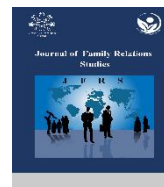




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Research Paper

Fruit Vendors' Relationship Crisis with Families and Relatives during COVID-19: A Cross-Sectional Study in Bangladesh



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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study aimed to identify the factors associated with the fruit vendor's relationship with families and relatives.

Methods: I conducted this study using a quantitative research approach and employed random sampling to collect field data.

Results: The study showed that married fruit vendors, compared to unmarried ones, were 2.77 times more likely to have relations with family members (OR = 2.77, 95% CI = .086–.887). In addition, fruit vendors whose spouses were illiterate had good relations with family members (OR = 4.95, 95% CI, 1.26–19.39). However, fruit vendors who lived in a pacca house (OR = .208, 95% CI = .053–.819), had a monthly income of BDT ≤20,000 (OR = .261, 95% CI = .088–.778), and had no savings (OR = 8.61, 95% CI = 1.85–40.07), were likely to maintain family relations. In the case of relations with relatives, the owner of the house (OR = .147, 95% CI = .049–.440), the local fruit seller (OR = 8.26, 95% CI = 1.11–61.16), having a monthly income of BDT ≤20,000 (OR = 7.96, 95% CI = 1.52–41.57), and having no savings (OR = .269, 95% CI = .079–.922) influenced it.

Conclusion: GO-NGO concerns can be useful for fruit vendors, particularly those who are more vulnerable to family issues.

1. Introduction

Family relation is a pervasive term. It might include relations between husband and wife, parents and children, and even between siblings. These relations depend on some vital issues, e.g., family practice, socioeconomic status, and the crisis of the family. This study primarily focuses on the relationship between fruit vendors and other family members. Misunderstandings, lack of cooperation, disputes. Any social issue might negatively influence family relations. Husband-wife relations can play a crucial role. Fruit

vendors, due to their occupational role, often stay outside the home, which can disrupt the family's fulfillment of demands. In such a scenario, a state of chaos may emerge within the family. It is observed that the socioeconomic circumstances of fruit vendors are not particularly stable. On the other hand, there is a connection through social capital bonding among the fruit vendors on the same land, and it begins with the existence and development of kinship relations (Ginting & Anugrahini, 2023). They extend invitations to each

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other within their respective families and proceed with their business activities. They also maintain social relations by exchanging information about market activities and providing assistance within the community. However, when sellers are not in the immediate vicinity, they establish their initial relationship by communicating with each other and various contacts to address customer needs while also striving to strengthen their social bonds (Ginting & Anugrahini, 2023). When conducting business in the same land, it is common for them to build trust through the exchange of information.

Due to the highly informal and trust-based nature of their business, fruit vendors represent one of the most marginalized groups of self-employed workers (Tigari & Anushree, 2020; Saha, 2011). Choudhury et al. (2011), Samapundo et al. (2016), Tigari & Anushree (2020), Martinez et al. (2017), and other scholars all agree that this industry is a major employer, eradicates poverty, and produces incomes that account for a sizeable amount of urban economics despite its low level of educational training. Among other services, they run a temporary truck and cart and make inexpensive, affordable food items easily accessible in public areas (Tigari & Anushree, 2020; Alimi, 2016; Rane, 2011). Their working lives are explained by Tigari & Anushree (2020) and Saha (2011) in terms of their financial situation, level of debt, number of bribes they have to pay to stay in the market, working hours, problems with using public spaces, and legal aspects of their activity. Mercado (2018) claims that their daily income varies, which may significantly affect their standard of living. It necessitates both a low-risk, low-return firm and a low-capital start-up investment with small profits (Hill et al., 2019; Sekhani et al., 2019; Kawarazuka et al., 2018). However, an increasing number of workers are now required to work longer hours, with greater mobility and connectivity (Dinh et al., 2017; Colbert et al., 2016).

As per the findings of Kawarazuka et al. (2018), they possess increased mobility and can relocate themselves in reaction to amended rules. They always choose crowded locations where customers are likely to buy their fruits when they go home (Ray & Mishra, 2011; Bhatt & Jariwala, 2018). They charge for their presence and occupy both public and private areas, including streets (Tigari & Anushree, 2020). They don't have enough infrastructure or a proper place to operate their firm (Begari, 2017). Since access to streets and pavements is restricted and requires social connections and affiliations, these examples also highlight the implicit regulation of the actions of street vendors (Samapundo et al., 2016; Kawarazuka et al., 2018). They occasionally borrow money to operate their business from cooperative societies

and the banking institutions of their families. In this industry, they compete with suppliers who lower prices without sacrificing the quality of the goods they provide to clients or consumers (Adhikari, 2011; Kambara, 2015; Jain et al., 2016). They divide work, time, incentives, and dangers among themselves (Kawarazuka et al., 2018). However, their operations are risky because they mostly rely on their labor and capital, with minimal assistance from friends, family, or other villagers (Kawarazuka et al., 2018).

According to various work factors and family stages, parents may enter or exit conflict at different times in their relationship (Matthews et al., 2014; Huffman et al., 2013). However, family relations are dynamic and eventually adjust to persistent conflicts, leading to overall positive well-being despite the ongoing presence of the family stressor (Matthews et al., 2014). According to Strazdins et al. (2013), work-family conflict (WFC) is the result of strains, stressors, and/or overloads that arise when work and family demands are perceived as being incompatible. WFC negatively affects family relationships by deteriorating the mental health of both mothers and fathers, marital satisfaction, and parent-child interactions (Fellows et al., 2016). The transitions of parents into and out of WFC affect family connections (Dinh et al., 2017) and give rise to worries about future success in several areas, such as health, relationships, education, and employment (Fergusson et al., 2014). Fruit traders contribute to the growth of the national economy. They are the company's proprietors. This enterprise improves its reputation in the community and among its peers. Finding the variables that affect fruit vendors' connections with families and relatives' crises was the main objective of this study.

Conceptual Framework

Various sociodemographic factors are liable to affect fruit vendors' relationships with families and relatives during COVID-19 (Figure 1).

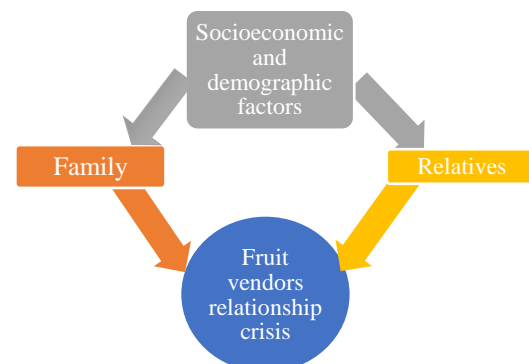


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the fruit vendors' relationship crisis

Theoretical Perspectives

Family systems theory is an approach to understanding human functioning that centers on interactions within and between a family and its embedded setting(s), according to Watson (2012). Intergenerational family systems theory informs how the family functions in social connections (Bray et al., 1986). A family systems view says that how well a person works is based on the system's pushes and pulls. These can be different emotional needs, role definitions and expectations, boundary and hierarchy issues, coalitions and collusions, loyalty conflicts, family and institutional culture and belief systems, double binds, projective identifications, and systemic anxiety. It is a complex social system in which members interact to influence each other's behavior (Franks et al., 1992) and even their needs and abilities (Watson, 2012). The primary experience of social interactions is the family of origin and the subsequent family bonds formed in adulthood (Franks et al., 1992). Any alteration in one family member has the potential to affect the entire system and perhaps cause changes in other family members as well (Watson, 2012). Individuals are impacted, and the whole is influenced by the subsystem interactions that occur between parents, between parents and children, and between children (Turnbull et al., 2011).

Family functioning in general has been a somewhat ignored subject in crisis scenarios. Losing one's work, livelihood, or income during the pandemic causes psychological stress and exacerbates the crisis (Hobfoll, 1989). When the coronavirus infects or kills someone, people get afraid and find it difficult to carry out their daily tasks. Research indicates that the strain on people's ability to cope leads to a general decline in family relationships and functioning (McDermott & Cobham, 2012). There may come a time during COVID-19 when parents are unable to provide their kids with enough time, attention, or support (La Greca et al., 1996). Higher levels of conflict, irritation, and withdrawal among family members differentiated exposure from non-exposure families (McFarlane, 1987).

2. Materials and Methods

1. Research Design and Participants: It was a cross-sectional, explanatory study. In this study, I interviewed fruit vendors from three different divisions (Khulna, Rajshahi, and Rangpur) in Bangladesh to collect data. I established certain criteria to choose fruit vendors from those three divisions: they must have been involved in their business for at least five years in the same urban areas, be the sole proprietor, maintain an open fruit shop despite the pandemic, and be the primary source of income for their family. I purposefully selected three

different divisions (Khulna, Rajshahi, and Rangpur) of Bangladesh for the study. However, we selected the fruit vendors through simple random sampling. No organization can determine the exact number of fruit vendors in the study area. However, the household census was not possible in these three divisions. Finally, we collected data from 416 fruit vendors (Khulna-232, Rajshahi-107, and Rangpur-77).

2. Data Collection Tools and Techniques: I prepared an interview schedule for the data collection instrument, which included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. I conducted a pilot survey with 15 fruit vendors before finalizing the interview schedule to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. I incorporated some deductions and additions into the schedule after completing the pilot survey. Students in the second-year sociology discipline at Khulna University collected data from the field in three phases from August to September 2021. I completed the first phase in 13 days in Khulna, the second phase in 7 days in Rajshahi, and the final phase in more than 10 days in Rangpur due to various issues. Questions like 'Are you suffering from a family relationship crisis?', 'Do you have healthy relations with relatives?' was asked of the fruit vendors while interviewing. While the fruit vendors kept themselves busy interacting with customers, the students inquired about their leisure activities in between customer interactions. Even as customers inquired about the fruit's price, quality, and other pertinent matters, the fruit vendors appeared bored. I solicited their consent before the interview, ensuring their dignity and respect. They also assured us that we would only use the information they provided for research purposes. During the face-to-face interaction, they gathered auxiliary information by examining significant sources at various stages of the study.

Data Analysis Method

I collected data from the field and processed it through repeated coding and decoding to meet the study's requirements. I analyzed and interpreted the processed data using both descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS 25.0 (IBM Corp). I used charts and percentages to describe the sociodemographic characteristics of the fruit vendors. I performed the chi-square or Fisher's exact test to demonstrate the relationships among the variables. To measure the degree of relationships among those variables, we used binary logistic regression (BLR). We entered sociodemographic factors (last as a reference category) into the logistic regression model to calculate the odds ratios and determine the statistical significance with a 95% confidence interval. For the model, $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

3. Results

Relationship Crisis with Families and Relatives

Family relations are an important aspect of human beings. Family relations influence the socioeconomic and even psychic situations of fruit vendors, as they reside

within families. Figure 2 shows the relationship crisis with families and relatives. It indicates that 94% fruit vendors had no family crisis during COVID-19. On the other hand, more than 95% had a relationship crisis with their relatives.

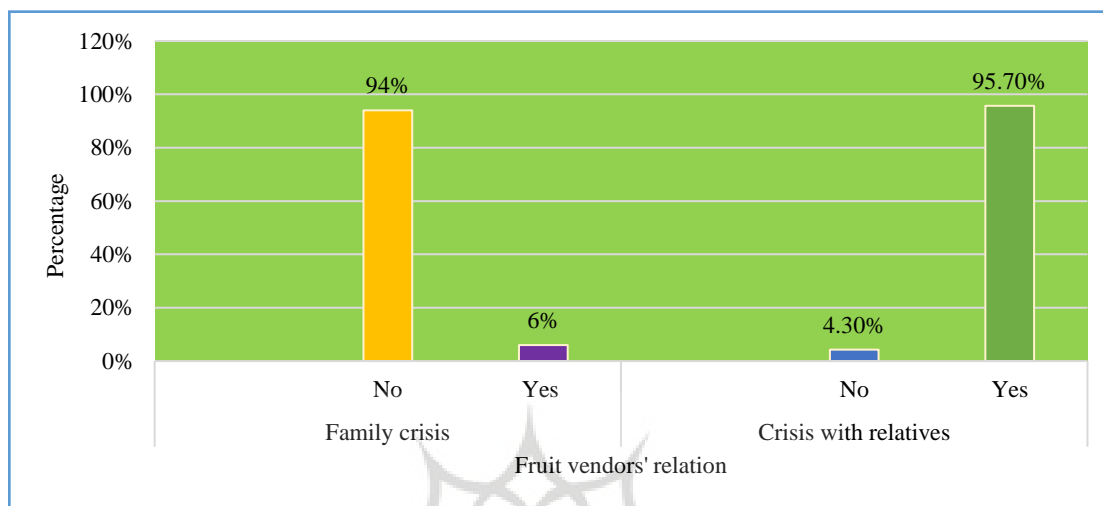


Figure 2. Relationship crisis with families and relatives

Fruit Vendors' Relationship Crisis with Family and Relatives

Table 1 elucidates the relationship between the fruit vendors and sociodemographic and economic factors. Sex ($p=.023$), marital status ($p=.039$), education

($p=.036$), spouse education ($p=.002$), types of houses ($p=.003$), types of fruit selling ($p=.008$), working hours ($p=.011$), monthly expenditures ($p=.006$), and savings ($p=.000$) were associated with fruit vendors' family relations.

Table 1. Sociodemographic factors and relationship crisis with families and relatives

Variables	n	%	Crisis in family relations (%)			Relationship crisis with relatives (%)		
			No	Yes	p	No	Yes	p
Age (year)								
40≤	245	58.9	229(93.5)	16(6.5)	.593	11(4.5)	234(95.5)	1
40≥	271	41.1	162(94.7)	9(5.3)		7(4.1)	164(95.9)	
Sex								
Male	405	97.4	383(94.6)	22(5.4)	.023*	18(4.4)	387(95.6)	1
Female	11	2.6	8(72.7)	3(27.3)			11(100)	
Marital status								
Married	335	80.5	319(95.2)	16(4.8)	.039*	15(4.5)	320(95.5)	.759
Unmarried	81	19.5	72(88.9)	9(11.1)		3(3.7)	78(96.3)	
Education								
Illiterate	22	5.3	18(81.8)	4(18.2)	.036*		22(100)	.613
Literate	394	94.7	373(94.7)	21(5.3)		18(4.6)	376(95.4)	
Spouse education								
Illiterate	25	6	19(76)	6(24)	.002*		25(100)	.498
Literate	391	94	372(95.1)	19(4.9)		18(4.6)	373(95.4)	
Type of house								
Pacca	166	39.9	163(98.2)	3(1.8)	.003*	3(1.8)	163(98.2)	.048*
Semi-Pacca	250	60.1	228(91.2)	22(8.8)		15(6)	235(94)	
Status of dwelling place								
Owner	314	75.5	298(94.9)	16(5.1)	.169	7(2.2)	307(97.8)	.001*
Rented	102	24.5	93(91.2)	9(8.8)		11(10.8)	91(89.2)	
Types of fruit selling								
Both	245	58.9	236(96.3)	9(3.7)	.008*	232(94.7)	13(5.3)	.187
Local	46	11.1	39(84.8)	7(15.2)		43(93.5)	3(6.5)	
Imported	125	30	116(92.8)	9(7.2)		123(98.4)	2(1.6)	

Variables	n	%	Crisis in family relations (%)			Relationship crisis with relatives (%)		
			No	Yes	p	No	Yes	p
Working hour								
<8	68	16.3	59(86.8)	9(13.2)	.011*	1(1.5)	67(98.5)	.329
8≥	348	83.7	332(95.4)	16(4.6)		17(4.9)	331(95.1)	
Monthly income (BDT)								
<20000	236	56.7	223(94.5)	13(5.)	.680	16(6.8)	220(93.2)	.006*
20000≥	180	43.3	168(93.3)	12(6.7)		2(1.1)	178(98.9)	
Expenditure (BDT)								
<10000	197	47.4	154(90.1)	17(9.9)	.006*	10(5.8)	161(94.2)	.227
10000≥	219	52.6	237(96.7)	8(3.3)		8(3.3)	237(96.7)	
Having savings								
No	204	49	181(88.7)	23(11.3)	.000**	5(2.5)	199(97.5)	.090
Yes	212	51	210(99.1)	2(0.9)		13(6.1)	199(93.9)	

(Source: Field survey-2021) BDT-Bangladesh Taka* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$.

On the other hand, the fruit vendors' relations with relatives were linked with types of houses ($p = .048$), status of dwelling place ($p = .001$), and monthly family income ($p = .006$). No relationship crisis with family is found for fruit vendors' age, dwelling place, and monthly income. For relative relations, it is insignificant for age, sex, marital status, education, types of fruit selling, working hours, and savings.

Predicting Relationships Crisis with Family and Relatives of The Fruit Vendors

Table 2 illustrates the fruit vendors' relationships with family and relatives during the pandemic. Married fruit vendors compared to unmarried ones were .277 times more likely to have relations with family members (OR=2.77, 95% CI, .086-.887). In addition, fruit vendors whose spouses were illiterate had good relations with family members (OR=4.95, 95% CI, 1.26-19.39).

Table 2. Predicting relationship with family and relatives of the fruit vendors

Parameter	B	Family relationship crisis				B	Relationship crisis with relatives			
		OR	95% C I		p		OR	95% C I		p
			Lower	Upper				Lower	Upper	
Sex										
Female	-.681	1.97	.277	14.09	.497	-	-	-	-	-
Male		1								
Marital status										
Married	-1.28	.277	.086	.887	.031*	.295	1.34	.333	5.42	.679
Unmarried		1								
Education										
Illiterate	.699	2.01	-.435	9.30	.371	-	-	-	-	-
Literate		1								
Spouse Education										
Illiterate	1.60	4.95	1.26	19.39	.022*	-	-	-	-	-
Literate		1								
Type of house										
Pacca	-1.57	.208	.053	.819	.025*	-.962	.382	.098	1.48	.165
Semi-Pacca		1								
Status of the dwelling house										
Owner	-.877	.416	.133	1.30	.132	-1.91	.147	.049	.440	.001*
Rented		1								
Type of fruits being sold.										
Both	-.767	.464	.135	1.59	.222	.659	1.93	.389	9.59	.420
Local fruits	-.240	.786	.170	3.63	.758	2.11	8.26	1.11	61.16	.039*
Imported fruits		1								
Working hour										
≤8	-.854	2.35	.686	8.05	.174	1.94	.143	.017	1.22	.076
8≥		1								
Monthly income (BDT)										
≤20000	-1.34	.261	.088	.778	.015*	2.07	7.96	1.52	41.57	.014*
20000≥		1								
Monthly expenditures (BDT)										
≤10000	-1.02	2.79	.990	7.89	.052	.443	1.55	.503	4.82	.443
10000≥		1								
Having savings										
No	2.15	8.61	1.85	40.07	.006*	-1.31	.269	.079	.922	.037*
Yes		1								

(Source: Field survey-2021) * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.001$.

Data Analysis Method

However, fruit vendors who lived in a pacca house (OR=.208, 95% CI, .053-.819), had a monthly income of BDT \leq 20000 (OR=.261, 95% CI, .088-.778), and had no savings (OR=8.61, 95% CI, 1.85-40.07) were likely to maintain family relations. In the case of relations with relatives, owner of the house (OR=.147, 95% CI, .049-.440), local fruit seller (OR= 8.26, 95% CI, 1.11-61.16), having monthly income (OR=7.96, 95% CI, 1.52-41.57), and no savings (OR=.269, 95% CI, .079-.922) influenced it.

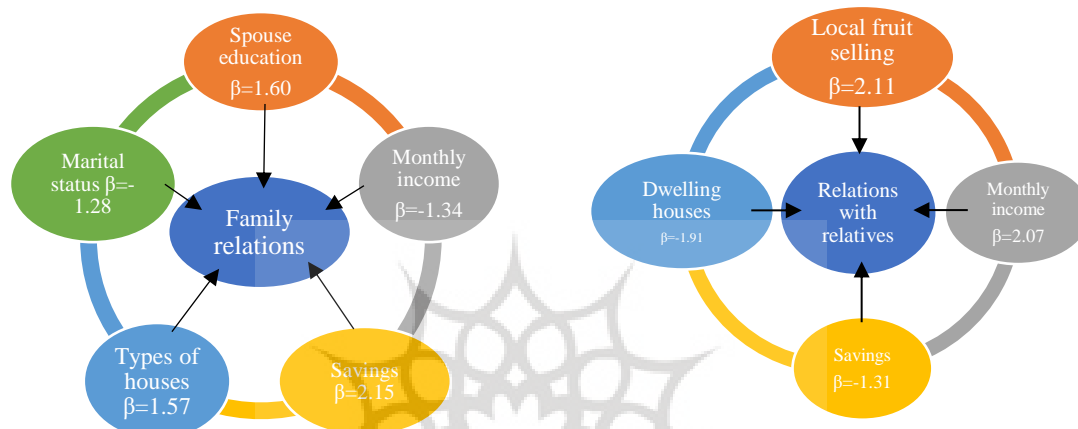


Figure 3. Comparison of fruit vendors' relations with family and relatives

4. Discussion and Conclusion

While most fruit vendors had positive relationships with their relatives, they did not have good relationships with their family members. Establishing and maintaining relationships with family and friends is crucial for procuring raw materials, engaging in vending activities, and becoming a profitable vendor (Kawarazuka et al., 2018). Responsive interactions, stability, and nurture foster pro-social behaviors that support growth and development while protecting against other hazards (Shonkoff, 2010). Children's developmental outcomes, including their mental health and well-being, are therefore influenced by their home contexts, particularly the kind of parent-child connections (Dinh et al., 2017; Leach et al., 2021). Even reduced family situations have been linked to worse couple relationship satisfaction (Baxter & Smart, 2011), increased irritation in parents, and worse family connections (Cooklin et al., 2016; Goodman et al., 2011). According to Valdez et al. (2012), family engagement was contingent upon the assistance of adult and child family members in running their enterprises. According to this study, married fruit merchants had ties to their families. Furthermore, fruit merchants had positive relationships with family members despite their illiterate wives. According to Dang (2020), women should take on a caring role, submit to all men, and maintain family unity. According to

Comparison of Fruit Vendors' Relationship Crisis with Families and Relatives

Figure 3 illustrates the effect of COVID-19 on fruit vendor relations with family and relatives. Savings (OR = 8.61, 95% CI, 1.85–40.07) greatly influenced fruit vendor family relations. On the other hand, the monthly income (OR = 7.96, 95% CI, 1.52–41.57) of the fruit vendor family affected fruit vendor relations with relatives more among the socioeconomic and demographic components.

Horton and Rydström (2011), men can continue to control women in conjugal discussions by playing this position. This position restricts their ability to withstand shocks (Kawarazuka et al., 2018). Women function more based on social than economic relationships (Kawarazuka et al., 2018). Males typically engage in more capital-intensive marketing endeavors, but they hardly ever solicit assistance from family members or other peer vendors (Kawarazuka et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, the fruit vendors residing in pucca houses were less likely to uphold family ties due to their lower monthly income and lack of savings. Due to their family's limited financial resources and social connections, they will encounter challenging circumstances (Kawarazuka et al., 2018). Individuals with strong financial standing and familial ties are more inclined to sell large quantities of goods on credit and incur the risk of no profit (Kawarazuka et al., 2018). Coley et al. (2013) connected one housing issue to the children's general well-being. Regarding relationships with family, the children's welfare was greatly impacted by the home's owner, a neighborhood fruit vendor with a meager monthly salary and no savings. In the informal sector, social networking is shaped by unspoken rules and laws. However, the safety nets that social relationships provide seem to be an even more important factor in determining their continuation (Kawarazuka et al., 2018). Individuals with

restricted social networks and/or low financial resources possess a more limited repertoire of adaptive coping mechanisms to manage their challenging circumstances (Kawarazuka et al., 2018). Moneylenders borrow money at astronomical interest rates from street sellers for both their business and social security needs, trapping them in a vicious cycle of debt (Saha, 2011).

Studies have shown that their exceptionally long work hours have been increasing over time. Moreover, the local authorities constantly harass them, leading to a lack of comfort and security at work (Saha, 2011). Despite giving poor people in both urban and rural areas options for a living, the system's power structure and gender relations—shaped by social and economic interactions—differ from those of formal systems (Saha, 2011). Therefore, the street sellers' existing working hours, the safety and security conditions at their place of employment, and the local government's persistent rent-seeking all contribute to the degradation of their working environment and financial hardship (Saha, 2011). Children who witness high levels of marital conflict and parental animosity or rage are less likely to be socially and emotionally healthy (Brock & Kochanska, 2016; Giallo et al., 2014). Children are aware of and appreciate their parents' labor, but prolonged workdays in particular have a detrimental effect on how much and how well they spend time with their parents (Lewis et al., 2008; Strazdins et al., 2013).

To understand the factors influencing fruit vendor relations with families during the pandemic, we examined variables such as marital status, spouse education, house types, monthly income, and savings. Their dwelling houses, local fruit sales, monthly income, and savings influence the issue of fruit vendor relations with relatives. Out of all the factors, the savings of the fruit vendors have the greatest influence on family relations, and the types of fruit they sell, particularly local fruit, are impacted by their relationships with relatives during the pandemic. In both cases, economic factors play a significant role in explaining the relational aspects of the fruit vendors. During the pandemic, we can mobilize NGO efforts to improve fruit vendors' financial circumstances.

Study Limitations

Like other studies, this has some limitations. This study represents a small part of Bangladesh. Investigating a rigorous study requires a large sample size. The lack of funding for the study hindered the development of the interview schedule. This study is quantitative. A qualitative assessment would yield a more comprehensive picture of their lives. The enthusiastic researcher has a vast scope to explore the relational aspects of fruit vendors.

Policy Implication

The fruit vendors' monthly income and savings impacted their relationships with family and relatives. The state, together with NGOs, can help them financially, particularly during the pandemic. The types of houses and dwelling places inhabited by the fruit vendors significantly influenced the issue. Therefore, GO-NGO initiatives must take into account the house types and dwelling places of the fruit vendors. We should treat married fruit vendors as vulnerable and consider them for assistance.

5. Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

Compliance with ethical guidelines, all ethical principles are considered in this article. The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and its implementation stages. They were also assured about the confidentiality of their information and were free to leave the study whenever they wished, and if desired, the research results would be available to them.

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Conflicts of interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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