

EXAMINATION CULTURE IN BANGLADESH: IMPACT ON STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND SOCIETY

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my/our own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
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.
4. I/We have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Approval

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Ethics Statement

This research was done in agreement with recognized ethical standards in the entire course of the research. Prior to the data collection, ethical approval was provided by the authorities of the concerned institutions. The purpose and procedures and potential outcomes of the study were clearly explained to all the participants. In addition to the parents or guardians of minors, all participants gave their informed consent.

The privacy and confidentiality of the participants were intact completely. The anonymity of all information gathered in the form of questionnaires, interviews, and observations was ensured and kept in a secure place. The results were presented in a pooled manner in such a way that one person was not identified. Only authorized researchers were able to access the data.

The study was entirely voluntary and all the participants had equal chances of participating in the study despite their background or position. The participants were not prohibited to drop out of the study and they were not subjected to any penalty. Efforts were put towards reducing any risk or discomfort and any problems arising in the course of the research were dealt with in a respectful and quick manner.

It was thoroughly and honestly carried out and reported in terms of study findings, limitations, and potential biases. The study was also meant to make a positive contribution to the educational practice without compromising the ethical standards and safeguarding the well-being of all the participants.

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Abstract

The culture of examinations has long embedded in the education system in Bangladesh. Although examinations were first meant to measure the learning process, for a long time getting a good score in the examination become the primary aim of teaching and learning in the classroom. In Bangladesh context, the examinations, particularly the high-stakes examinations have a profound impact on teaching, learning, and society as a whole. This study explores the impact of this culture of examination on students, teachers and the society as a whole.

Specifically, this study explores how examination-based education affects the learning behavior, motivation and psychological well-being of students, teaching to the test and the impact on the society. The study further investigates the role of family expectations and social pressure in strengthening exam dependence and advancing inequality in education. The study was conducted using the qualitative approach, taking the form of in-depth interviews with teachers, students and parents. This approach allowed me to document and present the experiences of the participants under the pressure of the exam and how they would see the learning and teaching under the exam-based system.

The findings reveal that the high focus on examinations promotes memorization as opposed to in-depth knowledge and critical thinking. Guidebooks, coaching notes and model answers are used by students as a means of delivering good results and this limits creativity and independent thinking. The constant exam stress has adverse effects on the mental health of students, which causes stress, anxiety, emotional burnout, and low motivation to study. There is also pressure on

teachers to give high performance in exams, which do not give them a chance to implement creative and student-centered teaching techniques. Furthermore, the curriculum is highly examination based and there is no room to develop skills and have holistic learning. The study also shows that the culture of exam has broader social implications since academic success associates closely with social status and family anticipations. It puts pressure on the students and parents and enhances inequality by prevalence of private coaching. The study concludes that excessive dependence on examinations restricts the real meaning of education and there is need to reform the assessment systems to encourage meaningful learning, creativity, and student wellbeing.

KEY WORDS: Learning Process, Curriculum, Perceive, Mental Health, Prevalence, High Performance, Memorization, Psychological Wellbeing

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The Examination Culture in Bangladesh: Influencing Students, Instructors, and Society

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Education is a long-standing phenomenon in Bangladesh, and it has been regarded as a key avenue of self-enhancement and to build a successful nation. Since the beginning of the independence until now, the government has focused on education as a poverty eradication and human capital strategy. With such aspirations an exam focused culture of examination has taken root and dominated the entire system of education. The current education system based on results of examinations is not only the way of assessment in this culture, but is regarded as the ultimate goal of education, the measure of intelligence, and the best indicator of future success. This system of education is not new, as it was used during the British colonial era of government, where formal tests were used to appraise administrative effectiveness and academic compliance. “Bangladesh’s current public examination system illustrated through the SSC English exam—is a high-stakes, socially influential system that is deeply flawed in design and practice: although the national curriculum promotes communicative language skills, the exam mainly tests memorization, reading, and writing while ignoring speaking and listening, leading to weak validity” (Sultana,2018).

This colonialist past has evolved with the time, into a system where one is judged by success not by the level of knowledge but the marks achieved. This framework found its way to

post-independence Bangladesh where standardized exams such as the Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE), the Junior School Certificate (JSC), the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) became the centers of the educational process.

The life of Bangladeshi students today is based on such exams. At a tender age, children are introduced with the belief that they and their future can be valued according to their grades and results. Instructors structure their lessons and courses in a way so that students can achieve high grades instead of having real understanding, and the parents often encourage this trend by giving credits to the test scores. As a result, the classrooms have turned into a place of intellectual exploration and a place of studying how to perform in exams. This has created a generation of students who are good in memorization and repetition of knowledge but they lack the ability to think critically, creatively and solve problems in the real world. “The exam encourages rote learning and test-focused teaching rather than real skill development the system fails to accurately measure students’ actual competencies or support the educational goals it claims to uphold” (Sulatana, 2018).

This focus on exams has had a number of impacts on the educational system, both in the way the curriculum is dealt with and in teaching styles, student motivation as well as societal ideals. The system of learning in Bangladesh is now organized on the basis of an assessment system that encourages learning without comprehension, memorization and repetition, rather than enquiry, collaboration and originality. This culture has become deeply established over the years to the extent that it has influenced the way schools operate as well as the way the society perceives intelligence and achievement.

1.2 the impact of Exam Culture on Educational Process

Bangladesh examination culture has greatly influenced the behavior and motivation of students including that of instructors and the society in general. To the students, learning has been redefined by the constant attention that is given to the tests. Students are almost judged completely on grades and scores and that makes students concentrate on memorizing rather than understanding. To most students, education is seen as a path of barriers to be overcome to make some progress in the future, and not as a journey to intellectual advancement. This way of thinking is detrimental to actual enquiry and critical thinking as students are taught how to respond to questions in a specific manner as opposed to learning to think on their own. A pervasive exam culture, particularly high-stakes examinations distort the educational process by reducing learning process as students concentrate on memorization and exam-taking strategies instead of deep understanding. This test-centric system stresses out and strains students, causes the motives to study for the good scores themselves and even elevate educational inequality (Nguyen & Cho,2022).

There is also the psychological impact of this culture which is problematic. At a very tender age, students are put under an enormous pressure to perform well, which in many cases comes at the cost of their mental and emotional health. Fear of exams has led to high levels of stress and lack of motivation and even depression or burnout in certain situations. Achieving and missing marks in examinations get strongly connected to the self-esteem of a student and there is hardly any chance of individual talents and other forms of intelligence. More so, the grading system creates a very competitive atmosphere whereby teamwork and innovation are often compromised to win over the competition.

The effects of this society affect the teachers as well as the test results of students usually affect their career assessment and organizational status. This compels most of the teachers to narrow down their teaching strategies where the main emphasis is laid on exam techniques, question format, and model answers instead of engaging and student-directed learning. Professional educationalists occasionally lose the pleasure of teaching and creativity in pedagogy due to the need to teach to the test. This eventually constrains the teacher to being a machine educator instead of a guide to the students in the realization of intellectual growth and awareness of the critical aspect of life.

The most affected area will be the curriculum. Despite the fact that Bangladesh has been taking a step to revise the lesson plans, the design remains exam oriented. Textbooks are structured so that what is tested is what is done and not what is important and leaves very little room to be creative, solve problems and practice. Other subjects such as arts, physical education and moral are not included since they are considered to be of no importance to high stakes tests. Consequently, an entire generation of students is highly knowledgeable in theory, but has overlooked very important areas of life, like communication and collaboration, flexibility, and critical thinking.

The consequences are not limited to schools but also to the society. Intelligence, pride and social position are tied to good scores by families. Due to this, children are always under pressure because their parents are in a constant push with them to perform better which often leads to psychological turmoil. “Higher levels of exam anxiety are also associated with lower student wellbeing and an elevated risk of poor mental health. One study found, with 96.6% reliability, that highly exam anxious students met the criteria to be diagnosed with a clinical anxiety

disorder. Furthermore, in a study of adolescent suicide in England over a sixteen-month period in 2014-15, Coroner's reports specifically cited exam pressures as a specific cause in 15% of Cases" (Putwain ,2020). The obsessive culture in society about the outcome of the tests has led to the growth of coaching centers and handbook companies, commercializing education. Poorer students are disadvantaged because richer families can afford these resources, which further widens the gap in access to quality education. In addition, vocational and technical education is being sidelined by putting more emphasis on exam results and thus limiting opportunities to those who are not just academically accomplished.

Moreover, the culture of examination establishes a loop where education achievement is measured by only test scores but not by the general development of students. The system promotes imitation and memorization rather than originality and invention. It may give high pass rates and quantitative results but it does not create critical thinking, problem solving and social responsibility. The long-term effects of this mismatch on national development include the fact that an exam-obsessed generation will not be able to satisfy the demands of an ever-evolving global economy where flexibility, critical thinking and creativity are the most important qualities.

1.3 The purpose and the significance of the study

The primary goal of the given work is to explore the impact that the culture of exams in Bangladesh has on the learning behavior of students, the approaches used by instructors in their work, the curriculum structure, and some of the broader social perceptions of the learning process. Through intense research on these interconnections, the study aims to find out the hidden implications of an exam-based education system and introduce possible solutions to

change it. One of them is to identify the psychological and intellectual impacts of tests on students. The research focuses on providing the answer to the question whether exam-based learning encourages genuine learning or storing information primarily. It shall also examine the manner in which students cope with the psychological weight of periodic exams and whether they are acquiring valuable life skills other than academic grades.

The other purpose is to explore the use of this exam-based method by teachers. The research will examine the issue of a constraint on teachers by the test requirements or whether they have the room to teach creatively. Their perceptions are important in establishing the extent to which the system encourages or demoralizes innovative education. The curricular aspects will be given more focus. The research aims to find out whether the national curriculum promotes holistic learning or whether it is constrained by the needs of the tests. It will also examine the question of whether the current processes of assessment are consistent with the goals of the National Education Policy, which emphasizes critical thinking, creativity, and lifelong learning.

In addition to the educational setting, the research will examine the way in which the culture of examination transmits to the societal perceptions and inequalities. The significance of the work is that it will help be more aware of the role of families, communities, and institutions in the cycle of test fixation and how it impacts access to educational opportunities at different socioeconomic classes. It is capable of informing representatives of the urgent necessity to reconsider the assessment processes based on the importance of focusing on outcomes of overreliance on tests. The current highly test-based system could be substituted with continuous and competency-based evaluation systems which promote learning with focus on skills, understanding, and innovation rather than rote memorization. This research can challenge

teachers to introduce alternative pedagogical practices that can be used to combine the test preparation with the practical learning.

On a bigger picture, the study contributes to the goal of developing a caring and modernized education system in Bangladesh one that does not only equip students to pass examinations but also to be able to think, solve problems and make a difference in the society. The results will be used to initiate a debate on the process of moving away an exam-based intensive system to one that promotes inquiry, creativity, and lifelong learning.

1.4 Research Objectives

The objective of this work is to critically examine the implications of the examination culture on the students, teachers, curriculum, and society in general in Bangladesh. The objectives of the study in particular are to achieve the following:

1. To examine the role of the examination culture in promoting memorization of students rather than sound comprehension and critical thinking.
2. To investigate the effects of constant exam stress on the mental well-being of the students, motivation, and interest in the learning process.
3. In order to understand the way exam-based assessment influences lessons delivered by teachers, resulting in the implementation of syllabus coverage, template solutions, and test preparation instead of creative and student-centered education.
4. To examine the role that academic performance and grades play in causing student disengagement, low self-esteem, and unhealthy competitions in classrooms.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How does the examination culture of Bangladesh influences students, teachers as well as the larger societal conceptions of education?
2. How does the examination-oriented system influence students' learning practices, particularly by encouraging memorization at the expense of critical understanding?
3. How does constant exam pressure influence student's motivation, mental wellbeing and attitudes towards learning?
4. What are some of the changes in evaluation practices that would minimize exam anxiety and lead to meaningful, holistic learning?

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Exams being the main emphasis of educational system

High stakes exams rule not only on the assessment but even the teaching learning process. public exams, especially English, have turned into ritualistic proceedings that are religiously followed just because of their social, institutional and cultural significance. As a consequence, the objectives of the curriculum, teaching methods in the classroom and students' learning habits are all produced concerning what is going to be tested on, rather than more

encompassing educational goals such as critical thinking or communicative power (Chowdhury & Alam, 2018).

High-stakes tests mediate students' experiences and expectations in the Bangladeshi education system, found that students prioritize performance on high-stakes testing over more general language learning goals as they promote academic advancement as well as social mobility; reinforcing an education system where exams are more important rather than holistic learning remain central to what is considered educational practice (Amin, 2021).

Schools in Bangladesh are much more than instruments through which to assess student progress. The high-stakes test acquires such weight that it becomes the measure of success, driving how teachers teach, how parents measure accomplishment and how students experience schooling. With all the attention and effort focused on getting high scores, learning is overshadowed by test prep, while important goals like inquisitiveness or emotional health or a sense of meaning get sidelined. Such that the education system becomes overburdened by exam-centrism, shaping parents' and teachers' priorities and what it means to achieve (Hardy et al, 2025).

Intensive public testing at the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) level with high stakes highly influences classroom teaching in that teachers are now motivated to teach students to pass exams instead of aiming at more general educational outcomes, which further enhances an education system where high school grades have become the ultimate determinant of success (Jamila and Kabir, 2020).

The high stakes examination system in Bangladesh is much more than just an assessment of student knowledge, but it determines the whole education system. The importance of exams

in terms of its academic and social implications means that teachers, for instance, focus less on what they teach but rather how to prepare or perform in the exam inducing them to leave aside broader teaching objectives such as creativity, critical thinking and real language use. Exam orientedness affects curriculum delivery, classrooms practices and attitudes toward learning and tests are considered to be the determinant of educational success. The education system is therefore narrowed to being exam focused rather than nurturing meaningful comprehensive learning (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018).

Lawyers and Scanlon (1969), stated that Examination has become a very crucial part in education. Because accessibility to education has increased, also policies fostering equality of opportunities are being established. Examination has become an important aspect and starting point for student as through this way more students are gaining access to secondary and higher secondary education. As nowadays for students, to admit into higher education and entry in professional fields majorly depends on examination results and that's why examination now serves not only as a tool for assessment but also as a social advancement indicator. But unfortunately, the problem is that when exams become the primary focus of education, the objectives ,instructions of education may become overly dependent on exam content as a result it can reduce the ability of critical thinking,the power of creativity of students .They also added that examination may play a vital role in school and colleges but access attention on exam focused system brings stress and demotivation to students as it affects students mental health and stability.

The culture of examination and testing are widely used in education system, specifically among developing countries. They are using examination as methods not only for assessing process but also it has been using to control and enhance education quality. Also, when exams become the

main goal of education then teaching curriculum, also teaching, learning process and especially students behaviour frequently get centered on the exam marks rather than learning objectives. Exam emphasis might be effective when it is well designed and consistent with learning objectives. However this additionally becomes problematic because if the process is restricted then education may devolve towards teaching tests losing learner objectives (Heyneman & Ransom, 1990).

Acar (2019) argued that there are so many educational systems that priorities exams having the main purpose on high scores rather than emphasizing on teaching materials and process. Also exam based learning may cause to a strong emphasis on memorization and only for passing tests rather than actual understanding and thinking deeply of the topic and that is it can lead a negative impact on students because it may limit the curriculum also most importantly can reduce the creativity and critical analysis of students. The article also pointed out that this system should be shifted to the process where the main focus will be on the learning process and materials that can encourage students for deeper thinking and analyzing. Efu (2019) explores that Examination has become the main emphasis or primary approach of assessing what students have learned. He addresses this process as a summative method that is meant to ensure accuracy rather than encouraging learning and it clearly shows the notion that the current process of education is significantly exam focused that highlights only the outcome over actual learning.

“Examinations are conducted in most countries of the world and have been considered to play a significant role in determining what goes on in the classroom in terms of 'what' and 'how' teachers teach, and students learn’, Though the objectives of examinations are not to teach students a particular discipline, examinations motivate learners to master things with greater importance and emphasis” (Rahman, 2018).

2.2 The consequences of examination system on student

According to George (2024), exam-season stress is an international epidemic, and it is marked by the fact that excessive pressure, social demands, and excessive focus on scores among students are the main factors that create anxiety and depression, which even lead to suicide in various countries. This constant stress does not only harm the well-being of the students but it also compromises their ability to engage in deep learning since they tend to concentrate in memorization and short-term performance instead of learning and skill acquisition.

The conventional examination-based systems might limit effective learning, which is why comprehensive learning changes necessitating a greater emphasis on mental health and evaluation alternatives to academic performance should be considered. In the urban high school environment, cognitive and emotional impairments, including poor concentration, emotional consumption, sleep disorders, and poor welfare are highly associated with the adverse outcomes of mental health deterioration in adolescents, including reduced learning efficiency and academic involvement (Mahaq & Okunola, 2025).

The heavy exam based and teacher-centered education systems tend to damage cognitive and psychological abilities of students by focusing on rote learning, memorization, standardized tests, such education systems do not allow students to deepen their understanding, think critically,

become creative, and learn independently thereby limiting genuine learning and cognitive development (Ghaleb, 2024).

Academic stress with the factors like homework overload, persistence of assessment, inability to balance between academic and personal life has great negative impacts on the mental health in the form of anxiety, sleep disorders, exhaustion, and chronic. Such stress, in addition to compromising well-being, is viewed by many students as a way of worsening their performance in school and their learning generally. Though there are those respondents who argue that stress can at times make one more focused and better in a task, most of them highlight that long-term or severe stress does not lead to more focus, motivation and the ability to engage deeply into learning material, indicating that institutional interventions, such as lessening assessment burden, redesigning evaluation processes and offering psychosocial support, allow to create conditions that are conducive to student mental health as well as learning (Perez Jorge et al, 2025).

Putwain (2020) demonstrates that excessive exam anxiety in children and the young population relates strongly to poor performance in exams not due to reduced ability, but because of impaired cognitive resources (such as memory, attention, and information processing) by anxiety. Another point that he makes is that the pressures of the exams and their anxiety can hamper actual learning. Under the exam conditions students are less likely to recall the information correctly and the reliability of exam scores as reflectors of the knowledge or the ability of student diminishes. Also, the stress and tension associated with examinations can worsen student well-being, depletion of motivation and long-term learning engagement. According to Sultana (2019), the high-stakes SSC English exam appears to have exerted a significant influence on classroom teaching and learning in Bangladesh where Ss are taught and approach the language with the aim of qualifying this test; which has led both teachers and Ss to give less priority not

just to language learning but even in valuing themselves if they dissociate their performance based on tests from extralinguistic factors.

English language testing in Bangladesh suggests that high-stakes public examination-based assessment significantly influences what and how learners learn, with the result that teachers end up teaching and learners learning mostly around exam-oriented tasks, practices, and memorization rather than meaningful language use. The strong washback effect of these tests can lead to teaching in accordance with test demands and further consolidating the education system where examination determines students' success (Khan, in Sultana et al., 2021).

When exam systems emphasize performance under pressure, they constitute a danger to true learning and fair evaluation of capability. Stress, anxiety and depression among students are high with exam related stressors along with time pressures, competition and classroom climate are some of the most common academic stressing factors found among students in Bangladesh and other similar settings. The academic system structure can penetrate the minds of the students, disrupting their cognitive and emotional abilities leading to poor learning experience and poor academic performance. (Arusha & Biswas, 2020). English language testing at the secondary level in Bangladesh is misaligned with curriculum goals and as a result teachers and learners press to prepare students for testing through rote learning, instead of any actual understanding of the language; because tests are made as per exam-related contents, it makes reinforce education system where success is defined more on examination performance than a larger educational purview (Rahman & Khan, 2021).

The prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress were alarmingly high among university entrance exam-bound Bangladeshi students with 57.7% confirming that they had mild to severe cases of depression, 61.4% that they experienced anxiety and 44.6% that they experienced stress

symptoms). According to the author, a high level of academic pressure and intense competition in the exam system end-of-entry add to this mental health load, and therefore, probably disables students in their concentration, memory and productive learning (Rabby et al, 2023).

According to Wall (2005), although high stakes examinations are generally initiated by a teacher with the aim of bringing about change in the curriculum, in reality, they tend to reverse the teaching methods in classrooms and in the long run end up undermining the actual student learning. In the book, it is revealed that such examinations influence teacher behavior, lesson content, and pedagogy by making educators and students to narrow their viewpoint towards teaching to the test instead of learning profoundly, critically, or by developing holistic competencies. The washback effect of high-stakes testing degrades the quality of learning since what is taught and learnt is determined by what the exam expects from a student rather than what he knows and understands.

The college stress on examinations is very high and it is influenced by factors that include lack of preparation, poor studying habits, high academic work load, and fear of failing among other factors. This analysis associated stress is strongly associated with the anxiety before and during examinations, which consequently may negatively impact on academic performance and general academic success (Kumari and Jain, 2014).

Stress and test anxiety in children affect not only their performance on a particular test but also their learning and psychological health in general. It emphasizes the fact that to a group of students, exams due to their high stakes and the stress they entail, act as an obstacle in expressing their actual academic proficiency and can even result in problems in other areas of life such as self-esteem, motivation, relationships, mental health (Putwain, 2008).

2.3 The influence of exam driven education system on teaching

The current Higher Secondary English examination system in Bangladesh has a severe implication on teaching and learning process, since it focuses assessment on learners near entirely on writing and a small importance to reading, listening and speaking. Although a language should encompass all four skills listening, speaking, reading, writing. Consequently, educators structure their teaching and the subject matter around what is on the test and students are conditioned to write and read exam relevant materials. As a result, teaching practice becomes very limited, and the curriculum becomes no longer aligned with classroom practice (Rahman,2018). High-stakes English exams in Bangladesh dominate teaching and learning, leading teachers and students to focus on test preparation and memorization, making exam performance the primary measure of educational success (Islam et al., 2021).

The washback of high stakes public English exams in Bangladesh by making speaking and listening optional but putting much emphasis on writing/reading generates a major negative washback on teaching. The exams put pressure on teachers to focus teaching on the exam material, be it on teaching the general curricular outcomes intended by teaching English to learners, such as communicative competence; therefore, teaching content, teaching methods and teaching practice become examination oriented and not aimed at teaching English to learners more holistically (Rahman et al, 2019).

High stakes testing in Bangladeshi schools intensely influences not only student behavior but the teaching process and the education system overall. By establishing test outcomes as the major indicator of achievement, exam-oriented culture promotes individual tutoring and learning based

on memorization and that undermines meaningful teaching and learning and distracts the greater aim of education such as critical thinking, holistic skills development or equal access to good teaching. (Hardy et al, 2025).

In a recently government installed system, teaching in most primary schools in Bangladesh is quite teacher concentrated, with little or no active student involvement, few practical experiments, discussions, and less use of assessment to learning practices. Formal assessment activities are low which puts off inquiry based/student centered instructional teaching and promotes rote based teaching. Consequently, the quality of teaching is low, resources are minimal, classes are too big, teachers are not trained enough and there is no follow up assessment which all together make teaching and learning of the science superficial and passive instead of interactive and development oriented (Ahmed et al, 2021).

In Exam focused and teacher centered educative systems, due to their emphasis on testing over a broad based learning goals, have a great effect in distorting the various teaching practices, they lead to teaching in terms of rote based, memorization oriented teaching, instead of teaching that gives focus to the development of critical thinking, creativity or an in-depth understanding; this has the effect that teaching has become exam focused since inflexible teaching standards are placed over educative development (Ghaleb, 2024).

In Bangladesh, the approach to formative assessment, namely, School-Based Assessment (SBA), in secondary schools is associated with serious problems, such as, small training and orientation of teachers to SBA, negative attitudes, heavy workload, large classes, and comprehensive syllabus. Due to the fact that SBA marks are not scored in public exams, it is occasionally overlooked or not well trained and therefore teaching is still largely focused on traditional

summative exams instead of the ongoing formative assessment, which restricts the ability to develop a holistic and learner-centered pedagogy (Hossain & Ferdous, 2021).

Where school assessment climates are based upon summative, exam oriented assessment, teachers are frequently motivated to conform their assessment practices in accordance with said demands, despite them contradicting their own conceptions of good teaching; and thus, many teachers turn to teaching to the test, replacing formative assessment with summative assessment and student centered assessment with exam oriented assessment which may result in academic dishonesty, undue pressures on students and teachers, and reduced chances of deeper learning and lifelong reflective practice (Asamoah et al., 2024).

Even though national secondary level English examination in Bangladesh does not include listening or speaking, though has a washback effect of focusing on reading and writing, the effect on teachers to emphasize exam relevant content in their pedagogy causes the desired communicative language curriculum to be distorted. Meanwhile, the authors demonstrate that the impact of this exam pressure on teachers is not always about mere victims, teachers can implement professional agency and combine test preparation activities with communicative and learner-centered approaches to achieve curricular objectives and manage the pressure of accountability (Ali and Hamid, 2023).

Although the implementation of formative assessment in Bangladesh under the new curriculum is a positive move towards the elimination of exam-based evaluation, the reality on the ground is that implementation is still unequal with many teachers reporting to have little knowledge, poor institutional support and poor training to implement formative assessment in the daily teaching. Consequently, although the overall attitude towards formative assessment is rather positive, the absence of specific guidelines, the lack of resources, and the disruption of effective feedback

limits the use of this teaching method, implying that the classical examination-focused approach to teaching continues to prevail in the classroom (Iqbal et al., 2024).

In recent education system, when the assessment practices, particularly summative, exam focused, tend to prevail, they do not contribute to effective teaching and learning; the use of regular formative assessment, as an alternative, may provide information and thus improve teaching practices, enabling instructors to modify the pedagogy according to the needs of students but not just teaching to test (Paul et al., 2016).

2.4 Exam culture and its impact on shaping social life

According to the article by De Gruyter Brill (2020), academic stress, especially exam stress and excessive coursework, has a great influence on the social life of students. In the study which was done on undergraduate students in Ghana it was established that the higher the level of stress related to academics the lesser the level of satisfaction in social interactions, involvement in social activity and the general social well-being. It is a fact that students who are under pressure due to exams are prone to anxiety and tension, which restricts their capacity to sustain friendships, taking part in social events, and having free time. The authors emphasize that in the absence of the proper support of the family, peers, or institutional counseling services, this stress may adversely affect academic achievements, as well as the quality of the social life of students, which indicates the close connection between academic requirements and social health.

The research involving medical students' perception on stress indicates that academic pressures such as exams and heavy coursework have a great impact on the social life and leisure of the

students. Students cited social isolation, emotional exhaustion and guilt during periods of high levels of stress when they were unable to devote time with friends or participate in recreational activities due to amount of time they had to spend studying. Such limitation of social interaction decreased the chances of relaxation and social support and ultimately decreased the general well-being and helped form a feeling of imbalance between academic and personal life (Foster et al., 2019).

Emotional intelligence of tertiary level students with higher emotional intelligence is connected to reduced perceived academic stress and that social support provided by family, friends or significant others is a key mediator of this relationship. The students who had better social support had lower academic stress even in high-stress scenarios in their preparation of an intensive course or examination, which, in its turn, facilitates preserving the social well-being and connectedness of the person. This demonstrates the importance of social relationships in mitigating the adverse impact of academic requirements on the social life of students (García et al., 2023).

High stress and anxiety and depression are reported among undergraduate students with stress requirements and exam stress, implies detachment of overall well-being which can disrupt social functioning as stress and depression increase, students are more susceptible to psychological distress, which probably diminishes ability or desire to interact socially and social life (Hossain, 2025).

Family, peer or significant other Social support entails a strong association with academic stress in that, students with perceived high levels of social support show lower levels of academic stress. This indicates that good social support can mitigate the adverse impact of academic

demands which help to protect an individual against stress, hence, ensuring their social well-being, social relations, and overall quality of life despite exams (Hidayat, 2025).

The students who have a higher perceived social support of family, peers or friends and those who have academic resilience are those who have been sampled; among them, those who have more perceived social support and those who have less supportive people. This implies that, social support is a security factor: when students have proper social support, their stress load due to academic demands is made less and that probably helps in sustaining their social well-being, interpersonal relationships and general quality of social life even in their extreme academic seasons (Basith et al, 2025).

The results indicate that Bangladesh learning is highly influenced by the exam-oriented nature of education system, which affects learning, cognition and well-being of students. Since childhood, students are trained in memorizing and learning strategies in exams, being deprived of learning anything and relating knowledge to real-life practices. Learning is directional and focused on high grades, guidebooks, coaching notes as well as model answers are used instead of textual interactions. Such a system smothers creativity, thinking independently and intellectual interest and promotes fear, anxiety and emotional stress. Students continuously judge their own worthiness by their grades, and high performers are in constant stress to keep their performance high, which also causes a psychological pressure on a large scale. The teachers too are put in a tight spot where they are pushed to put their efforts in exam preparation and not actual learning. Outside classrooms, the culture of exam determines how society views success, social position, and parental pressure, promoting inequality and diminishing success to quantitative data. In general, the culture of exams not only defeats the motivation intrinsic and cognitive development but also affects the emotional development of students and their attitudes towards learning as a

subject throughout their lives and poses a threat to the quality of education and human development in Bangladesh in general.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Design of Methodology

This section of the study covers a comprehensive summary and the essential components of qualitative research that includes framework, sampling, participants, nature of research method and data collection procedures.

3.2 Sampling

The sampling strategy utilized in this study is a purposive maximal variation strategy to ensure that a wide range of respondents of information on the examination culture in Bangladesh was captured. This was to bring on board members of various stakeholder groups in the education system so as to have the diversity of experiences in exam-oriented education.

The study follows the convenience sampling that contains a sample size of fifteen participants, with five being students, five being instructors, and the other five being parents. Participants are chosen based on their availability during the research and willingness to participate. Individuals who are Higher Secondary-level students who have encountered obstacles in the examination system and also the teachers and parents who have objections against the system are eligible to respond on high school learning practices.

3.3 Nature of research method (Qualitative)

Qualitative research can highly be suitable for exploring educational issues such as examination culture in Bangladesh as it allows a thorough understanding of social, academical and personal experiences in real world setting. To analyze an interpretive and complete understanding of how exams affect students, curriculum design and broader social attitudes this study adapts a qualitative method that involves interviews with students, teachers and educators from same academic backgrounds. The collective data will be carefully examined to uncover ongoing patterns in participants activities, experience and views on exam pressure, the memorization learning system and academic performance. As examination culture is a complex phenomenon that is affected by variety of factors including assessment techniques, institutional expectations, societal norms where qualitative approach plays a crucial role capturing these interconnected characteristics. Qualitative approach allows the study to show the way examination system not only change classroom procedures but also shapes students learning habits and social perception on education and success.

3.4 Data Collection

The data for this study was acquired through face-to-face interviews as well as mobile phone recordings in which each participant was questioned for data collection. All Student participants were from different schools who were asked a variety of questions about their experiences and backgrounds. Also, the study's other participants were current instructors at higher secondary schools who were interviewed about their professional experiences. Their views, as well as some helpful ideas, were thoroughly noted. Similarly, parents whose children

are candidates for the higher secondary exams were asked to express their opinions and recommendations, which were also considered. To obtain more accurate and useful data, participants were asking descriptive questions throughout the interviews rather than yes or no questions. The interview was conducted in both Bangla and English, and following the thematic analysis, the transcription of the interview data was translated into English.

3.5 Data Analysis

In the study, Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. The recorded answers were typed and read multiple times after the interviews were completed. This helps in determining the similar thought, recurring words and main points, which are common among the participants. Students, instructors, and parents all discussed pressure in exams, memorizing, stressing, and the exam-centered nature of the education intensively. As an example, most of the participants talked about how the structure of the tests encourages memorization as opposed to understanding. The students shared their impressions of mental stress and instructors talked about the effects of exams on their methods of teaching. On finding these similar ideas, they were classified into larger themes depending on their similarities. These issues were used in turn to investigate the effects of the examination system of Bangladesh on the students, teachers and the society in general. Such approach facilitated the organization of the data and discussion of the main findings of the study. During the data analysis, the research focused on the participants' significant statements as well as their real experiences. At first, the research takes a methodical approach, concentrating on the essential assertions of participants. Following then, the research progresses to a full account of the individuals' experiences. As a result, the data analysis focused on participant experiences rather than the author's personal viewpoint.

3.6 Ethical Consideration

Because the study will be conducted utilizing a qualitative research methodology that depends primarily on interviews, so there will be a few ethical problems will be addressed. First and foremost, the study will only conduct interviews with people who are willing to participate in the study. Furthermore, in order to protect the participants' privacy, their true identities will be obscured, and they will be referred to in the study as A, B, C, and Finally, the study will report its conclusions honestly, based on the obtained facts, and without falsifying any information. All collected data, including audio recordings, interviews, and consent forms, will be securely preserved for future inspection or confirmation. After a set amount of time, all data will be entirely destroyed to prevent any misuse or wrongdoing. This chapter provides a complete description of the current study's methodology, as well as an in-depth understanding of the research process and methodologies. Furthermore, we extensively discussed the methodologies that we employed during the data collecting. The following chapter will report and analyze the study findings.

3.7 Participants

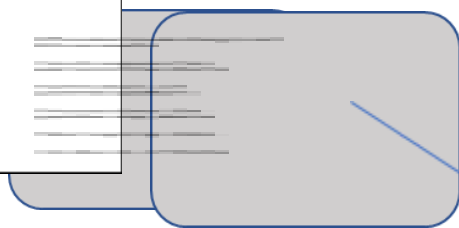
Name	Gende r	Age	Participant Category	Place of Living
Tanjim A	Female	34	Teacher	Dhaka
Faria B	Female	37	Teacher	Dhaka

Samantha C	Female	42	Teacher	Dhaka
Anika D	Male	35	Teacher	Dhaka
Sultana E	Female	39	Teacher	Dhaka
Abrar F	Female	17	Student	Dhaka
Sanjida G	Female	16	Student	Dhaka
Maisha H	Female	18	Student	Dhaka
Isma I	Female	17	Student	Dhaka
Pranjal J	Male	18	Student	Dhaka
Samiha K	Female	39	Guardian	Dhaka
Shawon	Male	40	Guardian	Dhaka

L				
Sharmin M	Female	50	Guardian	Dhaka
Khadija N	Female	42	Guardian	Dhaka
Eva O	Female	44	Guardian	Dhaka

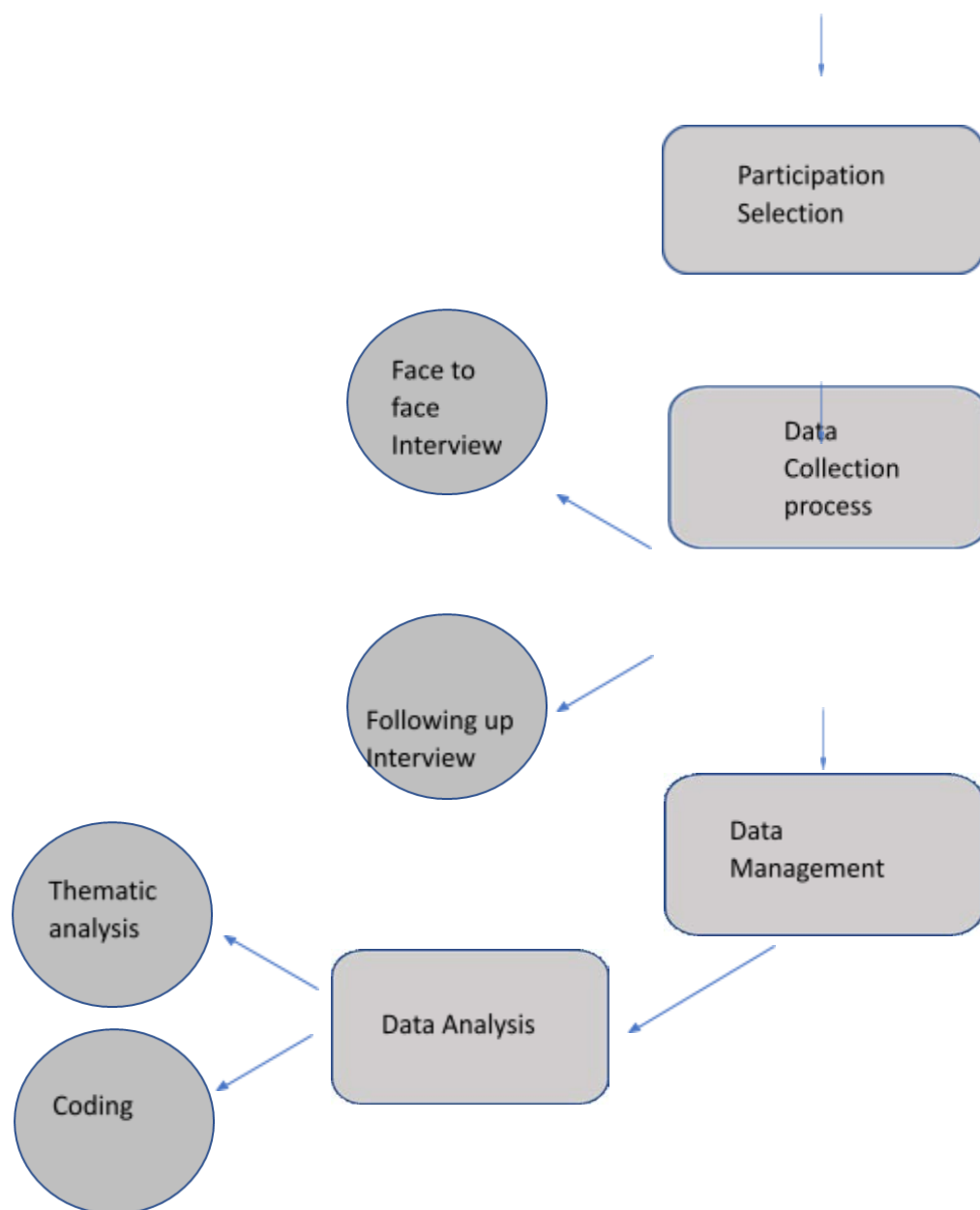
3.8 Methodology Framework

Qualitative
Research
Method



Approaches for
generating data





4.0 Findings

4.1 Exams encourage memorization rather than actual understanding

From the beginning of school, students are conditioned to concentrate on what is going to be on the exam and not why a subject matter is essential or the connection of the subject matter

to life in the real world. The students often emphasize on key questions, popular subjects, and recommendations, so students tend to think that learning can be useful only when they can gain marks. This has led the students to plan their day, time to study and even the choice of the topic based on the trends of the tests. “Most of the times I do not get that much time to study with a deeper understanding so I usually concentrate on the direct answers so that I can write well in the exam” (Participant C). Usually Students main source of information is guidebooks, suggestion notes and coaching materials instead of textbooks aimed at being understood. Certainly, several learners also go to coaching centers not because they like them, but because they feel that they cannot pass in tests without extra help. “I don’t think class lectures are enough to get enough suggestion and that is why I feel the need of going coaching” (Participant A).

This leads to learning being a process that is planned and purposeful. One thing that students learn with is the purpose of attaining good grades. Such as Memorization of answers, rehearsed questions and trying to guess questions in exams are among them. Not many students are allowed to go deeply into issues and pose questions because they are interested. The creative thought and creativity are often considered to be dangerous because the tests usually require fixed answers. Students fear that in case they write another thing though it may be correct, they will not get marks. Eventually, such anxiety provokes students to keep it safe and not think independently. Students also start to lose interest in studying and cannot even concentrate on the other event of life. “I am interested in drawing but due to academic pressure I do not even get the time for practice” (Participant B).

Due to the significance of exams, students learn to evaluate information using the grading system instead of knowing. The subjects would be classified as easy, hard, scoring, and non-scoring.

Students can hate a subject and work on it diligently since it gives good grades whereas neglecting courses that they like but which they find difficult in exams. Another important skill that is taught by this method is the ability of students to estimate the intellect through exam results. A student with good scores is considered to be smart but a student with low scores is often thought to be weak when he/she may have other qualities. This influences the confidence and self-image of kids in the long run. A lot of students start thinking that their value as a person depends on grades, this way of thinking influences their perception towards themselves and learning generally.

4.2 Exam pressure has a detrimental effect on wellbeing and motivation

Another common argument that students make is that the pressure of exams is not a problem of exam time only but also it accompanies them all through the year. There are constant inquiries on the part of all, parents, instructors, relatives and neighbors, on results, grades and future plans. Parents expect good performance, instructors' aware children about tests frequently and society measures students on academic performance. "I want to get good marks because without good GPA I cannot do well in the future" (Participant D). Hand in hand with this, students are always put against each other through rankings, GPA, and public results. All these expectations lead to continuous stress even where the exams are distant.

The constant pressure causes many students to develop anxiety and mental deterioration. They worry about failing their parents, losing up to their mates or not securing a successful future. "Many Students often faint during exam time and immediately taken to the medical Centre of

our school” (Participant E). Students who score high often get stressed due to the fear of losing their employment and this stress diminishes the pleasure of learning. Students learn in order to avoid failing and not because of the interest. The very nature of motivation slowly dies out in them and learning is more of a compulsion than an enjoyable experience.

Students are affected both physically and psychologically in the long term by stress. Numerous students feel anxious, fidgety, or emotionally drained especially when they are in exam periods. They might lack sleep, feel constantly exhausted or lose enthusiasm in activities that they might have enjoyed. Others turn out to be quiet and withdrawn whereas others are angry or frustrated. Friendships may break down in case competence gives way to cooperation. Students can think of their classmates as their competitors instead of trying to help each other. This destroys relationships and becomes lonely.

With the increased challenge in school systems, most students start losing faith in the educational system. In their opinion, the system does not appreciate their enjoyment, innovation, and overall development. Education is no longer some space of growth, exploration, and self-exploration. Rather it is a long struggle towards the next level of existence. There are those students who are even happy when the exams or courses are long gone showing the extent to which the pressure has intensified. This negative experience in the long-run alters the attitude of students towards learning whereby education becomes challenging as opposed to being inspiring.

4.3 Exam Stress Affects Students Learning Attitudes

The current education system lays too much emphasis on examinations, which significantly affects the attitude of students to the process of learning. In the perspectives of the instructors, exams have become the objective of learning as opposed to the assessment of knowledge. Students receive early instruction to focus on grades and expected answers rather than being inquisitive and thinking critically. The common complain raised by teachers is that students will enquire whether a topic is important to the test or not instead of getting interested in knowing its meaning and its application in real life. This is a clear indication of the way exam-oriented learning can influence the mentality of students. Teachers are also subjected to undue stress to finish the syllabus and students to pass exams because of the prevalence of exams. “We usually focus on the topics and tricks those are important for exams” (Participant F). Academic achievements are measured in terms of pass rates, GPA scores and in terms of college performance. Consequently, the teachers are usually compelled to focus on preparations of exams instead of real learning.

The activities that involve discussion, creativity, or profound knowledge are normally not taken since they take time and they are not directly assessed in exams. Education Teachers who want to teach deeper of issues or ask students to think independently can hardly do so in such a strict format. Memorization becomes more important than understanding in this type of exam centered classroom. “Teachers are used to plan the lessons according to the syllabus and exams” (Participant h). Teachers note that students rely more on guidebooks, coaching notes and suggestions in examinations instead of textbooks that are aimed at building knowledge. Education is mixed to memorizing definitions, formulaic and model responses. Lack of originality and personal answers is a common practice among students who are afraid of missing marks in case they do not give their answers in a particular pattern it is expected to. It is a fear

that does not encourage one to be creative and fosters the idea that one has to be repetitive instead of thinking and that in order to be successful.

Another observation by teachers is that this method alters the way students measure knowledge and subjects. Subjects are usually rated on the basis of their scoring value rather than their meaning and utility. In the course of time, students absorb the concept that the intelligence and ability are manifested in exam performance. High academic achievers are under pressure to keep up with their position whereas poor performing students start to look at themselves as weak or incompetent. Teachers feel that this hurts students' self-esteem and identity as students. Consequently, the attitude of the students towards learning is very result oriented. Learning is no longer about learning or studying but about surviving in the exam system. The teachers are of a firm opinion that in case of exams taking centerstage in education, the students are not interested in learning as an end in itself. Education in this case loses its original meaning of intellectual development and turns out to be a mechanical process whose sole objective is to get marks.

4.4 Academic Competency as a Cause of Student Disengagement

Teachers believe that students are pressured due to exam culture and that effects on them even after their academic period as it significantly contributes to their regular activity. After interacting with the students on a daily basis, one of the teachers explained that “pressure is not only found during exams but the whole academic year.” Students are always under pressure to perform well and have grades, parents, peer competition, and even in their education or career

life. This constant pressure causes a situation where the students are psychologically and emotionally drained.

Instructors have noted that most learners look nervous, fatigued, and stressed, particularly when they are about to take tests. Students who excel academically are not spared of stress. Rather, the high achievers are usually anxious to continue performing and fulfilling expectations. This is a pressure that is persistent in undermining the intrinsic value of learning amongst the students. That is why students start to perceive learning as a burden, instead of a significant or even entertaining process. “Most of the lesson plans are structured in a way that can help students to remember the answers rather than understand the main ideas” (Participant G).

In the long run this stress causes emotional disengagement. According to teachers, learners who perform poorly tend to demoralize and start thinking that they are not good at what they do. Other students either pull out, or otherwise, others get over competitive or aggressive. The teachers observe that learners often compare their grades, positions, and GPA which promotes unhealthy competition in a classroom. Students begin to see their peers as competitors as opposed to supporting one another. Such competitive atmosphere worsens friendship and lowers cooperation levels and makes students feel alone and insecure. The effects of exam pressure on mental health of students are also mentioned by teachers. The long-term effects of stress are anxiety, the fear to fail, sleep difficulties, and emotional instability. The teachers feel that mental pressure does not allow students to meaningfully participate in their studies and undermines their long-term association to education.

The more the students get disengaged, the less credibility they develop to the education system. According to teachers, there is a lot of complaints that the system is exam focused only at the expense of grades, and not their well-being, inventiveness, or growth. This ideology brings

frustration and resentment. Students can go on with studying since they do not have a choice, and their feelings towards learning are lost. According to teachers, this is possibly one of the worst consequences of an exam-based system since it will deter lifelong learning and personal development.

The consensus among all instructors is that there should be meaningful reform to counter student disengagement. In their opinion, students would be more confident and motivated and they would feel safer emotionally, in the case the exams were redesigned and the emphasis was made on understanding, creativity, and practical skills instead of memorization as the main one. This would enable the teachers to resort to interesting pedagogies and restore the students learning interests. Until these changes are done, teachers believe that the students as well as the teachers are stuck in a system that encourages stress, disengagement and emotional burnout instead of actual learning.

4.5 Social Consequences of an Exam-Oriented Culture

The power of the exam culture in Bangladesh is so impactful in determining the way the society views success, intelligibility and social worthiness and this is not only in schools but much further in families, communities and in daily social life. The achievement in academics has been greatly quantified by the exam results and especially GPA scores and the results of the board exams are mostly seen as the final testament of capability of a child and the position of a

family. Since early years children are taught that good marks are the key to their future and bad results will restrict their opportunities and social respect. This ideology places a lot of weight on parents since they are not only charged with the responsibility of ensuring that their children are educated but their performance within the society. “Some School guardian often neglects guardians because of the ranking position of their Daughter/Son in the class” (Participant K).

Academic performance becomes a social issue because relatives and neighbors in social events often enquire about examination scores, compare students, and give advice without being requested to do so. Consequently, this aspect has forced most parents to be able to send their children to coaching centers or personal tutors, which they cannot afford to meet the social demands. This social competition helps to strengthen inequality because families who have more financial resources are able to invest more in the preparation of exams, and the poor students have an unfair edge regardless of their potential or talent. In due course, marks are given a greater importance in society than honesty, creativity, kindness or useful skills and the interpretation of achievement is reduced to numerical measures. Students that have not mastered the exams are usually characterized as weak or incapable and this affects their self-esteem as well as their societal identity. The parents also feel stressed, guilty, and anxious because they are afraid of being judged as irresponsible or unsuccessful, in case their child does not perform well. “Students always go through a pressure that if they do not carry a good result or GPA five then they will have to face a great problem from society” (Participant L).

By so doing, the culture of exams forms a cycle of pressure wherein families, schools, and society repeat each other in regards to the expectation placed on them. Education starts being less related to the personal development and more concerned with the social contest, transforming exams into a form of honor or disgrace. Consequently, exam culture in Bangladesh is not such as

to merely assess academic studying; examinations also actively form social connections, social class disparities, parental conduct and social conceptions of achievement such that examinations are not merely a pedagogical instrument, but are rather a major part of the social system.

4.6 The impact of exam centered learning on cognitive and emotional growth

Besides its social influence, the exam culture in Bangladesh has also impacted extensively on the quality of learning and the psychological state of students. The education system has been dominated by the knowledge of performance in exams where the culture is to memorize textbooks, guide books and model answers as opposed to understanding and critical thinking. Educators pay much attention to covering the syllabus within a short time and emphasizing on the most common questions or even the suggestions that they will probably see in the exams. This leads to transformation of classrooms into exam-preparation centers instead of discussing, exploring or having creativity. Students are taught to learn in a strategic way, to memorize information so that they can remember it in the short term and not to develop their long-term knowledge and problem-solving abilities.

This method suppresses intellectual interest and promotes lack of creativity because students would be afraid that creative responses might not be valued during exams. Learning with the course of time becomes stressful and mechanical and it consequently will decrease the interest students have in education. This learning culture that focuses on exams also puts huge psychological strain on the learners. Anxiety, fear and emotional discomfort are common among many children during exam times, as they worry about failing their parents, teachers and even to

the society. “My brother faces a lot of problem during exam time, he even cannot sleep properly” (Participant J).

There are sleep disturbances, irritability, loss of appetite, and deficit of motivation, usually when it comes to high-stakes public examinations. Students having good results can also always be under pressure to keep their performance and they live in fear of failure instead of enjoying the learning process. Parents though being conscious of stresses faced by their children still tend to stress on grades since exams are the key to accessing education and securing a career in life. Even teachers are not exempted in this cycle because their professional reputation is measured by the performance of students in the exams and not based on the overall learning outcomes. As a result, the whole education system turns into an exam system which does not provide much time to emotional growth, creativity as well as life skills. Such a case has long term effects on the society since students might graduate holding certificates but they are not confident, flexible and strong. Unless it is reformulated to eliminate exam culture, there is a risk that the Bangladeshi society will keep on giving birth to people who are trained to pass tests but will not be ready to deal with life. Thus, the culture of exams has a not only academic but also mental impact on students and the quality of human development in the country in general.

5.0 Discussion

5.1 The Marks-Driven Attitude of Learners

This discussion describes the impacts of an exam-based system of education on the students, teachers, and society in Bangladesh. According to the experiences of students and teachers, it is revealed that exams have gradually turned into the primary aim of the educational

process rather than the means of learning assessment. Due to this, students are more concerned about memorization of answers, rather than the comprehension of ideas, teachers are under pressure to only teach, what will be in the exams and the society is using grades as the factor that measures a successful person. These impacts affect the thinking of students, their mental health, relationship and their long-term attitudes towards education.

Among the most obvious outcomes of the exam-based system is the fact that it promotes memorization rather than actual learning. Since the beginning of education, children are conditioned to be concerned primarily with exams. Students normally ask whether a topic is important to get marks instead of understanding the topic and asking why it is important or how it relates to real life. This demonstrates that learning turns to be exam oriented, as opposed to being knowledge oriented. Students frequently study using significant questions, recommendations, and past exam patterns in the preparation of exams. Their everyday life, time of study and even the subject matter are determined using the pattern of exams. Participant C also pointed out that time to study well is seldom available and thus the students work on direct answers that can enable them to get a high score. This indicates that the students are not lazy but the system is forcing them to study superficially. Bangladesh has a culture of high-stakes examination that has oriented the attitudes of students towards learning, which is highly marks orientation. It documents that the national exams take over schooling, where students, parents, and teachers are under pressure to ensure that they succeed in the examinations instead of having broader educational objectives. Due to the exam content as a factor in what students learn and how they learn, most learners are concerned with rote learning, past papers and model answers and good grades instead of learning language and communicative ability (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018).

The textbooks are not utilized by most students as they rely on guidebooks, coaching notes and suggestion sheets. Guidelines provide concise and predetermined answers that can be memorized easier as opposed to the textbooks which are designed to explain. Most students attend coaching centers not necessarily because they love them, but because students believe that they cannot pass exams without the assistance. According to Participant A, the lectures in classes do not usually given sufficient exam-oriented instructions, and students are forced to use coaching service. Consequently, learning becomes a premeditated process and the sole aim of learning is to get good grades. The students learn by memorization, practice of predictable questions and rehearsing the model responses. One does not have much room to ask questions out of curiosity or interest. Creativity in thinking is not encouraged as exams tend to require definite answers. The students are scared that they will lose marks in case they write something different even when it is correct. This fear makes students remain safe and not to think on their own.

5.2 The Viewpoints and challenges of Instructors in the classroom

Teachers strongly hold that the education system is dominated by exams. According to their experience, Exams are now the ultimate aim of learning rather than an ability to test knowledge. Instructors observe that students usually pose questions claiming whether a subject matter is important during exams instead of working on learning the subject. This demonstrates the extent to which the culture of exam has influenced the attitudes of students. Also, teachers are under pressure to complete the syllabus and produce good exams. Pass rates and GPA scores are the measurements of success in schools and colleges. Due to this reason, Instructors are usually compelled to emphasize on examinations. Participant F stated that in most cases, teachers concentrate on the issues and methods that are valuable in tests.

Group discussions, creative activities, and deep thinking are activities that are not given much consideration since they consume time and are not directly assessed. Such a system is problematic to teachers who would wish to promote independent thinking. The lessons will be designed to meet exams and syllabus specifications, instead of the student comprehensions. Lesson planning, as illustrated by Participant H, is largely determined by exam needs. Educators also note that Students are addicted to guidebooks and instructions. Students are afraid to provide original answers as they lose marks. This suppresses creativity and learners are taught to recite information other than think independently. Practices in testing are not in relation to the curriculum goals and healthy assessment. Due to the fact that exams focus on syllabus contents instead of valid assessment of communicative competence, classroom practice tends to be more oriented towards teaching to pass the test, memorization and enlisting personal tutors, instead of a purposeful language practice (Sultana,2020).

According to teachers, students get disengaged because of the pressure of exams. They argue that stress does not terminate in exams but follows in the course of the academic year. Students are afraid of grades, competition and future careers. This monotony causes the students to be mentally and emotionally exhausted. Educators observe that a lot of students appear to be nervous and tired, particularly, prior to exams. Even the students who perform highly are pressured to perform. This fear gradually eliminates the pleasure of education. Learning becomes a burden rather than something significant to the students. Participant G said that lesson plans tend to make students remember answers and forget an idea.

5.3 Social Effects and long-term consequences

Stress causes withdrawal of emotions in the long run. Poor performing students might be demoralized and begin to think they are not good. There are those who are way too competitive

or aggressive. The competition of grades that is perpetual brings about insecurity and breaks friendships. Classrooms turn to be a source of conflict instead of collaboration. Educators also mention the severe consequences of students having mental health problems. There is anxiety, fears of failure, sleeping problems, and emotional instability. The issues lower the engagement capacity of students with education. Students lose trust in the education system as the disengagement rises. The system is thought to be more student grading-oriented and does not care about the wellbeing and creativity of students. Students keep on studying because they have no option, only that their interest to learn disappears. This is harmful as it discourages lifelong learning and personal development.

It is not just the schools that are influenced by exam culture but also families and society. Exam performance (or GPA grades in particular) is considered to be the primary indicator of success in Bangladesh. Young individuals get to learn that good grades are a guaranty to good life at a tender age and poor performance leads to failure and humiliation. Parents are under tremendous pressure since their children will also be judged on their social status. During social events, family members and acquaintances tend to inquire about the examination outcomes and rank students. The pressure placed on parents by society compels most parents to enroll their children to coaching centers despite the inability to afford the practice.

This state of affairs heightens inequality as richer families are able to afford better coaches and resources, whereas less affluent students have a hard time regardless of their talents. Consequently, this has led to a situation where financial assistance rather than talent usually determines the success of the exams. Marks are also regarded as more important in the society compared to such traits as honesty, creativity, kind heartedness, and practical abilities. The low results are normally termed as weak among the students and this negatively affects their

self-esteem and social identity. It is also stressful and guilty when parents are afraid of being judged in case their children fail to perform well. Participant L mentioned that students are afraid of social issues in case they cannot achieve good results. Therefore, exam culture, families, schools, and the society develop a circle of pressure. Education is turned into a social race instead of the individual process. The exams become an object of pride or disgrace, and establish social relations of social inequality. students with high anxiety levels during examinations report reduced well-being in general and have a high risk of developing poor mental well-being, and some studies indicate that highly anxious students fit the diagnosis of clinical anxiety disorders. Notably, according to coroner reports, exam pressures were noted as a contributing factor in a significant percentage of cases of adolescent suicide, and thus the severity of the exam pressure to a minority of the youth. This is contrary to the dismissive opinion that exam stress is not harmful and is simply a part of schooling as this body of evidence demonstrates that exam pressure has a negative impact on academic performance and psychological well-being of many students (Putwain,2020).

Instructors also have an exam-based learning that influences their thinking and emotional development. The issue of completion of syllabus and anticipation of exam questions are put in the spotlight of the classrooms instead of encouraging discussions and creativity. Instead of acquiring profound knowledge and problem-solving skills, students get to memorize the information that they will use in the short term. Curiosity and creativity are minimized in this learning style. Lack of risks is taken by the students in fear of losing marks. Learning with time becomes mechanical and stressful and leads to the drop of interest in education.

Exam pressure is psychologically fearful, stressful, and uncomfortable. Some of the consequences experienced by many students are sleep issues, irritability, lack of appetite, and

low motivation. Even the good students live under the fear of failure. Parents and teachers are usually aware of such issues but helpless due to the role of exams determining entry to higher education and professions. Through exam results, the reputation of teachers is also determined, rather than the development of students as a whole. Consequently, exams become the Centre of attention of the whole education system. Such a system can in the long run end up with students who have certificates but have no confidence, creativity or life skills. Devoid of serious reform, the society will just end up producing people capable of passing exams but not ready to face the real life.

6.0 Conclusion

This paper was aimed at examining the effects of the culture of examinations on students, teachers, curriculum, and the society in Bangladesh. Based on the experiences of students and teachers and guardians, it is evident in the findings that examinations have ceased to play their initial functions of assessment and have become the focus of education. Consequently, the act of learning has been limited to memorization, teaching is influenced by the requirements of the exam, and success is being defined by means of grades and GPA. The conclusion synthesizes the key findings of the research and cogitates their general contribution to the education and social development in Bangladesh.

Among the most significant conclusions made in the course of the research it can be stated that the system of exams promotes the idea of rote learning over actual knowledge. Instructors are even taught at a tender age to concentrate on what is going to be seen in exams rather than the reasons as to why a subject matter is significant and how it can be used in practice. Learning is tactical and immediate, to make marks as opposed to the acquisition of permanent knowledge.

This pervasive usage of guide books, coaching notes and model answers demonstrates the extent to which this mindset has established itself. Students will be discouraged to be creative, curious, and think independently since they are fearful of getting marks deducted when their responses fail to meet the expected patterns. Consequently, a large number of students get to master the skills of memorization and fail to think critically, solve problems and apply their knowledge practically.

The psychological effects of the pressure of exams on students are also demonstrated as serious in the study. The stress associated with exams does not end with exams and extends through the academic year. The students are under constant pressure to perform well because of constant expectations on them by their parents, teachers, peers and the society. A lot of students feel anxiety, emotional exhaustion, problems with sleep, and lack of motivation. It has even been known to affect even the high achievers, whose lives are in danger of losing their status. In the long run, learning turns into a taxing issue instead of a pleasure. Students start to connect education with stress and fear rather than with growth and self-discovery which has a negative influence on the attitude of the student towards education in the long term. The other important conclusion is that the culture of exams is shaping the self-image and identity of students. Grades and GPA are put in the position of the primary measure of intelligence and personal value. High achievers are said to be smart and weak achievers are considered to be weak or incompetent irrespective of their abilities or potentials. This small concept of success undermines the self-esteem of students and restricts the appreciation of different skills. The feeling that their worth is based on the performance of their examinations is internalized by a lot of students and it has a far-reaching emotional and psychological impact.

The study also indicates that the exam-based system is another issue that significantly impacts teachers. Teachers are under intense pressure to cover the syllabus and deliver good exam results since their professionalism is most of the time associated with the performance of students. This pressure restricts their freedom of utilizing creative and student-centered approaches to teaching. Teachers are not given a chance to promote discussion, exploration and critical thinking; rather, in most instances, they have to concentrate on the techniques of exams, question patterns and memorization strategies. Most teachers acknowledge the need to learn more but they believe that only the exam system imposes limitations on them. This leads to mechanization in teaching and the real essence of education is compromised. Another field, which exam culture can be seen in, is curriculum design. A curriculum is exam-focused even though the policy tries to achieve critical thinking and creativity. Lesson plans and textbooks give priority to the tested subject as opposed to the subject that is important in the general growth of the students. Other subjects like arts, physical education and moral education are not as emphasized as they are not included in high-stake tests. This brings an imbalance in education where the theoretical knowledge has a higher value compared to the practical skills, emotional growth and life skills. As a result, students can receive academic certificates, still, not having the necessary skills required in their personal and professional life. The research beyond the schools and classroom shows that there are far reaching social implications of exam culture in Bangladesh. The results in academics are strictly connected with the social status, family pride, and opportunities in the future. Parents are under extreme pressure to make sure that their children excel and they will be willing to spend a lot of money in coaching and having personal tutors. This has been a factor in the commercialization of the education process as well as heightened inequality where the students in better financial positions stand to benefit at the expense of poor students who are unable to

afford the process of education. Meanwhile, vocational and technical education is frequently underestimated, and it restricts the choices of students that might perform better in alternative academic opportunities. In such a manner, exam culture promotes social inequality and limits different ways of success.

Collectively, the results indicate that the exam-focused system of education generates a pressure cycle between students and teachers, families, and the society. The system is reinforced on each side and it becomes hard to stop depending on exams. Although exams bring structure and assessable results, they have an excessively high level of emphasis, which directly contradicts the overall aims of education. The system might result in high pass rates and impressive statistics, yet they do not foster creativity, critical thinking, emotional wellbeing and social responsibility, which are much needed in a fast-changing world. This paper highlights that there is a pressing issue of necessary reform in the education system of Bangladesh. Evaluation strategies cannot be based on memorization-based tests but they should cover constant and competency-oriented evaluation which attaches importance to knowledge, abilities and innovativeness. The weight of high-stakes exams should be minimized and various types of assessment should be provided as the ways of reducing stress among students and promoting the learning process in a more profound way. More freedom and empowerment should be given to teachers to embrace interactive and learner-centered modes of teaching. Curriculum ought to be reconstructed so that it has a balance between academic knowledge and life skills, creativity and emotional development. Another factor that is significant in transforming the culture of examinations is parents and the society. It must change the mental perception in which not only grades but personal development, abilities, and personality are taken into consideration as the success measurements. To develop a more inclusive and equitable educational system, it is

possible to consider different types of intelligence and to appreciate vocational and technical education.

To sum up, this study demonstrates that exams although a significant component of education, its prevalence in the Bangladeshi system has posed significant academic, psychological and social issues. To become effective as a means of empowering people and helping a country develop, education should shift off an overemphasis on exams and in favor of a more comprehensive, human, and learner-centered model. At that point, education will motivate the student not only to pass the exams, but to be a thinker, a self-assured person who will have a positive impact on the society.

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Appendix (A)

Interview Question:

A. Student Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me about yourself and your background?
2. What is your usual method of preparing exams and what is your motivation to study this way?
3. Do you think that you learn the topics very well because you study for exams or do you learn to memorize mostly?
4. What level of pressure do you experience at exam time and what do you consider are the primary causes of that pressure?
5. How do exams influence your learning interest or interest in new ideas?
6. Do teachers give more attention on the lesson explaining or on training you to get good grades? Kindly Be specific, with examples.
7. What is your response to performance compared to that of your class mates?
8. Are you sure that the results of examinations represent your true abilities or knowledge? Why or why not?
9. Do you feel the need of coaching centers or personal tutor to prepare for exams and why do you think it is necessary?
10. Have you ever been stressed by exams physically or mentally? If yes, how?

11. Which learning activities do you like the most (e.g., group work, practical work, projects)?
12. Assuming the exams were redesigned to be based on skills and creativity and not memorization, what would you think about this?
13. Would you ever like to change the examination system of Bangladesh? If you would then how would you change the system?

B. Teacher Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me about yourself and your background?
2. What is the impact of the present examination system on your classroom and instructional practice?
3. Do you get the pressure for students to teach to pass the exam and not to teach the deeper understanding of knowledge? Why or why not?
4. To what extent is it possible to employ creative or interactive instructional strategies in your classroom?
5. How do you feel about exam pressure and how does it impact your relationship with students?
6. Do you believe that students' study to know or just to be graded? What have you observed?

7. What influence does the exam system have on your assessment activities (e.g. question patterns, feedback, assignments)?
8. What are the troubles you encounter with curriculum achievement and effective instruction?
9. What are the ways that the attitudes and expectations of parents would affect your teaching or assessment of students?
10. Are the students anxious or stressed with exams? What do you do during such cases?
11. In what ways do you suggest the curriculum should change to decrease exam-based learning?
12. How would you teach differently, in case exams were given more on the creativity and critical thinking?
13. What are the reforms that you would propose in order to reform the exam-oriented education culture in Bangladesh?

C. Guardian/Parent Interview Questions

1. Could you please tell me about yourself and your background?
2. What do you consider to be a successful student? What is the effect of exam results in this definition?
3. How would your emphasis on the examination grades of your child and why?

4. Do you believe that exams identify the ability or intelligence of your child? Why or why not?
5. How do you help your child during examination time at home ?
6. Has your child experienced any stress, anxiety, and change of behavior during exams? If yes, describe.
7. Why do you believe that most parents are taking their children to coaching centers or individual tutors?
8. Do your relatives or the society put social pressure on you concerning the performance of your child?
9. What do you want your child to get in learning: practicality, creativity or good grades? Explain your preference.
10. Do you believe that the present curriculum is equipping the children with the real-life skills or just the examination scores?
11. What do you feel teachers and schools might do to lessen the amount of pressure on students in exams?
12. Assuming that exam systems were changed and were not so memorization oriented, what would you expect in the education system of your child?
13. What would you like to change about the examination system in Bangladesh and why?

Appendix (B)

Transcription:

Researcher: Hello, Assalamualaikum, ma'am. Hope you are doing well. So please, could you tell me about yourself and your background?

Teacher: Hi, Waalaikumussalam. I am Nobunia Hamid. I'm currently a teacher at a high school. I've been teaching for seven years now and I teach both English for today and English grammar and composition.

Researcher: All right. So, ma'am, could you please tell me how the current examination system influences your teaching approach in the classroom?

Teacher: Honestly, the current examination system completely changes the way the English language should be taught or learned. I have to adopt deductive teaching since the examination system focuses more on the rules. So yeah.

Researcher: So, ma'am, do you feel pressure to teach for the exam rather than for deep understanding? Why or why not?

Teacher: Yes, I do. It is both because of the system and the parents. The system requires me to teach things that will be there in the exams rather than providing practical knowledge and the parents play a role too by pressurizing the children to get good grades rather than emphasizing on acquiring real world knowledge of English.

Researcher: All right so ma'am how much freedom do you have to use creative or interactive teaching methods in your class?

Teacher: I do have a certain level of freedom to use my own techniques. However, since the syllabus is always pre-decided and the classrooms are huge, I cannot always implement my own teaching techniques because time is short and there is a lack of resources provided by the authority. So that is another reason.

Researcher: Does exam pressure affect your relationship with students? If it does, then what are the ways?

Teacher: It's kind of does. The students usually consult me only to ask for suggestions for the exams. They don't really ask questions regarding their genuine curiosity or interest in the language.

Researcher: Okay, do you think students learn more for knowledge or just for grades what have you observed regarding this?

Teacher: Most of my students definitely learn only for good grades. There are a few students who want to pursue a life abroad and are more interested in learning the language and the culture but the number is really small. Like most of the students just want good grades. And I've also observed that this mentality mostly comes from the parents because children want good grades so that their parents don't get disappointed in them and things like that.

Researcher: All right. How does the exam system shape your evaluation practices like question patterns, feedback, assignments?

Teacher: The system basically shapes the whole evaluation process. Like all the questions are central. So, I don't have much authority over the questions and the patterns. And in terms of assessing the scripts, we do not get as much time as we need to publish the results within the

deadline. But the classrooms are huge, there are a lot of students. So, it is a challenge to assess the students to the fullest.

Researcher: So, ma'am, what challenges do you face usually to complete the syllabus and to provide a meaningful teaching to students?

Teacher: It's mostly... Only syllabus completion like there is not much scope for meaningful learning because as i said time is short and the number of students is huge so we don't really get the time for meaningful learning aside from just finishing the syllabus so this is one thing that i face the most right.

Researcher: So, ma'am how does parents' attitudes and expectations influence the way you teach or assess the students?

Teacher: Parents influence a great like they are always focused on finishing the syllabus and getting good grades so much so that they often pressurize the teachers as well to take more tests to make sure the students get good grades. So yeah, they do influence a great deal.

Researcher: Do students show anxiety or stress about exams? How do you even handle such situations?

Teacher: Students do feel intense stress before and during the exams mostly and i try to support them emotionally as well and academically by providing suggestions so that they can relax a little all right what change.

Researcher: What items or procedures should be added in the curriculum to reduce exam-centered learning in our country?

Teacher: obviously uh i think the curriculum should be more focused on meaningful learning and practical knowledge should be included. Practical learning should be included so that the students can learn from experiences rather than just bookish knowledge.

Researcher: All right. If exams focused more on creativity and critical thinking, how would your teaching change?

Teacher: Teaching would be more interesting if... I was able to incorporate my own teaching methods that fit the students' needs for critical thinking and creativity so yeah if that can be incorporated it would help a lot for the teachers.

Researcher: So, ma'am what reforms would you suggest to improve Bangladesh's exam dominated education culture?

Teacher: The most important reform I think should be continuous assessment rather than one-time exams. This way students will be much less stressed or anxious during the exams and it will obviously help them to get good grades eventually.

Researcher: All right, all the answers were truly understandable and thank you so much for sharing your ideas and thoughts with us.

Teacher: Thank you so much, it has been a pleasure.

Appendix (C)

Coding Sample

Name	Data Excerpt	Codes	Themes
Teacher	The existing examination system is the one that entirely alters the manner of teaching or learning the English language. It is imperative that I embrace deductive teaching as the examination system emphasizes more on the rules.	Examination based instructional strategy.	Effects of Exam System on Pedagogy

Teacher	The system would demand that I teach things that will be present in the exams as opposed to teaching practical knowledge.	Exam cheating instead of learning.	Exam-based Culture of learning
Teacher	Parents play a role too by pressurizing the children to get good grades rather than emphasizing real world knowledge.	Gender specific influence based on grades by parents	Parental Effect on Education
Teacher	This is because I cannot always use my own methods since the syllabus is pre-determined	Limited freedom in teaching	Affecting Teaching Structures

	and classrooms are very large		
Teacher	There is a scarcity of time and resources that are given by the authorities	Lack of time and resources	Institutional Challenges
Teacher	Students normally approach me with the view to seeking exam suggestions and not with curiosity.	Student interaction which is examination-orien ted	Student Motivation and Exam Effects
Teacher	The majority of student's study in	Grade-oriented learning	Surface Learning Culture

	order to achieve good grades.		
Teacher	This attitude is primarily a product of the parents.	Pressure on performance, which is imposed by parents	Social Pressure on Students
Teacher	There is a lack of time to properly evaluate students due to large classes	Centralized testing of assessments	Rigid Examination System
Teacher	There is not a lot of room to learn anything fruitful due to the scarcity of time.	Inadequate evaluation time	Assessment Challenges
Teacher		Completion of syllabus as	Curriculum Pressure

	Parents coerce teachers to do more tests.	opposed to learning	
Teacher	Students experience great strain in the build up to exams.	Frequent testing demands	Exam Intensification
Teacher	I attempt to help them on emotional and academic fronts	Exam anxiety	Psychological Impact of Exams
Teacher	Curriculum must be concentrated on valuable learning	Teacher emotional support	Coping Strategies

	and practical knowledge		
Teacher	Imaginative and critical thinking would make teaching more interesting	Need for practical learning	Curriculum Reform