

# **Ethical Issues in Online Education**

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## **1. Introduction:**

Online education is rapidly expanding world-wide. Since ethics work on every aspect in day to day life, there is nothing more to say that ethics will also work on online learning vastly. In this article, ethics from both teachers and student perspectives have been discussed. Also, discussion about solutions is not expressed against unethical practices, as the topic does not suggest.

It is believed by many that online education, which includes all online activities, such as online exams, assignments etc, does not support students from getting proper knowledge, manners and ethics. In this article it was examined how and what ethical issues arise when students perform online exams.

To examine the situation, multiple related research papers were studied. Also, surveys were done on both university students from Bangladesh, a country which is performing online activities for a long time due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Data from the survey is analyzed which will certainly bring us a conclusion.

## **2. JUSTIFICATION:**

Ethical issues in online education have limited the interaction between students and teachers. Students are now prone to online frauds. They are already seen to have lost all motivation because of the lack of social interaction among their teachers. In online education students and teachers maintain distance, since the activity is performed virtually. Neither the teacher nor the student is able to confront each other or the teacher cannot see what the student is actually doing. Students got the clear opportunity to break rules, which also indicates the breaking of ethics. This is because in the sudden absence of a teacher, students can perform any activity which

can be against ethics. They hardly try to solve any task seriously. The loyalty towards the exams and other activities are not at all proper. Online fraud is a very common issue in online academic environments / online education. It takes less effort to cheat in exams as opposed to face-to-face learning. About 60% of students are prone to online fraud. Since face-to-face interaction with teachers are solemnly limited, the practice of plagiarism, sharing of answers, searching answers online, question leakages, recurrent improper citing have become an ease for the students.

For example, if we consider a scenario where a student is giving an online exam, that student has a high risk of plagiarizing or engaging in similar behaviour throughout the exam because he or she has the opportunity to do so. 'Chances of unethical behaviour of students usually take place in online education than traditional learning, which led the learners in online education to behave unethically' [1] (Almseidein & Klaif.Mahasneh, 2020). So, the target of this research is to find out why students take this chance to behave unethically. Now moving from plagiarism done by students, let's focus on the unethical side performed by few teachers, in other word, the lack of concentration to students in online activity. Teachers are less concerned about student activity in online classes because they do not have face-to-face instructional activities. In physical education, a teacher would watch a student's activity and then instruct them accordingly. As a result, students learn from their mistakes and can act positively in the future. However, this does not occur in online education.

Since teachers and students don't have face-to-face teaching activities, teachers do not bother much about student activity online. In traditional education teachers used to observe a student activity and can observe and instruct a student accordingly. So here students get to know their mistakes and can act in a positive way next time. But in online education these does not happen. The importance of this research is because online education is expanding, but the unethical activities are not deteriorating, rather increasing. If this continues, the online education system will fall, people will lose their faith, and overall education will have an impact.

As already discussed above about some common issues, online education also requires some self-motivation, patience and time management skills. This also causes social isolation. Feedbacks are limited and skill developments are lacking within students. The importance behind this research is because as online education is expanding, there is no

deterioration of unethical activities. It is rather increasing and exacerbating. If this trend continues, the online education system will collapse, people will lose trust in education, and education as a whole will suffer.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:**

Research includes collecting data in order to add value to this research. Multiple papers were studied to find the reasons for the occurrence of unethical activities in online exams. Since these unethical activities in online exams might come due to e-learning, therefore we studied relevant papers which include unethical issues in online education.

Since research papers are found usually on google scholars, we gather most of the research papers from this website. Also other websites helped finding some research papers which added value to our findings. We also gathered knowledge by reading blogs, which we did not mention in this paper.

Surveys were taken to get response and data. This data will help us find the participants thoughts, experience, reaction. Also readers and scholars will be benefited.

Twenty questions were included in the survey created in a Google Form. There were 32 students as participants. For this research paper only students were surveyed. Out of twenty questions, thirteen include multiple choice questions and the rest are descriptive or opinion based questions.

### **DESIGNING THE SYSTEM / PROTOTYPE:**

It showed how likely, interactive and effective someone was to find about the online examination and education. The evaluations were given on a scale of one to ten, and respondents were asked open-ended free questions. They were also asked to give some feedback and strongly agree or disagree with any questions. The overall time for the survey completion was approximately 15 minutes.

We've been asking questions like how long were students attending the online classes. Then we asked their opinion about online exams evaluation. The options were: very effective, effective, moderately effective , not effective. The purpose of asking this question was to identify if the evaluations were lenient enough or not since there are a lot of plagiarism practices going between students through the

internet. Due to the exam misconducts held during online assessments / exams , students were asked a set of questions like do they actually think that they have got a chance to share their answers which were MCQ based. The student either responded a yes or no. Next we wanted to know how effective it would be if short questions were included in the tests. This was asked because a student might not be able to share or copy any short question answers since all exams have a time limit. Therefore there were different responses to this question. Related to this we asked another question whether the student will get a chance to reduplicate the same answer from any other student or not. This set was a yes or no. it is also found out that students try to take out answers from the google during exams. This question was also asked in the survey whether he/ she googles for answers during a certain exam. Next, whatever the response was, the survey again asked whether finding answers from Google is an ethical practice or not. The options were yes or no.

This pandemic has made a lot of misconducts in the academics of students. The accumulation of education now has completely transferred to online. And this is why we asked a question in the survey which platform was easier to score a good grade; online or offline. We expected the answers as yes, no or neutral. We also asked if the online examination was easy as compared to the physical environment exams. Students responded to various answers selecting one from the option given as strongly agree, agree or disagree.

#### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW:**

1. [1] (“Awareness of Ethical Issues when using an e-Learning System”) (Almseidein & Klaif.Mahasneh, “International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications”, 2020) study states that, before doing online classes firstly students must grow ethical knowledge. The author suggested that the learning environment is also a key factor to have ethics in students. However, Authors did not mention how students will prepare themselves from learning ethical knowledge, activities to prevent themselves from doing wrong in online exams.

[2] (“ETHICS IN E-LEARNING”) (TOPRAK, ÖZKANAL, AYDIN, & KAYA, “The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology”, 2010) study basically focuses on educational institutions, where institutions should guide students the ethical issues. Also, institutions should set some rules and regulations for unethical activities. The authors of this paper believe that if students get ethical knowledge

and if the rules and regulations from unethical activities are maintained strictly, unethical tasks like plagiarism, copying assignments will be reduced. However, the paper did not suggest how educational institutions should guide the students to ethical activities.

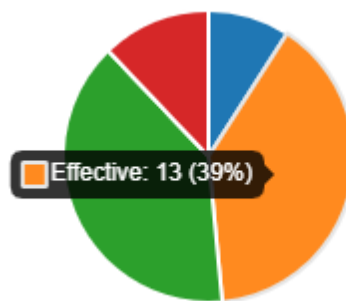
[3] (“Towards Ethically Responsive Online Education: Variables and Strategies from Educators’ Perspective”) (Aldosemani1, “Journal of Education and Learning; Vol. 9, No. 1”, “Published by Canadian Center of Science and Education”, 2020). This study focuses on the ethical challenges faced by instructors in online education.

However, the paper did not mention instructors can help students overcome from unethical activities.

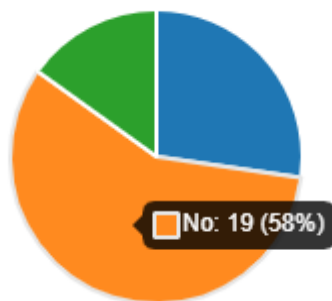
[4]. Raines et al. (2011) this suggests that plagiarism in online exams is considered as violating educational institutions, such as university, policy and moreover it benefits the student over others, rather than relying on their own ability to obtain academic results.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS:

In this pandemic, most students preferred to do their online exam at an institution in their home. Undergraduate students of universities had been much more likely to complete part of their exam online than were students in general. This data is performed via a web survey. The voter of the survey is currently studying university students. Most of them are studying in AIUB, BUET, KUET, RU, DU, and IUB etc. This survey is divided into some different section and options. At each section voter has five options whether he or she chose their opinion based on the questions regarding the Ethical problem in online examinations. The questions are based on the reliability of online examination in this current context. Most of the students told that the online classes are effective.

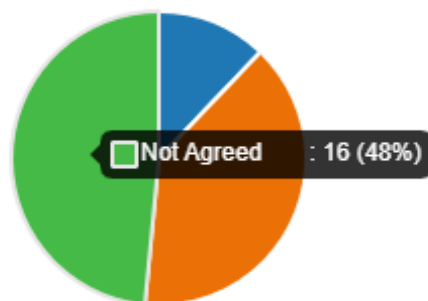


Because they are said that students can attend classes from anywhere, No time lost in transportation, teachers use and provide more audio-visual learning materials, even encouraging students to look at the additional online resources they provide, availability of Class recording for further evaluation by this online survey. In this survey, they also told that one of the positive is "recordings" student can go back multiple times and take notes to understand something which is not possible in live classes. Since all the assessments are happened in online there might be some way that students can cheat. In this survey, 58% students thought that Googling during the examination is not ethical.



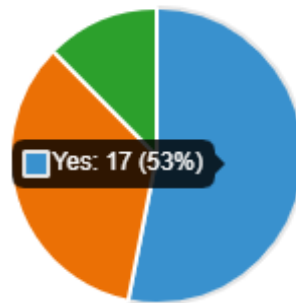
Because many of the question answers are found in Google. An exam is held for judging a student properly. If he/she Googles and finds answers online then that examination has no value at all.

From this online survey, we can say that 48% students do not agree that the online examination is quietest compared with the examination in the physical environment.



What type of precautions should teachers take to avoid these types of circumstances, another big factor is connectivity. Since all the stuff like teaching and assessment happens online, there is an issue about internet connection. In this context of our country some students live in rural areas. If at point internet connection is lost during classes or assessments they are not benefited through the

online education, on the other hand this can cause serious problems in their education. In that case they must be misjudged. To handle this problem, are there any precautions taken or not? This should be checked because they are not learned online rather than getting few marks in exams or failing to lose internet connectivity. Students have their practical classes but in this scenario this happens online, is it enough to provide practical examination just see the classes what teacher's doing with apparatus but student don't do anything with apparatus.



Additionally, in this survey, 53% of students think that getting good grades is easier in an online examination compared with the examination in the physical environment.

On the other hand there is an issue about the teacher's effort to examine students. How the teacher approaches the students and how he or she offers the resources to give exams at home. Each student and teacher has to spend more than three to five hours in front of a monitor, mobiles, computer or any other electronic device. Constantly using Electronics devices can cause Headache, Eye problems and so on. Are any precautions taken to avoid health issues? These are the facts that we are asking in our survey.

## 6. **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Based on the findings of the study, the following are some recommendations for institutions providing online examination and assessment systems:

- In an online examination and evaluation environment, the educational institution should use multimedia tools and monitoring technologies.

- The addition of a seminar course on ethical standards as part of the student's academic agenda.
- When a student logs into his account, he should be given the required information on how to make the most use of the online examination and assessment systems in order to avoid any unethical activity.
- For students participating in the online examination and evaluation system, the educational organization must establish appropriate regulations and procedures.
- Academic organizations ought to receive a code of ethics for their understudies when utilizing the online examination and evaluation framework truly.

At long last, the consideration prescribes the need to do comparable studies on other schools, colleges of nations, plans to extend mindfulness and information of moral issues related to online examination and evaluation framework.

## 7. **CONCLUSION:**

From this study it is found that students tend to perform unethical activities during online exams. There are several reasons found from the study, both from surveys and study from multiple research papers, that students perform unethical activities. Here surveys have been taken from students, but not from teachers. Since teachers' surveys are not taken, limitation takes place. This is because it is important to understand what impact occurs in online exams due to teachers' activity. If any further study takes place, we will be highly encouraged to take surveys from teachers and also we will try to examine teachers' perspectives.

## 8. **REFERENCES:**

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