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Corona virus Pandemic and Future of Higher Education: A Study on the Private University Students of Bangladesh

Md. Rayhanul Islam ¹ and Jannatul Islam ²

1. Department of Real Estate, Daffodil International University, rayhanul.bba@diu.edu.bd
2. MAEP, Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada, jislam@grenfell.mun.ca

Abstract

This study intends to analyze the detrimental effects of COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic on income sources as well as on the income levels of the financiers of private university students in Bangladesh and thus the ultimate effect of COVID-19 pandemic on private university higher education will be assessed. Primary data have been collected from 5745 private university students regarding the relevant issues by using a structured online questionnaire. Data were analyzed in SPSS software and afterwards presented in statistical tables. The study concluded that higher education expenditures of private university students are funded by the parents in most of the cases although some times their other family members and relatives also contribute while the students themselves rarely contribute for their educational expenses. The study resulted that professions of most of the financiers of higher education of private university students include business, private job and job in abroad and during the COVID-19 pandemic all the professions have been affected although business, private job and job in abroad have been affected much and effect on government services is not mentionable. The study concluded that the effects of coronavirus pandemic has decreased the income and might further decrease that which will eventually have adverse impact on the higher education of private university students of Bangladesh. The study suggested the respective authorities and stakeholders to initiate measures to provide safeguard during and after the coronavirus pandemic to the higher education. The study concluded that online learning should be facilitated where the regulatory authorities, government, private universities and related departments have roles to play.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Coronavirus, Higher education, Financiers of Higher Education, Safeguard.

Background of the study

Who should bear the cost of higher education- is a unique question with different answers all over the world. The answer varies from country to country. Mode of higher study financing is not same in all the parts of the world. Goksu & Goksu (2015) studied that different countries of the world use different funding model for higher studies of the citizens. In some countries, this financing model is mainly private



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sector based while some others follow public financing-based model. In developed countries, the higher education financing is mostly borne by the students. They work during the weekends or vacations for paying the education expenses. But in developing countries like Bangladesh higher education is financed by either the public sector or by their family- mostly by the parents. Bray (1996) mentioned that in the countries where governments do not ensure quality education to all, the parents want to finance the education of their children.

The higher education in public universities in Bangladesh are government funded that are budgeted from the government revenues. Their own earnings are not mentionable. But the public universities can ensure higher education for a very small percentage of the students due to the seat-capacity limitation. Rashid (2015) reported that only 05% of HSC and equivalent passed students in Bangladesh are able to get enroll into public university and the rest 95% have to look for admission either in colleges under national university or in private universities.

Private universities are mostly run by the students' fees and other payments in different names to the university. In the culture of Bangladesh, the academic expenses are borne by the family. In the other hand, besides the academic expenditure, the living expenditure in big city like capital city of the country is very high. These huge expenses come from the parental sources. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the income sources of the parents have been greatly affected which is assumed to hamper the educational expenditure of their children studying in different private universities. In such a situation, the higher education is passing through different challenges which are aimed to be studied in this article to display the reality and to bring out useful recommendation.

Literature Review

Higher education has been defined differently in different country based on their location and own policy. The places like Botswana & Egypt, all education after school or high school are referred to as higher study while in South Africa, higher study includes the university education only (Pillay, 2010).



In many countries, students have to pay some other expenditure in different names other than tuition fees (Bray, 1996). These expenditures may include development fees, semester fees, extra and co-curricular fees etc.

In Nepal, the state policy regarding funding of higher study includes to shift the burden to private sector. The public sector budget for higher education in Nepal is good enough compared to developed countries but actual government expenditure on it is poor compared to other developed & developing countries (Baral, 2007). Study is evident that Zimbabwe used to allocate large portion of GNP for education. During the 1980's, approximately 8-9 percent of the annual budget was reserved for education purposes (Lewin & Caillods, 2001).

The several lockdowns due to coronavirus pandemic, manufacturing activities have become highly affected in China. Many business houses are postponing their operations everyday resulting an increase in unemployment rate. The lockdowns taking effect are resulting in a cut to family budgets and may result in a budget cut towards educational purposes (Fernandes, N., 2020).

The sustainable development goal of the UN to eliminate poverty by 2030 seems to be impossible due to the corona virus outbreak, which has caused poverty to increase after 1990 for the first time (Summer et al., 2020). This increase in poverty may also affect the ability of the parents financing the expenditure of the students in higher study especially in a developing country like Bangladesh.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, business operations in China have been interrupted irrespective of size of the firms and small and medium enterprises have faced many barriers during this pandemic, Dai, Hu & Zhang (2020).

Economically, India has been listed as one of the fifteen most affected countries during this coronavirus pandemic, causing an estimated loss of around 348 million dollars, which has caused drastic effects in business, tourism, as well as aviation industries (Koshle, et al., 2020).

Chaganti et al., (2020) depicted that gradually the uncertainties are becoming certain in New England. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, service workers in New England are now facing a lot of uncertainty,



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ranging from loss of work to being compelled to work under unbearable pressure, including but not limited to heavy mental stress.

Many of us are facing big catastrophes in our lives now due to this corona virus pandemic. With time, COVID-19 will come and go, but the changes made to all working environments will continue to take place for the foreseeable future. Both corporate and state policies made during this pandemic will dominate the universe in the future (Harari, 2020).

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the Study focuses on the investigation of the estimated effects that the corona virus pandemic causes on the higher education in Bangladesh. To accomplish this objective the study further analyzes the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the income sources of the parents or guardians who are financing for the higher education of their children. The study further recommends some suggestions for the sustainability of higher education during and post corona virus pandemic days.

Methodology and data collection

This is a descriptive study using primary data collected through structured questionnaire. In collecting the data, random sampling technique was adopted. An online questionnaire was distributed among the private university students of Bangladesh and total 5,745 students responded to the survey. Through the survey, the respondents provided the relevant information about the financiers of their study and the way COVID-19 pandemic has affected their family income. The data were analyzed in SPSS software. Different statistical tables were used to display and interpret the results of the study. Relevant local and global literatures have also been reviewed to increase the validity of this study.

Data analysis and Result

Who bears the higher education expenditures and what is their profession:

The study found that in Bangladesh, the higher education expenditures of the private university students are borne by their parents, mainly the father while in some cases mothers also contribute. The study found



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that the other family members like brother, sister or the blood related relatives contribute in very few cases for the educational expenses.

Table-01 shows the financier pattern of private university students in Bangladesh. The study showed that fathers pay for the higher study expenditures of 79.08% students of the private universities followed by 4.66% by the mothers of the students. It is also noticed that 3.53% students pays their study expenditures jointly with their parents. Students earn some and rest amounts are paid by their parents. 5.73% students replied that their family members jointly contribute for their university expenses while 6.5% students replied that their university expenses are borne by their relatives.

Table 01: Who pays for the higher study of private university students in Bangladesh?

Financier	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
Father	4543	79.08	79.08
Mother	268	4.66	83.74
Self (by student)	29	0.50	84.24
Joint contribution (Student & Parents)	203	3.53	87.77
Joint Contribution (by family members)	329	5.73	93.5
Relatives	373	6.50	100
Total	5745		

Source: Author's compilation from survey data

Occupation of the financiers of the higher studies in Bangladesh:

From the survey data table-02 displays that profession of 28% financiers of private university students is business which is highest in percentage followed by 15.9% which accounts for the agriculture-farmer. On the other hand, professions of 14.9% financiers are private job holder. The table also displays that 7.5%, 5.4% and 6.8% represents the government service, job in abroad and teaching respectively as the profession of the financiers. At the same time 8.3% financiers are retired service holders and 12% financiers are engaged in other professions not included in the list above.



Table 02: Profession of the financier of higher study of private university students in Bangladesh

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Business	1611	28.0	28.0
Bank job	51	.9	28.9
Doctor	18	.3	29.2
Govt Service	433	7.5	36.8
Job in Abroad	308	5.4	42.1
Private job	856	14.9	57.0
Agriculture-Farmer	913	15.9	72.9
Retired Person	476	8.3	81.2
Teaching	390	6.8	88.0
Other	689	12.0	100.0
Total	5745	100.0	

Source: Author's compilation from survey data

Annual Income level of the financier of private university students in Bangladesh

Table 03: Income level of the financier of private university higher education students

Range of annual income	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 200000	499	8.7	8.7
200000-below 350000	1050	18.3	27.0
350000- below 500000	1307	22.7	49.7
500000- below 650000	1117	19.4	69.2
650000 and above	1771	30.8	100.0
Total	5745		

Source: Author's compilation from survey data

Table-03 summarizes that 30.8% financiers of the private university students belong to the annual income range of BDT 6,50,000 and above which is highest in percentage followed by 22.7% financiers having annual income range of BDT 3,50,000 to below BDT 5,00,000 and 19.4% financiers' income of BDT 5,00,000 to below BDT 6,50,000. Only 8.7% financiers have annual income below BDT 2,00,000 who might be poor from the view point of annual income and 18.3% financiers belong to the annual income level of BDT 2,00,000 to below BDT 3,50,000.

**Detrimental effect of coronavirus pandemic on the income of the private university students:**

Table 04: Degree of COVID-19 effect on the financiers of private university students in Bangladesh

Degree of effects	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Much affected	3478	60.5	60.5
Moderately affected	1128	19.6	80.2
Minor affected	360	6.3	86.4
Not affected	779	13.6	100.0
Total	5745	100.0	

Source: Author's compilation from survey data

Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has affected the professions of the financiers of private university students which surely will affect the affordability of them to pay for higher studies. Table-04 shows that income of 60.5% financiers have become much affected due to the coronavirus pandemic and 19.6% respondents said that income of their financiers have become moderately affected while 6.3% financiers income level have got minor affected but other 13.6% respondents responded that income of their financiers have not been affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be mentioned that income of 86.4% financiers of the private university students have been affected at different degrees.

Comparing the effect of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic of different professions:

Table-05 makes it clear that all the professions have become affected due to the coronavirus pandemic. 89.26% of the financiers with business as their profession has become much affected while 8.07% and 2.67% have become moderately affected and minor affected respectively. If we notice to the financiers employed in abroad, 93.18% have become much affected and 6.82% have become moderately affected. On the other hand, 99.3% of the private job holders have become much affected and rest 0.7% of them have not become affected. Scenario of teaching professionals says that 60.51% of the teachers' income have been affected much and 17.95% have become moderately affected while 11.79% have become minor affected and 9.75% have not been affected due to the coronavirus pandemic.



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The financiers who are farmer as their profession or engaged in other agriculture-based professions have also become affected. 54.22% and 34.72% of them have become highly and moderately respectively while 2.3% and 8.76% of them have become minor affected and not affected at all. Rest of the professions is not affected much to be mentioned due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 05: Cross tabulation showing degree of COVID-19 effect in different professions

Professions	Degree of COVID-19 effect				Total
	Much affected	Moderately affected	Minor affected	Not affected	
Business	1438 (89.26%)	130 (8.07%)	43 (2.67%)	0	1611(100%)
Bank job	0	9 (17.65%)	16 (31.37%)	26 (50.98%)	51 (100%)
Doctor	4 (22.22%)	8 (44.44%)	6 (33.34%)	0	18 (100%)
Govt Service	0	0	37 (8.54%)	396 (91.46%)	433 (100%)
Job Abroad	287 (93.18%)	0	21 (6.82%)	0	308 (100%)
Private job	850 (99.3%)	0	0	6 (0.7%)	856 (100%)
Agriculture-Farmer	495 (54.22%)	317 (34.72%)	21 (2.3%)	80 (8.76%)	913 (100%)
Retired Person	58 (12.18%)	174 (36.55%)	11 (2.32%)	233 (48.95%)	476 (100%)
Teaching	236 (60.51%)	70 (17.95%)	46 (11.79%)	38 (9.75%)	390 (100%)
Other	110 (15.96%)	420 (60.96%)	159 (23.08%)	0	689 (100%)
	3478 (60.5%)	1128 (19.6%)	360 (6.3%)	779 (13.6%)	5745 (100%)

Source: Author's compilation from survey data

Comparing the effect of Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic among the financiers of different level of annual income:

Table-06 featured the data showing the degree of COVID-19 effects on the financiers of different income levels and it has been found that 69.62% of the financiers having annual income of BDT 6, 50,000 and above have become much affected, 19.08% and 5.81% of this income level have become moderately affected and minor affected respectively while 5.49% have not been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. In the cases of financiers ranging the annual income level of BDT 5,00,000 to less than BDT 6,50,000 showed in the study that 60.61% and 19.87% of them have become much and moderately affected respectively due to the COVID-19 pandemic while 7.07% and 12.45% respectively have



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become minor affected and not affected due to this pandemic. On the other hand, 57.76% of the financiers with the annual income level of BDT 3, 50,000 to below BDT 5, 00,000 have been much affected while 26.1% and 3.44% of them have become moderately and minor affected in the pandemic although 12.7% are safe still. Financiers with less than BDT 2, 00,000 per year income are also greatly affected due to coronavirus pandemic. Among this group, 63.2%, 5.21%, 16.83% and 14.64% of them have been much affected, moderately affected, minor affected and not affected respectively due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 06: Cross tabulation showing COVID-19 effect among financiers of different income level

Range of income	Degree of COVID-19 effect				Total
	Much affected	Moderately affected	Minor affected	Not affected	
Less than 200000	316 (63.32%)	26 (5.21%)	84 (16.83%)	72 (14.64%)	499 (100%)
200000-below 350000	495 (47.14%)	201 (19.14%)	48 (4.57%)	306 (29.15%)	1050 (100%)
350000- below 500000	755 (57.76%)	341 (26.1%)	45 (3.44%)	165 (12.7%)	1307 (100%)
500000- below 650000	677 (60.61%)	222 (19.87%)	79 (7.07%)	139 (12.45%)	1117 (100%)
650000 and above	1233 (69.62%)	338 (19.08%)	103 (5.81%)	96 (5.49%)	1771 (100%)
Total	3478 (60.5%)	1128 (19.6%)	360 (6.3%)	779 (13.6%)	5745 (100%)

Source: Author's compilation from survey data

Conclusion & Suggestion:

Summarizing the analysis of the study data, the research found that in Bangladesh, cost of higher studies in the private universities are mainly borne by the parents of the students specifically by the fathers. In some cases, other family members of the joint families such as uncles and aunts also contribute and in few cases the higher study expenses come from students' relatives. The study also concludes that very few students contribute to their educational expenses thyselves as their family income are not that much sound always. It can be further concluded that, although all the professions have been affected jobs such



as business, private job, job in abroad and agriculture-based professions (farmer) have been mainly affected while government service holders in Bangladesh are not affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic. From the perspective of annual income level, people from all levels of income became affected in the coronavirus pandemic. The findings stated above hint that the private university students may face financial challenges in the coming days during and after the coronavirus pandemic.

However, the study suggests that the concerned authorities including university management, regulatory bodies, government and related stakeholders should initiate drives to tackle the challenges of higher education otherwise in the long run the effect will spread among the societies. Private universities may come forward with stimulus packages for the students, while governmental departments may facilitate online teaching by ensuring the related supports like low cost and uninterrupted internet and electricity. The researchers further suggest that financial stimulus packages should also come from the concerned authority to mitigate the adverse impact of coronavirus on the income of the people who fund for the higher education students of private universities.

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