



Received: 20-12-2021
Accepted: 25-01-2022

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

A study on changing attitude of students towards online study during Pandemic

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Abstract

This paper identifies and analyses the changing attitude of students particularly the private university students of Bangladesh towards online study due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is within the descriptive and qualitative research and undertakes the responses of private university students under different situations related to online studies during pandemic. This research has provided

an insight of what the education sector of Bangladesh is going through due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey response illustrates that student are getting adaptability and comfortability in doing online classes, however, it has been additionally found in spite of being comfortable to online sessions, students perceive in-person classes are much more effective than that of online classes.

Keywords: Online-class, COVID-19, Students, Universities, Digital-Learning, Distance-study, Pandemic, Problems, Technology

1. Introduction

In Wuhan, Hubei province, China, the COVID-19 infectious disease was first detected in December 2019^[4]. Also known as COVID-19, the devastating and contagious Coronavirus disease has significantly impacted the global economy, which has also shaken the education sector. More than 18,000 cases of the COVID-19 were found in over 110 countries and that's why on March 11, WHO (World Health Organization) declared it as a global pandemic^[1]. The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic caused many schools and colleges to remain temporarily closed during the current semester or even more in the future. Distance learning has gained priority in the education sector during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic^[8].

In March, Bangladesh announced its first COVID-19 case. As it is an infectious disease, the government has decided to shut all educational institutions for a certain period to control the situation. Not only developing countries like Bangladesh but also developed countries like the USA, UK and Japan etc. also closed their educational institutions temporarily. Bangladesh is the only South Asian country which has momentarily sealed its educational activities from march 17,2020 and presumably that is the reason the circumstance of Bangladesh is as yet levelled out. However, Qawmi madrasas have started their activities and it is reported students are not maintaining social distancing and other rules^[2]. A few schools and colleges and now almost every university has begun its educational program online. As online is the only medium to proceed with examine and procure information in this pandemic^[10].

In April 2020, UGC has entitled private universities to take online classes and exams. Moreover, it has allowed private universities to take practical classes and assessments with exceptional thought in No-vember 2020^[3, 5]. Though it is a good step to take online classes, students are facing some problems due to this. As a developing nation, it is hard to have much idea about computers, smart gadgets and the internet. Besides, before this pandemic student never got the opportunity to do online classes^[11]. As a result, students are new to this learning method. Even though this method is quite challenging for teachers.

In this study, the survey questionnaire consists of 35 questions. This paper endeavours to execute the following objectives: 1. To point out the learning method of online class in pandemic, 2. To find out the effectiveness of online classes in this pandemic, 3. To identify the sources available to attend online class and 4. To find out the learning environment due to COVID-19. The study would provide the university authorities with understanding the issues that students are facing due to online class and by keeping this in mind they can introduce an effective outline for students to continue the study without facing any trouble. Lastly, this study creates an opportunity for researchers to get an idea about the students' attitudes towards online classes in a pandemic. In this paper, literature review is highlighted in the second section. Chronologically the third section is about research methodology. After that the pa-per consists of data analysis, discussion and conclusion which have been discussed consequently.

2. Literature Review

Literature review consists of two parts in which at first the prime constraints that students of private universities in Bangladesh are facing are discussed briefly in reference to the related studies and literature review. On the other part, Brac University, the approaches of Brac University, a particular private university in Bangladesh, to online mode of studies has been discussed.

2.1 Constraints Facing by Private University Students

In Bangladesh, there are many private universities but only 107 private universities have got approval from UGC. As these universities are not funded by the government, students have to bear a lot of expense. According to NEWAGE Bangladesh^[12], the number of students attending the summer 2020 session is less than summer 2019 as it is difficult for students to hold up the expenditure. Even after providing the waiver, authorities could not allure students to attend the new semester, as most of the students are from middle class background and they do not find online classes useful^[7].

On the other hand, it was published in The Daily Star that due to the pandemic private university students prefer to stay at home and attend online classes^[6]. Because students do not want their semester to be halted. Although students can attend online classes and watch recordings, they still feel the offline classes were more effective. Side by side, they are under huge psychological pressure due to online classes. A student from Daffodil University has committed suicide due to the mental pressure and family problem. Moreover, due to low family income some university students cannot continue their semester and thus are unable to complete the graduation^[14]. As a result, low-income students cannot afford to purchase smart gadgets and data packs to attend the class. Additionally, electricity is one of the big issues in conducting online classes. Moreover, to decrease the mental pressure of students in UGC has asked private universities not to take exams^[12]. For this reason, private universities have started taking assignments instead of exams.

2.2 Brac University, A Leading Private University in Bangladesh

Although it has been one year, many universities cannot provide enough resources for students to join online classes. Whereas Brac University has created an excellent atmosphere of online learning. Brac University has launched its own educational platform named as BuX and provided a

waiver till 100% for students. Brac University has created a Student Assistant Fund to help the student out and enrol in the semester^[6]. With the help of BuX students can watch their lecture at any time anywhere. Students no longer need to worry about the electricity issue. Even students do not need to attend class and can sit for exams on BuX^[13]. However, as some students prefer to be in touch with faculties, Brac University has arranged a consultation hour for students where they can ask questions to their faculties through zoom, google meet, discord and other modules. Furthermore, if all universities start to think about the problems of students and come up with a solution like Brac University then online learning will be much more effective and enjoyable for students.

While there are a variety of research papers on COVID-19 correlated with educational studies, relatively little research has been conducted particularly on the Private Universities education sector in Bangladesh to the best of the researchers' knowledge therefore, there is an immediate need to analyse empirical evidence on the impact of COVID-19 on Private Universities in Bangladesh^[9].

3. Methodology

This research has provided an insight of what the education sector of Bangladesh is going through due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is under descriptive and qualitative research. The scrutiny embraces both the primary data and secondary data. The primary data evolved from online surveys which have been conducted through google form with 35 questions in the questionnaire. The survey collected 223 respondents and all the participants are from different private universities in Bangladesh. Whereas secondary data consists of journal paper, newspaper articles, blogs and conference papers particularly collected from Google scholar.

4. Data Analysis

The authors conducted a survey through google forms due to the limitations on in-person survey for COVID-19 pandemic. The survey questionnaire consists of 35 questions and it has been conducted on the private university students. The survey has 223 respondents from private universities who have played a part through online surveys. This study is within the descriptive analysis based on MS Excel used as a statistical tool to compress the responses.

The analysis and interpretation of survey and responses are shown below-

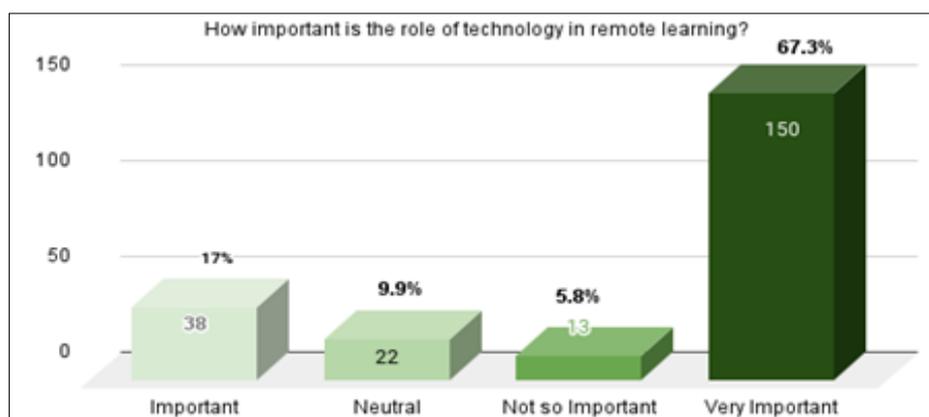


Fig 1: Importance of Technology

Fig 1 illustrates that 67.3 percent of students believe that technology is very important in remote learning. On the other hand, 17 percent of respondents stated it is important, while just 5.8 percent of students believe technology is not so important in remote learning.

As per the findings, fig 4 illustrates 31.4 percent of the students choose online programs, while 30 percent prefer in-person sessions. Some students, such as 24.7 percent, prefer partially online exams, while the remaining 13.9 percent prefer completely online assessments.

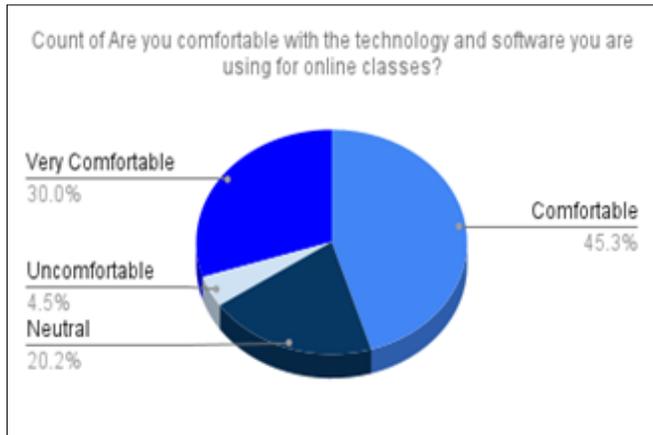


Fig 2: Comfortability of Technology

Fig 2 illustrates, according to the survey, 45.3% students are comfortable with the technology and software they are using for online classes and 30% are very comfortable. On the other hand, only 4.5% of students are uncomfortable with technology and software.

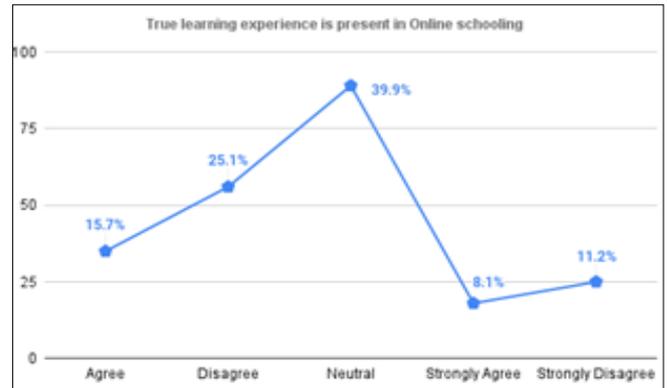


Fig 5: Learning Experience

Fig 5 encapsulates 39.9 percent of respondents were neutral regarding the genuine learning experience of online schooling, while 25.1 percent of students disagreed with this assertion. 15.7 percent of students believe that online learning provides a real learning experience. This assertion is strongly disagreed by just 8.1 percent of students.

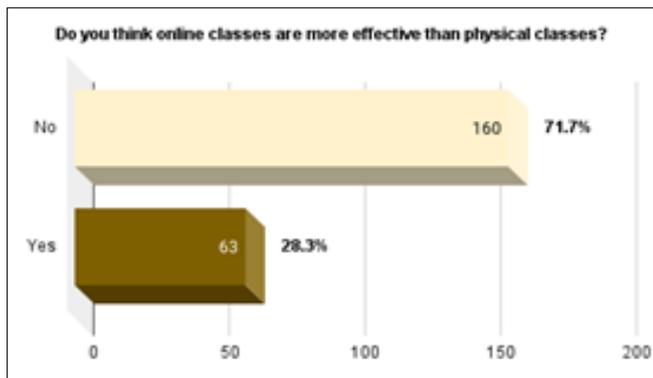


Fig 3: Online Class Vs. Offline Class

According to the findings, fig 3 exemplify that 71.7 percent of respondents believe that online classes are not more successful than traditional classrooms, while 28.3 percent believe that online programs are more successful than traditional classrooms.

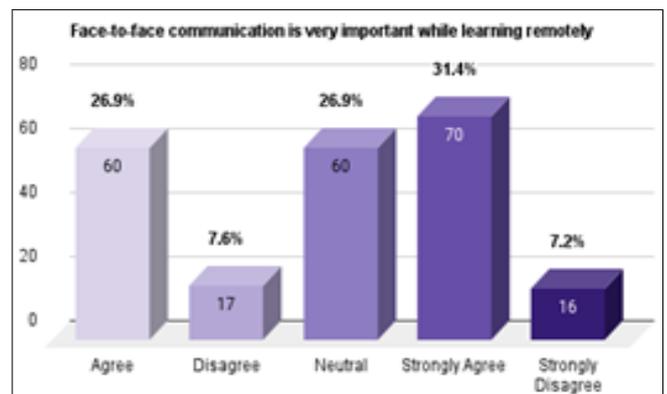


Fig 6: Importance of In-person Communication

Fig 6 compresses that 31.4% respondents strongly agree that Face to Face communication is very important while remote learning where 26.9% students in both agree and neutral with this statement. very few only 7.2% strongly disagree with this statement.

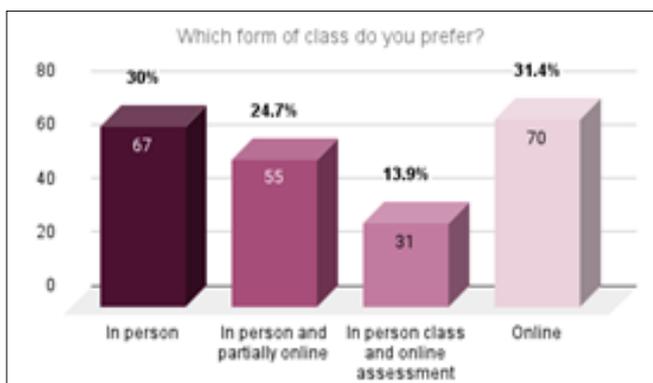


Fig 4: Preferences between Online & Offline Classes

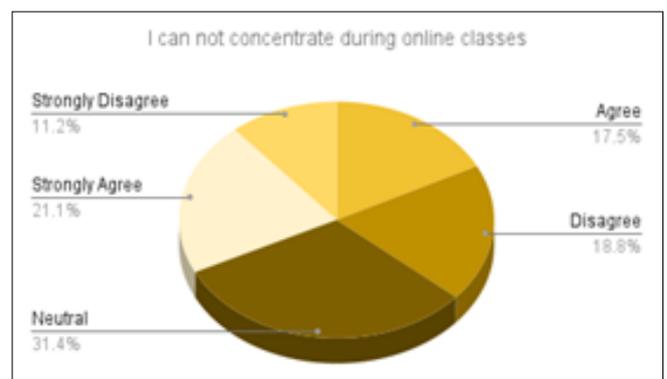


Fig 7: Concentration on Online Classes

According to the studies, fig 7 summarizes 31.4 percent of students were neutral regarding their ability to focus during online classes, while 21.1 percent firmly agreed that they could not concentrate during online sessions. 18.8 percent of students disagree with this statement, while 11.2 percent strongly disagree.

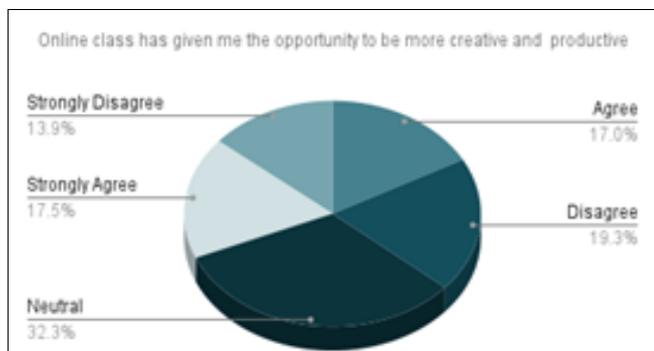


Fig 8: Creativity & Productivity

According to the surveys, 32.3 percent of students were neutral about their creative and productive abilities as a result of taking online classes. While 19.3 percent disagree with the statement about having more opportunities to be creative and productive. 17.5 percent of students strongly think that taking online classes has allowed them to be more productive and creative.

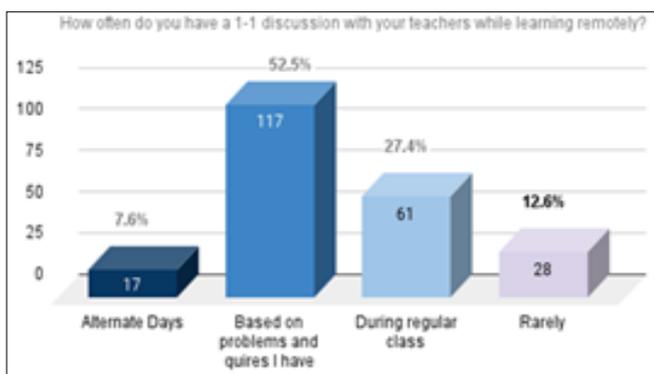


Fig 9: One to one discussion with the teacher

The question asked the respondents to know how frequently they connect to their teacher while learning on an online platform where 52.5% which is more than half of the response expressed that they connect to their teacher if they face any problems. While 27.4% and 12.6% said "during regular class" and "rarely" respectively

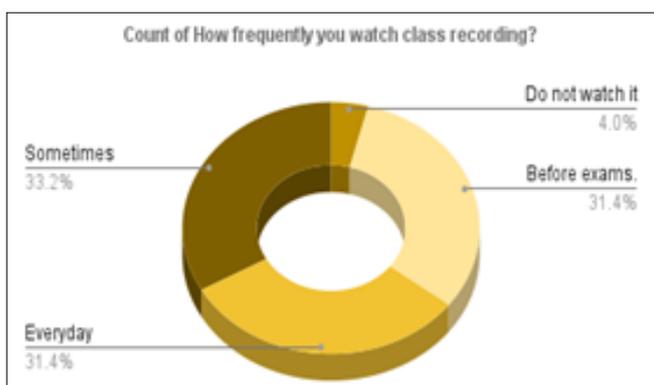


Fig 10: Frequency of watching class recording

According to the investigations in Fig 10, 33.2 percent of student's view class records occasionally, while 31.4 percent view recordings before tests and also on a daily basis. Only a small percentage of students, about 4%, do not watch class videos at all.

5. Discussion

It is evident that technology is essential to conduct online classes otherwise students cannot continue their semester and students are also quite comfortable using the digital method as it has been almost a year, students are doing online classes. However, the authors find out that students perceive in-person classes are much more effective for learning, still students choose online class over offline class because of traffic jams, a log gap between the class and attendance. Side by side, in Fig 8 the authors additionally found that most of the students are unsure about their productive and creative approach to-wards study and thereby the authors perceive it is difficult to build up creativity and improve productivity while having distance learning. Additionally, the authors suggest that in-person classes and study are much more effective and efficient in developing creativity as it provides a practical approach and in-person learning experience provides less opportunity in cheating activities. In fig 9, the authors additionally found that the students are less concerned in contacting and connecting to their teachers unless they come up with any difficulties. This surprisingly proves that distance learning or online classes are less effective than that of offline classes due to the decreased participation of students in connecting to their teachers.

Lastly, in preparing the study, the authors have been faced with some limitations. The study is based on only the private university students and due to pandemic, the authors could not have an opportunity to interact with students properly and could not conduct the in-person survey. Furthermore, an adequate number of articles and papers on the obstacle of university students due to the pandemic were not available.

6. Conclusions

The COVID-19 has shaken the different sectors of the industry all over the world and the education sector is one of them. It has been almost a year that private universities are enrolling students yet they are facing trouble due to lack of resources and support. Some students cannot enroll because of low family income, electricity issues, lack of smart gadgets and internet connection. In addition, educational environments cannot be created at home. In summary, students need proper support to continue their study online. As the pandemic is going on it is quite natural to suffer mentally, physically and financially. Due to this, some universities have started offering waivers and counselling for the betterment of the students. However, the authors recommend that one to one class should be arranged at least in a week to provide students a chance to communicate with the faculty. Furthermore, authorities should keep in mind the electricity and the internet are a hurdle for students to join class. Moreover, authorities should provide enough resources to help them out. In conclusion, this global pandemic is horrible for each of us. People are losing their lives and assets due to the pandemic. In this situation, every institution should be empathic towards their students. As nobody knows when this pandemic is going to end, it would

be wise for private universities to find out the loopholes of online classes and try to eradicate them. It would help the students to enjoy and attend the class. Additionally, it would help the private universities to stand out and shine in the future.

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