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Exploring Internal Reverse Migration Patterns in Cumilla District, Bangladesh: A Case Study During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The study assesses two-fold objectives: first, to explain the nature of internal reverse migration in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic, and second, to explore the push-pull factors of it. This study used a qualitative analysis tool and conducted 04 case studies and 10 In-depth interviews of reverse migrants for case study-based analysis. The study found that the pandemic triggered the reverse migration of informal workers, particularly female workers. Livelihood crisis, food insecurity, unexpected shocks, health insecurity, low living costs, and fear of infection are push-pull factors of reverse migration during COVID-19. Furthermore, these push-pull factors have motivated informal workers to migrate from urban to rural areas during COVID-19. The findings recommend that policymakers should address the vulnerability of informal workers in policy decisions. Policymakers should introduce new programs, i.e., social protection, and emergency economic schemes to provide support to the informal workers during emergencies like COVID-19.

Keywords: Reverse migration; informal workers; push-pull factors; COVID-19; Bangladesh.

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini memiliki dua tujuan: pertama, untuk menjelaskan sifat migrasi balik internal di Bangladesh selama pandemi COVID-19, dan kedua, untuk mengeksplorasi faktor pendorong terjadinya migrasi balik tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan alat analisis kualitatif, dan melakukan 4 studi kasus dan 10 wawancara mendalam terhadap migran migran untuk analisis berbasis studi kasus. Studi ini menemukan bahwa pandemi ini memicu migrasi balik pekerja informal, khususnya pekerja perempuan. Krisis mata pencaharian, kerawanan pangan, guncangan yang tidak terduga, kerawanan kesehatan, rendahnya biaya hidup, dan ketakutan akan infeksi merupakan faktor pendorong terjadinya migrasi balik selama COVID-19. Selain itu, faktor-faktor pendorong ini telah memotivasi pekerja informal untuk bermigrasi dari perkotaan ke pedesaan selama masa COVID-19. Temuan ini merekomendasikan agar pembuat kebijakan mengatasi kerentanan pekerja informal dalam pengambilan kebijakan. Para pembuat kebijakan harus memperkenalkan program-program baru, misalnya perlindungan sosial, dan skema ekonomi darurat untuk memberikan dukungan kepada pekerja informal selama keadaan darurat seperti COVID-19.

Kata Kunci: Migrasi terbalik; pekerja informal; faktor penarik; COVID 19; Bangladesh.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, for the last couple of years, has had a severe impact on labor markets and financial sectors around the world. During the pandemic, many people became more vulnerable to the oncoming anxiety of an unknown future and a financial crisis, while million of depressed vendors and workers began to re-migrate to their native places (Dandekar & Ghai, 2020). In developing countries, the COVID-19 pandemic has made a tremendous sum of people return to their villages with the downsizing of

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employees in the big cities. In Bangladesh, more than 40 million internal migrants have been affected by COVID-19, and in a few days, 500,000 to 600,000 people migrated from urban to rural places of origin (WHO, 2020). (Dandekar & Ghai, 2020) say that the number of internal reverse migrants is two and a half times that of overseas migrants.

Conflict and bloodshed, severe economic and political instability, and weather and climate-related hazards have prompted migration in recent times (Bhavnani & Lacina, 2015; Cottier, 2018; Petrova, 2021; Ullah, 2004). As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on global and national economies, it appears that the form, pattern, and style of migration in the third quarter of 2020 have changed significantly (IOM, 2020). Since January 2020, Bangladesh has seen both internal and external reverse migration (World Bank, 2020). Reverse migration is defined as “the movement of a person returning to his or her country of origin or habitual residence, usually after spending at least one year in another country. This return may or may not be voluntary” (IOM, 2011).

Migration is typically caused by low economic growth and unemployment in the area of origin (Bayona-i-Carrasco et al., 2017; Morrison & Clark, 2011). Reverse migration is dependent on commonalities between the origin and destination. The rise in employment opportunities goes along with a higher probability of return (Maura et al., 2012). Several studies investigated the two primary factors that influence migration: pull and push factors (Castelli, 2018). The main reasons for migrating to urban areas are economic, socio-political, and ecological factors (Hugo, 2015). According to (Pendse et al., 2020) three significant causes for reverse migration are unemployment, lack of food, and shortage of savings, whereas three primary reasons for rural-urban migration are employment, education, and lack of security. This shows that people can move back to where they came from if things like employment, food, and savings are affected (Khan & Arokkiaraj, 2021; Pendse et al., 2020). COVID-19 led to the unemployment of 12.2 crore people throughout India (The Hindu, 2020). Similarly, the COVID-19 pandemic has badly impacted a large number of Bangladeshi migrants. (Brac, 2020) found that almost 95 percent of the population has experienced a significant decline in income. Many slum residents struggled to cope with the crisis due to lower incomes during the lockdown, as they generally had some operating expenses such as housing rent and electricity bills; as a result, many migrated to rural areas (Das & Ahmed, 2020). (Rahman et al., 2020) found that in April, 6.0% of low-income individuals left Dhaka for their village homes, and by June, that number had dimbed to 15.6%.

These statistics suggest that there has been a substantial reverse migration (from urban to rural areas) as a result of COVID-19. Given this backdrop, the main purpose of the study is to explain the nature of internal reverse migration in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also attempts to explore the push-pull factors of reverse migration during the pandemic. To carry out the study, Brahmanpara Upazila in the Cumilla district of Bangladesh has been selected as the study area.

RESEARCH METHOD

The qualitative approach has been utilized to attain the objectives of the study. An explorative analysis of reverse migration during COVID-19 has been conducted. Thus, this study has used the case study and In-depth interview (IDI) tools to collect qualitative data and to explore the nature and factors of reverse migration due to the pandemic. Moreover, for a comprehensive understanding, the study has also used secondary data related to reverse migration from sources like journal papers, newspaper articles, annual reports, and other research documents of government as well as non-government agencies. The data was collected between August 15, 2021 and September 30, 2021.

Study area

The area of study has been Brahmanpara Upazila under the Cumilla district (Figure 1). As the economy of Cumilla is agriculture-based, nearly 60.59% households depend on agricultural activities (MRC, 2021). Consequently, a considerable number of individuals from Cumilla, have migrated to the metropolises of Bangladesh for a better life.

Figure 1 shows around 23% percent of people migrated from Cumilla to different metro-cities for better livelihood while 9% migrated to Dhaka, 19% to Chattogram, and 11% to Sylhet (Marshall & Rahman, 2013).

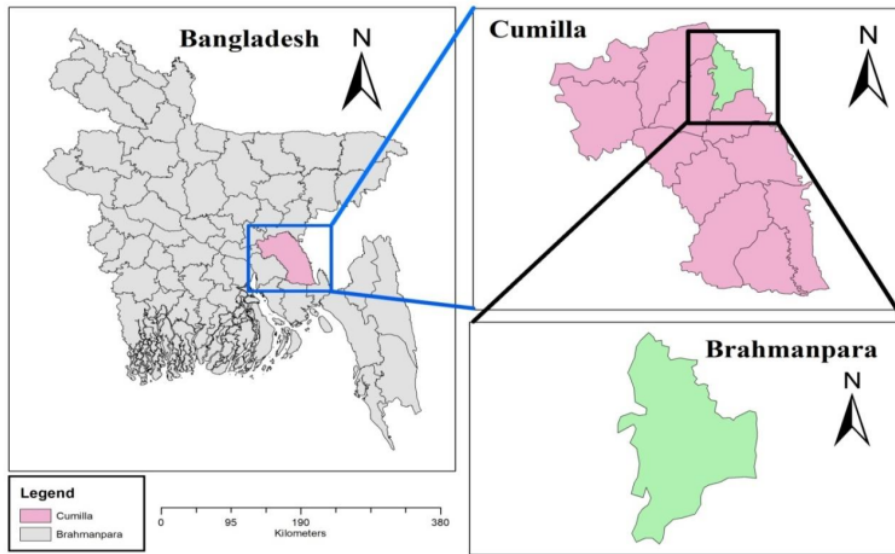


Figure 1. Map of the Study Area

Source: Authors' own

Sampling Method

We used non-probability purposive sampling to select the respondents. The respondents for IDIs and case studies were chosen using purposive and snowball sampling procedures. When selecting respondents, we emphasized individuals who had moved from Cumilla for better jobs at least three years ago. The respondents were selected depending on certain criteria, including (a) respondents who were affected by COVID-19; (b) reverse migrants as a result of COVID-19; and (c) respondents who were residents of Brahmanpara Upazila in Cumilla.

Qualitative tools

This study used qualitative approaches, which were more appropriate for exploring the study's objectives. We collected primary data using qualitative approaches such as case studies and in-depth interviews (IDIs).

Case study

This study employed a case study approach to analyze the scenario of internal reverse migration in depth and within the context of real life. It best meets the study's objectives. During COVID-19, we conducted 04 case studies with returnees from multiple destinations. One of the cases was a female returnee, while the remaining three were males. The majority of returnees were from Dhaka (3) and Chattogram (1). In addition, due to the COVID-19 lockdown and health concerns, we only gathered 04 case studies from respondents.

In-depth Interview (IDI)

IDI is a useful qualitative approach for analyzing the effects of COVID-19 on interviewees' livelihoods, behaviors, and everyday life challenges in depth. This study utilized IDIs to obtain information from interviewees about the influence of COVID-19 on their income opportunities, social and daily activities, that lead them to internal reverse migration. This study also collected 10 IDIs from returnees (04 female returnees and 06 male returnees) to understand the nature of reverse migration (see table 1).

Table 1. Demographic distribution of collected IDIs and Case studies

Name (Pseudo)/ID	Age	Sex	Occupation	Migrated place	Migration Year	Reverse-migration (2020-21)
IDI-1	40	Male	Garments worker	Cumilla to Chattogram	2013	Chattogram to Cumilla
IDI-2	42	Male	Street-vendor	Cumilla to Dhaka	2015	Dhaka to Cumilla
IDI-3	38	Male	Rickshaw puller	Cumilla to Dhaka	2018	Dhaka to Cumilla
IDI-4	49	Male	Street-vendor	Cumilla to Chattogram	2015	Chattogram to Cumilla
IDI-5	53	Male	Rickshaw puller	Cumilla to Chattogram	2013	Chattogram to Cumilla
IDI-6	44	Male	Garments worker	Cumilla to Dhaka	2016	Dhaka to Cumilla
IDI-7	42	Female	Garments worker	Cumilla to Dhaka	2018	Dhaka to Cumilla
IDI-8	45	Female	Street-vendor	Cumilla to Dhaka	2017	Dhaka to Cumilla
IDI-9	37	Female	Garments worker	Cumilla to Dhaka	2014	Dhaka to Cumilla
IDI-10	41	Female	Garments worker	Cumilla to Chattogram	2016	Chattogram to Cumilla
Demographic distribution of collected Case studies						
Fatema Begum	42	Female	Garments worker	Cumilla to Dhaka	2018	Dhaka to Cumilla
Malek	40	Male	Garments worker	Cumilla to Chattogram	2013	Chattogram to Cumilla
Hamid	42	Male	Street-vendor	Cumilla to Dhaka	2015	Dhaka to Cumilla
Abul Kalam	38	Male	Rickshaw puller	Cumilla to Dhaka	2018	Dhaka to Cumilla

Analysis and Ethics

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Using the case studies, we used textual explorative analysis to identify the push and pull factors of migration to reverse migration during COVID-19. We particularly followed the open coding technique to

analyze the qualitative data and scrutinized the texts line by line to identify objective-related ideas, events and perceptions, and reasons for reverse migration. Moreover, we tried to ensure the quality of data following the back-checking technique during the time of data collection period. All the respondents have been asked to participate in the study at their free will and they have been assured that the confidentiality of their information would be strictly maintained. Every case study was collected after obtaining full consent from the respondents. Thus, the ethical issues have strictly been followed throughout the process.

Limitations of the study

There were some limitations to this study, including difficulties in primary data collecting during COVID-19. As a result, this study was only able to collect 04 case studies and 10 IDIs from the field level. The COVID-19 lockout and worries about health risks delayed data collecting. Furthermore, time constraints and a lack of financing were limitations of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study examined the nature of reverse migration during COVID-19 in Bangladesh. It found the incidents of reverse migration that took place internally from urban areas to rural areas. The pandemic had a negative impact on the livelihoods of many internal migrant workers, who were mostly employed in informal jobs, day laborers, and self-employed in the urban centers. The major factors of internal migration were prevailing unemployment, competitive labor markets, enhanced livelihood prospects, etc. However, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered the reverse migration of informal workers during the nationwide lockdown.

The study found that there was a trend of reverse migration among daily workers and street vendors and informal workers in Bangladesh due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The frequency of reverse migration was more prevalent in informal sectors (i.e., RMG workers) rather than formal sectors. Internal migrants who were mostly employed in informal sectors were prone to reverse migration. In addition, those migrants who have mobilized enough tangible (i.e., include financial capital, physical capital, and natural capital) and intangible (i.e., human capital which is represented by labor's skills, experience, knowledge, and creativity) resources and had a higher level of savings had the high level of preparedness/motivation of reverse migration. With their savings and tangible and intangible resources, they have invested in self-income generating activities and hence, they have no tendency to remain of being unemployed and no intention to move back to urban centers again. A respondent added that,

“After returning to my village, I bought an electric charger Van with our savings. My daily income was about BDT 350-450. I could maintain my family expenditure and children's educational and health expenses with my income. I had no intention to go back to Dhaka again.”(A Male IDI respondent, IDI-4)

In case one, Mr. Malek migrated to Chattogram City with his family in 2013 to earn more and repay his debt. The COVID-19 pandemic forced him and his family to reverse migration. However, due to their dependence on business and farming with a stable income in their village, they have no intention to go back to the city anymore.

Case-1: A returnee with tangible and intangible resources

Mr. Malek, a 40-year-old man, moved to Chattogram with his family in 2013. He migrated into the city to earn more and repay his debt. He used to cultivate his land before migration. He and

his wife both worked in a garments factory and each earned about 5 thousand taka at the initial stage. Salary has increased since 2018 and from then they got 8-12 thousand taka each depending on the overtime. They tried to save one of their salaries and used one to bear the monthly expenditure. They came back home to visit their family before the nationwide imposed lockdown in March 2020. During the lockdown, public transport on roads was banned but they tried to go to their factory by a costly hired microbus. But they could not manage to reach on time and both lost their job. They did not get bonuses or even their pending salaries. They stayed there about 10 more days. They did not find any other work opportunities and decided to return to the village. After coming to the village, Mr. Malek started his new clothing shop business with his savings in his local market. He had also started fish farming in his pond. They had planned to stay one more year in the village, but ongoing COVID-19 has changed their plan. Now, they had no intention of going back to the city. Their children were growing up. There were no more opportunities like before in garment factories. Now garment owners pay the salary of the current month in the middle or last week of next month. They even curtailed half of the payment of overtime. However, due to the increasing price of daily commodities, the salary was not sufficient to live in the city. Rather now, they could depend on business and farming with a stable income in their village.

Similar to case one, the study also found that self-employed migrant workers experienced reverse migration due to income losses during COVID-19. In contrast to case one, they had a low level of preparedness to reverse migration. They had a minimal level of savings and had either tangible or intangible resources in their place of origin. As a result, they faced short-term unemployment after returning to their village which was absent in Case One. Slowly, they managed to start new income-generating activities with the help of microcredit from NGOs.

In case two, Mr. Abdul Hamid migrated to Dhaka city in 2015 to prevent unemployment and to earn more. COVID-19 left him no choice but to reverse migration. But after buying a charger van by taking microcredit from a local NGO and with his savings which leads him to earn a suitable income in the village, he has no intention to go back to the city.

Case-2: A returnee without tangible and intangible resources

Mr. Abdul Hamid, a 42-year-old man, migrated to Dhaka in 2015. He used to drive a paddle van and work as a day laborer when he was in the village. He did not get many passengers because people preferred an auto charger van. He did not have enough money to buy a charger van. On the contrary, day laborer work was not available after the harvesting season. So, he decided to migrate to Dhaka. He had a sugarcane juice stall and earned an average of BDT 1500 per day. He earned more during the hot summer season. But the nationwide lockdown left him with no work, no income, and no cash in hand. Therefore, he was forced to come back to his village at the early stage of lockdown. After coming to the village, he started to work as a day laborer during harvesting season. He bought a charger van by taking microcredit from a local NGO and with his savings. He was maintaining his family expenditure with his daily income of around BDT 350-400. He had no desire to go back to Dhaka anymore.

The study found that the migrant workers who were dependent on the daily wage income were the most vulnerable groups of reverse migration. They had no available work opportunities in the cities and no alternative income opportunities during the pandemic. They had no savings and resources and hence no preparedness to reverse migration. As a result, after returning home and finding no other income

opportunities, they faced a longer period of unemployment. Thus, they decided to go back to cities again to achieve their migration objectives. One respondent stated that,

“Before the COVID-19 situation, my daily income was about 500 Bangladeshi Taka. However, I was earning an average of BDT 180 per day during lockdown, from which I had to pay a rent of BDT 100 to the rickshaw owner. Besides, I had to bear the livelihood cost of five members of my family who live in the villages, but given that situation, I couldn't send back enough money for their sustenance. I did not have any savings left for my family to buy food. So, I decided to go back to my village because Boro (winter rice) harvesting season had already started where I could find my income options.” (A male IDI respondent, IDI-6)

In case three, Mr. Abul Kalam also migrated to Dhaka city in 2018 to earn more. COVID-19 forced him to reverse migration but he remained unemployed after harvesting season. He could not manage a loan due to the lack of land or productive assets. His finished savings left him no choice to decide to go back to the city again.

Case-3: A returnee having no resources and employment opportunities in the origin

Mr. Abul Kalam, a 38-year-old man, migrated to Dhaka in 2018. In the village, he worked as a day laborer during planting and harvesting of paddy. The rest of the time he worked as a local cable operator lineman and earned only BDT 250-300 per day. The income was insufficient to bear the household expenditure. The main purpose of migrating to Dhaka was to earn more, save money to start a grocery shop in his local area, or buy an easy bike. In Dhaka, he worked as a rickshaw puller and earned BDT 500-600 daily. During the lockdown, his earnings were reduced to BDT 150-200 per day, from which he had to pay a rent of BDT 120 to the rickshaw owner and BDT 150 for three meals. The house rent was BDT 2000. The house owner did not consider the delayed payments. On the other hand, he had to send at least BDT 12000-15000 to his family every month. But his earnings decreased during lockdown and he has to use his savings to fill up the shortage. Even sometimes he had to take money from his family. He was suffering from extreme mental pressure. Then in the middle of lockdown, he was forced to return to his village. After returning, he was unemployed for three months. He tried to get a loan from formal or informal sources but he did not get any. They suspected that he could not repay the loan because he had no land or any other productive asset. Then, he started to work as a day laborer during the planting period of paddy. Still, he was staying in his village. His savings had finished. So, he decided to go back to Dhaka again.

The study found that the tendency of reverse migration was more frequent among female migrant workers than male migrants during COVID-19. Female migrants experienced a significant fall in income due to job losses and hence expenditure and increase in debt during the pandemic. As a result, female migrants were in more vulnerable positions than male migrants. Though some female returnee migrants had savings but they had no suitable income-generating activities and employment opportunities due to gendered division of labor in the village. They depleted their savings rather than investing as a coping strategy. Female-headed households faced problems of moving freely in the bazaar (local market) to buy daily commodities and problems in child rearing and securing their healthcare and education with their poor income. A female respondent mentioned that:

“I worked as a housemaid in two houses in the capital's Mirpur area for five years. I earned Tk 8,000 from which I spent 3000 BDT on the house rent where I lived with my two children. My employers sacked me in March because of the Covid-19 pandemic. My employers said that they would hire me again when the situation would be improved. It was very difficult to run my family. I had no option

but to go back to my village. After returning to my village, I became unemployed. I could not participate in any income-generating activities due to social barriers in my village. So, I decided to go back to the city again for my employment.” (A Female IDI respondent, IDI-9)

In case four, Mrs. Fatema Begum moved to Dhaka in 2018 because she was a single mother whose family depended on her solely. Pandemic forced her to reverse migration. She remained unemployed and she had to solely depend on her savings in the village; which almost depleted her savings during the pandemic situation. There was a similarity in the findings of Case-1 and Case-2 where both persons could manage easily their livelihood and income sources in the village after their reverse migration due to COVID-19. Because they had enough amount of tangible resources to manage new income sources after reverse migration. On the contrary, the findings of Case-3 and Case-4 similarly found that both persons hardly managed new income sources in the village after reverse migration due to having no or few amount of tangible resources. The major finding was from the cases that female migrants were becoming more vulnerable after reverse migration during the pandemic situation.

Case-4: Vulnerability of a female returnee during Covid-19

Mrs. Fatema Begum, a 42-year-old woman, moved to Dhaka in 2018. Before going to Dhaka, she was a housewife. She migrated to Dhaka with her two children because she was a single mother. She started to work in the garment factory with BDT 9500 per month. During the nationwide lockdown, the garment factory closed for three months and she got only 60% (around BDT 5500) of her salary. She had to live with her children on that low money. The house rent was 3 thousand taka and the remaining money was not sufficient to bear the food expenditure. The house owner did not consider the delayed payments. She had no income source and started to use her savings to fill up the shortage of money. At last, she returned to her village during the middle of the lockdown period. After coming to the village, she remained unemployed and she had to solely depend on her savings. Her children were sick but she could not spend money for their treatment due to the lack of cash.

Factors influencing reverse migration among internal migrants

Table 2. Push-pull factors of internal reverse migration during COVID-19

Push Factors	
1.	Ruin of livelihoods due to the imposed nationwide lockdown: Joblessness, closure of factory
2.	Lack of available work opportunities and loss of income
3.	Higher Prices of daily commodities and food insecurity
4.	Job losses of RMG workers
5.	Lower salary in the RMG sector
6.	Insufficient income to bear the household expenditure
7.	Unexpected shocks: Ban on transport and lockdown lead to unemployment of transport workers, street vendors and day laborers
8.	Health insecurity- fear of being infected by Corona Virus
Pull Factors	
1.	Less fear of coronavirus infection
2.	Higher resource mobilization prior to COVID-19 led to investment in new income-generating activities
3.	Low living cost rather than urban area
4.	Economic improvements at home generate new opportunities- availability of productive work opportunities and non-farm income opportunities.
5.	Access to credit- availability of low-interest loan

Source: Authors' own

2 Table 2 depicts all the major factors that shape the decision-making process of the internal migrants for reverse migration as a coping strategy during COVID-19. They were categorized according to the importance of the respondents.

The respondents revealed that the decision-making process of reverse migration was strongly influenced by the prevalence of push factors and pull factors. The study showed that push factors like the destruction of livelihoods, job loss, lack of available income opportunities, food insecurity, unexpected shocks, and health insecurity forced the migrants to move back to their place of origin. In addition, pull factors like higher resources (both tangible and intangible resources) mobilization, low living costs in rural areas, less fear of coronavirus infection, economic improvements at home and access to credit motivated them to migrate to their village during COVID-19.

The study confirmed that the migrants who lost jobs due to the imposed nationwide lockdown faced income erosion and food insecurity. In addition, the closure of the Garment factory caused the job losses of many RMG workers, and the ban on public transport led to the unemployment of transport workers and day laborers. One respondent stated that,

“I worked in a Garments factory in Dhaka and earned BDT 9500 per month. I used to bear the monthly expenditure with my income. During lockdown, I was in a lot of difficulties after I lost my job. The house rent was BDT 3000, and I did not have money to pay house rent. The house owner did not consider the delay in payments. I did not have any other income to bear the food expenditure for my family. Then I started to use my savings to fill up the shortage of money. At last, I returned to my village during the middle of the lockdown period.” (A Female IDI respondent, IDI-7)

As a result, they had no alternative income opportunities and couldn't bear the household expenditure with their poor income. Health insecurity arising from the fear of being infected 15 the coronavirus was another push factor. All these incidences of push factors compelled them to return to their place of origin from their migration destination.

To further explore the motivating factors for reverse migration, the respondents were asked which factors would likely motivate them for reverse migration. In response, the respondents mentioned that reverse migration was more prevalent among the migrants who have achieved their migration objectives through resource mobilization at home and have a higher level of savings and acquired skills. They also stated that in rural areas, there was low vulnerability to coronavirus infection in the village, and the living costs of rural areas were very low rather than urban areas. As Abul Kalam mentioned that:

“We had to pay BDT 2000 house rent per month. During the lockdown, my earnings were reduced to BDT 150-200 per day, it has been difficult to manage family expenditure with house rent. Due to loss of income sources, I have decided to migrate to the village to avoid the house rent”. (A Male IDI respondent, IDI-2)

Furthermore, access to credit and availability of low-interest loans, economic improvements in rural areas including the availability of productive work opportunities and non-farm activities, and the development of the agriculture sector attracted the migrants for reverse migration during COVID-19.

Following the statements of respondents showed that push factors influenced the low-income vulnerable migrants most whereas pull factors attract the relatively higher-income migrants for reverse migration. The push factors for the comparatively low-income migrants were so strong that they had to move back to their village knowing the uncertainty of employment and income opportunities. In fact, it was the loss of livelihoods, as the consequences of job losses resulting from the lockdown, which is a major incidence of reverse migration. Additionally, the pull factors that attracted the comparatively well-off

migrants who had higher savings and skills and mobilized sufficient resources, were direct or indirect effects of the government's rural development policy, which had previously concentrated on urbanization.

Practical implications and recommendations

Our study's findings have important policy implications. In terms of policy implications, the findings of this study illustrate the push and pull factors that influence internal reverse migration during COVID-19. This study found that informal laborers were more prone to pandemics like COVID-19 than other sectors. Internal reverse migration was triggered by adverse effects on livelihoods and the economy, a lack of available income possibilities, rising food prices, and health insecurity caused by COVID-19. This study provides specific information to policymakers and practitioners, allowing them to adopt realistic actions to meet the needs of vulnerable people affected by COVID-19, particularly reverse migrants.

The study suggests that informal sector workers specifically the daily laborers who are vulnerable to the pandemic situation, require special attention for a scheme of economic benefits for them. The study's findings will help policymakers pay attention to disadvantaged groups when making policy decisions. The study also advises that the existing regulations related to social protection for vulnerable groups should be implemented properly.

Furthermore, future studies should aim to work with a larger sample size and employ a mixed research approach to investigate the challenges and influencing variables of internal reverse migration inside the country. Others can undertake additional research on this issue using both qualitative and quantitative methods to develop stronger policy suggestions, as this area remains unexplored in Bangladesh.

CONCLUSION

During COVID-19 pandemic, the world has experienced a distinct change in the characteristics and structure of migration and its impact on national and global economies. In Bangladesh, COVID-19 has made a tremendous sum of people return to their villages with the downsizing of employees in the big cities. The study examined the nature of reverse migration during COVID-19 in Bangladesh. The study also explores the push-pull factors of reverse migration during the pandemic. It found that the pandemic had a negative impact on the livelihoods of many internal migrant workers, who were mostly employed in informal jobs, day laborers, and self-employed in the urban areas. The tendency of reverse migration is more frequent among female migrant workers than male migrants during COVID-19.

In addition, the study indicated that migrants who had amassed sufficient tangible and intangible assets were highly prepared for reverse migration. On the contrary, the migrants who had few or non-tangible resources could hardly manage new income sources after reverse migration. The study identified the loss of livelihoods, lack of available income opportunities, food insecurity, unexpected shocks, and health insecurity were the push factors of reverse migration. In addition, pull factors were like higher resource mobilization, low living cost in rural areas, less fear of coronavirus infection, economic improvements at home, and access to credit-driven them to return to their village during COVID-19.

This study highlights the need for special attention to vulnerable informal sector workers, particularly daily laborers, during the pandemic, and suggests further research in both qualitative and quantitative methods to develop stronger policy recommendations.

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