

PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE ONLINE CLASSES: A STUDY ON THE TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS OF BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on presenting the perception of tertiary level students in Bangladesh towards the online class during the COVID-19 pandemic with the expectation of contributing in improvement in term of quality and acceptability of online classes in the future. Perception of the students have been assessed in different categories. A structured question was developed and distributed online among the tertiary level students of different private and public universities. A totaled 677 students participated in the online survey by snowball sampling method. SPSS research software was used to analyze the survey data and statistical tables were used to display the outcomes. It was found that 84.19% respondents are private university students and 75.2% of the respondents use smartphone in attending online class. 38.8% students are dependent on mobile data which is costly. The study found that maximum number of respondents agreed with the statements related to class effectiveness, teaching and the online platform and mixed perception is noticed while compared the online and face to face class. The study further resulted that university authorities are providing satisfactory financial stimulus although 31.6% respondents are neutral in this regard. However it is evident that a good number of students (27.9%) are interested in taking online course in future and 38.8% students are satisfied with the overall features of online class.

Keywords: Online class, COVID-19 Pandemic, Financial Stimulus, Tertiary level Students, Perception.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak in Wuhan, China, the changing world had started to further change. Gradually the countries around the world started to become affected with the COVID-19 and eventually the virus was identified in Bangladesh on 08 March 2020 and generating acute panic among the people (Alam, et al., 2020). Although the educational institutions were worried about the continuation of the academic activities during the pandemic but gradually the education system has been shifted to online platform. Kapasia, et al. (2020) studied that around 70% graduate and undergraduate students are actively participating in online teaching and learning and most of them are using smart phone. Their study also reported different challenges faced by the students like internet and socioeconomic problems that might

lead to their dissatisfaction towards the online learning. If the classes would have been decided to keep postponed until the visible improvement of COVID-19 situation, the loss- especially time the time loss and anxiety would become worse. Dhawan (2020) mentioned that still there is lot of uncertainty to go back to the campus teaching in India. On the other hand the teaching quality in online system varies from country to country, institution to institution, discipline to discipline and even faculty to faculty and such. A study on undergraduate and post-graduate students in Pakistan found online classes ineffective and they claimed it not to produce satisfactory output (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). Technological issues as well as the financial inability were reported as the prime problems of online class in Pakistan. However in online teaching and learning both teachers and students may have obstacles to make it effective and the students' opinion is a dominating factor to the effective online teaching and acceptability toward it. Students 'perception towards the online teaching and learning will surely help in strategy formulation for the education system during an epidemic like the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the study of Zainuddin and Attaran in Malaysia (2016) found positive feedback from most of the students with some recommendations of others. Their recommendations were to make the videos more engaging, relevant, and shorter. Also they have found flipped classroom in a word online class, worked well for quiet students, shy, international students who don't have fluency in English and full time students who have interest and more time to learn.

Alsaaty et al (2016) made a study on business students' perception towards traditional versus online learning in higher education. They showed 30.2% students said the materials given in online classes are convenient, easy to navigate and understand while 69.2% are not comfortable with online materials in terms of easiness.

Yang (2004) had a qualitative research work with three respondents. Their intention was to find out the factors for ensuring the quality of online teaching-learning in higher education. From their examination both positive and negative feedbacks are found. The students' gave their positive experiences on the factors of flexibility, cost-effectiveness, availability of electrical research, easiness of connection to the Internet, and well-designed class interface while the negative feedbacks were on instructors late feedback, unreachable technical support from instructors, lack of self-regulation as well as self-motivation, the sense of isolation, uninteresting instructional methods, and poorly-designed course content.

Technology is playing very vital role for the advancement of the developed country. Africa is also trying to grab this opportunity. Tagoe (2012) made a research for University of Ghana on students' perception to incorporate e-learning into teaching and learning with a sample of 354 respondents. He found that students' preferences are on mixed education system and web augmented system for near future rather than fully web-based or complete online education system. This study also showed that the skill which the students have in the time of their admission in university is not sufficient to start e-learning. Day by day they become smarter to handle computer and other e-devices. There is also some recommendation like to advance broadband facility, to improve the access of personal computer and to increase the female students' internet access so that they can enhance their computer skill.

Now-a days universities, corporations have extended the use of e-learning which is also very cost minimizing to deliver instruction and training. In their paper Smart & Cappel (2006) examined the students' perception of mixing online mechanisms in two undergraduate courses where students finished their online modules before to class conversation. The outcome indicates

that there is a borderline positive responses for online modules of elective courses rather than the required courses which implies the instructors should be selected.

Mansor & Ismail (2012) made a survey among 136 engineering students of a Malaysian public university to know the learning style of the learners and the perception towards online teaching. The data were collected by two domains. The result found by this research is there is various styles' learner but all of them have marginally positive perception towards the effectiveness and associated benefits of web-based learning. That means there is no impact of learning style on the view of engineering students to online learning.

In their paper of Somenarain et al. (2010) showed the students' perception and approaches to online instruction along with special effects of distance learning on their accomplishments. The research was conducted for two online groups with the result that there was no significant difference in course evaluations and student satisfaction between that two groups.

To reshape universities and to make education popular in worldwide, IT has a vital role. To meet the needs both instructors and students, institutions are integrating e-learning but some factors should be considered while implementing or evolving curriculums. According to Selim (2007) there are four critical success factors to make e-learning more effective where instructor characteristics comes first next technology infrastructure and university's support. From his study student characteristics was the least important factor to the success of web-based learning.

It is also necessary to explore the different dimensions of online instruction. Firstly have to know the factors for what online learning would be more successful or more failure. Saadé et al. (2007) found several dimensions like students' attitude, affect, motivation and perceptions of using online learning tools where affect and perceptions are found as having the strongest abilities of measurement and motivation is the weakest from their study among 105 respondents. As online education is a network of interaction between students and teachers from one end to another end of the world, it is now evolved to meet the expectancy of connection, collaborations of twenty-first century's learning system. Bhagat et. al. (2016) established a scale (POSTOL) to measure the students perception towards online learning cause to make an online learning meaningful, effective and engaging, determination of students' perception is a must. They found their (POSTOL) is a valid and consistent instrument with four dimensions: instructor characteristics, social existence, instructional approach, and trust.

Cortés & Barbera (2013) presented a paper which was a research among four institutions from different countries on detecting the factors of success in online education from students' perception. They divided their factors in learners' predictor factors, institutional predictor factors and outcome factors. The study found significant variances from learners view for total 14 factors except instructor's instruction and learner's satisfaction.

Young & Norgard (2006) presented their paper on students' view and preferences to online course delivery. Some points were identified by the authors from some existing related papers like: collaboration among students, worth and timely interaction between students and teacher, continuously course material update, availability of technical support, and online classes flexibility compared to face-to-face. From their own survey by the faculty members of university of Texas there were also some recommendations for consistent development of course contents and to increase technical support hours in a positive manner. Islam et al. (2020) recommended that teachers can play fantastic role in overcoming the challenges of online education by providing the relevant and easy-to- read study materials as well as by initiating online discussion group with the students.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study include to assess the perception of the tertiary level students towards the online teaching and learning, to investigate and analyze the main aspects of dissatisfaction and satisfaction of online teaching and learning to the students so that the respective stakeholders can work for the necessary improvement. The research also intends to recommend some suggestions to ensure quality online education for the tertiary level students in Bangladesh. Finally this research intends to suggest further necessary research work in this area of study.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This is a descriptive study based on primary data. From the last week of March 2020 the students were facing diverse challenges in attending online class. Keeping this thing in mind a self-administered structured questionnaire was designed and distributed among the tertiary level students of different private and public universities in Bangladesh who are actively participating in online classes. The researchers used snowball sampling technique to design and collect the data. Total 677 samples from different universities responded to the online survey and after collecting the data, cross tabulations and SPSS software have been used for analysis. Research results have been displayed in necessary statistical tables.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Demographic information of the respondents: Table 1 shows that of the total 677 respondents only 107 are from public university and rest 570 are from private universities. Whereas 625 respondents responded that their universities are located in Dhaka Division which indicates that universities situated in other than Dhaka division are not much actively involved in online teaching and learning. It is also seen that of the total 677 respondents 553 are from business discipline and only 118 and 2 are from other disciplines respectively.

No of total respondents		Location of university		Discipline		
		Dhaka division	Not Dhaka Division	Business	Science and Engg.	Humanities and others
Public	107 (15.8%)	61	46	67	40	0
Private	570 (84.19%)	564	6	486	78	2
Total	677 (100%)	625	52	553	118	2

Source: Author compilation from survey data

Table 2 displays that highest 75.2 % respondents use their smartphone for attending online classes while 19.2% use laptops and only 4.7% use desktop PC. But 0.9% responded that they use both laptop and smartphone.

Types of device	No. of respondents	Percentages	Data type used by the students		
Desktop	32	4.7%	Mobile data	263	38.8%
Laptop	130	19.2%	Wifi/Broadband	414	61.2%
Smartphone	509	75.2%	Total	677	100.0%
Laptop & Phone	6	0.9%			
Total	677	100.0%			

Source: Author compilation from survey data

Perception of the University Students towards the Online Classes

Perception related to goal/objective, study materials and assessment: From the table 3 below it is found that maximum number of students (45.9%) agreed with the statement that course objectives and online class procedures were timely communicated with them while some 18.9% strongly agreed with the same statement although 2.4% respondents are strongly disagreed with it and 24.5% found neutral with this issue. Table shows that according to 43.7% respondents course materials are of good quality at the same time 56.1% respondents are agreed with the statement that exams and related tests were related to the course learning objectives and 44.3% are agreed that interaction with other students are also helpful in online class to achieve academic goals.

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Response
The course objectives and procedures of this online class were clearly communicated in time:	18.9%	45.9%	24.5%	7.4%	2.4%	0.9%
The course materials of the online learning are interesting and good in terms of quality	11.2%	43.7%	26.4%	8.3%	9.2%	1.2%
Assessment components such as assignments, class tests and exams were related to learning objectives of the class	18.9%	56.1%	17.4%	3.5%	3.0%	1.0%
Online interaction with other students are helpful to achieve the academic goal	8.0%	44.3%	23.9%	14.5%	7.4%	1.9%

Perception related to class effectiveness, careful teaching and the online platform

Table 4 shows that maximum number of respondents agreed with the statements related to class effectiveness, careful teaching and the online platform and the second highest number of respondents are even strongly agreed. Number of disagreed and strongly disagreed respondents are not that much which indicate a positive perception of the students to the online class. Specially the respondents mentioned that teachers are caring enough and positive and constructive interactions are easily possible with the teachers and the fellow students.

	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Response
1	Teachers are very actively involved in teaching in online class	26.3%	47.1%	13.7%	2.7%	9.7%	0.4%
2	Teachers are enough caring and friendly in the online class	29.8%	49.8%	14.6%	1.8%	3.2%	0.7%
3	Teachers are motivating and helpful to solve academic problems in online class	19.5%	54.9%	15.4%	3.0%	5.9%	1.3%
4	Teachers are enough caring and friendly in the online counseling	18.6%	48.4%	23.0%	2.7%	5.9%	1.3%
5	Positive and constructive interaction is easily possible in online learning	11.8%	47.1%	24.7%	10.9%	4.7%	0.7%
6	Constructive interactions are easily possible with the friends and class mates in online learning system	8.6%	44.6%	25.0%	13.0%	7.4%	1.5%
7	Online interaction with other students are more helpful than the traditional system before this pandemic	9.9%	30.7%	21.0%	22.3%	14.3%	1.8%
8	The online system is user-friendly and easy to use.	8.9%	48.0%	27.8%	10.6%	3.7%	1.0%

Source: Author compilation from survey data

Perception towards online class Vs. Face to face class

Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Response
The academic quality of this online class is similar to the face-to-face classes I've taken	7.7%	24.8%	21.0%	29.0%	16.0%	1.6%
I have learned as much from this online class as I might have from a face-to-face version of the course.	9.2%	30.7%	19.8%	24.4%	14.3%	1.6%
It is possible to learn more in online classes than in face-to-face classes.	10.6%	27.5%	18.8%	23.0%	18.0%	2.1%
The quality of the learning experience in online classes is better than in face-to-face classes.	9.2%	23.6%	17.9%	27.9%	19.8%	1.6%

Table 5 shows the students perception towards the comparison between online class and previous face-to-face class. Here a mixed perception is noticed from the survey data, 29% respondents do not agree with the statement that quality of online class is similar to the face to face class but 30.7% agreed with the statement that they have learned in online class same as the face to face class. Besides, 27.9% respondents reported that quality of learning experience in online class is even better than that of face to face class.

Perception towards Universities Policy and Roles

From table 6: 32.5% respondents agree that universities are providing satisfactory financial stimuli although 13.6% strongly disagree with it while 31.6% respondents kept neutral in this issue. 26.6% respondents agreed that universities are creating excessive pressure to pay all fees. Good thing is that 56.9% students strongly agreed that universities are enough concerned about COVID-19 related safety and security measures.

	Items	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No Response
1	The financial stimuli (waiver/discount) provided by the university are satisfactory	5.3%	32.5%	31.6%	16.0%	13.6%	1.0%
2	University authority is creating excessive pressure to pay all required fees	10.3%	26.6%	33.1%	21.6%	6.9%	1.5%
3	University authority is concerned enough about COVID-19 related safety and security measures	18.5%	15.4%	56.9%	3.0%	5.9%	1.3%

Source: Author compilation from survey data

Overall satisfaction and preference of online class: From table 7 it is found that 40.6% students prefer to take more online courses in the future and 31.3% do not on the other hand 38.8% and 16.5% respondents are satisfied and highly satisfied with the online class only 4.4% are highly dissatisfied while 0.9% did not respond to this question.

Rate your overall degree of satisfaction with online class		Do you prefer to take more online courses in future	
Dissatisfied	12.7%	Yes	27.9%
Neutral	26.6%	Maybe	40.6%
Satisfied	38.8%	No	31.3%
Highly satisfied	16.5%	No response	0.1%
Highly dissatisfied	4.4%	Total	100.0%
No response	0.9%		
Total	100.0%		

Source: Author compilation from survey data

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the university authorities and the government may initiate joint financial stimulus package for the students to ensure smooth higher education. The financial stimulus package may help to shift them to laptop from smartphone which will make the online class more effective to the students. Online discussion forum is also recommended to increase the effective interaction between the students and the teachers who are the ultimate medium of exchanging knowledge. The study further suggests to take measures for ensuring uninterrupted internet and electricity supply at low cost for the students where respective wing of the government may play roles. Finally the current study concludes that more specific research initiatives should be taken to identify and solve the challenges of online classes which will result in better quality of online classes in the pandemic situation in the future. The recent study also claimed the necessity of industry-academia joint research works to win against the coronavirus pandemic, Islam et al. (2020). Hence the current study also recommend the collaborative study between the universities and the other industry based research bodies to bring positive changes in the industrial sector as well as in the academic arena.

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