

The Psychological Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic and Lockdown on Job Seekers in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

According to recent literature, university graduates looking for work are more likely to suffer from common mental diseases such as melancholy, anxiety, or stress. However, mental health difficulties among unemployed graduates have yet to be investigated in Bangladesh. This study appraises to assume psychological effects of covid-19 pandemic and lockdown on job seekers in Bangladesh. This study is based on a mixed-method of social research containing both primary and secondary data to meet its objectives. This study found a heavy psychological impact on jobseekers because of covid-19 which highlights different psychological disorders like uncertainty, anxiety, insomnia, depression, emotional disturbance, helplessness, etc. in the state of jobseekers university students. This study also shades the stress relief factors that help to minimize psychological disorders at a large amount. The factors are social support, family support, government motivation, age extension in a government job, etc. of later, this paper made some suggestions to overcome this downward psychological state of job seekers in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Psychology, Effect, Covid-19, Lockdown, Job Seekers, Bangladesh

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 (Coronavirus disease 2019) pandemic has had an effect on all of the sectors. COVID-19, which is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, is a highly infectious respiratory disease transmitted by droplets from infected people, who may or may not be symptomatic (Yu X, Yang R, 2020). As of April 20, 2021, the virus, which was first discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, had infected 215 countries, regions, or territories worldwide, resulting in 3,043,591 deaths and 142,723,918 positive cases (WHO, 2021, and Worldometer, 2021).

Fever, fatigue, dry cough, myalgia, and dyspnea are the most common COVID-19 symptoms, which can appear 2–14 days after infection through respiratory droplets and close contact (Naser et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). The World Health Organization had to declare it a pandemic in early March 2020 due to its rapid global spread and the threats it brought with it. The first case, however, was discovered in

Bangladesh on March 8th, 2020 (Satu et al., 2020, and IEDCR, 2020). There have been 10,497 deaths, 723,221 affected cases, and 621,300 recovery cases as of April 20th, 2021 (Worldometer, 2021). COVID 2019, a novel coronavirus, is spreading more quickly across the world. The government of Bangladesh, the general population, healthcare, and medical providers are all under enormous strain as a result of the current situation (Islam, 2020, and Mamun and Griffiths, 2020).

As a means of reducing covid-19's effects, Individuals are expected to limit physical interaction with people outside their household in many countries around the world (social distancing) (Anderson et al., 2020). Curfews, quarantines, and the closure of non-essential shops, colleges, and universities are among the other steps that have been implemented (Glass et al., 2006). Similarly, the government of Bangladesh has taken a number of steps, including territorial or country separation, travel

restrictions, danger protection in the workforce, crossing out and delays of events, border paddocks, and screening at airports and train stations, among others (Mahmud, 2020; World Economic Forum, 2020).

In March 2020, Bangladeshi education at all levels came to an end. As a result, many final-year university students, who either graduated before the lockdown or had their graduation delayed due to the pandemic, were in a state of upheaval. They have been suffering from mental stress for a long time because they need to finish their degree and seat for various competitive job tests in order to determine their expected future. This is something that most university students face. Anything comes to a halt as a result of this unforeseen circumstance, resulting in high unemployment rates.

Although Bangladesh's unemployment rate has been gradually decreasing, according to the ILO, it will hit 4.15 percent in 2020, analysts predict that the rate will unexpectedly increase due to the Covid-19 economic recession (ILO, 2020).

According to a recent study conducted by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) the unemployment rate among university graduates in Bangladesh is 38.6% (the financial express, May 18, 2019). Bangladesh currently has a large number of unemployed graduates. The 41st BCS preliminary examination was held recently. With 475,000 job seekers applying for 2,166 cadre posts in the 41st BCS, shown a large number of job seekers who wait to end this situation (Dhaka Tribune, 20 April, 2021).

At least 6.6 million Bangladeshi university graduates, all of whom are a priori fit for permanent jobs, are unable to find work because the job market is not growing quickly enough to keep up with the rising number of graduates (Wadud, 2019). Furthermore, Bangladesh's socio-cultural system has grown to the point where university graduates tend to become government job holder rather than start their own businesses.

The government of Bangladesh's above-mentioned lockdown policy has placed this large number of job seekers in an uncertain future, despite the fact that lockdown is thought to be a successful step in slowing the spread of coronavirus around the world (Barkur et al., 2020; Flaxman et al., 2020). Many large corporations and multinational corporations

(MNCs) have frozen their recruiting processes. Local businesses are also attempting to cut costs by laying off staff and discontinuing new recruitment procedures, resulting in a significant increase in the number of unemployed youths in the region (The Financial Express, December 24, 2020).

On the other hand, various government circulars such as Bank, BCS, and others are currently pending. It also resulted in neuropsychiatric problems such as terror, anxiety, depression, panic attacks, psychomotor excitement, suicide deaths, and a general decline in overall health (Brooks et al., 2020; Xiang et al., 2020).

Lockdowns or quarantines are important as preventative measures for physical health (CDC, 2020), but they can be harmful if imposed for an extended period of time. It's an unpleasant experience that can put your finances in jeopardy (Reger et al, 2020 and Thunström et al., 2020) due to job loss; social problems like social withdrawal, cyber bullying, alcohol consumption, and addiction; and mental health issues like suicide attempts and depression (Gardner et al, 2015 and ,Brooks et al, 2020).

It is observed that lockdown is linked to high rates of depression (31.2%) and anxiety (28.9%), even during the SARS outbreak. Similarly, high anxiety was detected throughout the 2009 H1N1 pandemic (Wheaton et al., 2021 and Xiang et al, 2020) a study from China, found that those in quarantine experience monotony, aloneness, irritation, worsening anxiety, and mental distress (Xiang et al, 2020). Despite the paucity of research for this population, these studies show that COVID-19 had a mental health effect on Bangladeshi college and university students but the mental health of job seekers in Bangladesh is yet to be studied (Faisal et al, 2021).

This study intends to add to the early conducted COVID-19 research and is among the first few to explore Bangladeshi job seekers students' psychological impact and mental well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic (Islam et al. 2020; Khan et al. 2020a).

The aim of this study is to determine the prevalence of psychiatric symptoms as well as the psychological stressors that cause vulnerability and protective factors. Finally, these findings will assist administrations, government departments, and healthcare professionals in ensuring the mental well-being of job seekers and students in the face of Bangladesh's

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COVID-19 outbreak. Furthermore, these results can be used to compare how job seekers students are actually adapting to the covid-19's unforeseen consequences.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

Study Population and Sample

This research was carried out throughout Bangladesh, focusing on a community of graduates and undergraduates from various public, private, and national universities who were looking for job. For this analysis, cluster sampling was used to select sample respondents. This research looked at the psychological effects of the covid-19 outbreak on job seekers. A standardized questionnaire was used to perform an online survey from April 10, 2021 to April 25, 2021. A survey questionnaire was sent to job seekers via email, Facebook Messenger, and Facebook groups for job seekers, with periodic reminders. The survey was fully voluntary, and the consent of the participants was obtained prior to the start of the survey. The participants were told that their answers would be kept private. To ensure data security and reliability, the questionnaires were made anonymous. Finally, 453 respondents that completed the

questionnaires were included in the final analysis.

Study Instrument

The study instrument comprised a structured questionnaire that contains four parts i.e. demographic information, lifestyle of respondents, Study and Job and Psychological aspects. Demographic information included an inquiry of Gender, Age, Marital Status, Family Income, Family members, residence type and interest in covid-19 vaccine. The part of lifestyle seeks exercise, sleeping duration, smoking habit related information. In the part of Study and Job, questionnaire seeks information related to study institution, year of graduation and post-graduation, study duration, Tuition, job preferences, covid-19 infection. In the last part, moreover the participants responded to the psychological aspects of him during covid-19.

Study Variables

The dependent variables in the study was Psychological Aspects. The independent variables included Demographic Information, Lifestyle and Study and Job-related variables. The dependent variables and independent variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Study Variables

Independent Variables	Dependent Variables
1. Demographic Information i.e. Gender, Age, Marital Status, Family Income, Family members, residence type.	Psychological Aspects i.e. uncertainty, depression, insomnia, anxiety, emotional disturbance, fear, distress, grief etc.
2. Lifestyle i.e. exercise, sleeping duration, smoking habit	
3. Study and Job i.e. study institution, year of graduation and post-graduation, study duration, Tuition, job preferences, covid-19 infection,	

Source: By Authors

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed through IBM SPSS version 22 software (IBM Corporation, Armonk, NY, USA).

Nominal and ordinal measurement were used to determine the factors associated with levels of anxiety.

Basically this study followed percentile analysis of the different variables that meets the demand of research objectives.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The demographic and selected characteristics of the study population are shown in Table 1. Among the sample of 453 jobseekers, approximately more two-third were male 395 (87.20%).

Table 1 shows the outputs of the questions related to gender, age, birth place, marital Status, family income and family dependency.

Table 2. Demographic Data of the Respondents

Variables	Number	Ratio (%)
Sex		
Male	395	87.20
Female	58	12.8
Birth place		
Urban	157	34.66
Rural	296	65.34
Marital Status		
Unmarried	397	87.66
Married	56	12.36
Age		
20-25	201	
26-30	212	
30 to above	40	
Family Dependency		
Yes	125	72.40
No	328	27.60

Source: Field Survey

Covid-19 and Job Seekers

This section of the questionnaire illustrates the rate of jobseekers who were vaccinated and want to be vaccine. Table-2 represents the number and the percentage of vaccine related information of job seekers where around 50% of

the respondents want to take vaccine and only around 6% respondents have vaccinated. This segment of the questionnaire also examines the daily life style of the respondents. Most of the respondents 325 (71.74%) believe that their life is affected by Covid-19.

Table 3. Vaccine Related Information of Job Seekers

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Are you vaccinated?		
Yes	26	5.74
No	427	94.26
Do you want to take vaccine?		
Yes	230	50.77
No	223	49.23
Daily life affected by Covid-19?		
Yes	325	71.74
No	128	28.26
Lockdown best to eliminate Covid-19?		
Yes	136	30.02
No	317	69.98

Source: Field Survey

Study and Job

The institutional type, studied faculty, study hour and job preference of the respondents were assessed in this portion of the questionnaire. The findings are shown in Tables 4.

This segment's true picture is calculated by using the percentage.

Most of the respondents of this study are from public university 401 (88.52%) where respondents from private university are very low 7 (1.55%), the participants of from national

university is 25 (5.52%) and others institutions 20 (4.41%) respectively are s.

Around 50 percent of the participants of this study are from Humanities group and the lowest respondents of this study are from business study group. Family and social expectations, Security of the jobs and high salary are the main reasons of job preferences of the jobseekers in Bangladesh. More than 50 percent of the jobseekers prefers BCS where private sector, Teaching and Bank job are their next preference respectively.

Table 4. Respondents Responses on Study and Job

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Institutions type		
Public	401	88.52
Private	7	1.55
National	25	5.52
Others	20	4.41
Studied faculty		
Science	155	34.21
Business studies	68	15.01
Humanities	230	50.78
Study Hour		
Less than 5 H	264	58.29
5-8 H	144	31.78
More than 8 H	45	9.93
Job Preference		
Teaching	68	15.01
BCS	236	52.10
Bank	38	8.39
Private	111	24.50
Others	0	0
Reasons of Preferences		
Security of the jobs	122	26.93
High salary	44	9.71
Family and social expectations	141	31.13
To serve nations	146	32.23
others	0	0

Source: Field Survey

PSYCHOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Suffering from Psychological Disorders

This section of the questionnaire measures the psychological aspects of the respondents. The most of the respondents (around 90%) think that during covid-19 they are suffering many

psychological disorders. Most of the respondents believe that they are suffering uncertainty 345 (76.16), Depression 324 (71.52%), Anxiety 351 (77.48%), Fear 295 (65.12%), Frustration 308 (68%), as shown in Table-

Table 5. Respondents Responses on Psychological Aspects

Questions and Variables	Number	Ratio (%)
Are you suffering from psychological disorders?		
Yes	405	89.40
no	48	10.60
If yes, what are the adverse effects on psychology?		
Psychological Disorders	Suffer (%)	Not Suffer (%)
uncertainty	345 (76.16)	108 (23.84)
Depression	324 (71.52)	129 (28.48)
Insomnia	172 (37.97)	281 (62.03)
Anxiety	351 (77.48)	102 (22.52)
Confusion	135 (29.80)	318 (70.20)
Numbness	0 (0)	453 (100)
Helpless	229 (50.55)	224 (49.45)
Emotional Disturbance	248 (54.75)	205 (52.25)
Mood Alterations	142 (31.35)	311 (68.65)
Irritability	155 (34.21)	298 (65.79)
Emotional Exhaustions	156 (34.44)	297 (65.56)
Boredom	199 (43.93)	254 (56.07)
Loneliness	269 (59.38)	184 (40.62)
Nervousness	242 (53.42)	211 (46.58)
Fear	295 (65.12)	158 (34.88)

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Distress	75 (16.56)	378 (83.44)
Frustration	308 (68)	145 (32)
Grief	137 (30.24)	316 (69.76)

Source: Field Survey

Psychological stress relief factors

This section of the questionnaire illustrates some psychological stress relief factors (Social Support, family support, govt. motivation, no need for lockdown, starting the job test, new job circular, seek the intervention of the Ministry of Youth and Sports) which may help the jobseekers relax during the Covid-19 situation.

Most of the respondents (more than 86%) believe that family support is the main factors to relief stress during Covid-19. Govt. motivation (79.69%), social support (72.40%) and new job circular (66.22%) may play crucial role to relief psychological stress during Covid-19 in Bangladesh.

Table 6. Respondents Responses on Psychological Stress Relief Factors

Stress relief factors responsible	Stress relief (%)	Not stress relief (%)
Social Support	328 (72.40)	125 (27.60)
Family support	393 (86.75)	60 (13.25)
Govt. Motivation	361 (79.69)	92 (20.31)
No need for lockdown	135 (29.80)	318 (70.20)
Starting the job test	204 (45.03)	249 (54.97)
New job circular	300 (66.22)	153 (33.78)
Seek the intervention of the Ministry of Youth and Sports	34 (7.50)	419 (92.50)

Source: Field Survey

Expectations

Table shows the responses of the respondents on their expectations, what they want in this pandemic situation. We all know that they are job seekers, age is one of the most important concern of them because, for 1.5 years, no job

examinations was conducted. They have lost this huge amount of time. In that case, most of them want age limit to be increased from 30 to 32/35. Almost 61% are agree with this and 74% of them said age limit should be 32 instead of 30. And they also want government motivation.

Table 7. Respondents Responses on Expectations

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age limit 30 is enough?		
Yes	274	60.49
No	179	39.51
Age preference		
28	9	1.98
30	17	3.75
31	11	2.43
32	337	74.41
35	70	15.45
40	9	1.98
Want govt. motivation		
Yes	370	81.68
No	83	18.32

Source: Field Survey

DISCUSSION

In this study, we investigated The Psychological Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic and Lockdown on Job Seekers in Bangladesh. The findings of this survey reflect that the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown has led to significant compromise in psychological aspects of jobseekers of Bangladesh. In this study, most of the respondents did not take vaccine yet (95%)

and most interestingly around 50% said they do not want to take Vaccine. But almost 72% mentioned covid-19 and lockdown policy because of it has heavy impact on the daily activities of them and affected negatively. This study found the responses against the policy of lockdown. Most of the respondents (69.98%) said that lockdown is not the best way to eliminate covid-19. This study also found that most of the jobseekers (88.52%) have completed

their graduation and post-graduation from public university and 50% of them are from humanities background. 52.10% jobseekers preferred job is to be BCS cadre because of job security (around 27%), high salary (9.71%), family and social expectation (31.13%), and serving the nation (32.23%). On the other hand, 24.5% want to be a banker.

A significant rates of depression, anxiety and stress were detected in this cohort. Unfortunately, since there no other studies among job seeking graduates in Bangladesh, more rigorous comparisons to elucidate temporal trends or additional contributing factors are precluded. The only study conducted among university students in Bangladesh using the same instrument also showed high prevalence rates of uncertainty, Depression, Insomnia, Anxiety, and Helpless, Emotional Disturbance (76.16%, 71.52%, 37.97%, 77.48%, 50.55% and 54.75% respectively). The elevated prevalence of these issues among University students (job seekers) may be explained by the significant academic, psychosocial and existential stressors. In this setting, the prevalence rates reported from other countries around Provisional the world have revealed substantial variability across different countries, suggesting that both local social and cultural factors, as well as the underlying common elements promoting the emergence of depression, anxiety and stress may lead to marked heterogeneity in the prevalence rates of these psychiatric disturbances.

This study also illustrated certain psychological stress alleviation variables (social support, family support, government motivation, no need for lockdown, commencing the job exam, new job circular, seeking Ministry of Youth and Sports aid) that may help job searchers relax during the Covid-19 situation. High rated stress relief factors mentioned by jobseekers are Social Support, Family support, Govt. Motivation, No need for lockdown, Starting the job test and New job circular (72.40%, 86.75%, 79.69%, 29.80%, 45.03% and 66.22% respectively). According to the feedback of jobseekers in Bangladesh, this study quoted some expectations of them to improve this haphazard situation. They think that the age limit to enter into government job is not expected at all time, but for now is not really fit as well. They want age limit to extend at 32-35 years. Most of them want 32 years as age limit for government job. They also mentioned about different

government motivation that will help them to recover this state of their psychology.

Further research is proposed for the inclusion of successful coping strategies used by the job seekers during testing times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Research should also be channeled in a way which can have the dual benefit of maximizing social outcomes and minimizing anxiety and adverse psychological impacts among job seekers. Lastly, research focusing on the use of digital technology and psychological artificial intelligence solutions to manage anxiety levels of university students should be intensified

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has wreaked havoc on human life all throughout the world, causing enormous economical and psychological misery. Despite the fact that all segments of society have been affected, those with lower incomes have grown more vulnerable. The COVID-19 outbreak has put people's lives at jeopardy in developing countries, where the majority of people rely on their daily income.

To conclude, the present survey suggests that the psychology of jobseekers of Bangladesh have been markedly impacted by the lockdown and the pandemic. They are heavily suffering from different psychological disorders we have seen during survey are uncertainty, depression, anxiety, insomnia, helplessness and emotional disturbance. To mitigate these psychological disorders levels amongst job seekers university students, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), has proposed some guidelines; minimize repeatedly watching, reading, and listening to new stories on COVID-19, specifically from unreliable sources of social media; maintain healthy diet, exercise, adequate hours of sleep; and keep the mind stress free by virtually connecting with friends and family members; and finally, take time to unwind and indulge in activities one enjoys. But they mentioned some stress relief factors during survey that will help them to recover their imbalanced state of mind due to covid-19 and lockdown. These stress relief factors are Social Support, Family support, Govt. Motivation and new job circulars etc.

This study was designed to swiftly determine the impact of COVID-19 and lockdown on the psychological well-being of job seekers in Bangladesh. There were some drawbacks to this study. First, only 453 job hopefuls from

Bangladeshi universities were interviewed. So, it may not be reasonable to generalize the results in the whole country. Further studies can be conducted with more participants distributed throughout the country. Second, we considered only a limited number of variables to understand the impact. However, future studies can accommodate more variables of psychological impact so that a general scenario of the impact can be produced extensively.

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