

## **The Paradox of ‘Water Is Life’ in a Water Rationed City During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

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### **Abstract**

In this chapter, we use the concept of everyday practice to highlight the plight of urban residents and what it means/takes to survive the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in a water-insecure city. We use data from four Wards on differentiated locations relative to storage tanks supplying water and different water rationing zones. The data was collected from 2020 to 2021 (2 years). A stratified random sampling technique was used to select a study sample of 303 respondents. Of these, 200 household heads were interviewed at their place of residency, while the remaining 103 respondents gave interviews while waiting to draw water from boreholes dotted around the four residential areas. Our results suggest that the policies for managing the pandemic paid less attention to everyday practices of getting around the more than two-decade-old water challenges in the urban areas. The water challenges in the urban areas further exposed the residents to COVID-19 infection, and the pandemic widened the gendered and spatial inequalities to access to water. We conclude that the search for and concerted efforts to access water to manage and prevent COVID-19 infection were equally associated with high chances of being infected and/or spreading COVID-19. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is not the last water-demanding crisis we will experience. This calls for a paradigm shift in urban water and sanitation access planning to include alternative water sources – groundwater – at the initial stages of residential planning.