

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN THE STATE OF MAHARASHTRA

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### ABSTRACT

India is the second-largest country of the Tribal Community population in the world comprising a total population of 104 million out of these in the Maharashtra state 10.5 million which constitutes 9.35 per cent of the tribal population as per census 2011. Since the independence of the country the tribal community facing problems with socio-economic development, food, shelter, education, healthcare and sanitation etc. In that, on the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the government of India announced the first nationwide lockdown for 21 days and thereafter various unlocking phases till today to stop the spreading of the covid-19 pandemic. But during this pandemic and lockdown period, the tribal community of the country was adversely affected severally. In the Maharashtra state, most of the tribal communities depend on Agriculture, Daily Wages, and Minor Forest Products etc. but due to lockdown, the tribal people lost their daily wages income as well as they are not able to sell their collected Minor Forest Products. Even last two years TRIFED (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited) has not purchased Minor Forest Products such as Myrobalan (Hirda) and Honey etc. During this period the central government and state government introduced various schemes and programmes for the tribal people but such schemes were not implemented effectively and efficiently. This study focused on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the Tribal Community of the state of Maharashtra considering the various aspects such as Healthcare facilities, Education, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), Unemployment, Purchase of Grocery, Lack of Public/Private Transportation, Selling the Minor Forest Products, efforts made by Grampanchayat (Local Governance) and Tribal Development Department during covid-19 pandemic etc. To understand the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the Tribal Community 126 responses were collected from the tribal people through the questionnaire.

**Keywords:** Tribes, Covid-19, Lockdown, Pandemic.

### Introduction:

The first case of the covid-19 was found in India on 27<sup>th</sup> January 2020 in Kerala state and thereafter the cases of covid-19 increasing very fast in India. Due to the spreading of the covid-19 virus in the country Government of India declared the first nationwide lockdown on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020 for 21 days to stop the spread of the coronavirus in the country and after that various unlocking phases. Now all almost every country of the world is badly affected by this covid-19 pandemic. Due to the covid-19 pandemic maximum poor, economic backward class and rural area people affected.

India has the second-largest population of the tribal community in the world next to Africa, comprising 104 million people which is 8.6 per cent of the total population of the country. In the country, the Maharashtra state has the second largest population of the tribal community next to the state of Madhya Pradesh has the highest population of the tribal community. According to the Ministry of the Tribal Affairs out of the total tribal population 89.97 per cent of the people live in the rural area and because of that covid-19 pandemic and lockdown was a very big and unknown challenge for this community. During this pandemic situation, the tribal community faced various difficulties in their daily routine. Even the central Government, as well as state government, introduced various schemes to support the tribal community but it was not reached up to every tribal people because a large number of the tribal people live in hilly and inaccessible areas. Some schemes are on paper these are not implemented effectively and efficiently.

### **The Objective of the Study**

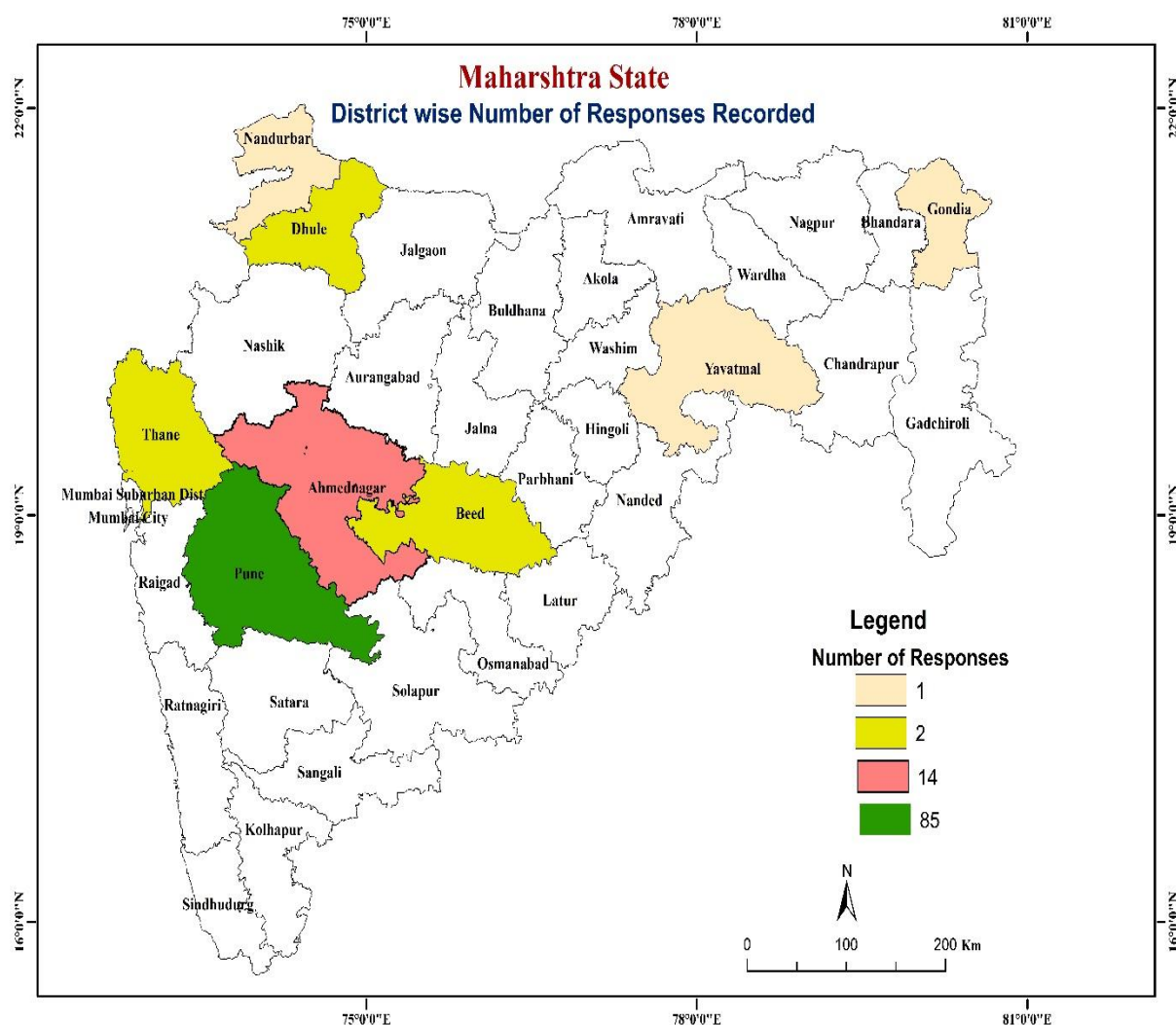
The important objective of the study is to understand and measure the impact of the covid-19 pandemic lockdown on the tribal communities of the Maharashtra state considering the various aspects. During the lockdown period how the tribal people suffered various challenges and how they overcome them. To understand the initiatives taken by the government and local governance during the lockdown period for tribal peoples.

### **Research Methodology**

For this study, the researcher collected the data using primary and secondary sources. In the primary sources, using the random sampling method, data has been collected using the Google form questionnaire based on five points Likert scale and collected the 126 from the study area. For this research study, ten questions were asked to the respondents which are related to know the impact of the covid-19 pandemic lockdown on the tribal community. To know the effectiveness and efficiency of the questionnaire pilot study was conducted with twelve samples that are not included in the statement of problem analysis. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, the researcher was not able to collect the data in physical form or through interviews. Some data was collected from secondary sources. The necessary information has been collected from different scholars and researchers published research work, articles published in different journals, newspapers, reports published by the government or non-government organisations. Moreover, some important information is also collected from relevant websites.

### **Data Analysis**

The present research study was emphasised on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic lockdown period on the tribal communities in the Maharashtra state. The data was collected for the study from all over the Maharashtra state. Following map showing the detailed information of the district-wise responses collected from Maharashtra state.



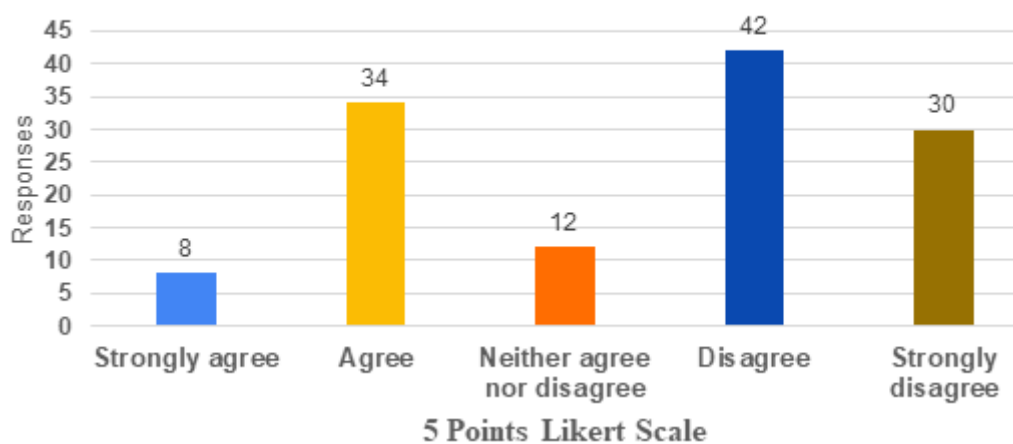
Map 1 Maharashtra State District wise Responses

In the above-mentioned map of Maharashtra state with the district wise responses recorded. 85 responses were recorded from the Pune district which constitutes 67.46 per cent of the total respondent, 14 responses were recorded from the Ahmednagar district that are the 11.11 per cent of the total responses, 2 responses each were recorded from the Thane, Dhule and Beed district, and 1 response each was recorded from the Nandurbar, Gondia and Yavatmal district.

The following ten questions were asked to the tribal communities and their interpretation as per the responses recorded.

The first question was asked, to know whether the tribal communities got the basic healthcare facilities during the covid-19 pandemic lockdown period. Because the tribal communities were already facing poor basic healthcare facilities. During the lockdown, the State Government and Central Government has announced various precautionary measures and provide healthcare facilities in the tribal area. Following is the analysis and interpretation of the responses.

*Que.1. Have you got the basic healthcare facilities that you needed during the Covid-19 lockdown?*

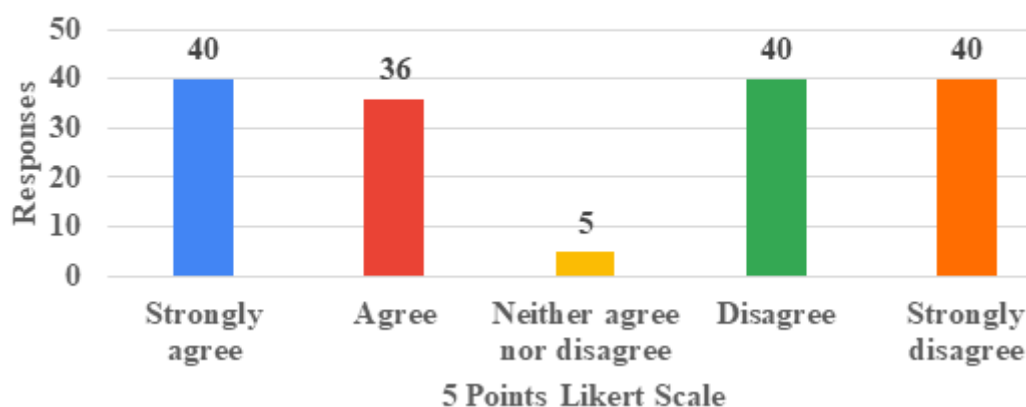


Graph 1 Healthcare facilities during the covid-19 pandemic in tribal area

The above-mentioned graph showed that a total of 126 responses were recorded for the question, out of which only 8 and 34 respondents responded as strongly agree and agree respectively it constitute only 33.3 per cent of the total responses and 72 respondents responded as disagree and strongly disagree for the question which is 57.14 per cent of the total recorded responses. It is shown that during the covid-19 lockdown period they have not got any basic healthcare facilities in their area. The remaining 12 respondents responded as neither agree nor disagree, it is 9.52 per cent of the total sample collected.

The second question was asked about education to know the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on students belongs to tribal communities. Since independence, the tribal communities have had the lowest literary rate. Due to the lockdown, there is a tremendous change in the education sector and the government announced that online education in this period. But for this policy the tribal communities facing a big problem because they are not well known about the use of the technology, there is a lack of network, electricity, availability of required devices etc.

*Que.2 During the Covid-19 lockdown period, you or your children learned in any way online or offline.*

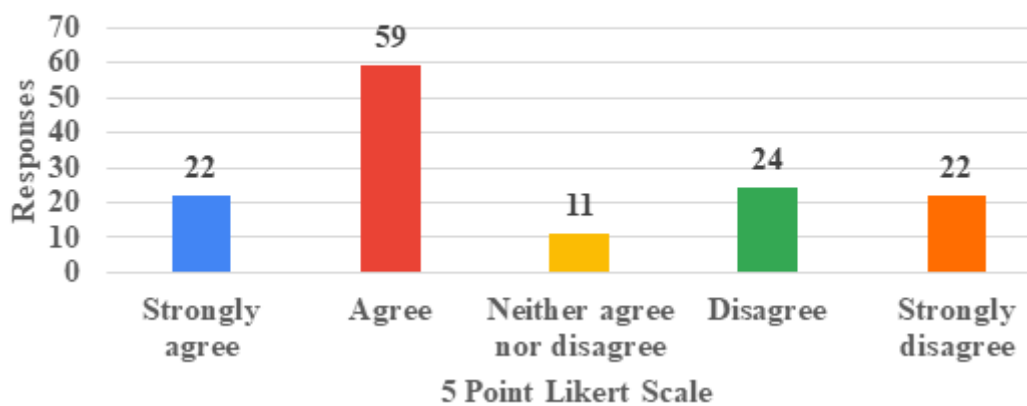


Graph 2 Impact of Covid-19 lockdown on education in tribal area

As per the above graph out of the 125 responses, 76 respondents said that they or their children got the online or offline education during the lockdown pandemic and 80 respondents recorded their response as there was no online or offline learning mode available for the students during the lockdown period and it constitutes the 63.49 per cent, remaining 5 respondent given their response as neither agree nor disagree.

The third question was asked about the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), to know the effective implementation of the scheme in the tribal area. This scheme was introduced by the central government during the lockdown period in March 2020 and implemented through Public Distribution System from April 2020 to provide the free 5kg wheat or rice per person and 1 kg dal per family per month holding ration card.

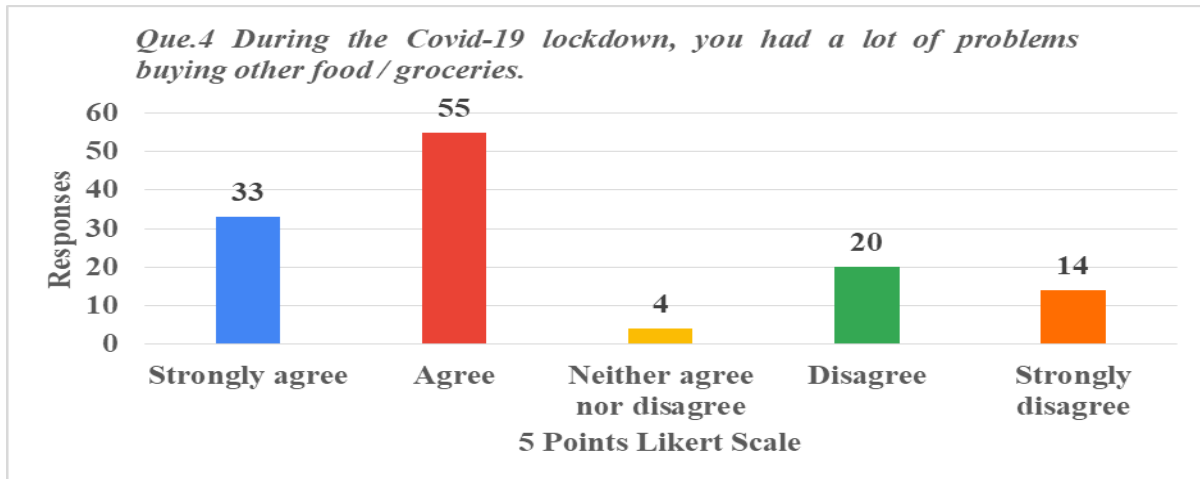
*Que.3 During the Covid-19 lockdown, you received rations from the government at the right time and in the right amount.*



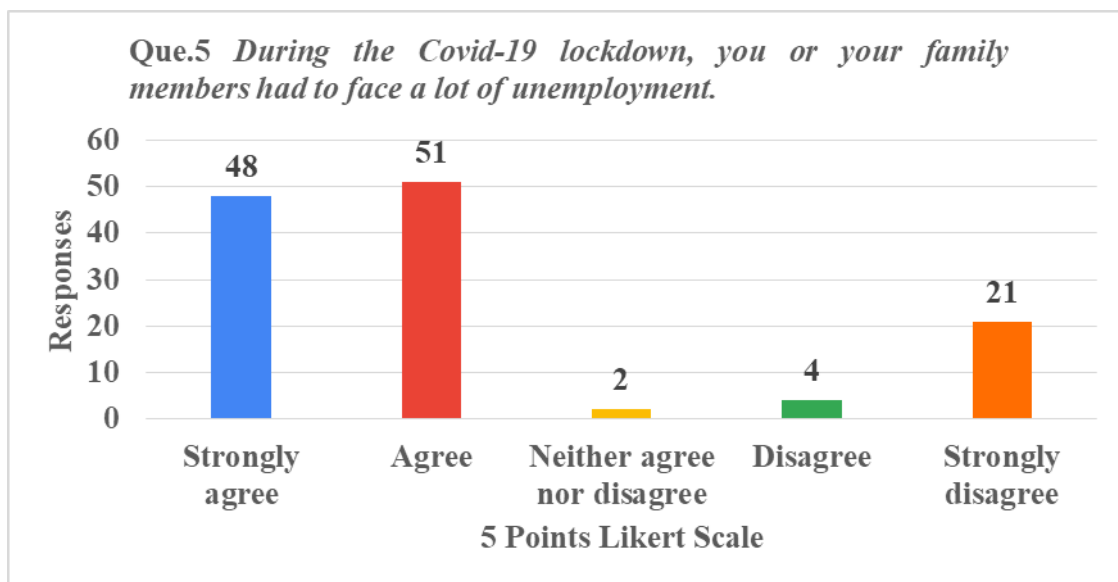
Graph 3 Implementation of Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana in tribal area

In the above-mentioned graph of a total of 126 respondents responded to the question, out of which 81 respondents said that during the lockdown period they have got the benefit of the PMGKAY on time and in the right amount which constitutes 64.28 per cent. The respondents who have responded as disagree and strongly disagree is about 46 responses from the total samples, which is 36.50 per cent. The remaining 11 respondents responded as neither agree nor disagree which is 8.73 per cent of the total respondents.

The fourth question was asked, to know the difficulties faced by the tribal communities during the lockdown period to purchase the groceries. Because in the tribal area the groceries stores are not available at the local level and even the lack of private or public transportation facilities during the lockdown period.



Graph 4 Problem faced by tribal communities to purchase the groceries during lockdown. The above graph showing the responses recorded the question related to the tribal communities faced a lot of problems to purchase the groceries during the lockdown period. Out of the total 126 responses 33 and 55 respondents responded as strongly agree and agree respectively which is the 26.19 and 43.65 per cent respectively, 20 and 14 respondents responded as disagree and strongly disagree, it is the 15.87 and 11.11 per cent respectively, 4 remaining responses responded as neither agree nor disagree which is the 3.17 per cent. Question number five was asked to the respondent to know the problem of unemployment faced by the tribal communities during the covid-19 pandemic lockdown. Most of the tribal people are daily wages worker but because of the lockdown, they were badly affected to get employment.

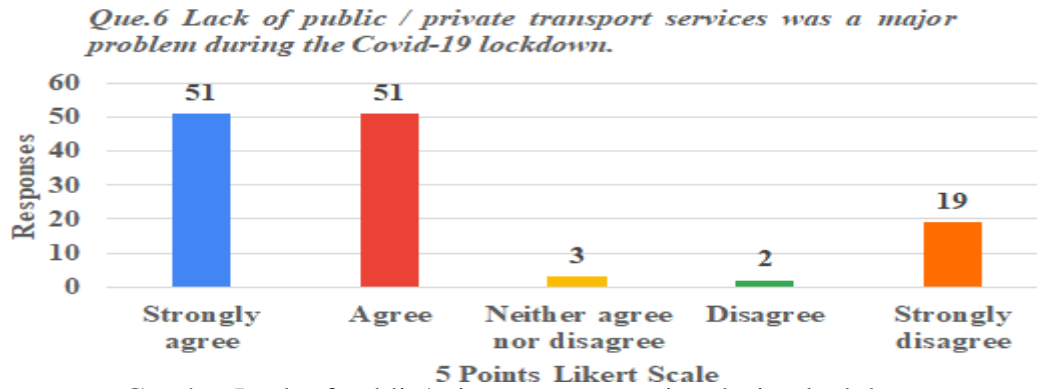


Graph 5 During Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown problem of Unemployment

For this question total, 126 respondents responded out of which 48 and 51 as strongly agree and agree it constitutes 38.09 and 40.47 respectively, respondents 4 and 21 responded that disagree and strongly disagree which is the 3.17 and 16.67 per cent respectively. The

remaining 2 respondents responded as neither agree nor disagree, it is only 1.58 per cent of the total responses recorded for the study.

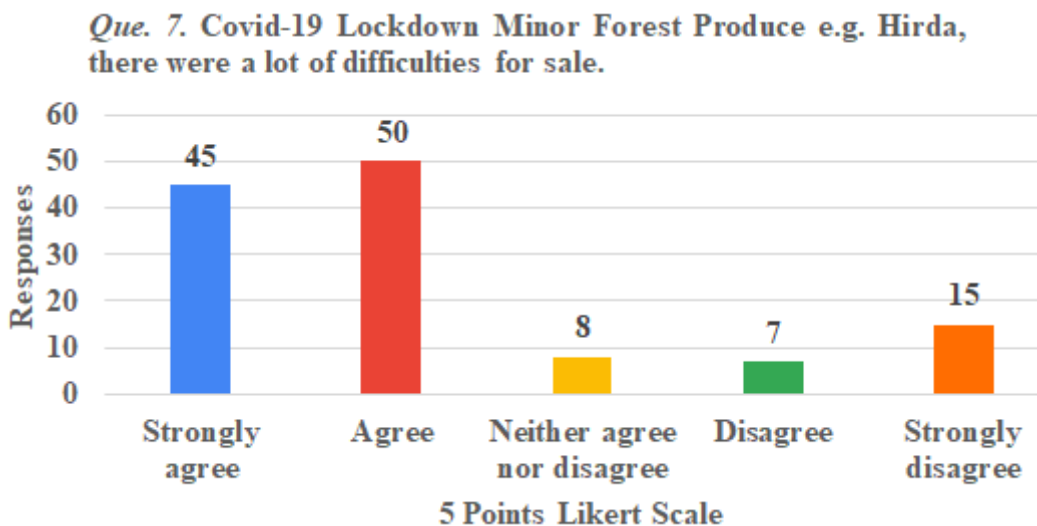
Question number six was asked to the respondent about the lack of the public/private transport service during the lockdown period was the major problem. Because the in the tribal area very rare people have their owned vehicles and because of that in an emergency the tribal people faced the problem of lack of the public and private transportation services.



Graph 6 Lack of public/private transportation during lockdown

The above graph showing the responses recorded to the question about the problem of the transportation services during the lockdown period. Out of the total 126 responses 51 respondents each responded as strongly agree and agree with the statement, which is 79.36 per cent, it was the major problem of transportation services during the lockdown period. Respondents 2 and 19 responded as disagree and strongly disagree with this statement, it constitutes 1.58 and 15.07 per cent respectively. The remaining 3 responses noted that they neither agree nor disagree with the statement.

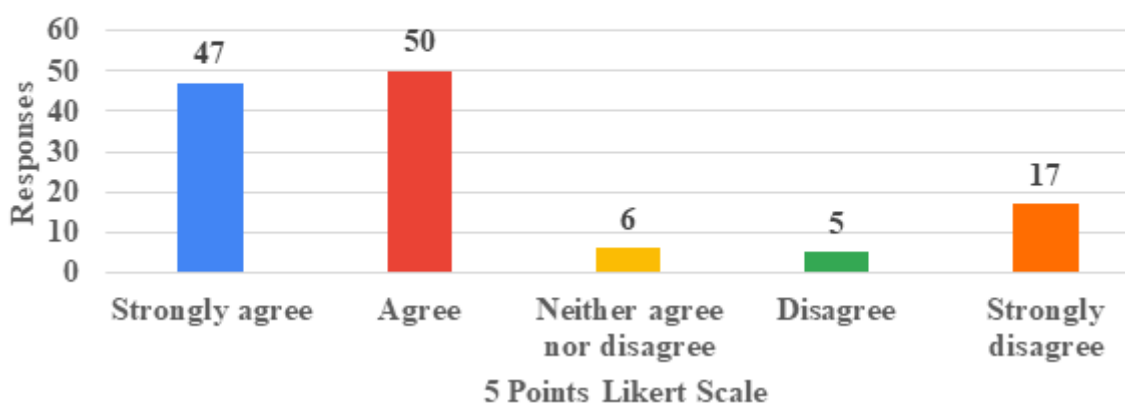
Question number seven was asked to the respondent about the difficulties to sell their Minor Forest Produce during the lockdown period. As per the Ministry of the Tribal Affairs, almost 100 million forest dwellers including the tribal people totally depend upon the Minor Forest Product for their food, shelter, medicines and income.



Graph 7 Difficulties to Sell the Minor Forest Product during the lockdown period

For this question total of 125 responses were recorded, out of which 45 and 50 respondents said as strongly agree and agree which is 36 and 40 per cent respectively, there were difficulties to sale their minor forest products. Respondents 7 and 15 responded as disagree and strongly disagree which constitute 5.6 and 12 per cent respectively. The remaining 8 responses were recorded as neither agree nor disagree, it is 6.4 per cent of the total responses. The eight number question was related to the impact of when the TRIFED did not purchase minor forest products from the tribal communities. The maximum tribal communities' income source is the minor forest products, but the TRIFED did not purchase such products from the tribal because of that the other traders exploited the tribal people and were not given the fair price for their products.

*Que. 8 Tribals did not get a fair price this year as the Society (TRIFED) did not purchase Hirda or other forest products.*

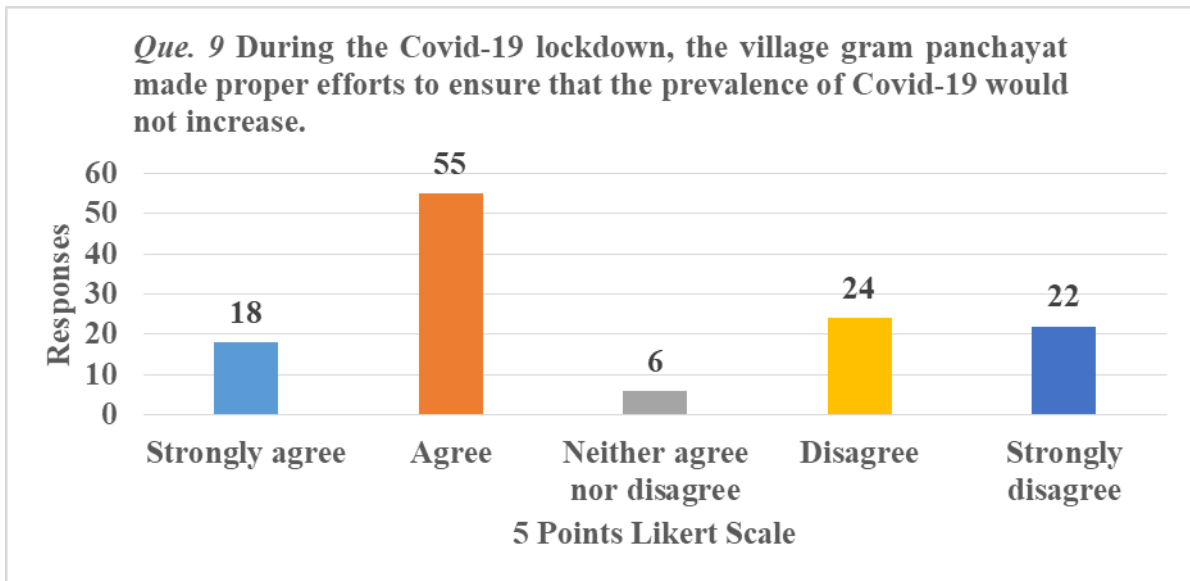


Graph 8 Tribals did not get a fair price as the TRIFED did not purchase minor forest products.

As the above-mentioned graph of the total 125 respondents responses in the five points Likert scale, 45 and 50 respondents responded as strongly agree and agree to the Tribals did not get the fair price for the minor forest products because TRIFED has not purchased the MFP, It constitutes the 37.6 and 40 per cent respectively. Responses 5 and 17 were recorded as disagree and strongly agree which is 4 and 13.6 per cent respectively to the above-mentioned question. Remaining 6 respondents said that neither agree nor disagree, it is 4.8 per cent of the total respondent.

The ninth question was about to know the role played by the local governance during the covid-19 pandemic lockdown period. Because the literacy in the tribal communities are very less and due to that they are not aware of such type of pandemic. Even there was a lot of false news spreading the tribal area and the people trust on the superstition.

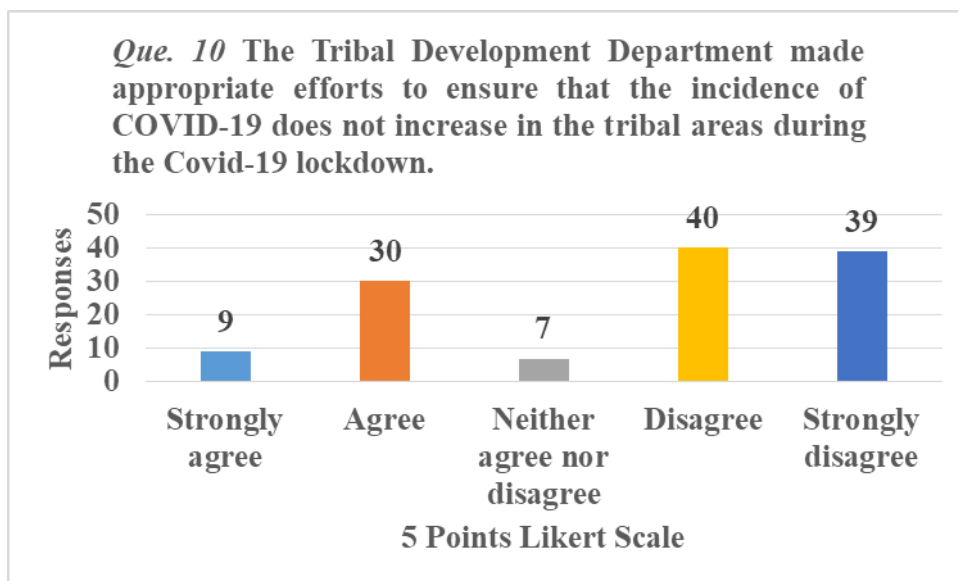




Graph 9 During the Lockdown Period Grampanchayat made proper efforts to control the spread of the Covid-19 virus

As above shown graph total of 125 respondents recorded their responses as in the five points Likert scale for this question. Respondents 18 and 55 recorded their responses as strongly agree and agree it constitutes 14.4 and 44 per cent of the total responses. Respondents 24 and 22 responded as disagree and strongly disagree with the above-mentioned question, which is 19.20 and 17.60 per cent respectively. The remaining 6 respondents responded as neither agree nor disagree, which is 4.80 per cent of the total responses.

The tenth question was asked in the questionnaire about the efforts made by the Tribal Development Department during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown period in the tribal area. In the county, there is a separate Ministry of Tribal Affairs at the Central level as well as State level. In Maharashtra state, the Tribal Development Department works under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for the overall development of the tribal communities.



Graph 10 Tribal Development Department Made appropriate efforts during the lockdown to stop the spread of Covid-19 in the Tribal area

The Last question of the questionnaire was responded by the 125 respondents. Out of which only 9 and 30 respondents responded as strongly agree and agree which is 7.20 and 24 per cent respectively. Out of total responses 40 and 39 responses were recorded as disagree and strongly disagree to the above-said question, which is 32 and 31.20 per cent respectively. The remaining 7 responses were recorded as neither agree nor disagree it constitute 5.60 per cent of the total responses.

## Conclusion

The problems of the tribal communities are not a new one in our country. But during the lockdown the tribal communities facing a lot of problems which are their daily routines such as lack of basic healthcare facilities, education, employment, collection and selling the minor forest products, and transportation etc.

In this study, the researcher tried to understand the impact of the tribal communities in the Maharashtra state. In this context, the maximum respondents said that during the covid-19 pandemic lockdown period the tribal people not got basic healthcare facilities. It is observed that during the lockdown period most of the tribal people not got healthcare facilities other than Covid-19 diseases. The education system in the tribal areas was very badly affected by the covid-19 pandemic because most of the primary and secondary standards learners from the tribal area are not got online or offline education. Even the residential tribal ashram schools also closed during the covid-19 pandemic and the students of such schools were not able to get online education due to the lack of devices and networks. Another aspect of the study was the implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY). The 64.28 per cent respondent says that the schemes were implemented successfully but it is observed that the schemes were not implemented effectively as introduced by the central government because most of in the tribal area 1 kg dal not distributed under this schemes. During the lockdown period, most of the tribal families faced the problem of unemployment but it is observed and confirmed by some despondence those Grampanchayat (Local Governance) has taken the initiative to implement the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, the people of such village had no problem of the unemployment. Therefore it is suggested that every Grampanchayat should implement these schemes very effectively.

As per the Ministry of the Tribal Affair, most of the tribal people are dependent on the minor forest products for their food, shelter and income. But due to the lockdown period, most of the people faced the problem to collect and sell the minor forest products and even most of the tribal have not got the fair price to sell their collected minor forest products because the TRIFED not purchased such products from the tribal people, because of that traders purchased such products at a lower price. It is suggested that every year TRIFED should purchase each Minor Forest Product from the tribal people.

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