



COVID-19 & Lockdown in Bangladesh: an assessment on socio-economic impact and adaptation challenges

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Abstract:

The people of Bangladesh quote the biggest challenge after the war of independence is Covid-19, which has caused a pivotal crisis to their economy, and health, and has led to a loss of livelihood. This paper aims to assess the socio-economic impact and adaptation challenges faced by Bangladesh due to COVID-19 & Lockdown. This is a qualitative assessment based on empirical or secondary data. Though much research has run on this epidemiologic situation and its severity on economic factors, and health issues at the national and international level, this research focuses on the adaptation of the challenges than the impact caused by COVID-19 & Lockdown in Bangladesh perspective. This research reveals that, though the education sector, agriculture sector, remittance sector, RMG industry, private job sector, and marginalized communities are severely affected, the health and hygiene, as well as social consciousness has developed intensely to a noticeable point. However, an extreme challenge is that to adapt to the changes where job insecurity, the higher price of commodity goods, health loom, and uncertainty of full swing recovery exist is very difficult.

Keywords: Adaptation challenges; COVID-19; lockdown; remittance; socio-economic Impact.

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1. Introduction

The global economy has noticed an unprecedented crisis in the health and economic field has been caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, with Bangladesh being no exception, (Kitagawa et al., 2020; Hasan et al., 2021). As COVID-19 is a new pandemic, with no vaccine or treatment invented in the previous history, the governments worldwide have implemented large-scale confinement tactics such as lockdown, limiting economic activities to the bare minimum, The Lancet (2021). These activities, along with social distancing and economic closure measures, have flowed to a massive economic throw-off. Economic activity gradually resumes after the lockdown was lifted (Alahdal et al., 2020; Haque et al., 2020), though it is unclear whether a full-swing recovery will be feasible (Charumilind et al., 2021). This pandemic has had a disproportionately negative effect on Bangladesh, especially its marginalized communities. Healthcare and social life have been badly affected and thousands of people are being lost tragically. The total confirmed case is 1.58M and the death case is 28,047 in Bangladesh by the last of December 2021 (coronavirus.jhu.edu, 2021).

Since the pandemic wave, the Bangladesh Government of failed to utilize the net packages for the deployment of social safety effectively due to a lack of enough preparedness and inadequate capability (Rahman et al., 2020; Anwar et al., 2020). After that, the Government of Bangladesh introduces many projects, provisions, and social consciousness programs (Government, 2020). People are also more conscious now a day but some the time we have seen they broke out the pandemic restriction deployed by the government. It's due to their financial and socio-economic bad situation rather than their consciousness (Gurtner et al., 2010; Fahim et al., 2021).

However, it has become evident that the COVID-19 situation is so terrible that, despite the government's initial efforts, much more must be done to supplement it. The present emergency social security measures cost 0.16 % in total, which is unlikely to be adequate to revive the economy or even provide families with sufficient assistance to weather the crisis.

1.1. Purpose of study

For adapting to the arisen challenges, many countries have deployed preventive tectrices, e.g., international travel bans, limiting activities at an essential level, remote office activities, lockdown, wearing musk mandatorily, and social distancing as well. As Bangladesh is a lower-middle-income country and one of the most densely populated countries, is struggling to fight to keep stable the country's COVID situation. In this research, we momentarily illuminate the present scenario of COVID-19 in Bangladesh and simultaneously provide some directions on how the country can adapt to the challenges risen by this pandemic. This paper aims to assess the socio-economic impact and adaptation challenges faced by Bangladesh due to COVID-19 & Lockdown.

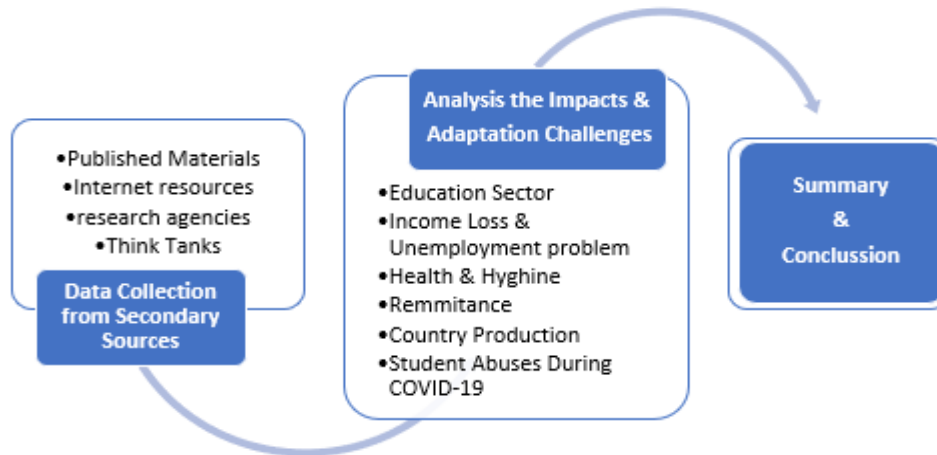
2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Data collection

The secondary data sources were used for doing the analysis. The graphical scenario analysis and descriptive analysis were used to examine the economic effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and adaptation challenges in Bangladesh. Therefore, to meet the purpose of this study, data from various Internet resources and published materials were used. For better output, research agencies, publications, think tanks, and policy experts' data were used as the sources.

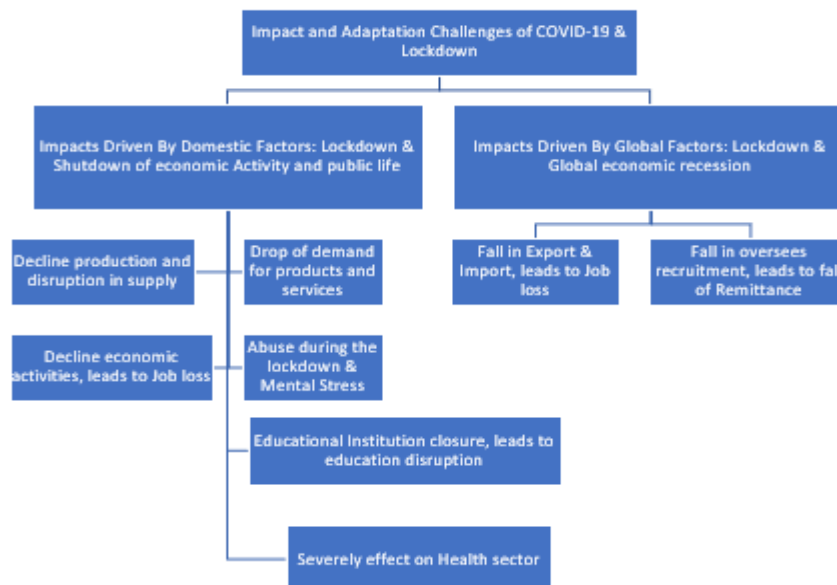
3. Results

Figure 1
Assessment Methodology



3.1. Flowchart of Impacts Investigation

Figure 2
Assessment Flowchart



3.2. Impacts on Education & Adaptation Challenges

In early 2020, the schools, colleges, and universities closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic which has caused the education disruption of 37 million children in Bangladesh (SitAn Report, UNICEF & UNESCO, 2021). They also urged that; governments should reopen the schools as quickly as it is safe to do. Schools were remaining closed throughout the entire period of the pandemic until 12 September In Bangladesh, when they reopened again. Such continuous school closures are startling associated consequences and

comprised mental distress; learning loss; heightening the risk of disappearing of structured education; timid child marriage; and increased child labor intensively. In the meantime, most of these dire consequences are affected the countless students, and others may well continue to be faced in the future years are coming. For these reasons, the education sector is passing a most vulnerable situation. The worst sufferers of the pandemic are the children from the poorer sections of the society as many of these are dropped out of school and have been forced into child labor (Tribune, 2021a).

As students were back in classrooms after the longest closure forced via Covid-19, where many of them missed their peers. Officials feared that due to early marriage and poverty assumed at least 50,000 children may have dropped out in Kurigram during Covid-19 (Tribune, 2021a). Though the Education Minister of Bangladesh, Dr. Dipu Moni claimed, that it is not being ascertained yet, how many students dropped out during the closure of schools forced via Covid-19. Shamsul Alam, the District Secondary Education Officer, said: "On Sunday, we visited five schools in Kurigram Sadar. Approximately 13% of pupils have dropped out of these schools as a result of the shutdown. Child marriage claimed the lives of 63 girls, which may in total around 50,000 as we assumed. If schools reopen after the Covid-19 closure ends on August 31, experts predict that more than 45 percent of secondary-level pupils would not return (Tribune, 2021b).

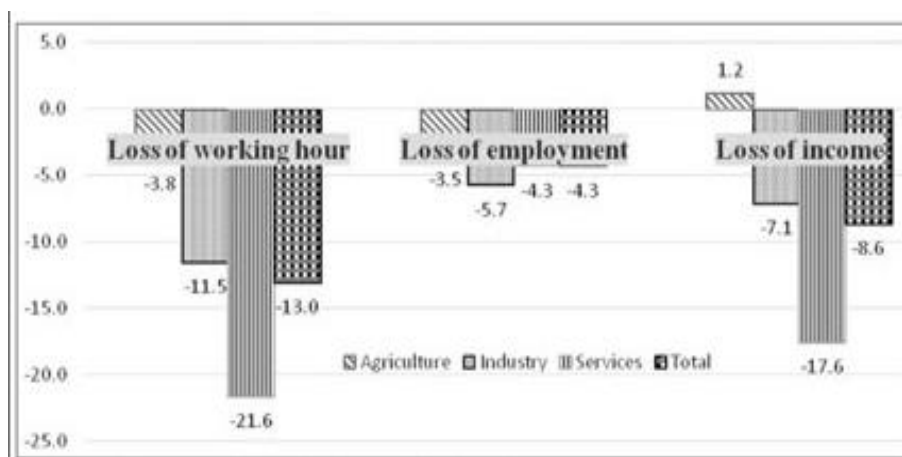
One of the big challenges faced by MoE is ensuring the learning is continued, so that the students didn't drop further behind. The Ministries should respond to meet the needs of learners in a diverse range that may include launching distant learning, significant support of materials required to be adapted, consultation, etc. These responses had to reckon with various levels of infrastructures, support, and resources.

3.3. Impacts & Challenges on employment

The impact of the pandemic is being transferred to the labor market in various ways that create so many challenges for new employment and the same for those, who dropped out of their jobs. The COVID-19 lockdown in the country has shown its immediate consequences, indirectly on the economy via a drop in demand for products and services, and the effects of the global economic crisis.

Figure 3

Estimation of Working hours, employment, and labor income lost in 2020



Source: Bangladesh Bank, Policy Note: PN2104, 2020

Many sectors and groups in the labor market face a diverse range of intensity in every economic crisis, and the severity of the impact varies similarly. After the Covid-19 shocks in 2020, labor markets worldwide were disrupted on a massive scale in many economies in the world. In April 2020, Bangladesh imposed nationwide restrictions, also no exception for Bangladesh's economy; which led to the shutdown of industries and factories, the suspension of transportation, the closing of offices, and the prohibition of meetings, all of which impacted domestic labor markets. The above chart depicts the reduction in employment, working hours, and worker income as a result of imposed limitations. According to the

graph, Bangladesh would lose 13% of its working hours by 2020. Working hours wasted in lower-middle-income nations, such as Bangladesh, were expected to be 12.5% in the second quarter of 2020 by the International Labor Organization (ILO). Furthermore, the ILO calculated and discovered that the working hours lost in Bangladesh as a result of the Covid-19 problem will be 12.2% in 2020, (Al Mamun et al., 2021).

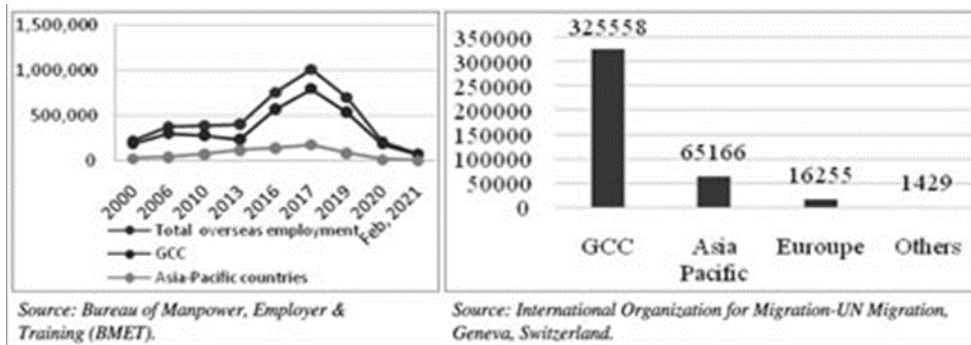
3.4. Impacts on Remittance & Challenges for Adaptation

Between April 1 and December 31, 2020, a total of 408,408 Bangladeshi workers have returned, through Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, as reported by the Probashi Kollyan Desk (PKD), 2021. COVID-19 and the lockdown harshly shocked overseas employment in Bangladesh, where overseas workers play a key role in Bangladesh's economy. The above chart shows an upward trend of overseas employment in GCC countries and Asia-Pacific territory till 2017 but drastically fall during 2019-2021, may to the pandemic.

The number of returning workers is segmented by gender and country of return in the below-mentioned table & graph. Where 88.7% have their passport and 11.3% have a persuasive out-pass, with male returns accounting for 87.8% and female returnees for 12.2%.

Figure 4

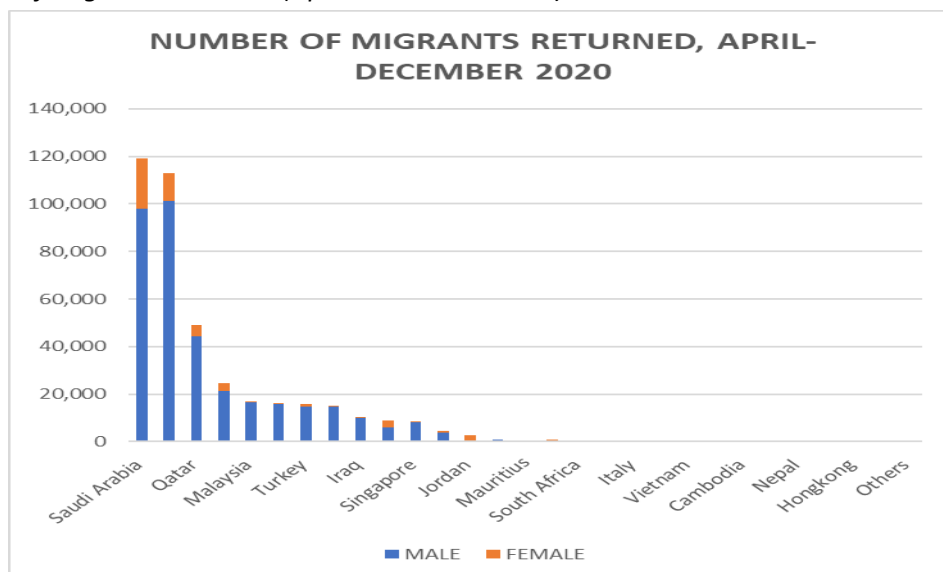
Employment in Overseas Markets & Number of Bangladeshi Migrants Returned due to Covid-19 (April - December 2020)



Source: Bangladesh Bank, Policy Note: PN2104, 2020

Figure 5

Number of Migrants Returned (April - December 2020)



Source: Probashi Kollyan Desk (PKD), 2021

Table 1

Number of migrants returned, April-December 2020

| Country | Male | Female | Total Returnees |
|----------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Saudi Arabia | 97,942 | 21,230 | 119,172 |
| UAE | 101,364 | 11,602 | 112,966 |
| Qatar | 44,426 | 4,826 | 49,252 |
| Oman | 21,248 | 3,209 | 24,457 |
| Malaysia | 16,436 | 670 | 17,106 |
| Maldives | 15,772 | 205 | 15,977 |
| Turkey | 14,941 | 1,029 | 15,970 |
| Kuwait | 14,609 | 618 | 15,227 |
| Iraq | 10,109 | 60 | 10,169 |
| Lebanon | 5,852 | 2,910 | 8,762 |
| Singapore | 8,268 | 156 | 8,424 |
| Bahrain | 3,931 | 553 | 4,484 |
| Jordan | 453 | 2,259 | 2,712 |
| Libya | 898 | | 898 |
| Mauritius | 190 | 512 | 702 |
| Sri Lanka | 621 | 2 | 623 |
| South Africa | 263 | 22 | 285 |
| South Korea | 217 | 3 | 220 |
| Italy | 151 | | 151 |
| United Kingdom | 113 | 21 | 134 |
| Vietnam | 121 | | 121 |
| Thailand | 97 | 16 | 113 |
| Cambodia | 106 | | 106 |
| Russia | 100 | | 100 |
| Nepal | 40 | 15 | 55 |
| Myanmar | 39 | | 39 |
| Hong Kong | 23 | 6 | 29 |
| Japan | 8 | | 8 |
| Others | 146 | | 146 |
| Total | 358,484 | 49,924 | 408,408 |

Source: Probashi Kollyan Desk (PKD), 2021

In 2020, a total of 408,408 remittance workers have returned mostly from Asia-Pacific regions and GCC. Though the remittance inflow has increased by 27.5 % in 2020 almost no employment migration in overseas countries. In the meantime, a huge number of overseas workers returned. As the Bangladesh government and Bangladesh Bank have taken some proactive measures it results in an upward inflow of remittances. To make a convenient environment for workers the policymakers should take further initiatives.

3.5. Impacts & challenges arisen on Country Production & Economy

The pandemic badly affects the Bangladesh economy resulting in a drastic fall in national production. According to Nath et al., 2020, the top three economic segments of Bangladesh are Agriculture, Industry, and Service, which contribute 18%, 29%, and 53% to our country's GDP respectively that are severely infected by the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 impacted agriculture & the Agri-food chain in Bangladesh harshly . This impact has been noticed as a result of collapsing the farm's production, disruption of the value chain and downward trend of market levels has revealed the risks, inequalities, and vulnerabilities of underlying procedures . Lockdown and travel restrictions functionalized the total agricultural supply

chain which has become a complex web for producers, and marketers, to produce, process, storage, market, and transport to consumers as well as decrease the food availability, increase the price, food loss, and waste accordingly (Roy, 2020).

Of all of the industries, the RMG industry is playing a very vital role in Bangladesh's economy. Its contribution to GDP is 11.2%.

Table 1
Export Growth Chart to Different Markets

| Market | % of Total Export | Exports Growth %, 2018-19 | Export Growth July-January, 2019-20 |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| EU | 61.91 | 7.66 | -6.18 |
| USA | 17.97 | 14.66 | -3.41 |
| Canada | 3.45 | 22.44 | -12.18 |
| Non-traditional | 16.66 | 21.77 | -5.13 |
| Overall | | 16.6325 | -6.725 |

Source: BGMEA stats and personal research

4. Discussion

The largest industrial segment has composed of more than 4,600 RMG factories, leading the 4.1 million workers in percentage 36% of manufacturing employment (Maeen, 2020). Women employees are the backbone of this industry they are industrious, dedicated, and low-cost as well. To inhibit the spread of coronavirus, though the government announced national holidays until April 25, 2020, it has extended more and more. That has caused the cessation of all commercial and industrial activity, except for emergency services. Because their retail outlets in Asia, Europe, North America, and elsewhere were substantially closed, many international buyers have postponed their confirmed purchase orders worth \$3.16 billion. These suspended shipments badly affect the involved 1,142 factories and 2.26 million workers .

The contribution of the service sector to the country's GDP is almost 55%, has mostly suffered from the covid-19 pandemic and caused, 11.22 lakh jobs lose the hardest-hit for the service sector. The income of employees involved in this sector has declined by 17.6% and 21.6% lost in working hours. According to Dr mustafizur Rahman, a fellow at cpd (Centre for Policy Dialogue), transport, hotels, motels, tourism, restaurants, construction, and housing are the major sub-sectors of the service sector. All these sectors have been infected directly by the covid situation and lockdown. Tourism and transportation are stock-still at a recession level. It would be very difficult for the service sector to recover until covid diminished as economists said. Though the central bank claimed, that agriculture and industry losses in 2020 were comparatively less than the services sector, statistic shows that 7.81 lakh in the agriculture sector and 6.95 lakh in the industrial sector the have lost their job and 3.8% in the agriculture sector and 7.1% in the industrial sector has decreased respectively (Bin Liaquat, 2021). In this context, after losing jobs many peoples are leaving the cities and back to the villages. Even many of them started agriculture or very root level works (Abir et al., 2021).

Naturally, the anxiety and fear cause stress if it's about the pandemic then it strongly impacted psychological health by overwhelming the mental distress (Elhessewi et al., 2021; Shahriar et al., 2021) and causes a wide variety of psychological illnesses, such as anxiety, panic disorder, and depression (Oppenauer et al., 2021). A study by Al Mamun et al., (2021) claimed that the prevalence rates of anxiety, stress and depression, as mild to severe symptoms ranged from 26.6% to 96.82%, 28.5% to 70.1%, and 46.92% to 82.4%, respectively. Which is concerned with the problems of mental health related to the COVID-19 pandemic, fear of infection, losing a job, lack of mental support, agitation, and financial

problems. Many people in Bangladesh are facing depression and mental health threats due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Das et al., 2021).

5. Conclusions

In summary, at present time It's very important at this time to think about how we can restructure the health sector, agriculture, industries, and the economy that has been adversely affected by this pandemic. The current situation emerges an emergency of a new action plan the reorganize the drivers of the economy following the new world. Simultaneously, it is time to reform our preparedness to beat any health crisis that may appear in further future, and so far, as a lower-middle-income country, Bangladesh has many limitations for taking actions like lockdown, so it must ensure health consciousness and constant supply of PPE, mask and the materials required for healthcare workers. Additionally, overcoming this crisis is a great challenge that may only be possible by supportive, empathic, and coordinative collaborative efforts.

Finally, COVID-19 taught us a great lesson that it is too difficult or even impossible for Bangladesh to address the crisis via a deteriorated healthcare system, in our upcoming days. History taught us; that every crisis gives us a chance to think differently. This crisis has bound us to reconsider our philosophy for economic development and furthered our action plans for the future. Moving away from the narrow thinking of growth-centric and multi-dimensional development strategy should be the emphasis of that new thinking. If our research will have been gone through by policymakers, the individuals involved in planning and implementation of development will be appropriate for taking the policies that undoubtedly work in the post-COVID era for socioeconomic development.

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