



Impact of COVID-19 on Ready-made Garments Workers in Bangladesh

Sherajul Mustajib Sharif

Department of International Relations, University of Chittagong, Bangladesh

Email: sharifmustajib@gmail.com

https://riopenjournals.com/index.php/society_sustainability/index

Doi: https://doi.org/10.38157/society_sustainability.v3i1.283

Citation: Sharif, S. M. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 on Ready-made Garments Workers in Bangladesh, *Society & Sustainability*, 3(1), 26-36. Doi: https://doi.org/10.38157/society_sustainability.v3i1.283

Research Article

Abstract

COVID-19 is an overwhelming crisis that has touched almost every sector. As the Ready-made Garments (RMG) sector is closely integrated with the global supply chain, it is important to understand the implications of COVID-19 on RMG workers as they are the most vulnerable in this situation. This article aims to explore the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic on RMG workers in Bangladesh. Particularly, it investigates the impact on health, safety and security, employment, livelihood, and social relations of the workers. The research also explores the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in this regard. The study followed qualitative methodology. The primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and key informant interviews. The findings revealed that COVID-19 implicated detrimental consequences in terms of health, safety and security, and social relations. The workers also faced a livelihood crisis as their earnings were curtailed.

Keywords: COVID-19, RMG workers, Corona, Garments, Pandemic, Bangladesh

1. Introduction

Bangladesh is the 2nd largest RMG exporting country in the world. RMG sector contributes about 13% of its GDP and entails 78% of its foreign earnings. As the COVID-19 crisis disrupted global export-import, it affected the RMG sector in Bangladesh. As a result of interruption in the global supply chain, factory owners started following a low expenditure policy. Factories remained closed; workers were scared of losing jobs. Along with health-related vulnerability, workers faced a tough economic crisis during the pandemic (Kabir *et. al.*, 2020).

Understanding the impact needs multidimensional analysis as this group of people is already vulnerable to transmissible diseases, as they live and work in congested places (ILO, 2020). The bitterest insecurity was imposed on them when they were compelled to join the work immediately during the climax of the pandemic. The socio-economic dimension is also a

variable to analyze the impact. RMG workers are economically marginal, and 85% of them are women. Most of them are from rural areas. With their scanty income, they manage their life as well as their family back in the villages. This condition also demonstrates the possibility of long-term psychological stigma, social censorship, gender-based violence, deprivation of basic rights such as the right to education, right to healthcare, etc.

This study investigates the consequence of COVID-19 from the health and safety, employment, livelihood, and socio-economic perspectives. It also sheds light on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders such as the government, factory owners, trade unions, NGOs, etc.

2. Literature review

The study by Begum *et. al.* (2020) significantly identified several socio-economic effects of COVID-19 in Bangladesh. The research explored that several sectors such as banking, dairy farm, poultry, remittance, RMG, etc. are severely affected by the pandemic due to the irruption to the global supply chain. Though the article identified sectoral impacts, it largely overlooked micro-level impact and the pervasive implications of the crisis towards marginal communities such as daily laborers, RMG laborers, and workers in informal sectors.

Akter (2020) identified the impact of COVID-19 as an unemployment problem. The study argued that the shrinkage of the global, as well as local economy, would lead losing of jobs. RMG, transport, tourism, banking and insurance, education sector are more vulnerable to this crisis. Based on secondary data, the study articulated several key aspects of RMG sectors among others. As the orders from international buyers were shrunk, factories remained shut and workers would be terminated- the study argued. Though unemployment is a crucial consequence among others, it cannot demonstrate a range of impacts on RMG workers.

The report by UNICEF (2020) revealed the scenario of COVID-19 implications on the RMG sector. Illustrating the financial backlash of COVID-19, the study also expressed its concern for the job security of RMG workers. It addressed the availability of hygiene practice in factories and the impossibility of physical distance. The report also argued the vulnerability of women, especially the health safety of children and pregnant women. The report did not address other aspects such as mental health, social stigma regarding pandemic, and so on.

Recently, a report by ADB (2020) demonstrates the low-intensity nature but rapid escalation of the crisis in the economic sphere. Addressing the extra-economic implications, it also emphasized the importance of on-crisis and post-crisis social measures. Another study by BIGD (2020) identified the roles of various stakeholders to cope up with the situation. Especially, the role of the trade union of the RMG sector was critically analyzed in this study.

Kabir *et. al.* (2020) addressed the social and livelihood challenge of RMG workers regarding the COVID-19 crisis. It also addressed the policy ambiguity of government and factory owners during the apex of the crisis. Hence, the study tended to find the negative consequences of such policy failure. Though the study contributed significantly, it did not amalgamate the constitutional and legal terrain of labor rights.

Overall, the existing literature mostly focused on economic perspectives. Though some of the articles included social issues, a few articles found having empirical investigation along with

microanalysis of socio-psychological perspectives. This study is going to contribute to this aspect.

3. Methodology

This study tends to explore the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on RMG workers in Bangladesh. It followed qualitative methodology as it is claimed to be the best approach in identifying the implicit elements of social phenomena (Babbie, 2020). The primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and key informant interviews. 26 in-depth interviews were conducted with RMG workers where they shared their experience by storytelling approach. Among them, 24 were women. They were from different factories located in Potenga, Boropol, and Chandgaon areas under the Chittagong City Corporation. All the interviews were conducted in the evening after they returned from the workplace. Two Focused Group Discussions (FGD) were conducted to find out various dynamics of workers from different factories. Each FGD consisted of 7 RMG workers, and most of the participants were female. Six key informant interviews were conducted. The key informants were mostly trade union leaders. The nature of KII was analytical as they have long-time experience and knowledge on labor rights issues.

Primary data were transcribed in the local language (Bangla) then translated into English so that they can be analyzed properly. Gathered data were synchronized in a thematic dimension. Both thematic and content analysis were followed to equip the findings. Relevant quotes from the respondents were inserted in the discussion section so that readers can comprehend the perspectives easily.

4. Impact of COVID-19 on RMG workers

4.1. Situation of RMG sector during COVID-19

COVID-19 is an unprecedented shock not only in health aspects but also in a wide range of economic, social, and security perspectives. The virus has already been transmitted to most of the countries of the world. According to the report, it has spread to 208 countries so far (Akter, 2020). Since the modern world is highly interconnected in terms of trade and business, information and technology, population movement, and several other dimensions, any interruption in one sector may lead to a drastic change to others. As such, the COVID-19 crisis touched almost every sector of statehood ranging from politics, economics, and society though it is merely a health issue in the medical sense. It broke the global supply chain. As the RMG sector is highly integrated into the global supply chain, it was hampered immediately and severely.

In Bangladesh, the COVID-19 patient was first affirmed on 8th March 2020. On 26th March, considering the rapidity of the virus dispersion, the government decided to implement a countrywide lockdown. Factories of RMG remained closed up to 30th May. On 7th July 2020, BGMEA suddenly declared to open factories. Workers were ordered to join the duty immediately. Such declaration created turmoil among workers. The situation was worst as there was no transport to return from the villages. It was reported in various news and public health experts urged that the opening of such a dense labor-oriented sector will be suicidal during this

apex period of infection. However, facing countrywide criticism, factory owners decided to keep the factories closed a few days more (Kabir, 2020). Meanwhile, the government announced a stimulus package of BDT 5000 crore for the export-oriented sector to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic (Daily Star, 2020).

Most of the factories reopened after one month though the pandemic situation was not normal at this time. The flow of thousands of workers in the morning became common in the pandemic as if it was a normal time. In the following section of the article, we are going to analyze this fact that how the rejoining of RMG workers during the crisis impacted their health aspects. We also identify other variables such as livelihood crisis, social stigma, unemployment, etc.

4.2. Health, safety, and security

COVID-19 is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which spreads between people, mainly when an infected person remains in touch with another person. The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe heavily. These liquid particles are of different sizes, ranging from larger 'respiratory droplets' to smaller 'aerosols'. Other people can catch COVID-19 when the virus gets into their mouth, nose, or eyes, which is more likely to happen when people are in direct or close contact (less than 1 meter apart) with an infected person (WHO 2020a). Considering these precautionary measures, people are advised to maintain social distancing, wearing a mask, using hand sanitizer, etc.

Bangladesh is a densely populated country. The RMG sector holds a huge number of workers who work and live in congested areas. The case of a confirmed patient of COVID-19 was doubling during the first week of inception. On the 15th day, the case doubling changed to triple that lasted till May 4, 2020 (WHO 2020b). The reopening of the factories led to high vulnerabilities of COVID-19 infection to the workers (The Financial Express, 2020). In April, 97 workers were found COVID-19 positive, and ten among them died (New Age, 2020). One of the key informants shared the researcher,

"Our factory was open during COVID-19. We worked till 11 pm or even more. We had to work in a crowded place. The workers were at high risk of COVID-19 infection."(Personal correspondence, 30 November 2020)

It was a matter of concern that RMG is a labor-intensive sector and maintaining social distancing and other safety measures is a real challenge. Typically, the RMG workers frequently suffer from a host of chronic health issues such as headaches, respiratory problems, depression, etc. because of the unhealthy workplace conditions, nature of the work, and the dust produced from raw materials. Another health hazard, dysuria (painful or difficult urination) is so prevalent among female garment workers (Chumchai *et. al.*, 2015). Despite this weak health compliance, some of the factories performed well. One of the workers shared satisfactory opinion such as,

"Our factory provides masks, checks temperatures, and provides hand sanitizers at the entry of the factory. Each worker was also provided with an umbrella so that they maintain distance on the way to the factory."(Personal correspondence, 13 October 2020)

Among the respondents, one female was found who affirmed COVID positive. She shared that when she was found high temperature entering the factory she was sent to the medial. After that, she was tested and confirmed positive. Most of the respondents said that factories ensure the use of hand sanitizers, masks, and temperature checks due to government and buyer's strong instructions. However, some of the workers who work in the factories outside the EPZ alleged that they were just provided soap but health protection was not followed properly in their factories. They also criticized that the medical facility provided by the factory is a "showcase project" as it just provides simple tablets for fever; it does not provide any other health checkups or care. And the worker with corona positive also assured that her COVID screening and treatment was done in local medical, not in the factory medical service. She also added that the cost of her treatment was also managed by herself. During the conversation, only two male respondents were found wearing masks, none of the female respondents wore masks.

4.3 Job security perspectives

RMG sector is a labor-intensive industry that employs 4 million workers. Around 85% of them are women (UNICEF, 2015). In Bangladesh, while the share of women's employment in several sectors is low, the picture is different in the RMG sector. It seems that the sector employed a large portion of women but the critical finding is that it possesses cheap labor and women are less reactive to discrimination (Zaman, 2020). During the interview, a respondent shared that,

"My wife was suddenly called to the Human Resource Department of the factory and said that her family faced an accident so that she had to go to her home (Village). Then, she was provided a blank paper to sign. She was terminated from the job without any reason. They staged this drama not to pay due to compensation of termination."(Personal correspondence, 29 November 2020).

According to the ILO report, the COVID-19 pandemic is associated with the frequent incidence of unemployment, lay off, and termination from the job. According to Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, as the global economy shrunk due to the pandemic, 1,142 factories in Bangladesh had lost orders worth \$3.16bn affecting 2.26 million workers due to the drastic effect of the pandemic (ADB 2020). As a result, the RMG sector was highly vulnerable to the large termination of workers. Around 15000 garment workers have lost their jobs due to the coronavirus in Bangladesh (Asia Foundation, 2020). Bangladesh government initiated some necessary measures, declared a \$588 million stimulus package for garment industries to pay the due wages (The Financial Express, 2020). Only 2% interest will be charged for the loan to the owners of the garments. Calculating the sum by the number of laborers, it is determined that this stimulus package would just cover compensation for one month (Ovi, 2020). This projection had become visible when factories reopened after one month.

The entire respondent confirmed that they received a basic of one month in addition to the festival bonus. One of the respondents was highly satisfied saying that,

"We received basic of one month even though the factory was off for 26 days. We also received the festival bonus in two Eids."(Personal correspondence, 27 November 2020).

But the information provided by some of the respondents was different who worked in factories owned by local people. They said that they were receiving salary lately in corresponding months. A female respondent expressed with frustration that,

"I was sick. I informed it via mobile. After recovery, I returned to the factory but they informed me that you do not need to come, you are terminated. I just received the salary of corresponding days; I did not get any compensation."(Personal correspondence, 13 October 2020).

In another discussion, 2 respondents informed that one of the sections of their factory was shut down but they could not inform that whether those workers were compensated or not. They only express their confidence in their factory that it maintains due process. The overall job security scenario in the RMG sector till December 2020 is partially safe. Though overtime duty is curtailed, regular duty was continued as it was. Due to low wages of labor, Bangladesh remained the favorite choice for buyers even in previous economic recessions (Farhana *et. al.*, 2015). The stimulation from the government, assisted the sector to bounce back, some of the experts imparted that the situation is turning gradually. The simulation package was for only export-based factories, but the remedy for other corresponding sub-contracting factories as well as the workers of those factories remained questionable.

4.4 Livelihood crisis

The pandemic situation led to a livelihood crisis all over the world especially the marginal community; informal workers fell into an extreme crisis (Chriscaden, 2020; Mustajib, 2020). In the case of Bangladesh, the economic hit of the COVID-19 jeopardized the impressive reduction of the poverty rate (Deutsche Welle, 2020). The poverty and livelihood impact of COVID-19 have two side interruptions: the supply-side and the demand side. The supply-side shock emanates from the shutdown of economic activities, whereas the demand-side shock comes from falling exports and remittances. According to a survey by SANEM, a 25% negative shock on households' expenditure leads to a rise in the poverty rate in Bangladesh from 20.5% in 2019 to around 41% (Raihan, 2020). However, as the RMG sector encompasses a lion's share of economic activities and employs 4 million workers, there are complex implications of the COVID-19 situation on RMG workers. Most of the respondents admired that they faced less or more livelihood crises during the situation. One of the respondents shared that,

"I could not pay house rent, and shopping bills due in the previous months as the factory was closed and we did not earn regular wages except basic salary"(Personal correspondence, 19 October 2020).

The livelihood challenges identified by researchers are the inability to manage daily expenditure, house rent, and foodstuffs. In addition, using monthly savings and borrowing from informal sources are also identified. The supply-side shock disrupted the availability of commodities during the lockdown. As a result, the price of several products was increased and it became challenging for RMG workers to manage the expenditures with their limited earnings. In this situation, the expenditure theme became "Budget of survival" (Deutsche Welle, 2020).

Different narratives also came from some of the respondents. They are satisfied even though they had to use their regular savings, they could spend time with family, as they said. According to a respondent,

"It is true that we earned less during the lockdown. Now, we do not get overtime as the order is less due to the pandemic. But, I am happy that I can spend more time with my family now. At this time, I work regular 8-hour duty. So, I return home earlier, I meet my child. It is more worthy to me than money"(Personal correspondence, 12 October 2020).

The livelihood crisis due to the pandemic situation is observed and acknowledged during focus group discussion. Most of the participants along with key informer affirmed that they faced complex livelihood crises during the time. There was a debate on "life or livelihood" imposing lockdown. As the labor pattern of the country more adheres to the informal sector, the livelihood crisis is so relevant, according to a key informer who used to work in an RMG factory and presently working on labor rights.

4.5 Social relations and family life

The COVID-19 situation has significant social and psychological implications (Saladino, 2020). Psychological and social well-being is affected significantly by "stay at home" orders, social distancing, and other safety precautions needed to contain the pandemic (American Psychological Association, 2020). In this regard, RMG workers are more vulnerable as most of the workers are women (UN WOMEN, 2020). The study also explored that this situation acutely induces domestic violence, social conflict and endangers family relations. To answer the query, a respondent smiled and shared,

"My husband is unemployed since lockdown as he is a motor driver. As the income shrunk, quarreling mode remained between us. It is simple"(Personal correspondence, 12 October 2020).

RMG workers live in congested areas. They had to join the work during the apex situation of the pandemic. Some of the house owners were empathetic while some were not. In Boropol and Chandgao area, respondents expressed their satisfaction with the local community and house owners while in the CEPZ area, respondents shared that their house owners did not waive the rent despite their request. And the CEPZ area was also found highly congested, maintaining social distance is not possible in such residents.

There are some elements related to the pandemic that affect a large portion of the population, such as separation from loved ones, loss of freedom, uncertainty about the advancement of the disease, and the feeling of helplessness (Lai *et. al.*, 2020). In this regard, the respondents shared that they did not face such kinds of problems. But few of the respondents informed that they felt insomnia.

The overall observation of the researcher is that the RMG workers are sympathetic to each other. They are also satisfied with minimum livelihood. Thus, their physiological conditions were stable during this time. But, as most of the respondents were female while the interviewer was a male, due to the conservative socio-cultural norm, there is a probability of hesitation to share about family life.

4.6 Role of stakeholders

Related to the RMG sector, the key stakeholders are government, factory owners, trade unions, NGOs, and the workers. The role of the government is central in this aspect. The other actors are also important as they participate in various parts of the policy cycle. For example, the factory owners are dominant stakeholders who have social responsibilities and legal obligations to maintain Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) measures. The trade unions are politically mandated by the workers to be the watchdog of their rights and be their representatives in raising voice against the exploitations. The NGOs and other social organizations have responsibilities to conduct research, arrange dialogues, and take part in policy recommendations.

To combat the economic and social crises and to ensure the recovery of the economy, the government has announced 19 stimulus packages accounting for around 3.7% of the country's GDP (Raihan, 2020). From this package, 50 billion BDT was allocated to export-oriented RMG industries to pay wages for three months. On the other hand, factory owners were found double standard stance following pandemic measures after granting the stimulus package. During the ongoing infection (while COVID-19-related infections and death rates are increasing), the BGMEA suddenly declared that garment factories would be re-opening from 26 April 2020 with the permission of the government so that shipments of previously ordered clothing items could be completed. RMG workers were reportedly contacted by the management of the factories and told if they do not return to work they would lose their jobs as well as any outstanding salary. One of the key informants asserted that,

"The factory owners do not care about workers' health issues. After the Rana plaza incident, though some of the fire safety and security measures were taken, health issues did not get attention up to the mark." (Personal correspondence, 8 October 2020).

There is a BGMEA hospital at Seaman's Hostel area in Chittagong, there is a banner posturing "Isolation Center", but no workers were reported to be taken over there.

The role of trade unions in the RMG sector is highly important. Though freedom of association is the constitutional declaration, RMG workers were found highly restrained to join in a trade union (Sultan, et. al., 2020). Moreover, during the focused group discussion, they were asked whether they had got any support from a trade union or any other organization. They were asked what the trade union was. Surprisingly, most of the workers were unfamiliar with the term "trade union". Though there are some worker leaders, they are not financially and organizationally competent to assist workers in the COVID-19 situation. Last but not the least, the role of civil society, NGOs, media is appreciable. Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies (BILS), the prominent think tank and NGO on labor issues in Bangladesh arranged several seminars, dialogues advocating labor rights issues during COVID-19. Some of the media and social organizations also responded to support workers during the crisis.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The COVID-19 situation has not ended yet. The impact of this pandemic is overwhelming and it is not possible to find concrete implications within this time. There might be a short-term and long-term impact. In this research, we identified some of the short-term impacts and underlying facts over RMG labor issues. To understand long-term implications, broader economic and public policy issues should be explored. Moreover, as the sector is highly integrated into the global supply chain, the issue is more pervasive than any other sector. This research tried to find some of the basic socio-economic consequences of COVID-19 on RMG workers in Bangladesh that revealed an immediate picture of the situation. This picture will contribute to future policy initiatives to maintain a sustainable working condition and ensure resilience in the sector.

Based on the findings and discussion with experts, this research proposes the following policy recommendations:

Health Safety Scheme: a health safety scheme should be enacted following health insurance strategy and the establishment of clinics/hospitals dedicated to the garments workers. This scheme can be financed by social welfare funds jointly contributed by the government, buyers, and factory owners. Besides, the knowledge of occupational health and safety should be disseminated among workers. To do this, an occupational health and safety officer should be appointed in every factory.

A Common Dialogue Forum: There is a communication gap among workers, trade union leaders, factory owners, and the government. A common knowledge-sharing forum will facilitate confidence building. This forum will find an inclusive solution for all the stakeholders and reduce skepticism about each other.

Strict Surveillance of Safety measures: As some of the factory owners are reluctant to follow health safety and security compliance, strict monitoring is essential. Thus, the government should increase its institutional capacity in terms of proper monitoring of compliance. Besides, some other institutions such as the regular trial of labor court should be ensured.

Funding: This project did not receive any funding.

Acknowledgment: The interviews of the respondents were taken during an internship project at the Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies. Therefore, the author likes to express his gratitude to the Bangladesh Institute of Labor Studies for its valuable assistance in data collection. The author is also grateful to the Voice of International Affairs Research Team for technical assistance.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Akter, S. (2020, September). Covid-19 and Bangladesh: Threat of Unemployment in the Economy. In 5. International EMI Entrepreneurship and Social Sciences Congress Proceedings E-Book (p. 280).
- Babbie, E. R. (2020). *The Practice of Social Research*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning Inc.
- Begum, M., Farid, M. S., Alam, M. J., & Barua, S. (2020). COVID-19 and Bangladesh: Socio-economic analysis towards the future correspondence. *Asian Journal of Agricultural Extension, Economics & Sociology*, 143-155.

- Bodrud-Doza, M., Shammi, M., Bahlman, L., Islam, A. R. M., & Rahman, M. (2020). Psychosocial and socio-economic crisis in Bangladesh due to COVID-19 pandemic: a perception-based assessment. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 8, 341.
- Chumchai, P., Silapasuan, P., Wiwatwongkasem, C., Arphorn, S., & Suwan-ampai, P. (2015). Prevalence and risk factors of respiratory symptoms among home-based garment Workers in Bangkok, Thailand. *Asia Pacific Journal of Public Health*, 27(4), 461-468.
- WHO (2020a, 9 July). Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): How is it transmitted? Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-how-is-it-transmitted>
- WHO (2020b) Coronavirus disease (COVID-2019) Bangladesh situation reports. Retrieved from [https://www.who.int/bangladesh/emergencies/coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-update/coronavirus-disease-\(covid-2019\)-bangladesh-situation-reports](https://www.who.int/bangladesh/emergencies/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-update/coronavirus-disease-(covid-2019)-bangladesh-situation-reports)
- UNICEF (2020) COVID-19: Impact on ready-made garment workers in Bangladesh. <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/en/reports/covid-19>
- ADB (2020). COVID-19 and The Ready-Made Garments Industry in Bangladesh. Retrieved from ADB website: <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/linked-documents/54180-001-sd-04.pdf>
- Chriscaden, K. (2020, October 13). Impact of COVID-19 on people's livelihoods, their health, and our food systems. Retrieved from <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people's-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems>
- Daily Star. (2020, March 26). Tk 5,000cr for workers' pay. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/tk-5000cr-workers-pay-1885891>
- Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com). (2020). Coronavirus: Economy down, poverty up in Bangladesh. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/coronavirus-economy-down-poverty-up-in-bangladesh/a-53759686>
- Farhana, K., Syduzzaman, M., & Munir, M. S. (2015). Present status of workers in ready-made garments industries in Bangladesh. *European Scientific Journal*, 11(7).
- Kabir, H., Maple, M., & Usher, K. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on Bangladeshi readymade garment (RMG) workers. *Journal of public health (Oxford, England)*, fdaa126. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/pubmed/fdaa126>
- Lai, J., Ma, S., Wang, Y., Cai, Z., Hu, J., Wei, N., ...& Tan, H. (2020). Factors associated with mental health outcomes among health care workers exposed to coronavirus disease 2019. *JAMA Network Open*, 3(3), e203976-e203976.
- Mustajib, S. (2020, December 24). Impact of COVID-19 on informal laborers in Bangladesh. Retrieved from <https://modern diplomacy.eu/2020/12/24/impact-of-covid-19-on-informal-laborers-in-bangladesh/>
- Neuman, L. W. (2014). Basics of social research: Pearson new international edition: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. Pearson Higher Ed.
- New Age. (2020, May 7). 97 RMG workers infected with COVID-19 last month: BGWS. Retrieved from <https://www.newagebd.net/article/105888/around-100-rmg-workers-infected-with-covid-19>
- Ovi, I. H. (2020, March 25). Industries, workers welcome stimulus package. Retrieved from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/2020/03/25/industries-workers-welcome-stimulus-package>
- Raihan, S. (2020, September 16). Anatomy of the stimulus package in Bangladesh. Retrieved from <https://selimraihan.wordpress.com/2020/08/01/anatomy-of-stimulus-package-in-bangladesh/>
- Ready-made Garment (RMG) Workers and Coronavirus: Events of Abandonment. (2020, April 24). Retrieved from <https://www.worck.eu/2020/04/14/ready-made-garment-rmg-workers-and-coronavirus-events-of-abandonment/>
- Saladino, V., Algeri, D., & Auriemma, V. (2020). The psychological and social impact of Covid-19: new perspectives of well-being. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11, 2550.
- Sen, S., Antara, N., Sen, S., & Chowdhury, S. (2020). The apparel workers are in the highest vulnerability due to COVID-19: a study on the Bangladesh Apparel Industry. *Asia Pacific J Multidiscip Res*, 8(3).

- Sakamoto, M., Begum, S., & Ahmed, T. (2020). Vulnerabilities to COVID-19 in Bangladesh and a reconsideration of sustainable development goals. *Sustainability*, 12(13), 5296.
- Sultan, M., & Hossain, M. S. (2020). Effect of COVID-19 on RMG Sector and Trade Union Efforts to Mitigate Fallout. BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Dhaka. Retrieved from: <https://www.poverty-action.org/recover-study/effect-covid-19-rmg-sector-and-trade-union-efforts-mitigate-fallout>
- The Financial Express. (2020, May 2). Infections among RMG workers increasing as factories breaching health guidelines. Retrieved from <https://www.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/infections-among-rmg-workers-increasing-as-factories-breaching-health-guidelines-1588438626>
- Tushi, A. (2020, July 5). OP-ED: What of the RMG workers? Retrieved from <https://www.dhakatribune.com/opinion/op-ed/2020/07/05/op-ed-what-of-the-rmg-workers>
- UNICEF (2015). The Ready-Made Garment Sector and Children in Bangladesh. Retrieved from: https://www.unicef.org/csr/files/CSR_BANGLADESH_RMG_REPORT.PDF
- Za an, F. (2020, November 14). The delusion of women empowerment in the ready-made garments industry of Bangladesh. Retrieved from <https://internationalaffairsbd.com/the-delusion-of-women-empowerment-in-the-ready-made-garments-industry-of-bangladesh/>



© 2021 by the authors. Licensee *Research & Innovation Initiative*, Michigan, USA. This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).