

Financial anxieties and subjective well-being of the middle-class during a pandemic

August 23 2022, by David Bradley



Dhaka Bangladesh. Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Very few people have been completely unaffected by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the developing world, where a burgeoning middle-class was

hauling itself out of the poverty trap of its ancestors, we might expect the detrimental effects of the pandemic to have been felt more harshly than for the well-off in the developed world.

Writing in the *International Journal of Happiness and Development*, A.F.M. Jalal Ahamed of the School of Business at the University of Skövde in Sweden has considered the financial anxieties and subjective well-being of the [middle-class](#) of Bangladesh. In this part of the world, as with many developing areas, the middle class commonly falls out of focus during times of crisis.

Ahamed has turned his focus on this demographic and found a worrying state of affairs that should help policymakers in the future ensure that those in this group who are actually on [lower incomes](#) are not abandoned. If they are, then there is the risk that such educated workers and consumers will accumulate problems, [mental health issues](#), relationship troubles and potentially fall into the poverty trap that cumulative issues can bring in the developing and developed world, but that are starker in the former.

The research suggests that as well as helping those in the lower classes during a crisis, there is also a need to help those who might be perceived as well off, who suffer too and to put in place universal job security insurance and financial counseling for employees in the post-pandemic world. It was obvious that during the height of the pandemic, lockdowns, firm closures, reduced consumption, limited social interactions, disrupted supply chains, and insufficient medical support would all contribute to a heightened sense of anxiety for everyone.

The aspirational demographic might face its own risks, perhaps hidden from view, while policymakers attempt to assist those in severe poverty. Without a thriving middle-class, however, Ahamed suggests, the notion of "developing" might be stalled or even come to a halt. It should be

pointed out that in this country, an income of just over US\$700 and up to about \$7000 per annum is considered middle-class, \$2 to \$20 dollars a day. However, Ahamed's study also considered education and culture as criteria for defining the middle-class demographic rather than simply income.

COVID-19 is not the first [pandemic](#), nor will it be the last. Its impact will be felt for many years to come and will inevitably overlap with the next major, international crisis. Ahamed suggests that the [developing world](#) needs to be prepared if it is to fulfill its aspirations and that will likely involve securing its middle class.

More information: A.F.M. Jalal Ahamed, COVID-19-induced financial anxiety and state of the subjective well-being among the Bangladeshi middle class: the effects of demographic conditions, *International Journal of Happiness and Development* (2022). [DOI: 10.1504/IJHD.2022.10049702](#)

Provided by Inderscience

Citation: Financial anxieties and subjective well-being of the middle-class during a pandemic (2022, August 23) retrieved 30 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-08-financial-anxieties-subjective-well-being-middle-class.html>

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