

Timeline

June-December 2020

Study Type

Randomized Evaluation

Research Implemented by IPA

No

COVID-19 Rural Household Survey in Gaibandha, Bangladesh

Researchers

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Abstract

Using data collected through a telephone-based survey in rural Bangladesh during the height of the pandemic, the researchers present evidence on the effects of COVID-19-led lockdown and school closures on children, focusing on three child-related outcomes: time use of children during the school closure, plans regarding children's schooling continuation, and the incidence of child marriages. The analysis reveals heterogeneity in the effects of lockdown and school closure in terms of the child's gender and the type of shocks. They find a decrease in children's study time and an increase in time spent on household chores during the school closure, and these changes were significantly larger for girls than for boys. Within the household, respiratory illness lowered expectations that a child would return to school and increased the probability of marriage-related discussions for girls. The findings offer a cautionary tale regarding the potential long-term effects of pandemic for girls in developing countries.

Project Outcomes of Interest

Time use of children during the school closure; Plans regarding children's schooling continuation; Incidence of child marriages

Partners

Florida International University, IDE-JETRO, MOMODa Foundation, University of Kent

Key Findings

- There was strong pattern of decreased study time at home and increased time on household chores and caring provided to other household members since the beginning of the lockdown. Furthermore, the magnitudes of these changes were significantly larger for girls than for boys.
- They also find important evidence that the marriage timing of girls form part of the households' coping strategy during the pandemic. Specifically, loss of remittances decreased the probability of marriage while a job loss increased the probability of marriage-related discussions within the household, albeit with no effect on actual marriages and engagements. The effects on marriage timing of adolescent girls and related behaviour are, arguably, unsurprising given that nearly 3 in 5 women in Bangladesh marry before reaching the age of 18 (NIPORT and ICF 2019), and there are substantial transfers and expenses associated with marriage (Amin and Bajracharya 2011).
- The absence of a spike in early marriages during the early stages of the pandemic is consistent with the findings of Corno et al. (2020) who find that, in regions where dowry is practised, droughts lead to a decline in early marriages; as well as with Amirapu et al. (2020) who find a sharp decline in the incidence of marriage, for girls and women aged 15-24 years, during the first two months of the COVID-19 lockdown in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the increase in marriage-related discussions within households that have experienced an adverse economic shock during the pandemic provides an early warning that, in the absence of effective policy responses, the incidence of early marriage may well increase at later stages of the pandemic.

Impact Goals

- Improve social-safety net responses
- Improve women's health, safety, and economic empowerment
- Keep children safe, healthy, and learning

Project Data Collection Mode

- CATI (Computer-assisted telephone interviewing)

Results Status

Results

Results

[Download the working paper here](#)