

Women Migration in Bangladesh: Returnee Migrants and Re-migration Challenges during COVID-19

By

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20162014

A thesis submitted to the Department of BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my original work while completing my 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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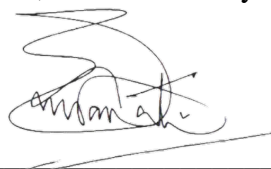
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Ethics Statement

I declare that I have obtained informed consent from participants before conducting interviews and the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants have been well protected.

Abstract

In Bangladesh, women mostly migrate as unskilled domestic worker and a small number of semi-skilled and skilled women workers migrate to other work sectors. Unskilled migrant workers face vulnerability during any crisis as they face information constraints and a lack of other services in their workplace and in the home country as well. During COVID-19, many migrant workers were forced by their host countries to return to Bangladesh and many came to visit their family with an intention to return. However, while most of the female migrants were eager to go back or re-migrate to a new place due to the economic difficulties faced in their home country, some did not want to migrate and wanted to stay in Bangladesh no matter how much struggle they were doing in here. While there were reasons behind such decision, women who wanted to return to their workplace and re-migrate, faced many difficulties during COVID-19 pandemic. This study attempted to explore diverse experiences and obstacles women migrants go through during their re-migration journey and how COVID-19 induced restrictions have added various dimensions of difficulties to that. This also examines why the highest portion of income as remittance sending group of Bangladesh go through such a situation and the deep-rooted cause behind their suffering. The question why and how women migrant workers are facing difficulties regarding their re-migration are addressed in the study. This study followed a qualitative method and used in-depth interview and key-informant interview methods to gather primary data. Data were analyzed through building themes and identifying patterns in their responses. The study finds that, knowledge gap regarding recruitment process, involvement of various recruitment actors, law and policy implementation gap as the most prominent theme that make re--migration difficult for women migrants and along with these issues, COVID-19 pandemic has created numerous difficulties like visa expiration, cancelation of flight, vaccination problem, financial difficulties for quarantine, passport renewal difficulties and so on. Despite the government taking various measures during the pandemic to send back the remittance earners, most of the women migrants were unaware of various information related to their return and rely on their local agents mostly. Moreover, the findings were analyzed in light of laws and policies taken by GoB and gender lens and found out that along with their gender identity as a women and their social class as an unskilled migrant worker, the loopholes in proper policy implementation creates different modes of discrimination and obstacles in their re-migration.

Keywords: Re-migration; women migrant; COVID-19.

Dedication

To the remittance fighters, whose sacrifices bloom our economy and yet those sacrifices are unnamed.

Acknowledgement

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Table of Contents

Contents

Declaration.....	ii
Approval	iii
Ethics Statement.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
Dedication	vi
To the remittance fighters, whose sacrifices bloom our economy and yet those sacrifices are unnamed.....	vi
Acknowledgement	vii
Table of Contents	viii
List of Tables	xi
List of Figures.....	xii
List of Acronyms	xiii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Research Background.....	2
1.2 Research Problem	3
1.3 Research Objectives.....	4
1.4 Research Question	4
1.5 Research Significance	5
1.6 Limitations.....	5
1.7 Structure of the Study	5

Chapter 2: Literature Review	7
2.1 Conceptual Understanding	7
2.1.1 Push and Pull Factors of International Labor Migration.....	7
2.1.2 Migration Law and Policy in Bangladesh.....	9
2.1.3 Overseas Employment and Migration Act 2013	9
2.1.4 Sustainable Development Goals and Migration.....	10
2.1.5 Policy and Measures Taken during COVID-19	11
2.2 Literature on Women and Migration	11
Chapter 3: Research Methodology.....	18
3.1 Data Sources	18
3.1.1 Primary Data.....	18
3.1.2 Secondary Data Source.....	21
3.2 Data Analysis.....	21
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis	22
4.1 Reasons for Remigration Decision of Women.....	22
4.1.1 Availability of Unskilled Job Market for Women in Bangladesh	24
4.1.2 No Savings and Repayment of Loans.....	26
4.1.3 Lack of Reintegration Facilities in Bangladesh.....	28
4.2 Remigration Challenges for the Women Migrants.....	31
4.2.1 Money and Information Gap	32
4.2.2 Renewal of Passport.....	34

4.2.3 Vaccination	36
4.2.4 COVID-19 Related Other Restrictions	38
4.3 Conditions to Fulfill for Re-migration and Key Actors for Creating Re-migration Challenges.....	38
4.4 Remigration Difficulties Apart from COVID-19 Induced Crisis	41
4.4.1 Traumatic Experiences and Deciding Not to Re-migrate	41
Chapter 5: Discussion	46
5.1 Reintegration Problem and Re-migration Decision of Women.....	46
5.2 Reason for Difficulties amid COVID-19	47
5.3 Sufferings of Women Migrants in Different Stages of Migration Processing.....	49
5.4 Women as a Victim of Exploitation.....	50
Chapter 6: Study Summary and Conclusion	52
References.....	56
Appendix A.....	65
Appendix A1.1	65
Appendix A.1.2	66
Appendix A2.....	67
Appendix A2.2.....	71

List of Tables

Table 1: IDI Respondent Profile21

Table 2: Problems women migrants are facing.....31

List of Figures

Figure 1: Factors of Migration.....	8
Figure 2: Responses regarding remigration	23
Figure 3: Savings of women migrants	26
Figure A1.....	65
Figure A2.....	65
Figure A3.....	66

List of Acronyms

BAIRA	Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies
BBS	Bangladesh Bank Statistics
BMET	Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training
BNSK	Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra
BOESL	Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited
BOMSA	Bangladeshi Ovhibashi Mohila Sramik Association
DEMO	District Employment and Manpower Office
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoB	Government of Bangladesh
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MDW	Migrant Domestic Worker
MEWOE	Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PKB	Probashi Kallyan Bank
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TTC	Technical Training Centre
UN	United Nations
WARBE	Welfare Association for the Rights of Bangladeshi Emigrants

Chapter 1: Introduction

The movement of people for temporary or permanent settlement is called migration. According to IOM (2011), migration is the movement of an individual person or group of people across international border or within a country. There might be many consequences of migration-social, political, economical. For economic reasons, migration can be internal or external and external migration means international migration. Although, men and women both actively participate in migration, however, according to ILO (2020), the migration of women is an important and critical issue and there is a lack of documentation, although the share of women in overseas employment has risen than the past. The participation of women in international migration has increased and globally around 49 percent migrants are women. The participation of women and their roles in international migration has changed greatly from the last few decades and women can now move independently for employment purposes across the border (IOM, 2011).

Research on migration clearly established that in developing countries, people mostly migrate for livelihood reasons and they go for short-term employment mostly. Although, in the past very few women used to migrate for short-term employment, in recent years this number is increasing. In many cases, they become victims of forced return from their workplaces. Despite so much uncertainty and tortures in their workplaces, they have to think of remigration to run their families, as in developing country like Bangladesh, there is a lack of employment opportunities and reintegration is very hard. To understand migration and participation of women in migration, the remigration phenomenon needs to be understood. When a person again tries for migration or again emigrates after returning to his/her home country, that movement is called remigration. Along with migration, remigration is also a coping strategy for the short-term international migrant workers, as there are lack of economic reintegration facilities to run their livelihood. However, there are research on reintegration difficulties female migrants have to go through, there is lack of research about the difficulties female migrant returnees have to go through during their re-migration.

This research aims to find out re-migration strategies and obstacles of returnee women migrants in Bangladesh during COVID-19 pandemic, where socio-economic consequences are evolving continuously.

This chapter will first introduce the study through discussing the background, a research problem will follow the discussion and then the research will move forward with the aims, objectives and research questions, the significance of this research and finally, the limitations.

1.1 Research Background

Migration is an essential form of globalization. When people move to another country for permanent or temporary settlement by leaving their own country of residence is known as international migration (IOM, 2011). Moreover, the movement of people for the reason of employment is called labour migration (IOM, n.d). International migration stimulates economic growth of a country and large inflow of remittances by offering an opportunity of employment for the surplus workforce of a country (Hadi, 1999 as cited in Farid et al 2009). Moreover, Siddiqui (2003) stated that, international migration help in reducing the unemployment of Bangladesh and is a major source of remittance, which stimulates the foreign exchange reserve of a country. According to Siddiqui (2021),

“As one of the largest labour surplus countries, each year from Bangladesh 700000-800000 people migrate for overseas employment and among them 12percent are women migrants. Moreover, as remittance, per annum Bangladesh earns more than \$18 billion” (p.1).

Remittance sent by the migrant workers contribute in generation of 12percent GDP of Bangladesh and generate employment of 9 percent in Bangladesh’s overall labor force (Ali, 2014; BMET, 2020; Karim, 2020; Mannan & Farhana, 2014 as cited in Karim et al, 2020). Moreover, this huge remittance continuously helps to raise the foreign currency reserve in Bangladesh, which accounts for US\$36.14 billion in the 2019-2020 financial year (BB, 2020a as cited in Karim et al, 2020). “Evidence shows that, there was an increase in poverty rate from 30 to 34 percent in Nepal in the absence of migration and a 20 percent decrease in the poverty due to increase in migration between 1995 and 2004” (Lokshin, Bontch-Osmolovski & Glinskaya, 2010 as cited in Reza et al, p.80). BMET data shows, a total of 12,199,124 people from Bangladesh had migrated from the time 1976-2018 for overseas employment and in the year of 2018, 734,181 migrant worker migrated to Gulf countries, other Middle Eastern and countries of South-east Asia (Siddiqui et al 2018, p.1).

IOM report says, there are more than 1.2 million workers employed in different working sectors of Gulf countries and women migrants are mostly involved as migrant domestic workers

(MDW). Data shows that in 2019, 104,786 women migrated overseas for work, which was only 3,121 in 2020 and a decrease of 79 percent in women overseas employment is seen (Siddiqui et al, 2020). Report by Wage Earners Welfare Board (WEWB) says, 17,182 women migrant have come back to Bangladesh from their host countries between April 1 and October 3 of 2020. COVID-19 has hardly hit the female migrants of the Gulf countries and many women were forced to return to their home country. Along with losing their jobs, there were cases of wage theft, abuse and immense torture before their return (Ansar et al, 2021).

Research by Ansar et al (2021) shows that, female migrants have to endure immense discrimination, stigma from the society upon their arrival and they were continuously being accused of bringing COVID-19 diseases from abroad and spreading them. Moreover, lack of available information and knowledge on legal service and assistance they find it impossible to report complaints against their employer and the agency that facilitated their migration. In most of the cases, women migrant returnee workers were victims of the wage theft, mental and physical torture and in most of the cases, those went unreported. Moreover, inadequate arrangements for quarantine after their return made them more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and from a vulnerable situation in their work county they fell into a more vulnerable situation. After their return, reintegration became a challenge for the migrant workers and it is more difficult for the female migrants. There is no concern for them and their wellbeing, the only concern is financial (Sikder et al, 2021). Moreover, returning to Bangladesh made them vulnerable due to socio-economic consequences they have to endure during COVID-19 pandemic. They are being considered as the bearer of the virus and facing various discrimination. Returning to the countries they work for is similarly important for the economy of Bangladesh and for their dependent families. Many female migrants are unable to join the workforce for various reasons along with covid-19 pandemic. Various reasons may be acting as a barrier to their return and I tried to observe the reasons in this study.

1.2 Research Problem

International migrant workers send remittances and are vital for the flourishing of the economy of Bangladesh. There are numerous studies that have investigated strategies and approaches of migration migrants have to follow, however, these studies have traditionally focused on their difficulties in host countries, and reintegration problems after their return and

difficulties they are facing during this pandemic. The body of knowledge presents a problem where due to lack of employment opportunities migrants want to re-migrate and in many cases they face several difficulties and COVID-19 pandemic has created other obstacles in this process. Although, government has taken several initiatives to assist the migrants, but as women migrants are mostly from rural areas and not have educational knowledge, they face information constraints. It is often heard that women from grass root areas fall victim of fraudulence by middleman in the migration process. However, as pandemic created several restrictions in movement, how the women migrant returnees from grassroots level are doing regarding re-migration or managing other economic support during the pandemic should be researched. In this circumstance, the study will examine the obstacles women migrants are facing amid the pandemic to re-migrate to a new employer or to return to their previous workplaces.

1.3 Research Objectives

Given the lack of research regarding re-migration challenges Bangladeshi female migrants face, this study aims to examine the challenges female returnee migrants faced for re-migration during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also aims to find out if there are other deep-rooted causes behind their re-migration difficulties, apart from Covid-19 induced difficulties and restrictions. The principal objective of the study has been to come into view the contexts and circumstances that necessitate re-migration for the women returnee migrants. Moreover, the study objective is to investigate the obstacles and hardships they face throughout the re-migration process and analyze the existing legal framework and the law implementation in practice level to understand the current women migration process of Bangladesh.

1.4 Research Question

Throughout the journey, this study tried to find out answers to one main research question and few other sub-questions. The central question of the study is -

What challenges Bangladeshi female migrants are facing regarding re-migration, amid Covid-19?

This question is followed by the following sub-questions.

- Why do the returnee women migrants want to re-migrate?

- What are the challenges they face for remigration?
- What are the terms and conditions the female returnee migrants experience for remigration?
- Who are the key actors involved in creating various challenges for remigration of returnee women migrants?
- What are the reasons if someone do not want to re-migrate?

1.5 Research Significance

Through this research, migration experiences of women will be clearly understood and their diverse experiences in the re-migration process in pre-pandemic and post-pandemic situation will be clearly addressed. This study will help address the current shortages of law and policy implementation in this area and provide new insight on women migration. In addition, this study will produce new knowledge on women migration that could be beneficial for the post-COVID era.

1.6 Limitations

This study is focused on the difficulties of unskilled and skilled women migrants during their remigration process, which was further exacerbated by COVID-19 induced rules and restrictions. However, male migrants and their struggles were not a part of this study and male migrants face vulnerability in the remigration process as well.

The main limitation of the research is the collection of data through telephone interviews considering the pandemic. Finding the respondents and convincing them to talk was a bit difficult. No interview or data was collected from male returnee migrants and no data was collected from recruiting agency or any intermediary, who are closely involved with processing of migration. Moreover, this research lacks detailed analysis of MOU or any law-policy that are taken for migration purpose.

1.7 Structure of the Study

This thesis has six chapters: Introduction, literature review, research methodology, findings and analysis, discussion and study summary and conclusion.

In chapter 1, the study context has been introduced. The aim and objective of this research have been identified, the significance and scope of this research has been discussed, and at last, the limitations are addressed.

In Chapter 2, the existing literature is reviewed to identify migration experiences of female migrants and their condition in the host countries and home countries in other time and at this Covid-19 pandemic.

In chapter 3, methodology of this study is addressed. In-depth interview and key-informant interview methods are used in primary data collection and journal articles and several reports on international migration are used as secondary data sources, which were collected from internet and google scholar.

In chapter 4, findings and analysis of data is presented. All the sub-chapters of chapter 4 answer the 5 sub research questions to find out the answer of a central research question.

In chapter 5, the discussion based on the study findings and relation between existing literature is presented. The evaluation and explanation of the findings are discussed along with the supporting and opposing arguments.

In chapter 6, the study concludes by summing up the findings and understanding obtained through the research. Moreover, along with some policy recommendations, the limitations and future scope of the research are addressed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Understanding

Global migration affects both negative and positive ways on the number of countries and individuals involved. Piper (2006) argued that:

Politics and policies shape the whole process of migration, starting from motivation for migration, pre-departure training, choice of destination and terms of admission, to policies regarding labor protection, and social and political inclusion. As a result, migration creates a myriad of political challenges, both in terms of relations between states and also in the nature of politics within states through the creation of new constituencies and the generation of new policy debates (p.133).

He also argued in his paper that laws and policies are often gendered and emigration and immigration affect men and women differently. Moreover, women are often deprived from their rights because of social structure and policy implementation. Migrant domestic workers are often treated differently by the society than a migrant male worker. The sufferings and harassment of women are also different and higher because of their gender identity as women. The existing law and policy regarding migration and the situation of women migrants as a beneficiary of these policies should be an important matter of concern. Moreover, the socio-economic situation of a women that are motivating them for migration are also responsible for their vulnerability as a women and as an unskilled women migrant.

2.1.1 Push and Pull Factors of International Labor Migration

In case of short-term women migrant workers, economic and socio-cultural factors act as determinants of migration. As Bangladesh is a developing country, it faces high unemployment pressure, low wages, lack of employment opportunity and poor economic condition, which act as push factors and in regards to women, they face more obstacles to find a decent job with their limited or no educational background and lack of skills. Demographic factors work as push factors here. Such as age, gender, education, race etc. “Economic, demographic, and social factors are among the key factors influencing the flow of overseas migration of workers. Migration flow is positively correlated with GDP growth in Bangladesh” (World Bank 2012 as cited in ADB BRIEFS, 2016, p.3)

Kiline (2003) said, to be motivated for migration, both push and pull factors have to be present. According to Dorigo and Tobler (1983), push factors are the dissatisfaction regarding one's home country because of poor economic condition, lack of job employment opportunities, low social status, socio-political unrest, rapid population growth, huge surplus labour etc. On the other hand, pull factors are the better employment opportunities, higher wages, social wellbeing, educational opportunity, socio-political freedom of the country of destination. Moreover, they said that patterns of migration can be understood by knowing and analyzing the underlying push and pull factors of both home and destination country (As cited in Zanabazar et al, 2021, p.2).

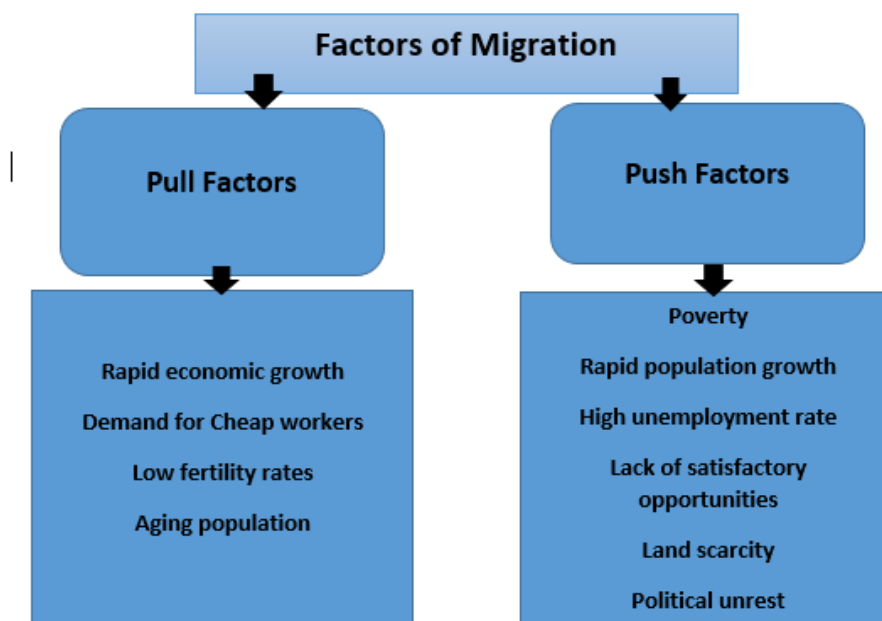


Figure 1: Factors of Migration

2.1.2 Migration Law and Policy in Bangladesh

Historical Development of Migration Institutions and Laws to regulate Labour Migration from Bangladesh.

- The establishment of BMET in 1976
- The Emigration Act of 1922 was replaced by a new emigration ordinance “The Emigration Ordinance, 1982 (Ordinance no XXIX of 1982)” (Legislative and parliamentary affairs division of Bangladesh, 1982)
- A Welfare Fund for migrant workers was established in 1990
- In 1998, signature of the UN’s International Convention on protecting of rights of all migrant workers and their family members.
- In 2002, GoB started granting licenses to recruitment agencies for overseas employment.
- In 2003, relaxation of tax restrictions on female labour migration.
- Migrant welfare bank (PKB) was established in 2011.
- In 2012, signed MOU between Bangladesh and Malaysia on sending and receiving workers.
- In 2013, enactment of Overseas employment and Migration Act.

(Etzold and Mallick, 2015, p.1)

2.1.3 Overseas Employment and Migration Act 2013

The act aims to create opportunities for overseas employment and create a safe and fair system of migration, to ensure rights and welfare of migrant workers and members of their families, to enact a new law by repealing the Emigration Ordinance, 1982 (Ordinance No. XXIX of 1982), and for making provisions in conformity with the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers and the Members of Their Families 1990 and other international labour and human rights conventions and treaties ratified by the People’s Republic of Bangladesh (Parliament of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Act No. VLVIII of 2013, p.1).

- Chapter II, section 6 of this act under the heading “Application of the principle of equality” specifies that:

While providing services or doing any other action under this act, there should be equal treatment for all overseas employment and the return of migrant workers. There should be no discrimination regarding gender, language, birth, color, age, ethnic identity, ideological views, political views, religious identity, familial, marital or social identity, or regional affiliation, or any other reasons. (Parliament of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Act No. VLVIII of 2013, p.4)

- Chapter VII (Rights of migrant workers), under section 26 specifies the right to information of migrant workers:

Migrants have the right to know the right information about their migration process, the contract of their employment, terms and conditions regarding working overseas and their rights as migrants as given by the law before their departure (Parliament of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh, Act No. VLVIII of 2013, p.12).

Moreover, Recruiting Agency License and Conduct Rule 2002, Expatriate Welfare and Overseas employment Policy 2016, Expatriate welfare and Overseas Employment Rules 2017, Expatriate Welfare Board Act 2017 and Migrants welfare Bank (PKB) was established for the welfare of migrants and to protect them¹.

2.1.4 Sustainable Development Goals and Migration

There are three specific targets taken in Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), for the international migration.

- Target 8.8: promoting safe and secure working environment through protecting the labour rights of the workers and protect the migrant workers who are working in insecure environment and particularly women migrant workers.

¹ Khan, M. M. U. A. (2020, December 19). Law and our rights: Agonising condition of our migrant workers. *The Daily Star*. Retrieved from <https://www.thedailystar.net/law-our-rights/news/agonising-condition-our-migrant-workers-2014045>

- Target 10.7: implementation of well-planned and properly managed policies regarding migration for regular, safe, secure and responsible movement of people.
- Target 10c: reduction of migrant remittance transaction cost to less than 3% and elimination of remittance corridors with cost more than 5% by 2030.

(MEWOF, 2016, p.30)

2.1.5 Policy and Measures Taken during COVID-19

- Providing financial aid of 20,000-25,000 taka for the migrant returnees from the Wage Earners' Welfare Fund, who were heading to Saudi Arabia as they had asked for a mandatory seven days of hotel quarantine, which costed migrants a huge sum of money.
- Primarily giving Pfizer vaccine to the Saudi Arabia and Kuwait bounded migrant workers in seven centers of capital city Dhaka.
- Initially financial assistance of 20,000 taka for 3000 female migrant returnee workers
- Government launched two loan or investment facilities of BDT 5,000 million and BDT2000 million at 4percent interest rate through the PKB to help the migrant workers start small business.

2.2 Literature on Women and Migration

Research on migration is a vast area to be explored which shows how migration systems work all over the world and how many dimensions of migration change over time and some remain unchanged. With the growing number of female migrants, there is a major scope of research in that area. It is crucial to articulate the existing understanding of the stated problem and understand the scope and gap of that literature. The available research set the theoretical basis on which the study will evolve. This chapter will explore the existing literature on migration, especially female migration to understand the underlying conditions of female migrants in their country of origin as in their country of employment and the difficulties they have to go through during this process.

For the people of underdeveloped and developing countries, international migration has been an essential livelihood approach (Siddiqui 2003, as cited in Farid et al 2009). Migration stimulates economic growth by helping the country to enhance foreign currency reserves in the form of remittance sent by the migrants. According to Siddiqui (2019), Bangladeshi workers mainly migrate for short-term employment and after the completion of their contract, they return to Bangladesh. As short-term workers from Bangladesh are dominant in labour migration sector, they mostly migrate to the Gulf and other Middle Eastern countries. Moreover, from the past few years, female migration is increasing in Bangladesh and their contribution to the economic growth of the country is growing.

Karim et al (2020) stated, from Bangladesh, a very small number of female worker were involved in overseas employment in the past. However, the annual trend increased in a consistent manner from 2000 to 2012 and in 2014, female migrants were more than double. Studies by (Afsar 2005 and Siddiqui 2001) shed light on diverse economic and social incentives behind women's international migration, for instance-economic solvency, limited opportunities in Bangladesh, social status etc. However, despite increasing women migration and contributing to their home countries' economy by their hard-achieved income, it raises questions if those systems related to women migration ensure an easy and safe migration process.

Due to Covid-19, many migrant women were victims of forced return and even after returning they have faced social stigma and economic uncertainty. If we look at the migration literature, short-time contractual migration has always been gendered in Bangladesh. Study findings by Rahman (2011) on labour migrants of UAE shows how men and women have different migration experiences in terms of occupational choice, earning pattern but his research also shows, despite of fairly low income than the male migrants, women migrants remit more to their home countries. However, despite their economic contribution, women migrants are treated as a threat to virtue by our society. Although this research shows how men and women migrate are treated differently, it lacks argument of how women from one gendered society falls into another by migration. Belanger and Rahman (2013) in their study on migrants from Gulf countries argued on the motivation of women to seek overseas employment, different socio-economic barriers in their decision making process of migration and how they negotiated their situation. Their findings suggest that women in their workplaces have experienced isolation and through migration, they actually go from one Purdah society to another. Here Purdah means a state of seclusion or conservative situation to protect the dignity of women according to society. However, women experience various difficulties in their migration from

the society and in the processing as well. If the society treats men and women differently and believes women employment through migration as violation of purdah and dignity, the thought itself is making female migration difficult.

Belanger & Rahman (2013) said, Bangladeshi unprivileged and illiterate women endure various structural and cultural obstacles in their process of finding overseas employment. Timothy and Sasikumar (2012) made a contrasting argument. They said, despite various vulnerabilities faced by the women migrant workers of South Asia, the increased feminization in Gulf migration positively influenced several regions of South Asia by empowering women and bringing an important change of the gender roles within the society. An argument also raised by Belanger and Rahman (2013) and said apart from economic reasons, women migrate to challenge the existing gender norms, abuse, subordination and the limited freedom the society assigned to them. Their findings also suggest, despite all the hardship in work countries, they want to re-migrate again. Nevertheless, it raises questions on the remigration procedures and obstacles of women during this process.

Other research on migration suggests that the emigration policies of South Asian countries treat men and women differently as noted by Oishi (2005). Research shows that despite increasing women migration, the sender and receiving countries from South Asia and Gulf countries are more gender stereotypical. Timothy and Sasikumar (2012) also argued that migration policies of these countries place women at the margins and make them victims of various vulnerabilities and incapable of international migration. The research of Rahman (2011), Belanger and Rahman (2013) both ignored the aspect of challenges female migrants might face in the process of migrating abroad. Most of the short-term female labour migrants are uneducated and often they fall victim to various fraudulent agencies. Parvin and Rabbi (2017) argued that limited access to information and illiteracy could lead to trafficking. In this regard, Kapur (2005) stated that societal construction of women as 'victims' delegitimizes their search for employment. Therefore, they depend on informal and often illegal agents to migrate and increase the chances of women ending up in trafficked networks (As cited in Jolly and Reeves, 2005). In my argument, to challenge the persisting gender norm and economic empowerment, women are often pushing themselves in a vulnerable and uncertain condition and integrate patriarchal order. Research shows that because of social structure, the experience men and women as migrants are different, which society assigns to women and expect from women in respective destination country. According to feminist scholars, migration experience of women are different then the men as the women and men share different reasons, practices and patterns in

the process of their migration (Dannecker, 2005; Dodson, 2008; Oishi, 2005; Piper, 2005 as cited in Belanger and Rahman, 2013).

According to Piper (2011), in the world of work, the choice and available job market for a migrant worker is gendered and for that reason men and women work in the different sectors and even in the same sector they perform different duties (as cited in Foley and Piper 2020). It is evident that migrant women are offered and employed mostly in bottom rank jobs, which involves culturally devalued tasks and limited sociological recognition (Ibid.; Baron and Newman, 1990 as cited in Foley and Piper 2020). According to Fatima and Sultana (2017), from 2000 to 2012 in Bangladesh, around 55.2 percent women migrated as unskilled worker, 12.2 percent as semi-skilled worker, 31.2 percent as skilled worker and only 1.2 percent as professionals. “The domestic work sector, cleaner, labourer are considered as unskilled work force and the garments workers are considered as skilled work force” (Islam, n.d, p.3). As per the data, unskilled employment sector is the most dominant sector for migration of women and then comes the skilled sector. In case of skilled migrant workers, they can use their expertise after returning to Bangladesh and economic reintegration is easier for them than the unskilled returnee migrants are.

According to UN Women (2013), most domestic workers are women and migrant women are increasing in this sector. Global evidence shows there is an increasing demand of domestic workers and these workers receive poor wages, have to work excessive hours without rest and proper health care, and most often exposed to labour rights violations (ILO, 2015 as cited in Shamim and Holliday, 2018). I want to argue that, not only gendered division of work, their illiteracy and lack of skill make them fit into the bottom rank jobs. Although, I have to agree that the patriarchal pattern of Bangladeshi society is the reason behind their situation.

Due to COVID-19, many migrants have to return to their country of origin due to forced and voluntary repatriation as many of them were laid off from their jobs. “Migrants in Asia, Africa and Latin America have been identified as a security threat and stigmatized for spreading Covid-19” (Chugh, 2020, UN, 2020 and seven can, 2020 as cited in Sikder et al 2021, p.61). During this crisis, several Bangladeshi migrants returned to Bangladesh and data shows that from 1 April to 30 December, around 400000 migrant workers returned to Bangladesh from different destinations (WEWD, 2020 as cited in Sikder et al 2021). A huge number of migrants are forced returnees, who lost their job and face high risk of unemployment, which makes them more vulnerable to the crisis.

According to the literature, unavailable social protection during COVID-19 in both host country and home country put the women migrants in more vulnerable situation. Women migrants have been seriously affected in this COVID-19, as they endured gender violence, mental and physical abuse, uncertainty, unfavorable workplace condition, no health facilities, helplessness and constant fear. Previously, the extreme power and control exercised by the employers of Gulf countries under the kafala system made women migrants more vulnerable to exploitation. However, due to the exclusion of this act the wellbeing and security, their fundamental protection of their human rights are dependent on their employers. (Huda,2006 as cited in Sikder et al). Due to the absence and implementation lacking of legal infrastructure, various kinds of harassment and tortures are done to the domestic migrant workers. In my argument, although all the literature is suggesting the unbearable torture of their employers, the actual suffering of women starts from their home country. From migration decision to migration process and after returning, they have to go through all the hardships.

Ullah (2007) argued that, the abuse of migrant workers starts from their own country at the hands of agents before their migration and after migrating they become victim of exploitation through their employer in form of excessive workload, wage theft, mental and physical torture and so on. Moreover, we are talking about challenging the gender norms, but it raises the question that if females have challenged the existing gender norms by deciding to migrate, why is their position still not changing in their own society? This thought persists from the beginning of female migration that women are more likely to violate and experience various mental and physical exploitation in their workplaces and they are the least paid workers. Studies also find that, wage gap is often gendered and it is very common that women migrants receive low pay although they have to work and live in more vulnerable and insecure condition (Piper, 2008; Hennebry and Petrozziello, 2019 as cited in Ansar et al). Another literature suggests that because of the pandemic, vulnerability of migrant women are greater in terms of job losses and economic recession (Foley and Piper, 2020 as cited in Ansar et al, 2021). In contradiction to previous findings, study by Reza et al (2021) suggest that remittance is gendered and receiving remittance of women migrant household are 69 percent compared to 30 percent of households with male migrants. Their finding shows, COVID-19 affected less the female migrants income compared to the male migrants, as female migrants comprise of more than 90 percent as domestic workers in Gulf countries and other Middle Eastern countries. This made their demand unchanged in their working sector compared to the male dominated sector, which suspended their operations due to pandemic and lock down. This resulted in less shock to the female migrant household.

Apart from remittance, we cannot ignore the fact that the domestic work sector is the most vulnerable sector to work overseas and in a pandemic, they become more vulnerable as due to stay home rules, they have to bear extra workload. Due to excessive work, lack of healthcare facilities and abusive behavior of their employer, many women fall victim to various abuses and they are more vulnerable to abuse and in their workplaces (Hennebry & Petrozziello, 2019, Aoun, 2020 , Amnesty International, 2020 as cited in Siddiqui, 2021). In all of the studies, apart from rape, abuse and torture, the death of migrant women are missing. Data shows, from January to September 2020, 64 corpses of female migrants were sent to Bangladesh (Tithila,2020). This throws questions on the existing migration protection policies of Bangladesh. Apart from these incidents, a report on Daily Star states, although the migration rate has fallen now because of Covid-19, around 22000 women have left Bangladesh for their destination workplaces during the pandemic.

When a female migrant returns to her country, she often faces difficulties to reintegrate in the society due to social stigma and societal changes that occurred in her absence. A study by Belanger and Rahman (2013) shows that women often hide or feel afraid to share their migration experiences as they are afraid that they will be stigmatized if they share their tortures. In many cases, female migrant workers become victim of rape by their employers and get pregnant and in most of the cases, they have to abandon their child. In many cases, they lose their mental stability by torture and abuse of their employers and return back home. These scenarios of female migration shows the harsh reality of the female migrants' condition in their workplaces.

A study by Nawaz and Tanny (2019) suggests that lack of information and training are major causes of suffering in all stages of overseas migration. They also mentioned that 89 percent returnee migrants are facing the challenge of patriarchal rule and low social acceptance after their return and 85 percent female returnee migrants face difficulties in finding jobs. Although this study mentioned the reintegration challenges that migrant women are facing, the study did not mention if some of the migrants are willing to re-migrate or if they do not want to go back again and what are the reasons behind this. The study findings of Sultana and Fatima (2017) suggest that a good economic environment attracts migrants and skill enhancement is very much important for the unskilled workers. However, apart from that the study found various factors that might influence female migration but ignored the family decision and networking influence in migration decision. Women have very little or no influence on their migration decisions in their household. In most of the cases, women migrate to work overseas to support their family through earning remittances. According to ILO (2020) report, women are

vulnerable in this COVID-19 pandemic as well. Increasing amount of gender based violence are committed against the migrant women and they are not getting proper healthcare and other necessary facilities as they are confined to their employers houses due to their nature of work (ILO, 2020 as cited in Siddiqui, 2021). The evolving gender norms in families are important for both men and women, which is not addressed properly (MFA, n.d.).

Research on Covid-19 impact shows, South Asian regions migrant women are the vulnerable group of people, who are the victims of pandemic induced economic problem (Budhathoki, 2020 as cited in Karim et al, 2020). Moreover, COVID-19 induced economic circumstances on migrant workers will create a huge effect on the remittance flow of Bangladesh with a serious impact on the GDP growth rate. (Sutradhar, 2020 as cited in Karim et al 2020). Although, we are celebrating that despite the employment rate fall drastically in 2020 compared to previous years, an annual 18.5 percent rise in remittances has been recorded (Bangladesh Bank, online; BMET,online as cited in Chowdhury and Chakraborty 2021). The reason behind this flow was offering a 2 percent stimulus by GoB to use legal and formal channels to send their remittances and 1 percent extra offered by some banks. We need to go deeper in the underlying situation behind the job losses of our migrants and policies and law enforcement agencies should move forward for migrant rights. Otherwise, Bangladesh will be in a distressed situation very soon.

Nonetheless, there are lack of research on process, consideration and various obstacles that female migrants have to go through during their remigration journey that my study tried to focus. Moreover, there are several act, policies and measures taken for safe and orderly migration of Bangladeshi migrants and to find the remigration obstacles of women migrants, this study will look if the women migrants are aware of these measures and from grassroots to urban level these policies are implemented with inclusion of all migrants or not. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology that the study followed to fulfill its specific objective.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter specifies the methods and procedures that the study followed to complete its research objective. The aim of the study is to find out the obstacles of women migrants in their remigration process in the pandemic situation of Covid-19. This study follows a qualitative method to find out the answer to its research question. Primary data collection method are used to find out the experiences of women migrants during the pandemic and their thoughts about remigration and the obstacles they are facing in this process.

3.1 Data Sources

The study is based on two types of data sources:

3.1.1 Primary Data

The primary data collection followed a telephone interview method. For primary data collection, in-depth interview and key-informant interview methods were used. Two separate sets of semi-structured questionnaires were built to conduct the interviews. To select and reach the participants for data collection, purposive and snowball sampling methods were used. For in-depth interviews, women migrants, who returned to Bangladesh during pandemic and between January 2020 to August 2021 were interviewed over telephone and 25 interviews were conducted. However, one physical interview was conducted upon the convenient location of the participant in Nabiganj, Sylhet. The reason behind using purposive sampling method was to include those participants, who are women migrants and returned to Bangladesh during COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, considering the hardship to find and reach to women migrants during the pandemic, snowball sampling technique was followed. Through this method, whenever I interviewed a participant, I tried to get contact with some other women migrants whom she knew came back during the pandemic.

It was challenging to conduct a telephone interview, as some migrants were not willing to talk about their personal experiences, as they did not know me. Here I got help from the NGOs who personally contacted some of them and told them about me that I will call them for some details. I took help from those women migrants, I built my rapport and interviewed them. After that, I requested them to help me to talk with their known women migrants. As I reached to them through a known network, they believed in me and talked to me willingly. Moreover, they thought, I was a part of NGO and will provide them financial support and many have asked for

a job even after telling them about my work. Moreover, it was hard to contact women migrants through the migrant database. As they did not know whom I was, many of them refused to talk and some of their family members did not let me talk with them in fear of any harm. Some of them talked to me and thought I am from any government office and many have asked what their benefit in this interview is. Convincing and making them believe in me and my work was the difficult part.

Calling the interviewee at the right time to conduct interview was also important to get their responses. The interview timing was during 11am to 1pm and 4pm to 6pm in the evening. Some of them asked me to call them later and sometimes I had to struggle to reach out to them and get their responses. The interview time was ranging from 20 to 1hr 10 minutes depending on the experiences and willingness of that participant to share. The age of the participants varied from 24 to 53 years old, most of them do not have institutional education, and some of them have studied until class 5. Among 25 respondents, 3 of them were garment workers and all others were working as domestic workers or cleaners abroad. Moreover, some of them were living illegally in their host countries. The location of participants were from Dhaka, Savar, Manikganj, Narayanganj, Rupganj, Keraniganj, Narsingdi, Kishoreganj, Comilla, Munshiganj, Faridpur, Barisal, Nabiganj, Fenchuganj, Sylhet, and the countries they returned from were Saudi Arabia, Oman, Lebanon, Jordan, UAE. I got their contact number and contacted them with the help of four NGOs named “BOMSA”, “BRAC Migration”, “BNSK” and “WARBE Development Foundation”. The interviews were recorded upon permission of the respondents to the voice call recorder

Moreover, 5 key informant interviews were conducted with migration experts from “BMET”, “BOMSA”, “BRAC Migration”, “BNSK” and “WARBE Development Foundation”, who are working in this sector over a longer period, have important contribution in this sector and have a deeper knowledge of migration phenomenon. The interviews were conducted via telephone and online platform Google Meet according to their convenience.

IDI Respondent Profile of Returnee Women Migrants	
Overseas Profession	Number of Respondents
Domestic worker	20
Garments worker	3
Cleaner in hospital and per hour work	2
Total	25
Age Group	
Below 25 years	1
25-35	14
36-45 years	7
46-55 years	3
Total	25
Marital Status	
Unmarried	2
Married	12
Separated from husband	11
Total	25
Other Earning Member in Family	
Yes, have little income	12
No	13
Total	25
Returned Country	
Lebanon	8
Saudi Arabia	7
Oman	5
Jordan	4
UAE	1
Total	25
Geographical Location in Bangladesh	
Urban	3
Rural	22
Total	25

Migration Experience in Years	
Less than 2 years	6
2- 3 years	4
4-5 years	7
6-8 years	2
More than 8 years	6
Total	25

Table 1: IDI Respondent Profile

3.1.2 Secondary Data Source

Various reports and publications such as research papers and country reports on migration of Bangladesh serve as a secondary data source of the study. I obtained them from the internet and known sources who have access to some of the journals. Moreover, the country reports are available online. The secondary data sources were used to collect and analyze information on women migration issues and current legal infrastructure on women migration management in Bangladesh.

3.2 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed through coding, building themes and identifying patterns from their responses. To analyze the data, the responses were transcribed from the call recordings of conducted interviews. The words and responses were made separate under each thematic question in a excel sheet. Later on, the data were written in a descriptive way.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings and analysis of the study. First, the findings from the primary and secondary resources will be discussed.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, the findings of the study are discussed. It is very prominent in the data that, although some women have migrated overseas multiple times, they do not have proper knowledge on the process and cost of their migration and mostly they rely on middleman or local agents for their overseas migration and many of them become victims of exploitation in this process. It is also noticeable that often local agents are their close family members or relatives but women migrants are charged money for their migration. Whereas, a very few women were aware that it does not require any money for migration of women in Middle Eastern countries and some were successful in their migration and have positive thoughts about their employer. Along with other problems, women migrants were vulnerable during COVID-19 pandemic and as they are not educated and do not have any knowledge on pandemic related obstacles, they faced severe difficulties to reintegrate in the society and return to their workplaces. The findings have focused on the central research question of my study which is “What challenges Bangladeshi female migrants are facing regarding re-migration, amid Covid-19?” and to find out answer of this broad research question, the following chapters have focused on the sub-questions that are needed to reach to the answer of this broad research question.

4.1 Reasons for Remigration Decision of Women

Many factors work behind the remigration decision of a woman. In most of the cases, they are the main earning member of the family and their family solely depend on their income. Along with other factors, remigration decision of women is mainly economic and after that comes other reasons. As migrants women are in many cases divorced, single mothers, widowed or their husbands married another women, they want to hold the responsibility of their own life and sometimes they want to create a safe and secure future for their children and they are responsible to run their family. Other than that, lack of income opportunities, no savings from their previous migration, lack of loan facilities and expertise to start a small business, lack of reintegration opportunities made them take decision to re-migrate. It is also prevalent in the field data that, most of the women migrant did not want to re-migrate and wanted to stay at their home countries with their families, but they have to migrate or considering remigration in

the face of economic obstacles, they are facing and lack of opportunities of an income source in Bangladesh.

Among the 25 interviewed participants, it is showing that 3 migrant women has started their remigration processing and know their desired country for migration, while 8 of women want to re-migrate but have not started their processing yet and still have not decided their desired country for remigration. Moreover, 4 women responded that they will return to their previous employer where they used to work before returning to Bangladesh during COVID-19 and 2 said that they do not want to migrate but if needed for economic reasons, they will give a thought for migration. On the other hand, 8 among 25 women migrants responded that they will not re-migrate and will stay in Bangladesh.

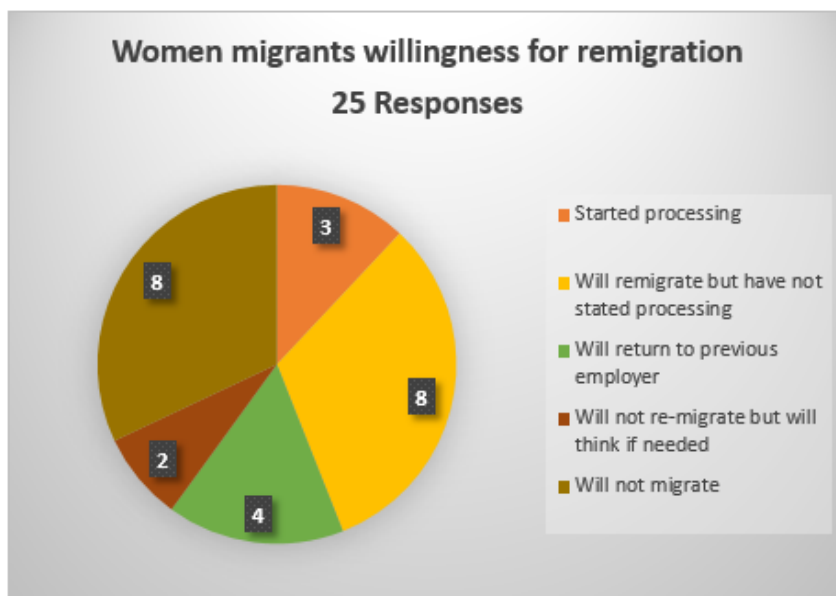


Figure 2: Responses regarding remigration

While most of the women migrants had either started their remigration processing or thinking of starting the processing, most of them said they do not want to migrate but due to economic obstacles and for their family and children's future, they are considering remigration as their livelihood choice. Out of 25 respondents, 13 women said that they are the sole income person of their family and the rest other said there are other earning person in their family but it is very little to run their livelihood.

Some of them said that if they could get a job with a better income or get some loan facilities to start a business over here, they want to stay in Bangladesh with their family and want to see

their children growing up in front of their eyes. While there were also responses that some women do not want loan, as they fear of loss and not being able to repay the loans and they want to do job. Otherwise, they consider remigration as a good choice. Moreover, some women also noted that their family members want them to re-migrate for a better income and for the improvement of their livelihood, although they do not want to go and there were also instances that the household members of migrant women do not want them to re-migrate.

4.1.1 Availability of Unskilled Job Market for Women in Bangladesh

Women migrants mostly migrate as unskilled domestic workers and cleaners. Most of them worked in Bangladesh before migration either as domestic workers or on other unskilled job sectors or homemakers. When they return to Bangladesh, it become hard for them to find employment in Bangladesh as job sector for unskilled work force is limited for the women and they do not have other skills to get job in Bangladesh. On the other hand, opportunities for skilled returnee workers are comparatively better and their workplace harassment, living condition and work environment is favorable.

If we look at the unskilled women returnee migrants, 5 women said that they tried to get employment in Bangladesh but could not get any job. 5 other women said that they did not try to get any employment after returning and 6 said that they were either expecting to start a small business or rearing of livestock to make a livelihood. However, one women said that she got a job of domestic worker at her village. Moreover, due to COVID-19 pandemic, getting job in domestic sector was hard to get as no one was allowing domestic workers as safety protocol and in fear of pandemic. However, 3 skilled returnee migrants said that they used to work as garments workers in overseas garments company and after their return they got employment in garments companies where they previously used to work before migration.

Therefore, it is prevalent that, the sufferings unskilled migrant women worker go through are far more than skilled worker and getting a job in unskilled sector is hard, when they return. It is also noticeable from the field data as 3 of the interviewed migrants among 25 were skilled migrant returnees and they used to work in the garment sector in Jordan. There were less suffering in their getting a job in Bangladesh because of skilled nature of their job.

However, as the interviewed migrants were mostly from rural areas, domestic works or other unskilled works are limited in those areas. A migrant woman who returned from Saudi Arabia said, she came to Bangladesh to visit her mother but unfortunately could not return to her workplace due to the pandemic. She added that she migrated for better earning opportunity and

could manage to build a small house and her condition improved a little than she had in the past but now in this COVID-19 pandemic, she has again fall into the vicious cycle² of poverty and passing her days in hunger. She said:

“I tried to get employment in Bangladesh, but due to the pandemic no one wants to hire any domestic worker and I do not have savings to start any business over here. I need to return to my workplace as soon as possible. If I can go back, I can earn some money, which is not possible in Bangladesh for illiterate people like me. I do not have money to mitigate my hunger now and even if someone buy me some rice, it would be a great help”

Along with loss of job in overseas, women migrants were passing their days in fear of uncertainty. Moreover, as per the migrant’s responses, having some skill or education is important to get job in Bangladesh. A migrant returnee from Lebanon, who worked as a cleaner in Lebanon came back to Bangladesh during pandemic by out-pass³, as Lebanon is going through currency devaluation⁴ problem and there was crisis of work. She is now trying to get employment in Bangladesh but according to her, as she is not educated, it is hard for her to get any job here. She commented that:

“I am trying to get a job of cleaner in the hospitals of Bangladesh but did not get yet. Hospitals in Bangladesh require educated people to give work there. I am an uneducated person, but I have read until class 5. So, now I am searching for work in garments sector as I have previously worked in garments before migration.”

According to another migrant’s response, to get job in Bangladesh, people need connection and she do not have that. Moreover, two of the responded said, no one is hiring them because of their old age and only people under 30 can get a job. Age limit has created a barrier in their earning opportunities. One of the respondent said:

“I could not manage any job in Bangladesh and neither had I received any help from anywhere, as I am aged. Whenever I give my ID card and passport, I am told that I am aged and they only take women with age of 18- 30- 32 and they ask for bribe to give job.”

² A chain of negative events, in which one difficulty creates several more

³ Emergency Travel Document (Outpass) for “Voluntary Repatriation”

⁴ Reduction of value of the currency

After staying overseas for a while, women migrants are facing difficulties to reintegrate in the society economically and they are facing obstacles to find an income opportunity. Almost all the respondent said that, they want to re-migrate as they have to earn to run their livelihood and in Bangladesh, they do not have good earning facilities to run their family properly.

4.1.2 No Savings and Repayment of Loans

From the data, it is prominent that although they worked for years abroad, most of them do not have any savings to start something of their own in Bangladesh. Many of them are indebted to other people, and to repay those loans they are re-migrating again. Among 25 respondent, 21 have responded to the question and shows that only 2 out of 21 respondent have a little savings and 5 of them had a little savings but spent all the money during COVID-19, to run their livelihood without any income source.

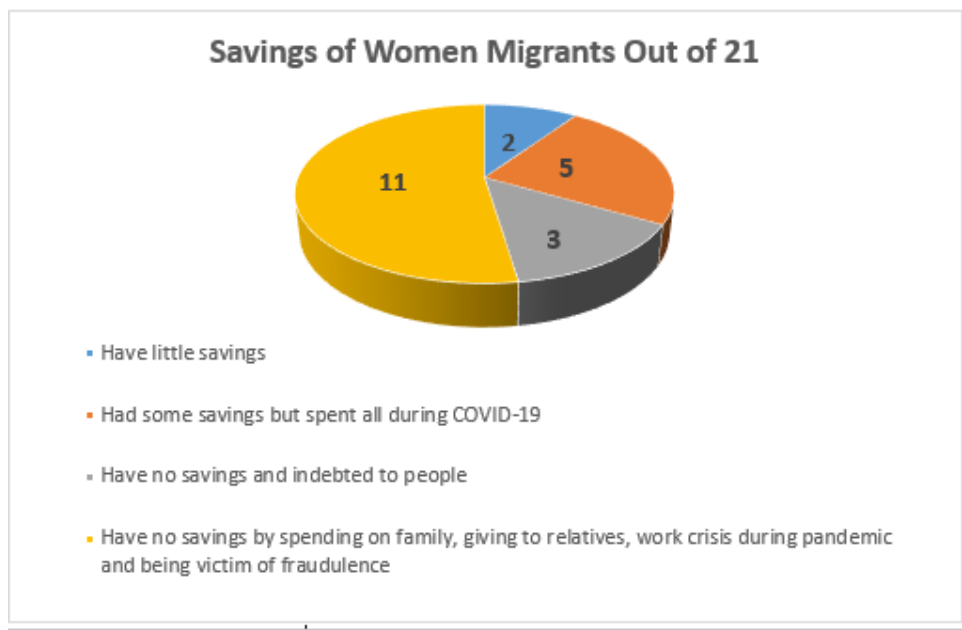


Figure 3: Savings of women migrants

A migrant women, who have lived in Lebanon for 10 years returned to Bangladesh during pandemic because of currency crisis in Lebanon, as her employer was unable to pay her properly during pandemic. She is now thinking of her remigration in the face of economic obstacles, although she has not decided the destination yet.

According to her response:

“I migrated overseas by taking loans in compound interest and sent money to my family at home. I could manage to build a four-store house but my children used to spent money recklessly without giving any thought. Later on, I was victim of a fraudulence, whom I gave 1.5-lakh taka in advance for my husband’s migration purpose but my husband could not go. For that, I lost all of my savings and now I am indebted to people. Now I must migrate under compulsion. If I had some savings or had 1-2 lakh taka, I would have bought a cow and calves, and live with my family in Bangladesh as my husband has started working again as a bus contractor. Now I have nothing to run my livelihood and I made some loan of 1-1.5 lakh taka in the last 9 months. I am in a miserable condition now”.

Moreover, pandemic induced crisis put the women in economically vulnerable situation, as they do not have income at home. A returnee from Lebanon noted that she had built a small house and saved some money from her previous migration, but during pandemic, she was sitting at home without any income, which made her economically vulnerable and now trying for re-migration. She added that she have to migrate to fulfil her economic need and would have stayed in Bangladesh, if she gets any loan facilities. She commented:

“I returned to Bangladesh during the pandemic as my employer in Lebanon where I have stayed for 11 years (2009-2021) was unable to pay me because they are going through a dollar problem in Lebanon, so now I am now going to Saudi Arabia to a new employer. I did not want to migrate but I have to earn money to send my son abroad and repay my previous loans as my husband does not earn or do anything for earning.”

As women migrants generally send a large amount of their earnings for their family to their home country, they cannot save for future purposes or sometimes they fall into victim of fraudulence and wage theft and lose their money. They are in most cases liable to repay the loans and bear their family expenses and during COVID-19, the returnee migrants lost their earning and remigration is an option for them to fulfill all the needs.

4.1.3 Lack of Reintegration Facilities in Bangladesh

Almost all of the women said that they would like to stay in Bangladesh if they had any income source. While most of them had urged for getting any loan to start their business, some have said that they are afraid of taking loans as they might put into the jail if they cannot repay the loans timely. Out of all the respondents, 2 migrants said that they are afraid of taking loans and 1 said that she wants to re-migrate as she thinks she can earn more in this way. One of the migrants from Savar, who will return to her previous employer said:

“If I take loan and cannot repay, police will put me into jail and insult me, which will be a huge shame for myself. If I can work somewhere, I will do, otherwise not. If I had savings of my own to start some small business or something, I would have considered not going.”

She also added that, *“Many people got incentives from government during lockdown but we migrants do not get anything, not even some rice or old age allowance or widow allowance.”*

The helplessness of migrant women are accompanied with their self-shame, which made them more vulnerable to ask for any help and to run their livelihood. Women who got any economic incentive or loan facilities from government or any NGO were able pay their debts and proceed with income earning activities with that money and they could at least survive during pandemic lockdown, while they had no earning source to run their livelihood. A migrant returnee domestic worker, who lives in Naryanganj and returned from Lebanon have received incentive from government and a small amount of money from airport while returning, which helped her a lot in the crisis. She said:

“I got twenty thousand taka from government and got some money in the airport while returning. I bought my daughter a sewing machine with that money and paid some of my debts with that money.”

In many instance, migrants find it difficult to look for job or help after their return for the social barriers. Most of them did not get any social protection or security from government or NGO to overcome their vulnerability. While, some of them said that sometimes they attend meetings and programmes of NGOs regarding migration and from there they get a little sum of money, which is a great help for them. On the other hand, some said that as they came from abroad it is shameful for them to ask for help.

A returnee migrant said:

“People in my village got help from government during pandemic but I did not get anything. As I came from overseas, I felt very shameful to ask for anything. What they would think about me?”

After return, women migrants live in uncertainty regarding income opportunities and reintegrating in society. Among the interviewed migrants, 4 said that they were in fear on social stigma and 2 of them said they did not go to anywhere after return as they knew that after coming from overseas, people behave differently. Moreover, one of the migrants said that she faced social sigma, as people consider female migration bad in her village. She commented that:

“In my village, women do not migrate and people consider me bad for that. I had no other option then to migrate, as I had no money to eat and run my livelihood. Men are migrating frequently but no one consider them bad. I did not tell anyone before my migration as I was indebted to people and going overseas for work is not good. They do ‘bad’ to people.”

One of the interviewed migration expert said that reintegrating in the society and starting something in Bangladesh is sometimes challenging for the migrant women. As their confidence grow after their first migration experience, they feel confident and encouraged for remigration. A migration expert said:

“Probashi Kallayan Bank (PKB) provides some loan after return of a migrant. However, the process of availing this loan requires so many formalities that it is difficult for the migrants to take the loan and the amount is not much so the migrants do not go for this loan. When the women migrants return to Bangladesh and if they have some savings and can take some loan from PKB, they can start some business in Bangladesh. However, in most cases, they do not know about the loan facilities and even if they heard about it, the long processing and documentation process discourage them to do so. That is why many women process their re-migration through the help of middleman. It is seen that, if someone have migrated once, when they return after their contract is over, they re-migrate for two-three times afterwards. The reason behind this is, their fear about overseas migration lessens by that time and decide for

re-migration if she is physically well enough to go. Some women do not migrate for their families and they might discourage the women for not going.”

Although economic reason is the main driver of migration and remigration, sometimes women face social stigma after returning to their home country. A migration expert gave opinion in this matter:

“The harassment of women migrants start from the airport when they return. To pass the immigration is sometimes tough for them and immigration officers do not behave friendly with a migrant worker. People think that they are domestic workers so they are victims of sexual harassment and do not behave welcoming towards them. When it comes to money, everyone is taking that. This is a mindset of maximum people which is a huge obstacle for social reintegration of the migrant workers”

Regarding the reintegration of women migrants, another migration expert said:

“Women mostly migrate as domestic workers and skilled migration of women is very little. Whoever is migrating as domestic workers, stays in economically and socially vulnerable positions and helpless. They do not find a suitable option in the face of economically vulnerable situation and by facing the social context, they feel that as they are not finding good employment opportunity here, they migrate overseas. Nobody migrate to change their fate, they migrate when they are in vulnerable and critical situation”

The expert further commented:

“Women migrants face many obstacles after they return to their home country. Social, reintegration, economic reintegration and psychosocial counseling is important when they come back home. As it is important for them to get proper assistance during staying overseas, after return they should give proper counseling to make them mentally well off , built confidence , provide guidance and economic support to start a small business and apart from that it is needed to be ensured that no one point finger towards them (social re-integration).”

Various reasons motivate and sometimes force the women migrant workers to take the decision of remigration. It is prevalent in the findings that due to unavailability of unskilled job market, low wages in Bangladesh, zero savings and lack of loan facilities they have to return to their

workplaces. Moreover, some women are trying to re-migrate to a new employer and some are in a dilemma whether they would be able to go or not which depends on their socio-economic situation.

4.2 Remigration Challenges for the Women Migrants

The foremost challenge a woman migrant faces when they decide to migrate is the information gap. Most of the women are not aware of the migration procedures and related cost regarding their migration. They depend on the local agents, whom they rely for their migration. During COVID-19 pandemic, some local agents tried to take advantage of the information gap of women migrant workers and they faced several difficulties like money asked by agents, passport renewal, visa expiration, curbing down of flights etc. Women migrants who want to re-migrate or return to their previous workplace, among them more than half of the respondents said that they were facing passport renewal, visa processing, vaccination, economic crisis and pandemic induced difficulties, which made their remigration journey difficult. Among those respondents, most of them said that those difficulties were created for pandemic and if pandemic were not there, they might have re-migrated earlier.

Problem Regarding Their Return	Number of Respondent
Economic difficulties	8
COVID-19 restrictions	8
Passport related difficulties	7

Table 2: Problems women migrants are facing

There were diverse problems women migrants were facing depending on their access to information and COVID-19 induces difficulties as well. While COVID-19 has made the scenario more difficult, the problem was already there and the middleman took advantage of the women migrants, who do not have adequate education and knowledge regarding the migration procedures.

4.2.1 Money and Information Gap

The female migrants are mostly domestic workers, who cannot read, write, and have no idea about the migration process. Many migrants were asked by the dalal ⁵that they have to pay money in order to migrate and they were not told about the overall amount yet. 5 of the participants said that their remigration processing is delayed due to economic problem and 1 women also said that, as the agents will work for them, in return asking money is obvious and normal. When she was asked that if dalal was asking money from her, she said that:

“Yes. They will work for me to send me abroad, so it is normal and obvious that they will take money from me. Otherwise, why they would do that? For my previous migration, I gave the agent 40 to 50 thousand taka and I have not started my processing yet but they will take money.”

Apart from that, a woman who has returned from Lebanon during COVID-19 and re-migrating to Saudi Arabia said that her brother-in-law is an agent and he was doing every processing regarding migration of her. She has started her processing late because of money. She said:

“I have to give money to my brother, as nobody will take me without money. He has not said the amount yet but I have to pay him later. For money, I am late for remigration. If no money was needed for migration, I would have migrated earlier. I will pay him after I migrate and I still do not know when I will be asked for money, it might be before migration or after. My processing is completed but still I do not know how much I have to pay.”

Moreover, in case of migrating to a new place some women are being asked for money by the intermediary. A returnee migrant from Oman said:

“I will now go to a new employer and I have to do all the formalities with my own money. COVID test, other processing, flight tickets, I have to pay for all the things. They will charge obviously as they have to do my work and send me abroad, nobody will do it for free.”

Information gap related to their migration is a huge backdrop. On the other hand, some of the migrants said that, previously they did not know that women migrants do not need money for

⁵ Sub-agent/local agent/middleman/intermediary

their migration but now they know. Some of them said they have attended some meeting in their village by NGOs, who let them aware of safe migration. One of the migrants, who had returned from Lebanon and was illegally living there, said that she had visited local WARBE office for her migration and will take help from them after deciding for remigration. She said:

“I have not started my processing yet as I was in fear that if I cannot migrate after doing all the processing, then what I will do. So I have contacted to WARBE office, if they give me hope, I will start my processing. I want to migrate officially and do not want to migrate illegally or with any help from dalal. The officials of WARBE said they can help me if I want to go to another country other than Lebanon, but I want to go to Lebanon as my husband lives there and he wants me to go there.”

Data collected from migrant women shows that most of the women are not aware of the fact that they do not need to pay any money to anyone for migration. After migrating for 2-3 times they are not still aware of the migration related information and for information and processing, they rely on local agents. Moreover, due to the pandemic many women who came for a vacation were unable to rejoin their workplace due to cancellation of flights, visa expiration, difficulty in getting vaccines, renewal of passports etc.

One of the interviewed migration expert said:

“In this COVID-19 the dalals are asking for double money and saying that before pandemic less money were required but now during pandemic double money are required to complete all the processing. Whenever women migrants are saying that they know that women do not need to pay money to migrate, the dalas are showing the additional cost like medical, finger print and others and taking money from the women.”

In another interview with a migration expert, he said:

“Women migrants do not need money for migration. If a woman migrates to Saudi Arabia, the recruiting agency get \$2000 from a Saudi employer, which is the reason that before 2015 there were very few recruiting agencies and the number of women migrants was less as well but now there are more than 600 recruiting agencies. Even the intermediaries or dalas are paid by the recruiting agencies to recruit a migrant but in some cases the dalal take money from the migrant woman as well. According to the rules, women migrant workers do not need to pay any money for their migration, but in most of the cases local agents who are taking money from

them are their family members or close relatives. In that case, they do not want to complain and in many cases, the money taken from them is not a big amount so they do not feel the need for complain. If anyone take money from any women migrant worker, she can complain at BMET. But the money that are taken unofficially and undocumented, there is no proof, so there is no scope for taking action”

4.2.2 Renewal of Passport

Women migrant returned to Bangladesh during COVID-19 facing different circumstances abroad. Some of them returned willingly for work pressure, some of them came for vacation with a intention to go back, some of them were forced to return and some were living illegally in abroad and returned via out-pass of Bangladeshi government and among all of them, some face passport related difficulties. For example- not getting passport for several months, cannot renew passport due to economic difficulties, document related issues etc.

A returnee migrant from Oman, who stayed there for two years and before that worked in Saudi Arabia for two years does not have the capacity to renew her passport. She wants to go back but her financial situation got worse during pandemic and now she is in trouble regarding her return to her workplace. She said:

“My contract is over so I returned to Bangladesh but my employer wants me to go again and I want to go there as well. However, my passport is expired and I do not have that money to renew my passport. My employer sent some money for my passport renewal but during the pandemic, I have to use that money for consumption purposes, as we have no money left to survive without any work. Now I do not have the ability to spend twelve to thirteen thousand taka to renew my passport”.

A migrant woman, who returned from Lebanon is willing to re-migrate due to economic difficulties but still could not start her processing as she had given for passport renewal but did not receive that to date. She said:

“I gave my passport for renewal via a dalal but I did not receive my passport yet. Dalal said that due to COVID-19 induced lockdown and shutdown of offices it might take 3 to 5 months to get my passport. But it has been 10months.”

Moreover, some were living abroad illegally and came to Bangladesh with a hope of migrating to a new place. They are now facing difficulties making a new passport as their previous passport was expired and taken by the embassy during their return. The difficulties were related to their old age and other documents. A migrant returnee from Lebanon, who lived there for 11 years and 8 years illegally, came back with government assistance in a hope of migrating to a new place with a valid visa. She said:

“As I was illegal migrant there and had no passport, after returning to Bangladesh, I am said that I cannot make passport at this age and even if I make passport, I cannot migrate at this age. If I knew, I would never come back as I had good opportunities to earn there, which I do not have in Bangladesh.”

Economic obstacles in Bangladesh put them in such vulnerable condition that they are now considering living illegally better than in their home country. Moreover, intermediaries are taking the advantage of pandemic situation and telling the migrant women that due to pandemic, extra money is needed everywhere and making the migrants victim. A woman migrant commented on this:

“I spent thirty-two thousand taka to renew my passport. As I have renewed it during pandemic. Normally it takes seven to eight thousand taka but at that time I had to give thirty-two thousand taka, otherwise government does not put seal on my passport. I put the seal through giving them money.”

The above statement clearly shows how the intermediaries are taking advantage of pandemic situation and made it a source of income. They are unnecessarily charging the women migrants, who are not aware of the cost and situation.

Other than that, from my observation outside the passport office⁶ and talking with some migrants I found out that most of them applied for their passport renewal via intermediary (dalal) and during the day to give their fingerprint and photograph, they faced harassment again. Long que outside the passport office and waiting there for hours and even after waiting for a whole day they were unable to give their fingerprint, complete other formalities, and have to come for another day. Moreover, while I casually tried to talk with a migrant she said that she

⁶ District passport office, Habiganj

came to receive her passport, which she gave for renewal on urgent basis (express delivery)⁷ but received on regular time (regular delivery). She said she had provided twelve-thousand TK for the passport renewal for 10 years, but when I looked into her passport receiving receipt, I saw that the intermediary registered for her passport for 5 years that costs 4,065 taka. However, she was told that her passport is for 10 years and needed 12 thousand taka but in reality, it was not the case. She said that she does not know anything as her brother did everything and later on after some conversation she said that, her brother is the dalal. Therefore, it can be seen that how the victimization of women migrants starts from their own family members and relatives.

4.2.3 Vaccination

Vaccination was a huge barrier for the migrant women in this COVID-19 pandemic. Many of them did not have information on vaccination and had no information regarding where to get it, how to get it, money related to vaccination and apart from that misinformation regarding vaccination. There were several misinformation regarding the after effects of vaccination and as people are not educated or have safe or sound knowledge regarding health risks, they considered it harmful. However, the intermediaries tried to take advantage of the situation and findings from my field data it shows that some women migrants were asked money for their vaccination registration and money for taking the vaccine shots. Along with that, as Saudi-Arabia and Kuwait were asking for some specific vaccination⁸ and Saudi government said that otherwise migrant worker have to stay in quarantine with their own cost, which is 70-80 thousand taka. Many migrants responded that they were even facing problem regarding registering for vaccine. A migrant who will return to her previous employer responded that:

“I went to a shop of nearby market of my village to register for vaccination. The boy from that shop said I have to pay one-thousand taka to register and I had not that much money to spend for vaccination so I came back from there. But my employer said, I have to be vaccinated, otherwise I cannot migrate.”

⁷ e-Passport with 48 pages and 10 years validity-Regular delivery: TK 5,750; Express delivery: TK 8,050

⁸ Pfizer, Moderna

Along with other difficulties, taking vaccination was a huge struggle for the migrants and specially women⁹ migrants, who are mostly from rural areas and do not have any way to get proper information. A migrant who have faced several difficulties along with passport, ticket and other restrictions. She said that she could not return because of vaccination. She said:

“I could not return due to vaccine and now I am fully vaccinated. I did not get vaccine earlier as I did not know where to go for registration and how to get it. I heard that it takes a big amount of money to register and make the vaccination card. If I have not taken vaccine, I would have to stay in quarantine, which is costly. That is why me employer did not take me back earlier. Now I am fully vaccinated and I will return. I had to give 360 taka to get my vaccine certificate.”

Along with these problems, not getting vaccination, expiration of their visa and quarantine restrictions has put the women migrants in vulnerable situation. Women migrants are struggling earners of any country and managing a big amount of money for staying in quarantine is difficult for them. A respondent from Rupganj, who was returning to her previous employer said that her flight date was in few days but she could not get her second dose of vaccine as her first dose was given in Saudi Arabia before coming to Bangladesh. Now she has been told that she cannot take her second dose of vaccine here, as Saudi vaccine is different from Bangladesh and they do not match. She was passing her days in worrying about the consequences if she cannot fly and migrate finally. She said:

“I heard that I have to stay in quarantine if I am not vaccinated and it will cost me a huge sum of money. How would I manage if they do not let me enter into the airport? I have not talked or communicated with anyone about this. If I cannot go for any reason and any problem comes finally, I would be in great trouble, as I have to work to survive. If I miss the ticket, it will be a huge loss for me. By running my livelihood, I do not have more money to stay in hotel for quarantine there. How would I manage all those things? I worry all day about this.”

Lack of information and help facilities are making their journey more difficult. Many women are passing their days in uncertainty worrying about their return and they are worried for their income loss and getting into trouble with their livelihood. Apart from that, registration

⁹ Long que outside vaccination center

difficulties, long line in vaccination centers and availability of desired vaccine was an important issue. The same respondent outside the passport office said that she was not jabbed yet and would take the vaccine before her departure. Shockingly she said that expatriates can take both the vaccine shots within an interval of 2 days but in reality the second dose is given after a month or two (depending on the vaccine) of first dose. She said that a close relative of her had taken vaccination this way and she will do the same to cut down hassles of going to the capital Dhaka as specific centers provide specific vaccination for the migrant workers. If her saying was true, in near future we will see some disastrous consequences of health hazards due to misinformation regarding vaccination.

4.2.4 COVID-19 Related Other Restrictions

Moreover, there were cases of visa expiration due to delays of flights, delay in passport renewal process, due to shut down of all offices during pandemic, people could not do their processing for migration, they were told to bear all the cost of their migration. Moreover, less demand of work in overseas, shutdown of flights, high price of tickets, quarantine restrictions, unavailability of demanded vaccine, COVID-19 negative test report under 24 hours created a difficult situation for the migrants. Initially, unavailability of PCR test lab in airport, huge demand of workers but not enough testing lab and sometime delay in test report due to huge demand made it difficult and traumatic situation for the migrant workers.

4.3 Conditions to Fulfill for Re-migration and Key Actors for Creating Re-migration Challenges

Now the question comes that, who are putting these conditions and what are the conditions that are necessary to fulfill by the migrants? In earlier chapters. I have discussed on economic and COVID-19 induced difficulties they were facing. In this chapter, I will proceed with the conditions that are being imposed by the destination countries and sometimes by the employer and in many cases by the intermediaries.

During the surge of COVID-19, on May 10, Saudi Arabia authority imposed restriction that the non-citizens, who were not vaccinated must stay at 7 days quarantine at hotel on their own

cost. As quarantine was expensive for the migrant workers, which might cost approximately 70-80 thousand tk. Later on BAIRA urged to the government to pay for the quarantine fee, as they are the wheel of our economy. Later on government has announced they would pay 20,000-25,000 taka for the financial support of Saudi-Arabia going migrants.¹⁰ However, as women face information constraints, in most cases, they were not aware of this and they faced several difficulties. Moreover, Saudi Arabia government did not gave approval for Sinopharma vaccine, which was available at that time in Bangladesh and Kuwait government said, they would not allow migrants to enter if they were not vaccinated with any of the four vaccines: Pfizer/BioNTech, AstraZeneca, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson.

Apart from that, travel ban was imposed by the host countries and afterwards the ban was lifted. However, Gulf Countries had made mandatory for COVID negative result done, not before than 6 hours of departure from a PCR test to enter the country.¹¹ As testing facilities were not available at any of the airports, migrants face difficulties in their return.

During pandemic, vaccination was a huge problem for the returnee migrants. Vaccination information was a huge obstacle for the return of female migrants. As most of the women migrants are from rural areas and do not have any educational knowledge, they were deprived of vaccination information, which delayed their return. Another obstacle they faced was to provide a corona negative test certificate done 24 hours before during flight and if the flight delays for some reason they had to go through the process again and faced huge obstacles. Some of their visas expired due to lockdown. The employers said the women migrants have to bear all the processing cost if they want to return, they can only send the visa. A migrant returnee from Dubai said:

“I could not return due to visa and some related issues. My employer said I have to bear all the cost of my return and they will just send the visa. Apart from that, all the processing costs

¹⁰ Govt. to pay quarantine rent for Saudi Arabia-bound workers. (2021b, May 29). *Dhaka Tribune*.

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/migration/2021/05/29/govt-to-pay-quarantine-rent-for-saudi-arabia-bound-workers>

¹¹ Hasan, J. M. A. R. (2021, September 6). Migrants going abroad: Their pleas finally heard. *The Daily Star*.

<https://www.thedailystar.net/nrb/migration/news/migrants-going-abroad-their-pleas-finally-heard-2170026>

are on me. It needs around 70 to 80 thousand taka to do all the processing which is a huge burden for me in this situation.”

As women migrants are deprived of information and other knowledge on migration, they are faced with various conditions to re-migrate. Another concern is noticed in women migrants that they want to return to the employers where they did not receive any violence or harassment and for that they are not thinking of going to a new country or to a new employer. A sense of security is leading them towards such a decision.

A skilled migrant who returned from Jordan said that if she wants to re-migrate to Jordan, she has to return to her previous workplace as per the rules set by that company. She commented:

“I returned willingly during COVID-19 as my mother was sick and thought that I would not go to overseas again. However, due to condition in Bangladesh, now I am thinking that working overseas was better as due to COVID-19 life become hard as living cost is becoming high along with house rent and other arrangements and low wages in Bangladesh. If I have no other choice than re-migrating, then I have to go to previous workplace as my company has blocked the passport of returnee workers so that they cannot get work in another company in Jordan. All the workers have to return to that company for work if they want to go again. They set the rules during pandemic. I heard that if I want to go to a new place, I have to make new passport.

There are multiple actors in every sector, who are exploiting the women migrants and creating difficulties. According to a response of migration expert:

“Dalals are dominant everywhere in the migration process and the migrants cannot do any of their processing without them. If you go outside the passport office, recruitment offices, there are hundreds of dalals waiting there. Not everyone is a fraud but we asked the government several times to take Dallas into legal framework but still there is no policy implementation on this side of migration governance”.

There are various causes regarding the difficulties and obstacles women migrants face in their pre-departure, post-departure and after return journey. The social structure, education, cultural factor, materialistic factor, possibility and desirability are some of the causes behind all the discrimination, obstacles women migrants face in their journey as an international migrants.

4.4 Remigration Difficulties Apart from COVID-19 Induced Crisis

Some women do not want to re-migrate and some have not decided yet due to various challenges like previous migration experiences. Women who have traumatic experiences with their previous workplaces do not want to migrate again. Women who have good experience with their employer, were interested in re-migration and who have bad experiences, consider not migrating again or saying that they have to migrate considering their economic consequences. Workplace experiences are huge challenge for the women migrants to make decisions regarding re-migration. While most of the women said they have to re-migrate due to their economic obstacles, less income opportunities in Bangladesh and to give their family income security, some of the women responded that they do not want to migrate again. Therefore, what are the reason that they took such decision? Well, while almost all of the interviewed migrants said that they want to stay in Bangladesh and want to live with their families but decided to return to the workplace out of their economic needs. It is not as if the migrant women who have decided that they will not re-migrate have economic security in Bangladesh, but because of their traumatic experiences in working overseas.

4.4.1 Traumatic Experiences and Deciding Not to Re-migrate

While migration is a livelihood choice for the women migrant workers, some of the women migrants said that they would not re-migrate because of their previous migration experience. Two of them said they would not re-migrate even if they were given fifty-thousand taka, which is actually a big amount for a migrant worker and a big claim for her. 5 of 25 respondents said that they would not re-migrate as they had faced harassment and torture at their workplace. On the other hand, among them, some said that they will not re-migrate again but will think if they get opportunity to work under a good employer. Moreover, some said they would go if they can work under free visa, which is living on their own and working on per hour basis on people's houses as domestic workers or in the hospitals as cleaner. It is also prevalent that women were considering working on free visa and not staying in any employer's house a safe option for working overseas. Moreover, some women migrants said that in free visa they could work on per hour basis and get wages on day-to-day basis so there is very little chances of wage theft.

The exploitation of migrants sometimes start from beginning of their migration processing. A women migrant from Keraniganj, who worked as a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia, returned home after 3 months on the face of excessive work pressure and torture. She migrated through a dalal from her nearby village and that person took 25 thousand taka for her migration processing. She was told that she has to work for three members of her employer's house but in reality, she alone worked for three whole floor of a house and could not even get time to eat for excessive work. She did not receive any training prior to her migration and she had no idea about where to go for help in overseas. She said, she was deceived by the local agent and was severely tortured by her employer and she had to stay at jail for 14 days and her husband paid 80 thousand taka to bring her back to Bangladesh. She said that:

“No one can work all the time, my hand and legs were attacked by fungal through continuously working in water. I could not take rest and I was COVID positive and was severely sick that my face swelled. They took my sim card so that I cannot contact to my home. My husband filed a case in embassy through the help of Bangladesh police. When embassy sent police for me, my employer said I am insane and they put me into jail. After staying there for 18 days in a bad environment, my husband sent eighty thousand taka to get me back in Bangladesh. I worked there for three months but did not get any salary.”

A responded from Comilla returned from Oman on December 2020 shared her traumatic experience during her 11 months of stay at her employer's house. Severe work pressure and improper eating arrangements made her physically exhausted. She was told by the intermediary through whom she migrated that she has to work for 8 people but in reality there were 18 people and she got less salary than she was told. She used to work alone, which is comparable to 3 people. Later on, she had to pay her employer 60 thousand taka to return from there as she did not complete her contract and had to bear all the returning cost on her own. She does not want to re-migrate as she could not gain anything from migration and it costed her more. According to her response:

“I do not have more strength to do domestic work after enduring so much in my overseas migration period. I worked all the time and even in empty stomach. I am physically very weak now. Even if someone offer me 50 thousand taka, I will not migrate. I had to spend all my savings from migration to come back to Bangladesh.”

Therefore, it was found that women who are trying to re-migrate are facing various difficulties but women who have decided not to migrate have also taken the decision because of their experiences. This should also be included as re-migration difficulties, as they have said that a good employer or working condition can make them change their decision.

While it was prevalent that unskilled migrant women mostly migrated as domestic workers and faced several difficulties from their migration processing, workplace obstacles and reintegration after return to Bangladesh, the case was different for the skilled migrant workers. 3 out of 25 interviewed women migrated as a skilled workers through BOESL and worked in garments company overseas. Their experiences are very different from migrant domestic workers who are unskilled and have very little knowledge about migration process and valid information regarding migration. It is prevalent that migration processing difficulties and workplace harassment and torture is very low in skilled working sector. All three of the interviewed migrant said, they used to work in Jordan and migrated through the help of BOESL, about which they learnt from their known people. All three of them were satisfied with their salary and living arrangement while working overseas and all of them got job after returning to Bangladesh during COVID-19 pandemic. Two of them returned because of their family issues and one of them returned after 1 year of migration due to excessive work pressure and will not return and now working in a garments company in Bangladesh. Although she did not face any torture or harassment, according to her the work pressure was traumatic.

She shared:

“I used to live in hostel and living and eating arrangement was good and I did not face any harassment. However, there was excessive work pressure and did not have any rest time or holiday even in sickness. They used to push injection if anyone is tired and sent back to work within 10 minutes. No matter how seriously sick someone is they must work. It effected the physical health of the workers. The high power injection sometimes did not adjust to patients body and sometimes workers were taken to hospital and sometimes patients used to die. What kind of treatment they were giving that people die in a day? I saw many things so I do not want to re-migrate. Own country is good.”

Regarding vulnerability of women migrant workers, here is opinion of one of the migration experts:

“In every situation, before migration, during migration and after return every women stays in a vulnerable situation. A women who works as a domestic worker, cannot run away from their employers house so there are huge chances to make them victim of harassment, as they are women. Middle Eastern countries had slavery before and still they think that they can do whatever they want with domestic workers. In such cases, women are more vulnerable than men are and in case of domestic workers, they are more vulnerable than any other jobs. The obstacles of female are much higher than male and they contribute to the remittance economy more than the male do. They do not spend money for other purposes as male migrants do and their vulnerability is higher as well”

Another migration expert gave her opinion on this:

“Women who are willing to migrate should provide proper grooming before migration. Government should come into proper negotiation with the host country that if any of the women face harassment, we will stop sending worker. However, government is afraid to put their strong voice regarding this. They think that such negotiation might result harmful for the expatriates in the host country and they might be sent back to Bangladesh. Government should increase their bargaining power in technical and diplomatic manners to protect the women migrants. During signing of MOU, GoB should ensure the protection of women migrant workers.”

She also added that:

“When women are migrating to Middle Eastern countries as migrant domestic works (MDW), they are facing many obstacles. In the skilled sector (garments), such problem is very less. MDWs do not complete the steps before migration like- 30 days of mandatory training and sometimes dalal make face certificates for those trainings. As a result, they do not understand the language and work when they migrate and face torture. Moreover, slavery is a long culture of these countries and their social structure make women more vulnerable. In addition to that, women do not know about their work hour, wages, member of employer’s house and eating arrangement before migrating. They migrate through believing in the words of dalal and later complain about the work place condition. Monitoring and quality of the training centers for MDW are very poor and there is no proper database regarding the number of women migrants received training from here before migration. Moreover, lack of manpower in labour wings,

lack of access to the embassy, lack of legal cell support make the women more vulnerable. If we say about MDWs from Philippine, they are very strong as their government is strict regarding protection of their rights. Our country was in a good state even in the pandemic because of remittance and foreign currency reserve, but the least budget is reserved for the welfare of migrants.”

While it is prevalent in the literature that gender identity determines the migration behavior, it is also noticeable that unskilled women migrant workers face more discrimination and obstacles for their social class as a domestic worker and unskilled labourer that a skilled migrant woman does not face or the suffering is less in some instances. Their identity as women and women from lower class make them more vulnerable in migration and therefore, they endure inhuman tortures in their workplaces.

In this chapter, the findings and analysis of the study are presented and in the next chapter, I will discuss the deep-rooted problems behind their sufferings and present arguments relating to the study findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Reintegration Problem and Re-migration Decision of Women

According to IOM, globally, the amount of remittances sent by women migrants are almost the same as male and they send a higher proportion of their money on a regular basis than men (IOM et al., 2007 as cited in IOM, n.d.). It raises the question that why the highest proportion of income sending women migrants do not have savings of their own and do not get re-integration facilities when they want to stay in their home countries. From the finding, it can be clearly seen that they do not have control over their remittances and whatever they sent home, it is used for their families' consumption and children's educational and future purposes. IOM (n.d.) report stated that, women migrants and especially single women might get extra pressure from their extended families home to send a bigger part of their earning to support them. Because of such pressure and their responsibility back home, women migrants may accept difficult working and living conditions overseas. Rashid (2016) in her paper developed "poststructuralist theorization of gender as an act of performance to describe the ways in which men and women in patriarchal society occupy different fluid subject positions as remitters, receivers, providers and managers of remittances in the course of remittance practices" (p.3). She demonstrated an analysis of gender and the remittance behavior in the villages of Bangladesh, where migration has been a common phenomenon of earning source.

Moreover, returnee migrants do not get job facilities as they are mostly unskilled migrant workers and along with job scarcity in rural areas, social barriers stop them to find employment in their home country. The challenges for women migrant workers for re-integrating socially and economically are greater than male migrants. They do not get support from their family after returning to do the same job they used to do overseas and cannot use their skills. (CEDAW, n.d.).

Moreover, as they do not get economic and social re-integration facilities after they return, they find it hard to re-integrate in the society and face hardships economically and socially. During any crisis, women and vulnerable groups of society face the most challenges. Regarding the world economic catastrophe of 2008, the major effect of that economic disaster among women and girls has been reported by UNAIDS (2012) and the obstacles it created all over the world for the equality of gender (As cited in Ansar et al, 2021).

As these women are from grassroots, they do not have information about the facilities that government are providing for the returnee migrants and in many cases the women migrants do

not have proper documents that are needed to apply for a loan. A report revealed that some of the returnee women migrants did not get any government relief, as they do not hold any Voter ID card or any other ID proof for the location they are residing in (UN Women, 2020). Moreover, the findings suggest that the involuntary return of the migrant women without any resources and without any social protection support are losing their opportunities of income and their economic hardship is increasing. The stigma of their society make it difficult for them to re-integrate economically and socially. Moreover, from the findings it is prominent that they do not have any idea that they can avail loan facilities from PKB and wait for an uncertain future. Reintegrating in the society after returning from overseas is by itself a critical phenomenon on regular time, and during COVID-19 pandemic, the problem was more serious. Countrywide shutdown, eating out of their little savings and no economic opportunity made them more vulnerable to reintegrate and they were compelled to decide for re-migration.

Migration decision of a person depends on various push and pull factors. While in generally, the push and pull factors might be same for men and women both but women in our society predominantly face more vulnerability and have very less opportunity for work. If I consider the respondent of my research, most of them were not doing anything in Bangladesh before migrating and some were doing domestic work or rearing poultry in their home. On this context, Belanger and Rahman (2013) quoted that , “economic ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors are the important driving forces for international labour migration and especially temporary labour migration in Asia” (Haque, 2005; Stahl, 2003, p.357). Therefore, various reasons and situations in the home country of migrants are compelling the female migrants for re-migration. Moreover, they have grown some respect in their society as they have worked overseas and most of the migrants want to do a respectable job or small business in Bangladesh because of their social position. Re-migration can provide economic support and create a social status itself for the migrants.

5.2 Reason for Difficulties amid COVID-19

Information, lack of official assistance are making the women vulnerable in their migration process. It is also prevalent that women who attended session on safe migration and know about offices or organization concerning migration, are aware of migration process and do not want to process via intermediary due to previous experiences. According to a report of ILO (2016),

women from poor countries and their low educational quality are more likely to lack access to accurate information regarding overall migration process and are at risk of being deceived by unscrupulous recruitment agent and traffickers. Another report on IOM (2010) revealed that, in many time migrant workers depend on their relatives and friends for information regarding overseas job opportunities and the situation , however around 45 percent of workers end up going for information and other processing to illegal sub-agents and other intermediaries. Moreover, inadequate information regarding labour market and other processing, it lead to higher migration cost. There are more than 1400 recruiting agencies in Bangladesh and their sub-agents are operating in grassroots level to send migrant workers abroad. However, they often charge higher amount from the prospective migrants who do not have knowledge on migration related costs.

If we look at the 2013 migration law of Bangladesh, there is provision for legal action against the recruiting agency if any fraudulence is proved against them. However, there is no such provision for their sub-agents and they are unregistered agents of recruiting agencies. Although, it is proposed several times to bring the sub-agents under registration and rule, it never became successful.¹²

In my argument, along with law and policy implementation lacking, migrant women’s identity as a “women” made them more easy to exploit. In Bangladesh, due to social barriers and various discrimination on gender roles, the road to overseas migration is hard for women than men face in their way. For these reasons, women migrant face various struggles in their migration processing, pre-departure stage, working stage and even after the return to their home country (CEDAW, n.d). COVID-19 has shown us their obstacles in a different new angle. Although, there were several steps taken by the government of Bangladesh regarding vaccination, quarantine and other measures, women migrants were still in vague regarding these procedures and the intermediaries took advantage of the situation and took money from them.

¹² Ara, A. (2021, September 11). Recruiting agencies show reluctance to register manpower intermediaries. *The Financial Express*. Retrieved from <https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/trade/recruiting-agencies-show-reluctance-to-register-manpower-intermediaries-1631328508>

5.3 Sufferings of Women Migrants in Different Stages of Migration

Processing

Apart from COVID-19 imposed compulsory conditions, women were facing some other conditions from their employer and middleman. Women are considered as weaker and subordinate group of society, who can be violated and exploited and they cannot protest. Silver (2009) argued that due to the legal gaps in labor code, women transnational workers have fewer rights. In most cases, women do not know their employers information, their wages and other information regarding their migration. It is evident that the intermediaries related to the migration process created many barriers for the migrants. From vaccination, passport to visa processing, everywhere there are exploitation. Their identity as a migrant women with less knowledge and education along with policy implementation lacking of GoB in the grassroots level made them more vulnerable. Moreover, by taking the advantage of pandemic situation, women migrants were exploited more in the face of imposed condition. As they needed to return for their economic consequences, women migrants had sometimes fall victim of those situation. According to Rashid and Ashraf (2018), there are more than 1200 licensed private recruiting agencies and only 35 percent of the work visas are processed through them and more than 60 percent visa are processed by the relatives, friends or family members of migrants. Moreover, they also argued that although the dalals or intermediaries are closely involved in labour migration process, they are not taken under the Migration Act of 2013 (As cited in Ashraf and Arafat, 2018). As the dalals and intermediaries are not officially documented, the scope of fraudulence is higher and women migrants seldom take action against them. Moreover, migrant women generally have no idea about migration related offices and organization and they believe what they are told by their known person and the middleman. Even being deceived in their previous migration, they did not file any complaints against the dalal or recruiting agency, as they do not know where to go for that and how to do that.

The migration governance is centralized and there are authoritative and administrative shortcomings in DEMO offices and other authorities involved and working at the rural level has clearly shown the reason for misery of migrants (Ansar et al, 2021). As women are considered to stay at home, their knowledge regarding outer world is limited and the limitations of migration governance created the situation worse for them. It is evident from the study that although GoB took some measures for migrants during the pandemic, but women migrants were unaware. To achieve the goals of SDG regarding safe migration and favorable workplace

and migration, the implementation of policies and dissemination of proper information on every aspect is important. In the migration process, women are agreeing to the conditions of the intermediaries out of their need. According to a report of BRAC (2020), migrants are unaware of the migration cost processing, rules and regulations due to their poor education and information barrier. They are not aware that they can migrate through the help of government and falling victim of irregular channel and middleman create various barriers and put many conditions for migration.

5.4 Women as a Victim of Exploitation

Research conducted by RMMRU on female migrants from Bangladesh (Siddiqui 2001) showed that many women have been successful in their migration and migration brought positive economic change in their lives. (CEDAW, n.d). However, there are many instances of failed migration and along with other problems; pandemic induced problems have made the situation worse. COVID-19 pandemic have affected the lives and livelihoods of migrant workers who returned during the pandemic and who could not return. Ansar et al (2021) have argued that vulnerabilities of women migrants in their workplaces are not new phenomenon and the stories of their sufferings, return, wage theft during the COVID-19 pandemic has unveiled the gap and lacking in migration governance system to address and response to any emergency. They also argued that, “the already existed fault- lines in the recruitment, employment systems and living conditions of workers in overseas employment has been revealed by COVID-19. Moreover, in recent decades, it emerged as one of the concerning issues regarding equality of gender.” (Ansar et al, 2021, p. 149).

From the findings, it is evident that along with COVID-19 induced difficulties and restrictions, a proper migration governance for safe migration of the women migrants in the grassroots level were unavailable. Some of the women migrants were privileged to receive some support from NGOs regarding fraudulence and session on safe migration, but majority did not receive any support. Responses from the KII respondents clearly shows that many women fall victim of fraudulence and sometimes migrate without taking the mandatory 30 days training at TTC and eventually face harassment when the worker do not understand their language and cannot do work properly. There are some recruiting agent, sub-agent who send migrant overseas by making fake passport, job contract and BMET clearance certificate (ILO, 2014).

Migrants are the drivers of Bangladeshi economy and in different stages of migration, they face various discrimination and obstacles. In case of women migrants, the problem is far more than the male migrants. The unskilled nature of their migration and absence of proper grooming and training facilities during their first migration do not let them aware of the actual scenario and they fall victim after they migrate overseas. Even after returning, when they want to re-migrate, they do not have any knowledge on migration processing and in most cases they face similar consequences. Their exploitation starts from the beginning of their migration processing and even after return when they try to re-integrate in the society. Along with other difficulties, which migrant women face in a normal world, COVID-19 induced difficulties exacerbated their sufferings and the intermediaries took advantage of the situation. Although there are agendas on safe migration, those are not in case of grassroots level. The pandemic induced difficulties will eventually solved and more women migrants will engage in overseas employment but if the faulty recruitment system is not fixed through proper implementation of the existing laws, Bangladesh will have to witness more such difficulties in near future. There are serious lack of information regarding the migration processing ways, cost and other details. Although there are DEMO offices and in many places, NGOs are operating for promoting safe migration services, most of the women are not aware and rely on sub agents. Functioning faults in TTC's, DEMO offices are also responsible for barriers of migration. Women migrants should have proper knowledge and clear guideline regarding migration and should be provided with financial assistance when they return home. They should be provided psychosocial counseling after they return from overseas and financial assistance with small entrepreneurship skill development and social re-integration facilities if they do not want to migrate again. The pandemic has shown that our migrant workers are essential for our economy. Although, there has been various difficulties faced by the migrant women in their overseas employment and the left behind women of migrant households, there has been lack of international and national policies regarding responding to this critical issue and including gender responsive policies to identify and solve this (UN Women, 2020b; CARE, 2020 as cited in Ansar et al 2021). Due to lack of proper monitoring and legal support, such incidents are increasing and during pandemic, there were reports regarding violence and harassment of women migrant workers.

In the next chapter, the study will conclude by discussing the major study findings, significance, future scope and limitations and policy recommendations

Chapter 6: Study Summary and Conclusion

International labour migration is a livelihood opportunity for the poor people of Bangladesh and they contribute to the economy at a large extent through sending remittances and contributing to the GDP of Bangladesh. Women migration has been an increasing phenomenon for the last few years. Most of the women migrate as unskilled workers, and they mostly migrate as domestic workers (MDW). Although, women migration has been increasing, the harassment and sufferings of women did not decrease and during COVID-19, the scenario has been worse and along with workplace harassment, many women returned to Bangladesh forcefully and voluntarily as well. As migration is an economic choice for women migrant workers, they face several difficulties regarding return to their workplaces amid COVID-19.

The findings of the study will help in understanding deeply the lack in migration governance in rural areas and the challenges of returnee women migrants in their reintegration and their return. Moreover, this study will be beneficial for the women migrants who are becoming victim of the intermediary in every steps of their migration processing. Although this study focused on COVID-19 pandemic related difficulties of women migrant workers, it also focused on the migration governance in normal world.

The purpose of this study was to find out the reasons behind difficulties of women migrant returnees to return to their workplaces and in regards to their remigration. Moreover, in investigation of this broader research purpose, the study tried to find out some answer to its sub research questions.

First, the study tried to find out the reason behind remigration of women from Bangladesh and the findings suggests that, women migrant returnee are considering remigration as a dire need in the face of economic obstacles. As women send a major proportion of their overseas income to their home country, they do not have access to their remittance and most of their money are spent on their families back home. Moreover, their gender identity as women and women migrant worker, keep them subordinate in society and make them more vulnerable to reintegrate due to social barriers. The socio-economic reintegration of returnee migrant women in the society is harder than the male migrants and the lack of reintegration facilities after their return made them more vulnerable. Moreover, lack of unskilled job, lower salary, no savings and lack of loan facilities have compelled them to re-migrate amid COVID-19 pandemic.

Second, the study find out the challenges women migrants were facing for remigration during COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 induced pandemic has made their remigration or return to their workplace difficult as due to shut down of the offices regarding migration processing, flights were shut down and the processing were taking longer than before. Moreover, information gap made them more vulnerable to victim of fraudulence. There were facing vaccination, quarantine, passport renewal, price hike of tickets and other pandemic induced problems along with economic obstacles, as many of them did not have money to renew their passport or stay in quarantine. The lack of official assistance in rural areas and information gap regarding safe migration made their remigration journey more difficult. The unauthorized nature of the local agents made it easy for them to make victim of the uneducated rural women migrant workers. Although there are provision for punishment if anyone illegally ask money from women migrant workers, in most cases they are not punished as women migrants do not complain or do not know where to go for complain or they do not have documents as a proof for any claim. Sometimes local agents are their relatives so they do not want to complain. While there were many measures taken by the GoB, the migrant women had no idea about those because of information constraints as they are mostly from rural areas, do not have adequate education and lack of knowledge regarding contacting to migration related offices.

Third, to find out the terms and conditions and the responsible actors behind the difficulties, it is prevalent that along with the imposed COVID-19 related restriction from the host countries, the intermediaries and in some cases the employer imposed conditions and made remigration or return even more challenging for the migrant women. Some women were asked to pay their own cost of return by their previous employer and the intermediaries in passport making, vaccination registration and other processing asked for money and put the economically vulnerable women migrants in difficult situation. Unavailability of local migration related office or sometimes the poor functioning of government offices regarding migration made the easy exploitative system for women migrants. The ignorance of the women migrant made them vulnerable to exploitation. Implementation lacking of migration act and their identity as gender become prominent in these findings for their sufferings.

Fourth, the study tried to look at the reasons behind deciding for not migrating again. While remigration was a challenge for the aspirant migrant, some women refused to re-migrate due to their traumatic migration experiences. Lack of support regarding complain mechanism, lack of protection in workplaces compelled them to decide for not migrating again. The study finds

the painful experiences of women from their previous overseas migration and their decision for not migrating again, no matter how much economic hardship they face in Bangladesh. The lack of implementation in migration law any policy, lack of report mechanism, absence of psychosocial counseling after their return put the women into vulnerable situation and they face vulnerability in reintegrating in the society as well. The journey of their vulnerability starts from their departure, when the local agents sent them without training or proper information regarding their workplaces. Moreover, wage theft of women migrants, excessive work pressure, lack of rest facilities, improper eating facilities and mental and physical torture are very common phenomenon for unskilled domestic migrant workers and the situation was much worse during the pandemic. In case of skilled workers, their work place was safe and they expressed their satisfaction regarding living and eating arrangements. Moreover, finding from the study suggests that, women migrants prefer living freely and working on their own will in the destination country as a favorable and safe choice for migration.

Although these were the findings, the study also revealed the implementation lacking of the migration policies and ineffective performance of government activities to promote safe migration. The lacking in collaboration of government and NGOs made the situation worse and some of the local agents are taking advantage of the situation.

The findings of the study will help in understanding deeply the lack in migration governance in rural areas and the challenges of returnee women migrants. Moreover, this study will be beneficial for the women migrants who are becoming victim of the middleman in every steps of their migration processing. Although this study focused on COVID-19 pandemic related difficulties of women migrant workers, it also focused on the migration governance in normal world.

Based on the study findings, here are some policy recommendations:

- Ensuring private and public partnership to work effectively to regulate the migration governance. Collaboration of Government and NGOs to ensure migration governance more effectively in remote areas.
- The local agents should be brought under law and create a more transparent selection process along with dissemination of proper information to the migrants.

- Focusing on skill enhancement of migrant workers will create more skilled women workers and their vulnerability can be reduced. Providing them life skill and protection training, leadership training and proper grooming are important as the women are less educated.
- Living arrangement in dormitories, rather than staying at employer house can reduce the violence and harassment of the MDWs.
- Creating a reintegration center for women migrants, where they can get service right from the beginning of their migration, while working overseas and after their return.
- A government center for psychosocial counseling, so that they can re-integrate in the society and providing them some economic support.
- Reporting mechanism, monitoring mechanism, regular monitoring of the workers, monitoring of TTCs and complain mechanism, so that they can get justice.
- Before migration, government should play important role to reduce the problems of migrant workers. While working overseas embassy and the host country government should take proper measures and action.

Due to time constraints and COVID-19 restrictions, the study could not be conducted on a broader perspective and did not look at the sufferings male migrants have gone through during pandemic and in general. Using telephone interview method for data collection is limitation as in person interview could unveil some other perspectives. However, I tried to mitigate that limitation through rapport building and communicating in a proper manner. Moreover, not including any recruiting agency or any middleman, family members of women migrants as study participants are limitation of this research. Along with that I have not discussed MOU, other countries policies and women migrants condition. Future scope of this research includes:

- Comparing policies of other developing countries and measures taken during pandemic and try to look the effect of those policies on migrant workers
- Conducting a study on social cost of women migration

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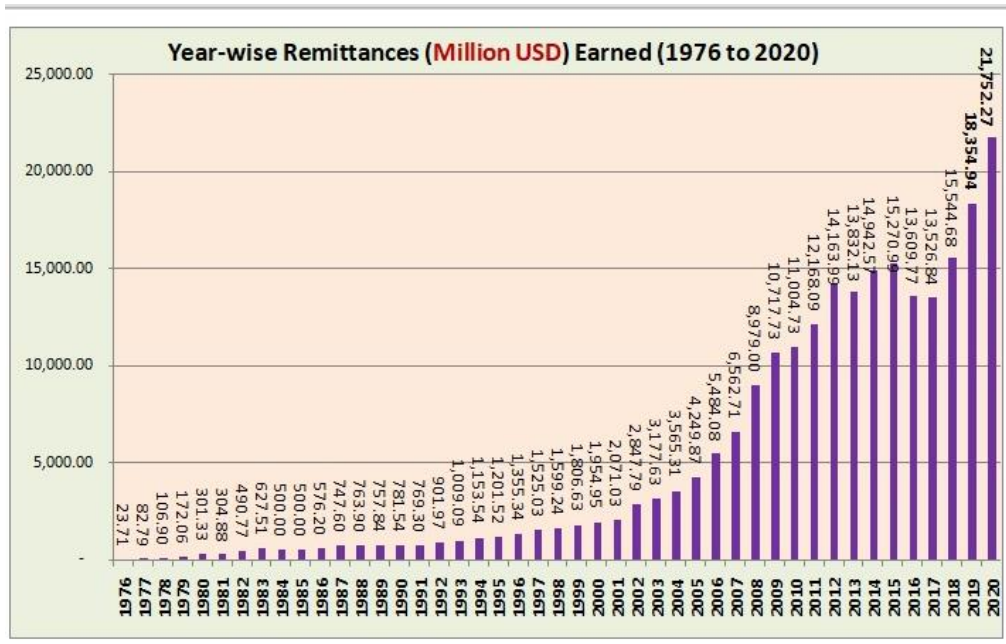
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Appendix A

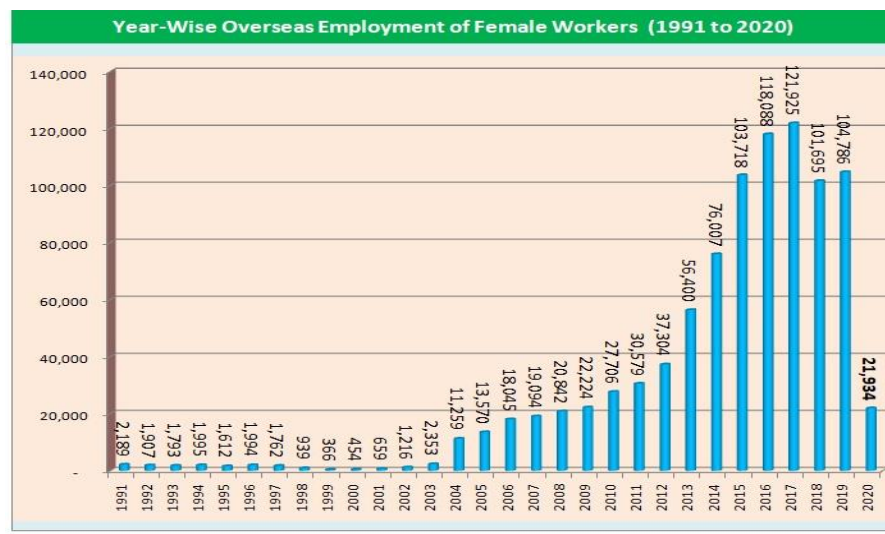
Figure A 1: Year-wise remittances earned by Bangladesh from 1976 to 2020



Source: BMET Online

Appendix A1.1

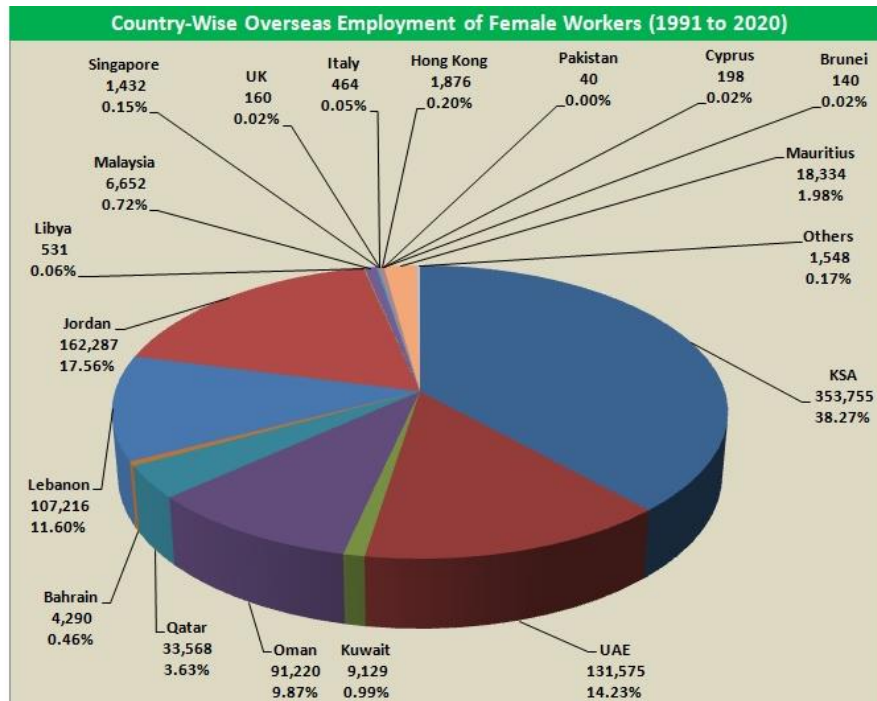
Figure A 2: Year-wise overseas employment of female workers of Bangladesh from 1991 to 2020



Source: BMET Online

Appendix A.1.2

Figure A 3: Country-wise overseas employment of Bangladeshi female workers from 1991 to 2020



Source: BMET Online

Appendix A2

Semi-structured Questionnaire for In Depth Interview (IDI)

Before conducting the interview, the interviewer will ask for permission to record the conversation. In addition, if possible the interviewer will take necessary pictures. The pictures will also be taken after the respondent has given permission to the interviewer.

Participants Information

Name	
Marital Status	
Migration experience overseas	
Occupation	
Country of employment	
Address in Bangladesh	

Q1. How long have you worked overseas?

Q2. Which country you went to work?

- What kind of work did you do in the destination country?
- Who was your employer?
- How was your employer?
- How was your living arrangement/accommodation?

Q3. How many family members are there in your family? Are there any other earning member in your family? Are there any kind of income source apart from your contribution?

Q4. Why did you decide to migrate overseas? What are the things that motivated you to migrate? Did you get support from your family?

Q5. Did you went for once?

Q6. When did you return to Bangladesh?

Q7. What were the reasons to come back to Bangladesh during COVID-19?

- Did you employer force you to return?
- Did your employer pay any compensation before reurn?
- Who paid for your air ticket?
- Why received you in Bangladeshi airport?

Q8. Have you received any economic or mental support from government or any NGO after coming to Bangladesh?

- Did you try to get employment in Bangladesh?
- Do you think you can utilize your skills (that you achieved in the country of destination) in Bangladesh?

Q9. Do you want to migrate again and join the overseas workforce? Are to processing for re-migration?

Q10. Why do you want to re-migrate?

Q11. What kind of problem you are facing in Bangladesh that you are considering re-migration? Other than economic reasons, are there any other reasons like social pressure?

- Do you think remigration will improve your financial condition? If so, why?

Q12. Have you got the incentive money of 20'000 TK, which Bangladesh government allocated for female migrant workers?

Q13. Would you consider not going back if you got any business loan to run business in Bangladesh? What are the reasons that are dominating your decision to re-migrate?

Q14. What kind of obstacles you are facing after coming back in this pandemic situation, which you did not face whenever you came to Bangladesh before?

Q15. Are you seeking help from government organization regarding your processing of migration? Or you are processing your migration through dalal or any other private agency?

- If it is a broker, who is he/she? What did he/she promise?

Q16. What are the obstacles you are facing in the processing of re-migration now? For example- economic, documentation or other things.

Q17. What kind of economic obstacles you are facing regarding remigration? Is the agency asking for money?

Q18. Has it became harder due to COVID-19? If so, why?

Q19. Are you processing for your remigration the same way you migrated for the first time? What are the difference between your first time migration experience and now?

- After remigration, who will be your employer ?

Q20. What kind of terms and conditions you have to fulfill to re-migrate?

Q21. Are these conditions making re-migration harder for you?

Q22. Who are creating the hardship according to your opinion? Is it the employer whose conditions making it harder for you to migrate or the agency? Or, both side is creating difficulties for you?

Q23. Does your family want you to re-migrate? If not, why? If yes- what kind of support they are giving you in this regard? Are they pressurizing you?

Q24. Can you tell us your previous work place and employer? Did you consider not going back because of unsafe work environment? Is it an obstacle for you in your re-migration?

Q25. In case of remigration, what are the terms and conditions you considered before deciding to re-migrate?

Q26. Are you facing any difficulties regarding the dalal or agency that you have contacted for your re-migration?

Q27. What guarantees do brokers give you in case of sending you abroad?

Q28. Did you get the vaccine? Have you faced any re-migration obstacles due to vaccination difficulties?

Q29. What kind of facilities from government according to you can make your re-migration journey easy?

Q.30. If you cannot re-migrate finally, what will you do? Please explain your plan.

Appendix A2.2

Semi-structured Questionnaire for Key Informant Interview (KII)

Before conducting the interview, the interviewer will ask for permission to record the conversation.

Name	
Occupation	
Organization Name	
Designation	
Experience in migration sector	

Q1. What are the main difficulties female migrant face regarding going back to their work or remigration process?

Q2. Many of the women who have returned or been forced to come have lost their jobs or are unable to go due to various problems. What kind of problems do they face when they want to return to their workplace during the COVID-19 or when they try to migrate anew? Kindly, give your opinion.

Q3. Do you think that the absence of proper migration governance is playing a huge role for the creation of difficulties for migrant women?

Q4. Are the terms and conditions of host countries creating obstacles for remigration of returnee migrants?

Q5. How most of the female workers processing their re-migration in this pandemic? What kind of obstacles they are facing to processing their migration?

Q6. Is it common in this pandemic that the female migrant returnees are becoming victim of fraudulence agents, which is creating a serious obstacle for remigration?

Q7. In which cases do you think female migrants usually face the most problems for re-immigration?

Q8. Do you think female migrants are facing more difficulties than male returnees are? If so, why? Please explain.

Q9. To promote safe and a convenient way of re-migration for female migrant, what kind of policies do you think should be applied? Kindly give your own opinion on this matter.