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Diasporic leisure during COVID-19 and the theory of moral agency

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Published: 13/04/2021

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

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Citation for published version (APA):

Bhandari, K. (2021). *Diasporic leisure during COVID-19 and the theory of moral agency*. BSA Annual Conference 2021, United Kingdom.

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Event: BSA Annual Conference 2021: Remaking the Future

Event Date: 13/04/2021

Institution: University of the West of Scotland

Presentation Mode: Oral

Title of presentation: Diasporic Leisure during COVID-19 and the Theory of Moral Agency

Preferred stream: Culture, Media, Sport & Food

Keyword 1: diaspora

Keywords 2: Nepal

Keywords 3: leisure

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Abstract Text:

Despite barriers and constraints, the way people participate in leisure activities varies according to cultural groups and over time. COVID-19 has imposed one of the greatest restrictions on peoples' ability to take part in leisure activities and the emerging studies have suggested a change in peoples' leisure preferences due to COVID-19. However, these studies have largely ignored the leisurely choice and practices of diasporic groups. This is unhelpful as scholars have noted that owing to various socio-cultural reasons, the nature of diasporic leisure can be different. For example, there is an argument that the Nepali conception of leisure is subject to a social sanction, which people negotiate through their religious values and obligations. Interestingly, many members of Nepali diasporic groups were actively taking part in social leisure activities despite government-imposed restrictions. This paper applies the theory of moral agency to explain the social leisure activities of Nepali diaspora during the time of the COVID-19 restrictions. The study is based on data collected through the observation of the Nepali communities' participation in leisure in the United Kingdom. The findings suggest that there is a shift in the application of moral agency amongst Nepali diasporic groups and that they rely on moral disengagement in justifying their leisure whilst considering themselves highest in their moral integrity in other diasporic pursuits.