshaw pullers. They are coming city for livelihood, but due to difficulty, found in regular jobs in the city. Rickshaw is easily accessible without formal education or proper training engaged in this profession.

Rickshaw pullers are in different social hierarchies of Indian old customs. They are migrating to the city to enhance their income and social status. They are suffering multiple poverty, like caste, family responsibility, and low income, far away from modern access amenities,

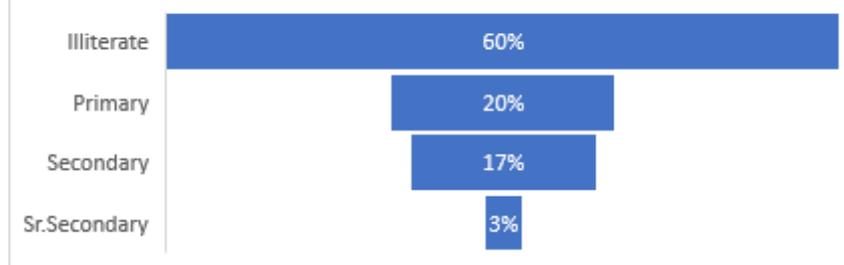
**Fig.06 (A)**



**(Fig.06(B))**



**Education level of respondents in percent ( Fig.06 (C) )**

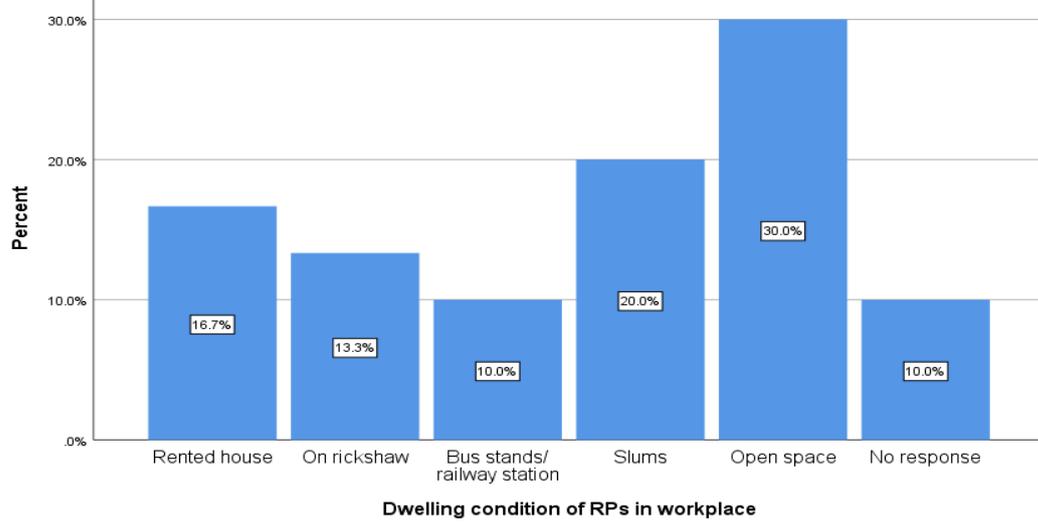


Source: Field Survey, October-November 2021

competition within the occupation, and modern means of short distances transportation such as e-rickshaw.

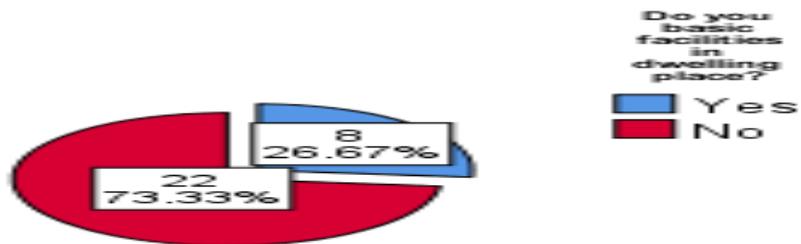
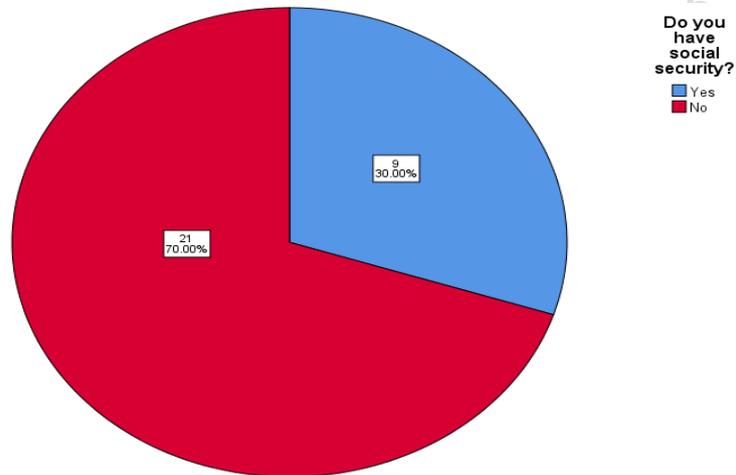
The Series of fig. 06 suggests that respondents' ages vary from 15 to 46. However, fig. 06 (A) shows that more than 60 percent of the RPs have age groups between 15-35, 30% between 36- 45, and the rest of 10 percent. Moreover, the pie chart (Fig.06B) shows a large chunk of people; more than three-fourths of people are married. Thus, on educational parameters, (Fig 06C) shows that more than half of people are illiterate, around one-fifth of people have primarily educated or secondary schooling, and the rest are negligible. During the field survey, the research was found and demonstrated in below fig no. 07, 08, 09 about the

dwelling conditions of the rickshaw pullers, how they are socially secure, and whether they are getting basic facilities in their workplace and where they spend most of their time. Fig.07 is clearly shown in the graph chart that about one-fifth of people have no place to live, they live in open spaces, some live on bus stands, railway stations, etc. only a few people found having a rented house with very few basic facilities, during covid they lost their jobs. Fig.07 in the bar graph shows more than 76% RPs dwelling.



Source: Field Survey, October-November,2021 (Fig.07)

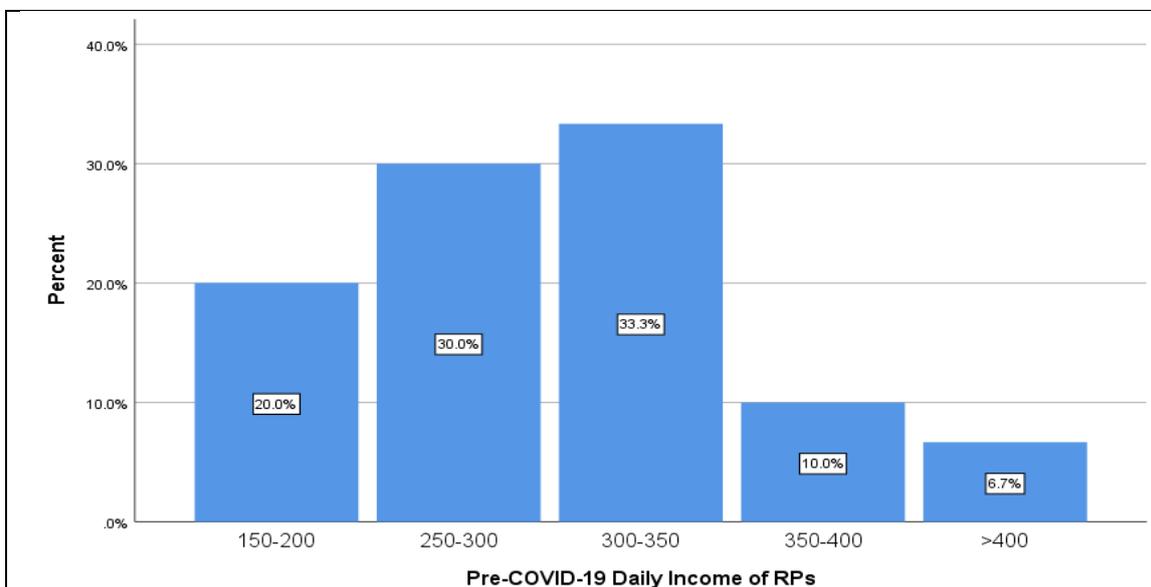
Do you have social security? (Fig.08)



Source: Field Survey, October-November,2021

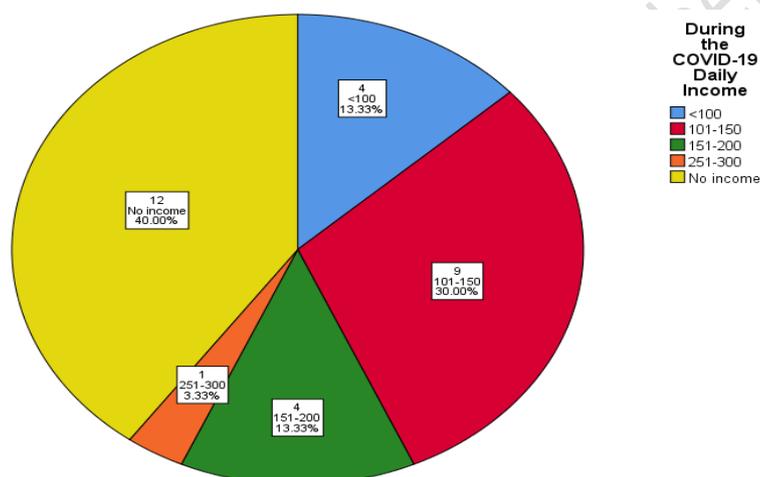
Source: Field Survey, October-November,2021 (Fig.09) Do you have basic facilities in the dwelling place?

Place in unhygienic places where RPs share kitchens and toilets and use commonplace. High level of risk of virus infection. The data have revealed that they do not have enough social.



Source: Field Survey, October-November, 2021 (Fig.10)

(Fig.11) During the COVID-19 Daily Income of RPS



Source: Field Survey, October-November, 2021

Security. They do not have enough earnings or financial support. The above fig no. 10 bar-graph shows that the pre covid income of rickshaw pullers was regularly going as per their expectations as we see that more than 50 percent earned between 150- 300 rupees,43% earned between 301-400 rupees and fewer respondents daily income of more than 400 rupees. However, during the covid-19 crisis, fig; 11 pie chart shows 40 percent of respondents no-income group, more than 56% of RP's daily income is less than 250 rupees, and a very negligible daily income of 300 rupees. Due to the covid lockdown, they lost jobs, as shown in

fig.10 and 11 pre-and during the covid-19 crisis; RPs are low socio-economic and implicit and explicit of poverty.

**Rafiq** (36, illiterate, migrated from Sitapur (Uttar Pradesh) with family) narrated that during the field sites, their income decreased, living rented houses with family, had no alternative jobs, how to pay house rent, and how to survive a long time in a current covid-19 crisis.

**Rajesh** (45, from Unnao District, U.P.) narrated that before COVID-19, their daily average earnings were between 200-300 rupees; during the covid-19 lockdown, they had no income, now 150-200 rupees daily earning. He has a lot of responsibilities family side. People during the novel coronavirus crisis do not want to ride a rickshaw because of fear of a virus infection. He is living in slums and eats street food. During the lockdown, he suffered anxiety and tension about an uncertain future.

### **Conclusion**

Lucknow city has historical and social-culturally significance in the Indian freedom movement. The city is dynamic urbanization and fast infrastructure development. In the neighboring districts, people are moving to the city. They are leaving their previous occupation (Ali, 2013). Rickshaw is easily accessible and provides an instant livelihood. Those who opt for rickshaw pulling as a profession. They come from underprivileged sections, such as Scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, Muslims, and other weaker sections of society. Most in this occupation opt for rickshaw pulling between 15-45 age group rickshaw pullers, and no exceptions greater than 60 age groups. They are illiterate, unskilled rural people who migrated to the city for their livelihood. Rickshaw is easy entry and instants income in this profession. They are low-income people, sources of income constraints by rickshaw pulling, and abject poverty. Poor living conditions both place origin and destination. During the virus crisis, they lost their jobs. However, in the pre-covid crisis, more than 83% of respondents of income was between 150-300 rupees; during the crisis, 40 percent had no income, and 43 percent had less than 200 rupees. Those are engaged agriculture workers. Therefore, low income has increased hunger and malnutrition among them. They have job competition within the occupation and outside as e-rickshaw. The dwelling condition is poor and unhygienic in the workplace. However, RPs are dwelling together with four-six people in a small room. However, they share kitchens, bathing places, and toilets. Most RPs do not have basic facilities in living sites. Thus, COVID-19 infection has a high chance in the dwelling and workplace. Rickshaw pulling is needed for physical fitness, but condition beyond it. The people's perceptions and attitudes are negative during the virus crisis on RPs. Due to fear of virus infection, people do not want to ride a rickshaw. So, the Pandemic crisis has enhanced the deterioration condition of RPs. They are

suffering from body pain, leg pain, and cough. They are self-Medicare through the medical store, and very few go to the government hospital. They do not have any social security or low financial inclusion. The government schemes penetration is negligence in this occupation. They are suffering from intergenerational poverty. They are treated as a secondary citizen in the urban city. They did not have proper documents, so they were low beneficiaries of the government scheme. Policy intervention is required for the upliftment of the socioeconomic condition of RPs through providing direct benefits to government schemes to RPs, such as health insurance, subsidies, and affordable houses in the city. The government could enhance income through public-private partnerships and skill development programs.

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