



Original Research



Impacts of Covid-19 on Persons with Disabilities who received Vocational Training from CRP: A Telephonic Survey

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: The Covid-19 pandemic situations affect all groups of people in society. Covid-19 presented disruptions in work routines and unprecedented job loss for millions of people all over the country, including Persons with disabilities (PWDs). During the pandemic, PWDs harmed their physical, mental, and social lives.**Material and Methods:** This study used a cross-sectional design, and data were obtained from 96 PWDs who received training from the Vocational Training Institute of the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP). The telephone survey was done with self-administered questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were used for the data analysis.**Results:** Among the total participants were men (76%) and women (24%). During the pandemic, 93% followed basic protection against infection, 32% received government emergency support and 97% of participants shared that their shops/factories and jobs were shut down for 1-2 months. On the other hand, 82% of participants reported having no monthly wage, and 91% of participants' families had significantly negative impacts on their physical and mental health and family income and were unable to access all sectors.**Conclusion:** The Covid-19 pandemic followed by the national lockdown to mitigate the transmission of the virus, but the sudden disruption of social support and assistance to the groups of PWDs had a serious impact on their daily living activities, livelihood, and also on economic status that impacted the overall quality of life. So, the government or non-government organizations should take the lead to initiate a disability-inclusive approach along with improving access for PWDs while planning for pandemic responses.This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)**Cite this as:** Moniruzzaman Sk., Rahman Md. H, Rahman S, Hossain MM, Subahan S (2024) Impacts of Covid-19 on Persons with Disabilities who received Vocational Training from CRP: A Telephonic Survey. *Asian J Heal Res.* 3 (2): 102–109. doi: [10.55561/ajhr.v3i2.171](https://doi.org/10.55561/ajhr.v3i2.171)

INTRODUCTION

The novel coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic situation is a global prevalence of coronavirus. It is an infectious disease caused by the coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2). Cases of coronavirus were detected first in December 2019 in China. This Virus was rapidly spreading across the other countries. In the European region, around 2 million people have died since the pandemic started [1]. In Bangladesh, The virus was

confirmed to have spread to the country in March 2020. Firstly, three known cases were reported on 8 March 2020 by the country's epidemiology institute, IEDCR [2]. Since then, the Covid-19 pandemic has spread across the whole nation, and the number of affected people has been increasing day by day [3].

Covid-19 presented disruptions in work routines and unprecedented job loss for millions of people all over the country, including persons with disabilities (PWDs) [4]. During the Covid-19 pandemic situations affected all

groups of people in the society. PWDs have negatively impacted their physical, mental, and social lives [5]. During the quarantine time, some of them face difficulties in getting career support, healthcare facilities, and restrictions on some usual activities, which leads to mental stress [6]. Even in non-pandemic contexts, people with disabilities face high family expenditure, lack of health care and appropriate transportation facilities, inaccessible services, stigma, and discrimination from community people and health care workers [7].

More than 1 billion people with disabilities live worldwide [8]. This pandemic situation puts them at risk of morbidity and mortality rates [9]. The global crisis of Covid-19 is deepening the preexisting inequalities, exposing the extent of exclusion, and highlighting the work on disability inclusion is imperative. Sometimes, these one billion people are the most excluded groups in our society and are among the hardest hit in this pandemic situation in terms of fatalities [10]. So, it requires all of us to act, interact, and communicate with them in different ways; the risk in the response to the current crisis is that persons with disabilities will be left behind once again [11]. To facilitate the successful reintegration of people with disabilities and aim to build them assets as skilled workforce for their society.

The Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP) is a leading Organization in Bangladesh dedicated to the comprehensive rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities. Established in 1979 by Valerie A Taylor, CRP has grown to become a beacon of hope for persons with disabilities (PWDs), providing a wide range of services aimed at improving their quality of life and integrating them into society. CRP's mission is to promote an inclusive society where PWDs have equal opportunities to achieve their full potential [12]. The Rehabilitation Wing of CRP plays a crucial role in the holistic recovery and empowerment of PWDs.

The CRP Madhab Memorial Vocational Training Institute (CRPMMVTI) is a specialized wing under the Rehabilitation Wing of CRP, it focuses on providing vocational training to PWDs. The institute was established with the goal of equipping PWDs with the skills and knowledge needed to secure gainful employment and achieve financial independence and also offers courses and inclusive job placements in private sectors [13]. In VTI individuals are carefully matched to courses after a full assessment of training needs and suitability, carried out by a multidisciplinary team that takes into consideration the trainee's physical and financial condition, education, family support, interests, mobility aids, home environment, and individual needs. For the last 45 years, CRP has been contributing to developing and ensuring the social inclusion of people with disabilities in Bangladesh [14].

The CRP always had responded towards the betterment of people with disabilities in most cases of natural and manmade disasters in Bangladesh. This study conducted a telephone survey to know the situational analysis of its vocational training beneficiaries and their family to better understand their crisis and coping mechanisms during the Covid-19 situation. Hope the findings may enable us to respond to the needs or find ways to mitigate the economic challenges and ensure the well-being of the beneficiaries of the PWDs.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this study, researchers used a quantitative cross-sectional study design. The researcher found out the percentages of different variables related to the PWDs through self-administrated questionnaires with a large sample size & collected data in a short period. The sample consisted of vocational trainees from CRP Madhab Memorial Vocational Training Institute (CRPMMVTI) of CRP across Bangladesh who met the inclusion criteria. The Inclusion criteria were both male and female persons with disabilities and also who lived in the community during the Covid-19 after receiving vocational training from CRP. Before conducting the study, ethical clearance (19th June 2022 at 31st IRB Meeting, Ref. No: 894) has been sought from the institutional review board of the Bangladesh Health Professions Institute (BHPI).

Permission was also obtained from the Rehabilitation Wing department of CRP and also from the participants during the data collection period. Participants who had completed vocational training at CRPMMVTI were contacted by phone, this training institute's main focus was to enroll persons with physical disabilities. Trainees were contacted over the phone because the participants were from different districts of Bangladesh. Trained interviewers conducted the calls with 120 trainees who completed the vocational training in the year 2018, but the interviewers were able to collect data from 96 respondents because the rest of the participants did not respond and were not interested.

In the data collection period, the interviewers clearly stated the purpose of the study and their participation rights in this study. Informed consent was obtained verbally from all participants before the survey, and they were interviewed over the phone. It also ensured that participants clearly understood the questions and provided accurate responses. One hundred twenty vocational trainees were selected by comprehensive sampling through phone calls and asking for survey participation. Questionnaires consisted of demographic information and questions related to finding the impacts on PWDs during Covid-19. Data entry and analysis

were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), Inc. version 20.

RESULTS

The demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in **Table 1**. The study included a total of 96 participants. The result shows that 76% were male and 24% were female, and participants were trained in various trades with the distribution as follows: Computer (30%), Electronics (21%), Dress-making and tailoring (18%), and Shop management (31%). All of the participants (100%) maintained social distancing while they engaged in any activity that’s why 0% of participants or their family members reported that they were infected with Covid-19. A vast majority of participants (93%) followed basic protection measures against Covid-19, while 7% did not follow any basic protection measures.

The impact of Covid-19 on participants is detailed in **Table 2**. Covid-19 affected the economic status of 17% of the participants, while 83% reported no economic impact. Various economic challenges were identified, including issues with shop rent due (7%), receiving partial salary (4%), job termination (2%), and uncertainty about the future (3%). About 32% of participants received government emergency support, whereas 68% did not. Among those who received support, the types of support included dry food (8%), grocery items (18%), and hand cash (6%). At the initial stage of the pandemic, 10% received rehabilitation support from the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed (CRP), while 90% did not receive any such support. The majority of participants experienced a shutdown of the shop/factory/ job during Covid-19 for

one month (83%), some for two months (14%), and a small number reported they did not shut down (3%). Participants' families faced various challenges, including economic problems (75%), physical problems (13%), mental problems (2%), family problems (1%), and (9%) reported no challenges were faced.

Fig. 1 also showed that 82% of the participants had no monthly wage, indicating they were without a salary, where 10% of PWDs earned less than 8000 BDT, 6% earned between 8000 to 15000 BDT, and 2% earned more than 15000 BDT. Meanwhile, 38% of the participants had a monthly family income between 8000 to 15000 BDT. Additionally, 32% had no monthly family income, 16% of families had a monthly income of less than 8000 BDT, 38% had a monthly income between 8000 to 15000 BDT, and 14% had a monthly income of more than 15000 BDT.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to assess the Impacts of Covid-19 on Persons with Disabilities who had undergone vocational training. This study shows that 76% were male and 24% were female. From them, 30% received computer training, 21% electronics training, 18% Dressmaking and tailoring, and 31% completed Shop management training. Based on this group of population, the study found that the majority of participants were female (63%) rather than male (37%) and also found that 75.5% got vocational training from CRP or other training institutes, and 24.5% did not get any vocational training [15].

This study found that (100%) of the participants maintained social distancing while they engaged in any activity and (93%) followed basic protection measures

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Participants

Variable	Frequency (N=96)	Percentage (%)
Gender of the Participants		
Male	73	76 %
Female	23	24 %
Training Trades of the Participants		
Computer	29	30 %
Electronics	20	21 %
Dress-making and tailoring	17	18 %
Shop management	30	31 %
Covid-19 infected to self/ family members		
Yes	00	00 %
No	96	100 %
Maintain the social distance while engaging in work		
Yes	96	100%
No	00	00%
Basic knowledge and awareness of Covid-19		
Yes, Followed basic protection	89	93%
Not followed	07	07%

Table 2. Impact on the PWDs during the Covid-19

Variable	Frequency (N=96)	Percentage (%)
Economic status affected by Covid-19		
Yes	16	17%
No	80	83%
Types of economic problems		
Shop rent due	07	08%
Got some amount of salary	04	04%
Terminated from job	02	02%
Uncertainty for future	03	03%
Received Government Emergency Support		
Yes	31	32%
No	65	68%
Government Covid-19 emergency support items		
Dry food	08	08%
Grocery item	17	18%
Hand cash	06	06%
Received rehabilitation support from CRP at the initial stage		
Yes	10	10%
No	86	90%
Shut down the shop/factory/ job during Covid-19		
1 Month	80	83 %
2 Month	13	14 %
NA	03	03 %
Challenges faced by the participant’s family during Covid-19		
Yes, faced the physical problem	12	13%
Yes, faced the mental problem	02	02%
Yes, faced the economic problem	72	75%
Yes, faced the family problem	01	01%
No	09	09%

against Covid-19, while 7% did not follow any basic protection measures. A case-control study found that it supports the consistent wearing of masks, handwashing, and also social distancing to protect against Covid-19 [16]. In a recent study conducted in Saudi Arabia, they found that almost half the participants did not know when and who should wear a mask to prevent the infection and were unaware that Covid-19 can spread from one person to another during each other in close proximity [17]. A report found that PWD might not be able to maintain social distancing because they required care of other support and also found that government support was low and 69.2% of participants had been suffering from economic challenges as the majority of participants hailed from socioeconomic status [18].

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on the economic and social lives of PWDs, as evidenced by the findings of this study. Notably, 17% of participants reported that their economic status was adversely affected by the pandemic, while a significant 83% reported no economic impact. This is consistent with other studies that have highlighted the disproportionate economic vulnerabilities faced by PWDs during the pandemic. For example, a study by Kuper et al. (2020) found that PWDs were more likely to experience financial hardship due to loss of income

and increased expenses during the pandemic [19]. Pant (2021) found that without support from the government and community people, PWD discrimination increased day by day during covid-19 pandemic [20].

The specific economic challenges identified in our study, such as issues with shop rent due (7%), receiving partial salary (4%), job termination (2%), and uncertainty about the future (3%), reflect broader economic trends observed globally. According to the International Labour Organization (2020), PWDs were among the hardest hit by job losses and reduced working hours, exacerbating their pre-existing economic insecurities [21]. Despite these challenges, only 32% of participants in our study received government emergency support, which included dry food (8%), grocery items (18%), and hand cash (6%). This limited support underscores the need for more comprehensive and accessible assistance programs for PWDs. Similarly, a report by the United Nations (2020) highlighted that many PWDs were left out of emergency response measures, which further marginalized them during the pandemic [22].

At the initial stage of the pandemic, 10% of participants received rehabilitation support from the CRP, while a staggering 90% did not receive any such support because these types of support were provided

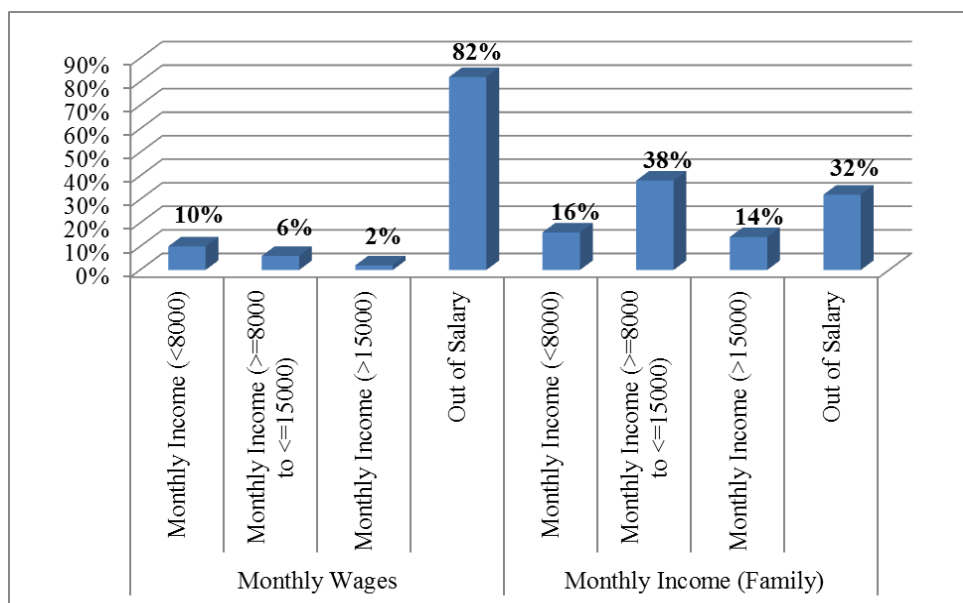


Fig. 1. Monthly Wage and Family Income of the PWDs during the Covid-19

based on donor availability. Rehabilitation services are crucial for PWDs to maintain their physical and mental health, yet the pandemic has disrupted these essential services globally. According to Cieza et al. (2021), the interruption of rehabilitation services during COVID-19 has had severe consequences for the health and well-being of PWDs [23].

The pandemic also led to the shutdown of shops, factories, and jobs for most participants, with 83% experiencing a shutdown for one month, 14% for two months, and only 3% reporting no shutdown for full-time. This prolonged disruption in economic activities has significant implications for the livelihoods of PWDs. Previous research by Banks et al. (2021) indicated that the economic fallout from Covid-19 has disproportionately affected PWDs, leading to increased poverty and social exclusion [24]. In Jordan, a survey was done with people with disability and found that in pre-pandemic situations, 67% of one or more members were single earners, but in pandemic situations, 78% were fired from their jobs [25].

Furthermore, the study found that participants' families faced a variety of challenges during the pandemic, including economic problems (75%), physical problems (13%), mental problems (2%), and family problems (1%), while 9% reported no issues. These findings align with the literature, which suggests that the pandemic has worsened existing inequalities and created new vulnerabilities for PWDs and their families. For instance, Altieri and Santangelo (2021) reported increased stress and mental health issues among PWDs and their caregivers due to the pandemic [26].

The economic impact of COVID-19 on people with PWDs has been profound, as demonstrated by the findings of this study. 82% of participants reported having no monthly wage, indicating a significant lack of salary income. This aligns with the broader literature that highlights the economic vulnerabilities faced by PWDs. According to Holland (2021), PWDs are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed compared to the general population, a situation exacerbated by the pandemic [27]. A report found that many unemployed PWDs were trying their level best and expecting to get a job in the private sector, but in this global pandemic, there was no possibility of employing new staff in the companies/factories [28]. Among those who did earn a wage, 10% earned less than 8000 BDT, 6% earned between 8000 to 15000 BDT, and only 2% earned more than 15000 BDT. These figures reflect the broader economic marginalization of PWDs, who often face barriers to high-paying jobs. Baptista et al. (2021) have shared that PWDs typically earn lower wages and have less job security, a disparity that the pandemic has further intensified [29].

Family income levels among the participants also highlight significant economic challenges. While 38% of the participants reported a monthly family income between 8000 to 15000 BDT, a notable 32% had no monthly family income at all. Additionally, 16% of families had a monthly income of less than 8000 BDT, 38% had a monthly income between 8000 to 15000 BDT, and 14% had a monthly income of more than 15000 BDT. This distribution underscores the economic strain on families with PWDs, who often rely on limited financial resources. According to Patel (2018), families

of PWDs are more likely to experience financial hardship, particularly in low- and middle-income countries where social safety nets are weaker [30]. In Bangladesh, 63% of people were economically executed, and the participants' weekly income declined in 80% of poor households [31]. The lack of monthly income for a significant portion of the participants (32%) indicates a high level of economic dependency, which is further compounded by the pandemic. Research by Ciciurkaite et al. (2022) found that during COVID-19, PWDs and their families faced increased financial pressures due to the loss of employment opportunities and additional health-related expenses [32]. This financial dependency often forces families to adopt coping strategies that can have long-term negative consequences, such as borrowing money or reducing essential expenditures [33]. Furthermore, the economic disparities highlighted in this study suggest a need for targeted interventions to support PWDs and their families. Enhanced social protection measures, including disability benefits and emergency financial aid, are crucial to mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic on this vulnerable population. The World Health Organization (2021) emphasizes the importance of inclusive social protection policies to address the unique needs of PWDs during crises [34]. PWDs and their families maintained a coping strategy for managing economic stressors, and many of them were living at the poverty level; they had lower income and savings, poor networking with others, and fewer assets.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic situation, followed by the national lockdown to mitigate the transmission of the virus, and the sudden disruption of social support and assistance to these groups of individuals will have a serious impact on their daily living activities, livelihood, and also on economic status that impact on the overall quality of life. This study confirms the findings from elsewhere that TWDs have been particularly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. The government or non-government organizations should take the lead to initiate a disability-inclusive approach along with improving access for PWDs while planning for pandemic responses. To mitigate this challenge, we should have some plans & programs for any unwanted situation.

Recommendation:

This study specifically examines the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on persons with disabilities who received vocational training and live in the Bangladeshi community, a demographic often overlooked in the pandemic response research. It provides critical insights

into the socio-economic and other challenges faced by PWDs during the pandemic. According to the Rights and Protection of the Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013 the following medical care, rehabilitation, and employment are prime rights of persons with disabilities; if the following points ensure for PWDs, it will be very helpful for cope up in every pandemic situation:

- Ensure 100% job or seed money support for PWDs.
- Offer in-kind support for them.
- Getting funds from the CBR department of CRP can help them to become independent and also build good relations with local DPOs and Govt. and the local administration.
- Arrange awareness and counseling sessions on specific situations.
- Provide basic medical and rehabilitation support based on situational needs.
- Ensure inclusion in the local safety net schemes.

Impact of this research on the future:

This research highlights the significant impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on persons with disabilities who received vocational training and live in the community. This study's findings can inform policymakers and organizations to develop disability-inclusive strategies for future pandemic responses and disaster management plans, and also emphasizing the need for targeted economic support and rehabilitation services for PWDs can lead to better preparedness and resilience among this vulnerable population group.

Limitations:

The study was conducted on a small size of participants. As a developing country, there were a limited number of resources in this context. The researcher took PWDs who completed the vocational training from the CRP. So, it is difficult to represent all PWDs in Bangladesh.

Ethical approval:

The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare there is no conflict of interest.

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