

**Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Secondary Level Education in  
Bangladesh: A Qualitative Study**

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English

Department of English and Humanities  
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### **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that,

1. The thesis submitted is my 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 have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## **Approval**

The thesis/project titled “Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Secondary Level Education in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Study”

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of Fall, 2021 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English on [00.05.2022].

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### **Ethics Statement**

This thesis is my own work and there is no plagiarized contents included in the thesis. While conducting this study I have followed Brac University's ethical guidelines strictly. Participants identities are not revealed anywhere in the thesis and all the names used are pseudonyms.

### **Abstract**

Like many other countries in the world, educational institutions in Bangladesh remained closed for a long time due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There was no face-to-face classes for a prolonged period due to pandemic, but after sometimes various educational institutions offered synchronous and asynchronous online classes. Students attended live classes through various online platform such as Zoom, Google meet, Skype and Facebook live. However, attending online classes was not easy and smooth for many students. Students faced numerous obstacles in attending online classes and many of these stories were reported in electronic and print media. However, there is a dearth of research in Bangladesh context that explored the difficulties students faced in attending online classes. This qualitative study explores various difficulties students faced to attend online classes during the pandemic. This study identified a number of reasons behind these difficulties including poor internet connection, high internet cost, lack of necessary resources, lack of ICT knowledge and lack of institutional support. More importantly neither teachers nor students had any prior experience of online teaching and learning. Moreover, uncertainty, loneliness and mental stress were also created barriers for students in their online education. Finally, this study is important as the results and recommendations will help various stakeholders to plan and take necessary actions in any kind of emergency situation in the future.

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate my work to my Almighty, to my beloved parents, to my supervisor and to my all well wishers.

## **Acknowledgment**

At first, I would like to thank Almighty Allah. I am also thankful to my mother and father who guide me every single day. I am additionally thankful to my supervisor who informed me how to write an entire thesis paper. In every single meeting, he guided us and did not give any pressure on writing. With his great support, we have completed our thesis paper at the proper time. I would like to be grateful to each and every ENH department faculty member who trained me and delivered me this far with their valuable speech. I am very lucky to have the best faculty members in my ENH department like Md. Al Amin, Lubaba Sanjana, Seema Amin, Abu Sayeed Mohammad Noman. I have learned many matters from them at some stage in my complete experience at Brac University.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The pandemic of COVID-19 has been causing global disruption and affecting every aspect of human life in different ways. One such disruption of COVID-19 is the closure of every educational institution for a certain time. For continuing education for students, face-to-face classes were transformed into remote online classes. For the vast majority of Bangladeshi people, this was a new version of learning where they learned through online sessions by using different types of technology. In online sessions, students learned by watching video lectures, lessons, and all type of learning activities. In developed societies, it is not a new version of learning; rather, it is an important part of learning in curriculum, and students are familiar with different aspects of online learning as they are using different types of online method for doing their assignments. Regarding developing countries such as Cambodia, it is not a common learning method, but something that needs to be systematically processed to be implemented as large-scale learning. If we talk about Bangladesh, it is a developing country where the online platform is not a common aspect. Thus, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it became tough for the teachers and students to cope with this new learning system.

In Bangladesh, the COVID-19 pandemic was identified on March 8, 2022 in the capital, Dhaka. Hundreds of thousands of people have died in this pandemic, and since the virus is contagious, social distancing was enforced and a general lockdown was held from March 26, 2022. People in that time were told to keep themselves at home and all educational institutions remained shut. In that situation, the online platform was the only way to continue education. However, since most educational institutions globally remained close, gradually Bangladesh also enforced this decision. As it is a new system of learning for most Bangladeshi students, they faced a lot of problems. School students who struggled a lot for this online session. If we talk

about all students, most of the students do not have much knowledge about technology, but during the pandemic, they had to use an android mobile phone and different types of apps as like Zoom, Google Meet, Facebook. Usually, Bangladeshi school students are mainly used to learn face-to-face via white or blackboards on which teachers give lectures and students listen. However, for this pandemic they have had to indulge in more autonomous learning. As a result, several problems surfaced in the educational sector in Bangladesh.

Students in schools who are not habituated in online learning have maintained a schedule for doing their regular class online. They have learned how to login in to Zoom or Google Meet and how to connect with the teachers with proper audio tracks and video files during online sessions. They had not been habituated in using much technology for learning purposes, and so they had to learn how to connect with online session. For doing this kind of online sessions, students faced several internet and technology issues. However, at the same time they also took some advantages from online learning as they were able to stay at their home and did not need to face traffic jams. However, the disadvantages may have outweighed the advantages. Besides those already discussed, there was the potential of several diseases affecting students due to looking at the mobile screen for a long time, and headache and eye pain are but two examples. As the shift to online learning is a sudden shift for a developing country, teachers were also not sufficiently ready. Though many made online schedules, video lectures, using materials for online sessions, they were not properly trained to properly integrate technology in the class. As a result, students also faced several problems for their teachers' lack of digital literacy. The pandemic was thus a big challenge not only for learners but also for educators. Changes to the educational sector through technical support, administration, planning, maintaining online schedules, collecting data – all these things were potentially new experiences for the teachers and

students. To properly tackle these issues, teachers and students need proper skills and knowledge of using technical effects.

To help educational institutions, the Bangladesh government took some accountability to control classes in this lockdown period. However, most people from rural and remote areas faced challenges to shift to the online platform (Fami, 2020). Both teachers and students faced distance problems, technical issues, lack of internet access, and insufficiency of financial conditions.

The main aim of the study is to explore the problems Bangladeshi school students faced during the COVID-19 lockdown.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

COVID-19 has affected people worldwide. The outbreak was first recognized in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The nations around the world suggested the public to take responsive care. The public care strategies have protected handwashing, sporting face masks, bodily distancing, and warding off mass gathering and assemblies. Lockdown and staying home techniques have been put in region as the wanted motion to flatten the curve and manipulate the transmission of the health problem (Sintema, 2020).

Bhutan first declared the closing of colleges and institutions and discount of commercial enterprise hours for the period of the 2nd week of March 2020 (Kuensel, 2020). The complete nationwide lockdown was carried out from 1 August, 2020 (Palden, 2020). More than 170,000 children in Bhutan from instructions PP–XII are affected by way of university closure. Several schools, colleges and universities have discontinued face-to-face teaching.

The COVID-19 pandemic has furnished us with a risk to pave the way for introducing digital reading (Dhawan, 2020). Research highlights certain dearth such as the vulnerable spot of online instructing infrastructure, the restrained publicity of instructors to online teaching, the records gap, non-conducive surroundings for studying at home, and equity and academic excellence in terms of higher training. In Bangladesh, college students are not used to online gaining of knowledge of patterns in contrast to developed countries. Not simply college students but also many instructors of major and secondary grades of education decide upon the practice of standard teaching techniques. Even most university instructors are also hesitant to use the online platform for teaching (Islam, 2020). During online classes, teachers sometimes lost communication with college students as they did not reply to the teacher's lessons. As the students

could flip their cameras off, the instructors were unable to make any eye contact and also unable to study their body language. College students occasionally lost their confidence because of terrible lectures and for that reason, they decide on to continue to be quiet rather than asking any questions. This mind-set is also uneasy for instructors when students did not exhibit interest to communicate with their respective instructors (Mohammed et al., 2020). Teachers become uncomfortable whilst delivering lectures in online classes where the students have their cameras off and rarely respond to the lectures that are given. Teachers had to put more effort to be successful in online lessons for grabbing students' attention (The Financial Express, 2020a). Also, teachers had to supply the effort to make their lectures more advantageous so that the students do not get bored and can maintain their concentration. However, it appeared quite uncomfortable for the instructors to talk alone barring any responses (The Financial Express, 2020b).

The length of the online lessons was additionally quite a difficult issue. If the instructions are lengthy and the instructing approach is not precise, then college students tend to get bored. By teaching of maximum subjects, there might also be consistent pressure amongst the college students (Zaman, 2020). For this reason, students cannot listen or even recognize the documents they had been given for one particular lesson due to pressure from others. Therefore, most of the time, teachers had to supply extra effort to shorten the time of classes and to cover maximum matters so that it could be convenient for college students to cope (The Financial Express, 2020b).

A large number of college students in Bangladesh are living in rural-based areas. For those who stay in a remote rural area, the accessibility of network is inconsistent (The Independent BD, 2020b). Students during the pandemic were additionally pressurized to use various online studying platforms that need a high-speed internet connection. However, in far flung areas, it was almost not possible to get a high-speed community connection to attend online classes smoothly. Students

therefore faced interruptions during classes for poor network connection which led to problems in their understanding. Sometimes it even felt depressed the college students to take place in the platform of online classes. Most of the time students miss important data of study and they finish their study in online session which can decrease their future studies or job sectors (Zaman, 2020).

In rural areas, most of the students had to purchase mobile data packages to take part in online classes. However, due to community troubles in rural areas and the excessive cost of internet data, students' attendance became lower and some students dropped out of their study. According to a current document provided by way of a UK-based cable company, the Bangladeshi data program's price is greater amongst the three South Asian countries – India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Bangladesh charges the absolute highest for one gigabyte of cellular data – \$0.99 – whereas India charges for one gigabyte at \$0.26 (Jasim & Sajid, 2020). In 2021, this problem has been further discussed in the countrywide budget 2020-2021. The fee of cellular phone and web services grew from 10% to 15%, ensuing in an upward push typical of 33.25%, which was once simply 27.25% earlier than lockdown (The Daily Star, 2020a). To deal with these troubles, some universities have also offered free internet packages to attend online classes via Zoom or Google Meet. However, in rural areas, these web services are so lackluster that despite having adequate information, students could not use them appropriately (The Daily Star, 2020b). The pandemic became a burden for the college students who were unable to fulfill their simple needs in the crisis. For that, students have even become a little apathetic to take part in their online studies (The Independent BD, 2020b).

Online classes through TV or smartphones are working for the time being but a maximum quantity of college students faces a shortage of these devices. In rural areas, a portion of the Bangladeshi population does not have a television, smartphone, or any other digital device for e-

learning. UGC is offering repayable smooth loans to these college students who cannot afford any digital gadgets; however, the mortgage disbursement has emerged as a prolonged process. Moreover, most of the households in this pandemic are struggling with their basic needs, and for them, buying any digital gadgets is quite taxing. So, for the lack of digital devices, students struggled to join online classes during the pandemic. Alamgir (2021) confirmed that about 69.5% of the students cannot attend online learning, and about 57.9% of college students complained about not having any digital gadgets (Alamgir, 2021).

Students lacked awareness of online lectures as well. The way the courses were carried out and that environment held students away from concentrating on the classification (Fatema, 2020). College students generally did not pay attention to the classes the instructor gave in online courses because of poor presentation skills. Moreover, they were also unfamiliar about this new structure of the class. Students thus chose to stay quiet instead of asking the professor any questions, even though questions were generally asked by the teachers (Chowdhury, 2020b). Most of the time, students flipped off their digital camera, resulting in the teacher not being able to make eye contact with them. Majed et al. (2020) found that, according to students, the reason behind them switching off their camera is to minimize mobile internet data use.

Though much blame may lie on students for the lack of online learning effectiveness, it is also important to think from their perspective. On the one hand, during the lockdown, Bangladeshi students used clever gadgets and spent too a lot time on social media. Among them, 60% of college students used their mobile continuously and they did not study at all at some point of the lockdown (Emon et al., 2020). Some students have been wasting their time on Facebook, TV, Web series instead of concentrating on their studies. Most of the time, college students are deeply engaged in unnecessary gossip in many groups on Facebook and WhatsApp, which threatens their future

careers (Barua, 2020). On the other hand, it was not practical nor ideal to switch completely to an online platform for learning. Stress and trauma triggered by using unparalleled uncertainty due to epidemics have affected the mental fitness of students, parents, and teachers, also leading to psychosocial problems in epidemics and subsequent epidemics (Mopme, 2020). Although new graduates were supposed to enter the workplace, this was not feasible due to the occurrence of COVID-19 (Sahu, 2020). Their financial status has also affected as they lost jobs such as tuitions due to the lockdown, which in turn even impacted the country's economy. This kind of anxiety, frustration, and household stress also triggered a few college students to commit suicide – a heartbreaking tragedy indeed (Emon et al., 2020).

To uphold social distancing regulations, they could no longer spend unrestricted time with their friends (World Vision, 2020). Several reports stated that many households already do not have TV sets. Moreover, colleges were closed and first-year examinations were either cancelled or delayed due to the pandemic in 2020, 2021, and even 2022. In that case, many of the primary students were thinking that they were being held back from their deserved academic years and academic lifestyles (Uddin, 2020).

While the government has started broadcasting classes on TV, it has been challenging for most college students to be there seeing that 50% of families no longer had satellite TV (BBS, 2019). Furthermore, due to the suspension of physical attendance in the classroom, college students struggled with anxiety. It has been found that the impact of COVID-19 on secondary stage students in Bangladesh has been massive. As extended school closure were predicted to increase college dropout rates, child labor, and early marriage (The Daily Star, 2020c). Study findings advised that HSC candidates should be involved about their future.

When the authorities determined to cancel their HSC examinations and make them automatically pass. This kind of outcome manifested yet another problem which was that their auto-pass grades would have an effect on their college admission test. Many parents had been unemployed due to coronavirus or compelled to shut down their businesses. Students were anxious about how they would overcome economic losses during the pandemic (Emon et al., 2020). Engineering and medical students additionally faced essential difficulties. A tutorial session jam has befallen due to the uncertain shutdown of academic establishments (Ahmed, 2020). Especially last year students who wanted to graduate at the end of 2020 have neglected their probability to apply for many job circulars. Still, some personal universities compelled their college students to end their final year semester tests and made them graduate. This variety of quick time exam, however, was not properly evaluated. Ultimately, the students became graduates but satisfactory schooling was not ensured in the course of this process. In the absence of education, skills, training college students would have no access to traditional job markets which would make monetary impacts, especially among postsecondary students, and may enlarge the hazard of childhood unemployment (ILO, 2020). Massive job losses in recent instances and growing working pressure are having an especially painful effect on younger people worldwide. Recent conditions solely pinpointed that losses or disruptions in the tutorial year will have an effect on disadvantaged childhood from terrible socio-economic families, in particular due to the increased value of education opportunities. It can amplify anti-social activity and social unrest among the youth. This is a specific danger in Bangladesh due to the negative adolescence reputation and social media (Mopme, 2020).

### Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This method I chose for this study is qualitative research methodology. In this section, I explain my research procedure, including where and how I have collected and analyzed the data.

The data collection method was conducting semi-structured interviews. The interviews tried to explore students' opinions and reasons which answer the research questions and also offer some possible suggestions to overcome the problems of online education during the pandemic. This goes in line with the purpose of interviews in qualitative research (Lapan, Stephen D, P-3). The interview questions are outlined in Appendix A. The participants' details are given below:

Student's name	Institutions	Class
1. Sadia Islam	Morning Glory School and College	9
2. Shapnil Jahan	Savar Cantonment Public School and College	10
3. Samia Kabir	Morning Glory School and College	9
4. Srabonty Das	BPATC School and College	10
5. Arefin Sumi	Savar Cantonment Public School and College	10
6. Sibbir Ahmed	Morning Glory School and College	9

7. Borsha Haque	Morning Glory School and College	9
8. Farzana Akter	Savar Cantonment Public School and College	10
9. Nusrat Jahan	Savar Cantonment Public School and College	9
10. Rithika Jimi	BPATC School and college	10
11. Sabina Yeasmin	Morning Glory School and College	10
12. Sharna Akter	Savar Cantonment Public School and College	9

It was not easy to conduct interviews with all participants at the same time. Different participants took a different amount of time, and the interviews were one-to-one and were taken online. Findings from the interview are explained and analyzed in the Data Analysis section.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the difficulties students face in attending online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh?
2. What are the difficulties teachers face in teaching online classes during the Covid-19 pandemic in Bangladesh?
3. What are the challenges of going back to the face-to face class after the pandemic?

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis**

A detailed participant profile is presented before the data is analysed in themes.

### **4.1 Participant Profile**

First of all, I have asked students what problems they faced while doing online classes during the pandemic. Overall, I found that the students started online sessions to pass their classes and that this form of learning was a totally new experience for them. Due to the pandemic, they took part in online classes for almost 2 years. This chapter analyzes the data regarding the students' concentrations on studies after institutions opened up after such a long drought.

I have asked one student from Morning Glory School who reads in class 9. During the pandemic she was totally dependent on online sessions. She told me she was doing online private coaching, which means students continued their studies online. When I asked if she faced any internet issues during online sessions or tests, she told me that not only was it a new experience for them to do online classes, but that they have also faced internet issues during class and exam time. According to her, sometimes, electricity was gone during class periods and sometimes internet was gone for some issues. They faced problems during such times.

When I asked her learning procedure during the lockdown, she told me that most of the time she was doing her classes in the early morning, and sometimes in the morning. Her private coaching classes were in the afternoon. She felt relaxed most of the time as she did not need to go school physically. However, she sometimes felt it became tough for them to continue watching online learning videos and attending classes on the mobile screen for a long time.

When I asked her which one is good for her between online or offline session, she told me that online classes are better for her as they can take part in classes or exams peacefully from their homes. She also talked about the advantages of physical classes, saying that they can gain face-to-face experiences or can do some activities in a physical classroom setting and also face no internet issues.

Another participant is a class 10 student. When I asked her about her studies during the pandemic, she told me that it was fully relaxing. She did not need to physically go to her school. If she needed any help from any teacher, she called her teacher to come online to solve her problems. She does not need to do any journey for going to school. In her point of view, online sessions are better than offline sessions. As for problems faced during online sessions, the common answers were electricity and internet issues. When I asked her how she wants to study after the pandemic, she told me that she has found more comfort in online sessions if internet issues are solved.

The third participant I interviewed reads in class 9. She told me her education during the pandemic involved both online and offline sessions. She did her regular class in online sessions but gave her exams offline. Sometimes when she missed any exam, the teacher gave her another chance to give the exam. In her point of view, when teacher gave this kind of opportunities to them, online learning is better than offline learning.

My fourth participant who reads in class 10 said that she continued her studies online. She experienced some issues in online sessions as she does not have any internet connectivity at her home and she does not have any mobile phone either. Thus, she took part in her online sessions by using her mother's mobile phone. She told me sometimes she used to experience terrible headaches due to looking at the mobile screen so much. Moreover, she does not have

enough knowledge in technology, which is why sometimes she faced many problems while doing her online classes. In her point of view, offline learning is better than online learning. In offline sessions, she can do physically interact and not require looking at the mobile screen all the time.

Regarding the fifth participant, she reads in class 10. She said that she has undergone online learning sessions during the pandemic. She told me that online platforms can be good if there is enough internet connectivity. If the internet service is not good, online sessions, according to her, are not good ways to learn. She also talked about the positives of online education: that they do not need to go to school physically, and that they can do their classes at home. She has also enjoyed her online classes, as she never experienced such classes before. She said, “If internet connectivity is good, online class session will be the best learning material for me.”

My sixth participant, who reads in class 9, said he did his regular classes online. In his perspective, online classes are better than offline classes. In online sessions, they can do their partake in the class from their homes without having to tackle the traffic. This can also save precious time, as he said that he could even do classes right after waking up. He added,

In exam time, sometimes we were stuck in traffic jam. Exam time used to start but we could not reach our school in time. It became stressful and overwhelming for us when we used to see our questions in the exam hall as we already came there by facing traffic jam and were late.

My seventh participant is another person who reads in class nine. During pandemic she was exposed to online learning. In her classes, every week they got new assignments. Regular

classes of specific time lengths were also held. She said that online education trumps offline education when it comes to the commute. However, in her perspective, teachers or schools are given them much pressure in online education. She told me that when they were doing their physical class, they did not face that many assignments which are given to them in online education. It became tough for them to look at the mobile screen all the time.

The eighth participant reads in class 10. She said that, during the pandemic, it became quite for her to continue her studies. Her education continued when the government enforced online learning. During class periods, she first became quite nervous as she did not use any mobile phone before the pandemic. Afterward, she did her regular classes via a mobile phone. Since she had to do all assignments via a mobile phone with help of some applications, her digital literacy increased. It became tough for her all the time to study from a mobile screen. In her perspective, offline learning is superior.

As for the ninth participant, she is a class 9 student. She also said that her education took place online. Whenever she faced any problem in her studies, she connected with their teacher to solve her problems. She has enjoyed online learning significantly and thinks it is perfect for her. When the internet connection had some issues, she used mobile data to regularly attend classes. She also depended on mobile data when electricity went in her area. After the lockdown, she expressed desire to continue online sessions.

Upon asking my tenth participant who reads in class 10 the same questions, she replied that she has had to use online platforms during the pandemic to continue her studies. The school to which she went gave a regular routine for online classes. She had two or three classes on each day. She used to attend the online classes regularly, but it became tough to do so due to

electricity or internet issues. Because of internet issues, she prefers offline session for doing her regular classes.

The eleventh participant reads in class 10. She said that during the pandemic she used online platform for her school and private sessions. She did her regular classes in Zoom meetings and, at the same time when she finished school class, she did her private coaching in online sessions through Zoom as well. She told me that it became quite tough for her to manage all the sessions that took up all day, especially as she had to look at the mobile screen continuously. It hampered her eyes and sometimes caused terrible headaches. She prefers offline classes as they are safer for her health. According to her, internet issues are also common for all the students in online education.

Finally, the twelfth participant reads in class 9. Like most of the participants, she has learned exclusively through online platforms during the pandemic. In online sessions, she felt more comfortable studying as she did not need to go to school physically and also did not have to face any traffic jam. Another positive she mentioned was not having to face any scolding from her teachers. In online sessions, she faced internet issues as sometimes electricity went and internet connectivity became poor. However, if she were to choose from these two ways of studying, she would pick online education. According to her, it gives her much comfort and, at the same time, can also save much of her time.

## **4.2 Thematic Analysis**

From the interview data the following themes emerged. I have also related the themes with the existing literature where possible.

### ***4.2.1 Common Issues of Electricity and Internet Availability***

One of the most common issues most of the participants reported is internet connectivity. As we all know, for doing online classes, internet connectivity is of the utmost importance. Without an internet connection, neither students nor teachers can even join online classes. The data I have found show that most of the students find it difficult to afford consistent internet. As all students' financial condition is not the same, some families cannot afford android mobile phones. Even if money is not an issue, access to a good internet connection is not ensured, especially in rural Bangladesh. Another related issue is the lack of consistent electricity, which also is more prevalent in rural areas. All students cannot afford to use mobile data for online sessions. Sometimes, students need to stay online 24 hours for doing their assignments. For that they need to use WiFi, and if electricity is gone for a whole day, it is difficult for the students to do their assignments as they cannot use data for a long time. During online classes, if either the internet or electricity outage causes a student to miss some important parts of the lecture, often the teacher does not consider this and thinks it is an excuse.

According to G. Arun, a language trainer from Thiruvambady, "the students who depend on virtual classrooms are struggling to cope up with the situation and they need some favourable intervention during this lockdown" (Kozhikode, 2021, June 3). This is mainly noticed in urban areas. Most of the children using wired connections with WiFi modem in their homes as power supply disruptions disconnect them from the classroom. Teachers who prepare video lectures also faced difficulties. Live classes often ended because of unexpected technical issues. Most of the people's fear is that during the monsoon period, the situation will worsen due to delays in repairing damaged power lines, transformers, and electric posts.

Thus, poor internet connection and high-costing mobile phones and mobile data are major obstacles for most of the students in rural and remote areas in our country. According to

Md Jhohurul Haque, chairman of Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission, “It is impossible to provide uninterrupted internet facilities because many areas are still without electricity connections and mobile network coverage” (Jasim & Sajid, 2020). Furthermore, UGC conducted a survey where 87 percent of students have smartphones but no internet connections or inability to afford internet data. An education survey of Dhaka University found that most of the students want to take part in online sessions but expensive data, poor connections, electricity problems, and lack of devices are major barriers. There is another issue related to internet connectivity besides simply consistent access to it. This is the speed of the internet connection. Sometimes, students cannot join online classes at all because of slow internet connectivity, and sometimes they can join but may not be able to follow the lecture and engage in class activities well due to low network connections. This is especially an issue when students have online exams time or presentations. Teachers cannot manage their time properly because of the slow and high internet connectivity of various students. Some students join timely but some students reach late after exam time starts.

Yet another issue of slow connectivity is that students sometimes need to download some information or data from the internet, but because of a slow network connection, it takes a lot of time to download those files. As online learning has also made online materials available, the materials need to be downloaded, and further mobile data is used if the WiFi is inconsistent or non-existent. There are also some areas where 3G or 4G network connections are not available. Sometimes, students need to download a big file, and if the connections are not at high speeds, it takes the whole day to download that file. In short, due to a lack of good internet connection, many students failed to submit their assignments timely, join the online classes, and follow the lectures even if they are able to join.

#### ***4.2.2 Prolonged Screentime Leading to Health Hazards***

Virtual classes may be beneficial for students for some reasons as they do not need to go institutions physically, but can do their classes with a relaxed mood and without the extra pressure for going institutions. However, there is the danger of students being affected by different diseases like eye pressure and headache after looking at the mobile screen for a long time. In online education, Bangladeshi students have had to attend online classes and do their assignments by looking at the screen, leading to more time spent with the mobile phone or computer. For example, A parent whom I have taken interviews from Azimpur who said that before the pandemic, her son did use smart devices. However, during the lockdown, he used it for over 10 hours. When she used to ask her son about it, the son used to say that he was attending online classes or preparing his assignments. Unfortunately, her son developed eye problems due to the constant pressure on his eyes.

Another parent whom I have asked they said same thing about their children spending their whole time looking at the mobile screen. However, this was for entertainment purposes as the children used to ask for the mobile phone before eating and playing. It hampers students' physical and mental health as they are staring at the mobile screen all the time. As a result, they have taken their children to the eye hospital and they said their eye becomes dry and the retinal function decreases while the minus power increases among students and the youth. The number of patients is also increasing day by day doctor said. Looking at a computer, mobile and other screen devices is harmful for the eyes for the children, last two and a half months children are more prone to eye and headache for reflective error and they need glasses.

Children spend in front of computers and smart phones for a long time for online classes as schools remain shut due to the Covid-19 pandemic which is starting to bother parents as complaints of headaches, eye problems and stress surface, it has been learnt.

Time spent on screens not just for studies but for other activities as well is increasing, says a city-based psychiatrist, who, worryingly feels it's turning out to be "worse than cannabis addition."

The ministry of human resource development (MHRD) recommended just 30 hours of screen time for pre-primary students, two classes of 45 minutes each for classes 1 to 8 and four classes of 45 minutes each for classes 9 to 12, but that's not working, parents allege. Many schools are not following the directions, which anyway are not binding.

Classes go on for longer than expected. "My children recently developed fever and headaches after attending online classes and I had to take them to the doctor," says Nitin Goyal, president of the Chandigarh Parents Association.

#### ***4.2.3 Preference for Online Education***

Some students felt online sessions are more comfortable than offline ones. In an online session, they are doing their class without going their school physically. In that way, they do not need to face traffic jam for a long time and no issues for going to school late. Students, therefore, may be able to do their regular classes with proper time in online classes. If they had any problem in any section of their study, they can connect with their teacher via the internet. In some areas the roads are not in good conditions and may be under construction, resulting in the students having to take detours. This is also avoided in online classes. Another major benefit of

online education is that in offline settings, some students had to sacrifice their comfort in living in a place close to the school or college. In online education, students can join classes from a different district. This also means the extra costs for their rented house are removed.

#### ***4.2.4 Online Education Problems in Particular Subjects***

Some students said physical activities are important in some courses like chemistry, physical education, and biology. In a chemistry class, the teacher may show some connection of mol in pot and boil them. If students cannot see these in reality, it may become difficult for them to identify the connection. In a physical education class, there is some exercise to do for the students which cannot be possible if they cannot do those physically. In a biology class, they cannot recognize the bones which is showing in their practical session. Most of the students are familiar with the physical benefits of activity and exercise, but it should be remembered that physical activities help students to develop their brain, health, and cognition. Surveys of questions and assignments where students need to share how they have been physically active are important.

There are some physical activities which should be done physically, meaning that the teacher will show students physical exercise and the students will copy them and do those by themselves. It is much more effective in face-to-face offline classes. Though there are several videos on YouTube how to do physical activities at home, in face-to-face classes, the teacher or instructor can give personalized recommendations and guide students by hand. Indeed, physical activities are done with the collaboration of teachers. Since physical exercise is an active process, students need to participate there physically in the class. There is another physical activity which is class competition using steps or miles or minutes; if the internet connection lags, it will not be possible to complete that task in a proper time.

#### ***4.2.5 Need for Digital Literacy***

Regarding the technology of our country, most of the institutions are not using technology to a great extent. As a result, students and teachers were not that much capable to adapt to new technology in the pandemic. Students found difficulty in using new technological apps which were fundamental to online learning like Zoom and Google Meet. Some students who have some knowledge about the internet can easily adapt them, but the students who lack digital literacy and who do not use a smartphone faced difficulty in online education. In offline session, even those students who scored well could not perform well in online sessions due to the lack of technological knowledge. Teachers are also not trained well about new apps which are also a major problem for doing online sessions.

The pandemic of COVID-19 has thrust technology into an even more important role than it had previously, especially in the education sector. It was needed in almost all cases: from attending online classes to writing on digital platforms like Google Doc. If students embrace the integrated technology in education, they can thrive in several ways since there are various benefits to online education such as being able to join classes from anywhere and not needing to tackle the traffic. Unfortunately, the solution does not only lie with the students. The Bangladesh government also has to step in by improving electricity and internet connectivity. Even the internet speed has to be at a standard since downloading materials is an important part of online education. If internet connection is not so well and students do not have much knowledge about technology and how to access and download free information, it could be a major problem for the students.

Computer education is thus a much-needed realm of knowledge for the students of today's world. I have also taken some students from Morning glory school to take information

for my research, those students still cannot operate MS word and PowerPoint. They also face much difficulties with their live session, browsing study materials, communication-related apps, websites, and others. Sometimes, students face difficulty – especially those students who do not use a mobile phone. They face difficulties regarding how to login into Zoom and join live classes, how to create and submit their work, how to communicate with teachers via online sessions, among others. In online session, teachers give students assignments for improving their reading and writing skills, but students may not be able to write the assignments with proper confidence if they are using new technology. This unfamiliarity may sometimes lead to them losing hope to continue online sessions and communicating with the teacher. As a result, students lose their interest to do online session because of poor technological skills with apps, video calls, and become unable to express themselves via live chats, emails, or text messages. Regarding teachers, they are used to teach using the blackboard and textbooks; but during the pandemic, they had to deal with virtual softcopies and virtual marking of scripts.

Two participants in this study particularly faced internet problems and some other technological issues. First, Islam who reads in class 9 in Morning Glory School and College, said that the area where she lives in cannot capture 3G or 4G internet connectivity. She added that most of the time they face poor internet connection. Moreover, even electricity is not available in their areas, as most of the time it is announced that electricity will be gone for the whole day. Due to such drastic connectivity problems, she suffered in her online sessions. She said that she could not concentrate on her studies properly because of these types of gaps during her online class sessions. She also said that once during an online class when the teacher gave them important chapters from the book for the exam, that time her internet became slow, resulting in she not being able to note the important information properly. At another time while she was

doing her online class, electricity was gone. When it returned, she explained the situation to her teacher, who unfortunately did not believe her and instead blamed her that she turned off her internet connectivity herself. She was totally confused about how to convince her teacher that it was the truth. Most unfortunately, it was quite common for her to lose network connection.

Miss Kabir, another student who reads in class 9 from Morning Glory School and College, also faced technological problems during her online sessions. She had not used a smartphone before, but used it for the first time because of her online class. She lacked digital literacy so much that she did not know how to open a Google account, how to buy internet packages, how to use WiFi, how to download apps, which apps she had to use for doing online classes, how to log in the apps like Zoom or Google meet through Gmail account, how to get class link of the online session, how to mute or unmute or turn on the digital camera or audio from Zoom, how to share files with the teachers, and more. As a result, she had to take help from her friends who have knowledge about android phone.

## Chapter 5: Discussion

A common issue of all the participants was that they faced some issues of internet connectivity. When the issue of internet connection is out of the picture, some students felt that online learning is good for them as it gives them more time to read. Time is saved as they do not need to go to school or college by facing traffic jams, and so they can do classes with relaxed minds and less pressure. However, some students said that looking at the mobile screen all the time is harmful for them as they are already facing eye problems, headaches, and different kinds of mental diseases. As a university student, I am not sure what will happen after the lockdown when our university will take classes in campus. I have taken 12 interviews from 12 students and have come to know that all students' perspectives are not the same, though there are some patterns of difficulties. The students who are interested in mobile phones tend to have better digital literacy. These students have enjoyed their online sessions. On the other hand, the students who are not interested in mobile phones found it difficult to study in online sessions. Students' interest thus increases when they can do any work on a platform with which they are familiar.

Now the discussion turns to the solutions of these aforementioned problems brought to the surface by the pandemic. Indeed, both online and offline classes have their own distinctive ways to take classes. With the shift from offline to online learning during the pandemic of COVID-19, there were several problems like students being affected by different diseases like headache and eye problems, which in turn impacted their studies. Another common problem to tackle is the poor internet connectivity. If the government takes necessary steps to strengthen internet connectivity, it will be helpful for our upcoming studies. In every institution, there is seldom update in technology, and students in schools do not have enough knowledge in

technology. In every school, there should be a subject to learn about technology. Identifying those students who especially require such knowledge should be a priority. Every institution should also have updated technology so that if any disaster like COVID-19 comes, they can take necessary steps immediately. In fact, every institution should prepare for such disaster management. If this kind of virus spreads, institutions can take online classes but there will be no issues of internet connectivity or other problems of technology which have been faced by students in this pandemic.

As discussed, fully online classes are not ideal for the students as it is harmful for their eyes and brain. Especially in a pandemic, education should not be physically taxing as well. Different kinds of apps like Zoom and Google Meet are used by the teachers and students who do not have enough knowledge about these apps, and yet are doing online classes using these apps. Therefore, to be prepared for the future, they have to be trained about these kinds of apps so that they can take classes perfectly. If we talk about dental education during the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual reality and augmented reality, haptic technology are being used for skills training. Blended learning and virtual curriculum can also be incorporated in dental leaning for future (Haroon, 2020). During this pandemic many dental schools and instructors interact with students that how to teach them. To activate that kind of teaching formulation, they are reforming clinical activities in the e-learning and e-teaching process. Many institutions are also taking necessary steps to update their teaching and learning procedure.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

To sum up, we can say that the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively influenced secondary education in Bangladesh on a number of sectors. Many international locations took numerous one-of-a-kind policies to overcome these newly springing up problems. As for education, the nearly unanimous decision was to shift to online learning completely, with live online classes being a major component. Bangladesh was additionally affected and compelled to shut all academic institutes, which has resulted in a significant educational gap, especially before the decision to switch to online education. It was the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh that decided to shift to e-learning. The online platforms used for conducting classes were through Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, recorded classes for secondary, higher secondary, and college students.

Unfortunately, at first, it was challenging to ensure maximum attendance and enable quality presentations due to the fact that most of the students as well as the teachers were unfamiliar with the concept of online learning and teaching. Teachers and students faced numerous problems, among them being the lack of technological knowledge, internet and electricity issues, and overall poor digital literacy. One major problem faced by students was the internet connectivity issue for which they had to pay a significant amount every month for attending online classes. This problem was especially acute for those with financial struggles. Especially during the pandemic crisis, students faced additional psychological strains due to their parents' financial problems. Many students' parents also became unemployed, and the students' jobs – such as tuitions – were also at peril due to the lockdown and social distancing. Added to all these was the pressure of continuing their education in this pandemic. Furthermore, long-term lockdowns influenced school dropout rates, infant labor, early marriage, and more. On the other side, the university's closure for 12 months meant that students could neither graduate nor apply in many job circulars.

Besides students, COVID-19 has had a hazardous effect on personal instructional institutions. Many personal instructional institutes had been unable to bear their month-to-month costs since all lessons had been postponed with no fees from students at some stage in the lockdown. Overall, these realities made their existence extra underprivileged. The authorities have taken many initiatives and they have implemented many of them to recover the losses. In this situation, the Bangladesh government should take more necessary steps about the major issues of the students which relate to internet connectivity and enhancing digital literacy. Teachers and students have to give proper training about new technologies and every institution should be ready to use technology to overcome these kinds of educational gaps.

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### **Appendix A: Interview Questions**

1. Which class do you read in and what is your institution's name?
2. During the pandemic of COVID-19, how have you learned?
3. During online sessions, did you face any problems of learning?
4. How was your learning procedure after lockdown?
5. Did you face any internet issues during online tests and online class sessions?
6. After experiencing online classes, which do you prefer between online studies and offline studies?