

**Online Teaching Challenges during the COvid-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh:
An Insight from Teachers**

By

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fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MA in TESOL

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

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2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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Abstract

The main focus of this phenomenological study is to detect the observed challenges teachers face in online teaching and the probable insights. The research implements a hermeneutic phenomenological research design, which primarily serves to intensify the interpretative element to elucidate meanings in the interview transcripts of participants under a phenomenon (Van Manen, 2017). Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with four teachers from a private university. The findings disclose that during the online teachings, teachers faced challenges such as lack of internet access, unavailability of gadgets, online assessment, prejudiced outlook, less student-teacher interaction and lack of motivation. This study also gives some probable solutions to these challenges such as redesigning assessments, using specific platforms, and providing students with gadgets and financial support.

Keywords: online teaching; challenges; solutions; prospects; Bangladesh.

Dedication

I dedicated this to my parents, who have always been my mentor and guide and whose encouragement motivated me in every step of my journey to completing my degree. I do not know how to express my appreciation and gratitude to my parents. May Allah bless the departed souls of my parents.

Acknowledgement

Firstly, all praise to the Great Allah, for whom my thesis has been completed without significant interruption. Secondly, I thank my advisor, Kushal Das sir, for his kind support and advice in my work. He helped me whenever I needed help. Finally, without the thorough support of my parents' family members, it may not have been possible. With their kind support and prayer, I am on the verge of graduating.

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Chapter-1

1. Introduction

This introduction chapter includes a brief background information of recent studies, research questions, rationale of the study, significance of the study, research objectives, and limitations of the study.

1.1. Online Learning

A form of education known as e-learning involves students using their personal computers, laptops, or smartphones to access the internet when away from their academic institutions (Anastasiades et al., 2010). Online learning is helpful in some cases where face-to-face education is not feasible; there needs to be more accommodation for the participants, distant locations of the participants from the institutes, etc. This learning method is also called distance learning, online teaching, video classes, etc. E-learning has a role in academics due to the internet and technological advancements.

1.2. Background Information

The education landscape has undergone a profound transformation propelled by the global digital revolution, marking a paradigm shift where technology seamlessly integrates with traditional pedagogy. This evolution gained unprecedented momentum with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating educational institutions worldwide to reassess teaching methodologies and swiftly embrace online platforms. While this shift presented challenges, it emerged as a

lifeline for academic continuity, providing a dynamic and resilient alternative to conventional classroom learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected almost all areas of human life, including education (Islam et al., 2020; Nepal & Kumar, 2020). The education sector has been one of the worst-hit areas worldwide. Educational institutions were forced to shift their teaching mode from physical classes to online classes (Marshall et al., 2020). However, different countries managed this sudden paradigm shift in teaching-learning differently depending on their socio-economic status. Managing online teaching with the required technologies and teacher expertise was complex for all countries. Even a developed country like New Zealand could not ensure equal learning opportunities for all its learners. Many parts of the country needed internet connectivity, and poor learners needed help to afford laptops and other gadgets essential for online learning.

Moreover, only half of the schools in New Zealand believed that their learners would be able to attend online classes (Mutch, 2021). Bangladesh, like other South Asian developing countries, is fighting a tough battle against the coronavirus. We got the first positive COVID-19-positive case in Bangladesh on March 8, 2020. Since March 18, 2020, all educational institutions have postponed physical classes to protect students, teachers, and officials from the infectious virus (Ela et al., 2021). Most secondary schools and higher secondary colleges started teaching their students online in July 2020 as the virus wreaked its havoc nationwide. However, this sudden shift to online classes was not pre-planned; instead, it was an “emergency conversion” (MacIntyre et al., 2020, p. 1). None of the stakeholders - learners, teachers, officials, and guardians - knew about online teaching-learning (Khan et al., 2021).

Bangladesh, renowned for its vibrant undergraduate education system, has not been impervious to this global educational upheaval. The imperative to integrate online teaching and learning has become increasingly compelling in a nation that regards education as a cornerstone of societal progress. However, the success of such a transformative educational policy hinges significantly on the adaptability and resilience of its front-line soldiers – the teachers or educators.

This research endeavors to unravel the intricate dynamics of online teaching and education for undergraduate students in Bangladesh. Recognizing that teachers are the linchpin of successful implementation, the study highlights their challenges, the innovative solutions they deploy, and the promising prospects that emerge from their dedicated efforts. Understanding the educators' perspective becomes paramount in gaining a comprehensive grasp of the situation, as their experiences and insights guide the trajectory of this educational metamorphosis.

The multifaceted nature of this research encompasses exploring the challenges inherent in adopting online teaching methods. These challenges span from the digital divide, where discrepancies in internet access and technological resources persist, to the intricate task of upskilling educators in navigating virtual classrooms effectively. Through a detailed analysis, the study aims to illuminate the innovative solutions implemented to address these challenges, acknowledging that resilience and adaptability are essential attributes in the face of such transformative shifts.

Furthermore, as the demand for accessible, flexible, and technology-driven education grows, the research delves into promising prospects. It seeks to identify emerging trends, best practices, and potential future developments in online education in Bangladesh, painting a holistic picture of the evolving educational landscape.

In essence, this research contributes valuable insights that extend beyond the immediate challenges, offering a nuanced understanding of the ongoing digital transformation in Bangladesh's undergraduate education sector. By examining the experiences of educators, unveiling innovative solutions, and exploring prospects, the study aspires to inform policy decisions, foster continued adaptability, and ultimately contribute to the sustainable evolution of education in the digital age.

The research adopts a phenomenological approach, recognizing that teachers' experiences in this transformative period are subjective and complex. Phenomenology is an apt methodology as it qualifies for an in-depth investigation of the lived experiences of educators, capturing the essence of their challenges and innovative responses. By delving into the unique perspectives of teachers, the study aims to uncover the underlying meanings and structures that shape their encounters with online teaching, providing a richer and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon.

The study engages a qualitative research design, utilizing interrogation, focus groups, and document analysis to gather data. This approach allows for a deep exploration of the intricate dynamics at play, enabling the researchers to capture the nuances of educators' experiences and the contextual factors influencing their practices.

As the educational landscape continues to develop, this research serves as a timely and essential contribution, offering insights that can inform not only immediate responses to the challenges of online teaching but also the long-term trajectory of education in Bangladesh. By embracing the complexities of this transformative period and amplifying the voices of educators, the study endeavors to pave the way for a more adaptive, resilient, and effective education system in the digital age.

1.3. Significance of the study

This study can help understand teachers' challenges in integrating online teaching, which is crucial for policymakers and educational authorities. It would also be helpful to initiate professional development programs for teachers. By shedding light on the innovative solutions implemented by teachers and institutions, the study can offer valuable best practices that have successfully mitigated challenges. The research findings can guide allocating resources for technology infrastructure and training. By understanding teachers's challenges, educational institutions can allocate resources strategically to areas that require the most support, ensuring

efficient and effective utilization of resources. The study can serve as a basis for future research in online education, inspiring more studies that explore related topics and expand on the findings.

1.4. Rationale of the Study

The use of a phenomenological approach in the research on teachers' challenges in online teaching during the pandemic in Bangladesh is appropriate because of its emphasis on exploring and understanding the lived experiences of individuals. Phenomenology is well-suited for investigating subjective experiences, perceptions, and meanings attributed to a phenomenon, providing a nuanced understanding of the intricate aspects of online teaching.

In the context of this study, the challenges teachers face in adapting to online education are likely to be multifaceted and deeply rooted in their personal experiences. Phenomenology allows researchers to delve into the essence of these experiences, unveiling the intricate web of emotions, perceptions, and cognitive processes that shape teachers' responses to the transition to online teaching.

Furthermore, the phenomenological approach aligns with the qualitative nature of the research, offering a holistic exploration of the phenomenon without imposing preconceived notions or predefined categories. By adopting this approach, the study aims to capture the richness and complexity of teachers' experiences, providing valuable insights for educational policymakers and stakeholders in Bangladesh seeking to enhance the effectiveness of online teaching strategies amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic.

1.5. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What challenges did teachers face in implementing online teaching at the undergraduate level?
2. What are the insights of online education in Bangladesh?

1.6. Research Objectives

The research objectives for the study are:

1. Investigate the challenges teachers encounter in implementing online teaching at the undergraduate level in Bangladesh, focusing on vital aspects such as technological barriers, pedagogical adjustments, and student engagement.
2. Explore the probable insights of online education in Bangladesh, including identifying effective strategies, best practices, and potential areas for improvement to inform future educational policies and procedures in the post-pandemic landscape.

1.7. Limitations of the study

The research's exclusive emphasis on capturing teachers' perspectives introduces a potential limitation, as it overlooks other significant stakeholders' viewpoints in the online learning environment. While teachers are undoubtedly key participants, students and administrators contribute substantially to the dynamics of online education. Neglecting the perspectives of these

vital stakeholders may result in an incomplete understanding of the multifaceted challenges and potential solutions in the online teaching landscape.

Students' experiences and challenges in adapting to online learning environments could provide valuable insights into the overall efficacy of the educational approach. Their feedback on engagement, technology accessibility, and the overall learning experience is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced in the online setting. Moreover, administrators responsible for implementing policies and providing resources possess insights into systemic challenges that may impact teachers and students.

Chapter-2

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This literature review chapter includes information about the challenges the teachers faced and also the probable insights of online education from different contexts.

2.2. Challenges Teachers Faced in Online Teaching

According to Snoeyink & Ertmer (2001) online education has external and internal barriers that teachers encounter. Exterior walls include resource constraints such as lack of equipment, training, or technical support. In contrast, internal barriers include institutional factors such as school cultures, teacher-level factors such as beliefs and perspectives about teaching and technology, and exposure to change. Recent studies also agree with the above such as external and internal barriers to online teaching(Kelly, 2015; Kopcha, 2012). This section reviews the literature on the challenges of online teaching-learning, explicitly focusing on the changed circumstances.

2.3. Access, Gadgets & Cost

As a developing country, most of Bangladesh's people live below the poverty line. Many students lack proper devices or internet facilities due to financial scarcity (Rahaman et al., 2021). To accelerate the e-learning process, the University Grant Commission (UGC) initiated soft loans for public university students to buy smartphones (Alamgir, 2020).

Lack of credentials for gadgets, online aids, materials, and training poses a significant challenge to remote teaching. In developed countries successfully integrating computers and internet connectivity into most classrooms, it was moderately easy to introduce distance teaching by autographing contracts with Zoom and other online platforms. However, the scenario is very diverse in both poor and developing countries. Jalli (2020) argues that a significant portion of the Southeast Asian population still needs access to electronic devices and the Internet. Jalil (2020) also added that infrastructural gaps between different parts of a country and geographical conditions result in internet speed discrepancies.

The scenario is different in rural cities and developing countries. Only some students or educators are economically blessed to have modern gadgets. Bhuiyan et al. (2020) report that teachers and students in rural Bangladesh have limited or poor access to the Internet. He showed his concern that the costs of internet data packages are challenging for students and teachers in many developing countries. Beaunoyer et al. (2020) states that using older and outdated devices might cause uncertainties in accessing online resources and create a less satisfying experience for the participants. Instefjord & Munthe (2017) point out that the availability of resources only automatically leads to adequate integration if the devices work correctly or if teachers and students have access to relevant learning resources. Ease of use and flexibility are also vital

factors because they determine the attitude to the use of technology (Petko, 2012). Instefford & Munthe (2017) argued that institutions must ensure that the population has optimal access to technology regarding equipment and network connectivity.

2.4. Redesigning of Curriculum

The evolution of online education demands a paradigm shift in the way we conceive and deliver curriculum, particularly in the context of online teaching. Redesigning the curriculum for virtual classrooms goes beyond mere adaptation; it requires thoughtful reimagining of pedagogical strategies to harness online platforms' capabilities effectively. Unlike traditional in-person classrooms, where direct interaction and physical presence shape the learning experience, the online realm introduces a dynamic interplay of digital tools and virtual environments.

Teachers used some particular types of curricula in face-to-face learning, while in online education, they had to redesign their curricula.

According to Whittle et al. (2020) in the absence of regular face-to-face interaction and observation, which most educators are used to, teachers are anticipated to develop applicable strategies to make online classes entertaining and compelling. Akimov & Malin (2020) states that redesigning feedback strategies and assessment tools is also crucial for online education.

Another study mentioned various issues from the teachers' perspectives in moving from conventional teaching to virtual learning, such as actively engaging students, encouraging them

to participate in the online learning process, and developing quality content for education. Numerous technological challenges include downloading problems, app installation difficulties, poor Internet connection, login ID issues, inaudible voice, video, etc. (Sangeeta & Tandon, 2020).

2.5. Cheating in Exam

Cheating in the exam is another big concern for educators in online education. Regular face-to-face exam teachers can personally monitor the students. Lee et al. (2020) asked their students to sign a 'Test Ethics Pledge' before the exams and used video cameras to monitor student performance during the test. Akimov & Malin (2020) assert that oral examinations have met all three criteria of validity, reliability, and fairness in their experiments in online contexts. Teachers must possess general skill sets to redesign the curriculum and teach and assess successfully online. Contexts such as Bangladesh, where pre-service training is rare, particularly in universities. It is a massive challenge for many teachers (Anwaruddin, 2012; and Rony & Awal, 2019) .

One study showed that teachers faced problems during online teaching due to a lack of technical skills, an absence of student interest, and a drop in participation. Students made many excuses, making it difficult for the teachers to identify the genuine reasons (Yusnilita, 2020).

Assessment is, no doubt, vital to any face-to-face or online learning. According to Adedoyin & Soykan (2020) online learning during this global pandemic complicates examinations as they are online. New approaches to assessment, therefore, are critical.

With online assessment, teachers have restricted control over students' work, so it is challenging for teachers to restrain cheating and ensure students complete the assessment assignments themselves.

Das (2023) mentioned that online teaching needs more communication with body language. Students may need to follow the correct meanings and messages, which may, in turn, yield poor performance or classroom participation.

He also added that to overcome this issue, the teachers must be flexible with the students concerning their assignments and deadlines. Teachers need to recognize the need to be in contact with the students to understand them and plan activities to help them accomplish their goals. Discussions, problem-solving sessions, and practical assignments can develop communication and interest in students.

He further mentioned assessment as the most essential part of the teaching and learning process both in a traditional and online medium. Sometimes, it is a source of stress for students. Because of a lack of communication between learners and teachers, the expectation of performance from students may differ. Lack of assignments, examinations, and activities online may cause difficulties in assessing learners. Richardson et al. (2019) suggest that eLearning courses had drawbacks in terms of the lack of clear and specific face-to-face interaction between students and teachers or with other students; as a result, students might lose track of the learning process, while more technical difficulties might cause distress to users.

2.6. Insights to Ensure the Effectiveness of Online Education

Despite the many challenges discussed above, COVID-19 has been considered a silver lining in the crisis for the education system (Heng, 2020). It has paved the way for the digital transformation of education and enhanced the adoption of ICT in the classroom.

Several researchers have suggested how to enhance the effectiveness of online learning. Naffi et al. (2020) suggest eight ways universities can improve equity and access to online education. They include Creating accessible materials, Choosing adequate digital technologies, Recording lectures and captioning videos and audio content, Adopting inclusive, culturally responsive teaching, Adopting a flexible approach to student participation, Ensuring financial support and equipment, Understanding student needs, and addressing systemic racism.

As researchers tend to be unwilling to participate actively in online classes, which is understandable given their remote presence, some researchers suggest tips for creating an engaging online learning environment.

For example, Fung et al. (2020) recommend maintaining student-teacher interaction and employing it to improve online learning. They suggest that teachers should start class early and use the chat function to perform regular checkpoints to check up on students. Asking students to turn on their videos can also expand their attention to the lectures or class exercises.

Another tip to keep them engaged is regularly seeking their real-time responses during online classes. To do this, teachers can use interactive platforms.

Chapter-3

3. Research Design

3.1. Introduction: This chapter focuses on methods of the study, source of data, background information of the participants and data analysis.

3.2. Method

This study used a Hermeneutic phenomenological research design, a method of textual analysis with an artful form of understanding and exposing hidden meanings (Van Manen, 2006). The procedure enhances the imperative component to show presumptions and intentions in the texts of participants' interviews that have been transcribed under a phenomenon (van Menen, 2017). Hermeneutic phenomenology seeks to describe and analyze lived experiences with a specific depth and richness to explicate lived meanings, which is its primary goal(Van Menen, 1990).In hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher analyzes the entire process of comprehending phenomena with the participants rather than just narrating the events(Creswell, 2009). This phenomenon investigates a group of people who have experienced it. Thus, a heterogeneous group of 3-4 and 10-15 people is identified (Creswell, 2009). The researcher chose 4 teachers from a private university in Dhaka, Bangladesh, who had firsthand experience with the issue as participants in this study. The interpretative meanings of the data gathered from semi-structured interviews (the semi-structured interview questions are mentioned in the appendix section at the end of the research work) are crucial to a hermeneutic phenomenological study because they allow for interpretation through the researcher's lenses and present the implications in a

trustworthy and reliable way to the participants and their performances (Riser, 1997). Hence, for these reasons, the hermeneutic phenomenological research design is implemented in this study.

The researcher contacted potential participants over the phone and selected them based on their availability and years of experience. The researcher conducted interviews via Zoom. This study desired to gain in-depth insights into the challenges teachers face in implementing online teaching at the undergraduate level and the probable solutions and prospects of online education in Bangladesh.

3.3. Background of the Participants

The four participants of this study are teachers of a private university in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The participants of my study teach at undergraduate level. They had experiences of online teaching during the pandemic. Among my participants there are two male teachers and two female teachers. The table-1 below shows the information about the participants-

Participant	Gender	Designation	Institution	Years of Experience
T1	Female	Lecturer	Brac University	5 years
T2	Male	Senior Lecturer	Brac University	15 years
T3	Female	Senior Lecturer	Brac University	13.5 years
T4	Male	Senior Lecturer	ULAB University	11 years

Table-1 : Information of the Participants.

3.4. Data Analysis

In the current study, we used the code-recode strategy to comprehend holistically lived experiences. Finally, conformability, which concerns that the “data and interpretations of the findings are not figments of the inquirer’s imagination (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392), was established using a rigorous method for analyzing the data using an audit trail, how we assigned codes and generated themes.

Table-2 demonstrates how we constructed a concept that describes the data. We analyzed data and produced a vision and, thus, the central theme –” Lack of Internet Access & Gadgets of Students Affected Online Teaching.”

3.5. Development of Themes

Lack of Internet Access & Gadgets of Students Affected Online Teaching	
However, I did have students who were not from Dhaka, and they had very conservative thoughts of being online. Some students were from remote villages or from remote areas from the town. They do not have the privilege. Only some have a laptop or a big laptop. So, there were many challenges from the students' end. I can see that my students are struggling.	Concept Struggling with gadgets Internet access problem in remote areas
There are some challenges like the teachers and students have internet connection problems and the connection could have been faster. Suddenly, everything switched to online, so there was a massive transition even among the internet service providers. So, they could not provide better service. Day by day they were giving the shared line to others. As a result, it was creating a connection problem. Students used	Unequal internet service Internet issues in remote areas

to connect to the online classes but because of poor internet connection, they lost the connections during class time which is a big issue. Students were connecting from remote places and due to poor connection they used to join late to the class and again lost the connection between class times. So, the coming and going happened every time, which hampered the class's continuity. It was a very natural problem for all of us.	
Poor network was another issue that made things more complicated. Because of poor network connection, teachers had to give repetitive instructions, and this repetition killed our time in class. Electronic gadgets were another issue. Every student is not affluent, so they must get used to having proper gadgets to attend classes. In a family, there are two children, and both of them take classes simultaneously, but they have one laptop or computer.	Complications with internet Lack of proper gadgets
Electricity was another big issue. Students attended classes remotely, and in Bangladesh, not every area is appropriately privileged with electricity.	Unequal facilities of electricity

Table-2 : Lack of Internet access & Gadgets of Students Affected Online Teaching

Like the above table-2, the researcher analyzed the data and developed the other themes of this research work. First, the researcher tried to code the entire data from the semi-structured interview(see the Appendix) and later on depending on teachers statements, opinions and experience tried to develop different themes and also tried to figure out the important words which helped to define the theme. Like the above mentioned way researchers tried to develop the challenges and probable insights mentioned by the teachers in the whole interview session.

Chapter-4

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Introduction

The phenomenon investigated in this study was Teachers' experiences of online teaching at the undergraduate level. Because most of the embedded data had emotional experiences, assigning a few adventures under a particular category was arduous. However, we can solve such dilemmas by analyzing the context and outcomes of the incidents. Data analysis resulted in four major themes of teachers' challenges, comprising several sub-themes. Along with the researchers' interpretative description, teachers' descriptions of their experiences of support are presented verbatim and with quotes in each theme. Data analysis resulted in probable solutions and prospects of online teaching from the teacher's experience.

4.2. Challenges from Teachers' Perspective

4.2.1. Lack of Internet Access & Gadgets of Students Affected Online

Teaching

The literature review of this current study mentioned various time that, during pandemic time there was a economic imbalance in the society which eventually disrupted the regular life and education. It was evident from teachers' experience that they faced many problems regarding internet access, electronic gadgets, and the cost of having devices or the internet. Throughout their interviews, they mentioned negative words such as struggling, poor internet connection, and

hampered the continuity of the class. They highlighted that the improper internet connection significantly disrupted online teaching. For example, T1 expressed in the interview:

“Some students were from remote villages or from remote areas from the town. They do not have the privilege. Only some have a laptop or a big laptop. So, there were many challenges from the students' end. I can see that my students are struggling.”

During the pandemic, all the students were not living in the city area. Instead, they live remotely in a village without a proper internet connection. Students also reported to the teachers that they needed more essential gadgets to join online classes.

Another Teacher agreed with the above information about gadgets, Internet connections, and difficulty. According to T4:

“Because of poor network connection, we had to give repetitive instructions, and this repetition killed our time in class. Electronic gadgets were another issue. Every student is not affluent, so they must get used to having proper gadgets to attend classes.”

Teachers also mentioned that not all students are from affluent families, so students face problems adapting to the situation economically. Students need a powerful internet connection and proper gadgets to join online classes. As already during the pandemic, everyone was struggling with economic issues, so at that time, buying internet packages and devices was an extra expense.

Hence, according to Teachers' experiences, the situation mentioned above was a challenge, and they state that the lack of internet access and students' gadgets affected online teaching.

4.2.2. Challenges in Online Assessment

In online teaching, educators have grappled with a formidable challenge—assessment. The shift to remote learning has heightened concerns among teachers, fostering anxiety about the integrity of examinations. With students scattered in distant locations, academic dishonesty looms large. The virtual setting amplifies uncertainties regarding cheating and collaborative efforts during exams, leaving instructors apprehensive about accurately gauging individual student performance.

In this current study, teachers mentioned handling the issue of cheating in the exam while online. They had to face challenges mentioned in their statements while in their interviews. T1 mentioned that,

“Of course, there are many challenges, like talking to someone, cheating, or helping each other while taking the exam, as it happens at home, not in the classroom. So those things are not in our hands.”

Teachers shared that, while online teaching, the most difficult challenge was assessment. As students were in a remote place, teachers were very anxious about whether their students were cheating or not or helping each other in the exam.

T2 and T3 shared similar experiences in interviews. Align with the above thought, teachers expressed that,

“For the quiz, we used to give 30 minutes in between. They would open the window, fill in the questions, and submit it, and we are still determining what they did during this time. There is a considerable chance of cheating, and they did cheat.”

Teachers mentioned that they used to take online quiz tests with minimal time allotment, which would help the teachers in their assessment, and also, in this way, there is less chance of cheating.

“When I used to visit my students' break-out room, they did their tasks correctly. When I left the breakout room, they would start gossiping in Bangla. You can monitor all the rooms simultaneously and not check who is gossiping in Bangla. This was not easy and a great challenge.”

Teachers used break-out rooms for group work where students could communicate with each other and monitor the students while doing tasks. Teachers mentioned that they used to check the break-out rooms simultaneously. However, the students still used to speak in Bangla or gossip while the teacher checked others' break-out spaces.

Hence, according to teachers' experiences and descriptions, it gives support, and it is evident that there are challenges in online assessment.

4.2.3. Prejudiced Outlook & Social Standing

The experiences of Teachers in the current study highlighted that society's outlook is a social stigma and is very responsible for a negative outlook towards online teaching. For example, T1, while narrating the incident, said,

“I think. Umm ... There is a prejudice in Bangladesh even now that there is anything online, whether that is online shopping, online teaching, anything online, anything is not in person umm... There is something wrong about it.”

In the context of the present study, educators' accounts underscore a profound societal influence that exacerbates the challenges of online teaching. Notably, a paradox emerges in Bangladesh: a society traditionally open-minded towards online shopping paradoxically harbors skepticism and negativity regarding online education. This disparity reveals a deep-seated social stigma

surrounding virtual learning, creating a significant hurdle for teachers. While the populace embraces digital commerce, the prevailing negative outlook on online education poses a unique and formidable challenge, necessitating a nuanced understanding of cultural perceptions to effectively navigate the landscape of remote teaching in this cultural context.

Align with the prejudiced outlook of the society of Bangladesh, and social standing is significant for the people. Teachers mentioned it in their experiences. T2 and T4 said that,

“Many families prioritize boys’ education rather than their girl child. Many female students told me about these types of problems. So, this kind of social stigma was another challenge for the teachers and students.”

“Social standing was another issue for students for not having the cameras on while in online classes. Some of the students come from affluent families, and some are not. So they are not used to feeling comfortable turning on the camera or showing their rooms or surroundings.”

Some female students reported to the teachers that their families are not affluent enough to have multiple gadgets or only one laptop, so their families prioritize their sons' education over their daughters'. Some female students also mentioned that they had only one laptop, and at the same time, she and her brother had classes, and only one could join the course; at that time, families gave importance to their son's education. Another issue reported by the teachers is that students are unwilling to turn on the cameras while in online classes as they feel awkward showing their room or around as they are not from affluent families.

4.2.4. Challenges in Student-Teacher Interaction & Lack of students Motivation

The current study also marked another challenge: effective student-teacher interaction and a pervasive lack of student motivation. As education transcends physical classrooms, the traditional dynamics that foster engagement face disruption. The virtual realm often hampers the organic exchange between students and teachers, creating a barrier to the interactive learning experience. Additionally, the absence of direct physical presence contributes to diminished student motivation.

As in online teaching, teachers have limited options for monitoring the students and looking out for what they are doing. In offline classes, it is easy to interact with students and motivate the shy learner. T1 and T2 mentioned these topics in their interviews. They said that,

“Students just switched on, and no response. The cameras are off, and they are doing something else. Only if they are being called will they respond during that time. Sometimes, they needed to be in formal positions to turn on the cameras. They were lying on the bed and attending the class. Whatever happened in the class, they were not bothered at all. They were attending the class. You know, this happens every time they are not learning anything.”

“Students are not there. They were not doing their 100%. They may be joining but need to focus on it. They may have opened another tab or tapped while doing the class and doing something else. So, the interaction part is complicated.”

Teachers shared that student-teacher interaction is crucial in online classes, but it can be improved if the students are motivated and keep their cameras on. After turning off the camera, what the students are doing is still being determined. If the cameras are off, the students are lying

in bed, sitting, or doing something else. In remote learning, this was a significant barrier to student interaction.

Hence, according to Teachers' experiences and descriptions, it gives support, and it is evident that the challenges in student-teacher interaction include a lack of student motivation while online teaching.

4.3. Insights from Teachers' perspective

Teachers offer invaluable insights into the complexities of online learning in this current study as they have experienced it. From the vantage point of educators, a wealth of probable insights surfaces, unveiling the nuanced challenges and opportunities within this digital paradigm. As architects of knowledge delivery, teachers become frontline observers, witnessing the dynamics of student engagement, technological hurdles, and pedagogical shifts. Exploring their perspectives promises a profound understanding of the multifaceted landscape of online education, offering a roadmap to address issues and leverage potential advantages. Depending on the challenges teachers face, they provide some insights that help them to overcome the situation.

4.3.1. Redesigning Assessment

Redesigning assessments is one of the notable insights towards online education . It is evident that online teaching differs from the classical teaching method, and different teaching methods, materials, and reviews greatly help overcome the situation. T3 expressed,

“We would declare a time and start a concise window for multiple sets of exams and different time slots. Umm..... So that is what we did. In terms of checking, once they are submitted, they check their work. There are technologies to stop

those like there are options. There is an option called locking the screen. It means students cannot open another tab or browse anything, or you can also make it mandatory to keep the camera on and the recording on. So you can see who is doing what. So again, this is not something we can do as teachers.”

Teachers also mentioned that they tried breakout rooms, debate sessions, group discussions, multiple sets of questions, and quizzes while teaching online. T2 & T1 expressed,

“In Zoom we could go to the breakout room for tasks. When I used to visit my students' break-out room, they did their tasks correctly. You can monitor all the rooms simultaneously and not check who is gossiping in Bangla.”

“However, we did our debate session. However, we needed help to do our debate session. You have to distribute students in groups to run the debate session properly, which takes much work—so arranging different kinds of tasks or activity based classes while online teaching. So for that class, we used to choose a topic and ask someone to discuss it. Some other students will talk counter about the previous student. So it was easy to go for a kind of debate. However, finally, we managed to do it. We asked two groups of students to join the debate session while mentioning the time and other instructions.”

Teachers also added that they used to ask the students different questions to determine the authenticity of their work. T2 mentioned that,

“We used to ask questions based on their presentation to help us determine whether that person worked on their presentation. We also tried different activities like reading activities, reflective journal activities, quizzes, and writing. For activities like quizzes or writing, students use goggles a lot. When four or five students are in a group and have to answer a quiz, we try to use all the Google Docs' options to reshuffle the question to make variations in the question.”

The teachers used different assessment methods while online teaching for a better experience, such as locking the screen while giving exams. Locking the screen helps the teachers assess because if the option of locking the screen is open, the students can not do anything or open any tab other than one. They also used to ask the students to turn on their cameras and record the whole online session, which was very helpful. By doing this, they can easily monitor everyone.

Teachers also used to have group discussions, debate sessions, presentations, and quizzes for assessments, as there are fewer options for cheating in these types of exams. They asked the students questions about their presentation, which helped the teachers determine whether the students did it individually or not. They also mentioned creating multiple sets of quizzes to avoid cheating.

4.3.2. Use Specific Platforms

Using a specific platform is a very helpful insight and according to the teachers it helped them to monitor everything easily. It is also helpful from student ends as well.

In online session time management is crucial, so teachers use a specific platform to introduce or upload materials, give feedback, or give tasks within shared folders. For example, T4 said,

“I uploaded the tasks in Bugs and other materials for in-classroom tasks. So first, we discussed a particular topic in the classroom and asked the students to open those uploaded materials or tasks for better understanding. I used to create folders for every student. So, whatever tasks I gave them, they would do it there in a shared Google Docs, and I used to have access to it. I could monitor who is doing what. I used to show the whole class a particular writing or answers of a student, and everyone used to give feedback about it.”

Teachers used a specific platform for uploading all the material necessary for the students. It also helped the teacher to access everyone's work simultaneously, and this platform was also helpful for organizing every student's work properly, which eventually helped the teachers evaluate the students at the end of the semester. Teachers can check the progress of the students very easily and give proper feedback to students accordingly.

4.3.3. Providing Students' with Gadgets & Financial Support

In the ever-evolving landscape of online education, universities take center stage as facilitators of student success. Teachers' narratives shed light on a commendable trend — universities stepping up to empower students. By providing essential gadgets for online classes and extending financial support to alleviate semester costs, institutions demonstrate a proactive commitment to overcoming the challenges posed by the digital shift. This strategic assistance fosters inclusivity and underscores a collaborative effort to ensure equitable access to education. For example T2 said,

“Our university provided gadgets to the students and also provided financial help with the semester fees.”

Most of the population in Bangladesh lives below the poverty line and during the pandemic the situation became worse. Many people lost their jobs. In these circumstances if the universities provide such support to the students to effectively run their education.

4.4. Discussion

The transition from traditional offline teaching methods to the virtual realm, gleaned from insightful interview data, has exposed educators to many challenges, diverging significantly from their prior experiences. This study delves into the multifaceted landscape of obstacles encountered during online teaching, providing a nuanced understanding of teachers' difficulties.

Foremost among these challenges is the issue of accessibility, with teachers highlighting a lack of internet access and unavailability of gadgets as pervasive hurdles. The digital divide becomes starkly evident as disparities in technological resources impede students' ability to participate fully in online classes. This stark reality calls for immediate attention to bridge the gap, demanding innovative solutions and collaborative efforts from educational institutions.

Online assessment is another formidable challenge as teachers grapple with concerns about the integrity and fairness of evaluations conducted in virtual spaces. The absence of physical monitoring raises apprehensions about academic dishonesty, compelling a reevaluation of assessment methodologies to ensure reliability and authenticity. To prevent cheating in exams in online teaching, redesigning assessments is crucial.

The study also unravels the thread of prejudiced outlooks and diminished interaction, painting a vivid picture of the interpersonal challenges in the virtual classroom. Teachers lament the reduced student-teacher interaction, impacting the quality of the learning experience.

However, amidst these challenges, glimmers of hope and pragmatic solutions emerge. The study advocates for redesigning assessments, emphasizing the need for creative evaluation methods tailored to the virtual setting. Specific platforms are proposed as tools to enhance the online teaching experience, promoting a more interactive and collaborative learning environment. Furthermore, providing gadgets and financial support is crucial to mitigating the digital divide, ensuring all students have equal access to the tools required for successful online learning.

According to this contemporary study, the teachers said that students struggle with the lack of internet access and the need for proper gadgets. The scenario is very diverse in both poor and developing countries. Jalli (2020) argues that a significant portion of the Southeast Asian population still needs access to electronic devices and the Internet. Bhuiyan et al. (2020) report that teachers and students in rural Bangladesh have limited or poor access to the Internet. Broom (2020) showed his concern that the costs of internet data packages are challenging for students and teachers in many developing countries. Additionally, many other studies also reported the adverse effects of unstable internet connections across different contexts in Cameroon, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Afghanistan, and the Philippines (Chiatoh & Chia, 2020; Hakim, 2020; Lukas & Yunus, 2021; Nashir & Laili, 2021; Rahim & S. C, 2020; Tarrayo et al., 2021) and in Bangladesh (Khan et al., 2021; Parvej et al., 2021). Both the broadband internet service providers and the mobile phone companies in Bangladesh failed to upgrade their networks and ensure better services for their subscribers during the pandemic (Alhumaid et al., 2020).

The current study also mentioned that online teaching teachers faced pressure to design materials and tasks for class, and teachers said another challenge of assessments while online teaching, which is closely related to the challenge mentioned above. Akimov Malin (2020) states that redesigning feedback strategies and assessment tools is crucial for online education. Lee et al. (2020) asked their students to sign a 'Test Ethics Pledge' before the exams and used video cameras to monitor student performance during the test. Akimov and Malin (2020) assert that oral examinations have met all three criteria of validity, reliability, and fairness in their experiments in online contexts. Teachers must possess general skill sets to redesign the curriculum and teach and assess successfully online. Suggested contexts include Bangladesh,

where pre-service training is rare, particularly in universities. It is a massive challenge for many teachers (Anwaruddin, 2012; Rony & Awal, 2019).

A recent study talks about the lack of student-teacher interaction and motivation. According to Whittle et al. (2020), in the absence of regular face-to-face interaction and observance, which most educators are used to, teachers are expected to devise practical strategies to make online classes engaging and effective. Das (2023) mentioned that online teaching needs more communication with body language. Students may need to follow the correct meanings and messages, which may, in turn, yield poor performance or classroom participation.

Teachers shared their experiences about the assessment in online education, and the literature review also agrees with the statement. Assessment is, no doubt, vital to any face-to-face or online learning. According to Adedoyin (2020) online learning during this global pandemic makes the evaluation more complex as it needs to be online. New techniques for assessment, such as the ones before, are critical.

With online assessment, teachers have restrained control over students' work, so it is difficult for teachers to regulate cheating and ensure that students complete the evaluation tasks by themselves.

Lack of student-teacher interaction and motivation is another crucial point raised by the teachers in the current study. Das (2023) mentioned that online teaching needs more communication with body language. Students may need to follow the correct meanings and messages, which may, in turn, yield poor performance or classroom participation. From the data in this current study, researchers also found a new form of the challenge of online education, which is a negative

perspective for online education, and very interestingly, in the literature review, we could not find such a mention of attitude towards online education.

In this study, teachers mentioned probable insights into the challenges they encountered. According to the data, this includes redesigning assessments, academic, professional, and financial support, using specific platforms, and increasing awareness. The literature reviews also show similar ideas. Dhawan (2020) discusses several solutions to problems associated with online education. The answers may include pre-recording video lessons or lectures; humanizing the learning process by making it more interesting, dynamic, and interactive; creating forums for communication using social media and other digital platforms; continuously improving the quality of the online courses; allowing students to ask questions and provide feedback; and promoting collaborative learning, project-based learning, and group-based learning.

As students tend to be unwilling to participate actively in online classes, which is understandable given their remote presence, some researchers suggest tips for creating an engaging online learning environment. For example, Fung et al. (2020) suggest strengthening student-teacher interaction and operating it to enhance online learning. They suggest that teachers should start class early and use the chart procedure to conduct regular checkpoints to check up on students. Asking students to turn on their videos can also improve their attention to the lectures or class activities. Another suggestion to keep them engaged is regularly seeking their real-time responses during online classes. To do this, teachers can use interactive platforms.

The overall findings and discussions of the current study imply that the challenges and probable insights teachers expressed are similar to the literature review. The literature review mentions challenges like access, gadget cost, exam cheating, and curriculum redesign. One challenge cited

by the teachers in the current study differs from the literature review: the prejudiced outlook and social standing. This new finding could be very impactful for future research in the Bangladeshi socio-economic context.

Chapter-5

5. Conclusion

The culmination of this research underscores the multifaceted challenges teachers encounter in the transition to online education in Bangladesh. These challenges, ranging from limited internet access and gadget availability to the intricacies of online assessments and the vital need for sustaining student-teacher interaction and motivation, encapsulate educators' diverse hurdles in this transformative journey. The synthesis of the literature review and the current study's findings converge on several key strategies that hold promise in addressing these challenges effectively.

The challenges laid bare in this research paint a comprehensive picture of the hurdles teachers grapple with in the online teaching landscape. The digital divide, a persistent issue in many developing nations, takes center stage as limited internet access and gadget availability hinder the seamless transition to online education. Additionally, the complexities of online assessments pose a unique set of challenges, requiring innovative solutions to ensure fair and practical evaluation. Perhaps equally crucial is the nuanced challenge of maintaining meaningful student-teacher interaction and motivation in the virtual realm.

The literature review and the current study converge on the significance of several interventions to address these challenges. Redesigning estimates to allocate resources effectively, providing academic and financial support to educators and students, utilizing specific online platforms tailored to the educational context, and enhancing awareness about the nuances of online education emerge as pivotal strategies. This alignment reinforces the robustness of the identified

solutions and suggests a consensus in the scholarly discourse on the potential avenues for mitigating the challenges posed by online teaching.

Notably, the emergence of a negative perspective towards online education, an aspect not extensively discussed in existing literature, adds a layer of complexity to the narrative. The above signals the need for a more comprehensive understanding of attitudes toward online education, recognizing that perceptions are crucial in successfully implementing educational policy. Exploring and addressing these negative perspectives becomes imperative to foster a more positive and receptive environment for online education initiatives.

Despite the formidable challenges outlined, there is a notable undercurrent of optimism among teachers regarding the potential of online education. Educators recognize its role in promoting distance learning and potentially reducing institutional costs and acknowledge online education's transformative power. This optimism provides a glimmer of hope amidst the challenges, indicating that, with concerted efforts and strategic interventions, we can harness online education as a powerful tool for advancing educational goals.

As the academic landscape continues to develop, the path forward involves a concerted effort toward implementing the suggested insights and embracing the opportunities presented by online education, for acceptance requires collaborative action from educational institutions, policymakers, and educators. Redesigning estimates, providing targeted support, leveraging

appropriate platforms, and cultivating a positive attitude toward online education should be at the forefront of this collective effort. The journey towards a more resilient and inclusive educational landscape in Bangladesh demands adaptability, innovation, and a steadfast commitment to harnessing the potential of online education for the benefit of students and educators alike. In this endeavor, the findings of this research serve as a guidepost, offering insights to inform strategic decisions and shape the future trajectory of education in the digital age.

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Appendix

Semi-Structured Questions for Teachers

(The information collected will be kept confidential)

Name:

Designation:

Institution:

Years of teaching experience:

1. Did you face any challenges while implementing online teaching at undergraduate level?
2. What kind of problems did teachers encounter while giving tasks to students in online teaching?
3. Did teachers face any challenges while instructing students in online teaching?
4. Were there any challenges while doing testing and assessment in online teaching?
5. What are the insights and prospects of online education in Bangladesh?

