

# Covid-19 and Students life in Khansama Upazila, Dinajpur District, Bangladesh

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## Abstract

The Covid-19 has had drastic effect on educational sector around the world. This study took an attempt to explore how far the Corona pandemic affected the lives of rural and municipal students of Khansama Upazila, Dinajpur District, Bangladesh. The study collected data by using questionnaire interviews from 198 respondents who were 9 to 18 years old. The study found that the Corona pandemic hit the educational lives of rural pupils more compared to municipal ones and a remarkable number of rural students were afraid of returning to their studies than those of municipal ones. According to the survey, municipal students were more aware of Corona infection than rural ones. It also found that students-families of both areas had financial crisis during Corona pandemic which created a rift in the families that affected the mentality of the students. It also found that rural students involved more in income generating activities to support their families than their counter ones, and many rural parents married off their school-going daughters to reduce their financial crisis. Long time market closure result of this pandemic, made a shortage of daily necessities in both areas which affected the nutritional needs of the students. Again, the confinement of the students in their home during the lockdown isolated them to their surroundings that ultimately affected their mental health.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, student life, rural, municipal and Bangladesh

## Introduction

The Covid-19 is a Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), caused by SARS-CoV-2, a Novel Virus which belongs to *Coronaviridae*. The first case found in Wuhan City of China and reported in December 2019 (Kumar *et al.*, 2021). The global spread of Coronavirus forced the governments of most countries to close educational institutions that disrupted educational life of more than 168 million children

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(UNICEF, 2021). The first case identified in Bangladesh on March 8, 2020. Nine days later the Government of Bangladesh made an announcement of the closure of all educational institutions and cancellation of all public examination considering the safety of students, teachers, staff and guardians (Antara, 2021).

This announcement deprived nearly 38 million students from their opportunities to receive proper learning and interact with their peers, which had affected their education experience (Rahman and Ahmed, 2021). Normal growth and development of children has thus been affected severely. BRAC (2021) reported that 13% of students had less interest in studying while 14% of students did not study at all during the pandemic period. To address the disruption, the government arranged broadcasting classes through a television channel for primary and secondary students, and directed teachers of all schools, colleges and universities to deliver lectures using internet.

A plethora of studies identified educational, familial and social impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on student's life. The first group includes disrupting studies<sup>4</sup>, inability to bear online class expenditure<sup>5</sup>, wasting much time by watching TV and using smart mobile phone<sup>6</sup>, and developing phobia for coming school back again<sup>7</sup>. Helping household activities<sup>8</sup>, involving in income generating activities<sup>9</sup>, facing more financial crisis<sup>10</sup> and forced child marriage<sup>11</sup> are elements of the second group. The last group mainly includes restrictions on outside movement<sup>12</sup> and mental illness<sup>13</sup>. All these studies reviewed conducted their studies at macro level and did not take an attempt to make a comparison between rural and municipal areas. Moreover, most of the studies were conducted in the context of developed world. All these shortcomings led us to take an attempt to conduct a study in the developing country like Bangladesh at micro level. The main objective of the current study was to find out the effects of Corona pandemic on the lives of students at both rural and municipal settings and the specific objective was to find out the comparative effects of Corona pandemic on educational, familial and social lives of students of both areas. The rest of the paper is organized in the following manner. The next section is the description of research method followed in this study. The third section presents main findings of the study followed by main discussion of the study in which argumentations have been developed. The last section draws a conclusion.

## Methodology

Primary data was collected by using questionnaire interviews from the respondents who were from 09 to 18 years old. Initially a draft questionnaire was developed on issues, such as, demographic and socio-

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<sup>4</sup> Abdullah and Shovon, 2021; Antara, 2021; Dutta and Smita, 2020; Human Rights Watch, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2021; Masih, 2021; Mustari, 2021; Save the Children, 2021; UNESCO, 2021 and USAID, 2021

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed, 2021; Byron and Habib, 2021; Emon *et al.*, 2020; Mahmud *et al.*, 2021; Raihan *et al.*, 2021 and USAID, 2021

<sup>6</sup> Save the Children, 2021

<sup>7</sup> Gautam *et al.*, 2021 and UNESCO, 2021

<sup>8</sup> Antara, 2021; Makino *et al.*, 2021 and Save the Children, 2021

<sup>9</sup> Jahan, 2021; Khatun, 2021; Makino *et al.*, 2021; Save the Children, 2021 and Suresh, 2021

<sup>10</sup> Mahmud *et al.*, 2021; Save the Children, 2021; Uddin M, 2020; UNICEF Bangladesh 2020 and USAID, 2021

<sup>11</sup> Antara, 2021; BRAC, 2021; Gautam *et al.*, 2021; Jahan, 2021; Khatun, 2021 and Save the Children, 2021

<sup>12</sup> Save the Children, 2021

<sup>13</sup> Ali, 2020; Antara, 2021; Dutta and Smita, 2020; Gautam *et al.*, 2021; Hsu, 2020; Islam *et al.*, 2020; Khan *et al.*, 2020; Masud *et al.*, 2021; Mustari *et al.*, 2021; Piya *et al.*, 2022 and Shammi, 2020 and Yeasmin, 2020.

economic background of the respondents. The questionnaire used in the study had four parts. The first part asked some general questions like family size, age, sex, household head, occupation, monthly family income, region and religion of participants. The following part put some questions on comparing educational lives of the respondents before and after Covid-19 pandemic. In the third part, a few questions related with familial lives of the respondents were asked and finally, the last part asked some social life related questions. The researchers found certain anomalies regarding ordering the questions and then felt the necessity of adding few more questions with changes and adjustments in the questionnaires. With some addition and correction, the questionnaires were finalized for pretesting. Both open and close ended questions were incorporated in the questionnaires. The pretest was conducted among five respondents for testing the effectiveness of suitability of the research instrument and discovering possible weaknesses, ambiguities and problems that could be corrected before actual data collection took place. It was also done with the objectives of exploring the necessity of adding new questions. After the pretesting, necessary correction and modifications were made in the questionnaire. It was then ready for conducting interviews among the respondents.

Field investigation lasted from October 12 to November 05, 2020. The single proportion formula was used to determine sample size. In this study, 198 respondents were interviewed among which 113 were from village<sup>14</sup> and 85 were from municipal<sup>15</sup>. This study (Khansama Upazila) is situated within Rangpur Division, Northern part of Bangladesh which was purposively selected. The systematic sampling technique was employed to select the study participants from each of the selected areas. The numbers of the participants sampled from the selected areas were determined using proportionate- to population size. A total number of students with the same age category living in village and municipality areas were 192 and 269 respectively. The interval (k) value was calculated for each selected area by dividing the total number of students in each area by the corresponding proportional sample size calculated for each area. The initial participant was randomly selected by the lottery method. Then other participants were selected at every k<sup>th</sup> interval. Every questionnaire contains 57 questions. It took on average 20 minutes to complete interview. Once the field investigation was over, all the questionnaires were edited and some errors were detected and corrected accordingly. We provide frequency distribution tables and graph with percentage to describe responses and do all kinds of data processing activities through Excel software and manually.

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<sup>14</sup> South Balapara; 8 No.Word; 4 No.Khamarpara Union

<sup>15</sup> Pakerhat Bazar



Figure 1: Map of the study area

([www.google.com](http://www.google.com))

### Findings of the Study

Table 1: Demographic and socio-economic profile of the respondents

Different criteria	Respondents	
	N	%
<b>Age (Year)</b>		
9-10	31	15.7
11-12	28	14.1
13-14	38	19.2
15-16	46	23.2
17-18	55	27.8
Total	198	100.0
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	93	47
Female	105	53
Total	198	100
<b>Family Size</b>		

Nuclear	122	61.6
Extended	76	38.4
Total	198	100.0
<b>Level of Education (Class)</b>		
Five (Primary)	39	19.7
Six-Ten (Secondary)	97	49.0
Eleven-Twelve (Higher Secondary)	62	31.3
Total	198	100.0
<b>Level of Monthly Income (Taka)</b>		
Less than 12,000	62	31.3
13,000-15,000	54	27.3
16,000-20,000	42	21.2
More than 20,000	40	20.2
Total	198	100.0
<b>Areas</b>		
Rural	113	57.1
Municipal	85	42.9
Total	198	100.0

Source: Field Work

Table 1 shows the demographic and socio-economic status of the respondents. The percentage of the respondents aged between 17 and 18 years was 27.78 which is followed by the age group 15 to 16 (23.2%), 13 to 14 (19.2%), 9 to 10 (18.7%) and 11 to 12 (14.1%). Among the respondents, 47 percent (n=93) are males and 53 percent (n=105) are females. Besides, 61.6 percent (n=122) of the respondents were from nuclear family<sup>16</sup> whereas 38.4 percent (n=76) of the respondents were from extended family<sup>17</sup>. On the other side, almost half of the respondents (49%) studied at class six to ten while the percentage of students studying at class five and 11 to 12 was 14.7 and 31.3 respectively. The percentage of households having monthly family income below BD Tk. 12,000, 13,000 to 15,000, 16,000 to 20,000 and above 20,000 was 31.3, 27.3, 21.2 at 20.2 interchangeably. Finally, 57 percent (n=113) of the respondents were from rural area and rest of them were from municipal area.

**Table 2: Impacts of Covid-19 on Education Life of the Students**

Variables	Rural	Municipal
	Yes	Yes
Continuing study at home	65 (57.5)	70 (82.4)
Access to online class	29 (25.7)	71 (83.5)
Bearing high costs for online class	35 (31)	80 (94.1)
Affecting study without classmate	89 (78.8)	73 (85.9)
Completing a chapter as like as before	34 (30.1)	52 (61.2)
Managing reading time like the past	37 (32.7)	54 (63.5)

<sup>16</sup> Parents living with their two children

<sup>17</sup> Expansion of nuclear family where uncles, aunts, grandparents, as well as, parents, children and siblings live together.

Studying with help of family members	36 (31.9)	61 (71.8)
Continuing studies if the school is reopened	93 (82.3)	81 (95.3)
Continuing studies through tuition/coaching like before	37 (32.7)	23 (27.1)

Source: Field work; Note: Percentage in Parentheses

Table 2 reveals how the Corona pandemic has affected student's learning capacity and skills in both rural and municipal areas. The study showed that 57.5% and 82.4% of rural and municipality area students respectively continued their study at home during Corona pandemic. Besides, the percentage of rural and municipality students with online class connectivity was 25.7 and 83.5 respectively. The study found a disparity in bearing high online costs and getting study help from family members between two areas; it estimated that only 31% of rural and 94.1% of municipality students could bear high costs and 31.9% of rural and 74.1% municipality students received family assistance respectively. At the same time, 17.2% of rural and 4.7% of municipal students reported that even if the school reopened, they would not be able to continue their studies. This reveals that most urban-based students continued their study using blended methods whereas rural ones dropped due to various reasons, having no online connectivity was one of them.

**Table 3: Impacts of Covid-19 on Current Familial Life of the Students**

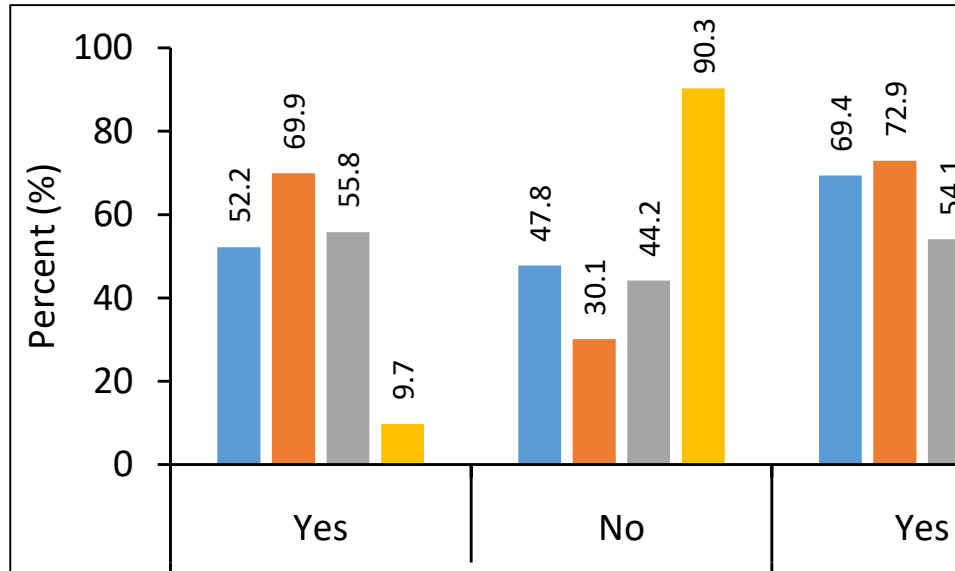
Variables	Rural	Municipal
	Yes	Yes
Washing your hands with soap for 20 seconds	85 (75.2)	77 (90.6)
Sharing family works	101 (89.4)	65 (76.5)
Involving money generating activities	54 (47.8)	17 (20)
Any effect on family's income	91 (80.5)	68 (80)
Familial crises due to financial difficulties	66 (58.4)	47 (55.3)
Effects of familial crisis on you	66 (58.4)	47 (55.3)
Nutrition deficiency for dietary change	79 (69.9)	53 (62.4)
Arranging or thinking of girls (13+ years) marriage by family	21 (18.6)	09 (10.6)
Getting right price of agricultural products	18 (15.9)	18 (21.2)
Getting everything like before	25 (22.1)	19 (22.4)

Source: Field work; Note: Percentage in Parentheses

Table 3 presents different types of economic and familial problems that both rural and municipal students faced during the Covid-19 pandemic. The study showed that 89.4% of rural and 76.5% municipal students shared family works. At the same time, the percentage of rural and municipal students involving in money generating activities was 47.8 and 20 respectively. As reported by 80.5% rural and 80% municipality students, Corona pandemic affected their family income. This situation might force 69.9% of rural and 62.4% of municipal students to reduce their family nutrition intake. This situation also might cause forcing 18.6% rural and 10.6% municipality parents to think of getting their girls married earlier.



**Figure 2: Impacts of Covid-19 on Social Life of the Students**



Source: Field Work

Figure 2 highlights region based differences in social crisis during Covid-19 period. As said in the figure, the percentage of rural and municipal students forbidding from participating in play grounds/recreation/traveling/social functions was 52.2 and 69.4 interchangeably. At the same time, 69.9% of rural and 72.9% of municipal students were reported to have changed their religious practices and rituals. As reported by 9.7% of rural and 12.9% of municipal students, their hat-bazar remained closed during the pandemic period.

### Discussion

Covid-19, possibly the largest pandemic in the world, has hit all aspects of human life. In Bangladesh the first Covid-19 case was detected on March 8, 2020-much later than China and Europe. Nevertheless, this pandemic has been stand stilling the entire life system of Bangladeshi people for a long-term. This study highlighted how much student life has been affected by the pandemic in both rural and urban settings.

### Disrupting education life

The rapid spread of Coronavirus in Bangladesh forced the government to close all educational institutions for more than a year like other countries. This long closure made students distracted from learning. The study presents that in the pandemic situation only 57.5% of rural students continued their study at home whereas that figure for municipality was 82.4%. In a study, Masih (2021) found that only a half of rural students could not read more than a few words. A mother of 9 years old girl said that her child did not study now and waited for the reopening of school (Human Rights Watch, 2020). In this situation, the Government of Bangladesh started broadcasting live and recorded lectures. However, this created education inequality among the students. The study showed that urban area based students were able to join online class more compared with rural ones due to the availability of android phone, wide range coverage of broad band internet facilities, the ability to bear online class expenditure and awareness of the guardians. Ahmed (2021) found in his study that one in five rural students maintained

the online learning programs. Similarly, Mustari *et al.*, (2021) found that privileged students with parental supports were more eager and able to learn. According to Byron and Habib (2021), only 9.2% of children in the poorest households and 91% children in the richest households had access to televisions that telecasted online or recorded classes. Even in some cases, municipality students (71.8%) received more cooperation from their parents than rural ones (31.9%). Rural students (17.7%) had more fear of continuing their study after reopening educational institutions than municipality ones (4.7%). UNESCO (2021) reported bad consequences of this learning loss. These include disruption of physical growth and mental development of children, and increasing high risk of dropping education life.

### **Facing economic and familial crisis**

The first wave of Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdown made millions of families into poverty traps across the world. Bangladesh was no exception. The economic fragility of the family had severe effects on children. The study reported that income of four in five rural and three in five municipality families had been affected due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Around 77% of the Bangladeshi families were reported to be declining their average monthly income by Alam (2021). It also reported that farmers could not sell their agricultural goods or get a fair price that further aggravated their economic crisis which caused quarrels between family members. This economic misery created nutritional deficiency among rural (84%) and municipal (62.4%) students. In their study, Hussain and Mamun (2020) showed that 64% families were in serious food crisis. This finding has also been corroborated by Antara (2021) revealing that 44% students suffered from malnutrition due to financial crisis. Less than half rural students and one-fifth municipality students were therefore forced to involve in many income generating activities in order to reduce their family financial crisis. According to Save the Children (2021), 2.5% male students were asked to search for and got engaged in income earning activities for their families. Suresh (2021) reported that during the pandemic situation many of school children were involved in child labor to support their families. In this situation, 18.6% of rural and 10.6% of municipal student families thought of getting their school going girls married to reduce burden on them. According to BRAC (2021), 77% of the marriages took place in households during that Covid-19 period brides of which were under age of 18. This figure is higher than that of nation (51%) in 2018.

### **Increasing social crisis**

The government of Bangladesh enforced an all-out lockdown as the country grapples with a surge in Coronavirus cases and fatalities with the highly infectious Delta variant causing havoc. The study found that the students (52.2% rural and 63.4% municipal) were not given permission from families to participate in playground, traveling, recreational and social activities due to Corona shutdown. In the social system of Indian subcontinent, children never dare to disobey their parents or family elders. So during the Corona pandemic, the children in both rural and municipal areas did not go outside house as their parents said. According to Save the Children (2021), only 1% students could go outside as usual, 36% students once or twice in a day, 40% students not at all and 23% students once in a few days. Mustari *et al.*, (2021) reported that during confinement the absence of interpersonal interactions, emotional attachment and physical activities put the students' socialization process at risk, resulting in socio-psychological changes in activities and behavioral patterns. The study found that 71.7% of rural students and 91.8% of municipal students could not continue relations with their neighbors and relatives during the Covid-19 situation. Along sides, 25.7% of rural students and 32.9% of municipal students



were forbidden to go for prayer outside their families. Such a social isolation, institutional and home quarantine made students life bored and depressed. Antara (2021) showed in a study that 55% children were worried and unhappy about their lives in this environment. Ali (2020) found that as long as the pandemic continued, each new day brought new issues, misinformation and propoganda in social media that created unnecessary psychological trauma and anxiety among the children. In a study by Islam *et al.*, (2020), around 15% and 18% of students were reported to have had moderately severe and severe depression from anxiety respectively.

## Conclusion

Covid-19 pandemic had shaken most of the world's institutions ranging from education, economy, industry, humanity, religion, to the rest. This study explored how the pandemic has affected entire life (educational, familial and social) of both rural and municipal students. The study found that a small portion of rural students could continue their studies whereas that number in municipality areas was a large. At the same time, the percentage of municipal students with access to online class and capacity to bear online class-related expenditure was higher than that of counter ones. Worthy mentioning here that strikingly a greater proportion of rural students expressed their fear about starting their studies again more than urban ones. Municipality students were more aware of the Corona infection than that of rural students. Additionally, other than helping family works, many rural students were found to have been engaged in income-generating activities in order to reduce family financial crisis, result of long-term lockdown. This economic crisis sometimes created family altercation which affected mental well-being of students. In this situation, many parents thought of marrying off their school-going daughters to reduce their financial crisis. The nutritional needs of the students were also affected by the long closure of markets and of supply of daily necessities. During the pandemic situation, the students had to confine in their houses without interacting with the outside that affectd their physical growth and mental develoment. Finally, it can be said that this Covid-19 pandemic has been pushing many students towards a frightening, anxious and uncertain life.

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