

Household Responsibilities: Roles of Women and their Family Members during Coronavirus Lockdown Period

Dr. Razina Sultana

Associate Professor of Social Work, Jagannath University, Bangladesh

Abstract: *This was a qualitative study. The main objective of the study was to determine the roles of women and their family members during the Coronavirus lockdown period and find out if there was any gender disparity in household responsibilities between them. The snowballing technique was followed to select 10 participants. It applied a Case study approach and a semi-structured interview schedule was used to collect the primary data. The researcher attached the highest importance to ethical issues. It was found that all but two of the participants were working women and all ten were enjoying high social status thanks to their educational qualifications, professional positions as well as their monthly family incomes. During the lockdown period, most of the participants got no chance to take a single moment of rest and they had to start their household duties from the very morning till late evening. Because of the virus they had another extra burden of disinfecting different things. Big gender inequalities and gender disparities were found between the partners regarding performing household chores. Gender stereotyped roles were still prevalent among such highly educated males. At the same time, gender disparities were also noted between daughters and sons. Social workers have a vital role to play in these regards. Family casework and Family group work may be used to remove gender disparity, patriarchal attitudes to gender-stereotyped roles and to change the male ego of the husbands to make them more productive contributors to the family. Social workers can organize workshops, documentary shows, and views exchange programmes to make a positive change in the community regarding these issues.*

Key-words: Household Responsibilities, Coronavirus Lockdown Period, Gender disparities, Gender stereotyped roles

Historically, household responsibilities were assigned to women only. Women's work outside their homes was considered to be conflicting with their household management and it was thought inappropriate for them to work outside. Changes in the philosophy of women as a homemaker in has occurred gradually in Bangladesh over the last few decades (Islam and Akter 1). Because of prioritizing women's empowerment by the government and non-government organizations, increasing educational opportunities for women, the growth of urbanization, economic and social development, the incidence of women working outside has increased a lot. Currently, the exposure of the women of Bangladesh to educational opportunities is significantly higher than it was some decades ago, especially in the urban setting. Women are receiving higher degrees, and they are becoming the biggest job candidates for a variety of jobs (Akkas et al. 2064). And the perception of society towards women's employment has been positive now. But the traditional gender-stereotyped roles assigned to women have not much changed.

In the urban areas of Bangladesh, especially in Dhaka, the working women find it very difficult, bridging household and workplace duties. On the other hand, the duties of the housewives, who have not to go outside for working, have now been shifted from traditional homemaker to 'tough job without salary and recognition'. They have to go shopping for groceries and other items, to

school/colleges, coaching centers accompanying their children, especially for the security of their daughters, go to banks for bill payments or other necessities, to doctors for the treatment of family members and to medicine corners for buying medicines, etc. Thus they are in no way less busy than working women and face the same problem managing their homes. Now when women's burden of work is ever increasing, services from household assistants have emerged to ease their excessive workload. Women who can avail themselves of the services of skilled and dependable full-time household assistants are lucky, getting a lot more help in household chores than those who do not find themselves thus helped. But owing to the non-availability of full-time household assistants, part-timers have emerged as an essential part of most families in Dhaka city and all these women, whether working or not, feel relieved and relaxed depending on the part-time assistants. The females who are employed through verbal agreement and who work for their house-lords' homes for a fixed slot of time on a fixed rate for a fixed piece of work and do not live in any house-lord's home are called part-time house workers (Uddin et al. 81).

During the Coronavirus lockdown, since the entry of all outsiders was forbidden to check the spread of the virus, no part-time assistant was allowed to enter into an apartment/flat/house to do her job. Help, on the one hand, from part-time assistants suddenly stopped, but an opportunity, on the other, was created to have all the family members at home and to get help from each other splitting the household chores between themselves. Some husbands who had offices also got enough time to stay at home because of rotated office attendance, a maximum of one or two days a week. At the same time, the children had no schools/colleges/universities then, no coaching or private tuition to attend, or nowhere to visit. In such circumstances, how did the women manage their huge family burdens during lockdown periods when there were no household assistants? Did the women get help from their husbands with the household chores? Did the husbands use for their families the spare time that sprang to them from the lockdown vacations? Did the family members share the household chores among themselves, splitting the duties or were the women over-worked due to their full-time presence at home? Had the traditional attitudes of the husbands changed towards household chores? Did mothers get help from their children in household responsibilities? Were there any gender disparities regarding performing household chores between the partners? How were the children contributing to their families when they had enough time during lockdown? Were there any gender disparities regarding performing household chores between the daughters and sons? Had the attitudes of the family towards the boy children changed or were they performing those duties only which were in line with their masculinity?

Since all the family members enjoyed staying home together and as there were opportunities for cooperation in household chores, did the women get more rest than in the previous normal situation? Or, were the women exhausted with excessive duties because of the full-time presence of all the family members at home instead of getting help from them? This research-based on an in-depth interview is an attempt to find out the answers to all these research questions. As far as the researcher knows, there have been a lot of researches on housewives and working women regarding their various problems, role conflicts of working women, how the women sacrificed their careers because of family and children, working mothers' difficulties regarding the rearing of children, patriarchal attitudes of husbands towards family responsibilities, gender disparities between the partners regarding household chores, gender disparities between male and female children regarding family opportunities, etc. But the researcher is not aware of any such researches in gender disparities between the partners and male and female children in performing household responsibilities during the Coronavirus

lockdown period when all the family members are at home. It is necessary to determine the roles of women and their family members in household responsibilities during Coronavirus lockdown and investigate whether there is any gender disparity between them in performing household chores. Social workers' interventions in all aspects of family responsibilities are also very critical.

Conceptual Framework

Household responsibilities: Household chores were divided into many categories and then in different sub-categories. Household Chores as go shopping for groceries and other items; disinfecting vegetables, fishes, meats, fruits, and other items; cutting vegetables and fishes/meats; preparing breakfast, lunch, dinner, and refreshments with afternoon tea; serving the foods in dining table and removing them; washing dishes, utensils, appliances, sink and counters of the kitchen; making beds; tidy up the rooms; dusting the surfaces of the rooms; sweeping and mopping the floors of the rooms; washing own cloths; washing family clothes by hand/washing machine; wipe down washing machine, folding clothes; cleaning the toilets; vacuuming entire house; wiping down the doorknobs and switches; making sure all the switches are off; taking care of a garden, taking care of pets and taking out the trashes were considered to be household responsibilities in this study.

Women: The study considered those as women who were currently married and living with their husbands in the same flat during the Coronavirus lockdown, who had two children of both sexes, whose children were at least teenaged, had no relative/s to help her with household chores and had no full-time or part-time household assistant during the Coronavirus lockdown.

Family members: Husbands and two unmarried children of both sexes who were living in the same house were considered to be the family members of the women.

Coronavirus lockdown period: To contain the spread of Coronavirus, the Bangladesh government at first declared 26 March to 14 April 2020 as a general holiday. Later, it was extended seven times and the extension continued up to 30 May 2020. Therefore, this study considered 26 March to 30 May 2020 to be a Coronavirus lockdown period.

Theoretical Framework: Since the objectives of the study are to determine the roles of women and their family members during the Coronavirus lockdown period and find out if there is any gender disparity in household responsibilities between them, the theory of patriarchy and Social cognitive theory is found suitable for analyzing the issues.

Walby defines patriarchy "as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (Walby 20). The main characteristic of **patriarchy** is the concept of customary gender roles. "Male domination, power relationships by which men dominate women, and a system whereby women are kept subordinate in several ways" (Bhasin 3) are the main features of patriarchy Patriarchal ideology believes that men have masculine roles and women have subordinate or feminine roles (Sultana 3). Gender roles are considered to be socially acceptable behavioral norms for individuals according to their sex. Gender stereotyped beliefs and gender stereotype roles in a society and culture are transferred to members through the socialization process. Patriarchal society identifies which roles are appropriate for men and women. Injustices and inequalities regarding the distribution of responsibilities are justified by patriarchy. When women are not financially dependent on men and earning a handsome amount of income, why are they still subordinated to them? The root

causes of their subordination are explained by the theory of patriarchy. According to Walikhanna, "The subordinated status of women is not only supported by men, but also it is sanctioned by culture in terms of customs, traditions, beliefs, and values made by men in the patriarchal socio-cultural atmosphere, and also sub-consciously supported, reinforced and maintained by women themselves" (qtd. in Sarker 19). That is why boy children are discouraged from doing household chores by their mothers themselves to consider social norms.

On the other hand, according to **Social Cognitive theory**, children learn to socialize themselves and internalize gender-stereotyped behaviours and gender roles of their specific culture. Bandura stated that "Human self-development, adaptation, and change are embedded in social systems. Therefore, the personal agency operates within a broad network of socio-structural influences. In these agentic transactions, people are producers as well as products of social systems. Personal agency and social structure operate as co-determinants in an integrated causal structure rather than as a disembodied duality" (Bandura 266). As stated in Geis, at first children learn to categorize themselves as male or female. Secondly, this type of self-classifying motivates them to value those characteristics and conduct according to their sex. Lastly, they seek to match their behaviour up to what is regarded as gender-appropriate in their cultural environment. Once gender-stereotypes are internalized, they continue to guide their behaviour throughout their life (Eagly et al.).

The objective of the study: The main objective of the study was to determine the roles of women and their family members during the Coronavirus lockdown period and find out if there is any gender disparity in household responsibilities between them and to compare average daily rest hours of the women during lockdown period with the previous normal situation.

The specific objectives of the study were to:

1. Know the profile of the women;
2. Determine the roles of women and other family members in household responsibilities during the coronavirus lockdown period;
3. Investigate if there is gender disparity in household responsibilities between the partners and also between their daughters and sons;
4. Compare average daily rest hours of the women during the lockdown period with the previous normal situation and
5. To suggest social workers' interventions in all aspects of family responsibilities.

The methodology of this study: This was a qualitative study and the case study method was applied. Qualitative research was considered most suitable for this study because, "This kind of research refers to the human perception, human behaviour, human cultures, social norms and values, which are more complex and unforeseen issues. . . . It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible. Qualitative methods have much to offer when we need to explore people's feelings or ask participants to reflect on their experiences. These practices transform the world" (Islam Ch.1).

Interview technique and Observation methods were adopted to collect data from the participants. Household chores were divided into broad categories and then into sub-categories. Many of those work categories were not found in any less urbanized areas. Since Dhaka is the most urbanized area of Bangladesh, Dhaka was selected purposively for its study. As the roles of women and their family members in household responsibilities were the main focus of this study, the respondents comprised only currently married women who were living with their

husbands. Again, gender disparities between the partners and also between their children were another issue addressed in this study, only those women were selected who had two children of both sexes at least in their teens. The snowballing technique was followed to select ten participants. Women's contact telephone number was collected first and then the appointment was made to interview them. The researcher selected 16 women with above-mentioned criteria but six of them refused to participate in the study because of social distancing. Finally, 10 of these women were interviewed and a semi-structured interview schedule was prepared to collect the primary data. The data was collected from 7- 18 July 2020. Working women were interviewed in their office chambers and the housewives in their own residences maintaining social distancing and other measures to prevent Corona. The duration of each interview was more than one hour. Not more than two women were interviewed in a day. Participants' willingness and full consent were considered to be very important. No statistical method was applied in analyzing the primary data. "Qualitative research is concerned with nonstatistical methods of inquiry and analysis of social and cultural phenomena. It draws on an inductive process in which themes and categories emerge through analysis of data collected by using the techniques observation, videotape, and case study" (Sarker 36).

Since Coronavirus is a very recent issue and as this study was conducted just after the lockdown period, the amount of reference was then very scant, especially in Bangladesh. Therefore, the researcher, for her **secondary data source**, had to rely much on local and international papers, survey-based international reports, discussion papers, and information available on Google.

Ethical Issues: At first the study objectives were clearly explained to the participants and nothing was hidden by the researcher regarding her purpose. Participants' willingness and consent were considered to be most important. They were also informed that participation was not mandatory and anyone could withdraw from the interview session at any moment if someone felt discomfort. As the topic of the research was sensitive, the actual names of the participants were not used. To ensure security and confidentiality, the personal identities of all participants were kept hidden and their actual names were changed to pseudonyms. All were ensured before the interview that their proper names would not be used. Since women and their husbands under this study had a high socio-economic background, there was a risk of their identities being revealed. That is why the researcher was much careful to conceal their identities. Their positions were also not directly mentioned. For the same reason, the names of their working organizations or the places of their offices or residences were kept hidden.

Profile of the women under study: It was found that all but two of the respondents were working women. Since all of them had at least teenage children, all of them were above 40 years of age (Table 1). Among them, two were Govt. College teachers, two were doctors, two were officers, one was manager of a public bank and one was Assistant Superintendent of Police. While considering the educational level, no one was below HSC. Out of 10 respondents, five had a Master's degree, two had MBBS degree and one of them had both MS and Ph.D. degrees. The data indicates that most of them were highly educated. Regarding their income, the data revealed that their monthly income was not below than Fifty thousand taka. Two of them earned more than One Lac taka monthly. Concerning their residence type, the data showed that only one of the respondents lived in a rented house, two of them lived in government quarters, two of them in husbands' house. It has been noted that among the ten women, three of them had their flats where they lived with their family. From the findings, it became clear that women

under the study were solvent. All of them except one had a monthly family income above One lac taka. The data showed that the average monthly income of seven families was more than two Lac.

Table 1: Profile of the women understudy

Case number	Name	Ages of women	Education	Occupation of the women	Monthly Income of the	Age difference	Education of husbands	Occupation of husbands	Family Incomes	Residence types	Ages of Daughters' Education/Class	Ages of sons	Sons' Education/Class
1	Alok Lota	44	MSS	Housewife	-	10 + yrs.	M.Com	Accountant of a private medical College	80000	Rented house	19 XII	22	Hons 2nd Yr
2	Malati Lota	44	MSS	Officer in Directorate of P. Education	70000	3 yrs.	FCPS	Doctor of a Govt. hospital	2 Lac+	Husband's house	20 XII	15	X
3	Ononto lota	45	MSS	Govt. College teacher	55000	9 yrs.	MSS	Deputy Secretary of a ministry	1.5 Lac	Govt. Quarter	19 XII	16	X
4	Konok Chapa	42	HSC	Housewife	-	10 + yrs.	LLB	Lawyer	2 Lac+	Husband's house	22 Hons. 3rd Yr	20	BBA 2nd Yr
5	Shawrna Chapa	41	MA	Administrative officer in a private office	50000	8 yrs.	MA	Officer in Directorate of Youth Development, BD	1 Lac+	Own mother's house in separate flat	21 Hons. 2nd Yr	13	VII
6	Korobi	57	HSC	Assistant Superintendent of Police	80000	7 yrs.	BA	Banker of a Public bank	2 Lac+	Own flat	27 Doin g Job	24	Hons Final
7	Nilambori	48	MSc	Manager of a Public bank	1 Lac+	2 yrs.	MSS	DGM of a Public bank	2 Lac+	Joint Flat	19 XII	16	X
8	Oporajita	52	MBBS	Doctor of a Private hospital	80000	1 yrs.	FCPS	Doctor of a Public medical university	2 Lac+	Own Flat	18 XI	16	IX
9	Sheuily	42	PhD	Govt. College teacher	80000	10 + yrs.	PhD	Teacher of a public university	2 Lac+	Govt. Quarter	17 XI	24	BSc. Final Yr
10	Zinnia	52	MBBS	Doctor of a Private hospital	1 Lac+	8 yrs.	BSc. Engineer	Engineer of a Govt. project	2 Lac+	Own flat	16 After SSC	22	BSc 2nd Yr

From the findings, it has been established that the women and their families had a very strong economic background. It is evident from the findings that they were enjoying high social status thanks to their high educational qualifications, professional positions as well as their monthly incomes.

It was noted that husbands of women were also highly educated. Out of ten husbands, only one was below Post-graduate. Two of them were doctors who earned an FCPS degree, one was Deputy Secretary of a ministry, two were bankers among which one was DGM of a public bank and one was a teacher of a public university. Except for them one Lawyer, one Engineer, one Accountant and one officer working in Youth Development Directorate were among them. From the findings, it became evident that all the husbands held very high positions professionally and therefore enjoyed a high status in society.

As the condition of the study, all the respondents had one daughter and one son, among these 20 children, only 5 were studying in schools, and the rest of them were studying at colleges or Universities.

Roles of women in household responsibilities during lockdown situation: In Dhaka city, the majority of the families who had no permanent assistant in their homes had at least one part-time assistant to help them in household chores. The women, whether they were working or not, had to depend on these assistants. But during the lockdown time, to prevent the spread of coronavirus they were not permitted to enter and work in any house or apartment. This study revealed that women were the worst sufferers due to the absence of the assistants. It was found that almost all of the women under this study had to start their household duties from the very morning till late evening preparing breakfast, lunch, and dinner; serving prepared food to family members; washing dishes and utensils three times a day; cleaning the appliances, sink and counters; making beds; tidying up rooms; dusting the surfaces of the rooms; sweeping and mopping the floors of the entire flat; washing clothes by hand or sometimes by washing machines; folding clothes; cleaning toilets; vacuum-cleaning entire house and wiping down the doorknobs and switches. And because of the virus, they had another extra burden of processing anti-virus sprays frequently and disinfecting vegetables, fish-meat, fruits, and other things. On the one hand, they were overburdened with regular household chores because of the unavailability of any helping assistant; on the other hand, due to corona, they had some new responsibilities, which created an unbearable situation for them. In this regard, (Engle) also found that as a part of health precaution to protect themselves from COVID-19 infection, houses, clothes, food, vegetables are needed more attention and labor to clean and disinfect than before the COVID-19 pandemic. Using survey data collected in April 2020 from a representative sample of Italian women, Boca et al. analyzed jointly the effect of COVID-19 on the working arrangements, housework, and childcare of couples where both partners work. Its result also showed that social distancing steps to prevent the expansion of Coronavirus, such as working from home and school closures, have placed a huge burden on the families and additional workload linked to COVID-19 was shouldered by the women (Boca et al.).

Mrs. Malati Lota, being forced into a long lockdown vacation, was not happy at all, because it increased her workload manifold, involving caring for her family.

"Before the lockdown, I always wished to spend a long vacation with my family and enjoy the moments a lot. Now I have got a long lockdown vacation unexpectedly. But only after seven days, I became bored with this new situation. I was not used to processing fish and meat for

cooking or freezing them up, sweeping and mopping floors, and cleaning toilets and so my part-time assistant helped me in doing these chores every day. It seems to me that I am bound to stay at home for an indefinite period, and I at times have the feeling that I have been sentenced to rigorous imprisonment at home. Now I feel my job duty was a kind of recreation and variation from monotonous household chores."

Ononto Lota was a govt. college teacher and her husband were working as a Deputy secretary (BCS, Admin cadre) of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. From the very beginning of her family life, she discovered her husband was always very busy with his professional responsibilities. Conversely, she would always enjoy flexible work hours at her college and got the opportunity to perform many duties staying at home. She along with one permanent assistant, who after being attacked with fever was also sent to her village, would do everything for the family. Her workload was more than doubled in the pandemic situation because all the family members were staying at home and they liked the variation in food items.

Dr. Oporajita and her husband were more or less the same age. She with her family was living in her Flat which she owned from her parents. Though she achieved greater successes in her student life and her academic results were far better than her husband's, she lagged behind him for performing responsibilities to her husband and children. But Dr. Oporajita accepted her very busy husband's role with much sympathy and without any complaint. She told the researcher:

"After completing the MBBS, both of us joined a hospital. But after marriage, I was bound to concentrate my life on family and children while he built up his career completing various training, diplomas, and at last FCPS and joining a public medical university. During the lockdown, when after my time-bound job at a hospital I came back home to care for my family, he went to his chamber in a prominent diagnostic center and was very busy with his profession from morning to late evening and earned three times more than me. And he had no time to pay any attention to household chores. How would he help in family chores? If both of us be serious with our career, then what would be of our family?"

The data showed that eight women out of ten had increased workload due to the lockdown situation of whom four became fatigued with their excessive overburden of household duties. In another article, it was mentioned that with home quarantine, women are facing increased work pressure and regarding this, regular altercation, conflict, disappointment, and psychological stress are common in the families and it is true for mothers being victimized (Mizan). "The unequal sharing of household responsibilities has large economic consequences: women's participation in the labor force is lower than men's, and they hold a larger proportion of part-time jobs, work fewer hours (in paid work), are more likely to work in lower-productivity sectors, and earn less" (Arráiz : p-59).

Role of husbands in household responsibilities: It was noted that husbands rarely helped the family with household chores either before the coronavirus pandemic or during the lockdown. In this study, the majority of husbands helped the family with buying food and other items from local shops once or twice a week, washing only their clothes by hand or by the washing machine and at late evening when their wives were exhausted from the day's work, made sure that all the switches were off. Sometimes they helped in disinfecting fruits. Only two of those husbands regularly and one irregularly helped their wives with disinfecting vegetables and other non-food items, cutting vegetables, preparing and serving food whenever possible for

them, clearing the dining table, making beds, mopping the floors of rooms, washing family clothes by the washing machine, folding clothes, vacuuming the entire house, wiping down the doorknobs and switches, taking care of the home garden and taking care of their pets. Ms. Alok Lota narrated her husband's roles during the lockdown time as:

"My husband always does the outside work. During the lockdown time, he helped the family buying food and other items from local shops once or twice a week, disinfected fruits, cleared the dining table with my daughter usually in the afternoon and after dinner when he was at home, washed his clothes and trashed-out every day. He can cook because he was in a hostel in his student life. But he does not cook to reduce my work pressure regularly. When my children and I were suffering from Coronavirus for more than fifteen days, he would prepare regular meals for us, serve them, take care of us, etc. Before us, my husband also had contracted Corona."

Mrs. Malati Lota expressed negatively:

"My husband is five years senior to me. He would never help in any way either before Coronavirus or during the lockdown. From the beginning of my married life, he has always been very busy with his professional duties in hospital and private practice. He has never done a single stroke of work to help me and has always considered all the family duties to be things to be done by females only though I am not a housewife nor have I done such things at my workplace where working hours are flexible. I was married when I was a final year student at the university and my exam was then knocking at the door, so to speak. When I was preparing for my exams, even he would not help his newly-wed wife, myself. At last, I went to my parents' house to stay and appear in my exams. During the lockdown, he had more time than previous because did not go to his chamber but he only took out the trashes every morning while he left for the hospital."

A 42-years old Konok Chapa, a housewife, was very young when she was married. Her husband was senior to her by more than 10 years. When she was newlywed, her mother-in-law, who was her aunt also, helped and trained her in organizing the family. But her husband would never show any attitude of helping her with household chores. She was unhappy and was in a miserable condition during the lockdown period. She was very exhausted from her duties and responsibilities and described her husband's roles in the following way:

"During the lockdown time, my husband had no office, no professional duties, and had plenty of spare time. While I was in the most difficult situation in my life then and he never expressed any attitude of helping me in household chores. He spent his free time gossiping with local friends, watching TV news, watching movies on YouTube, chatting on Facebook, video calling with his colleagues and deeply sleeping at noon. Vegetable vans, fruits vans and fishes were just below our building and he had not to do down even for buying things also like other husbands in Bangladesh. He only helped me in processing and disinfecting fruits. There was Ramadan (Muslim Holy month) during the lockdown and only occasionally he felt bound to cut vegetables when I failed to send soup for her elderly sick parents in another flat of the same apartment. In late evening, when I became very tired and went to bed he made sure that all the switches were off. But always he was very sincere to our pet cats and in taking care of our rooftop garden. It seems to me that he loves our pet cats and garden much more than he does me. I feel that housewives are more vulnerable than the working women in Bangladesh for being housewives only."

But the 41-year-old Shawrna Chapa, who was working in a private company office as an Administrative officer, was very appreciative of her husband. She supported her husband and highlighted his roles in the lines below:

"During lockdown time, I only did the cooking-related work, made beds, tidied up rooms, and cleaned bathrooms for my family. And my husband helped me with processing antivirus sprays and disinfecting vegetables, fruits, and other items, serving food and removing things from the dining table. He washed his clothes, folded all the family clothes, wiped down the doorknobs and switches as a measure of warding off the virus and at night he made sure that all the switches were off. Moreover, my husband helped me in dusting the surfaces of the rooms, sweeping and mopping floors of the entire flat. He also took out the trashes every evening. And interestingly, my son is more active than my daughter in doing household chores with his father. My friends and relatives are very jealous of me. But I think every husband should share family chores since a family is for both husband and wife. And when both are working, there must be equal sharing of household duties and responsibilities."

Ms. Nilambori, a public bank manager, who was only two years junior to her top-level management-position-holder husband working in another public bank, appreciated her husband like Ms. Shawrna Chapa for his helping attitude and feelings for the family. She considered the lockdown situation to be a blessing for families and she stated:

"I think; coronavirus lockdown has created an opportunity to strengthen family bondage for many families. Though the workload of the family has increased a lot due to the absence of household assistants, family members have got more time to stay at home and helped each other splitting the household chores between themselves. It created a 'we-feeling' among them. Many a family has become more well-ordered and more self-dependent than before. Family members have tried to develop a habit of using modern household gadgets to reduce the urgency of part-time assistants like their counterparts in developed countries. I think it is a good education for all families."

Like Ms. Shawrna Chapa and Ms. Nilambori under this study, other researchers also found shared responsibility in some families. It has become evident from the study findings that out of 10 participants, four participants spoke very negatively about their husbands' attitude towards household chores and only two were satisfied with the help they got from their husbands in household chores. The three other women, of whom two were government college teachers and one was a doctor, were of good opinion about their husbands because they believed that their husbands were very busy with their professional responsibilities and they couldn't help in household chores, although, in reality, they enjoyed a flexible office time during the lockdown. The findings of this study are similar to Gonalons-Pons who opined that in some cases, women report economic reasons as rationalization they're doing more household work such as earning less money than the partner, more flexible job than the husband, i.e. all well-known patterns that result from structural gender inequalities. More generally, it is power dynamics within couples, fed by gendered expectations, guilt women into doing more housework and care work, and make it easy for men to get away without interruption (Gonalons-Pons).

Children's roles in household responsibilities: From the findings, it appeared that children of the women under this study played an insignificant role in their family. During their lockdown vacation, they had enough time in their hands compared to their previous normal life. But very

few of them helped the family with any household chores. Dr. Oporajita thinks that smartphone is a major barrier for today's children for their overall development. She mentioned:

"Today's children are brought up in such a way that they did not receive education to be self-dependent or to help a family in household chores. But we, from an early age, were educated to help parents with household chores. Nowadays, children from their toddler ages play with family smartphones. In preschoolers and middle childhood age, they use smartphones, tablets, or laptops and from their preadolescence period, they become fully addicted to the phones. We, the parents, don't know the solution to these teenagers' addiction can be removed. Bangladesh's government and mobile operators should be serious regarding this matter for the future of the nation. During the lockdown situation, there was a lot of time for them to help in doing family chores side by side with their regular studies. But they were not trained to help the family like their counterparts in developed countries."

On the other hand, a government college teacher Ononto Lota, whose HSC candidate daughter and a 10th grader son was also not helping the family in household chores, supported the children and justified its causes very clearly: She explained:

"In our times, students would study unaided, and the teachers would give special attention to their classes for slow learners. Students would spend several hours in schools and colleges not only to do classes but would also to have happy hours with their school/college friends. They had enough time then for recreation, playing outside with their siblings and cousins, visiting relatives' houses, and helping the parents in performing household chores. Boys at that time would usually help their families with outdoor chores while girls used to help their mothers with chores at home from a very young age side by side with their studies. But now, the education system is different where students start coaching and private tuition from early morning to evening, before their school and colleges, and after returning from them. They are self-centered, unfeeling to their families like machines. The children nowadays do not have the training to contribute to their family but I think, it is not only their fault, but it is the result of today's faulty education system."

But Ms. Alok Lota, a highly educated housewife, was quite positive towards her children. Like Alok Lota, Ms. Sheuily presents her children as follows:

"During the lockdown situation, I had to do all household chores on my own, so to say. My daughter, who is studying in class XI, helped me in serving foods, removing them from the dining table, making beds, tidying up the rooms, dusting surfaces of the rooms and sometimes mopping the floors of the rooms very efficiently. When she wished, she prepared different new food items, which she has learned to do watching YouTube. But my son did not offer any help to me because he was always busy with his study and project and he has also a male ego like his university classmates."

Dr. Zinnia was very appreciative of her daughter who stated:

"Both my son and daughter are equal to me and I don't make any difference between them. Both of my children wash their clothes, make their beds, tidy up and dust surfaces of their rooms, sweep and mop the floors of their rooms with modern appliances and they wash their plates. Additionally, my daughter, who has appeared in her SSC this year, has shown a strong feeling for me from her very young age. During the lockdown, I got much help from my daughter. She further helped me in processing and disinfecting vegetables and fruits, serving and removing

things from the dining table, folding family clothes and if I am sick, she nurses me. Thank god, I have such an affectionate daughter."

It has become evident from the study that children played an insignificant role in household chores. During the lockdown time, they had no school, no coaching, no private tuition, or no outdoor life. While their mothers were having a very difficult time with no household assistant to help them and were exhausted from their household duties mainly because of their constant presence at home, none of them, except three, ever showed an attitude of helping their families with household chores.

Gender disparities in household responsibilities between the family members: It was also to find out if there was any gender disparity in household responsibilities between the partners and between daughters and sons of the women under study. It became apparent that study findings brought to light big gender disparities between the family members regarding performing household chores. According to a survey result published in The New York Times, it was reported that in pandemic-era, domestic work is not being divided more equitably than before the lockdown. 70 percent of mothers in that survey were found to be completely or mostly responsible for housework during lockdown (Miller). Empirical analysis reveals that the new working arrangements have the potential to further increase women's workload, resulting from both job and household responsibilities. The study results indicate that men and women have a different reaction to the changing circumstances during a pandemic, -- --- men are unwilling to contribute more time to do housework and inequalities have been found in distributing the housework (Boca, et al.).

The study finds that women spent significantly more time on housework than their partners. The most senior respondent of this study was a 57-year old Korobi who was working as an Assistant Superintendent of Police and was very hard-working and skilled enough to do office and household work simultaneously. Throughout the coronavirus lockdown time, she, like other participants in this study, had nobody to help with her household work. She referred to the patriarchal attitude in Bangladesh to explain her husband's role in the following way:

"My husband can cut vegetables, fruits, fishes, and meat like a professional and can cook very efficiently. He cooks some items very infrequently if he wishes to entertain someone close to him but he never cooks to help the family. Husbands of working women do not hesitate to consume wives' income but they think beneath their dignity to perform household duties. It will never change because of the traditionally prevalent patriarchal attitude. If the wife is busy with her profession and the husband gets an opportunity to stay at home, even then he does not take any responsibility for family chores. Doing household chores goes against their male ego, they consider it to be women's work and feel it to be an insult to masculinity or their male chauvinism. They don't think, or even they do not want to know, how overburdened their working wives are and how tired they are after returning home, doing a very hard professional job."

Being married only after her HSC, Ms. Sheuily completed the rest of her education successfully and joined BCS (education). Her husband, who is 10 years older than herself, could never help the family doing household chores because of his heavy professional engagement. She, like her husband, earned both an MS and Ph.D. degree. But she could not use the degree

profitably while her husband could utilize the maximum of his merit and energy and earned extra money a lot. She narrated her gender roles very clearly as:

"At the time of lockdown, getting his university closed, my husband took classes online in various private universities, worked with different projects, and did consultancy from home. He did not waste a single moment and made much money from sources other than his salary. Since my husband was very efficient in technology, he properly utilized his knowledge. On the contrary, acquiring an unexpected lockdown vacation, I became a full-time housewife taking not a single moment's rest and engaged myself to fulfill all the needs of my husband and children and thus sacrificed my valuable vacation for the welfare of my family. I had no other choice."

In this regard, Dr. Zinnia's comment was:

"As I am a doctor, at the time of lockdown I had to go to my hospital every day, but my Engineer husband had enough time for taking rest because of office attendance by rotation for maintaining social distancing, he had to go to his duty a maximum of one day a week. He watched TV news and dramas changing the channels frequently, browsed the internet, did chat on Facebook, and made calls to his friends and colleagues with WhatsApp and IMO. But never considered the household duties as his responsibility. He took all the household chores as women's duty and strongly supported the belief that the family belongs to women. He believes in gender stereotype roles." She further added, "When I was in my evening duty and was not at home, he only helped our daughter in serving the items which I prepared for the evening and removed the leftovers from the table. He faced much trouble sleeping at night because of plenty of rest during daytime in the lockdown situation and, therefore, made sure that all the switches were off."

It is evident from the data that in the case of only two participants, no gender disparity was found in their family regarding the distribution of household duties. But when the husbands were skilled enough in household chores because of their previous experience from their hostel lives, they would not offer to share the responsibilities with their wives because they believed in gender roles and traditionally prevalent patriarchal attitudes.

The study data clearly showed that cooking and serving food, making beds, washing and folding family clothes, sweeping and mopping, vacuum-cleaning, cleaning toilets are still considered to be women's work only. Martínez and Paterna also indicate that gender ideology creates a discriminating meaning of household chores for men and women. They mentioned that "those house chores that keep the home every day (shopping, cooking, washing dishes, washing clothes, and cleaning the house) are considered feminine, while those considered male or neutral tasks (paying bills, taking care of the car or home maintenance) do not involve daily devotion" (qtd. in Cerrato and Cifre). A recent study of Fernández et al. has shown that there is still a division of house chores by gender, "depending on the gender role nuclei: instrumentality inside and outside the home for men; expressiveness and instrumentality inside the home for women" (qtd. in Cerrato and Cifre). It became clear from the findings of this study that gender stereotype roles were still prevalent among such highly educated males and thus big gender disparities was there regarding performing household duties.

Though almost all the children under this study were found to be very dependent on their parents about having their work performed, gender disparities between daughters and sons were still prevalent. Among the 10 daughters, three were found to be active in their family chores. These three helped their families by disinfecting fruits and other things, preparing slight

refreshments for the afternoon tea, serving food on the dining table and removing the leavings or leftovers, washing the dishes used by themselves, making beds, sweeping floors, and two of them sometimes mopping the floors, washing clothes by the washing machine, folding clothes, wiping down the doorknobs and switches, taking care of their home garden and two of them taking care of Pet animals. On the contrary, the sons of the women did much lesser work than them. Out of ten sons, three served foods, and cleaned the dining table, washed their dishes, own clothes and took care of their garden with their fathers and sisters. Two of them made their beds and sweep and mopped the floors with modern appliances with their fathers and sisters. It was evident from the findings that daughters performed those chores more which were in line with their gender identities. Arr' aiz had the same observation who mentioned that these disparities in the sharing of household responsibilities start early in life (59). The disparity in time spent on household responsibilities has long-term effects: they distort girls' lives not only in the present but also in the future. The study of Levison and Moe support the findings that, since house-work can be extremely time-consuming, particularly in developing countries, the unequal sharing of household responsibilities disproportionately affects girls' opportunity to build their human capital, whether early on through education or, later, through experience on the job (qtd. in Arr' aiz).

Comparing average rest periods of women with **the** previous normal situation: It was found that almost all of the women under this study had to start their household duties from the very morning till late evening in the coronavirus lockdown situation and they got no rest at all. Among the ten participants, whereas four of them got the chance to take two hours, two of them got three hours and three of them got more than three hours to rest on an average before the lockdown, during the lockdown period seven of them got no chance to take a single moment rest. They were exhausted with the excessive and disproportionate workload during the lockdown period (Table 2). Clavijo indicates that as women are giving priority to their household, to somehow safeguard their careers, many have been working before their children get up, after they go to bed, at night, and on weekends. Others have been dealing with insomnia, often caused by the anxiety they feel regarding potential marginalization from their workplace.

Ms. Alok Lota expressed her present situation as follows:

"Before the coronavirus pandemic, usually on an average I got at least four hours' rest and I would then enjoy the time watching dramas on the television, listening to songs, browsing the internet, watching YouTube, using Facebook, sometimes going outside specially to restaurants with my children. But during the lockdown, my life has changed. I got very tired of working endlessly. Since I do not know when this unbearable situation will come to an end, I feel very frustrated." She was so exhausted that she further added:

"My opinion is that people should accept coronavirus as a new disease and should learn to adjust themselves to it. It is like other diseases and people should not be afraid of it. Sometimes the affected person dies due to complications but in most of the cases, patients recover within a few days. The government should order the reopening of all the institutions and stop of lockdowns immediately."

Ms. Korobi was very exhausted with her unbearable workload during the lockdown weeks and regarding her rest time she stated:

"During lockdown time, I had to go to my office as well as a field outside Dhaka regularly. On the other hand, my banker husband had enough time for rest and recreation because he had to attend his duty a maximum of two days a week. He had plenty of time to gossip with local friends and neighbours downstairs, watch TV news, chat on Facebook and WhatsApp or IMO and fall asleep at noon. On the contrary, since shopping for groceries and the other tasks including preparation of food for family members were only on my shoulders, and thus my workload was three times more than what it had been in the normal situation before the coronavirus pandemic when I used to get regular help from two part-time assistants twice a day, letting me avail myself of at least two-hour' rest daily on an average. The lockdown situation took away my rest time, imposing an unbearable extra load on my already burdened life but blessed my husband with enough time for sufficient rest and recreation."

On the other hand, public bank manager Ms. Nilambori had a cooperative husband for which she was lucky to get enough rests even in the time of lockdown. She mentioned:

"From the very beginning of our family life, we have a mutual understanding between us. He has a positive attitude towards household responsibilities and never minds helping in performing family chores. He does not consider household chores to be only women's work and tries, instead, always to lessen my workload. But my father, own brothers, nephews, brothers-in-law, and almost all of my male colleagues do not offer any help to their wives in household chores. In that sense, I am lucky enough to share household duties with my husband. That is why whereas my female colleagues and relatives did not get any rest and were tired with their unmanageable workload, I easily get three hours to rest on an average and both of us can manage us 'we time' and enjoy it."

Table 2: Average daily rest hours of the women

Daily Average rest hours	0 Hour	1 Hour	2 Hours	3 Hours	3+ Hours
Before Lockdown (No. of participants)	-	1	4	2	3
During Lockdown period (No. of participants)	7	1	1	1	-

Social Work intervention: Social Work is a humanizing profession and social workers are action-oriented people and agents of society (Morales and Sheafor pp. 3, 125). The social work profession promotes social change, problem-solving in human relationship, and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Utilizing theories of human behaviour and social systems, social work intervenes at the points where people interact with their environments. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work (Sarker 21). Social work intervention is necessary for the better sharing of household responsibilities, a good understanding among all the family members and building a strong bondage between the family members.

Social Work can help the families by counseling to adjust to the changing roles in the Coronavirus lockdown period. Social workers can use Family casework for helping individual members of the family change their traditionally prevalent patriarchal attitudes in order "to make them more productive contributors to the family" (Morales and Sheafor 125). The logical discussion technique of the Supportive treatment method may be applied to make the family members understand the value and importance of cooperation and sharing of family workload.

It might help them to visualize the consequences of gender disparity in the sphere of household responsibilities and the ultimate result of noncooperation within the members. The ventilation technique of the Supportive treatment method may also be applied to help the women releasing unexpressed conscious and pre-conscious emotions against customary gender norms and values of the society. The technique of clarification of the Modifying treatment method might be employed to change male ego and gender-stereotyped attitudes to gender roles of the husbands and male children of the families. Enabling the husband to understand the negative influence of gender ideology and gender difference in the types of household duties for increasing his sense of reality is very important to motivate him for change (Hussain and Alauddin pp. 33-38). Thus egalitarian relationships between the partners would be established.

Family group work may be used by which the family members would be able to examine their relationships and work together to resolve their problems. **Family consultation** may be employed in which all the members of the family work with the social worker to improve relationships among family members and cope with the newly emerged situation. Acquiring advanced skills and training for therapeutic activity, social workers might apply **Family therapy** to change the structure of the family to make it more supportive for its members. (Morales and Sheafor pp. 125 - 126). By applying the method of Group work, motivating the family members to accept the ideology of equal distribution of household chores for the welfare and development of the family and the society at large is possible. Group work can remove gender inequality and gender disparity between the partners in performing household responsibilities which impair and threaten the break-down of family functioning. It aims at the development of individual family members through the interplay of personalities in group situations (Hussain and Alauddin pp. 61-69).

Community services as a field of Social Work practice help the communities improve their functioning (Morales and Sheafor) by individualized attention. Social workers can organize workshops, documentary shows and views exchange programmes to change the patriarchal attitudes of the community. Social workers can also help to shape gender and development policies and promote necessary changes in the social services sector.

Conclusions: After so many years of women's rights movement, till now in this century household responsibilities are considered to be the primary responsibilities of women. The study showed that there were unequal sharing and disparity between the partners in performing household responsibilities. The major portion of extra workload due to the Coronavirus pandemic always fell on women. The division of household chores by gender or gender difference in the types of household duties was sharply noticed in this study. Thus gender inequality, gender disparity, patriarchal attitudes and negligence towards their wives were noticed among the husbands. Though the majority of the children were found to be very dependent on their parents about having their work performed, gender disparities between daughters and sons were also prevalent in this study. Daughters performed those chores more which were in line with their gender identities. These have a long term negative effect not only on the families but also on the whole nation. This pandemic shows that behind the scenes, working women are still facing powerful gendered norms, being forced to balance their personal and professional lives which ultimately leads them to anxiety and career sacrifices. Gender equality is not just a question of financial independence or career development. The root cause of gender inequalities is gender norms and it must be addressed so that equality is fully redesigned (Clavijo). "If women who constitute half the population of the society cannot

properly apply their merit and labor, it will leave a negative impact on the overall human development in Bangladesh. Sociologists and civil society have a role to play in the matter. Chapters should be added to the textbooks of young children to familiarize them with responsibilities to families. Analytical gender-related articles should be introduced in college textbooks. These topics should be incorporated into the syllabus so that the future generation does not consider child-rearing and performing household chores to be the sole responsibilities of women" (Sultana 130).

References:

Akkas, M. A. et al. "Causes and Consequences of Work-Family Conflict (WFC) among the Female Employees in Bangladesh: An Empirical Study," *Journal of Business and Economics*, Volume 6, No. 12, pp. 2063-2071, December 2015. DOI: 10.15341/jbe(2155-7950)/12.06.2015/007

Arráiz, Irani. "Time to share the load: gender differences in household responsibilities and business profitability," *Small Business Economics*, 2018, pp. 57–84. DOI: 10.1007/s11187-017-9925-z

Bandura, Albert (2001). *Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication*, Available at www.cogweb.ucla.edu/crp/Media/Bandura_01.pdf

Bhasin, K. *What Is Patriarchy*, New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2006.

Boca et al., "Women's Work, Housework, and Childcare Before and During COVID-19", *Discussion Paper Series*, IZA DP No. 13409, 2020. IZA – Institute of Labor Economics <https://ideas.repec.org/p/hka/wpaper/2020-043.html>

Cerrato, Javier and Eva Cifre. "Gender Inequality in Household Chores and Work-Family Conflict," 3 August 2018. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01330

Clavijo, Natalie. "Working women under huge pressure during a lockdown," 10 July 2020 www.thehrdirector.com/business-news/gender/women-work-through-the-night-to-manage-work-and-family-commitments-during-lockdown/

Eagly, Alice H. et al., editors. *The Psychology of Gender*, Second edition, Guilford, 1993.

Engle, Jeremy, "How Is Your Family Dividing Responsibilities During the Quarantine?" *The New York Times*, 15 May 2020. www.nytimes.com/2020/05/15/learning/how-is-your-family-dividing-responsibilities-during-the-quarantine.html

Gonalons-Pons, Pilar. Women Already Do Most Domestic Work. The Coronavirus Makes That Gap Worse, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 May 2020. www.inquirer.com/opinion/commentary/household-domestic-labor-essential-workers-gender-gap-coronavirus-20200511.html

Hussain, M. Noorul and Mohammad Alauddin. *Introduction to Social Work Methods*, College of Social Welfare and Research Centre, 1970.

Islam, Shafiqul and Sarmin Akter, "Gender Stereotypes in the Bangladeshi Business Firms," *Arts and Social Sciences Journal*, Vol. 9, Issue 4, 2018, DOI: 10.4172/2151-6200.1000382

Islam, M. Rezaul. *Social Research Methodology and New Techniques in Analysis, Interpretation, and Writing*. IGI Global, 2019. DOI:10.4018/978-1-5225-7897-0

Miller, Claire Cain. "Nearly Half of Men Say They Do Most of the Home Schooling. 3 Percent of Women Agree." *The New York Times*, 10 April 2020. www.nytimes.com/2020/05/06/upshot/pandemic-chores-homeschooling-gender.html.

Mizan, Arpeeta Shams. "Domestic violence during the time of corona: *Let's not forget the victims*" *The Daily Star*, 1 April 2020. www.thedailystar.net/opinion/human-rights/news/domestic-violence-during-the-time-corona-1888192

Morales, Armando and Bradford W. Sheafor. *Social Work: A Profession of Many Faces*, Fourth Edition, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc, 1986.

Sarker, Prafulla C. *Gender Violence against Women in Patriarchal Society*, Mother's publication, 2017.

Sarker, Prafulla C. *Issues and Perspectives of Social Work and Social Development*, 2nd edition, Mother's publication, 2017.

Sarker, Prafulla C. *Qualitative Research: In Multidisciplinary Perspective*, Prime University: Centre for Research, HRD and Publications, 2014.

Sultana, Abeda. "Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis". *Arts Faculty Journal*, Vol. 4, Dec. 2012, pp. 1-18, DOI:10.3329/afj.v4i0.12929.

Sultana, Razina. *Child Caring and Career Limitations among Working Mothers in Dhaka City*, 2013. unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Institute of Bangladesh Studies, University of Rajshahi.

Uddin, M. Jasim et al. "The Problems and Prospects of Part-time House Workers in Dhaka City," *Empowerment: A Journal of Women for Women*, Vol. 19. 2012, Dhaka: Women for Women.

Walby, S. 1990. *Theorizing Patriarchy*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd.: Oxford, UK and Cambridge USA.