



Stigma, Shame and COVID-19: "They Won't Even Touch the Money we Touched"

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Brief Overview: This research study aims to explore how the national discourse around COVID-19 has given rise to stigma against COVID-19 in Bangladesh. The narratives and rhetoric around COVID-19 have largely been shaped by the media. Such narratives play a huge role in shaping people's knowledge and perceptions about COVID-19, including subconscious beliefs about the "carriers" of this disease. The study seeks to explore general perceptions revolving around COVID-19, identify the specific groups of people who are being subjected to stigma – both medically and socially – and bring out the anecdotal accounts of the ways in which they are being discriminated against. It is important to identify these social dimensions as they influence social behaviors amidst pandemics which have ramifications for access to health care as well as social initiatives to contain pandemics.

Methodology: This study employs three data collection tools:

- (i) English and Bangla online surveys;
- (ii) content analysis of Bangla and English news articles;
- (iii) case studies of COVID-19 positive patients in government-cordoned off residences. Content analysis of news articles was done using a priori coding mechanism and deductive thematic analysis. News articles have been selected using the purposive sampling method across seven categories of pivotal moments that shaped the narratives around stigma and COVID-19:
 - (i) migrant returnees;
 - (ii) concerns about health professionals' safety put forward by FDSR;
 - (iii) announcement of lockdown;
 - (iv) return of garment workers to Dhaka;
 - (v) residences being cordoned off;
 - (vi) abandonment of people by family members; and
 - (vii) suspected and confirmed COVID-19 patients fleeing.