



CENTRE FOR  
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SOCIAL SCIENCES  
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## THE SOCIAL SCIENCE PERSPECTIVE

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# APPROACHING RESEARCH

## When Pandemic Hits Hard: The Field Work Experience



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happiness is very simple: someone to love, something to do, and something to look forward to. Six years ago, I went through this checklist. I have someone to love, I have something to do, but what did I look forward to? What are my dreams? Realised that being an academician for past 12 years, having the Doctorate salutation was always my dream. Thus began my Ph.D. journey towards achieving that coveted degree. As I near its completion here is my journey and the insights I have accumulated along the way.

The very first dilemma that I came across while initiating my Ph.D. journey was “whether I will be able to cope up and continue my research in the field of Public Policy and Administration!!” Since I hold an M.Phil. degree and M.Sc. degree in Economics and also over the past two decades I am teaching Economics only. Here comes Dr. Priyanca Mathur, my Ph.D. guide and mentor, who gave me the confidence through multiple discussion sessions and made me realise that “it’s tempting to ignore what you don’t want to deal with. But ignoring won’t improve things”. So here I am today, almost on the verge of my thesis submission in the field of Public Policy and Administration.

Human migration and migrants have always attracted me as a subject to be studied and researched on. My M.Phil. work was on migrant labourers in Bengaluru and my Ph.D. thesis is also a research on educated women migrants of Bengaluru. To talk about my Ph.D. field work experience, as soon as I joined my

Ph.D. in 2019, I had planned and chalked out what I have to do over the next 4-5 years because I knew that it’s not going to be a cakewalk since I have to balance between my research work, full time job and a full-fledged family with two young kids. But as saying goes “man proposes, and God disposes”- COVID-19 pandemic hit hard in the beginning of 2020 and my all plan of field work was halted for months! That was the first major challenge. During this period of uncertainty, I was trying to progress my review of literature and writing synopsis and preparing for research methodology papers examination. Here I would like to mention that though everything was in standstill mode during pandemic, JAIN (Deemed-to-be University) conducted all the research coursework examinations, synopsis presentation on time, using the facility of newly emerged mode of online platform.

Meanwhile, I was trying to identify and get in touch with my probable respondents over phone calls and had a plan to start field work as soon as first lockdown was withdrawn. Finally, the stringent lock down was ended in May 2020. Although it was still extremely risky to visit different houses, offices etc. with high chance of getting infected from Corona virus, but I had to hit the field for my data collection. However, in the initial couple of months, whom I had identified as probable respondents were just not allowing me to enter their houses or office premises for obvious reason of corona virus risk. Apart from that a large per cent of identified respondents had left Bengaluru and gone back to their hometown as they had the facilities of work from home.

All of which was completely unanticipated! In nutshell, my pace of data collection was extremely slow.

The same situation went on for next 5-6 months and I had stopped my data collection which was quite disheartening as a researcher. Finally, I have revisited the field a fresh in the beginning of 2022 and here also the process was not very smooth as a large section of migrant respondents were still staying at their hometown and not returned to Bengaluru. My entire journey of fieldwork was consisted of identifying the respondents, not able to collect data from a segment of identified ones and again searching for a new set of respondents. This process was extremely time consuming and at time disheartening as well. But once this data collection journey was completed and now when I look back at my journey of visiting field, it gives me a sense of satisfaction that fighting against all odds-mainly COVID-19 pandemic, my journey of Ph.D. will be memorable in its own way. All I can say if a doctorate turns a person into an expert, the journey of Ph.D. is the stage where the expertise begins to be built.