

PANDEMIC, RETURNED FEMALE MIGRANTS AND THE  
QUESTION OF REINTEGRATION:  
PRECARIOUSNESS AND POSSIBILITIES

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of Development Studies in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Masters in Development Studies

Masters in Development Studies  
Brac University  
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Masters in Development Studies  
Brac University  
December, 2021

## Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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## Approval

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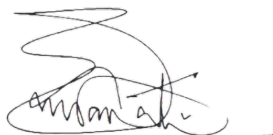
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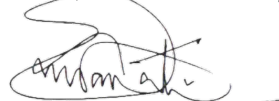
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## Ethics Statement

I am ensuring the quality and integrity of this research. Here, all the participants took part voluntarily. The confidentiality of the informants was kept in consideration as per their request.

## Executive Summary

COVID-19 has made life even more precarious for Bangladeshi female migrant workers. During the pandemic, they faced unfair treatments, wage theft, and other forms of exploitation in the host countries. A large number of women became the victims of mass deportation. Within these circumstances, the question of immediate reintegration became critical for policymakers and non-governmental organizations working with returnees. Building on the qualitative approach and Feminist Standpoint Epistemology, the study seeks to gather in-depth information and holistic insights concerning the reintegration challenges of female returnee migrants during the pandemic. It demonstrates how factors such as social stigma, limited access to the correct information, unemployment, and the ripple effect of unproductive investment work in deepening the precarious human condition of female returnees. Nonetheless, the study also makes visible layers of possibilities. The extended period of international migration and movement can positively impact women's intellectual and emotional maturity. The majority of research participants demonstrated a higher capability to make decisions and act independently on their behalves. The study proposes that policymakers take note of the active agency of female returnees along with their susceptibilities. It explains the implication of the dual policy focus in designing a more appropriate and gender-friendly model of reintegration.

Keywords: CV19 pandemic; female returnees; reintegration; precarious human condition; possibilities of life; maturation;

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the individuals and organizations who are continuously working hard to support the migrants and the ecosystem.

## Acknowledgment

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my supervisor Abu Ahsan for his help and guidance in the completion of this dissertation. This research outcome was only because of the support of the migrants who shared their stories, my faculties for the mentorship, and my colleagues to support me in executing the research. I would also like to thank BRAC University for giving me the opportunity.

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## List of Acronyms

MoEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MDW	Migrant Domestic Worker
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ILO	International Labour Organization
BMET	Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training
BAIRA	Bangladesh association of international recruiting agencies
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arab
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprises
EU	European Union
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
FD	Fixed Deposit
DPS	Deposit Pension Scheme
ROI	Return on investment
PTSA	Post traumatic stress disorder
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
NFCD	Non-Resident Foreign Currency Deposit
NELM	New Economics of Labour Migration
AFML	ASEAN On Migration Labor
MFA	Migrant Forum Asia

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Background history of migration and Bangladesh:**

Till date, various types of theory and definitions were given on the term of migration. According to (IOM, 2015 as cited in Nawaz & Tonny, 2019), “The movement of people away from their regular residence, whether across an international border or inside a country, is known as migration.” ILO defined migration as all overseas migrants who are working or looking for work in their current country of residence (as cited in Labour Migration DVS 2201). According to UNESCO (as cited in Nawaz & Tonny, 2019) “it is the crossing of the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period. It includes the movement of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people as well as economic migrants. It can be of two types: Internal (within-country viz. rural to urban, urban to urban, etc.) and overseas (country to country). Internal migration refers to a move from one area (a province, district, or municipality) to another within one country. International/overseas migration is a territorial relocation of people between nation-states” (as cited in Appleton, 2011). To formalize the process of overseas migration the countries are divided into two categories by (Engbersen & Snel, 2013) which are the sender and host countries. Sender country is the origin of the migrant worker and the host country is the current residence of the migrant worker.

From the very beginning, people were on the move either to urban migration or to international migration. Migrants have always traveled in groups and as individuals to seek freedom from war & conflict, poverty, climate exploitation, unemployment, religious intolerance, or political repression and to seek new economic possibilities. When people travel to another country and then return to their home county after a certain work period is called return migration. It was a very popular concept among the low-wage laborers in the 17th and 18th centuries. The two sides of the same coin of circular labor migration are empowering the unemployed and strengthening the relationship among governments through the exchange of skills. Thus, the relationship between Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) and the United Kingdom became stronger through labor migration in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From the 1950s to the 1970s, there were low-wage labor shortages in the United Kingdom and they started recruiting from the Commonwealth countries. As a consequence, the

Sylheti youths from Bangladesh started migrating to the United Kingdom since then. Though the official records lacked sufficient data of the total migrants. In 1971, Bangladesh was established as an individual nation right after the Liberation War. As a post-war settlement, the government of Bangladesh offered citizenship to the stranded non-Bengalis. Due to cultural mindset, the non-Bengalis who stayed back in Bangladesh wanted to return to Pakistan (then West Pakistan) but the Pakistan Government was disinclined to take them back. A huge number of abandoned non-Bengalis stayed back in Bangladesh. As a result, this newly born country became overly populated compared to its geographical capacity. Besides, the country was already having a crisis of downturn economy due to the post-war recovery process and it became challenging to offer protection on ensuring primary human rights for the mass citizen. But, during the oil crisis of 1973, the influx of oil wealth boomed in Saudi Arab, and parallelly the incentive-based labor demand was also on a hike for the increasing number of infrastructure development. This resulted in a higher number of low waged labor migration from Bangladesh. International migration helped us to reach one step ahead on the ladder of economic growth.

Since 1976, only 6,000 Bangladeshis left to work in other countries. This number had a slow hike in the 80s but remained static till 1989. From 1980 to the 90s around 7 lakh people migrated from Bangladesh. The migration rate took a noticeable figure from 1990 to 1995 when more than 1 million Bangladeshis migrated abroad which took a hike around three times between 2005 to 2010. With times the international migration increased from our country. (Etzold & Mallick, 2015)

But, above all, international labor migration is a key factor behind the economic development of Bangladesh. From figure number 1 it can be said, in 2019, there is an estimation that around 7.8 million Bangladeshis are employed abroad which falls under the top 10 origins of international migrants along with other countries like India, Mexico, China, Pakistan, Syria, Afghanistan, etc.



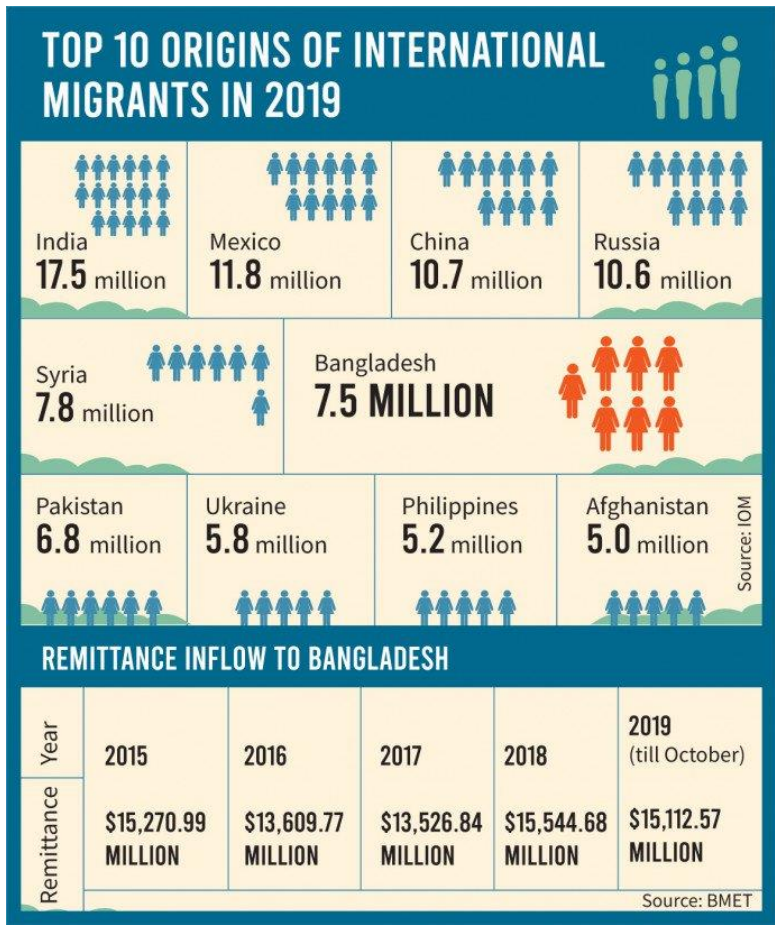


Fig 1: Top 10 origins of international migrants in 2019

Source: The Business Standard, 2019

According to ILO every year more than 4,00,000 people seek overseas migration (Labour migration in Bangladesh (ILO in Bangladesh)”, n.d.) The figure shown below highlights the overseas employment from 1976 to 2020 by BMET.

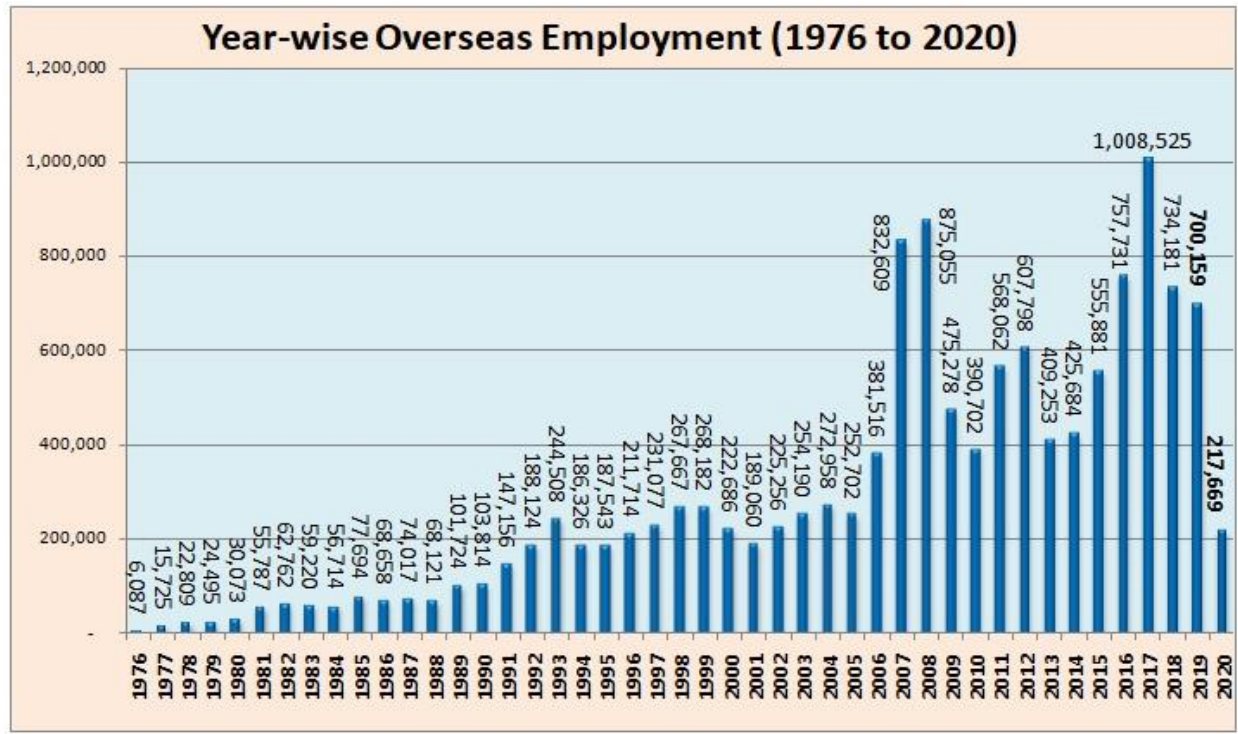
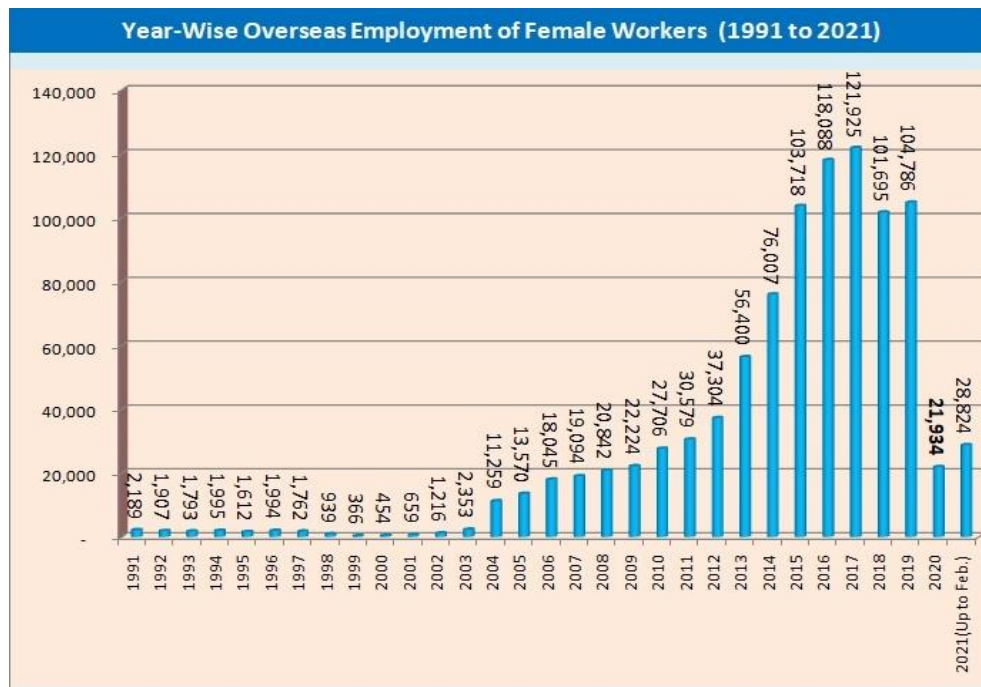


Fig 2: Year-wise Overseas Employment (1976 to 2020)  
Source: BMET

It can be seen that in 2017 about 10,08,525 Bangladeshis migrated abroad. Mostly, they leave on expensive and perilous excursions by land, sea, and air, with and without papers. Despite the government's and development sector's efforts in recent years to institutionalize and control migration, it remains a perilous endeavor, frequently involving a desperate leap from poverty into worldwide human trafficking and exploitation. Many workers deace in the process. Most find low-skilled, physically and emotionally demanding jobs on the outskirts of their host societies. However, migrants continue to play an important part in the country's economic development.

## 1.2 History of female migration:

The labor migration sector was already in a stage of improper management and over that women are the least privileged.



*Fig 3: Year-wise overseas employment of female workers (1991 to 2021)*  
*Source: BMET*

Now, if we see from figure 3, the yearly migration ratio of the female migrants in the last 10 years, we can see that women are still way behind the total migration rate from our country compared to the males. According to BMET, female migrants who traveled alone or by family members were negligible from 1991 to 2003, at around 1% of total migration. This enormous gap occurred due to the severe restrictions placed on female migration. From the study of Anas (2015), it is identified, in the early 1970s though the Government of Bangladesh had no such policy for female migrants but in early 1981, a presidential order was passed with limited flexibility on female migration internationally. As per the order, only the highly skilled female can migrate but semi-skilled female workers cannot migrate without any local guardian.

Profession	Middle East	Far East	Total	%
Doctor	175	0	175	0.84
Nurses	1038	157	1195	5.74
Teacher	13	0	13	0.06
Factory Workers	171	4845	5016	24.09
Garments Workers	3810	229	4039	19.39
Housemaid	6121	185	6306	30.28
Cleaner/ Labour	4048	33	4081	19.60
Total	15376	5449	20825	100.00

Table 1: Female Migration from Bangladesh by Profession 1991-2004.

Source: BMET 2009

After 16 years, at the end of 1997, the restriction was again imposed with more focus on the job category level such as only doctors, engineers and teachers could migrate. Though BAIRA came forward against this ban calling it a stance against the development.

In the year of 2003, the newly formed Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (MoEWOE) brought a change in the policy of female migration. They eased the policy with some limitations for the unskilled or semi-skilled laborers such as the minimum age limit was set to 35 and security money for the agencies was increased for female workers to 50,00,000 BDT. This policy was eased more in 2006 by reducing the age limit to 25 except for the cleaners. With fairly sharp rises in 2014 and 2015, women made up nearly 19% of all Bangladeshi migratory workers by 2015. According to BRAC, about 9.24 lakh female migratory workers went abroad for employment in different countries, including those in the Middle East, between 1991 and 2020. But, unfortunately with the increasing number of female migrants the scope of work was not increased for them. Currently, in overseas, the employment opportunity for females are very limited to domestic work and garment work. As the migrants are mostly from marginalized communities so most of them are either unskilled or semi-skilled. (MFA, n.d.). As per IOM, over 1.2 million migrant workers from Bangladesh are working in KSA Saudi Arab, and female migrants are employed as domestic workers. But there is skill demand in other areas like medical service providers nurses, caregivers, etc. (The Daily Star, on behalf of UN Network on Migration in Bangladesh, 2020). International labor migrants from Bangladesh are occupied in 130 plus nations but the women migrants are only limited to less than half of this total nations. The migrants tend to migrate preferably to Gulf countries (Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arab,

United Arab Emirates), then south Asia and other region through legal recruitment agencies or sometimes even illegally.

This has been illustrated in figure 4:

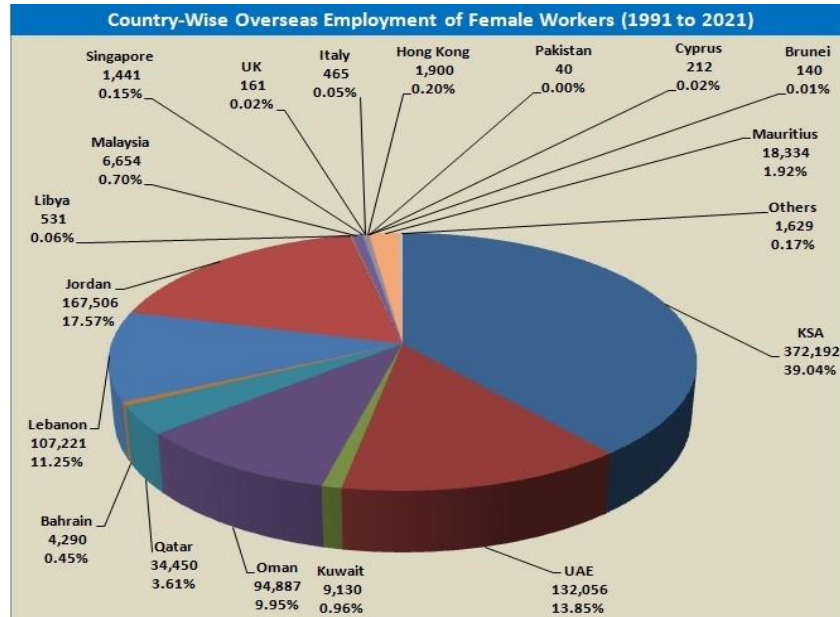


Fig 4: Country-Wise Overseas employment of female workers (1991 to 2021)  
Source: BMET

IOM Bangladesh National Programme Officer Nishat Chowdhury said: “Although women migrants have low skills and education, they send back higher remittances than men, and they contribute significantly in boosting the national economy. But our study clearly shows that the rights and welfare of female migrants need to be greatly improved” (IOM, 2013) Now from the graph below we can have the highlight of Year-wise remittances earned from 1976 to 2020.

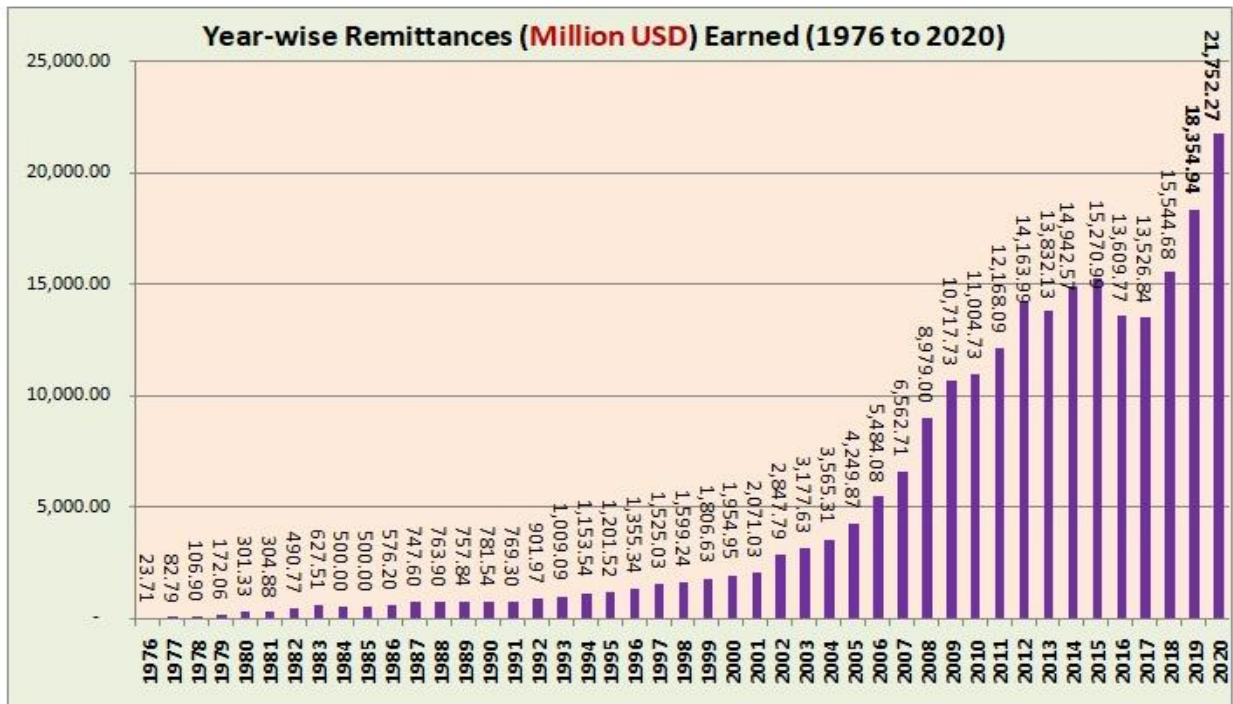


Fig 5: Year-Wise Remittances (Million USD) Earned (1976 to 2020)  
Source: BMET

It can be seen, post-2006 the influx in remittance got much higher, which happened after the female migration policy upgraded the age limit of female migrants up to 25. This helped to increase the recruitment of female migrants in the migration stream. Even, in 2020 as per World Bank we became the 8<sup>th</sup> largest remittance recipient. (Bangladesh 8th most remittance-receiving country in the world in 2020: World Bank”, 2020) According to BMET, during this time, the country received \$217.52 billion as a remittance.

### 1.3 Status of migrants during pandemic:

Low-wage migrants are more likely to reside in dorms or hostels in crowded locations, where distancing is a cruel joke. Due to pandemic this came to light that migrants live in a very unhealthy environment which is why covid-19 affected them most. As per the data of the Health Ministry of Saudi Arab at least 75% positive covid cases were of the labor migrants. And in Singapore, this percentage was much higher which was more than 93% positive cases as per the Singapore

Ministry of Health, 2021. Migrants were at high risk of being affected by covid-19 because of their crowded living place. Apart from the health risk, migrants work in very low-wage working sectors which were also affected by the pandemic. The lockdown of different countries put unjust pressure on the economic situation and resulting unemployment. Migrants already lead poor life even being employed and this unemployment at the time of lockdown made their lives more miserable.

During the Covid-19 Pandemic, the unfair treatment of Bangladeshi migrant workers in host countries was frequently in the spotlight—whether it was the detention of unregistered workers or their mass deportation back to Bangladesh. It is been said by Abrar (2021) that “Despite having due visas and work permits, the workers were forced to return by their employers. The state-sponsored repatriation process did not ensure that workers could lodge claims to their unpaid entitlements in the future.” All the while migrants were facing wage theft and great uncertainty over prospects of employment. Nearly three-quarters of domestic workers were at significant risk of losing their jobs thanks to the Pandemic. Since the beginning of the pandemic, the housekeeping industry has been the least secure and focused. Due to employers' fear of being impacted by covid-19, MDWs found themselves in a hazardous situation. Because MDWs operate in a variety of settings and are thought to be less concerned about pandemics, their presence has become a source of concern for employers. As a result, they began terminating their employment, leaving the migrants in a deplorable situation during the lockdown. They had no choice but to return to their homes. As a result, as many as 225,582 expatriate Bangladeshis from 29 countries returned home on October 24, 2020. Alam (as cited in Dhaka Tribune, 2020) said that a total of 200,146 male and 25,436 female expatriate Bangladeshi workers came back home from April 1 to October 24. A total of 191,194 ex-pats returned for various reasons, including not having work due to the coronavirus crisis and expiration of the time frame of work, contract, or Akama (visa) as 34,088 back without a pass after serving different jail terms, he said. Among the returnees, some 60,989 workers returned from Saudi Arab, the second-highest 59,920 ex-pats came back from the UAE due to a lack of jobs in their employing organizations.

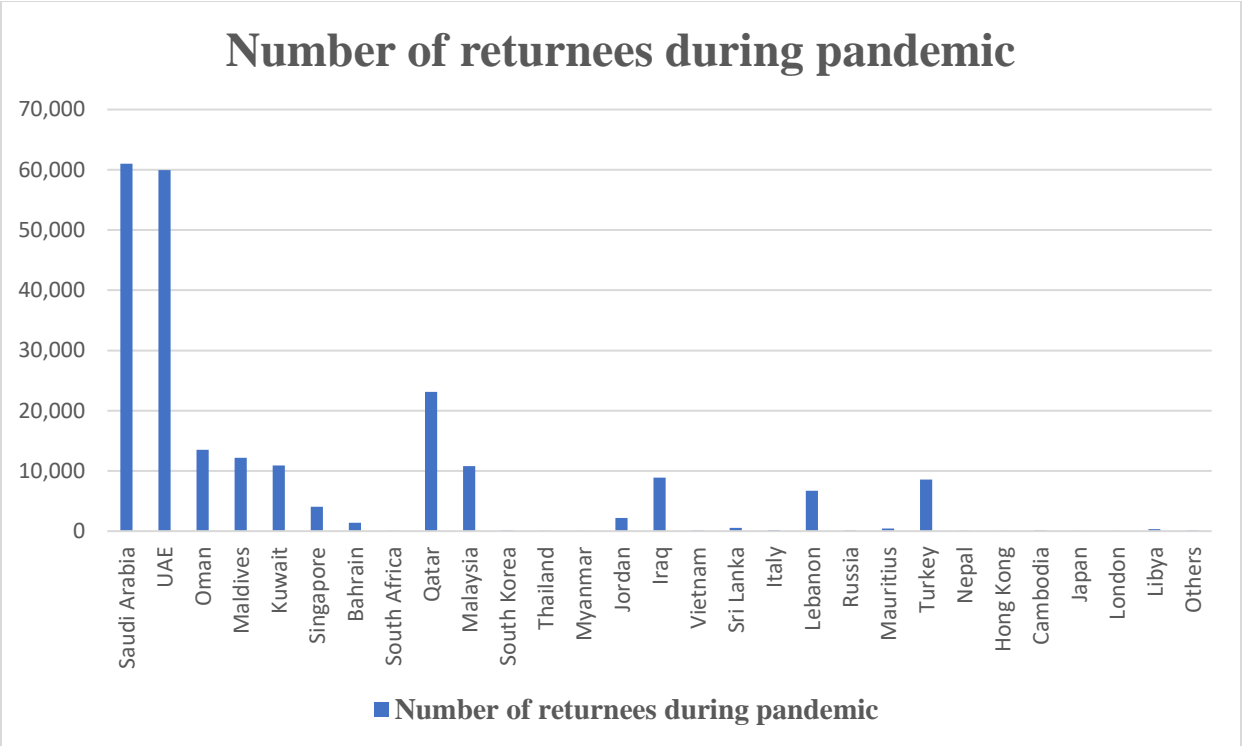


Fig 6: Number of Returnees during pandemic (April 1 – October 24, 2020)

Source: Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment, 2020

About 49,924 female migrant workers returned home from 21 countries amid the coronavirus pandemic, Brac Migration Programme (2020) said.

Country	Number of female returnees during Pandemic
Saudi Arab	21,230
UAE	11,602
Qatar	4,826
Oman	3,209
Lebanon	2,910
Jordan	2,259

Table 2: Country-wise female returnees during pandemic

Source: Brac Migration Programme



Also, as per the Daily Star's (2020) data "77 corpses of female migrant workers arrived home amid the Pandemic when global air communications largely remained suspended, it added. Shariful Hasan, head of the Brac Migration Program, said after analyzing the data from Expatriate Welfare Desk at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka-- 22 female migrant workers died in Saudi Arab, 14 died in Lebanon, 11 in Jordan, 7 in Oman, and 4 in the United Arab Emirates this year. From April to October 2020, a total of 20,788 migrant women returned to Bangladesh through Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka."

#### **1.4 Reintegration challenges and Possibilities in pandemic:**

The reintegration process is an interconnected concern between the employer and the home country. However, due to a lack of coordination on both ends, the process chain is not adequately geared. This inequality became more apparent during the pandemic when migrants were confronted with the hardships of forced unemployment. As a result, migrants were forced to return due to uncertain employment, putting them at risk on multiple levels. Their misery begins in the home, then radiates to the community and the state. Concerns about effective reintegration arose as a result of the crisis. Migrants who have been away from their communities for a long period find it difficult to reintegrate into their communities. Migrants typically return with a diverse set of contemporary skills that exceed the community's employment capabilities. As a result, returnee migrants are at risk of losing their jobs. Furthermore, even if they wish to invest to generate chances for themselves, they may not have access to the correct knowledge about the industry and logistics. For new aspiring investors, the community lacks field experts at the grassroots level. Returnees who are unwelcomed by the community and have social stigmas exacerbate the shortages. People question migrant women's financial sources, marriage status, decision-making authority, and other factors.

However, migrants are more than just remittance carriers; they are also a conduit for bringing new opportunities to the community. Beyond gender prejudice, migration aids in the transfer of skills from modern cities to the grassroots level. The social capital that female settlers bring back home

also contributes to socio-profitable development, mortal rights, gender equivalency, and women's commission (UN Women, 2013a). More community leaders with technological, logistical, and administrative understanding are produced as a result of this approach. They gain a better understanding of human rights.

## Chapter 2: Literature Overview

In recent findings, it is observed that the migration process is highly contaminated with the concept of gender biases. Gender-sensitive practice is an age-old custom of the patriarchal social structure of Bangladesh. This practice acts as the barrier in ensuring basic human rights for females and formed a concept about them as the secondary part of the society. According to Lim (1997:220), patriarchy is the system of male domination and female subordination in the economy, society, and culture that has characterized much of human history to the present day. Patriarchal institutions and social relations are responsible for the inferior or secondary status of women in the capitalist wage labor market. Hartmann (1981) argues that both housework and wage labor are important sites of women's exploitation. To make sense of the condition of women it's important to look at the gender dynamics both in public and private spaces. As a result, in recent decades, the concept of females' participation in the male-dominated labor market became a more researched and voiced area.

According to Anas (2015), conventionally, the physical mobility of females has always been significantly limited. But despite limited scopes females never stopped working hard to have their economic independence by taking a paid job outside their home. Thus, female labors even secured their participation in international labor migration but with the cost of social stigma and insecure migration process. Female migrants are more susceptible and face many difficulties in having information for safe migration. Since women started migrating very lately especially the unskilled and less skilled females so the migration process was never strategized considering any female-friendly support. As a result, both the migration agencies and the migrants suffer much. Besides, women's scope of work in the overseas is confined to domestic work, cleaning, garment work, etc.

which are very less formalized and less protected sectors with a very low range of wages than the male migrants whereas male migrants have broadened labor market like construction, farming, garments production, salesman, waiter, etc. It limits the benefits or scope of improvement for the females. Moreover, since the female migrants are mostly with zero education so they lack knowledge in using modern appliances and it results in low wages sometimes physical abuse by the employers as well. Even female migrants cannot have alternative employers easily in times of fierce situation. Despite their contributions to host countries, female migrants are not assured of basic protection. As per Alam (2021), “Wherever they go, migrants typically take up the jobs that locals will not do. In most societies, they remain segregated, outside their host society's social safety net and legal protections, particularly vulnerable to the shocks to their host economy.”

In multiple dimensions female migrants are exploited as per ILO (2008):

**Sex:** male vs female.

**Race, color, and ethnicity:** in labor market situations where the principle of “equal treatment and opportunities” is not applied, mainly in the case of women migrant workers belonging to a certain ethnic or racial group vis-à-vis the racial or ethnic origin of the majority of the population.

**Occupation:** performing jobs where they are not formally considered workers.

**Wages:** performing jobs where the principle of “equal pay for equal work” is not applied.

**Nationality:** as foreign workers vs nationals.

**Migration status:** as undocumented vs documented.

## 2.1 Concept of return migration:

While there have been scholarly approaches to return migration since the 1960s, with hindsight, it is undeniable that the 1980s were fertile ground for scientific debate on the return phenomenon and its implications for origin countries (Cassarino, 2004).

Return is “in a general sense, the act or process of going back or being taken back to the point of departure. This could be within the territorial boundaries of a country, as in the case of returning internally displaced persons (IDPs) and demobilized combatants; or between a country of destination or transit and a country of origin, as in the case of migrant workers, refugees or asylum seekers” (IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019).

There are mainly two different types of return migration which are described below:

1. **Voluntary return** - is “the assisted or independent return to the country of origin, transit or another country based on the voluntary decision of the returnee” ([IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019](#)).

- **Spontaneous return** is “the voluntary, independent return of a migrant or a group of migrants to their country of origin, usually without the support of States or other international or national assistance” ([IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019](#)).
- **Assisted voluntary return and reintegration** is the "administrative, logistical or financial support, including reintegration assistance, to migrants unable or unwilling to remain in the host country or country of transit and who decide to return to their country of origin" ([IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019](#)).

- **Voluntary humanitarian return** is the application of assisted voluntary return and reintegration principles in humanitarian settings and “often represents a life-saving measure for migrants who are stranded or in detention” ([IOM, 2020](#)).
2. **Forced return** - “a migratory movement which, although the drivers can be diverse, involves force, compulsion, or coercion.” ([IOM Glossary on Migration, 2019](#)).

However, it seems like the official definition of return migration by IOM *is not well defined*. For example, IOM’s concept of “forced migration” doesn’t allow us to understand how pandemic, warfare, structural violence often force a large number of exploited precarious migrant workers to return home.

## **2.2 Return migration in pandemic and its consequence:**

Though every year return migration occurs but, all category of return migration is not recorded. Abrar (2021) argued, during pandemic, there was a record number of forced return migrations due to lockdowns, travel restrictions, unemployment, etc. Returnee migrants were not well received in their home nations. The treatment they received at airports and quarantine centers was far from good. The rapid influx of returnee workers, many of whom arrived empty-handed, added to the strain on households and communities already struggling to cope with the pandemic. Returnee migrants were confronted with economic and social difficulties. In the pandemic recovery strategy, the reintegration of these returnee migrants became the priority in the national policy discourse.

## 2.3 Concept of reintegration:

There are no clear legal or policy structures that enable reintegration, except many countries. This hasn't changed much since the 1980s when a study of return emigrant workers in Asia and the Pacific by (ESCAP Secretariat, 1986, p.136) shared the authorities (of Asia and the Pacific) haven't built up any significant initiatives or strategies for reintegrating returning migrant workers. The idea of reintegration came prominent in the environment of war deportees in African countries in the 1980s. In recent times, the term entered in the studies of migratory workers. (Arowolo, 2000). Besides, as per the report of AFML to ILO (2018a) Structured reintegration programs in ASEAN, transferring countries are yet in their inception. Nawaz and Tonny (2019) found in their study our people have limited knowledge of the concept of reintegration and other hypothetical models to define the different elements of reintegration, as mentioned by Kuschminder (2013). The process of return migration necessitates new community adjustment and acceptance, as well as collaboration in comprehending the missing links of livelihood when they were away from their homeland for an extended period. The entire process of reconciling in the origin is called reintegration. This process is not a direct or any simple step and it does not imply that they can simply return to their previous way of life; rather, it takes time to acclimatize to a new way of life in their previous way of life, which was often quite superstitious. Some people can reintegrate rapidly, while others will never be able to do so, resulting in re-migration. The study discovered that the reintegration process can be divided into four categories. Those are-

1. cultural orientation,
2. social networks,
3. self-identification, and
4. access to rights, institutions, and the labor market.

According to their study, Islam (2010) considered three factors in the reintegration process for its true impact:

- a) The impact of entry status on the ability to integrate and settle
- b) Patterns of incorporation into the labor market and

### c) The impact of migration on the status of women and men

Besides, Boyd and Grieco (2003) observed the reintegration process as the multidimensional model of considering different components. Migrant returnees always come back with newly earned skills and experiences, remittance savings after their contract ends abroad with the employer. For the renewal process sometimes, they need to come back to the home country and then they fall under the reintegration process. Lack of knowledge on reinvesting and creating an alternative income source is the missing link of the proper reintegration. Latek (2017) claimed a different perspective by correlating political stability with smooth reintegration. As political stability results in a healthy socio-economy and plays a vital role in the reintegration process. Besides, he encouraged more access to vocational training and counseling for the returnees as it increases the opportunity for the returnees to reconnect with their community. Chobanyan (2013) emphasized on increasing access to information to minimize the obstruction in the reintegration system. And, more awareness-raising session needs to be coordinated from the judicial and private employment opportunities. He shared the weak reintegration process of Armenia which was full of unemployment, cultural and social unacceptance, housing, etc. to highlight the areas to be focused on for an impactful reintegration process around the world.

Another concept was presented by Setrana and Tonah (2014) that re-adaptation is another term of reintegration to avoid the negligence received while they were away. This also added that peers play a key role in the process of reintegration into the community. The study showcased the challenges behind the successful reintegration which are unstable infrastructure, unemployment, corruption and bribery, unstable political situation, etc.

Besides, the mindset of the surrounding people of the returnees also effects highly this reintegration process. In Kumasi, Ghana returnees are idolized with their experiences and acquired skills, knowledge it burdens them mentally to fulfill the high expectation of their peers. In the IOM (2015) report, it is highlighted that returnees are sometimes degraded by the non-migrants of the community with different assumptions which add to the challenge of reconciliation of returnees. Besides, their learned skill does not match the existing job market of their origin community which frustrates them in terms of financial reintegration. The journey of reintegration is never simple.



## **2.4 Gendered reintegration:**

Another dimension is found that males and females are unequally treated even in the reintegration, just like the migration process. This reintegration lacks impactful strategies for the female returnees (Islam, 2010, as cited in Nawaz & Tonny, 2019). Lack of coordinated, integrated, and comprehensive approach to sustainable reintegration of returnee migrants at home is a big challenge of reintegration of women.

The reintegration challenges are categorized in multi-dimension.

### **2.4.1 Mental health well-being:**

Physical torture, workplace exploitation, mental and sexual harassment, and other forms of abuse are frequent among women migrants abroad. Diseases and occupational injuries are highly widespread, even though health care options are very restricted for labor migrants. It is also usual for female migrants to be without legal assistance while they are abroad. They are encouraged to remain silent due to the lack of complaint channels which leads to psychological challenges. Because of the taboo of being sexually molested overseas, they are often shunned by their communities. People frequently make derogatory remarks about their "unconscionable lifestyle." Many returnees have been forced to confine themselves at home as a result of this toxic social attitude. (Tithi, 2021). Swapna Rani (30) a returnee from Saudi Arab stated,

*“I was bound to return as I faced physical torture there in Saudi Arab. I had to cook for a family comprising 24 members. I usually did all the household chores. If I failed to meet-up their requirements they tortured me. I have got skin sickness due to unbearable physical torture and mental pressure. I was injured not only physically but mentally because of being fear of harassment. Then I decided to return home. Now my physical health is not good as I had before. My family members are treating me as a stranger. I have lost my goodwill and honor which is creating psychological pain for me. I feel like suicide myself. I find no interest in life anymore” (Nawaz & Tonny, 2019, pg.55).*

### **2.4.2 Unemployment:**

From the study of Nawaz & Tonny (2019), it was identified returnee migrants encounter difficulties in finding new jobs due to a lack of certified work experience abroad. The situation is particularly susceptible in the case of forced returnees. According to the returnees, the circumstances in their home country are far more difficult than their lives before migration when asked about reintegration issues. It would be preferable if they had never relocated.

*“I did not find any job after the return. My experiences are not matching here with my expectations. I worked as a housemaid in Saudi Arab. I had a month-long training before going there. I did not have collected any certificate from there. I wanted a better job with a handsome salary but I failed to find it as the wage is lower here in Bangladesh for us rather than abroad. I wish to re-migrate but my family was unwilling to send me again. I learned new things during my stay in Saudi Arab but didn't know how to use my skills and experiences. The opportunity is limited here for us”* ---a returnee woman from Saudi Arab (Nawaz & Tonny, 2019, pg.54).

### **2.4.3 Socio-cultural reintegration for the female returnees:**

Returnee migrants also face difficulties in social reintegration because of different stigmas. The startling finding by (Tithi, 2021) is that female returnee migrants are having marital difficulties as well. According to the survey, 14.7 percent of returnee female migrants divorced their husbands, while 10.5 percent were simply abandoned. Most of our female returnee migrants are in a similar predicament.

Akter Shanu (28) a returnee from Saudi Arab:

*“I was being near to rape in Saudi Arab. I was senseless due to the torture by the house lord. My left hand was fractured. I had to spend more than one lakh taka for going there*

*but I did not get my money back and I had not the opportunity of sending money to the country. Society is now criticizing me for my decision of migration and my husband opposed to accept me anymore. My husband is deciding to get married again. He has decided not to continue with me anymore. I don't know where I should go and how will I live my life” (Nawaz & Tonny, 2019, pg.55).*

This story highlighted, even though these female migrants were merely the victim of an unfortunate incident of sexual assault, social stigma prevented them from being welcomed even by their own community. Social reintegration becomes the biggest challenge for female returnees.

#### **2.4.4 Gender-based insecurity in decision-making power:**

The cultural change that occurs in the absence of the returnee causes these reintegration challenges. Migrant women, help to make family life more comfortable and easier by staying away from the family, but their sacrifice is often untold (Anas, 2015). Women, feel obligated to please their husbands because, despite their increasing mobility and economic power, migratory women are keen to emphasize that the reversal of labor is ad hoc and clearly temporary. This is supported by their spouses, who use gendered symbols and meanings to maintain their masculinity while reluctantly staying at home and doing women's tasks. The deep engagement of women in decision-making processes is intolerable for men. (Hoang & Yeoh, 2011). As a result, domestic violence and family difficulties emerge.

## 2.4.5 Limited knowledge about savings and investment

According to the study of Nawaz & Tonny (2019), the majority of returnees spend their hard-earned money in repaying loans, home activities, and gifts for family members upon their return. They are unable to save much for reinvestment due to some irrelevant norms of bringing expensive gifts for the family. Instead of producing a revenue stream, they create more cost-cutting garbage. They have a limited understanding of income-generating chores and small businesses, and as a result, their investments typically result in little cash flow. Having their own house is a priority for them because they have always lived in a shabby environment, but they cannot imagine that if they create an income source, their cash flow will be consistent. Most of the time, their sustainable financial and economic reintegration are hampered due to their short-term thinking. As a result, their hard-earned remittances get finished much sooner than expected. In some remote areas, there is very little opportunity to pursue business prospects or reinvestment in any other aspects.

One of the returnees back from Saudi Arab has said,

*“I earned but I lost. I did not know the mechanisms of spending my hardcore earnings. I am doing a little business now without having any support from others. I even don’t know the channels and networks for supporting me. I don’t know any mechanisms of government for us”* (Nawaz & Tonny, 2019, pg.54).

A returnee woman from Saudi Arab said,

*“After my back from Saudi Arab, I have bought a land though I had only few cash at my hand. I take a loan and purchased the land for housing purpose”* (Nawaz & Tonny, 2019, pg.55).

Two individual surveys were conducted by RMMRU and IOM on the remittance utilization along with the socio-economic profiles. This survey also predicted other key areas of reinvestment. Such

- as:
- a. Loan repayment
  - b. Social events
  - c. Community development
  - d. Business

## 2.5 Gendered reintegration in Pandemic:

Migrants were unreasonably affected by the pandemics and the consequence worsened the existing gender-based inequality. According to the study (Brac, UN Wmoen & CIC, 2021), at least 61% of households with minimum of one migrant returnee member lost their job and 44% shared they failed to find any job to earn whereas they are bearing expenses from savings, asset rentals, etc. Besides, another serious concern appeared when 25% of returnees shared their fear of repaying the loan which was taken for their migration, and this loan amount range is 76,000 BDT to 7,00,00 BDT. Moreover, another concern from a different dimension was identified during the pandemic. At least 4.57% of returnees were school-going children who were in fear of dropping out of education. Apart from this, 74% of female returnee migrants shared they were unable to get any income-generating job whereas 18% feared facing additional workload of households in the pandemic.

Reintegration of the female returnee migrants became difficult as they had to return to their communities where availability was scarce. The lawmaker suggested that they could be re-educated or re-skilled in the areas of teaching, handicrafts, etc.

*“It is easier to train them in work that can be done at home.” In his comments, Tanvir Shakil Joy, member of the Parliamentarians’ Caucus on Migration and Development, said: “Returnee migrants tend to spend their savings on purchasing luxurious items instead of making an investment. We need formal institutions to help them preserve their earnings and ensure a better future for them.” “It is difficult for them to get a job here after returning. So, if we can provide them with loans for small businesses, it will be more helpful for them,” the ruling party lawmaker added. (Dhaka Tribune, 2021)*

## **2.6 Limitation of reintegration triggers repeat migration:**

In Bangladesh, repeat migration has always been a way of life. This is seen in developing countries, especially in low and mid-level labor (Rahman, 2019). Moreover, (Rahman, Bakshi & Kamruzzaman, 2011) found in their study that unemployment, poverty, economic degradation, and community maladjustment in the home country are key push factors behind repeat migration as per most relevant studies. Abrar (2021) stated due to the different challenges in reintegration, migrants are unable to put their advanced abilities to use in their home country. As a result, they are forced to work in low-wage jobs, adding to their already-existing obligations. More impoverished pockets emerge in places with a high migrant population.

However, to secure the entire migration system which includes pre-migration, post-migration, return migration, reintegration, and repeat migration, Government prioritized establishing policies and rights. I have mentioned some of the rights below:

## **2.7 Measures taken by the Government:**

### **2.7.1 The international employment policy**

In a situation report of United Nations (n.d) it is discussed that the foreign employment policy was formed in 2006 to ensure safe migration and take safety precautions while overseas. This policy was a lifesaver in terms of ensuring the basic rights of Bangladeshi migrants in all aspects. For the benefit of labor migrants, an agreement was reached with Gulf countries, South Asian countries, and other countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Libya, Oman, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Malaysia, and South Korea. Furthermore, under this policy, family members are also covered by the government's support system, to safeguard migrant rights. Safe migration was highly prioritized under this policy to:

1. Exploring the job opportunities in abroad
2. Maximize the outreach of this labor market to cope with other high remittance recipient countries
3. Develop the skills through vocational training to increase more skilled human resources
4. Make fair procedural of the recruitment agencies by limiting the service fee by 84000 BDT including the air ticket for the male aspiring migrants and 20000 BDT for the women aspiring migrants of housekeeping sector only where the air ticket will be provided by the employers.
5. Additional attention is advised for the female migrants by organizing awareness sessions of secure migration and mandatory reporting by the recruitment agencies about the female migrants towards the mission
6. Developing Bangladesh Mission's capacity abroad and establishing the safe houses
7. Strengthening the M&E of the migrants especially female migrants.

o **Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL)** BOESL is a limited company under the control of the Ministry. It was established in 1984. This is a government-owned organization, which is responsible for enhancing and processing foreign employment. The main function of this organization is to carry out the business of recruiting agents for employment of Bangladeshis abroad with a nominal service charge. It is also undertaking effective employment promotion campaigns in the labor receiving countries.

o **Expatriates Welfare Bank:** To reduce the cost of migration, the Government has established “Expatriates Welfare Bank” (Probashi Kallyan Bank) for giving loans with simple interest to the aspirant workers going abroad and providing financial assistance to the returnee migrants to invest in productive activities.

## 2.7.2 The saving schemes and account facilities for migrant workers

Though the government of Bangladesh already identified the social and economic reintegration challenges, still working on the required steps to be taken. But the most recent action by the government is to have a bank facility to support the returnees financially. In the study of (Siddiqui & Abrar, 2003) the schemes are highlighted which are discussed below:

i) **Non-Resident Foreign Currency Deposit (NFCD):** Migrants can have an NFCD account in any branch of Bangladeshi and foreign banks. The account can be opened for different periods: one month, three months, six months, or one year in foreign currency. This account can be maintained for an indefinite period even after the return of the wage earner (migrants). One is also eligible to open an NFCD account with his/her savings within six months of one's return to Bangladesh.

ii) **Wage Earners' Development Bond:** The remittance of Bangladeshi migrants abroad can be invested in Bangladeshi currency in a five-year Wage Earners' Development Bond. The profits are investable in Bangladesh and the bonds accrue an annual interest rate of 12%.

iii) **Non-resident Investor's Taka Account:** One can open a NITA by the money remitted for investment in the share and securities of the capital market of Bangladesh. Such an account may be opened in any dealer branch of an authorized bank. The central bank also allows the investment of funds in remunerative business projects to the account holders. 62 Most of the commercial banks, nationalized and private, offer the Bangladesh Bank facilities and instruments to Bangladeshi wage earners. These include the NFCD account, Wage Earner's Welfare Bond, and Non-resident Investor's Taka Account.

## 2.8 Suggestions by the Government:

Though different policies were prepared by the government since the beginning of migration. However, they were not prepared to take into consideration women's needs. Hence, this has been identified by the government recently and the different ministries have suggested a few of the



policies to be revised. According to the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (2016):

### **2.8.1 Protection of the Rights of Migrant Workers and Members of their Families by MoEWOE**

1. A combined four-stage protection structure (viz: during the pre-departure stage, during departure, during a stay in the destination country, during return to the country of origin) will have to be built.
2. A four-stage welfare program based on the protection structure will be chalked out.
3. Welfare program will be regularly monitored and evaluated.
4. Labour Welfare Wing will be strengthened.
5. If it is necessary, pressure will be exerted so that countries of destination implement the international conventions framed for safeguarding the interests of the migrants.
6. Policy will be adopted and implemented for ensuring reintegration.
7. Separate immigration counter for migrant workers will be arranged at the airport where a database will be maintained for storing information of departure and return.
8. For carrying out the purposes of the Anti-human Trafficking Act, 2012, specific actions will be taken for the prevention of human trafficking under cover of labor migration.
9. Services of Airports, travel routes, and air transports will have to be modernized and upgraded to provide appropriate safeguard to female migrants, and requirements of outbound and returnee migrants will have to be kept into consideration.

A structured policy framework for sustainable reintegration needs to be introduced by the government of Bangladesh. Government should take preventive measures to tackle the inhumane forms of attitude to migrant workers especially women migrants at home and abroad.

### **2.8.2 Policy suggestion for the gendered reintegration:**

The development of distinct legislation, regulations, and programs for returnee men and women is a pressing need. Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (2016) emphasized the establishment of databases for returnees, particularly women. Furthermore, referral services for returnees should be established, partnerships with national banks and private sector lenders to assist returnees with soft loans and easier access to funding. Banks should issue loans to help people overcome their financial difficulties. Returnees' social safety nets, such as free education for their children, can be established. For migratory employees, a one-stop service center should be built. It is necessary to ensure the development of government officials, local community members, and local leaders' capacities to create a network of support for returnees. It is necessary to publicize good practices. Furthermore, foreign missions must be proactive, and the government should lobby labor-receiving countries and explore alternate markets to lessen reliance on the Middle East. The government should locate secure nations for women migrant workers, have a competent investment program in place to solve the economic issues of women returnee migrants and provide psychosocial counseling and legal help together with social and economic counseling for reintegration. A solid and comprehensive process should be implemented, with a focus on women migrants' socioeconomic reintegration.

### **2.8.3 Policy suggestion for multilateral partnership:**

According to the action plan of the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment (2016) Government and NGOs, along with other private sectors, should work together for the technical skill training of returnees. Steps will be taken for extensive publicity works through radio, television, and other mass media and through advertisement aimed at raising mass awareness, especially for preventing the dissemination of misleading and deceptive information and publicity. (Policy Directives 2.2.10). Basic entrepreneurship training, business development, and livelihood program assistance for workers and family members should be ensured. Introducing financial literacy training to promote efficient and productive use of remittances, nurturing the

skills and experiences of returnee migrants should be ensured. Migrants have a great contribution to the national economy of Bangladesh. Returnee migrants are the assets for their families as well as for our country. So, socio-economic reintegration should be facilitated in a meaningful and comprehensive way by eradicating the mentioned challenges in Bangladesh.

With the increased demand for labor migration now the government of Bangladesh would like to maximize the outreach of exporting human resources. This will ensure the economic growth of the country by reducing poverty. The earned remittances are both incomes for the family and also for the country which is reinvested in the origin country. Different agencies or organizations are working on finance management counseling for the returnees. Many projects on awareness-raising are ongoing for efficient financial management. Though the ongoing activities are very limited if we compare with the need or demand. To advocate for the migrant worker's rights an employment contract will be prepared which will help to ensure the minimum wage figure, regular on-time payment of the wages, health, and other security (ILO, 2018). This MoU will be in both languages. Moreover, labor laws and laws relating to social protection in destination countries will be closely examined before accepting any fair BLA or MoU. (Policy Directives 2.2.3) Considering the trend of international migration and the structural dynamics of skill, measures will have to be taken for ascertaining the comparative status of Bangladesh as a labor-sending country, which will help to find ways and means for taking preparation for catering to the demands of the ever-changing labor market.

To ensure the social reintegration of returnee migrants, BRAC is working for providing community support, contributing, and promoting institutional support too (BRAC, 2019). A baseline survey was conducted by DEVCOM from August 2020 to November, 2020 on "Recovery and Reintegration Support for Bangladeshi Returnee Migrant Workers" for CAFOD UK. This was executed by Caritas Bangladesh and OKUP in 8 different districts and 25 Upazilas and was designed considering both genders. Gender experts should be recruited to identify the gaps in strategy in both pre and post-migration stages. Generalizing the support system for both genders will help women to have ownership of their assets and decision-making. Moreover, men also need to be counseled to adopt the changes in women's empowerment. (Birchall, 2016)

## **2.9 Research Objective:**

Though many policies are established for the reintegration of female migrants, different organizations are working to execute the policies and support them throughout the years, but still, female migrants are exploited in different aspects which came into light mostly during pandemic. Besides, new challenges also appeared for them in home and host countries. In the past, the countries of origin turned a blind eye to the return and rehabilitation of short-term migrant workers. Exploring new markets for deployment and implementing methods for safe and orderly migration has been their main priorities. The focus of policy has mostly been on regularizing the recruitment channel in the drive to capture bigger volumes of remittances. There has been a noticeable vacuum in policy and program intervention on the repatriation and reintegration of labor migrants in this environment. And this is why the unprecedented situation requires more concentration to recognize the gaps for incorporating gender equality in the context of migration. It's not the policies we need to change but we need to strengthen the implementation:

The objective of the research thus is:

- a. To identify the precariousness of the reintegration for female returnee migrants in their home country during pandemic.
- b. To determine the possibilities in the reintegration process for female returnee migrants.

## **2.10 Theoretical Framework:**

This study focuses on six theoretical frameworks, which are detailed below:

### **2.10.1 Neoclassical Economics:**

The neoclassical approach to international migration is predicted on the notion of wage differentials between receiving and sending areas, as well as on the migrant's expectations for higher earnings in host countries (Todaro 1969, 140), return migration seems to be viewed as the consequence of their failed experiences abroad or because their human capital was not rewarded as expected. The neoclassical economics of migration views migrants as individuals who maximize not only their earnings but also the duration of their stay abroad to achieve permanent settlement and family reunification (Cassarino, 2004, p. 255).

### **2.10.2 New Economics of Labour Migration:**

New Economics of Labour Migration contends that people move on a temporary base to achieve their pretension or targets in host countries, as a prerequisite to returning home. The duration of stay abroad is calculated concerning the requirements, in terms of insurance, coping power, and savings. Once similar requirements are fulfilled, return migration occurs. In fact, according to NELM, settlers go abroad for a limited period, until they succeed in furnishing their homes with the liquidity and income they anticipate earning. (Cassarino, 2004, p. 256)

### **2.10.3 The Structural Approach to Return Migration:**

The structural approach to return migration is essential for demonstrating the impact of contextual factors on returnees' ability to innovate and appear as change agents. Return experiences are shaped not just by skills and financial capital, but also by local power relations, customs, and values in

home countries, which have a significant impact on returnees' ability to invest their migrating experiences in their home nations. Concerning two variables: time and space, the effects that return migration may have in-home countries. (Cassarino, 2004, p. 259). In terms of the status of returnees and their own societies, time refers to the length of time spent abroad as well as the changes that occurred before and after migration. Returnees' reintegration depends on social developments in their home societies as well as professional advancement. To be reaccepted, a returnee must readapt to the new cultural and behavioral standards of his community of origin, which is referred to as resocialization, according to W. Dumon (1986). Depending on the length of the migration experience, this process of readjustment can take a long time. Furthermore, according to Dustmann (2001), the period of stay overseas should be maximized to allow migrants to learn and develop their talents, increasing the likelihood of them being invested once they return. In terms of space, structuralists claim that the settlement region (rural or urban) influences the reintegration process of returnees and restructures their aspirations. Furthermore, family members tend to monopolize resources by investing money in the construction of large houses and the purchase of luxury cars rather than using savings to modernize agricultural technology, for example. (Cassarino, 2004, p.260) Returnees tend to focus their consumption patterns on unproductive investments and conspicuous purchases, according to structuralists, because they adapt their expectations and behaviors to local society to be "accepted" (Byron and Condon 1996, 100 cited in Cassarino, 2004).

#### **2.10.4 Self-Help Approach:**

Interestingly, the word "self-help" implies that people participate in activities for their own benefit; but, one of the most important aspects of self-help activity is that people come together to aid one another. A traditional understanding of the self-help approach is that it involves an action that has a consequence of providing some benefit to or improving the well-being of another person. The self-help notion is based on the idea that people who are facing similar problems may help one other by teaming together. Furthermore, it has been suggested that taking on this position is personally powerful, satisfying, and healing for the helper. Helping others establishes the helper as a valuable community member. So, rather than relying on traditional welfare organizations,

individuals can utilize self-help groups as additional support or as a complete alternative. Dissatisfaction with the traditional help organizations has also led to an increase in the use and number of self-help organizations. According to research, these groups act as an alternative to social stigma. A new member who has been stigmatized stereotypically finds quick acceptance as a group member. As observed by Riessman, self-help organizations are characterized by a bottom-up kind of participation, and it is because of this grassroots aspect of the self-help concept that dependence is primarily on the membership's collective, experiential knowledge. This experiential knowledge has been defined as information and wisdom gained from one's own or others' life experiences. Many people feel that one of the most important parts of all self-help groups is the exchange and communication of experiential knowledge. Participants in self-help groups, according to Schubert and Borkman, must believe that the knowledge they receive from experience is valuable and should be shared with others. Members of a group can characterize an issue they've encountered and set guidelines for dealing with it by sharing their personal experiences. There are obvious variances in the fundamental makeup of various styles of self-help. (Dwyer, C. D., & Maruna, S., 2011, p.3).

### **2.10.5 Markov Chain Analysis:**

A Markov chain is an appropriate representation of the structure of the behavioral process of repeat migrants. The key feature of this model is that the future state depends solely on the current state. (Constant & F. Zimmermann, 2003)

### **2.10.6 Refuse to work syndrome:**

The refusal to work syndrome is defined by an inability to keep or find a job for an extended period. Political, personal, or philosophical considerations can all contribute to this attitude. As a result, the individual contributes very little to his or her personal or household income. (Nemko. M, 2015)

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter outlines the study's specific methodological approach and its theoretical foundation. It also describes data collection, analysis, interpretation processes, and techniques, and reflects upon the limitations of the study.

### **3.1 Research approaches taken:**

#### **3.1.1 Qualitative Approach:**

As the study seeks to gather in-depth information and holistic insights concerning the reintegration challenges of female returnee migrants during the pandemic, it employs the qualitative approach, which entails collecting and analyzing largely non-numerical data. Creswell (1994) and Merriam (1988) identify the distinctiveness of qualitative research for privileging the voice of the research participant and understanding how they make sense of their lived experiences.

Secondly, qualitative research involves understanding the processes and dynamics concerning a particular social phenomenon. Notably, the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in qualitative research. Hence, the researcher's profound involvement in fieldwork is critical for qualitative research. In terms of theorization, the study undertakes the inductive method. According to this mode of reasoning, research findings and higher-level abstractions emerge from the rigorous analysis of raw data of the participant experiences (Creswell, 1994 in Panday, 2004, p.7).

#### **3.1.2 Feminist Standpoint Epistemology:**

The research is built on feminist research methodology, specifically Feminist Standpoint Epistemology. Inspired by the French writer Simone de Beauvoir, this unique philosophy of knowledge or theoretical perspective emerged from the Second Wave of feminism that engulfed the social science faculties of the Western universities between the 1960s and 1980s.

In her seminal text, *The Second Sex*, published in the US in 1953, Beauvoir rejected the idea of "the essence of woman." She argued that institutional, social, and cultural norms of a patriarchal society, underpinned by androcentric ideology, constituted women the second sex or the "other"



vis-à-vis men. During the time, white, bourgeois, middle-aged men dominated the academic world in the West. Likewise, a heightened emphasis on objectivity and rationality characterized research practice. Since the 1960s, feminist scientists began to critique sexist outcomes of supposedly value-free, impartial, dispassionate scientific research. These observations led to two fundamental questions: how is knowledge produced? Who produces it and for what end?

According to Dorothy Smith (1974) and Barbara Dubois (1983), the western metaphysics of knowledge had placed man as the "knowing subject" and woman as "the Object of knowledge." They argued that what was presented as universal knowledge was, in fact, a male form of knowledge, and social science was built upon the male social universe. In her interrogation of philosophy of science, Sandra Harding identified the epistemological foundation of social science research methods as androcentric and questioned the claim of scientific objectivity. Drawing on Hegel's dialectical philosophy of the master/slave relationship and Marx's historical materialism, she proposed the idea of Feminist Standpoint Epistemology (Westmarland, 2001).

Building on the concept of class, Marx analyzed the history of capital from the vantage point of the proletariat. Following the dialectical tradition, Harding highlighted the consequences of structural gender inequality on knowledge production to argue that women as marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that make it more possible for them to be aware of things and ask questions than it is for the non-marginalized groups (1986). Following this line of thinking, this research denounces the prevailing view of female migrant workers in many economic analyses as merely a source of remittance. Instead, it brings the unprivileged social positions as women at the heart of analysis. The study attempts to understand the phenomena of reintegration through the eyes and experiences of women. Furthermore, it aims to apply women's knowledge in the light of gender-friendly policy outcomes.

In interviewing women, the study refuses to undertake the conventional approach in which the interviewers' questions dictate the nature of dialogue within an unequal relationship. Instead of the preoccupation with building rapport, the study attempts to cultivate a non-directive, non-judgmental, and more reciprocal context of correspondence among the researcher and the researched. Inspired by Oakley (2016), the study perceives such correspondence as to the gift

relationship's transactions (Mauss, 1954). It does not consider interviewees simply as the provider of data, but the process of interviewing as the correspondence becomes a strategy for eliciting marginalized and obscured lived experiences, perspectives, and insights.

Based on these strong features of the qualitative research this approach is considered to be relevant to this study. Like other research approaches qualitative research follows multiple data collection processes. Among those five processes were adopted for this study. Those approaches are:

1. Interview
2. Observation
3. Focus group discussion
4. Primary research
5. Secondary research

## **3.2 Data Collection:**

To bring the research outcome both primary and secondary data were collected. Primary data was collected through interviews/case studies (first-hand) and secondary data from periodicals, research papers, newspapers, documents, pictures, reports, etc.

### **3.2.1 Primary data collection:**

To collect the information for this research the support was taken from Bangladesh Nari Sromik Kendra (BNSK) as they develop skills for the female migrants with certification and have a pool of aspiring female migrant workers. After discussing this study with the Executive Director of BNSK, Ms. Sumaiya Islam eagerly came forward voluntarily in connecting with the female returnee migrants. She arranged two dates to interview 18 participants at the end of the classes of BNSK so that their class schedule is not hampered. So, here the sampling was random since the participants were selected by the authority randomly based on individuals' readiness to speak about their migration experience.

A two-day site visit was conducted to collect data from the interviewee. On the site approximately in total 8-hour interviews were taken with 18 informants from 24<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to 25<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at the empty training classroom of BNSK.

Interviews were taken in two forms:

- One-One in-depth interview
- Focus Group Discussion

An ethical perspective was followed during the interview. Each interview was for about 20 to 30 minutes where participants were very cooperative despite not being offered any incentives for attending the interview. Before starting the interview, a short briefing was conducted by the researcher about the importance and reason behind this interview session. This briefing played an important role to enlighten the informants about the impact of their data. They became very much proud to hear about the research topic and when it was explained how their story will help the policymakers to identify the challenges, their interest increased highly. They felt the urge of sharing their untold stories to contribute to the completion of this research. Even though they were requested to inform about anything they feel uncomfortable sharing. But interestingly they became very detail-oriented while sharing their stories to maximize their contribution through data and also shared their valuable opinion on how their challenges can be eased. On top of that, they were very concerned about the volume of their voice if it will be audible in the recording or not. They suggested also writing notes if something remains inaudible in the recording.



*The researcher with the research participants*



*The researcher with Achin Marma (Center In-charge, BNSK) and aspiring migrants.*

The interview process was a semi-structured interview which is then the blended form of a structured and unstructured interview. Initially, a key set of questions was taken but on the site with the flow of the conversation open discussion and cross-sectional study were involved. Key research questions for this explanatory research were:

- What phenomenon created their desire to migrate abroad?
- Who helped you in the processing?
- How pandemic affected their return?

- What challenges do they face in the reintegration process in pandemic?

- Why do they want to remigrate?

These are my 18 research participants' research information at a glance concerning the migration process. It involves:

No.	Name	Duration of Work	Work Location	Monthly Income	Return for	Remigration Reason
1.	Sathi	7 years	Lebanon	30000-40000	Pandemic	No savings
2.	Shahina	10 years	Lebanon	30000-40000	Pandemic	No savings
3.	Shahnawaz	3 year 8 months	Lebanon	13000	Pandemic	Not able to get a job here
		2 year 8 months	Jordan	17000		
		1 year 8 months	Saudi Arab	22000		
4.	Hajera	2 years	Jordan	10000	Pandemic	No savings
5.	Hasina Banu	3 year 5 months	Jordan	25000	Husband's death	No savings
6.	Mukta	2 years	Lebanon	20000	Pandemic	
7.	Shilpi	4 months	Saudi Arab	20000	Torture by the employer	No savings
8.	Ajirun	2 years	Saudi Arab	12000	Pandemic	No savings
9.	Dilara	2 years 3 months 18 days	Saudi Arab	22000	Pandemic	No savings
10.	Mst. Noyon	2 years	Jordan	16000-17000	To look after kids forced by husband	No savings
11.	Mst. Parvin	6 years	Kuwait	15000	Pandemic	No savings
		2.5 years	Dubai	30000		
12.	Asma	2.5 years	Saudi Arab	22000	Pandemic	No savings
13.	Akhi	2 years	Saudi Arab	17000	Pandemic	No savings
		1.5 years	Oman	12500		
14.	Rozina	5 years	Lebanon	15000	Pandemic	No savings
15.	Nasima	6 years	Saudi Arab	7000	Pandemic	No savings
		6 years	Dubai	15000		
16.	Rina Chowdhury	4 years	Jordan	15000-25000	Pandemic	No savings
17.	Shorifa	3 years 3 months	Jordan	15000	Pandemic	No job
18.	Shantona	3.5 years	Saudi Arab	18000	Pandemic	No savings

*Table 3: Respondents' migration details based on research question*

The discussion was open-ended along with the basic introductory question on the name, location, age, marital status, migration period, etc. This basic information helped to have an ice-breaking in conversation.

To regulate the flow of discussion some open-ended questions were also asked. For instance,

1. Despite having work experience for several years why you are enrolled here for training?
2. Did migration help you to overcome your fears and boost your self-confidence?
3. After working for years in abroad what is one thing you want to change in the system if you have the opportunity?

These open-ended questions helped to get some new insight into the research. This research topic was very sensitive to bringing out information so the researcher took the opportunity by motivating the participants by sharing some success stories on the consequences of not giving up. The group of participants barely spoke about their journey to anyone and internally felt very depressed so to develop a trustworthy relationship few dispersed stories were brought from the life experience of the researcher also relating to the study. The open-ended discussions were in FGD so that if someone individuals can relate their story after listening to others' side and speaking up. It helped them to believe that they are not the only sufferer, rather other people are also having sometimes similar and sometimes more brutal. There is nothing to be feeling low and there are people to support if they needed. Then all of them encouraged each other in different situations which created a ripple of positivity, unity, and trust among the returnees.

### **3.2.2 Secondary data collection:**

To complete this research some journal articles, periodicals, webpages, web documents, reports, etc. were interpreted along with the government policies to be a more concrete dataset. The journals were mostly from the research programs of UN, IOM, ILO, EU, BMET, BAIRA, etc.

### **3.3 Data Analysis:**

It is referred by (Islam, M. N., 2008, p. 171) that observation refers to a technique that operates by systematically selecting, watching, listening, reading, and recording behavior and characteristics

of living beings, objects, or phenomena. The discussion of this research is the sufferings of the migrant returnees in different stages like pre-migration, during the migration period, and post-migration. After collecting the data from the returnee migrants, it was transcribed through repetitive listening of the recordings, reading from the taken notes carefully. Then it was analyzed and categorized to create the codes. The similarities and differences between the data given by individuals were interpreted. The codes were considered by the frequent appearance of a specific category. Moreover, to validate the codes it was cross-checked with the secondary data from the existing hypothesis. It was claimed by (Weick, 1989) that testing of existing theories and a tested hypothesis is at halfway “between validation and usefulness” for the unprocessed data.

In this case, most of the hypotheses were focused on the precariousness of migration and reintegration. For example, adverse relationships, social stigma on gender-biased moral values, unemployment after coming back, unsustainable investment of the remittances, etc. But interestingly a new insight came in front from this research which is empowering and mature mindset of the female returnees to sustain in this patriarchal community.

Codes	Core Idea
Migration works as the escape route from adverse relationships caused by →	Polygamy
	Addiction
Females are mentally abused to fulfill the men’s desire	Females are given a lack of ownership on remittance and assets built
	Females are forced to invest in unproductive areas
	Forced barrier in remigration based on the husband’s willingness
Increased remigration for the females	For a better living
	Improper savings management caused zero cash flow
The empowered mindset of the female returnees	Social stigmas are the representation of the dirty mindset not the women’s moral value.
	Making own decision of social reintegration

Table 4: Data analysis

### **3.4 Limitation:**

In-depth interviews gather qualitative data which are insightful but here the data was retrieved from a relatively small sample size so the study is limited on the information category and this cannot be generalized in all aspects.



## Chapter 4: Findings and Data analysis:

For female migrant workers, both reintegration and repeat migration are complicated processes, which have become even more challenging during the pandemic. Based on in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with eighteen research participants, the study sheds light on these aspects from the vantage point of women. The glimpse of the 18 participants' preliminary data is shown in the table below:

No.	Name	Age	Marital Status	Residence	Number of children
1.	Rojina	25	Married	Munsiganj	1
2.	Shahnawaz	38	Divorced	Dhaka	1
3.	Sathi	26	Divorced	Borguna	2
4.	Shantona	27	Divorced	Chattogram	N/A
5.	Ajirun	27	Divorced		1
6.	Nasima	37	Divorced	Naryanganj	2
7.	Hajera	28	Unmarried	Chattogram	N/A
8.	Shilpi	28	Divorced	Pabna	1
9.	Parvin	32	Divorced	Sylhet	N/A
10	Shahina	33	Divorced	Rajshahi	2
11.	Hasina Banu	31	Widow	Munsiganj	2
12.	Mst. Noyon	33	Married	Khulna	2
13.	Dilara	27	Divorced	Gazipur	N/A
14.	Akhi	27	Divorced	Comilla	1
15.	Shorifa	26	Married	Natore	2
16.	Asma	35	Married	Barishal	1
17.	Mukta	31	Divorced	Barishal	1
18.	Rina Chowdhury	24	Married	Faridpur	2

Table 5: Preliminary data of the research participants

## 4.1 Why did they migrate?

As per the neoclassical economic theory, the reason behind migration is higher wages and access to employment. Besides, this theory also views migrants as individuals who maximize not only their earnings but also the duration of their stay abroad to achieve permanent settlement and family reunification. Through analyzing the data, I received from the interview with the female migrants' similar evidence is also observed aligned with neoclassical economic theory.

### 4.1.1 Adverse marital relationship

Female migrants are not thought of as a category of maturation or epistemic guide. For women, the culturally defined good life is to have a home with her husband (Das, 2014). Home is often the place of masculine dominion in which the man expects the women's labor to secure the peace he craves (Price, 2002). And women are supposed to make it/maintain the serenity of this heaven through emotional labor. Out of affection women tend to compromise highly on their mental and physical well-being, pour unconditional love which is misinterpreted by the husbands mostly. Even, women also become habituated to blaming themselves for being failed to maintain the serenity of their self-proclaimed ideal home ruled by their husbands. And when this haven turns into hell women keep suffering silently which causes them even death sometimes. That is why suffering is undertaken as the category to have the monolithic representation of women. One of the returnees named Shahnawaz shared:

*" My father died of cancer when I was quite young. We were unable to take him to the doctor since the treatment was very costly. This agony has been bothering me for years. I wished if I could earn money. Later, after a few years, my mother married me off, but unfortunately, my married life could not last long. When I got married, my husband worked in a primary school as a teacher in North Dhaka. However, I didn't know how to read and write in stark contrast to him. This difference never was a matter of concern between us. My husband was very supportive. We were blessed with a baby after a year. We were happy in our marriage for over two years. My husband's salary was insufficient to run the family with a child. His economic inability made him depressed and provoked him to scold me, saying I was illiterate and poor. His words hurt me. So, I reminded him that he had chosen*

*me, knowing my situation. Nothing was hidden from his eyes. Then why suddenly, he was behaving so strangely? He didn't utter a word. I also told him to repay the money I lent him at the start of our marriage. Before my marriage, I worked as a cook in a house and earned 13,000 BDT a month. I gave my husband 1 lakh BDT as a loan from my savings, but he never gave back my money. Later, I found my husband had an illicit relationship with another girl. When I learned about the pregnancy of that girl it made me feel very much disgraced. It deeply hurt my self-respect. I could not tolerate this. So, I took a big step of divorcing him. After the divorce, I thought of doing something to earn for my son and me. And then, by taking help from a neighbor, I migrated to abroad."*

The life trajectory of 38 years old Shahnawaz illuminated how female migration is very much a gendered phenomenon. Echoing Shahnawaz, several research participants identified and emphasized adverse intimate relationships with their husbands, rather than adverse economic conditions, as the prime factor influencing them to migrate abroad.

*"I migrated to Lebanon to earn money for my daughter's treatment as she was suffering from heart disease. Since birth, she had a hole in the heart. But my husband was very reluctant, even about our daughter's treatment. He was an alcoholic and unemployed. I used to work as the domestic labor in two households. With that, I could barely manage the house rent, utilities, and food. Then the cost of treatment became an additional burden, but I wanted to save my daughter anyhow. Finding no financial support from my husband, I thought to migrate with the help of my sister as she was already living in Lebanon." ----  
----- (Rojina)*

*"I got married at my parent's will with their chosen groom for me. But unfortunately, I could not have any child due to some limitations of my health, and my husband was not ready to understand my complexity. He used to blame me for being barren and abused me. Once my husband and my in-laws attempted to kill me by poisoning the food. Luckily, I survived that time. Like a miracle, my parents came to visit me at that moment. They took me to the hospital as my health condition got worse. The doctor told my parents that if they were late, it would be difficult to save me. When I heard this, my parents decided not to*

*send me to my in-laws again. My family was very supportive. Later, I divorced my husband. To make me come out of this trauma, my family suggested that I apply for labor migration abroad. Then because of their motivation, I migrated to Saudi Arab.” -----  
----- (Shantona)*

The voices of Rojina and Shantona, women in their late 20s, illuminate the ways gender-specific challenges within the marital relationship forced them to opt for international labor migration.

#### **4.1.2 Unwillingness of the men to work:**

A couple of research participants claimed that their partners' lack of motivation or energy to work and earn for the family drove them to migrate abroad. Notably, they insisted the problem did not arise from unemployment but men's particular mindset and inertia. Instead of performing the provider role, their husbands like to depend on their wives income. As per section 2.10.6 in the discussed theoretical frameworks people with refuse to work syndrome are unwilling to work due to low self-esteem even if they have the opportunity to work. These people claim to love their families but are unwilling to support them economically.

*A returnee named Nasima, (37) said, “My husband wasn’t unemployed. He used to drive an auto car but not regularly. Sometimes he didn’t go to work for 20 days consecutively for no valid reason. He used to misbehave with me and take loans from others whenever there was a shortage instead of going to work regularly. Because of this kind of behavior, I moved to my parent’s house. My cousin used to live in Kuwait. From him, I heard that many women go abroad for work. seeing my struggles my cousin inspired me to go to Saudi Arab as he knew an agency. He explained, it’s not bad to work abroad. But that time, no one from my neighborhood migrated to abroad so it was quite difficult to convince my parents. I begged my parents for letting me go to Saudi Arab so that I can earn better and support the family. After convincing for days my parents agreed and I successfully migrated”*

Another returnee Sathi was married for more than 5 years and was blessed with two children. Unfortunately, her husband was engaged in gambling. Sathi said

*“My husband does not go to work; he used to spend all the time gambling, gossiping with local goons in the tea stalls. It became very difficult for me to raise the children with my limited income from garments. Seeing my neighbor who was a migrant I thought of seeking help. After listening about the migration life benefits from the neighborhood, I found the courage to dream a better life. But I was afraid if my husband gets to know that I am trying to migrate abroad he won’t allow me and will divorce me. Our children were too young so without the husband’s presence it will be difficult to migrate also. My neighbor helped me to apply for the migration and when all the confirmation came, I told my husband that for the children’s future I need to secure the income. Then, he also agreed as he never intended to work so there will be easy cash flow for him without even going to work if I earn well.”*

This finding opens another pathway to research on the reason behind the refusal to work syndrome among the men despite being from a marginalized community where people cannot earn a meal without work.

#### **4.1.3 Lower-costs of female migration:**

Ara (2021) mentioned in her study that female aspiring migrants are informed about their gendered eligibility to avail free of cost migration. Moreover, in a signed MoU between KSA and Bangladesh, it is mentioned that through the online system MUSANED employer will pay an advance amount to the recruiting agent to hire a female domestic worker. And for this, the female migrants won’t have to pay by themselves.

Apart from this, another opinion also came from the report presented in a virtual session which was jointly organized by Drishti Research Centre (DRC), Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF), and RAPID it was shared that the migration cost of women is 16% cheaper than the men. It is anticipated that the reduced price is for the high demand of domestic labor abroad and also making female migration more flexible to prepare more human capital. About this situation one of the interviewed returnees named Shahina said,

*“One of our neighbors went abroad and used to send money to her family monthly. Seeing this my husband became hopeful and insisted I go abroad for work. Initially, I didn’t want to go. I have two little children and also, I had a fear about going abroad alone. I asked my husband why wouldn’t he go instead of me! He said it needs a lot of money to go abroad for a man. We didn’t have our own home. My husband worked in a furniture shop. With his earnings, it’s impossible to build our own home and ensure a secure future for our children. Moreover, we already had some loans. So, after thinking about these, I decided to apply for migration. Though I heard there is no payment needed for female migration from my husband. But while processing I had to pay twenty thousand takas in the name of passport making. Still, my husband was happy as the amount was very little compared to the amount a male need to pay for migration. After all these processes I migrated to Saudi Arab in 2016.”*

It can be seen from this story that the government’s rule of zero cost for female domestic labor migration is violated by many travel agencies. Besides, from all the information shared by the returnee migrants among the 18 informants for this research:

Amount paid to the recruitment agency	70000	60000	50000	30000	10000	0
Number of migrants	1	2	3	1	2	9
Migration Location	Jordan	Lebanon, Kuwait	Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arab	Saudi Arab	Saudi Arab	Oman(1), Saudi Arab (3), Jordan (1), Lebanon (2) Dubai(2)
Year of migration	2016	2008 - 2014	2011- 2017	2019	2018	2017-2018
Type of work	Garment Worker	Garment Worker, Domestic labor	Garment Worker, Domestic labor	Domestic labor	Domestic labor	Domestic labor

*Table 6: Migration expenses vs type of work and location*

From their experiences, it was observed that thought migrants had to pay high for the work in a garment factory but 50% of the respondents did not have to pay for their labor migration for domestic work. The reason found if the agency person is known only then it becomes easier for the women to migrate as domestic labor with zero cost as per the government rules. A returnee named Shilpi (28) was the only child of her parents. She shared:

*“My father was the only earning member for the family since my mother was always unwell. Unfortunately, my father became ill and we could not get proper treatment as we did not have money. Seeing this I spoke to my paternal uncle about migrating abroad as he has the agency through which he used to send people. My uncle helped me in processing and I did not even need any money to spend for this.”*

#### **4.1.4 Availability of high wage jobs abroad:**

Females aim to join the migration stream due to a lack of financial opportunities in the home country. The conservative mindset also sometimes acts as a hindrance for the females to start working and being self-reliant. Migrants with the same set of skills get higher wages abroad than their home country as a result, they can support families and also have savings. They can dream of a sustainable livelihood. Thus, the unavailability of job scopes and the gender-based pay gap works as the push factor for the increased female labor migration.

One of the returnee migrants named Dilara migrated to support her sick parents through more earning. She said,

*“If we work in one house as domestic labor in Saudi Arab, we will get monthly at least 16000 to 20000 BDT and most expenses are taken care of by the employer whereas in Bangladesh if I work in one house of any local citizen, I will get 5000 to 6000 Tk maximum. Moreover, here I will have to think about my living cost. Through this income, how will I survive myself and going to support my family? Working as a domestic worker abroad ensures savings for my family so why won't I go there. Any migrant cannot sustain in our country after return for a long time due to lack of job facilities with a fair wage.”*

A migrant named Mst. Noyon (33) shared her story on this. She lived in Jordan for two years.

*“My husband had a problem with back pain severely so he could not work much. We also had two children. Our daughter was 1.5 years old and our son was 3 years old. I used to work as domestic labor in two households but the income was insufficient to raise the children and also do the treatment of my husband. So, I requested my neighbors if they find any suitable job for me. One day I got to hear from a neighbor that her sister-in-law works in a garment factory in Jordan. They are recruiting from Bangladesh. If I am interested, I can apply and her sister-in-law will help to arrange the interview. Later, I also communicated over the phone with her sister-in-law and agreed to give the interview. Fortunately, I was selected after the interview. My salary was 11000Tk and with overtime, I used to earn 16000 to 17000 Tk monthly. My living and food expenses were only 3000 Tk as my company arranged the accommodation. I could easily spend 13000 to 14000 Tk*



*monthly to Bangladesh. But if I worked in a garment factory in Bangladesh, I could only earn 6000 to 8000 Tk monthly which wouldn't allow me to have savings for the future of my children and also spend in better treatment for my husband."*

#### **4.1.5 Aspiration of a better living:**

In some cases, females look at migration as the escape route of their sufferings and torchbearer towards a better life. Usually, in the earlier life of the migrants, they experience the turmoil of poverty like limited access to fair wage jobs, adverse relationship with family, zero health support, and unhealthy accommodation compare to their later life of migration. That is why they consider migration as the vital element of ensuring a satisfactory livelihood which they failed to achieve in the home country before.

An aspired returnee migrant Mst. Parvin (32) shared,

*"I was really depressed after my divorce thinking I added additional burden for my parents as I had other two siblings. My father was a day laborer and my mother remained sick always. But my parents were very supportive of my failed marriage. They never talked about the challenges they were facing to feed three children. Even, they used to protect me from the rumors of the community people about my marriage. But, seeing the sufferings of my family I decided to be their support instead of a burden. Then I asked my cousin's brother to help me in migrating abroad. Later, with his support, I could complete all the procedures by taking a loan of sixty thousand taka and migrated to Kuwait to be self-reliant and support my family. I was in Kuwait for six years and I used to send 15000 Tk monthly to my family. Later, I migrated to Dubai for 2.5 years, there my income doubled and I could send monthly 30000 Tk for my family. With this income now my two siblings are taking higher education, we bought a small land to build a house in future"*

Another woman named Ajirun (27) migrated abroad as her husband wasn't much supportive and was addicted to alcohol and gambling. She shared

*"Though my husband was addicted, but I was very hopeful to bring back my husband from the path of darkness. Seeing people around me going abroad, I also went to a local agency for the guideline. With their support, I could migrate to Saudi Arab. But unfortunately,*

*even after sending money from abroad, my husband did not feel the urge of being a better person for the sake of our marriage. When I asked them about this, he started taunting me that now I became wiser than him just by living abroad and then divorced me. I was completely shattered at that time. But my family gave me moral support. And I regained my confidence. Now, I am a self-reliant person and don't have to depend on anyone else. My life is peaceful and better than before.”*

## **4.2 Reintegration challenges:**

Female returnees confront a slew of problems when they return from overseas, whether forced or voluntarily. The notion of new labor migration economics is used to characterize this voluntary return. Migrants return voluntarily once they earn enough to support their families, according to NELM. And forced returns occur as a result of a variety of events such as political turmoil, natural disasters, terrorism, war strikes, etc.

According to the structural approach, return experiences are shaped not just by skills and financial capital, but also by local power relations, customs, and values in home countries, which have a significant impact on returnees' ability to invest their migrating experiences in their home countries. As Dumon (1986) put it, “the returnee can be defined as a person who, to be reaccepted, has to readapt to the changed cultural and behavioral patterns of his community of origin and this is resocialization”.

In this process of readaptation returnees either have limited opportunity to employ their advanced talents due to a lack of job opportunities in the name of reintegration, or they are humiliated by the community because they are suspected of engaging in unethical activities. According to Tithi (2021), due to a shift in social views about returnee migrants, 54.2 percent of returnee migrants reported having unequal pay compared to non-returnee migrants. The proof for the discussed theories can be found in the interviews' common experiences.

#### 4.2.1 Social Stigma and mental well-being:

Women are frequently criticized for working outside the home. People, especially in marginalized communities, assess a woman's strength and capacity based on the presumption that women cannot earn much morally. Whenever a woman goes out on labor migration, she is usually met with harsh words from her peers. At each step, women must prove themselves to gain the respect that they deserve as just basic human rights. People either doubt their morality or their ability. And this is considered the most difficult hurdle for reintegration, as it has a significant impact on a woman's mental health. A returnee migrant named Hajera (25) shared

*“I lost my father all of a sudden at a young age. Then my mother started working in maternal uncle’s house with low-wage, my other two sisters had no income as they were studying in school. I used to work in garments but with this 4500 Tk monthly, it was not enough to run a family of four members. One day my paternal uncle came to me and said if I want, he can send me abroad with a labor visa. So, with the help of my uncle, I migrated to Jordan. I used to send monthly 10000 Tk to my mother through bKash. When my mother used to go to the local shop to cash out, the shopkeeper started asking my mother that what kind of work her daughter is doing that she is sending 10000 Tk every month. As words spread like a fire, so after a few days everyone in the community started talking that she is not even married and alone in abroad. But my mother was very patient as she knew I am working hard as domestic labor only for the family. It was also difficult for me to stay away from my family, I missed them very much there. When I came back during the pandemic I was not welcomed well by the community. My neighbors told their daughters not to be friendly with me thinking I will teach them unethical views. Some even said, she is 24 years old and still not married. She has no future. Why would anyone marry a girl like her whose character is not pure? But my sisters and mother are of great support for me to fight against this odd”*

Another female returnee migrant named Hasina Banu (31) shared her story on this. She used to live in Jordan for 3 years and 2 months. She was back in Bangladesh 8 months back for coronavirus. She expressed:

*“My husband used to work in a small firm at Mohakhali. He used to live in Dhaka with two of our children. Leaving our children at a very early age I took the tough decision to*

*migrate so that I can ensure a better living for them. One day I got a call from an unknown number that my husband had a stroke and he was rushed to hospital by his colleagues. Hearing this I sent immediately 50000 Tk for his treatment. I was working in a garment factory in Jordan and monthly I could save 15000 to 16000 Tk. The company used to give accommodation and food. But when the pandemic started the company was facing challenges and my salary was also reduced. I could only save 6000 to 7000 Tk. During pandemic, I received a call from Bangladesh that my husband is no more as he had a second stroke, and this time he could not survive. Hearing this, I decided to go back to Bangladesh for my children, and also the income was not good in the pandemic in Jordan. After coming back, I started getting marriage proposals and a lot of negative talk about myself. People used to say she came from abroad so who knows what she does there alone, even her husband is not alive now. Some men teased me saying why only foreigners should get a chance to enjoy, let us have the chance too. After hearing all these I became impatient so, I sent my children to an orphanage in Bogra and migrated again.”*

Among all this, another migrant shared her story about facing social stigma. And her case was shocking. Shilpi (28) shared

*“I went to Saudi Arab and only stayed for four months. My father was sick at the time, so I migrated there because of my financial crisis with the help of my uncle. Following that, the first two months went exceptionally well. I used to get 20,000 Tk every month in addition to food. However, after two months, my employer was unable to properly pay my salary. Even worse, I was forced to work in the homes of my employer's relatives without adequate food or money. Then I went to the police station and told them about my circumstance. Since the pandemic began, I was unable to find another employment and was forced to return to Bangladesh. I never imagined I'd have to return so soon, barely four months later. I couldn't even save; in the first two months, I sent all of the money I had gotten. My in-laws used to be very respectful of me since I used to send money and my name was taken with the highest respect. But now that I'm back in this pandemic with no savings people don't even call me at social gatherings and treat me as a disgrace to the family. They believe I did something improper with the owner, which is why I was not retained. Even in decision-making, my input is not valued as much as it was before migration. I feel I have*

*lost my freedom of speech. Not only that, but people look down on us, slandering my reputation. They stated that I was involved in immoral practices. I couldn't stand it any longer my husband's startled reaction to this and isolated myself at home for days. He also deserted me after hearing rumors from neighbors and family. He stated that he needed to live in this community and that he could not do so without taking into account the culture. He can't live with someone whose reputation has already been tarnished. He divorced me without even considering our daughter."*

#### **4.2.2 Lack of ownership on the remittance and assets built:**

Most women are inclined to give everything they have for their families. Even the entirety of their earnings. They seldom think of themselves because they believe they are incapable of adequately planning reinvestment or asset management. Men should be the only ones in charge of this. As a result, women's wealth and money are occasionally stolen. One of the informants had exactly this experience. Akhi (27) years old said

*"My husband encouraged me to migrate so that we may have a better life." My salary in Saudi Arabia was 17000 Tk when I moved there. I had to put in a lot of effort. It was a remote area where I was responsible for 400 goats as well as all housekeeping duties. My employer was abusive. Whenever I tried to take a break, she tortured me mentally and physically. One day, I made the decision to leave that place. I couldn't take my paperwork with me when I had the opportunity to flee. I took shelter in Madinah. A Pakistani man called me as his sister and helped me to hide in the mosque. Every day, I could only have Zamzam water and a few dates. He found me a job after seven days. My new employer was extremely pleasant; they assisted me in obtaining a new passport and used to pay me 27000 Tk as a salary. During that time, I also worked part-time in the neighborhood. I was paid 32000 Tk every month. Almost all of my money was sent to my husband. He repaid his loan of 300,000 Tk and also bought land with my money. Then he promised to transfer the land to my name as soon as I arrived. In 2018. Upon my return, I discovered that my husband had married another woman. And didn't even put the land in my name. He divorced me when I went to inquire about the land. I was out of money at the moment. So, in 2018, I*

*returned to Oman. After nearly two years in Oman, I returned home. This time, I used my savings to purchase my own piece of land."*

### 4.3 Repeat migration reason and challenges:

Repeat migration means multiple migrations from the home country. It is not necessary to migrate in the same destination as before. Remigration is a common term among returnee labor migrants nowadays. The structure of the behavioral process of repeat migrants is best represented by Markov chain analysis. The main characteristic of this paradigm is that the future state is exclusively determined by the current state. And this analytical view is observed in the shared stories of the research participants. Repeat migration occurs mostly due to their irregular cash flow or lack of any income source which reflects their unstable current state.

#### 4.3.1 Reasons behind repeat migration:

Repeat migration occurs when savings are spent due to unsafe reinvestment with remittances, limited job market access in the home country, or a desire to live a more progressive life, among other factors. The total response can be measured from this figure:

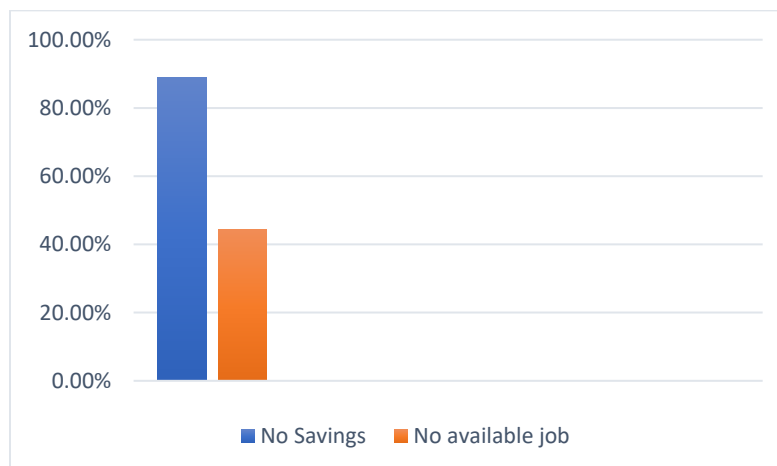


Fig 7: Major reason behind repeat migration

#### **4.3.1.1 Unproductive reinvestment:**

Migrants tend to reinvest mostly in paying loans, buying lands, marrying off children, or purchasing expensive gifts for the relatives and family members like mobile phones, gold jewelry, etc. Furthermore, rather than considering the creation of a supplementary revenue stream, returnees focus solely on their immediate desires.

One of the returnee migrants named Shorifa (26) said

*"When I returned to Bangladesh after a long absence, I was overjoyed to see my relatives. Before my move, my family had been through a lot. We couldn't even eat three meals a day consistently. I wanted to provide my family with as much joy as possible. So, I took a smart television for my in-laws, a smartphone for my father, and a gold necklace set for my mother on my way back. During my marriage, I witnessed my mother's embarrassment in front of my in-laws because she never wore jewelry. I returned during the pandemic. However, because my wages are nearly gone and I am familiar with all of the labor, I am considering remigrating."*

Another returnee Shahnawaz said

*"After coming back in pandemic, I decided not to return and instead stay with my only child. However, my savings are already over as a result of marrying off my child. I still have the ability to work. I don't want to rely on anyone else when I'm old. So, I'm considering working for a few more years and putting money up to build my own home."*

#### **4.3.1.2 Returnees are unable to utilize their hard-won skills from abroad:**

Throughout the migration life, the migrants adopt advanced skills on the usage of modern home appliances, how to cook multi cuisines, buying groceries from super shops, how to avail online services, etc. But after coming back to the home country, they face challenges in getting jobs. Mostly, they are highly qualified compared to the available jobs around their locality. This challenge is one step higher for female returnees. A returnee named Sathi said

*"I knew how to prepare all of the typical Arabian dishes. It was a duplex, and I used to be the only one as the domestic worker. There, I had to learn how to use modern household appliances such as a washing machine, microwave oven, electric oven, air-frier, and vacuum cleaner, among others. Why would I stay here if I couldn't find work that would allow me to put my skills to use?"*

Another returnee Asma said:

*"When I returned, I was unable to find a job. I applied for a job as a nurse at a community clinic. My interview went well, but they declined to hire me after checking my age. They were looking for people up to 25 years and but my age was 35. I was frustrated hearing this. Employers here mostly look for younger people. Then how would I survive here with this kind of discrimination? Despite learning all kinds of sophisticated machinery utilization techniques, I was unable to put my knowledge to use."*

Though these cases endorse the importance of remigration and ensuring sustainable livelihood this also highlights the gaps in process of reintegration.

### **4.3.2 Challenges in Repeat migration:**

The remigration process might seem simple and people might have questions like migrants already know the process of applying for migration then what challenges can appear? Some cases are discussed below based on these concerns:

#### **4.3.2.1 Improper documents preservation from previous migration:**

Returnees most of the time cannot preserve their documents like certificates, passports etc. This happens due to abusive behavior from family or lack of knowledge on the preservation process which makes their remigration process difficult and expensive while remaking those documents. As in most cases, returnees are left with no savings so some cannot remake the documents timely.



A returnee name Rina Chowdhury said:

*"I had four children and my youngest daughter was 1.8 years old when I traveled to Jordan to work. My husband works in the electrical industry. Maintaining a family of six with only one earning member is quite challenging. So, I had to take this decision of migrating abroad. I went there back in 2016. My starting salary was BDT 15000. I was employed as a housekeeper. My landlord was quite nice to me. I used to transfer all of my money to my husband in Bangladesh. I never had to worry about food, clothing, or medications. My owner took care of everything. During Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha, I used to get a bonus as well. I received my first raise after two years on the job. My salary became BDT 25000. I came back to Bangladesh in 2020 to see my family. At that time pandemic broke out so I was unable to return to my prior job. Also, seeing me after years my husband became quite emotional. He didn't want me to return to my old job. He destroyed my passport and training documents, preventing me from working abroad. But now that our savings have run out, my husband is pressing me to relocate. Due to the time it took to rebuild my passport, I missed one opportunity to migrate to Dubai in the interim. I am currently applying to Oman and require training certifications. That is why I am receiving Housekeeping training at BNSK."*

Another returnee named Asma shared,

*"I had no idea how to properly store my training certificates." I kept all of my paperwork in the cabinet once I returned, although some of them were damaged by termites and booklice. Now, to remigrate, I enrolled in BNSK for certified training."*

#### **4.3.2.2 Unawareness about the new work environment and fear of being exploited:**

Migrants in many cases learned to adjust with their workplaces abroad. When their contracts come to an end or for any other emergency like a pandemic, they have to return to their home country.

But during remigration, they cannot go back to their previous owner. As a result, a fear work in them that how their new owner will be. If they will be good or not. In which place they will be living and what kind of food will be there etc.

A returnee name Shahnawaz mentioned

*"First time, I migrated to Saudi Arab. There, my owner was quite helpful and friendly. However, I later moved to Jordan to work at a garment factory. I was quite unsure about my work environment because it is not in the same industry as domestic labor. Though the working environment was pleasant, I was unable to consume the factory's meals. The food smelled a little musty to me, and the spices were not properly prepared. As a result, my health began to decline. Later, I began cooking for myself, which raised my overseas expenses."*

Another returnee named Asma said

*"Whenever I tried to speak in Bangla, I was assaulted, but if I spoke in Arabic, the owner didn't hit me." Furthermore, the eating culture was to eat from a single dish, while maids were required to eat from separate plates. My migrating experience would have been a lot better if I had been aware of the culture beforehand. Now I intend to remigrate to Jordan. But I'm terrified of the new culture and individuals I'll encounter there. What if they're as bad as my former landlord?"*

Like the other two returnees, Shahina also shared her sad experience abroad. She said,

*"I'm terrified of relocating." I don't want to go through what I did with my first migration. Even though later I found a good home, that incident still gives me goosebumps. My first owners were not particularly wealthy. They paid wages for the first three months, but then stopped paying for the next two months. They had a family feud that resulted in the breakage of their cellphone. As a result, they seized my phone and inserted their SIM card inside. They used to give me the phone, though, so I could chat to my folks. And, my owner's spouse used*

*to lock me inside when he went to work. My employer used to spend the majority of her time with her children at her mother's house after fighting with her spouse every other day. My owner's husband used to take lunch outside in the afternoon and would bring me a sandwich on his way home at night. Most of the time I was without food and water as there was no grocery. The water tap was also damaged for several days. I was starving and determined to cook something in the kitchen one day. In their absence, I usually did not touch anything, fearing that they might beat me. But that day, I couldn't stand it any longer. I took flour and lentil to cook roti and dal. I was so relaxed after eating that I fell asleep. After an hour, I heard the voice of another Bengali laborer who used to work in the neighborhood and yelled through a broken window. She then assisted me in getting out of this situation by calling the cops. I'm not sure how I'd cope if she wasn't there. Later, I worked in another household, which was pleasant. But now while I am planning to remigrate, I do not know with whom I will have to be there and work. It would be good if we could get back to the good owners from the previous migration. But this is not possible ever."*

In the focus group discussion, all three returnee migrants suggested that the government should develop a policy that would allow them to return to their previous employment, where they felt safe. This will make their repeat migration easier.

#### **4.4 Empowered mindset of the returnees:**

The cognitive development of female returnee migrants is the most interesting conclusion of this study. Even despite many hardships such as failed relationships, social stigma, mental trauma, and so on, the returnees have a mature and positive perspective, which is thought to have been acquired through global mobilization. This positive come out of the adverse challenges is the newly found insight of migration. This not only improved their thought process but also helped them regain their self-confidence and capacity. It highlights the fact that the time has finally come to stop viewing women solely as sufferers. It emphasizes the need of recognizing their strength and knowledge regarding life's progress. We can experience a perceptual shift if we perceive things differently, which can help us see the unseen side of women's life. It is possible to choose socially

desirable destinations while avoiding gender bias. This development aligns with the theoretical framework of section 2.10.3, the structural approach which argues that return migration is essential to show how the impact of contextual factors on returnees' ability to innovate and appear as change agents. To put the light of reality on this two of the migrants' experiences are described: A returnee named Mukta showed her bravery in moving forward to have a secure life.

*She said “Many people have told me that Arabs are bad people. They are obnoxious. My experience, on the other hand, was quite different. My madam used to adore me, and still, whenever I give her missed call, she calls me back. They (the Arabs) are decent people. They don't want to hurt any of the girls. For someone like me, they spend roughly 6-7 lakh Tk to get out of here. They also spend on all of their essential needs, such as clothing, medicines, and cosmetics. I never had to pay for these things out of my pocket. She also purchased gifts for both of my children. I will be eternally grateful to her, and I pray to Allah for her good health. I built a three rooms house after coming back with 10 inches pillars. I also bought a lot of things for the house as well. but when I returned after staying in Saudi for 3 years, I was astonished to discover that my husband had done nothing in the meanwhile. I used to send money to my mother's bank account and raise my children that way. Later, I divorced my husband. One of my younger brothers is doing business and he helped me a lot. Both I and my brother used to contribute to the family. I was able to marry my daughters to decent families. My younger brother is currently preparing for the BCS exam. Even if I don't go abroad, I can now manage my family. However, because I am familiar with the process, procedures, and language, I am still able to proceed. I'd like to return to Saudi Arabia. People often tell me that I was fortunate at the time and that I should reconsider returning. However, I always tell them that there are good and bad individuals everywhere. If someone has been in difficulty before for a bitter experience, that does not rule out the possibility of good in that place. If I get into any kind of problem, I'll call the cops. I'm extremely familiar with the system now, and I've realized that there's no reason to stifle my ambitions out of fear of the unknown. I constantly tell people that if there is a problem, there will be a solution; all we have to do is remain calm and patient.*

Another returnee migrant Mahmuda shared:

*“Many people have this concern that people get tortured once they go abroad, but my experience wasn’t bad. Now that I have experience and I have the courage and know that language as well, going abroad wasn’t a problem at all. At the end of 2014, I flew to Dubai again. Before the pandemic started, I came back from Dubai. I have done so many things during my abroad life. In Dubai, I used to get 1400 Dirham. The owner had two houses. One in Dubai and another in Oman. They were very cordial about me. I came for vacation while covid just started but I couldn’t go back because of the corona. A broker then told me to give him my passport saying he will manage the visa. But then, he disappeared and I couldn’t get my passport back. I lodged a GD as well. I got my passport back eventually. I always tell the girls that abroad is not bad and as my experience was good as well. It all depends on you. Some people may have a bad experience and they tell others about it. That’s why many people are afraid of going abroad.”*

Apart from the hardships that Mukta, Mahmuda, and other migrants faced, another aspect of their shared experience emerged. The migrants as a whole became highly progressive. They learned that silently tolerating injustice is not acceptable, and how to speak up in the face of adversity. Relationship conflict and societal stigma had no effect on them. They fought until they were self-sufficient, and then they gave up. Even though they were a female from a downtrodden community controlled by men, they stood with their families. Surprisingly, in some situations, the family assisted the females in escaping the oppressive situation. Instead of being an economic burden, the female returnee migrants prepared themselves as human assets. Even a few years ago, this seemed unthinkable. They are now more comfortable expressing themselves. They had no emotions or regrets about their prior problems as they shared their story. Rather, they were quite proud of themselves and their peers, as evidenced by the focus group conversation. Even if some of them were afraid of challenges, they dared to face them. They believe that if they were able to overcome all of the unforeseeable outcomes previously, they can confront obstacles again. It is claimed that by having the privilege of witnessing this transformation, we have already entered an era in which equality has become the new norm.

## 4.5 Other findings:

Apart from all the discussed results, some other areas were also observed in this research. This finding will help us to have a better insight into the impact of migration, reintegration, and remigration. Those are:

### 4.5.1 Average income range of the migrants:

The average income range of the returnees varies highly from location, type of work, duration, etc. Interviewing the 18 informants the average income range is divided into two ranges.

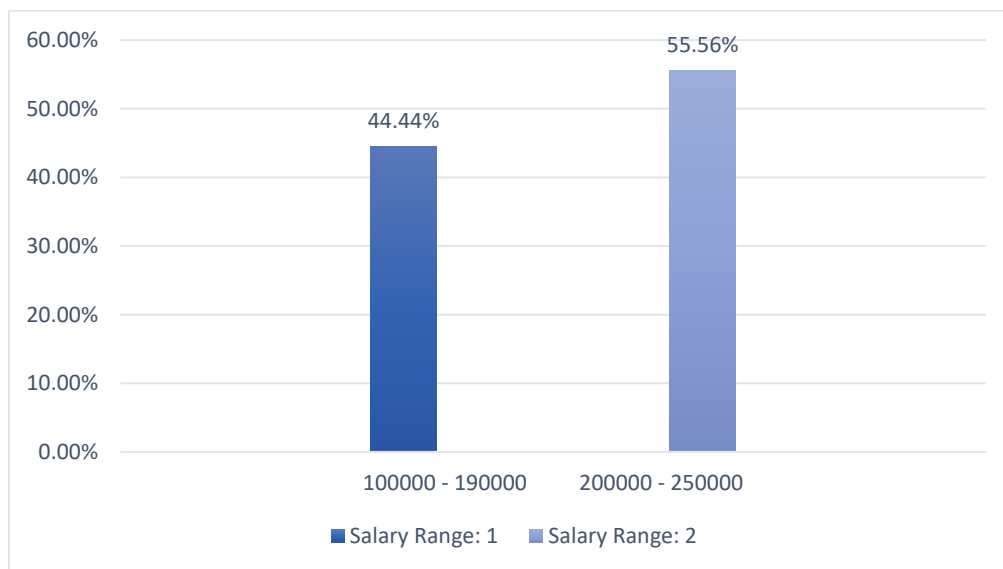


Fig 8: Average salary range of the research participants

### 4.5.2 Remigration location demand:

The majority of migrants prefer to go to Saudi Arab because of the improved amenities and security. Simply a few years ago, people were scared of even hearing about Saudi Arabia because many dead bodies of female refugees who had been subjected to horrific torture and sexual assault had arrived in Bangladesh. However, the system has altered, and the layers of the migration process now include more securities. Along with this growing desire to travel to Saudi Arab, another finding is that the majority of returnees are from Lebanon, yet they never want to return. People do not wish to go there since they are facing serious crises such as currency issues, lack of access

to energy, and shortage of water. The new aspired location identified from the research is shown in figure 9:

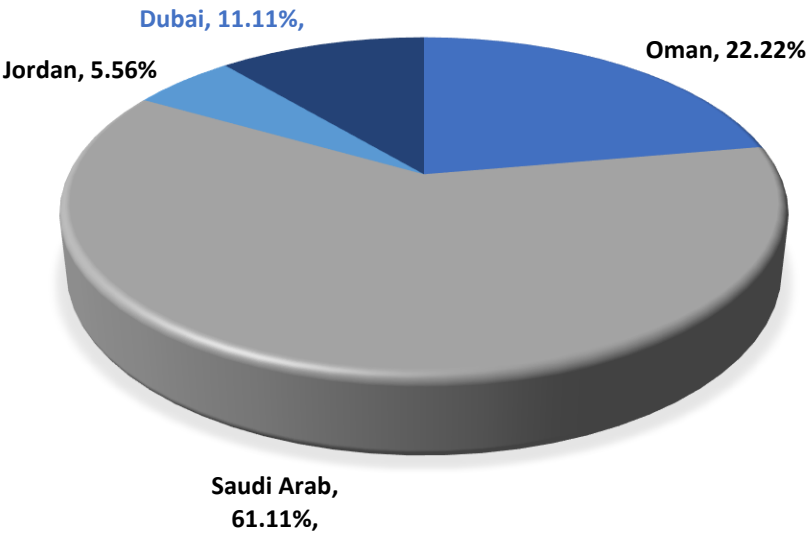


Fig 9: Newly identified aspired location of repeat migration

## Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the precariousness and potential for female returnee migrants during the pandemic in terms of reintegration. The qualitative technique aided in the study's findings and served as a tool for learning from the returnees' life experiences. After the interviews, all eighteen informants stated their comfort as they never had the opportunity earlier to reflect on their precariousness phase of life and how they emerged more confident. The informants shared their complete migratory experience, from aspiration to reintegration, as well as their ideas on remigration in the event of pandemic. A few important concerns surfaced as a result of their shared information. Domestic abuse, societal stigma, sexual assault, unemployment, limited access to knowledge, and lack of asset ownership are just a few of them. The research's most perceptive result, though, was the astute potential for women's reintegration

Though the process of migration has been viewed as tedious in many ways from its inception, it has eventually had a favorable impact on both developing and developed countries. Because of their ever-progressive lifestyles, developed countries are perpetually short on inexpensive labor. To ensure that their expansion is sustainable, they hire low-wage workers from poor countries. Low-wage labor, on the other hand, assists emerging countries in reducing their economic burden. Developing countries usually have a surplus of manpower, but they face challenges such as unemployment, limited resources, and corruption. Besides, the concept of migration always had a gendered connotation. As a result, in other literature development and policy discourses, female migrants are always underrepresented. They are classified as disposable labor in the gendered dimension of precarity. Only precarious is heavily emphasized, yet, there is hardly any research in Bangladesh that dug into / investigated the possibilities of female returnee migrants. They are, on the other hand, the acme of potential, reflecting maturity and futurism. Female migrants gain information and get a fresh perspective on life as a result of their experiences with many hard conditions in all aspects of life. The main conclusion of this study is the potential that has gone overlooked in earlier studies on female migrants. Migration, according to this result, aided women in identifying themselves.

One of the main things from findings through focus group discussion is it's not essential anymore that the traditional concept of the good life depends on man only rather women created an



independent mindset. Female returnees perceive migration as a means to get out of the gendered struggles. The prominent aspects like divorce, infertility, etc. that dominated the condition of rural women's life once these are not considered failures now. Possibilities are perceived in a broader context. Kadir Onur Unutulmaz, deputy director of Global Migration Research Center referred to migration as "human security". He also undertook migration as the key step to human civilization. He said "Throughout human history, migrants have brought new ideas, technologies, and cultures alongside wherever they went." It clearly brings an opportunity to improve human civilization as many migrants throughout history brought new perspectives and fresh ideas to their new homes (Alhas, 2019). According to him, migrants are never socially welcomed in the early stages, but we can see how they gradually become - significant actors for social growth, such as returnees bring important skills, learning, and expertise that can positively contribute to their countries of origin.

Returnee migrants' skills and expertise may also be useful in resolving the challenges of reintegration and also ensuring safe migration which is becoming a growing concern among activists. Since female migrants are mostly among the sufferer group so more focus is needed on a gender-balanced migration process.

The government and NGOs can construct a network of service providers out of female returnees, such as barefoot attorneys, who will act as the community's spokespeople, to ensure proper reintegration and a seamless relocation process. Their homes can be transformed into productive spaces. For example, each female returnee migrant's home can be considered a unique migration advisory agency. If a community has several migrants, a committee can be formed, with the most experienced returnee serving as the committee's leader.

These committee members will go door to door, run an awareness campaign through open-air group meetings, and ensure that everyone has access to the correct information. Both the service seeker and the service provider share a similar life sphere, as well as a similar language correspondence with even distinct dialects. Women from similar socioeconomic groups are more likely to believe returnee migrants about the migration process than any other agency. They will serve as a conduit between aspiring migrants and government authorities, giving correct information by government guidelines. As a result, would-be migrants will be protected against

being duped by immigration authorities. Their efforts may be aided by local leaders, civil society organizations, journalists, and others. The researcher strongly recommends that it will be tremendously helpful in terms of establishing a grassroots administrative effort or public demand for safe migration. The self-help approach is what it's called.

A classic interpretation of self-help is that it entails taking action that has the effect of benefiting or improving the well-being of another person. Furthermore, it has been suggested that taking on this assistance position is personally powerful, satisfying, and healing for the helper. Helping others establishes the helper as a valuable community member which was discussed in section 2.10.4. The main purpose of this method is to render victims as the agent of development. Furthermore, this will contribute to the development of an empowered village model and the reduction of corruption in the safe migration process. Women will empower other women as a result of this approach, and men will become more aware of the issue as well. The agencies can directly obtain a list of aspiring migrants from the committee, allowing them to proceed with safe migration.

The reintegration of female returnees will be less difficult and more respectful in this way. Returnees come out of social stigma Through playing important role in the migration process in their community.

Furthermore, attention should be paid to the restoration of the migrants' certificates copies in the recruitment agency or the government database, so that if they lose the printed copy, they can obtain an alternative copy without having to spend more money and time retaking the certification courses.

The primary focal areas for sustaining our economy through remittance earnings are proper job placement of migrants in the destination country and also the reintegration of returnees. Furthermore, because gender equality is a fundamental human right and it makes good economic sense to promote safe, lucrative migration opportunities for women (who account for half of Bangladesh's human capital), a human development approach to migration that takes gender perspectives into account should be incorporated into national development plans. To enhance support for returnees with limited resources, the challenges must be identified. The digital empowerment of returnee migrants, as well as their digital fluency, is sometimes overlooked. Returnees can use mobile programs like Sheba XYZ, Hellotask, HandyMama, Mistri

mama, Truck Lagbe, Foodpanda, Pathao, Uber, Shohoz, and others to interact with the digitalized urban labor market. To make working people's lives more comfortable and accessible in a short amount of time, these platforms require human resources. Migrants may be the ideal fit and speed up the reintegration process because they possess skills such as driving, using smartphones, browsing, checking Google maps, repairing, and cooking.

Migrants' high-earning remittances have fueled our economy for decades, and they deserve our help as they struggle to reintegrate. Only intermittent influxes of returnee migrants had occurred before the pandemic. On the other hand, challenges drive innovation. It's past time to concentrate more research on how we might use returnee migrants' experience to create new opportunities.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

From the foregoing chapters, this study guided us to determine that the reintegration of the female migrants has widened its possibilities. Precariousness and the possibilities of reintegration on female returnee migrants were the main focus. To conduct the research initially the migration history and nature of the gendered migration were discussed in the first chapter. How female migration took a constructive shape throughout the years in the sector like migration which was already dominated by a pool of men and how pandemics cause the influx of returnee migrants were also focused there. Besides, statistical data of the female returnee migrants was shown to understand the size of this influx. In Bangladesh, females are already a deprived minority due to the patriarchal community. And then the forced return of the migrants at a time caused an unimaginable challenge on the country's governance. Due to pandemic on one side, the health sector was exhausted, people were losing jobs, running out of food, money, etc. in Bangladesh and other side labor migrants abroad have faced job loss, wage theft by employers which resulted in their early return. Unwanted come back of the returnees added more economic burden. Though Bangladesh received the highest remittance during the pandemic that was a temporary pool of remittance. To overcome this challenge reintegration came as the only solution while all other countries were having travel restrictions and remigration was not an option anymore. Then in the second chapter, different literature on female migrant reintegration and remigration was discussed to identify the existing concepts on this research topic. This chapter of literature reviews helped to create the pathway of this study. As a result, a qualitative approach was undertaken to examine the research questions to have in-depth insights on the experiences of the female returnee migrants. In the methodology chapter, it was discussed how the research questions were examined directly through a semi-structured interview with 18 informants and how the data was interpreted to have a meaningful outcome. Apart from this, secondary data was also collected from the thorough readings of the articles and journals to have a comparison with the pre-existing literature on the findings. And finally, detailed findings were presented in chapter four by referring to the case studies to have a 360-degree perspective from the experiences of returnee migrants. The key highlight among these findings was to identify the possibilities of creating employment opportunities for the female returnee migrants by utilizing their days of hands-on experience on

migration through a self-help approach. This approach is basically to create a bridge between the aspiring migrants and access to the right information through the returnee migrants. Then in the discussion chapter the reintegration possibilities were elaborated to have a glimpse on the open-end field of future research especially about reflecting more on the empowered mindset of the female returnee migrants.

Women workers were recognized as an essential part of the economy in the Perspective Plan (2010-2021) and the Sixth Five Year Plan (2011-15). The Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment and its subsidiary bodies adopted a flexible approach to meeting migrant women workers' needs based on their family situations. The current efforts are geared towards skilling women workers before they migrate.

About rehabilitation of the returnee Bangladeshi ex-pats, Minister for Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Imran Ahmad said: "The government has taken the initiative to set up a fund of Tk700 crore for the rehabilitation of returnee workers and send them abroad again through re-training"(Dhaka Tribune, 2020). Besides, in the 8<sup>th</sup> Five-year plan (2021-2025) the government set the target to reduce poverty rate to 15.6 % and extreme poverty rate to 7.4%. And the government also aims to employ 11.3 million including 3.25 million overseas jobs. According to BMET, during this time, the country received \$217.52 billion as a remittance. So, we need to support the returnees with available resources. Returnees require access to health services, social protection, and quality jobs to cope with the fallouts. At the same time, Bangladesh needs to explore new labor markets to minimize disruptions to remittance inflows and expand options for Bangladeshi workers, supporting women's livelihoods and health is essential to avoid further impoverishment. Such an approach can have profound benefits not just for women workers themselves but also for their families, their communities, and the national economy of Bangladesh. This year, Brac and Standard Chartered Bangladesh came forward together with a collaborative approach of developing skills and entrepreneurship for the returnee migrants. The project entitled "Covid-19 recovery: Entrepreneurship Training and gainful Employment for Returnee migrants affected by covid-19 in Bangladesh" with an aimed duration of two years. More NGOs, organizations, and the government need to work together to rehabilitate the female migrant workers who have returned during the Pandemic. The notion of seeing only gendered precariousness must be dispelled.

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