

## Shift in Traditional Masculine Role Amid COVID-19: A Comprehensive Overview From Bangladesh



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**ABSTRACT:** Gender has been an essential category of analysis that has been culturally and historically embedded in society since the 90s century (Scott, 1986). Gender is not a set of defined traits of masculine and feminine roles; instead, it is connected to social, economic, and psychological aspects. This research intends to examine the changing pattern of conventional conservative masculinity amid the COVID-19 epidemic, which instigates male dominance and supremacy and prescribes an fundamental and objective manner of men's roles. Covid-19, a worldwide pandemic, brought immense health as well as socioeconomic crisis for both men and women. As men and women experience the catastrophes differently, a gendered dimension of assessing their condition due to such a pandemic is necessary. Consequently, this paper aims to explore men's miscellaneous experiences, including their socioeconomic crisis, struggle, and coping mechanisms in that outbreak period. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity, Talcott Parsons' functionalist theory, and Judith Lorber's gender role theory were used to assess findings and to comprehend traditional masculinity. According to findings, men face a massive change in their way of living due to the pandemic, which brought both positive changes in their behavior as well as creating an extra burden to bear socioeconomic turmoil. However, men's involvement in family care work, participation in parenting, contribution to creating flexible conjugal relations, and agreement in the deterioration of precarious masculinity indicate a shifting prototype of traditional masculinity. Similarly, masculinity is not just a linear, homogenous, or rigid construction; it has multiple overlapping variables that evaluate the pandemic from a gendered dimension.

**KEYWORDS:** Hegemonic masculinity, Gender role, COVID-19 pandemic, Precarious masculinity, Gender stereotype.

### INTRODUCTION

Gender has become an important category of analysis in every context. Gender is constructed by the social norms, rules, symbols, and power structure that defines cultural expectations for how one should behave based on one's biological sex. According to Scott (1986), gender is a primary way of signifying the relationship of power. Almost in every culture, a binary division of gender roles is constituted that implies one's acts accordingly, feminine or masculine. Characteristics of these gender roles are predetermined by social influence and structure, which is considered a key organizing concept of institutions and practices in society. Within South Asian culture, masculinity represents men as breadwinner, responsible, hardworking, rational, and strong. Men are compelled to follow these canons, which are constructed by society and often result in toxic masculinity. Besides, hegemonic masculinity is cultivated by a patriarchal social structure. Likewise, intensive study on masculinity can give a clear picture of how masculine roles affect family relations, as well as power exercise, with women.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, gender roles have been shaped in significant ways. Binary gender roles of men and women in the home and workplace were highlighted in the most recent reports on gender and COVID-19 (UN Women, 2020). Besides, the masculine authority has a strong persuade on social institutions together with the family, workplace, and other organizations in a patriarchal culture. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize analyzing the masculine role during this pandemic. In addition, social and economic changes brought by this pandemic impacted existing and traditional masculine roles.

Furthermore, the global health community included men's risks and needs related to the pandemic. It positively engaged men in addressing challenges during home confinement, such as domestic violence and the enormous burden of caregiving (Molano, 2020). Men's role, responsibility, their engagement in gender relation and household activities, their different needs, activities, and their psychological condition- all need to be addressed. Men faced multiple troubles, including unemployment, frustration, and health issues, as the global economy and institutional activities faced many changes during the pandemic. Additionally, men's engagement in sexual and reproductive health and gender equality provides a pivotal lesson to explore masculine roles and responsibilities. (Pulerwitz, 2019) Most of the research papers about gender role analysis amid COVID-19 confinement focused on the survival issues of feminine roles.

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In contrast, masculinity is assessed through a general lens of existing gender differences and gender stereotypes (Fisher and Mitchell, 2020). Most of the time, masculine issues do not get significant observation in revealing gender analysis (Fisher and Mitchell, 2021). It is a pivotal part of the present time to address the masculine role, its changing patterns, challenges, and endurances amid the epidemic. Also, masculine roles and responsibilities are interconnected with class and race. Men are not a homogenous group and have different suffering and needs. Global shifts in the masculine role, social norms, and gender roles brought about by this pandemic are closely connected to changes in socioeconomic and socio-cultural conditions. Many men became primary caregivers to their families, although violence, depression, and conjugal conflict increased amid the pandemic. This research will provide a comprehensive overview of masculine roles and responsibilities, their changing pattern, as well as men's coping strategies amid the COVID-19 pandemic by addressing gender as a key determinant.

### Covid-19 Pandemic, Gender, and Masculinity

The first outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic occurred in Wuhan, China, which had a high mutation rate and heavy transmission. This global emergency cannot be understood or experienced in a homogenous way by all people (Islam, 2020). No pandemic is gender-neutral. That is why gender plays a vital role as a critical determinant for exploring the gendered impact of COVID-19. (Calvo, 2020). Besides, the sexiest effect of this pandemic has resulted in many areas of Europe, America, and Asia (Parlak, Cakiroglu, and Gul, 2020). Several researches, newspaper reports, and NGO work have been done evaluating the burden of unpaid care work, child-rearing, women's vulnerability, gender-based violence, and economic or health crises that elucidated the effects of conventional gender roles and gender division of labor. Not only the COVID-19 pandemic but also outbreaks like the Spanish flu, Ebola, Zika, etc., covered gendered impacts, which emphasized the feminine crisis (Wenham and Smith, 2020). However, men have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Men's roles, status, struggle, and vulnerabilities are vital for scrutinizing the outbreak's gendered impact and taking any policy regarding gender sensitivity (Harsin, 2020). The COVID pandemic has brought various dimensions to the conventional masculine role, which might be a considerable area in addressing women's challenges (Betron et al., 2020). In addition to being a collection of characteristics, the masculine role is rooted in all social institutions, stating how a man is expected to behave, accommodating the accepted standards of masculinity. The Covid pandemic has fetched transformation in social norms where changing patterns of masculine acts are either done reluctantly or willingly (Khan, Ratele, and Arendse, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic had multidimensional impacts on the conventional concept of masculinity. Men's inclination to viruses and their intricacy of staying at home for extended periods compose coping mechanisms essential for managing social, familial, and economic crises. At the same time, the socioeconomic effects of the Corona catastrophe should be estimated. Hence, the differential experience of masculinity needs to be identified and explored in the gendered analysis of this epidemic.

Fiona Mackay (2020) discussed the term newness of masculinity to reconstruct the conventional masculine role amid this pandemic. It is a theoretical orientation in which not all men are produced as a homogenous oppressive group. Instead, men as subjects of gender relation and their differential experience following class and race are considered. This conceptual frame helps indicate the changing masculinity, new roles, and expectations during the pandemic (Ahikire and Mwiine, 2020). The emergence of lockdown amid this crisis offered great learning to reconstruct the pervasive masculinity and engage men in these shifting roles, which might help gain equitable positions for both men and women in society. It created an option for involving men in domestic care work based solely on financial support (Boca, Oggero, and Rossi, 2020). Particularly, married men with children were involved in caring work, schooling, and helping their partner. However, they hardly ever eat together and concentrate on housework beforehand. In the UK, Italy, and Australia, men are involved in household activities and spend time on child education. According to the webinar report of HeForShe (2020), a positive change in rigid masculinity was investigated through positive parenting where fathers got involved with their children in Turkey. The Mother Child Education Foundation (ACEV, 2021) observed a decrease in family violence and a more equal gender division of labor by having involvement in the positive role of men in Middle Eastern countries.

Moreover, in South Africa, Nigeria, and Vietnam, the HeForShe report (2020) examines that a changing casting of masculinity is occurring, which resulted in the welfare of men's health as well as a decrease in gender-based violence. Yet, not all men experience the same kind of changes in a homogenous way. Because tribal, migrant, black, lower-earning class men are already exposed, the pandemic added some extra burden to their livelihood, which might often cause domestic violence, poverty, hunger, and even suicide (Harsin, 2020). The fear of social stigma, the pressure of precarious masculinity, stereotypical conceptions, and joblessness- all affected men harshly. Labor and middle-class working men with limited income faced vulnerable conditions (Shammi and Rahman, 2020). Experiences are different and notable because an employed man and an unemployed man's exercise of masculinity is not identical. So, men experienced intricacies, complexities of family life, and power dynamics that revealed themselves (Molano, 2020).

Within South Asian culture, masculinity represents men as breadwinners, responsible, and hardworking, which leads to toxic masculinity several times. Consequently, men become liable for domestic violence, gender-based violence, and intimate partner violence in this context. An Indian survey report that published research work emphasized exacerbating the burden of household chores, work from home, and children's responsibilities of women and girls. Very few explained how unpaid care work and household responsibilities men and boys adapt by unlocking their hegemonic masculine attributes during this COVID-19 pandemic

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(Chauhan, 2020). More than ever, married men with children took on the tasks of childcare, child education, household management, and working from home (Chauhan, 2020). Changes in the trend of conventional masculinity were perceived even in limited numbers, and 27% of Indian men and boys engaged in household activities amid the pandemic lockdown (Chauhan, 2020). Because of this shifting trend, a gendered interpretation of masculinity is essential to embracing the COVID epidemic. Therefore, by examining the assorted experiences of men throughout the COVID-19 epidemic, this research offers an ethical analysis of changes in male roles and behaviors and negotiating strategies men acclimatized to deal with the alterations.

### METHODOLOGY

This research aligns with Feminist Standpoint Theory, implying that truth is not fixed and can differ based on people's experiences. Feminist Standpoint Theory recognizes the unique perspectives and knowledge gained from lived experiences, including those of men (Harding, 1986). In view of the fact that this study emphasized on multidimensional reality, a qualitative research approach was chosen to explore the topic in depth. Purposive sampling was used to select 40 employed men who were married, had at least one child, and worked in formal sectors. Based on their income, participants were divided into lower-class (income below \$6/month) and middle-class (\$6-\$12/month) groups (BBS, 2020). All 40 men interviewed were aged between 28 and 40 years old and had been married for 2 to 10 years. 15 of those participants lived with extended family, while others lived separately. Potential participants were requested to participate via email, providing a brief overview of the research topic, participant information and a consent form. If they met the criteria and were interested, the researcher scheduled an interview at respondent's convenient time. Interview questions were organized by highlighting previous research and focused on areas where men perceived the COVID-19 pandemic most challenging. This research intended to get a comprehensive understanding of masculinity by considering gender issues as key determinant. A precise framework was systematized to acknowledge the respondent's experiences with the issue and to conduct the semi-structured interview procedure. This particular interview category was chosen to facilitate the analysis of the spontaneous problems uttered by the interviewee.

Moreover, it makes it easier to gather meticulous data using an organized technique. Asking open-ended and structured questions together increases the number of unanticipated answers. As a detailed and arbitrary type of sampling, purposeful sampling assisted in categorizing the target population as needed for the research rationale. Purposive sampling is the most productive technique for data collection in this qualitative study since it was carried out by a definite group of individuals based on the research goal. The responders granted their permission to participate morally. Besides, some limitations remain in the study. Experience of a mainstream man and a tribal or ethnic man is not exact. Class, color, ethnicity, religion, occupation, and other factors influence how males perceive the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, these have a noteworthy influence on transformation in masculine roles and behaviors. However, due to specific technological difficulties, COVID-19 restrictions, and accessibility challenges, this study cannot include all middle-class and lower-class males, only those who classify as intersectional. Moreover, there are many transgender men in our society. They have different experiences, and multiple changes have happened in their lives due to their changing gender identity and the pandemic situation. Nevertheless, this research has focused on the mainstream men in particular.

### MASCULINITY FROM THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Connell (1995) described hegemonic masculinity as a specific form of masculinity within a particular historical and social context. This type of masculinity avows unequal gender relations between men and women, masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities. Moreover, heterogeneity of masculinity, characteristics of conventional masculinity, as well as power relations in gender roles can be understood through Connell's dominating theory of hegemonic masculinity. It employs a conceptual understanding which addresses men's dominant social role over women and other gender identities. In addition, hegemonic masculinity is socially and culturally embedded phenomenon that imposes subjugation of other men who cannot sustain hegemony of masculinity. Men's idealized role as breadwinner, brave, and boss in society are portrayed through this perception. Therefore, Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity can assist in analyzing gender relations that make it difficult for men to behave beyond a predominant and pervasive form of masculine role. However, Connell stated - "*Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend, without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy, are complicit in this sense.*" The construction of masculinity is such that it necessitates male dominance in gender relations, mostly over women, who are considered prominent supporters of family responsibilities. This hegemonic form of masculinity has been legitimate for years in every institution of society, which is a historically, culturally, and contextually persistent part of gender practice. As a result, Connell (2005) added -

"Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or it is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and subordination of women."

Being a part of gender roles which is learned and imposed by the socio-cultural context, male sex role or masculine role is defined to stand for the behaviors, attributes, activities, and responsibilities of men. To become a man, one must fulfill those inducted roles.

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The conventional masculine role is averted in Talcott Parsons's (1964) functionalist perspective on gender roles. Here, Parsons asserts a theory that defines the differential functions of men and women in every society. Masculinity and femininity are symbolized by those differences based on internalized sex roles. Moreover, men's roles determine the instrumental role of being the breadwinner and decision-maker in the family. On the other hand, women's role is ascertained as expressive, depicting the role of caregiver and emotional supporter. Nevertheless, rigid, conservative construction of masculine roles agree to care work, emotion, stress, and men's involvement in domestic work. Men are under additional pressure to conform to the so-called macho model, which is not taken into consideration. However, gender is not a static or fixed practice with the stereotypical division of labor between men and women based on biological sex. Subsequently, it is changeable in a variety of times and contexts. This paper identified and explored how the COVID-19 outbreak helped bring a shifting pattern of conservative hegemonic masculine tasks.

According to Judith Lorber, an American sociologist (1995), gender is a product of socialization and is subject to human agency, organization, and interpretation. Gender roles are socially constructed and structured, which explicitly categorize people with defined social behaviors. In addition, the most pervasive categories are masculinity and femininity, which create distinct roles and responsibilities for men and women in social environments. These categories are identified and defined through the gender division of roles and responsibilities. As a result, traditional masculine roles and responsibilities are also connected to socially structured gender roles, which puts men in a rigid form of performance. Furthermore, precarious masculine theory states that manhood must be behaviorally demonstrated through toughness, arrogance, and dominance. Otherwise, the ideal of masculinity will be lost if soft, weak behavior is constantly shown and -social development and behavior of masculinity. Besides, the conception of precarious masculinity threatens men by putting extra pressure on maintaining the imposed conventional masculine proven (Himmelstein et al., 2018). Such a masculinity perception has vastly stressful consequences on their everyday psycho duties and activities. Therefore, evaluating men's altering attempt to break existing social, cultural, and rigid masculine pressure and perception can assist in comprehending the gendered impact of the COVID outbreak.

### FINDINGS

The 40 men interviewed were married and had between one to two children, as per the necessity for inclusion in the study. Those men were aged between 30 to 40 and had been married for two to ten years. Their responses to their experiences concerning shifts in conservative masculine roles, including men's engagement in household chores and child care. Moreover, their explanations of the research questions insert their coping mechanism of changing patterns of masculine behaviors within their surroundings that might impact their gender relation, parenting, and psychological stability to help understand the importance and validity of the research.

#### Lockdown as an opportunity for household engagement

The world went under lockdown when the COVID-19 virus increased so fast. Bangladesh became a part of this initial attempt to stop the spread of the coronavirus. Working individuals get an excellent opportunity to spend time with their families. Never before had they obtained such long-term vacation; of course, the countrywide lockdown imposed restrictions on moving outside. Therefore, they could utilize the time being engaged in household activities (child rearing, child education, cleaning, cooking, etc) which were solely responsibilities of female members. In reality, males typically have to work outside, hang out with friends, watch TV, or use their phones afterward. But, men began to recognize the pressure of household chores that they did not even think about when confined to their homes during lockdown situations.

Furthermore, they viewed the facility as a place to work from home or receive automatic leave from their jobs as a chance to participate in domestic chores. As a result, COVID-19 confinement conveyed a capability for men to slacken traditional hegemonic masculinity and dominant patriarchal behavior over women and children, which might lend a hand in flexible gender relations. One of the respondents, a private job holder with one kid aged five years, said:

"I do not even imagine my wife's work strain in the house. Now I realize her work stress as I am staying home full-time throughout the lockdown. That is why I look after my child so she can carry out other tasks easily".

#### Pandemic and Lockdown as psycho-social and economic tension

While conducting face-to-face interviews, most respondents said they were under psychological and socioeconomic haul amid this crisis. Some of them fear losing their job as many factories and offices are deducting their employees. One of my respondents said that the extra expense for children has increased as he has to stay a long time at home. Children want to have pampering things. The increasing family demand, the responsibility of fulfilling these, and the economic crisis have created psychological pressure on them.

One of the universal and existing masculine traits is men's role as economic providers of family. Consequently, they have to be pompous and perhaps hostile to exercise power. The epidemic altered the common traits of masculinity since the world went through a terrible period of social, physical, and economic scarcity due to this epidemic. Men are usually expected to act like monsters, but amid this pandemic, they were also afraid and were making an effort to be understanding of starkness, brutality, shortages, and violence. Many of them lost their job amid this crisis or were low-paid. They tried to modify their conservative notion that housework

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is for females and they can be dominant; hence, they control monetary matters. They also understood the increasing unemployment, family burden, and household maintenance. Five respondents said they did not prefer their wives to work outside and restricted their wives' mobility to keep the family reputation. However, they realized that allowing their wives to work would be better during this economic crisis. One respondent stated that-

"My wife working on the home's outer surface did not appeal to me. So, I assumed she would stay home to provide domestic care, just like my mother did. But under the current economic crisis, I believe it would be better if I permitted her a job."

### **Conforming to peers: change in conventional masculine role as a positive vibe**

Men engaged in care work and household tasks, which are embedded as feminine roles in South Asian culture. This unbending and static gender stereotype was being changed during this lockdown, and men were behaving ahead of rigid partial roles and cooperating with their partners in household chores. In many cases, such supportive notions help bring happiness to family life. Several research reports illustrated that men became more violent while women had to bear the double burden of increasing housework due to home confinement. But at the same time, numerous men are engrossed in flexible gender roles by assisting their partners in caring for their children. They were conforming to their partners in decision-making regarding household costs, child care, education, and other maintenance. According to one of the respondents, a government employee, he had been more cooperative with his partner in every decision-making regarding family matters. As he stayed at home for a long time, he could observe his partner's effort to balance the unpaid care work and all other activities.

Another one said:

"I could not give my family sufficient time, especially my wife. After a day-long hard work, I did not take any responsibility for child care or other family stuff, and I often misbehaved with my wife, exhausted from office work. Now, I have some free time and can help my wife with household work. Our marital relationship has improved as I can accompany her and my child."

### **Diverse experience of men with different socioeconomic contexts**

Men of different social and economic strata face this pandemic situation differently. Although the traditional masculine gender role and its expectations are the same for men of every stratum, their experiences differ variously. Men with middle-class income face less economic stress than men of lower income. Middle-class men with literacy and definite income often contribute to family care work, child education, and caring for older people. On the other hand, lower-income class men had to face the worst suffering of the economic crisis. But both were participating in the changing trends of masculinity. They significantly helped their wives with child care. Respondents from lower economic contexts said helping their wives and doing household activities is essential. But before such lockdown, they did not have the will to perform these responsibilities as they had to stay outside the home for work a long time. Moreover, some other respondents from both middle and lower income claimed that when they were involved in household chores, they had to bear mocking or even conflict with other family members, including their mother, grandmother, or neighbors. As the traditional socialization process of our society prefers men to be outside workers and cost providers, scarce men are taught to be an integral part of domestic responsibilities.

One of the interviewees (Car driver of a garments industry in EPZ) said:

"When I go to help my wife in child care or cooking, my family members do not support it because they think it is her responsibility to maintain me and my baby daughter. So, though I feel that I cannot help her directly, it has become a kind of prestigious issue. Besides, many employees are losing their jobs; I am also in extra tension in the present economic context. That is why I do not think to do anything that spoils the family chain."

### **Social construction and expectation of masculinity**

Gender roles are part of the socialization process based on cultural context through which men and women are taught to act upon their differences. It is a societal expectation and a pressure to perform defined and definite roles within that circumstance. The hegemonic or traditional masculine role is constructed by social and cultural norms where men are socialized to be brave, breadwinners, and dominant. As a result, the rest of the family's reproductive roles go to women. Social creation and expectation of masculinity do not allow men to act beyond existing dominant roles. Some respondents said they had never helped with cooking, cleaning, or caring for children. Before being confined to their homes, they had never considered doing such a job. They had grown up learning to be wage earners and were familiar with seeing female family members perform these caregiving duties. They are expected to meet the family's needs and make financial decisions.

Likewise, society teaches us a static gender stereotypical role to execute, which becomes universal and essential. However, the theoretical concept of gender implies that gender role is achieved through psycho-social and cultural factors that are stretchy and flexible. But, the binary division of gender roles imposes a set of rules and behavioral traits that perpetuate rigid masculine and feminine roles. Traditional masculine role ascertains and promotes men's patriarchal dominant role character. Any man who goes beyond such existing norms is criticized and mocked. People learn to accept and exercise these orthodox roles and behaviors from the family to all other institutions. Gender discrimination starts very first within the family framework. Male members are treated as superior, and female members serve their needs actively. Such perceptions and notions burden men to engage beyond the conventional masculine role. So, it becomes challenging for men to realize and recognize the unconventional role. However, the pandemic situation has brought changes to such existing constructions.

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One respondent said he never saw his father or grandfather help their wives in household work. Moreover, the female members were dedicated to serving family and household affairs. But apart from his family, he now sees his wife struggling with two children, and he cannot help her due to her workload. Now, he is pretty free amid lockdown and can observe his wife's pressure. So, he helps her, and even he behaves softer than before. Another respondent said:

"Man is like a tiger of the forest. Staying home for a long time confuses the tiger in the cell. Covid lockdown is just like this for me. But at present, I notice how my wife maintains such monotonous life by doing household activities at home which I never thought of. So, I try to help her and wish to take her on a trip after the lockdown."

### Scapegoat for the pandemic situation

Historically and culturally, most people anticipate men to be financial supporters and bearers of family. Most of the time, it becomes a social pressure for them to fulfill such needs every time. Respondents' explanations and experiences of such rigorous masculine expectations and stress enrich the research and help evaluate the importance of examining masculinity to get a comprehensive synopsis of the gendered impact of the COVID crisis.

Interview respondents brought up the issue of how this COVID-19 pandemic socially, economically, and psychologically affects them. They have to bear the maintenance of family costs and other responsibilities related to jobs and outside activities. Moreover, the market economy has fallen, and lower-income men become the scapegoat of this lockdown situation. Whenever they are depressed, they feel the fear of stigmatization that if they fail to maintain family, their honor of masculinity will be destroyed. Such psycho-social effects have made them think that they are the worst sufferer of this situation. Maintaining precarious masculinity has created extra pressure on men amid this situation. One of my respondents said:

"Only I know how I am bearing the family cost. I cannot share my economic crisis and stress with my family because I am the eldest child and the only earner. So, being unable to bear them is like a nightmare."

### Cope up with conventional retrogression

Conventional masculinity does not encourage men to be involved in domestic work. Although cleaning, cooking, or family care are fundamental life skills, existing structures seem to threaten absolute masculinity. Connell's hegemonic masculinity also implies unyielding and strict attributes of men where care, emotion, and weakness bring hazards for them. Fear of the destruction of masculinity, which is entirely culturally and socially built, leads men to practice patriarchy. This global pandemic brought various conversions in health, economy, education, and other social activities. As a result, men also featured a wide range of transformations that pushed them to deal with deterioration. 25 respondents in the interview asserted that they had been coping with new responsibilities of household-related activities and child care activities. Generally, they did not think about involvement in domestic endeavor; but the pandemic made them realize that domestic and unpaid work responsibility is no longer an easy task. They said that the traditional masculine role never teaches them to become independent in care work or never makes them understand that these types of work can be a part of their role. The respondents stated that they had to mentally get ready to work together with their wives since they had heard that this type of service was unsuitable for males. However, they feel obligated to help their partners and look after the kids during this lockdown because they have spare time. They have so been adjusting to the traditional regression and related changes in the masculine role. One of the interviewees, a cash in-charge of a firm, said:

"The Covid pandemic has brought many new responsibilities for me. Before such a pandemic, I did not care much about my children's hygiene issues or did not take care of their food. I tried to help their mother maintain their hygiene and food issues, which were entirely her responsibility. Now I must sort out a free time for my children to look after them. Only office work is not enough now to survive with the outbreak."

### Family support as strength

15 respondents from the interview described that they were getting psychological support from their family members, which helped them negotiate with the coping strategies amid the pandemic situation. Besides, they need to care for their children, as many of them have deducted a helping hand. Moreover, cooperating with their partner improved their conjugal relationship, and they became more attached to children and other family members. One respondent said:

"Connecting with family members and engaging in household activities are very significant. It not only brings happiness but works as a stress reliever. The pandemic lockdown has brought a positive change and connectivity in my life."

Changing patterns of masculine attributes brought a changing form of gender roles. Here, integration and involvement with family members are a strength of changing masculinity and coping with new situations.

### Fear of stigmatization

Eight respondents narrated that they often feel the fear of stigmatization as they are working domestic chores, which are socially established as feminine work. They do not become enthusiastic about sharing their role in household work with their friends or other family members. They may think that participating in this type of work can not be a glorious part of manhood.

Traditional socialization processes in our society allow men to become hegemonic over women but not be equal partners in every sphere of life. Besides, if any man fails to maintain the so-called masculine trend or does not practice hegemonic masculine attributes, he might be taunted. They are exposed to domestic care responsibilities, but they are not comfortable sharing their experience of changing roles because they have a fear of having a stain on their masculinity.

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An interviewee said:

"Amid this pandemic, I am doing a lot of household work resembling washing, cleaning, planting, child caring, and helping them with online activities. But I do not share these with my friends or family who stay apart. They might not take it easily or mock me as I am doing such work with my wife, and they might name me homesick."

Changes during the COVID-19 pandemic in conventional masculine roles have diverse experiences. One of them is the fear of stigmatization for existing socio-cultural functions of masculinity. Many of the respondents from my interview said they are not at ease with sharing or spreading their caregiver role because they might face disdain from their friends and other family members for being a part of the feminine role.

### DISCUSSION

Men and women had different social, economic, psychological, and physical experiences during the covid-19 outbreak. Moreover, no pandemic is gender neutral, and studies on the gendered impact of this pandemic provide immediate impacts on pre-existing gender relations, increasing economic vulnerabilities, and the occurrence of gender-based violence. However, emphasis on crisis, violence, and emergency men's social as well as psychological needs, sufferings, and changes during such epidemics are often ignored. The gendered dimension of any analysis mainly portrays the exposure of femininity by highlighting men's patriarchal aggressive role over women. In addition, traditional masculine roles have established an essential, objective, and linear form of men that depicts men as violent, dominant, and money providers. Furthermore, pre-existing social structure and stereotypical standards of masculine attributes prevent men from behaving like a human being rather than as patronized puppets to perform power. As a result, a comprehensive study on masculinity amid such a global epidemic was not highlighted by discussing men's stress, emotions, risks, and diversified sufferings. However, existing literatures on masculinity amid this pandemic indicated a changing pattern in conventional conservative masculinity, which appraised men's involvement in domestic care work, participation in parenting, and contribution to creating flexible conjugal relations.

Connell's theory of masculinity (1995) helps us understand conventional masculinity, which is socially, culturally, and historically constructed. It illustrates men's dominant power over women and other genders. Connell defined it as a masculine dividend. Additionally, this theory provides explanations of social creation and imposed responsibilities on men that lead them to violence. Besides, Talcott Parsons' functionalist theory (1964) implies differentiated and essential gender roles that escort men and women to carry out different and particular roles, responsibilities, and tasks produced by socio-cultural context. American Sociologist Judith Lorber (1995) also described gender roles as socially built concepts that are obligatory for men and women to act differently. As a result, precarious masculinity has been formed to follow the existing idea of patriarchy, which generates extra social as well as psychological pressure to fulfill the supremacy of masculine roles. Furthermore, it demonstrates fear of losing masculinity or communal stigma. Social expectations, stereotypical practices, and cultural cultivation of traditional masculinity hinder men from holding flexible gender roles in our context. Thus, men experience the COVID crisis, a global emergency, in an entirely different way that needs intensive study, even though keeping their emotions, anxiety, and jeopardy aside to maintain macho roles.

This study explored how many men engaged themselves in household chores, child care, and assisting partners. They started realizing the strain of the double burden of reproductive and productive roles throughout the pandemic lockdown. Moreover, this paper has asserted men's differential needs, sufferings, changing patterns of pre-existing rigid roles, economic disaster, underlying familial pressure, and psycho-social dilemmas amid this outbreak. Nevertheless, it can be said that accentuating simply traditional and underlying masculinity does not wrap up the heterogeneous experiences of men. A slightly in-depth investigation to find out their diversified experience, shifting behavioral patterns, and coping mechanisms with the socioeconomic change can be included to recognize men's positive role in the COVID crisis. Finally, addressing gender as a critical determinant for comprehending the changing pattern of masculinity can illustrate an overview of the gendered aspect of the epidemic.

### CONCLUSION

Men and masculinities are still disregarded issues in Bangladesh. This research reveals men's multidimensional and diverse social, cultural, economic, and psychological aspects amid a global outbreak of COVID-19. Sudden and severe virus and its primary prevention as lockdown paused the whole world and brought it into a confined circle. There is no gender-neutral pandemic. Men, women, and other gender identities have different distress during the pandemic. Predominating hegemonic masculinity that creates indispensable and fundamental features of masculine roles usually prevents men from being kind, soft, emotional, and caregiver. However, this paper explores varied experiences of men that went beyond the objectified and linear depiction of masculinity in the COVID period. Most of the research papers regarding gender analysis of this epidemic emphasized women's vulnerabilities, violence, and stress of family responsibilities, and very few exposed men's needs, struggles, and negotiations. In addition, the South Asian Context frequently treats men as patriarchal master that allows the normalization of male dominance and power exercise over women. Hence, the hegemony of masculinity is taken for granted, which averts comprehensive analysis of men's changing positions amid such outbreaks. This study also discloses the impacts of global changes on men's conservative attributes, which guides an opportunity to build more flexible gender relations as well as to impede domestic violence. Furthermore, the findings integrate a

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changing tendency of masculine roles, indicating men's involvement in care work and domestic tasks. To understand the multilayered effect of any epidemic, gender is an essential and critical dynamic to evaluate the vulnerabilities of men and women. Because gender role plays a prominent part in dealing with policy measures to organize socioeconomic crisis amid the pandemic. Therefore, concentrating on intensive analysis of masculinity is crucial for inclusive gender analysis of the epidemic.

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