

# Assessing Institutional Support to Online Education at Tertiary Level in Bangladesh Coping with COVID-19 Pandemic: An Empirical Study

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## ABSTRACT

Institutional support and quality education are linked in a significant way. During COVID-19, institutional support is critical to closing the huge academic gap that has emerged as physical academic practices have been moved to a virtual education system using technology. This research aims to assess institutional support for online education in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic. This analysis focused on the three main elements of the adapted model of institutional support (AMIS) of Bond et al. (2007), and the institutional support model (ISM) of Valverde and Rodriguez (2002), namely financial support (FS), technical support (TS), and mentoring support (MS). The findings of this research are, a few universities in Bangladesh have provided average support for continuing online education, while others have just started taking online classes. Several problems have been discovered, such as the lack of dedicated software for conducting online academic activities, lack of training and grooming, lack of mentoring, poor internet access, lack of smartphones, high internet package rates, and so on. This study concludes with some policy recommendations for a smooth online education system in Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** assessment, institutional support, online education, tertiary education, COVID-19, Bangladesh

## INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus has wreaked havoc on education, as well as other aspects of the state such as Bangladesh. Following the emergence of the Coronavirus pandemic in 2020, Bangladesh's education system, like that of most other nations around the world, has undergone significant changes as a result of the widespread adoption of online learning (Dhaka Tribune, December 31, 2020). The quality and popularity of online education vary by country and institution. Learning and teaching styles, personal motivation, and infrastructure are all important factors in ensuring a smooth online teaching experience (Eom et al., 2006). Bangladesh's public and private universities, colleges, and schools have shifted their classes to online. According to a recent survey, while 40% of students are taking online classes, nearly half of them are unable to do so due to a lack of devices (Islam et al., 2020). However, most of them (70%) are from private universities. Students also feel the online courses are somewhat doubtful in terms of viability and efficacy (Islam et al., 2020).

In developing countries like Bangladesh, the main argument against online classes is a lack of a reliable internet connection (Islam et al., 2020). Even though they can attend classes, the experience is inefficient because they have difficulty following the lecture because the network is constantly down, preventing them from communicating effectively with the teachers. Because of the poor internet connection, this problem becomes even worse for students who visited or lived in the village during the pandemic (Al-Amin et al., 2021). Because the majority of students do not own a laptop or computer, online classes discourage class participation. Assignments and tasks cannot be completed on a smartphone. Students are unable to use cyber cafes or repair malfunctioning computers in this situation. Students also stated that online classes are not the same as in-person classes because they are less engaging (The Business Standard, 2020).

Although educational institutions are providing various supports such as television, radio, and social media platforms to reach students from various areas, the household income and expenditure survey 2020 revealed that approximately 12.70 percent of poor families do not own a mobile phone,

even though students need at least a smartphone and a stable internet connection to attend online classes (Tariq & Fami, 2020). In an online seminar hosted by the Center on Budget and Policy, prominent educators shared their perspectives on online education. According to the speakers, holding online classes for 7.5 lakh students will cost around Tk. 10,000 crores. They (the speakers) requested a reduction in internet usage charges, which they believe the government can arrange (The Business Standard, 2020). The government of Bangladesh, the university grant commission, educational institutions, and other non-governmental organizations have all taken steps to help Bangladesh cope with the pandemic and address the country's uncountable educational losses.

This paper's main goal is to assess institutional support for online education at the tertiary level in Bangladesh as it deals with the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is based on a descriptive analysis of social research, in which both qualitative and quantitative data were used to satisfy the study's objectives.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study was performed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For this analysis, data was gathered from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected from public and private university teachers and students through an online survey that included both structured and unstructured questions. Secondary data was gathered from a variety of sources, including books, journals, blogs, web sources, and newspapers. The research used five Likert scale instruments to determine institutional support for online education at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. A purposive sampling technique was used to perform this analysis. Teachers from various public and private universities in Bangladesh, as well as students from those universities, were the participants.

For this study, a mixed questionnaire was developed based on above mentioned models. There are four basic parts of the questionnaire containing personal information, perceptual information, institutional support information, and some general statements of the respondents. Five-point Likert scale, i.e., strongly agree (SA), agree (A), moderate (M), disagree (D), strongly disagree (SD), YN (yes, no), and open-ended questions are used to fulfill the study objectives. It was an

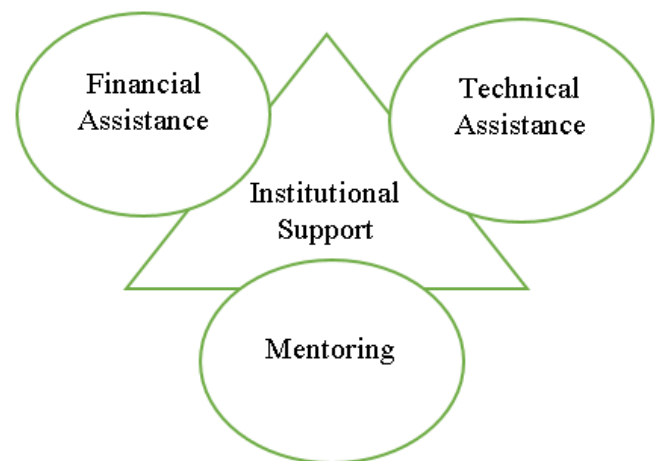
online survey for collecting primary data, so the questionnaire was in Google Form. SPSS and MS Excel were used to tabulate, process, and analyze the data collected from various respondents through an online survey. The data was analyzed using both nominal and ordinal measurements.

Regarding ethical issues, this research has been approved by Noakhali Science and Technology University Ethical Committee (NSTUEC).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

We looked at two key models to determine institutional support. Bond et al. (2015) developed the adapted model of institutional support (AMIS). Financial support, emotional and moral support, mentoring, professional socialization, academic advising, and technical support were all used to create the model (Bond et al., 2015). Another is the institutional support model (ISM), which includes financial, emotional, and technical support. **Table 1** summarizes the underlying concepts of these two models.

Following the analysis of the above two models, this study developed a model that includes the three items depicted in **Figure 1** to assess institutional support for online education in Bangladesh at the tertiary level.



**Figure 1.** Model developed by the authors

**Table 1.** Summary of AMIS model and ISM

Adapted model of institutional support (AMIS)		Institutional support model (ISM) (Valverde & Rodriguez, 2002)	
Items	Description	Items	Description
Financial support	Money to pay for tuition	Financial support	Loans, fellowship, & assistance for research
Emotional or moral support	Relationship with individual faculty, family, & students	Emotional or moral support	Cohort support to each other, cultural & social activities, individual bonds with faculty & staff
Mentoring	Long-term relationship with a role model, usually a cultural match	Mentorship	Moving students along
Technical support	Access to & assistance with computers, equipment, & skills needed to conduct research & study		
Academic advising	Guidance for plan of study & specific courses	Technical	Research design, statistics, computer usage, laboratory availability, & equipment availability
Professional socialization	Activities to enhance skills & abilities as a professionals		

Source: Compiled by the authors based on Bond et al. (2015) & Valverde and Rodriguez (2002)

## CONTEXTUAL BRIEF OF ONLINE EDUCATION DURING COVID-19

Due to the fear of a COVID-19 pandemic, academic institutions in Bangladesh have been closed for the foreseeable future since March 2020 (Rahman, 2020). The majority of students, as well as other people involved in the education sector, were negatively affected by the closure of academic institutions. Many countries around the world have begun to implement online education systems and are continuing to do so to close the educational gap (Rahman, 2020). Most of the students at the university level of Bangladesh have a positive perception of mobile learning that is related to technical adaptation of online education (Biswas et al., 2020). On the other side, many students and parents are opposed to the idea of resuming classes through online platforms. Their main points of contention were a lack of consistent, stable internet connections, a lack of appropriate devices, the cost of data, the financial situation of their families, mental stress, and others. On the other hand, a small group of students and professors from various universities argued in favor of using e-learning methods (Moralista & Oducado, 2020).

BioTED, a new training and research initiative, conducted a study at 42 private and public universities, finding that only 23% of students were in favor of taking online classes in this scenario, while the remaining 77% were against it. Only 55.3 percent of students have a laptop, personal computer, or tablet with which to take an online course. It shows that 44.7 percent of students are unable to attend online classes due to logistical issues. The most important factor for online classes is internet connectivity, and according to our poll, 55 percent of students do not have enough internet connections to continue their education online. They also discovered that 40% of students are now taking online courses, with the majority (70%) coming from private universities (Bangla Tribune, 2020). The University Grant Commission of Bangladesh (UGCB) has issued guidelines for taking online courses at private universities. Private university semester courses and examinations can now be taken online, according to the UGCB. Universities, on the other hand, are not permitted to begin new semester activities before July 2020. Furthermore, private universities are also permitted to take both classes and examinations online, according to the UGCB's guidelines. The practical test of scientific subjects, on the other hand, cannot be taken in any manner online in this case. Furthermore, when taking online exams, maximum transparency is required. The university will be able to organize the remaining activities in the next semester if at least 60% of the classes were finished before the pandemic (Sujan, 2020). However, another group of students concerned about the length of the semester supports online classes but opposes online examinations. Online connectivity, according to faculty, does not necessitate a lot of planning. Some universities have aided students by purchasing mobile internet packages for them, eliminating their financial pressure. Given the current state of affairs, online classes may become commonplace. It's critical to get it right the first time and ensure that no student group is left behind (Megha, 2020).

By adopting new system of education to mitigate the effect of the pandemic the students and their teachers face several levels of barriers and experience as follows:

- a. stress due to economic uncertainty, concern for the well-being, and anxiety about the future,
- b. the challenge of returning to educational institution where many students have fallen behind and increased pressure to ensure catch-up with little professional development support, and
- c. little access to the right technologies or the skills to use them (Shrestha et al., 2022).

## CONCEPTUAL BRIEF OF INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The environment of the institution and student engagement is influenced by institutional support (Battistich et al., 1995). In this context, institutional support refers to active organizational encouragements in the form of policies, laws, monetary and non-monetary aid that motivate students and teachers to carry out their duties in a highly efficient and productive manner (Al-Enazi, 2016; Saint et al., 2003). It refers to the resources, opportunities, privileges, and services provided by institutions to students, teachers, and other employees (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). Institutional support connects stakeholders to a network of resources, expertise, and emotional support that allows them to navigate the institution more effectively and successfully. The cultural landscape of a student's life influences institutional support. The learning environment has an impact on culturally specific traits such as interests, attitudes, and skills (Gottfredson, 1996, 2002). For ethnically diverse students, institutional support affects engagement and achievement. (Bottiani et al., 2016; Cornell et al., 2016; Kotok et al., 2016). Students benefit from institutional support because they have a network to help them overcome problems and obstacles that affect their self-esteem and psychosocial well-being (Stanton-Salazar, 2011).

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTS TO ONLINE EDUCATION IN BANGLADESH

The pandemic has impacted the education of about 40 million students in the country, from primary to university level, as they are unable to attend in-person classes after all institutions were closed on March 17 to combat COVID-19 (Alamgir, 2020). In May, the country's 46 public universities began offering online academic courses to more than 500,000 students, including a large number of needy students from rural areas. However, many public university students are said to be without smartphones due to a lack of financial resources, preventing them from participating in online courses (Panday, 2020). Teachers and students are not adequately prepared for distance learning. In light of this, the government, the University Grants Commission (UGC), and educational institutions all provided various forms of assistance for continuing online education. Universities, both public and private, are calling for more affordable mobile internet

packages for their students. In a letter to Post and Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar on June 15, the Association of Private Universities of Bangladesh (APUB) requested special internet packages for private university students. At a meeting with the University Grants Commission on June 25, the vice-chancellors of most public universities made a similar request (Alamgir, 2020).

The UGC, the nation's apex regulatory body for higher education, released letters to 43 public universities on August 6 requesting lists of poor students who do not have smartphones and need financial assistance. The UGC requested grants or low-interest loans for students who needed to purchase smartphones to take online classes. In the budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021, the government announced that 66,400 crore Indian Rupees (approximately US\$8.95 trillion) would be allocated to education. This was equivalent to 11.7 percent of total spending and 2.1 percent of GDP (Dhaka Tribune, December 31, 2020). Soft loans, stipends, online packages, reduced semester fees, and a variety of other benefits are available to students at a variety of private and public universities. Other programs have been offered, such as online education training, dedicated software for online classes, examinations, and tests, in order to close any gaps that may arise.

## RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### Demographic Data of the Respondents

Here, demographic data includes three variables i.e. gender, age, and university. In **Table 2**, respondents are classified by sex, age, and university.

### Perception towards Online Classes

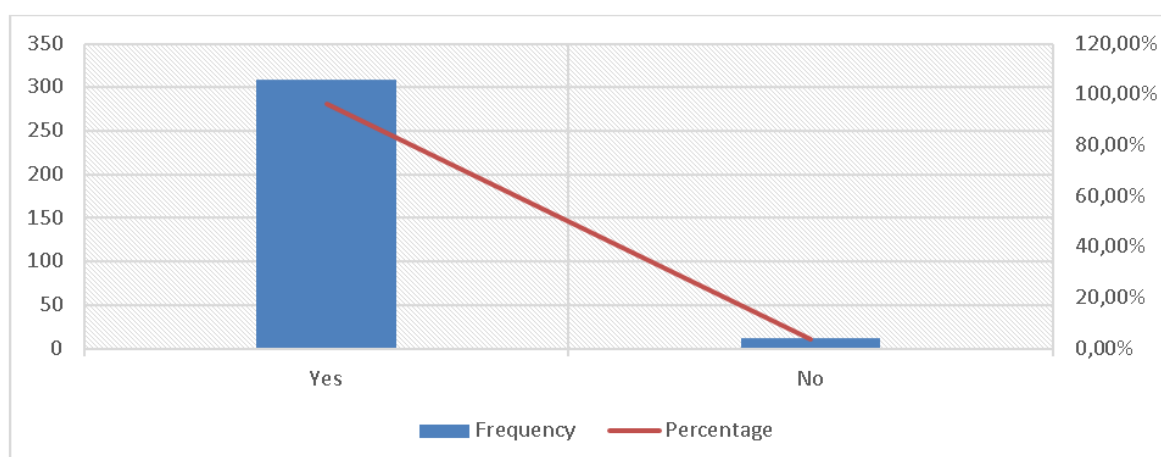
This study asked multiple questions to find out how respondents felt about online classes during COVID-19. **Table 3**, **Figure 2**, **Figure 3**, and **Figure 4** display the results of the survey. The data on respondents' satisfaction with online classes is shown in **Table 3**. **Figure 2** depicts the responses to the question, "Are you active in online classes?" The majority of those polled participate in online classes. The majority of respondents are only marginally happy with their online education. **Figure 3** shows how respondents reacted to the question "Do you think online classes are more interactive than physical ones?" **Figure 4** categorizes the data about "Does online classes meet the needs and demands of the quality education?" It shows most of the respondents have a negative perception about online classes.

**Table 2.** Demographic background of the respondents

Variable	Categories	Frequency & percentage
Gender	Male	164(51.3%)
	Female	156(48.8%)
	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>N=320 (100%)</b>
Age	<16-20	30(9.4%)
	21-25	278(86.9%)
	26-30	12(3.8%)
	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>N=320(100%)</b>
University	Public	214(66.67%)
	Private	106(33.33%)
	<b>Total (N)</b>	<b>N=320(100%)</b>

**Table 3.** "Are you satisfied with the online classes?"

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Satisfied	48	15.0%	15.0%	15.0%
Partially Satisfied	148	46.3%	46.3%	61.3%
Not Satisfied	120	37.5%	37.5%	98.8%
No Response	4	1.3%	1.3%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>N=320</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	



**Figure 2.** "Are you active in online classes?"



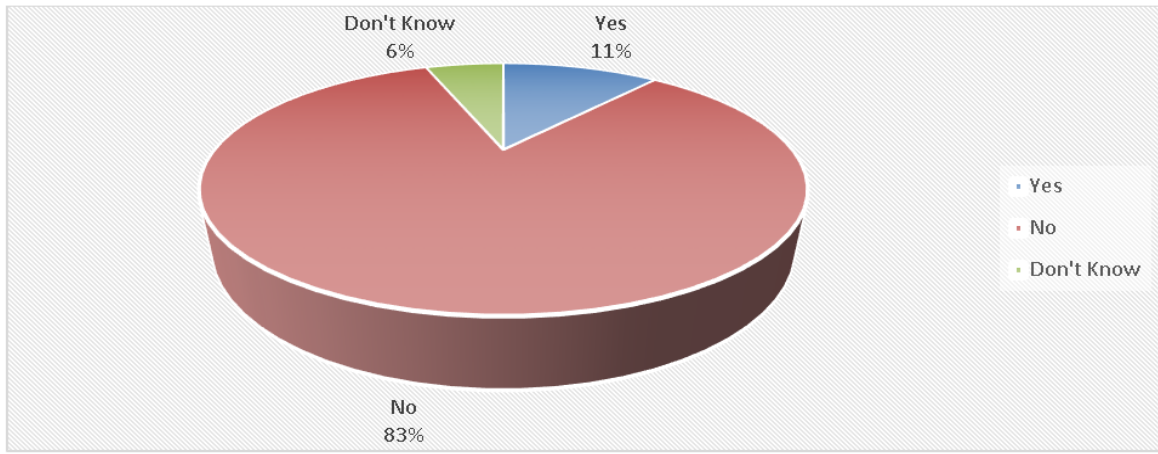


Figure 3. “Do you think that online classes are interactive than physical one?”

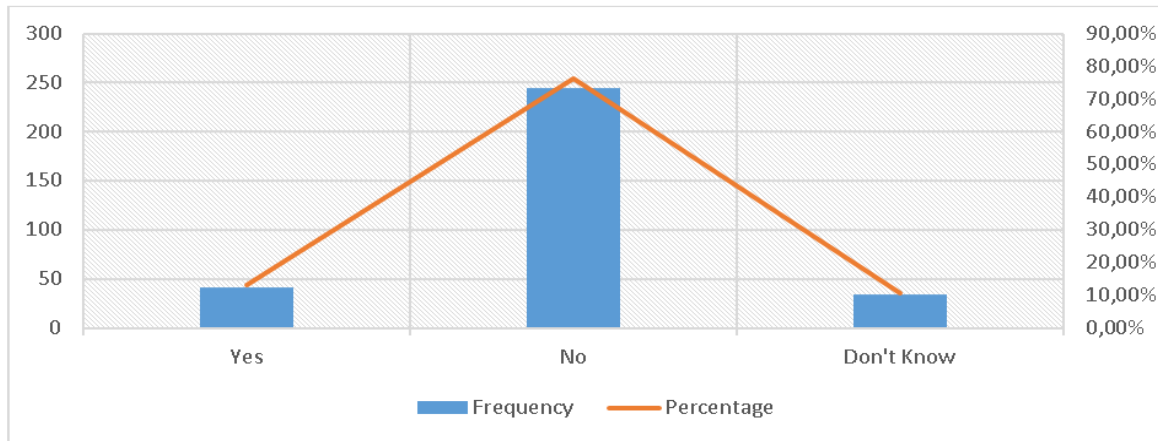


Figure 4. “Do online classes meet the needs and demands of the quality education?”

### Institutional Support to Online Education

#### General

To get general information on online education, two questions were asked in this regard. All the responses are shown in Figure 5 and Table 4.

Figure 5 contains yes-no question like “Did you get any support from your university for continuing online classes?” The majority of the respondents acknowledge the support provided by the universities.

Table 4 shows the responses regarding their satisfaction with the assistance they got from their university. Most of the respondents are partially satisfied.

#### Financial assistance

Providing financial assistance to students to pay tuition fees and living expenses through a hybrid scheme of loans and grants, in accordance with the general idea that tertiary education uses public funds in a manner that promotes its contribution to society and the economy (OECD, 2008). Lavy (2002) discovers a connection between financial support and teacher success rewards and student achievement. To assess

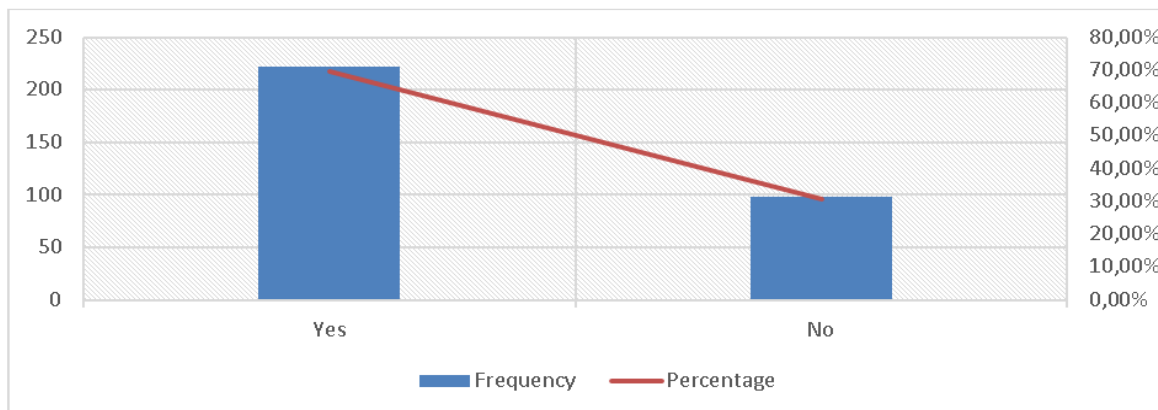


Figure 5. “Did you get any support from your university for continuing online classes?”

**Table 4.** “Are you satisfied with the assistance you got from your university?”

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Satisfied	88	27.5%	27.5%	27.5%
Partially satisfied	120	37.5%	37.5%	65%
Not satisfied	76	23.8%	23.8%	88.8%
No response	36	11.3%	11.3%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>N=320</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Table 5.** Financial assistance provided by universities

Questions	Yes	No	Do not know
	N(%)	N(%)	N(%)
“Does your university provide financial assistance for distress & meritorious students?”	266(83.1%)	36(11.3%)	18(5.7%)
“Did your university reduce or compromise in semester fees?”	144(45%)	130(40.6%)	46(14.3%)
“Did your university provide loans or monetary assistance for buying smartphones or laptop?”	165(51.6%)	121(37.8%)	34(10.6%)

the financial assistance to online education at the tertiary level, this study asked the respondents three basic questions, answer of those questions are shown in three separate categories, i.e., yes, no, and do not know shown in **Table 5**. The responses regarding “Do your university provide financial assistance for distress and meritorious students?” are shown in **Table 5**.

Most of the respondents said that their university provides financial assistance for distress and meritorious students. Regarding “Did your university reduce or compromise in semester fees?” 144(45%) said their university reduced semester fees during COVID-19. A large number of the respondents, 130(40.6%) said their university did not reduce semester fees. Regarding “Did your university provide loans or monetary assistance for buying smartphone or laptop?” 165(51.6%) said their university provided loans or monetary assistance for buying smartphone or laptop. 121(37.8%) respondents have given negative responses in this regard. A great number, 34(10.6%), could not respond.

### Technical assistance

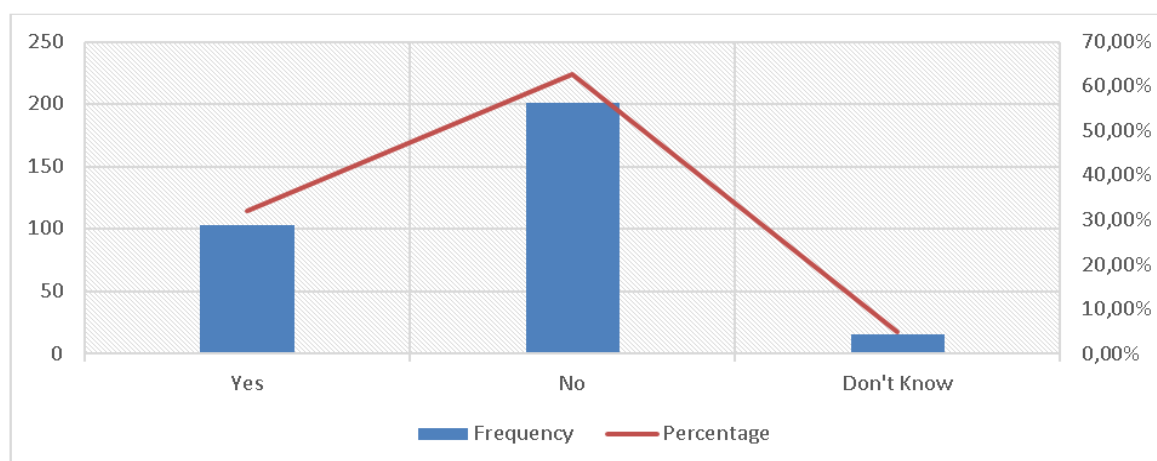
Both teachers and students need technical assistance (Sirkemaa, 2001). Teachers need technical assistance to ensure that they have the resources and skills required to integrate technology into their classroom practices. Technical assistance aids students in acquiring the expertise and skills they need to meet their specific curriculum requirements (Valdez et al., 2004). Installation, operation, maintenance, network administration, and security are all examples of technical support (Sife et al., 2007). To evaluate the technical assistance provided by the universities of Bangladesh during the pandemic, this study asked four questions, opinions of the respondents are categorized in **Table 6**, **Figure 6**, **Figure 7**, and **Figure 8**.

### Mentoring

Mentoring is a one-on-one relationship in which an experienced person (i.e., a mentor) helps a less experienced colleague (i.e., a protégé or mentee) to advance professionally

**Table 6.** “What are the tools your university encourages to use for online education like Zoom, Google Mate, Google Classroom, LMS, etc.?”

Tools	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Zoom	302	94.2%	94.2%	94.2%
Google mate	4	1.2%	1.2%	95.4%
Google Classroom	11	3.4%	3.4%	98.8%
Others	5	1.5%	1.5%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>N=320</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Figure 6.** “Does your university have dedicated software for online classes, exams, and assessments?”

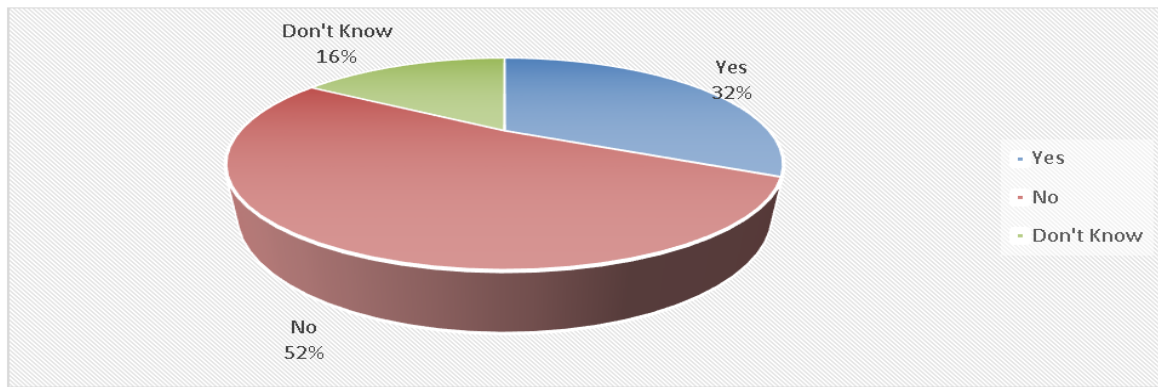


Figure 7. “Does your university have online library facilities?”

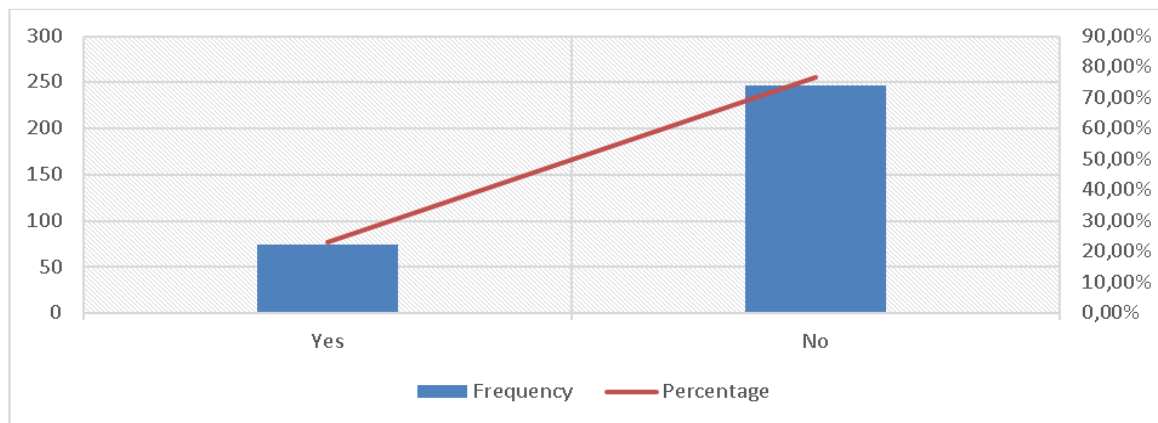


Figure 8. “Did you get any training regarding online education from your university?”

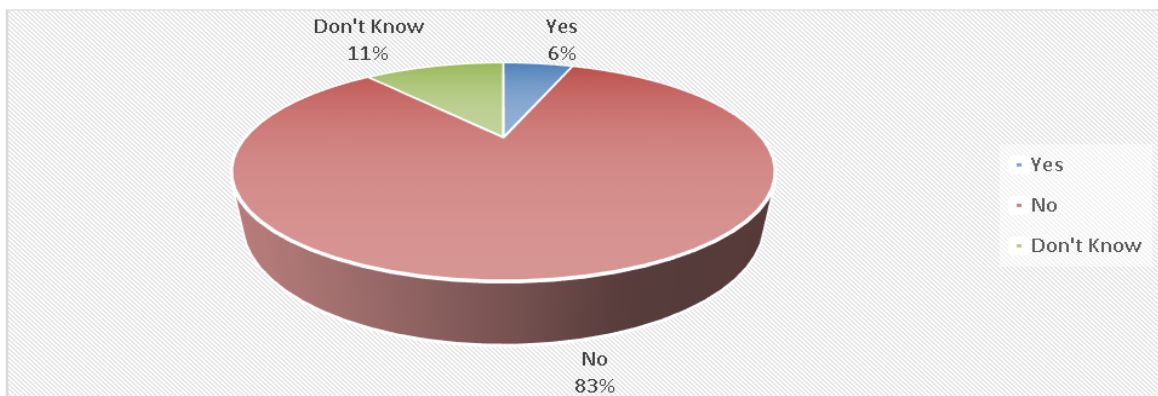


Figure 9. Counseling is continuing during COVID-19

and personally. (Godshalk & Sosik, 2000; Hegstad, 1999). Mentoring can be an effective tool for reducing the stress that new teachers and students face by providing curriculum orientation and encouraging the development of better collegiality and collaboration standards (Sweeney, 2004). Regarding mentoring, this study asked the respondents two questions. Figure 9 represents the data on ‘Counseling is continuing during COVID-19’.

According to results in Figure 9, 266(83%) respondents said they are not under counseling. On the other hand, only a few, 18(6%), said they get such counseling and the rest 36(11%) do not know about it. Table 7 shows the responses regarding the statement “Concerned office or staffs are always taking care of you what you need during COVID-19”. In this regard,

50(15.6%) respondents strongly agreed, 76(23.8%) agreed, 38(11.8%) were moderated, 120(37.5%) disagreed, and 36(11.3%) strongly disagreed.

### General Statements

Table 8 shows the respondent’s opinions regarding some statements based on five scales of the Likert scale i.e. strongly agree, agree, moderate, disagree, and strongly disagree. The first statement was “Concerned authorities are supportive in handling every matter during COVID-19”. Regarding this statement, 10(3.1%) respondents strongly agreed, 128(40%) agreed, 124(38.8%) were moderated, 36(11.3%) disagreed, and 22(6.9%) strongly disagreed. The next statement was “University has an appropriate environment for online

**Table 7.** “Concerned office or staffs are always taking care of you what you need during COVID-19”

Categories	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	50	15.6%	15.6%	15.6%
Agree	76	23.8%	23.8%	39.4%
Moderate	38	11.8%	11.8%	51.2%
Disagree	120	37.5%	37.5%	88.7%
Strongly disagree	36	11.3%	11.3%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>N=320</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	

**Table 8.** Some general statements regarding institutional support

General statements	SA	Agree	Moderate	Disagree	SD
Concerned authorities are supportive in handlings every matters during COVID-19	10(3.1%)	128(40%)	124(38.8%)	36(11.3%)	22(6.9%)
University has an appropriate environment for online education	20(6.3%)	102(31.9%)	124(38.8%)	48(15%)	26(8.1%)
Our university has been able to build capacity quickly	42(13.1%)	34(10.6%)	70(21.9%)	162(50.6%)	12 (3.8%)
Feeling Comfortable with the online education	46(14.4%)	82(25.6%)	90(28.1%)	88(27.5%)	54(16.3%)
Online classes are well designed that meets the expectations	10(3.1%)	66(20.6%)	90(28.1)	104(32.5%)	50(15.6%)
Instructors are using a different method in conducting online classes that meet gap	20(6.3%)	72(22.5%)	88(27.5%)	86(26.9%)	54(16.9%)
Online Classes are very effective for the teaching-learning process	8(5%)	56(17.5%)	78(24.4%)	100(31.3%)	70(21.9%)

SA: Strongly agree; SD: Strongly disagree

education.” In this case, 20(6.3%) respondents strongly agreed, 102(31.9%) agreed, 124(38.8%) were moderated, 48(15%) disagreed, and 26(8.1%) strongly disagreed. The next statement was “Our university has been able to build capacity quickly.” In this context, 42(13.1%) respondents strongly agreed, 34(10.6%) agreed, 70(21.9%) were moderated, 162(50.6%) disagreed, and 12(3.8%) strongly disagreed. Regarding this statement “Feeling comfortable with the online education,” 46(14.4%) respondents strongly agreed, 82(25.6%) agreed, 90(28.1%) were moderated, 88(27.5%) disagreed, and 54(16.3%) strongly disagreed. The next statement was “Online classes are well designed that meets the expectations;” 46(14.4%) respondents strongly agreed, 10(3.1%) agreed, 90(28.1%) were moderated, 104(32.5%) disagreed, and 50(15.6%) strongly disagreed.

Regarding this statement–“Instructors are using a different method in conducting online classes that meet the gap;” 20(6.3%) respondents strongly agreed, 72(22.5%) agreed, 88(27.5%) were moderated, 86(26.9%) disagreed, and 54(16.9%) strongly disagreed. The last statement was “Online classes are very effective for teaching-learning processes.” In this regard, 8(5%) respondents strongly agreed, 56(17.5%) agreed, 78(24.4%) were moderated, 100(31.3%) disagreed, and 70(21.9%) strongly disagreed.

## DISCUSSION

As it is mentioned earlier that COVID-19 has forced the academic activities of Bangladesh to shift to online. This study found that majority of the respondents are active in online classes. Out of 320 respondents, 308(96.30%) are active in online education but they (148) are not happy with online education introduced during COVID-19 pandemic as the replacement of offline education. According to Ramij and Sultana (2020), majority of the students marked lack of technological infrastructure, high cost of internet, low speed of internet, the financial crisis of the family, and mental pressure for the students are the prime hindrances for online education in Bangladesh. There is a significant gap between

physical education and online education and online education can never be a replacement for physical education system. 244(76.30%) respondents said online classes do not meet the needs and demands of quality education. This study is based on three major principles of the AMIS model and Valverde and Rodriguez’s (2002) ISM. Regarding financial assistance, most of the respondents, 266(83.1%), said that their university provides average financial assistance for meeting the gap during COVID-19. This assistance did not cover all the stakeholders. Very few universities have offered financial assistance like reducing semester fees but most of the universities have not provided such opportunities, as a result, students have faced huge financial crisis during the pandemic. Regarding technical assistance, most of the universities in Bangladesh do not have online library facilities. However, to make online education effective, training is prerequisite for all stakeholders of this system especially teachers and students, but this study found students did not get any training that would have been helpful. The online classes are continued through zoom apps in most of the universities of Bangladesh as 302(94.2%) of respondents used it. Mentoring is one of the significant processes by which students reduce their stress and pressures. It is highly needed for students during such pandemics. But unfortunately this study found, the universities did not take care of them so that they could reduce their stress and pressures. Finally, it is observed that both students and teachers had poor support from the authority during COVID-19 to continue their teaching learning. According to Khan and Abdou (2021), now the entire higher education system is suffering from four main problems to tackle the situation like firstly, government through the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the UGC of Bangladesh were reluctant to the online education as an alternative, secondly, parents and students are not well aware, and thirdly most of the universities are not familiar with the online education.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Academic programs have been severely interrupted, and students are extremely depressed as they consider their



academic future in the aftermath of the COVID-19 lockdown. The study's main goal is to assess Bangladesh's institutional support for online education in the midst of a pandemic. While the government, the UGC, colleges, and many other institutions have taken measures to support online education, this study finds that their support and planning are insufficient to reduce this massive academic loss. In light of this, the authors of this study advise authorities and policymakers to take the following steps.

Firstly, in all universities and colleges, dedicated software can be set up for ongoing learning tasks such as holding classes, taking attendance, examinations, tests, and evaluations.

Secondly, more training and grooming sessions for both teachers and students, as well as staff, should be organized, as many senior professors are unfamiliar with modern technologies.

Thirdly, the authorities should take measures to ensure stronger, more reliable internet service at affordable rates, given that the majority of students attend online classes from rural areas and 68.9% of students rely on mobile internet. Academic institutions along with the UGC and other private sectors should take the responsibilities for ensuring such an environment at any cost.

Fourthly, along with online classes, online mentoring and counseling sessions should be made available to ensure that students of all ages and teachers receive mental support and that learning does not become monotonous.

Lastly, successfully identifying potential flaws and roadblocks that students may face, as well as providing appropriate solutions. Instructors, for example, must be creative in assessing students' class performance and keeping them engaged throughout the class by employing a variety of teaching techniques.

As we noted, the government and universities had provided varying levels of support. For example, the UGC stepped up to the plate and introduced policies requiring all universities to go online. Digitization had become mainstream in just four months. On a daily basis, over 3,800 classes are held online, with over 220,000 students in attendance. So far, 10,200 faculty members have delivered a total of 203,200 classes to more than 9.2 million students. The Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN) has played a significant role in this. BdREN supported online teaching at 147 of the country's 153 public and private institutions. In 2009, the Bangladesh government had begun the process of digitizing higher education with the help of the World Bank's Higher Education Quality Enhancement Project (HEQEP). Bangladesh's Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation (HEAT) project had provided additional support to universities and the UGC to help them coping with COVID-19. It also enhanced BdREN's capacity to support higher education institutions and ensure connectivity for education and research institutions across the country. Along with this, the UGC and university has given soft loan without interest to the students for buying digital device and laptop. Different kind of monetary assistance also given to the students as well. The amount of scholarships and stipends have been increased to make up with COVID-19.

The goal of this study was to quickly identify the institutional support for online education at the postsecondary level in Bangladesh while the country grapples with the COVID-19 pandemic. This study contributes to a better understanding of the institutional support for online education at the tertiary level in Bangladesh, as well as directing future researchers in this area. Through a comprehensive analysis, it also creates a valuable argument regarding institutional assistance and overall performance of university students. Academics and researchers will undoubtedly gain from this study if they continue to do similar research.

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