

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY - BANGLADESH



SOFTWARE DOCUMENTATION AND TOOLS

CSC5407

Educational Crisis During COVID-19 in Bangladesh

AUTHORS:

MD. TANZIRUL HAQUE NAYAN [20-91850-3]

SADIA AFRIN [21-91927-1]

SUPERVISOR

DR. RAZIB HAYAT KHAN

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER SCIENCE

August 4, 2021

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1 Introduction

Educational institutions across the world are experiencing unparalleled challenges with the start of the COVID-19 issue and the accompanying social distancing measures used to flatten the curve [1]. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, educational institutions in Bangladesh have also stopped. Millions of children across the world are no longer in school and are living in fear, with many of them facing increasing threats of violence, neglect, and abuse from stressed-out family members and online abuser [2]. It is an even bigger issue in Bangladesh, where the educational system is already fragile [1]. Bangladesh is one of the countries most affected by a complete shutdown, with over 40 million children enrolled in school. Board examinations like the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and university application tests have been stopped [3]. Students in secondary school have been promoted depending on their previous performance. As students prepare to apply for university admission, educational authorities must make decisions regarding the logistical and public health measures that will allow universities to hold admissions test. Countries all around the world are currently suffering the pandemic due to a lack of strong lockdown precautions. Since May 31, 2020, Bangladesh has been through a period of more loosened measures. Now, the major limitation that will be maintained as previously is the closure of educational establishments [3], with intentions to extend the closure. The study's goal is to investigate about the crisis that Bangladesh education system is facing and try to give some possible solution by identifying the reasons.

2 Literature Review

The first case of COVID-19 was identified in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, and the outbreak of COVID-19 cases in China has been classified a Public Health Emergency of International Concern [3]. The virus is usually transmitted by respiratory droplets, but infection can also occur through indirect contact, such as when someone is exposed to the environment or things that an infected person has meet. After rapidly spreading from China to the rest of the world, COVID-19 was classified a pandemic on March 11, 2020. The disease's extremely infectious nature has prompted the implementation of social distancing measures in many aspects of life, including education. The first incidence of COVID-19 was identified on March 8th in Bangladesh, and by March 23rd, the number of cases had risen to 33 [3]. Under the situation, the Government of Bangladesh ordered a countrywide widespread lockdown beginning on March 26, 2020, for a period of 10 days of government and non-government offices, industries, public transportation, marketplaces, and so on. Educational institutions were closed even before the lockdown, from March 17, 2020. Students left the hostels and returned to their families [3]. Aristovnik et al. [3] found that students who are alone in their homes and rely on distance online learning have anxieties and uncertainties about their future professional prospects, as well as feelings of boredom, anxiety, and dissatisfaction. Ziauddeen et al. [3] examined the benefits and drawbacks of reopening schools in the United Kingdom and concluded that some students face significant disadvantages, such as food shortages, and that reopening schools would benefit many children and their families while posing risks to families with vulnerable adults. According to Viner et al. [3], the effects of school closing are larger in low- and middle-income nations due to a lack of school meals and medical assistance, as well as an increase in school dropouts, child marriages, and child labor. According to a research of Dhaka Tribune, 19% of primary school students and 25% of secondary school students are at danger of education loss since educational institutions in the nation have been closed since March of last year because to the Covid-19 outbreak [4]. Only around 2% of people watched classes on a government-owned television channel. At the same time, 51% of primary school students and 61 percent of secondary school students resorted to coaching or private tuition, which has been the dominating coping strategy [4]. According to the Campaign for Popular Education's (CAMPE) Education Watch Report 2020-21, 58 percent of students surveyed [5] did not have access to remote learning programs due to a lack of technologically equipped electronic devices or smart phones. According to Sizan Ahmed Jim, a master's student at Dhaka University [5], many of his colleagues who do not have access to WiFi at home, use cellular data to attend online classes or go to neighboring cafés or stores that give Internet access. Undoubtedly, the crisis has far-reaching consequences for the physical and psychological well-being of children.

3 Problem Statement

Since the coronavirus pandemic began, the country’s educational institutions have been closed for more than a year [6], 17 months to be exact. When the epidemic hit [5], both public and private educational institutions moved their academic activities online. With the current lockdown, students will have to wait several months before they can return to their campuses and resume their usual academic lives [6]. Though many public and private educational institutions are conducting online classes, there are many issues that hampers the system. Most of these institutions, as well as the professors who would be teaching these sessions, were in unfamiliar surroundings. Besides, there are not enough resources available to both teachers and students. Many students cannot afford their own computer/laptop/smart phone and many of them don’t have personal Wi-Fi or internet connection at their home. Apart from, there are still many teachers who don’t have enough knowledge about new technologies. A fourth-year undergraduate student at Rajshahi University named Sanjeeda Prottasha [5], have shared her opinion about online classes. She has shared that many of her classmates are not attending online classes because their respective departments are not cooperating with them. Several departments, for example, have postponed online sessions due to an unwillingness to continue lectures without issuing examinations. On the other hand, despite students demanding for online classes to be implemented, departmental administrators are ignoring them. While many private universities offer recorded lectures and pre-planned tasks to help students [5], public universities are lagging behind. Final examinations have been postponed, causing session jams for most public university students. Both SSC and HSC exam have been postponed due to the difficulty in arranging exams for COVID-19. This has created significant challenges to students’ educational development at important times in their careers. For example, in 2020, the higher secondary certificate examinations (HSC) were not conducted [3], and it was decided that students would apply for university entrance based on their secondary school (Secondary School Certificate) and eighth grade (Junior School Certificate) results. According to a World Vision research, 44% of junior-level students were concerned that they would be unable to return to classes once school activities began. According to another study performed by the Stromme Foundation Bangladesh, young girls are more likely to become victims of child marriage [4]. According to a World Vision 2021 survey, 55% of children were unhappy with their home life, and 40 percent of youngsters suffered from hunger during this time since their parents’ income had reduced. Apart from school dropouts and child marriages, children have mostly suffered from mental health issues since they have never been confined inside their homes for such a long period of time throughout their lives. They are also deprived of the opportunity to play with their friends and classmates. Both kids and instructors are facing in mental health issues, as well as back pain, obesity, and headaches, with other illnesses. Dr Mahjabeen Haque, Director [5], Student Counselling and Guidance Office, Dhaka University said in her opinion that ”Spending long hours in front of screens causes permanent neural changes in young kids, which leads to an addiction to electronic devices, and stifles their capability to judge between right and wrong”.

A report from a renowned news portal, Dhaka Tribune provides the following data where it is showing that how badly COVID-19 is affecting the education system in Bangladesh.

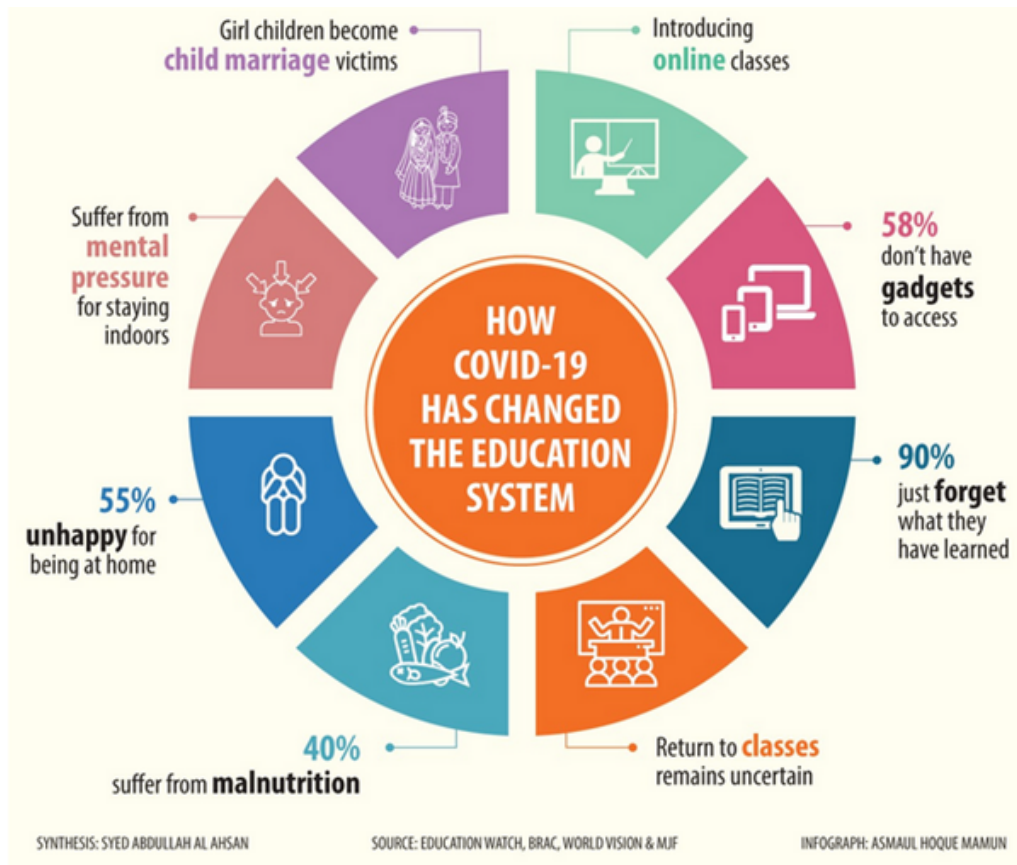


Figure 1: Impact of COVID-19 in Bangladesh

4 Methodology



Figure 2: Methodology

At first the problem had been discussed and analyzed. Afterwards, based on the discussion and analyzed findings, a set of questionnaire had been prepared for the survey. The survey had been conducted using Google Forms and most of the participants were students in the survey. After completing the survey, the results had been collected and analyzed.

5 Survey Questions

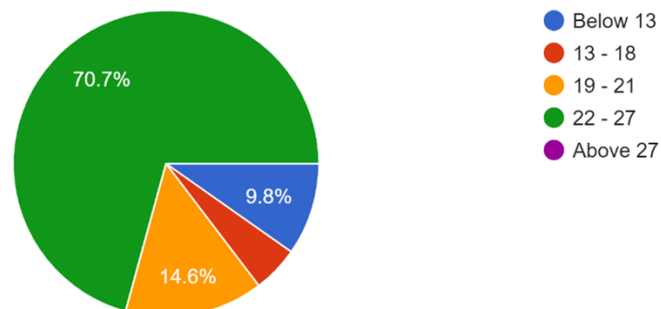
The following questions had been prepared for the survey:

1. Your Age
2. Your Gender
3. Educational Institute Type
4. Were you going to school, college or university before the Corona situation?
5. Are you continuing your studies at home?
6. If you are continuing your studies at home, which is the medium of your study?
7. Is your school / college following up on your studies?
8. How are you spending most of your time?
9. Do you think your education is hampered because of COVID-19?
10. Do you want the educational institutes to open?
11. Do you think the alternative education processes (i.e., online classes) during COVID-19 are effective?
12. If you are doing online classes, do you understand the topics properly?
13. Do you think that public university students are lagging behind (i.e., session jam)?
14. If yes, according to you what are the reasons behind it?

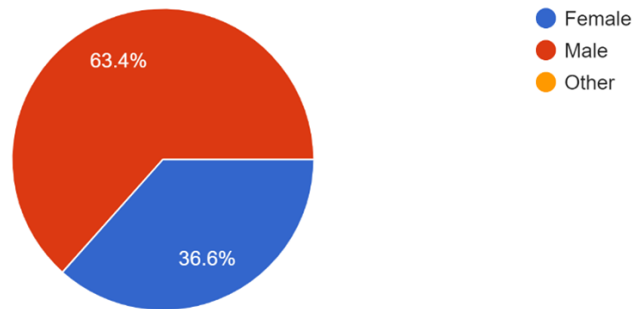
6 Survey Result Analysis

After completing the survey, the results had been collected and analyzed. The total number of participants in the survey was 41. Following are the analyzed summary result for each question:

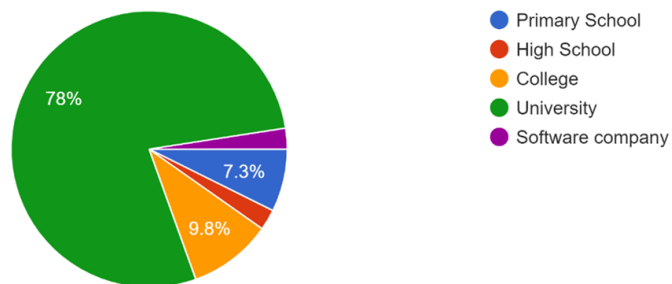
Your Age
41 responses



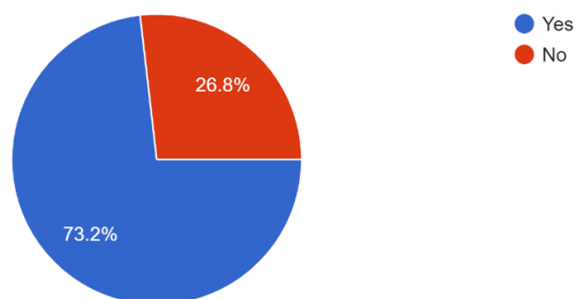
Your Gender
41 responses



Educational Institute Type
41 responses

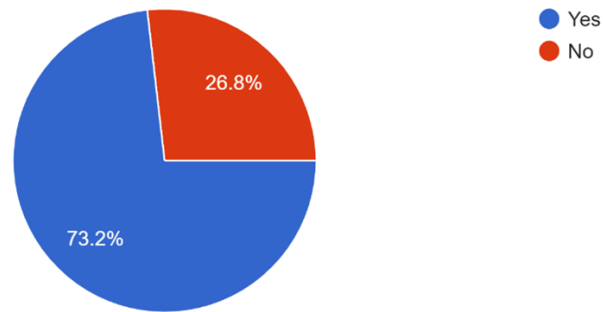


Were you going to school, college or university before the Corona situation?
41 responses



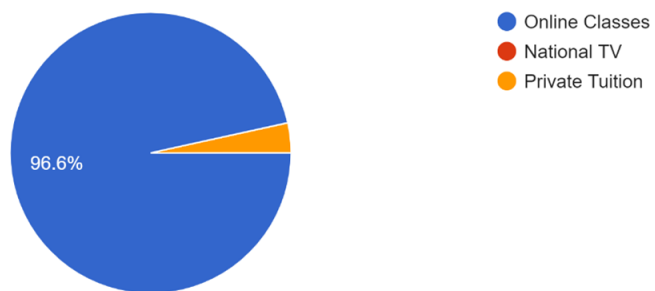
Are you continuing your studies at home?

41 responses



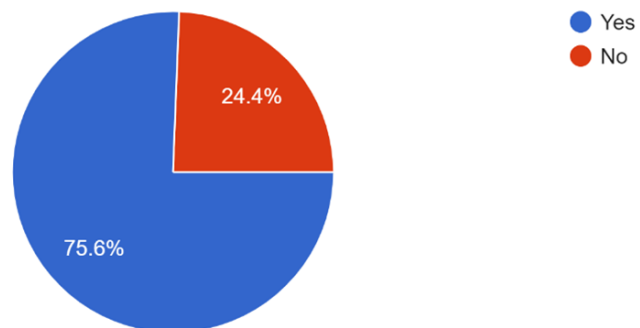
If you are continuing your studies at home, which is the medium of your study?

29 responses



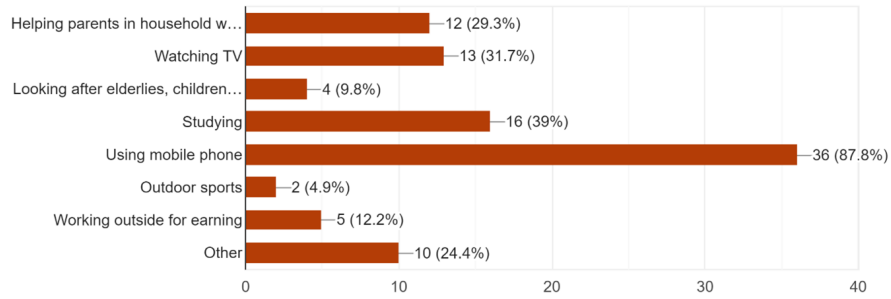
Is your school / college following up on your studies?

41 responses



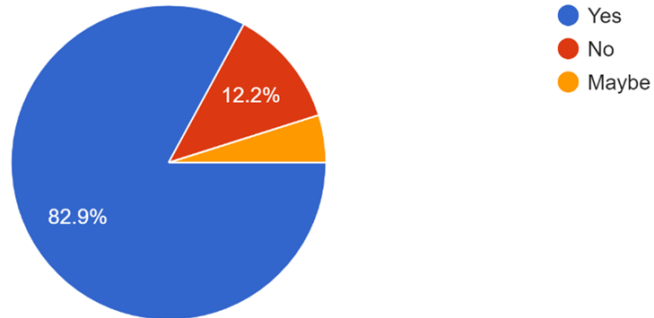
How are you spending most of your time?

41 responses



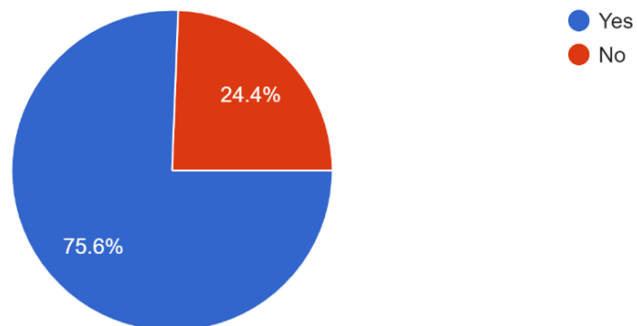
Do you think your education is hampered because of COVID-19?

41 responses



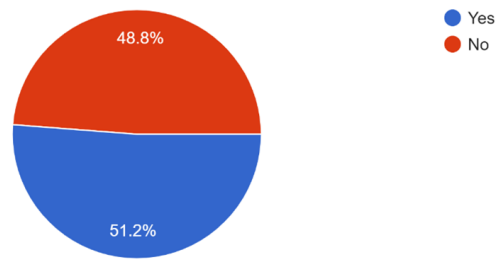
Do you want the educational institutes to open?

41 responses



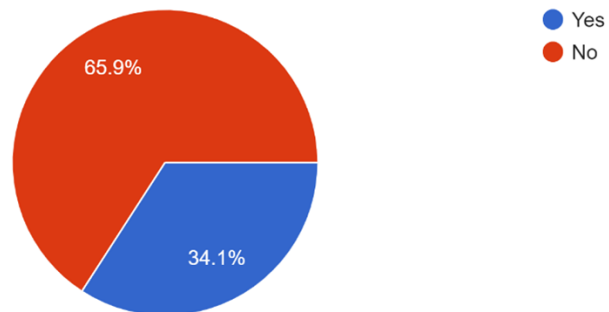
Do you think the alternative education processes (i.e., online classes) during COVID-19 are effective?

41 responses



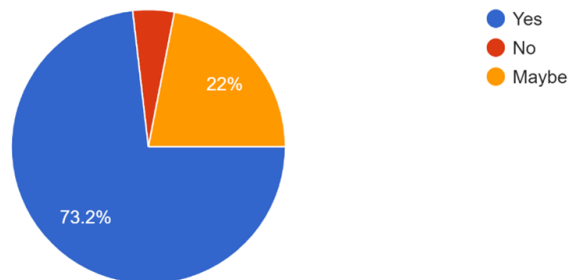
If you are doing online classes, do you understand the topics properly?

41 responses



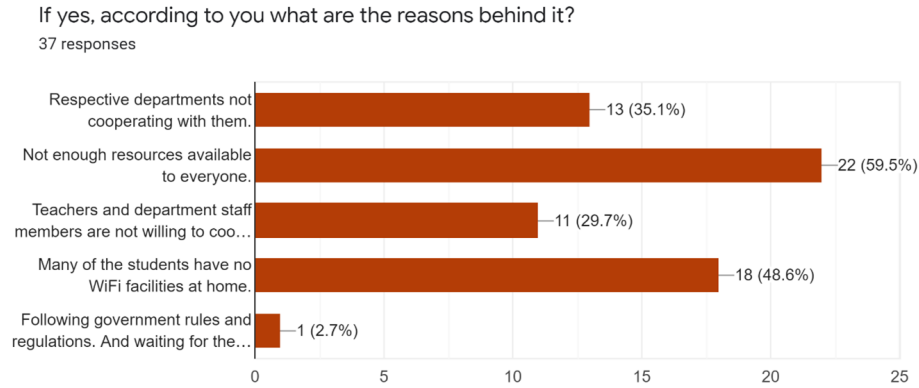
Do you think that public university students are lagging behind(i.e., session jam)?

41 responses



7 Limitations

There were some limitations while conducting the survey. Among the other limitations, one of them is as we are university students, most of our friends and colleagues are in the same level of education like us and they have filled up the survey according to that. We got only a few numbers of SSC and HSC students responds and the number is not very large. On the other hand, the number of primary



and high school respondents are close to zero. If we could get a good number of responses from the school going students, the survey result would have been better.

8 Conclusion

The closure of educational institutions has the potential to cause significant losses in the future prospects of students as well as in the economic output of countries. The educational institutes in Bangladesh had been closed since March 2020. While the educational institutes had been closed, many institutes continued with online classes and exam but most of the educational institutes failed to cope up with the online class adaptation. If this continues, the future of the students might get uncertain along with our country's future. Bangladesh's government introduced remote learning through television, mobile phones, radio, and the Internet to assist students cope with the adverse effects of school closures. Unfortunately, these tools are not available to all students [7]. UNICEF is cooperating with the Bangladeshi government to provide efficient remote learning programs that use TV, radio, mobile phones, and the Internet to reach as many children as possible. UNICEF has also helped in the creation of guidelines to assist instructors who are teaching in distant locations [8].

9 References

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