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# EVALUATION OF THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 IN BANGLADESH: AN ANALYSIS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

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**Abstract:** *The COVID-19 pandemic, since its emergence in late 2019, has exerted profound socioeconomic repercussions globally. This study explores the multifaceted socioeconomic impact of the pandemic on Bangladesh, with a specific focus on gender disparities. This study examines the gender-specific effects of COVID-19 on the economic well-being, healthcare access, and social roles of individuals in Bangladesh, using data from secondary sources. The findings of this study indicate that COVID-19 has exacerbated preexisting gender disparities in Bangladesh. Loss of income and employment opportunities caused disproportionate economic hardships for women, particularly those in low-income households. The pandemic disrupted women's access to healthcare services, raising concerns regarding their reproductive health. The study underscores how traditional gender roles were reinforced during the pandemic, with women bearing the brunt of increased caregiving responsibilities. It resulted in decreased participation of women in the formal labor force, potentially hindering their long-term economic empowerment. Policy recommendations are put forth to address these disparities, emphasizing the need for gender-responsive measures in pandemic recovery strategies. These include targeted economic relief programs, improved healthcare access, and initiatives to promote gender-equitable social norms. The research highlights the urgency of integrating a gender perspective into public health and economic policy to build a more resilient and inclusive society post-pandemic.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Pandemic, Economy and Society, Gender, Bangladesh

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact that COVID-19 has on Bangladesh's economic sector and society from the gender perspective point of view, including current references and examples from Bangladesh. The pandemic caused by COVID-19 is not just a public health crisis; it is also having profound significant consequences on the

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fundamental aspects of society and economy (Bonea and Rosca, 2022; Cimpoeu et al., 2023). Even though the impacts of the pandemic will vary from country to country, it is quite likely that poverty and inequality will increase all over the world. As a result, it will be even more extremely crucial to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UNDP, 2020). The Novel Corona Virus Disease, also known as COVID-19, was detected for the first time in Wuhan Province on December 31, 2019, which is located in China. After several time elapsed, on March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization announced that the corona virus had reached "pandemic" dimension. The virus has rapidly spread around the world, reaching 185 countries, including both underdeveloped and developed nations. Everything around people's lives all across the world has been disrupted as a result of the pandemic. It has had a significant impact on the family lives of people, as well as the economy, society, and other aspects of life. The United Nations says that the world hasn't changed this much in the last 75 years. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a significant amount of damage to the economy around the world. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) considered situation a "new recession" and evaluated by comparing it with the European financial crisis during 2009. Along with damaging the global economy, the pandemic has negatively affected development, security, health care, food, and political sectors. Because to the widespread transmission of the COVID-19 epidemic, the whole planet is currently going through the most challenging time of the history. Its effects on society and the economy are so terrible that the strongest economies in the world are still fighting to get over it. Even after a lot of effort, the US, the UK, and most of the countries of Europe are still trying to deal with this pandemic. From this point of view, Bangladesh is not an exception; rather, it is comparable to other countries. The epidemic has severely affected poor countries economically, socially, and politically. Poor countries are likely to lose the battle against Corona due to a lack of supply of necessary equipment for Corona treatment and a lack of test kits. A research paper published by Travel Bank has shown that in developing Asian countries, the production of the domestic trade sector has decreased drastically. The economy suffered a loss ranged from \$77 billion to \$347 billion as a consequence of the epidemic, which approximately to 0.1% to 0.4% of the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP). A total of \$22 billion have been lost throughout Asia as a result of the pandemic (ADB, 2020). Projections indicate that major economic and social changes will take place worldwide in the future due to this pandemic.

## **2. Objectives and Methodology**

The main purpose of this research paper is to provide a concise overview, in as few words as possible, of how the COVID-19 epidemic has had an effect on the economy of Bangladesh., affected the population and social surroundings of Bangladesh, and analyzed this transformation from a gender perspective. This article contains two sections. The initial section analyzes the effects of COVID-19 on the Bangladesh's economy, the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) industry, and remittances. The second section analyzes, from a gender perspective, how the pandemic has affected women in the labor market as well as at home.

This article was mostly written by compiling information and data from secondary sources. This article was prepared after considering the findings and points of view presented in a variety of other publications, including newspapers, social and mass media, research papers, essays, novels, and accounts of earlier epidemics. All the data has been verified multiple times and collected. After analyzing the data, the results and conclusions are written. The article analyzes the socio-economic changes of the corona virus from a gender perspective and recommends the necessary next steps.

### **3. Economic Impact of Covid-19**

Bangladesh is one of the countries that has a massive population and is among the most populous nations in the world. Because of the spread of COVID-19, Bangladesh is currently dealing with a significant obstacle. Bangladesh has experienced a crisis in health, economics, society, religion, and politics as a result of the Corona virus pandemic. In reality, COVID-19 has made massive impact to the total impact in the country's economy. There are three primary ways in which COVID-19 has had an impact on the economy of Bangladesh. Initially, Bangladesh announced a lockdown on March 26, 2020, which was later rescinded. On April 5, 2021, the country went into lockdown for the second time. As a result of the lockdown, the country's domestic productions as well as its international trade have suffered. The second factor is a decrease in exports to the ready-made garment sector (RMG), and the third factor is a decrease in remittances sent by Bangladeshis working outside of the country (IMF, 2020).

Agriculture, industry, and the service sector make up 18%, 29%, and 53%, respectively, of Bangladesh's gross domestic product. The pandemic has had an adverse effect on the economic condition of Bangladesh (Begum et al., 2020). Because of the inability to sell milk during the lock-down, dairy producers have requested urgent government aid. Around 12 to 15 million liters of milk were halted throughout the country, resulting in marginal dairy farmers losing Tk 5 million each day (Begum et al., 2020). The lock-down has lowered demand for chicken and eggs, threatening the viability of Bangladesh's poultry industry. The Bangladesh Poultry Industries Central Council (BPICC) estimates that the losses in the poultry business fluctuated between 1.150 billion and 1.160 billion Bangladeshi Taka (Begum et al., 2020).

In May 2020, the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) conducted a study which revealed that around 16.4 million individuals have dropped below the poverty level as a result of COVID-19. About half of these individuals had a decreased income, and more than twenty percent had a monthly income below Tk 15,000. 57% of respondents to the BIDS survey reported not receiving a salary throughout the pandemic, 32% witnessed a decline in earnings, and just 11% maintained a constant income (Jamal, 2020).

The Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) have jointly done a research and found that the rural population's daily income decreased by 79% between February and April of 2020. The percentage is 82% among the urban poor. The food budget of the urban poor has declined by 47%, and among the rural poor, this rate is 32%. A report published by

BRAC showed that about 36% of the city's residents had deteriorated economic conditions, and 3% did not receive any salary. In another study done by BRAC, found that 95% of household incomes have gone down and 62% of salaried workers have been fired (Miah et al., 2020).

A survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in September 2020 found that, due to the coronavirus pandemic, the income of each family in the country has decreased by an average of 4 thousand takas only. As incomes dropped during the pandemic, food intake has dropped by 52% of households (IBS, 2020). The impact of Corona has hit the lower working class people deeply as the upper class of society has stopped hiring maids or maids to maintain social distance. According to a report published by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), more than 50 million people are employed in the informal sector, which is about 85.1% of the total workforce. About 80% of day laborers have lost their jobs and become unemployed due to the epidemic (Jamal, 2020).

Some recent data bears relatively positive results. According to the World Bank (2021) report, the agriculture industry and services sector contributed 12.7%, 29.6%, and 52.8% to GDP in 2020, respectively, and these sectors provide employment to 38%, 22%, and 41% of the total workforce (lloydsbanktrade, 2021). The strategies adopted by Bangladesh to minimize the negative impact on its economy after the lockdown have worked positively. According to a report published in *The Financial Express* in February 2021, Bangladesh and Vietnam will be the fastest growing economies in the world among the six frontier markets in Asia (Mujeri, 2021). The Washington-based International Institute of Finance (IIF) noted that Bangladesh provided more than Tk 1.0 trillion in stimulus to boost the domestic economy (Mujeri, 2021). According to this report, this has been positive for Bangladesh as the risk of a debt crisis is low.

China is providing short-term financial and technical assistance to a wide variety of the flagship development projects in Bangladesh. These projects include the Padma Bridge, the Padma Rail Link, the Karnaphuli Road Tunnel, and the Greater Dhaka Sustainable Urban Transport Project. The epidemic has caused significant delays and setbacks for many of these initiatives. However, Bangladesh succeeded in completing the 6.15 km long Padma multi-purpose bridge on June 25, 2022 (Daily Star, 2022).

## **Impact of Covid-19 on the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) Sector**

In Bangladesh, the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector is capable of generating 80 percent of the country's total exports. Each year, Bangladesh's garment sector makes up for the export of over \$32 billion worth of clothing. Following China as the world's highest exporter of clothes, Bangladesh is the second largest exporter in the world. There are over 4,000 factories in Bangladesh, which together employ 4 million people; the vast majority of these workers are women (Thomasson and Paul, 2018).

The crisis caused by the corona virus has had a significant impact on Bangladesh's garment sector, which saw a reduction of 89 percent in exports in the first week of April. A total of \$2.3 billion worth of orders placed in the garment industry were canceled during the first half of the month of April 2020. Major UK companies cancelled orders

worth 25 billion dollars in clothing (Nazir, 2020). In addition to Primark, most UK clothing retailers, including Fraser Group, Walmart-owned Asda, Debenhams, New Look, and Philip Day's Picks, have cancelled their clothing orders from Bangladeshi suppliers. Many garment workers lost their jobs due to the cancellation of garment orders. Many garment factories fired their workers without any prior warning. More than one million garment workers in Bangladesh have lost their employment as a result of order cancellations, as stated in a study that was published by the Global Workers' Rights and Workers' Rights Consortium (WRC) at Penn State University. The government of Bangladesh announced a \$588 million development package. The country's trade minister was cited as claiming that orders totaling more than \$2.6 billion had been canceled in Bangladesh's garment industry, and more cancellations are forthcoming (Begum et al., 2020). The Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) reported that around \$2.67 billion worth of production, or 828 million garment orders, were cancelled. Many factories have closed, affecting the lives of about 1.96 million people (Begum et al., 2020).

According to a survey published by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in October 2020, ready-made garment (RMG) factories closed their doors between March and October and reduced 8% of their manpower. And among the garment workers who lost their jobs, the number of women is 61%. Prior to the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the total percentage of women working in garment manufacturers was 62%. It is now down to 57% (Ahmed, 2021). The Bangladesh government's main strategy for the garment industry was to temporarily shut down garment factories to prevent the spread of the virus. Later, the government decided to open factories in an attempt to protect the garment industry. Businessmen, workers, and factory owners applauded the decision, but human rights activists criticized it. They urged the government to ensure more protection for factory workers. Covid-19 hit the garment industry first with cancelled orders and delayed payments. Government initiatives for this industry include extending wage support loans and stimulus packages; facilitating export development funds and holding foreign exchange in a single pool to pay back-to-back imports; a moratorium on export earnings; and debt classification. The first wave of the corona hit the garment industry hard, but these government programs helped the industry keep going. Garment sector exports decreased by 7.78% in October 2020. Last year, the annual export volume decreased about 16.94% (Huq, 2021). Currently, export prices have fallen and order placements have slowed down. This industry needs to be protected as it is already suffering from the first wave of attacks. Restructuring of this sector will ensure a stable life for millions of workers.

### **Impact of Covid-19 on migrant workers and remittances**

Bangladesh plunged into further uncertainty after the garment industry lost \$6 billion in export earnings (Rashid, 2020). Apart from the garment industry, the second shock to the economy came from the disruption in remittance flows. Many families living in rural areas of Bangladesh dependent on remittances as their primary source of income. It is regarded to be the second highest source of foreign exchange earnings in Bangladesh, behind the garment sector, which provides for around 40 percent of total foreign

exchange earnings. Remittances contribute around 8.8 percent of a country's GDP, making them a significant impact in the nation's overall economy, fiscal health, and ability to reduce levels of poverty (Rashid, 2020). The Refugee and Migrant Movement Research Unit (RAMRU) has named migrant workers as the "Golden Man" for their tremendous contribution to the economy. There is a clear downward trend when comparing data from March 2019 and 2020 provided by Bangladesh Bank. About 11.38% of migrant workers in different countries are losing their job, which is expected to increase in the coming months. The longer the pandemic lasts, the longer the waiting time to go abroad. According to the Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA), about one and a half to two million workers completed the immigration process in the last three months and left from the country (Rashid, 2020).

Due to the COVID crisis, developed countries have created some restrictions in their job markets. As a result, many migrant workers lost their jobs and returned home. According to a report by the World Bank, Bangladesh will have to accept an increasing number of repatriated labor migrants, which may again increase the unemployment rate in the country. According to Bangladesh Bank's data, remittances of \$1.78 billion came into the country in February 2021, which was 9.2% less than the previous month. The flow of remittances decreased from February to April but increased from May onwards. The country's foreign exchange reserves reached \$444.03 billion as of February 25, 2021, with increasing inflows of remittances (Mavis, 2022).

## **4. Gender Significance of Covid-19**

During the corona period, the social and economic crisis of Bangladesh was observed from the perspective of gender, and the current situation is observed to be more complicated. The Corona crisis has a massive impact on the everyday lives of Bangladeshi women and has pushed to a shift in gender roles in the workplace as well as the household. These changes have been brought about by the crisis. Women face an uncertain future as most legal institutions remain closed amid the state of emergency. As the lockdown began, it affected the women of the poor working class, especially pregnant women and children. Pregnant women and children suffer from food and nutrition shortages, which increase maternal and child mortality rates (Suraiya and Saltmarsh, 2020).

### **Women's Participation in the Labor Market**

Women have been disproportionately impacted by the worldwide coronavirus epidemic, with many losing their jobs and others experiencing fatigue trying to care for sick family members and aging parents. Oxfam International states that in 2020, women around the world lost more than 64 million jobs, which is 5% of all the jobs they held. Last year, only 3.9% of jobs for men were lost. Oxfam International says that the loss of jobs caused by the Covid-19 crisis cost women around the world at least \$800 billion. This is more than the GDP of 98 countries put together (Connley, 2021). The lockdown in Bangladesh

has adversely affected the lower working class population. In general, the participation rate of women in the labor market of Bangladesh is low. In 2020, male participation in the labor market was 84%, while female participation was only 36.4% (Mujeri, 2021). Due to the lockdown during the Corona period, the participation rate of women in the labor market has further decreased. Many female workers have lost their jobs due to the cancellation of a large number of garment orders in the ready-made garment sector. According to the World Trade Organization (WTO), women have been affected more than men in the commercial sector by the COVID-19 pandemic. A significant number of women are employed in industries or organizations that are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. Such examples of these include the textiles, clothes, and footwear industries, as well as the telecommunications industry. Women earn less than men, resulting in increasing poverty among women (WTO, 2020).

According to the survey results of UNFPA, UN Women and British Medical Journal, due to the impact of Corona, the employment opportunities of women in the formal sector in Bangladesh have decreased by 81%. For men, this rate is 14%. Even in the informal sector, 24% of women have lost the opportunity to work. About 37% of women are at risk as employment declines in the productive sector, compared to 26% of men. As a whole, 10% of women in countries with low and moderate incomes are at risk from trade marriages in the service industry, whereas only 6% of men (Ahmed, 2021).

In service sectors, such as tourism and the travel service industry, women are more represented than men, and travel restrictions during the corona virus pandemic have cut off their sources of income. School closures and temporary closures of child care facilities have had a significant impact on reducing women's income opportunities. For all these reasons, women have to change their work schedule as well as reduce their working hours. Besides, their household and service work has increased. Due to the low level of financial resources and limited access to government funds, the rate of risk in such businesses has increased. The government of Bangladesh has launched an incentive package of Tk 200 billion for cottage, micro, small, and medium enterprises (CMSMEs), of which only 5% would be dedicated to women. During the period of April through December of 2020, the SME Foundation distributed loans totaling TK 220 million. However, just five out of the total of 282 borrowers were female (Ahmed, 2021).

According to a separate research report that was published by BRAC in October of the previous year, only 1% of female business owners and employees were unaware of the incentive package that the government was offering, and while 44% of them attempted to take loans under the package, the remaining 59% did not do so out of fear of being harassed (Ahmed, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also put rural women entrepreneurs in a major crisis, with 80% of them having no income during the pandemic. Without any income, small business entrepreneurs spend most of their savings in a bid to survive and get caught in the web of debt. If the situation worsens, many of the entrepreneurs may have to go back to their previous housewife roles. This will hamper the economic development of rural women.

## **The Dropout Rate of Girls and increase of Child Marriage**

All educational institutions, including schools and colleges, have been closed since March after the epidemic spread across the country, increasing the dropout rate of girls and child marriage. It is expected that the dropout rate among school-going children will increase and it is likely that more of them will be girls. Due to lack of income and rising poverty rate, many families will not be able to afford the education of girl children which is likely to increase the number of child marriages as a result. According to a UNICEF Bangladesh report, nearly 1 crore girls are at risk of child marriage due to Covid-19 (UNICEF, 2021). This means that Bangladesh faces the danger of losing its previous progress in reducing the prevalence of child marriage.

## **Impact on Female Headed Households**

Although every household is facing financial loss due to Corona, female headed households are facing more uncertainty than male headed households. A BRAC study revealed that 80% of households headed by women saw a decline in income, whereas 75% of households headed by men did so (Miah et al., 2020). 57% of female-headed households saw their incomes drop to almost zero, compared to 49% of male-headed households. About 90% of women-headed households require food or financial and humanitarian assistance. 21% of female-headed households compared to 18% of male-headed households said their ability to meet living expenses would not exceed one week. 25% of male-headed households and 30% of female-headed households are uncertain about the future. That is, on the basis of all these data, it can be said that, where all families are facing crisis, the level of income-related crisis of women-headed families is direr.

## **The Burden of Domestic, Service and Unpaid Work**

The world's economy and people's livelihoods often depend on women's unpaid work. Before the pandemic, women performed two-thirds of the unpaid domestic work worldwide (UN Women, 2020). In the context of Bangladesh, lockdowns, social distancing measures and school closures have placed additional pressure on women. As of March 2020, nearly 42 million students who have closed schools and colleges are staying at home. This has put additional pressure on women for household work and child care (UNICEF, 2020). According to a survey conducted by BRAC, 91% of women's unpaid work increased during the pandemic. About 89% of women do not get any free time. Due to the closure of schools, the amount of unpaid work for girls who have younger siblings has also increased (Suraiya and Saltmarsh, 2020).

A UN Women study titled "COVID-19 Bangladesh Rapid Response Analysis" claims that the lockdown period increased existing tough conditions for women at home, caused more women to suffer, and intensified existing gender inequalities. The report also stated that before the pandemic, women worked 3.43 times more than men at home. As schools are now closed and all family members are at home, women's unpaid work has increased

since the pandemic. Lockdown has brought different results for men and women. Many men have come forward to share the housework, but most of the housework is done by women during the lockdown.

Men used the opportunity to stay at home to focus on creative and hobby activities, such as writing poetry and short stories and joining Facebook Live. On the other hand, women hardly have time to spend on any hobby. During the pandemic, there is a shortage of domestic assistance, so working women are required to do all of the home duties on their own. These tasks include cooking, cleaning, and taking care of children and the elderly. The additional burden of unpaid work on working women often leads to marital discord and domestic violence.

## **Violence Against Women**

According to the UNFPA, domestic violence has increased by 20% worldwide during this period. In the first week of the lockdown in South Africa, more than 90,000 complaints were filed against gender-based violence (Prothom Alo, 2020). Domestic violence has increased by 32% in France. 13 women have died in the UK in the first four weeks of lockdown. According to a report published by the Guardian, the rate of requests for help online has increased by 120% worldwide (Sarker, 2022). Harassment of women has also increased on social media, with tweets against women increasing by 93% between October 2019 and October 2020 (Ahmed, 2021).

Gender-based violence has increased at an alarming rate during the epidemic in Bangladesh. A case study of 7,000 rural families conducted by STEPS showed that a total of 4,500 women were victims of violence (Sifat, 2020). Due to lack of employment, loss of income, closure of business, lack of food and increase in family debt, family violence is increasing in the country. Another survey conducted by BRAC to examine the status of women in the 11 districts of our country and found that 32% of the participants felt that domestic violence had increased due to the loss of jobs and income in their families. Although there are only 90 victim centers in the country, all have been closed due to the pandemic. As a result, women victims are more likely to be victims of violence as they stay at home. Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) conducted two telephone surveys to find trends in violence during the lockdown. According to the preliminary findings of the survey conducted in May 2020, there were 4,249 women victims and 456 children victims of violence in the month of April. Out of them, 1,672 women and 424 children have never been victims of any kind of violence throughout their whole lives. After thereafter, a second telephone survey was carried out on 53,340 women and children, and it revealed that a total of 13,944 episodes of violence had taken place in 53 locations over the course of 31 days in the month of May (MJF, 2020).

A comparison of the May and June reports shows that there has been an increase in incidents of violence from May to June. The survey also noted that the rate of violence against women and children has increased by 31%. Around 19 girls were raped, 18 girls were attempted to be raped, 19 girls were abducted and 13 girls and 6 boys were kidnapped in May. About 97.4% of the total 11,025 women were victims of domestic

violence. The telephone survey also shows that 45% of women are victims of emotional violence, 33% of women are victims of economic violence, 19% of women are victims of physical violence and the remaining 4% are victims of sexual violence (Suraiya and Saltmarsh, 2020). According to the January online report of *The Financial Express*, Bangladesh Mahila Parishad revealed that 4,622 women and girls were victims of violence in 2019, according to the data of 14 domestic newspapers (Mujeri, 2021).

A total of 197 cases of violence were registered in the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court between March 26 and June 3 after the start of the Corona situation. Among the cases, there are 56 cases of rape, 14 cases of attempted rape, 51 cases of dowry-related violence, 36 cases of kidnapping, 18 cases of sexual harassment and 7 cases of physical violence (Suraiya and Saltmarsh, 2020).

During the pandemic in Bangladesh, gender-based violence has escalated at an alarming rate due to child marriage. An analysis of the reports from May and June, as conducted by the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), reveals a discernible surge in violent incidents during that period. Additionally, the rate of violence in child marriage has risen by 31%, according to the survey (Sarker, 2023). As the police primarily focused on controlling the situation outside of the epidemic, they paid less attention to cases related to violence against women. Courts were also closed for months after the epidemic broke out. These incidents have worsened the situation of women. So, it is clear that the rate of violence against women has increased in the country during the lockdown period.

## 5. Results and Analysis

The society and economy of Bangladesh have been severely affected by Covid-19 in the past two years and ongoing in the following year. However, the hope is that the economy of Bangladesh has suffered less damage during the epidemic compared to the economy of other countries in the world. The supply of foreign exchange or remittances has increased relatively in the last few months which have provided financial security to various households. Recently, the United Nations has approved Bangladesh to transition from the list of least developed countries by 2026. Various organizations, including the World Bank, have predicted that this year's economic growth will not exceed 2-3%. If so, then evil will be good. In that case, it can be said that the condition of the rich or middle class may not be so bad. But it is true that it will not affect all classes of people equally. There are numerous small professional groups in the country, which are undoubtedly in financial distress. Women workers can be specially mentioned in this regard. We have to wait for a few more days to understand the effect of Corona on the overall economy of the country, how much people of various classes and professions will be affected.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, women are at a disadvantage socially and economically. Women entrepreneurs can be specially mentioned here. The government incentive package calls for payment based on bank-client relationships. But any advice on what to do for small women entrepreneurs who have no record of taking loans in the past. So if the incentive package is not specifically for women, then it can be feared that

it will not reach women. Many women have lost their jobs during the Corona period. In this case, only the clothing sector comes up in the newspapers, but there is not much discussion about the large number of women who have lost their jobs in the vast informal sector. A large number of women also work in agriculture. Corona has also had an adverse effect on them. It can be said that a special kind of fragility has been created for women in the working world. Women, who may have been able to join a job after hundreds of attempts, have lost it during the corona virus. Those women don't know if they can ever go back to their old jobs. It can be assumed that, due to lack of adequate facilities, many women have to return to domestic activities only. During the corona period, not only the household and service work of women has increased, but women have to do a lot of work. From service work to domestic work, women have to perform. Even after the lifting of the lockdown, many women are unable to return to work as other facilities such as child day care centers are closed. Boredom and depression are coming in women's life. Social distance, quarantine management is useful at this time, but its effect is falling on people's psyche. Depression, fear, panic, resentment, anger, isolation, loneliness, neglect, degradation and futility emerge from social distancing and dehumanizing behavior in people. These are one of the main causes of violence against women. Violence against women has increased exponentially during COVID-19.

Analyzing the data from the year before and after the epidemic, it can be seen that the number of rape victims in 2019 was 1,080, which increased to 1,538 in 2020. In 2020, only from January to September, a total of 919 women and children were raped. Worryingly, children are almost twice as likely to be raped as adult women. In 2019, the number of women and children who were raped during this period was 834 (Sifat, 2020). There is an economic reason behind the increase in violence against women during the Corona period. The male breadwinner in many households has lost his job during the lockdown. Frustration, anger and resentment are born from lack of money. In patriarchal societies, women are affected. In addition, since spouses and children spend more time at home, women's domestic labor has grown on the one hand, while family conflicts, violence, and dowry abuse have increased on the other.

Corona pandemic has further weakened the position of women at home and outside. But here it is not necessary to blame only Corona. Even before the advent of COVID-19, there was violence against women. So, along with Corona, we need to shed light on the prevailing views and thoughts of the society, which has further accentuated the negative impact of Corona on women.

The gender-specific impacts of COVID-19 in Bangladesh have serious implications for the country's social and economic fabric. Addressing these implications is not just a matter of gender equality but also essential for achieving sustainable development goals and ensuring overall societal resilience. Some Policy Recommendations to address and minimize these issues are following:

- **Gender-Responsive Economic Relief:** Policymakers should design and implement targeted economic relief measures that address the specific needs of women, including cash transfers, job creation programs, and support for women entrepreneurs. These measures should aim to bridge the income gap created or exacerbated by the pandemic.

- **Enhanced Healthcare Access:** Ensuring equitable access to healthcare services, especially for maternal and reproductive health, should be a priority. Investments in healthcare infrastructure and awareness campaigns that emphasize women's health and well-being are essential.
- **Promotion of Gender-Equal Norms:** Initiatives to challenge and transform traditional gender roles are imperative. Education and awareness campaigns can be used to challenge stereotypes and promote the equal sharing of caregiving responsibilities within households.
- **Data Collection and Research:** Continued research is vital to understand the evolving dynamics of the pandemic's impact on gender disparities in Bangladesh. Data collection should be gender-disaggregated, allowing for a more precise understanding of the situation and informed policymaking.
- **Capacity Building and Empowerment:** Empowering women through skill development, education, and vocational training can enhance their resilience and ability to adapt to changing economic conditions.

## 6. Conclusion

In 2019, Bangladesh's position was 135 in United Nations Human Development Index (UNHDI). In 2022, Bangladesh climbed six steps and got the 129th position in just three years. Bangladesh was ranked 50 in the Global Gender Gap Report-2020. Among the 7 countries of South Asia, only Bangladesh has achieved the honor of being among the first 100 countries. After the pandemic, Bangladesh's position in the Global Gender Gap Report-2023 has dropped to 59. So it can be feared that the COVID-19 may overshadow many of Bangladesh's achievements. The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the socio-cultural structure of Bangladesh, resulting in a paradigm shift in how people live and tragically claiming numerous lives. The current situation has further amplified pre-existing gender inequities within the labor market and heightened women's workload in domestic settings. Concerns have arisen over the potential dampening effect on women's rights movements within society as the prevalence of gender-based violence and pre-existing gender disparities escalate amidst the pandemic. The escalation of violence against women during the lockdown period is a significant concern, necessitating the implementation of imperative measures to address and mitigate this issue effectively. Hence, it is imperative to address not just the economic aspects but also to develop a comprehensive strategy that incorporates a gender perspective in order to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. This approach should be central to societal rehabilitation and economic recovery efforts. In the forthcoming period, Bangladesh will face significant difficulty bolstering its economy, augmenting individuals' income, and ensuring a seamless standard of life. On the contrary, to address the issue of violence against women, it is imperative to implement current legislation rigorously. This is because the safety and advancement of half of the population within a society are essential prerequisites for achieving comprehensive and enduring societal progress. As the world navigates the complexities of a post-pandemic era, further research is needed to monitor the long-term

effects of COVID-19 on gender disparities in Bangladesh. Future studies should focus on evaluating the effectiveness of gender-responsive policies, tracking changes in gender norms, and examining the broader social and economic consequences.

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The author declares no conflicting interests.

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