

## The COVID-19 Pandemic and Suicidal Behavior in Bangladesh: Social Stigma and Discrimination Are Key Areas to Focus On

Dear Editor,

The COVID-19 has impacted our financial, social, and mental health.<sup>1</sup> It has unpredictable consequences on individuals' mental health.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, economic recession, social stigma, fear, quarantine, lockdown, restriction, and stressful life events are potential risk factors for suicidal behaviors.<sup>3</sup> The present letter aimed to present the context of COVID-19-related suicide due to social stigma in Bangladesh.

Case-1: On April 17, 2021, a 50-year-old COVID-19 patient committed suicide by jumping off the 10th floor of Mugda Medical College Hospital, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He was admitted to the hospital with the COVID-19 on April 9, 2021. The victim was a private service holder. He was unmarried and in the New Eskaton area of the capital city. He left some phone numbers of his relatives, but nobody came to receive the dead body.<sup>4</sup>

Case-2: A 50-year-old COVID-19 positive cattle trader committed suicide on June 21, 2021. Police recovered the deceased person's dead body from his residence at Chuadanga's Alamdanga Upazila. After being COVID-19 positive, he was undergoing isolation at home following the advice of the doctors. The local people started to harass and humiliate his family when the local administration put his residence under lockdown. The locals did not allow the family to leave the house, even to shop for groceries. Therefore, the COVID-19 positive person committed suicide after being subjected to social stigma.<sup>5</sup>

Earlier, we observed some suicide cases due to financial crisis, fear of COVID-19, and treatment negligence.<sup>6</sup> These cases are different from any previous COVID-19-related suicides. Both the victims were financially solvent and had a good social status. Moreover, healthcare professionals, government authorities, and the general population are now more prepared to fight the pandemic in Bangladesh. However, these suicides happened after being subjected to social stigma due to COVID-19. In Bangladesh, 71% of the general population suffers from loneliness during the COVID-19.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, social stigma influences the suicidal ideation of mentally vulnerable people.

Healthcare services are emphasizing the medical treatment of coronavirus-infected patients. However, the related psychological support is insufficient. The consequences of psychological impacts are unseen until it is too late. These 2 cases are examples, and there are numerous similar incidences due to social stigma during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the psychological stressor might influence further COVID-19-related suicides. Thus, I recommend the early adoption of mental health promotional strategies to minimize future incidences. The authorities should emphasize social awareness and educate people to prevent such incidences in the future.

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**Md. Rabiul Islam** 

Department of Pharmacy, University of Asia Pacific, Farmgate, Dhaka, Bangladesh

**Corresponding author:**  
Md. Rabiul Islam ✉ robi.ayaan@gmail.com

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