



Asian Journal of Management and Commerce

E-ISSN: 2708-4523

P-ISSN: 2708-4515

Impact Factor (RJIF): 5.61

AJMC 2025; 6(2): 1296-1302

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www.allcommercejournal.com

Received: 06-08-2025

Accepted: 11-09-2025

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Post-pandemic challenges and resilience strategies of young female entrepreneurs: A study on Bangladeshi university students

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DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.22271/27084515.2025.v6.i2n.856>

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has imposed unprecedented challenges on global economies, and the entrepreneurial landscape is no exception. Young female entrepreneurs, particularly in developing countries like Bangladesh, have encountered distinct hurdles amplified by gender biases and traditional norms. This study explores the post-pandemic challenges faced by young female entrepreneurs who are university students in Bangladesh and investigates the resilience strategies they employ to navigate these challenges. Through an analysis of qualitative data gathered from interviews and surveys, this research sheds light on the unique experiences of this group. The findings underscore the significance of online platform, collaboration, skill development, seminar or workshop, advice from mentors in shaping the entrepreneurial resilience of young women. By unraveling the intricate interplay between gender dynamics, entrepreneurship, and post-pandemic contexts, this study contributes to both scholarly understanding and practical interventions aimed at fostering inclusive and resilient entrepreneurial ecosystems.

Keywords: Entrepreneurship, post pandemic challenges, resilience strategies, Covid 19

1. Introduction

Enterprises face prodigious hurdles posed by the environment and society from time to time, i.e. globalization, technological changes, new forms of consumption, consumer tastes and preferences, as well as fortuitous events such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Entrepreneurs are sweating on being adapted into different changing realities, volatilities and uncertainties. Today, entrepreneurship is recognized as a crucial component of both sustainable and economic growth. This helps the nation become more competitive in both its domestic and global markets, combat unemployment as a way to address today's pressing issues, and support entrepreneurs in bringing new ideas to market and realizing their own personal growth (Acs & Szerb, 2010) ^[1]. Despite the significance of these factors for entrepreneurs, only a small number of research have linked them to successful entrepreneurship and more specifically, career success (Mooradian *et al.*, 2016; Mueller *et al.*, 2017) ^[16, 17]. Entrepreneurs need to gather resources that enable them to adapt to change in their personal, familial, and professional lives if they are to survive in such drives for success (James and Gudmundsson, 2011) ^[11]. Success in the workplace typically needs months or years of work. Despite the fact that entrepreneurship is thought to be essential for economic growth. Undoubtedly, every entrepreneur who aspires to thrive must overcome a number of obstacles, such as competing demands and a lack of time. Due to these difficulties, business owners were noted as having more pressure than other types of workers (Salisu *et. al.*; 2020) ^[20].

1.1 Rationale

The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has ushered in an era of unprecedented challenges, deeply impacting various sectors and aspects of society. Among the areas significantly disrupted, entrepreneurship has faced unique hurdles that necessitate careful examination. This study delves into the experiences of young female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh, a group that has been particularly vulnerable to the multifaceted consequences of the pandemic.

As we transition into the post-pandemic phase, understanding the challenges faced by these entrepreneurs and the strategies they employ to navigate the evolving landscape is essential for informed policymaking, educational enhancement, and fostering a resilient entrepreneurial ecosystem.

1.2 Research objectives

The primary objective of this study is to investigate the post-pandemic challenges faced by young female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh who are university students and to explore the resilience strategies they adopt to overcome these challenges. This research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the unique experiences of this group and contribute to the broader discourse on entrepreneurship, gender dynamics, and resilience.

1.3 Research question/hypothesis

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

- a) What are the post-pandemic challenges encountered by young female entrepreneurs who are university students in Bangladesh?
- b) What strategies do these young female entrepreneurs employ to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic and promote resilience in their entrepreneurial ventures?

2. Literature review

This literature review examines the post-pandemic challenges faced by female university students in Bangladesh aspiring to become entrepreneurs, as well as the resilience strategies they employ to overcome these challenges. Through an analysis of pertinent literature, this study sheds light on the distinct experiences of young women in entrepreneurship during the pandemic and post-pandemic phases. The review emphasizes the role of social networks, digital transformation, gender biases, education, and government policies in shaping the resilience strategies of young female entrepreneurs. By synthesizing findings from various scholarly works, this literature review contributes to a deeper understanding of the unique challenges and strategies of young women entrepreneurs in the Bangladeshi context.

2.1 Educational background of young female entrepreneurs

Education increases a woman's capacity to manage her own business (Danish and Smith, 2012) ^[5] but Bangladesh still has a lower percentage of female entrepreneurs than other emerging countries is not shocking because (Hwang H and Takane, 2020) ^[30] report that in Bangladesh, there is a significant gender disparity in the ownership of micro, small, and medium-sized businesses, with 92.6% of males and 7.4% of females holding such positions. This classification highlights problems that affect female entrepreneurs, such as limited opportunities for commercial activity, inefficient markets, unequal access to institutions and resources, and low rates of educational attainment (Mozumdar *et al.*, 2022) ^[14].

2.1.1 Challenges for Young Female Entrepreneurs Post-Pandemic

The pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing gender

disparities in entrepreneurship. Young female entrepreneurs face distinct challenges, including limited access to resources, gender-based discrimination, and traditional societal expectations (Datta & Gailey, 2020; Kabeer, 2021) ^[6, 12]. Lockdowns and economic downturns have disproportionately affected industries with a higher concentration of female-led businesses (World Bank, 2020) ^[22]. Young female entrepreneurs also grapple with balancing domestic responsibilities and business endeavors in the wake of remote work and learning arrangements (Ghosh, 2020) ^[7].

2.2 Resilience Strategies of Young Female Entrepreneurs

Despite the challenges, young female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh have demonstrated resilience through adaptive strategies. Social networks, including family support and mentorship, play a vital role in their entrepreneurial journey (Alam & Lema, 2022; Shahnaz, 2021) ^[4, 21]. Digital transformation has enabled them to explore new markets and overcome geographical limitations (Rahman *et al.*, 2023) ^[19]. E-commerce platforms and digital marketing have become pivotal tools for reaching customers (Islam *et al.*, 2023) ^[10]. Moreover, educational initiatives fostering entrepreneurship skills and self-efficacy contribute to the resilience of young female entrepreneurs (Akter *et al.*, 2022) ^[2].

2.3 Gender Biases and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Gender biases continue to impact young female entrepreneurs' experiences and strategies. Stereotypes and biases affect their access to financing, networking opportunities, and market access (Hossain & Jahan, 2020) ^[9]. However, some studies suggest that facing and challenging gender biases can lead to heightened determination and innovative problem-solving (Rahman & Sikder, 2021) ^[18]. Women's ability to harness resilience against systemic biases can lead to transformative changes in the entrepreneurial landscape.

2.4 Education, Training, and Entrepreneurial Resilience

Entrepreneurial education and training programs have a significant role in building resilience among young female entrepreneurs. Comprehensive training equips them with skills and knowledge to navigate challenges (Nagpal & Tyagi, 2019) ^[17]. Incorporating gender-sensitive perspectives within educational curricula can address gender disparities and empower female entrepreneurs (Gupta & Kumar, 2020) ^[8]. These programs foster confidence and self-efficacy, enabling young women to overcome obstacles with determination.

2.5 Government Policies and Support

Government policies are instrumental in shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystem for young female entrepreneurs. Bangladesh has witnessed initiatives promoting women's economic participation (Afrin & Zaman, 2023) ^[3]. Gender-responsive policies focusing on access to finance, market opportunities, and mentorship can enhance the resilience of young female entrepreneurs (Khatun & Akter, 2021) ^[13]. Collaborative efforts between governments, NGOs, and private sectors are crucial in creating an enabling environment for their ventures.

The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced unprecedented challenges to young female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

This literature review underscores the multifaceted challenges they face and highlights the diverse resilience strategies employed. Social networks, digital transformation, education, and government policies play pivotal roles in shaping their entrepreneurial journey. Understanding the distinct experiences of young women in entrepreneurship post-pandemic is essential for creating supportive environments that foster their growth and resilience.

3. Research methodology

This study involved various female entrepreneurs from public and private universities in Bangladesh. Structured method and interview analysis were used to describe and summarize the properties of the mass of data collected from the respondents and the methodology adopted in the research comprises of primary and secondary data. A qualitative method was used to collect primary data from the respondents who worked as an entrepreneur through a formed interview questionnaire and secondary sources were used for enhancing the insights of this paper, such as articles published in different journals, books, working papers, conference papers and websites etc. The questionnaire cluster into two section that is section A (Demographic Profile) related to general information such as gender, age, designation, educational qualification, and job experience and Section B consisted of some selected items to be responded on interview questions. The questionnaire was prepared based on existing literature to assessing challenges of young female entrepreneurs in post pandemic era in Bangladesh. This study examines the feedback provided by students regarding areas for improvement, with responses from five entrepreneurs who are running students, complete graduation and post-graduation. An open-ended question was designed to gather student input: " Post-Pandemic Challenges and Resilience Strategies of Young Female Entrepreneurs." The responses from each student were compiled into a text document, organized into distinct segments to facilitate loading into the content analysis software. The analysis was conducted utilizing the free qualitative analysis software QDA Miner Lite 3.0.7. The first step involved sorting interview data into challenges and resilience strategy aspects of young female university entrepreneurs. Meaningful units were then pulled from the relevant portions of the text, and codes were assigned to each unit. These codes were not predefined; instead, they emerged from a thorough review of the interview, leading to the identification of several challenges and strategies, which

were then organized into codes. Each of these codes was subsequently categorized within one of the broader categories based on representation of the entrepreneurs. Additional analysis and frequency calculations were performed using the QDA Data Miner Lite qualitative analysis software.

4. Results and Discussion

A contextual analysis was conducted by direct interview method on five female entrepreneurs who studying or graduated from various public university. The students were asked to provide their ideas and experience on challenges and strategies of resilience after post pandemic situation female entrepreneurs in Bangladesh. Demographic profile shows, 30 to 34 years (56.4%) old female entrepreneurs do entrepreneurship business in highest rank, then 25 to 30 years (28.2%) female students choose this profession. Most of them live in metropolitan or city area (68.6%), then in rural area (16.8%). Study said education of these female entrepreneurs rank first to honor's degree (36.8%), then master's degree (32.2%), 40.5% female entrepreneurs doing their business for 1 to 3 years and 33.6% entrepreneurs are doing their activity of entrepreneurship for 4 to 5 years.

Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents

SL No.	Variables	Level	Percentage (%)
1.	Q1__Age	20 - Below 25	10.9
		25 - Below 30	28.2
		30 - Below 35	56.4
		35 and above	4.5
2.	Q2__You are Living_in	Rural	16.8
		Regional	8.2
		Remote	6.4
		Metropolitan/City	68.6
3.	Q3__Education	Ongoing	30.5
		Honour's Degree	36.8
		Master's Degree	32.2
		PHD	0.5
4.	Q4__Tenure of Business	Less than 12 months	20.0
		1 - 3 years	40.5
		4 - 5 years	33.6
		More than years	5.9

4.1 Here two categories identified: Entrepreneurship challenges and resilience strategies. The condensed units of meaning within the challenges category were classified into eleven codes, while at resilience strategy aspects were categorized into eight codes.

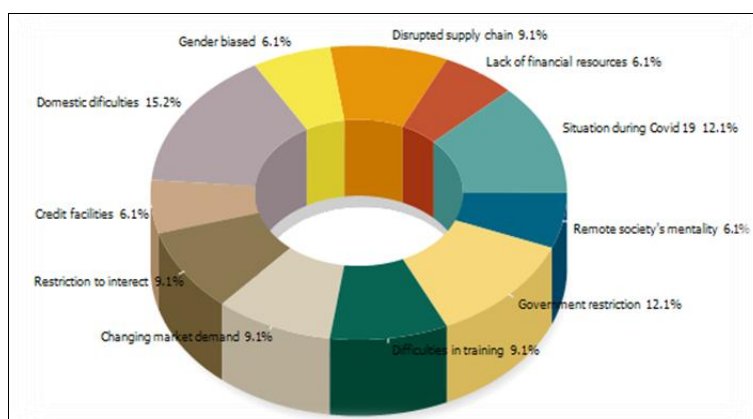


Fig 1: Frequency of Entrepreneurship Challenges

The outcomes of the frequencies of entrepreneurship challenges are illustrated in figure 1, where domestic difficulties show major challenge by 15.2% frequency, then situation during Covid 19, government restriction both are in 12.1% frequency, disrupted supply chain, difficulties in training, changing market demand, restriction to interact both are in 9.1% frequency.

Table 2 shows entrepreneurship challenges category based on interview from respondents along with code, count,

percentage of code, number of cases and percentage of cases. Here domestic difficulties ranked higher than others challenges by 5 count, 5.3% codes, 5 cases and case percentage is 100%. Situation during Covid 19 and government restriction percentage of cases stands 80% with 4 cases, that's count 4 with 4.3% codes. Restriction to interact, changing market demand, difficulties in training, disrupted supply chain both are count 3, codes percentage is 3.2, cases number is 3 which stands 60%.

Table 2: Entrepreneurship Challenges Category

Category	Code	Count	% Codes	Cases	% Cases
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Situation during Covid 19	4	4.3%	4	80.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Lack of financial resources	2	2.1%	2	40.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Disrupted supply chain	3	3.2%	3	60.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Gender biased	2	2.1%	2	40.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Domestic difficulties	5	5.3%	5	100.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Credit facilities	2	2.1%	2	40.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Restriction to interact	3	3.2%	3	60.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Changing market demand	3	3.2%	3	60.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Difficulties in training	3	3.2%	3	60.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Government restriction	4	4.3%	4	80.0%
Entrepreneurship Challenge	Remote society's mentality	2	2.1%	1	20.0%

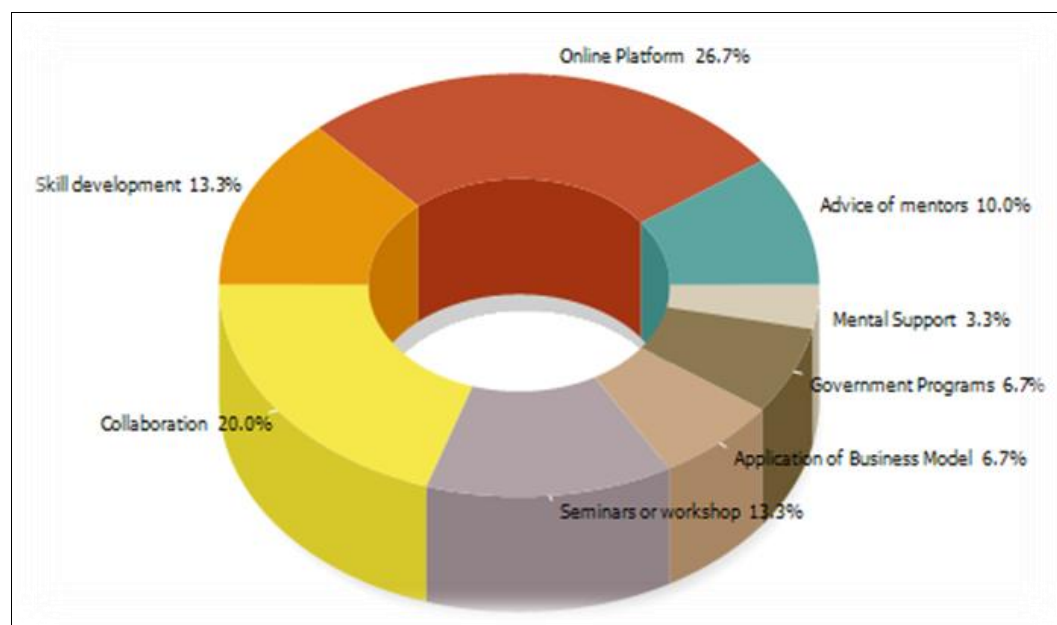


Fig 2: Frequency of Resilience Strategy

Figure 2 illustrate frequency of resilience strategy where eight codes are identified under this category. Online platform shows bigger strategy to recover the challenges by 26.7% which stands first priorities said by respondents. Then, collaboration, skill development, seminar or workshop, advice from mentors shows respectively 20%, 13.3%, 13.3%, 10% of frequency by which they declared

their priority. Table 3 also categories with resilience strategy with code, count, % of code and cases and number of cases. Here, online platform counts in 8 (8.5% of code), 5 cases (100% of cases), collaboration shows 6 count (6.4% codes) with 5 cases (100%), skill development, seminar or workshop ranked three with 4 count (4.3% codes), 4 cases (80% of cases).

Table 3: Category of Resilience Strategies

Category	Code	Count	% Codes	Cases	% Cases
Resilience strategies	Advice of mentors	3	3.2%	3	60.0%
Resilience strategies	Online Platform	8	8.5%	5	100.0%
Resilience strategies	Skill development	4	4.3%	4	80.0%
Resilience strategies	Collaboration	6	6.4%	5	100.0%
Resilience strategies	Seminars or workshop	4	4.3%	4	80.0%
Resilience strategies	Application of Business Model	2	2.1%	2	40.0%
Resilience strategies	Government Programs	2	2.1%	2	40.0%
Resilience strategies	Mental Support	1	1.1%	1	20.0%

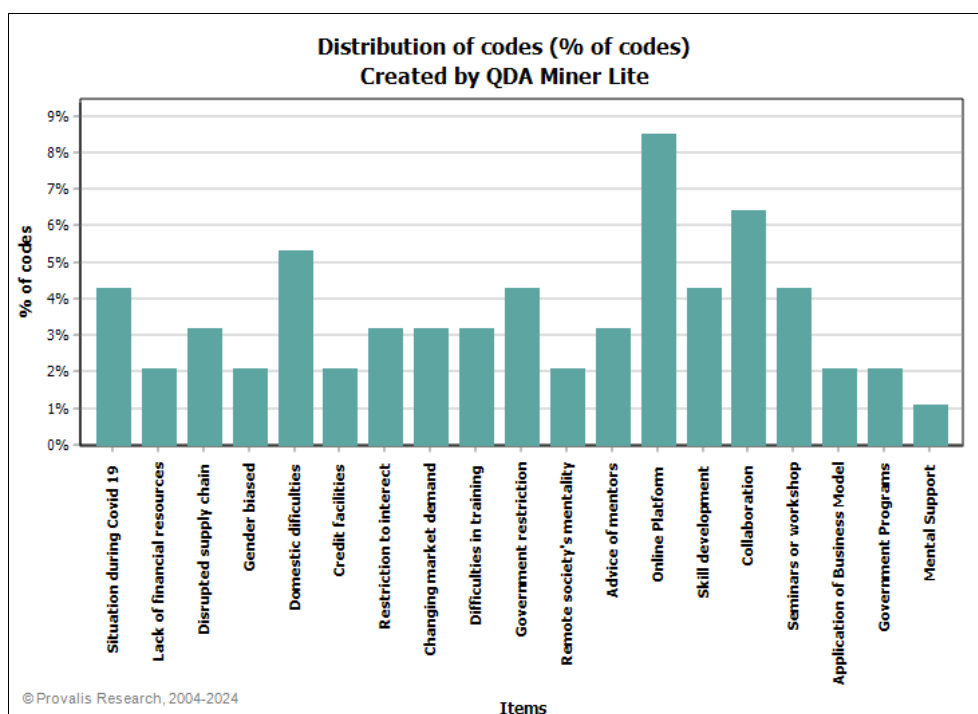


Fig 3: Percentages of all codes

Figure 3 created by QDA Miner Lite shows, distribution of codes by frequency chart and its percentages, where vertical axis shows % of codes and horizontal axis shows items and

online platform give a greater value in this frequency chart also collaboration and domestic difficulties shows respectively their positions by analyzing data.



Fig 4: Word Cloud

A word cloud, also known as a tag cloud, is a visualization technique that displays text data, where the size of each word reflects its frequency within the text, thereby making more commonly used words stand out with greater prominence. This visualization aids in comprehending extensive text by showcasing the frequency of words, and it can be made interactive to foster audience participation and dynamic presentations. Using QDA Miner Lite software word cloud create an overall visualization of frequency of

all codes under two categories which shows codes of challenges and resilience strategies for young female entrepreneurs.

5. Findings and Recommendations

The findings will reveal various challenges faced by female entrepreneurs like domestic difficulties, situation during Covid 19, government restriction, disrupted supply chain, difficulties in training, changing market demand, restriction

to interact, gender biased, lack of credit facilities, restriction to interact with others, changing market demand, difficulties in training, remote society's mentality. This paper will show the significance of online platform, collaboration, skill development, seminar or workshop, advice from mentors, application of business model, government programs, mental support both from family and society in shaping the entrepreneurial resilience of young female entrepreneurs to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic and promote resilience in their entrepreneurial ventures. By exploring the complex relationships among gender dynamics, entrepreneurship, and the circumstances following the pandemic, this research enhances both academic knowledge and practical strategies designed to promote inclusive and resilient entrepreneurial environments. Recognizing the unique experiences of young women in entrepreneurship after the pandemic is crucial for developing supportive settings that encourage their development and resilience.

6. Conclusion

A method centered on entrepreneurship that encourages online participation and collaboration among young female entrepreneurs emerged from research has proven to be highly effective. The content analysis conducted was helpful in identifying categories reflecting their challenges of entrepreneurship and resilience strategy from them by young female entrepreneurs. Findings indicated a uniformity in entrepreneur's feedback, highlighting the significance of resilience strategy through a blend of various instructional resilience strategies that would capture their interest at entrepreneurship business. Furthermore, the incorporation of gamification features was shown to be effective in enhancing entrepreneurs engagement especially young female entrepreneurs. Future efforts in application of business model, government programs, mental support from both family and society need to overlooked to enhance female entrepreneurship and to reduce challenges which acute after pandemic. The study focuses on young female entrepreneurs who are university students in Bangladesh. It delves into the experiences of this specific demographic to understand their post-pandemic challenges and resilience strategies. While the study provides valuable insights, it is important to acknowledge that the research is context-specific and may not be entirely generalizable to other regions or demographic groups. Moreover, as with any empirical research, limitations such as sample size constraints and potential biases in self-reporting may influence the outcomes of the study.

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