Navigating Emergency Online Learning: A Comparative Study of University Students in Bangladesh and Indonesia During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Navigating Emergency Online Learning: A Comparative Study of University Students in Bangladesh and Indonesia During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The present study compares the university student's experiences of emergency online learning during the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 in Bangladesh and Indonesia. The focus of this study are on enjoyment, performance, satisfaction and cost of online learning. This was quantitative cross-sectional research conducted by using an online survey with the participation of 438 and 529 university students in Bangladesh and Indonesia. The findings reveal that university students in Bangladesh are a little more comfortable with online learning compared to those in Indonesia. The students in both countries have no problem with adaptation to avant-garde online learning platforms. University students in Bangladesh appear little more satisfied with online teaching while those in Indonesia tend to be less satisfied. University students either in Bangladesh or in Indonesia consider online learning as an expensive learning mode. The present study reveals an early online remote learning experience of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of this study may not be generalised due to the nature of the descriptive comparative study focusing on Bangladesh and Indonesia. Specific factors underlying their experiences require further investigation. In future endeavours, lecturers are urged to actively harness proper technologies, mix between conventional and virtual learning, or blend synchronous and asynchronous learning to provide more enjoyable online learning.

Keywords: adaptation learning, asynchronis learning, learning experiences, online learning, remote learning, synchronis learning, virtual learning

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1. Introduction

The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak raises many disruptions in higher education. University students around the globe have experienced a sudden shift from face-to-face to online learning due to

higher education institutions closure for preventing further transmission of the virus. They stayed away from universities and colleges thrust into vastly different learning environments without any formal preparations. Academic staff ought to initiate innovative solutions by embracing various friendly technologies in their hands to deal with emergency remote teaching (Johnson et al., 2020). Furthermore, a variety of approaches and strategies have to be taken by tertiary education institutions to conduct asynchronous or synchronous online learning without compromising academic quality and curriculum (Crawford et al., 2020) as well as provide multiple supports concerning students' mental health and well-being (Sahu, 2020). The disruptions hence inevitably leave considerable challenges for future endeavours.

Pedagogical changes during the critical time of COVID-19 have led to a renewed interest in understanding online learning experiences. It is interesting to examine university students' comfort and satisfaction with emergency distance learning. This may be the first experience for students or lecturers to immediately change their teaching and learning agenda due to an emergency. A high sense of innovativeness and generous flexibility is required when teaching in a tumultuous time (Martinez-Cola et al., 2018). Learning and instruction processes should be flexible rather than fixed to promote more delightful than painful learning activities (Huang et al., 2020). In addition, the learning has to be accessible to students from a variety of social and economic backgrounds (Doucet et al., 2020). Investigating student's experiences in learning during the crisis can be valuable for reconsidering further implementation of the learning model.

Several studies have suggested that it is pivotal importance to investigate learning experiences in different situations. Moreover, comparing two or more contexts could have extensive comprehension of the studied issue. Learning experiences that are defined as perceptions, responses, and performances of learners from interaction with learning environments, products, and other resources will change when the situations change (Huang et al., 2019). Besides, learner experience is critical for developing and refining learning environments (Dutton, 2017). Initial learner experiences influence continuance intention for learning (Safsouf et al., 2018). Therefore, taking learning experiences into account becomes more and more essential to ensure learners' engagement and performance in learning.

Most studies on university students' online learning experiences amid the COVID-19 pandemic, however, have merely been conducted in one country. In an underdeveloped country like Pakistan, online learning is not that successful since the vast majority of students are less likely to have access to the Internet (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). Similarly, students in rural areas of Bangladesh are more likely to have limited speed of broadband and Internet connections (Mamun et al., 2020; Islam & Habib, 2021). Although from the perspective of Indian, Ghanaian, and Indonesian students, the online learning programmes were a great idea, they spend enormous money to purchase the Internet quota (Agarwal & Kaushik, 2020; Demuyakor, 2020; Wargadinata et al., 2020). Furthermore, students in Indonesia find it hard to comprehend learning materials due to the minimum interaction between students and lecturers or with their peers (Firman & Rahayu, 2020; Sadikin & Hamidah, 2020). The lack of face-to-face interactions leads to unsatisfactory online learning (Zhou et al., 2020) and increases dropout rates in China (Huang et al., 2020). Further taking concern about the findings of

previous studies, having a comparison between countries could be a more profound comparative study. Moreover, a cross-country comparison promotes global understanding of remote learning during the pandemic in a variety of contexts.

The present study is aimed at comparing university students' experiences of learning in virtual mode amidst the unprecedented impacts of COVID-19 in Bangladesh and Indonesia. Learning experiences investigated in this study focus on the aspects of enjoyment, performance, satisfaction, and cost of online learning. To achieve the defined purpose and concerns, a quantitative cross-sectional research method was used involving 967 university students in both countries. The finding is expected to reveal their experiences of emergency remote learning. Comparing the online learning experience of university students in Bangladesh and Indonesia is crucial as both countries have several similarities, especially regarding geographical region, religion and economic status.

The results of this study contribute to the comparison of learning experiences between two different countries and complement existing literature which tends to examine a single country. After describing the methodological aspects, the rest of this article presents research findings that are followed by critical discussion and finished with a conclusion.

2. Method

The present study is quantitative cross-sectional research conducted by using an online survey with the participation of university students in Bangladesh and Indonesia. The research design was chosen due to its ability to gather data and examine multiple outcomes concurrently (Onojah et al, 2021). It was also relevant to the posed research questions that seek to reveal immedi-

ate learning experiences within the defined time. The use of online surveys enables data collection effectively and safely respecting the COVID-19 crisis. Following the research design, the survey was administered after the implementation of the learning-from-home policy in the first semester between March and June 2020. It was the most critical time for university students since they had to learn differently without any formal preparations. Table 1 summarises the university students' profiles in detail.

Table 1 describes Bangladesh and Indonesian university students who have participated in this study. Overall, there are 438 students from Bangladesh and 529 students from Indonesia who study in four different academic years. The majority of them are in the first and second years of study reaching over 70% of students. While over half of students from Bangladesh live in rural areas, the majority of Indonesian students live in urban areas around 40%, and merely 36% of them located in rural areas. Many students in both countries have no online learning experience which respectively reached around 53% for Bangladesh and 69% for Indonesia. Global application is by far the most common platform for online learning achieving over 70% and the main Internet connection also either in Bangladesh or Indonesia is through mobile data that attained around 69% and 77% respectively.

A questionnaire was developed on Google Forms and distributed to university students by a convenience sampling method through social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter. The questionnaire was developed with a focus on enjoyment, performance, satisfaction, and cost of online learning on a five-level Likert scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree.

The collected data in this study were analysed descriptively by a descriptive statistic to simplify, analyse, and describe the main features as well as visualise the data in clear tables (Marzal, 2022). Respecting ethical issues in research, it was explicitly stated on the questionnaire that all collected data is used only for research purposes and the students voluntarily participated in this study.

Table 1. The Profile of University Students

Profile	Bangladesh		Indonesia	
Year of study	Students	Percentage	Students	Percentage
1st year	168	38.36	188	35.54
2nd year	154	35.16	241	45.56
3rd year	68	15.53	65	12.29
4th year	48	10.96	35	6.62
Total	438	100	529	100
Location	Students	Percentage	Students	Percentage
Urban	147	33.56	218	40.45
Suburb	40	9.13	124	23.01
Rural	251	57.31	197	36.55
Total	438	100	539	100
Online learning experience	Students	Percentage	Students	Percentage
Have	202	46.12	163	30.24
Have not	236	53.88	376	69.76
Total	438	100	539	100
Used applications	Students	Percentage	Students	Percentage
University apps	9	2.05	29	5.38
Global apps	426	97.26	397	73.65
Combination	3	0.68	113	20.96
Total	438	100	539	100
Internet connection	Students	Percentage	Students	Percentage
Broad band	130	29.68	123	22.82
Mobile data	306	69.86	416	77.18
Total	438	100	539	100

3. Result and Discussion

Learning experiences are dynamic depending on the current situations and contexts. This study aimed to examine and compare university students' experience of online learning amid the unexpected situation of COVID-19 in Bangladesh and Indonesia. Employing a quantitative cross-sectional research design and collecting data by using a questionnaire, this study reveals enjoyment, performance, satisfaction, and cost of joining learning delivered through the Internet. Looking more detail into the collected data, Table 2 discloses the online learning experience of university students in Bangladesh and Indonesia.

Table 2. Online Learning Experiences of University Students in Bangladesh and Indonesia

A	Statements	C	1	2	3	4	5	T	M	SD
E	I am comfortable with online learning	B	88 20.09%	83 18.95%	99 22.60%	124 28.31%	44 10.05%	438 100%	2.89	1.29
		I	54 10.21%	178 33.65%	205 38.75%	74 13.99%	18 3.40%	529 100%	2.67	0.95
P	I can easily adapt to new online learning platforms	B	68 15.53%	106 24.20%	97 22.15%	132 30.14%	35 7.99%	438 100%	2.91	1.22
		I	24 4.52%	75 14.18%	213 40.26%	188 35.54%	29 5.48%	529 100%	3.23	0.92
	I have low academic performance in online learning	B	26 5.94%	59 13.47%	90 20.55%	146 33.33%	117 26.71%	438 100%	3.61	1.18
		I	12 2.27%	36 6.81%	147 27.79%	252 47.64%	82 15.50%	529 100%	3.67	0.9
S	I am satisfied with the feedback from lecturers in online learning	B	68 15.53%	72 16.44%	109 24.89%	137 31.28%	52 11.87%	438 100%	3.08	1.25
		I	44 8.32%	170 32.14%	205 38.75%	102 19.28%	8 1.151%	529 100%	2.74	0.92
	I am satisfied with the learning assessment given by lecturers in online learning	B	91 20.78%	85 19.41%	118 26.94%	114 26.03%	30 6.85%	438 100%	2.79	1.23
		I	28 5.29%	129 24.39%	250 47.26%	107 20.23%	15 2.84%	529 100%	2.91	0.87
	I am satisfied with lecturer's time management in online learning	B	29 6.62%	63 14.38%	95 21.69%	179 40.87%	72 16.44%	438 100%	3.46	1.12
		I	31 5.86%	113 21.36%	216 40.83%	155 29.30%	14 2.65%	529 100%	3.02	0.92
	Overall, I am satisfied with online teaching and learning processes	B	73 16.67%	81 18.49%	97 22.15%	150 34.25%	37 8.45%	438 100%	2.99	1.24
		I	74 13.99%	201 38.00%	191 36.11%	56 10.59%	7 1.32%	529 100%	2.47	0.91
C	Online learning is costly	B	33 7.53%	43 9.82%	62 14.16%	151 34.47%	149 34.02%	438 100%	3.78	1.23
		I	7 1.32%	46 8.70%	177 33.46%	203 38.37%	96 18.15%	529 100%	3.63	0.92

Table 2 reveals the online learning experience of university students in Bangladesh (B) and Indonesia (I). The experience concerns multiple aspects (A) of enjoyment (E), performance (P), satisfaction (S), and cost (C) of online learning. Generally speaking, the data standard deviation of Indonesia is lower than that of Bangladesh in all aspects and statements while the mean is fairly comparable. It means the data gathered from Indonesia is less varied since the data points in a dataset are close to the mean (average). In other words, there is little variability or dispersion among the values. The implication is that the findings of this study may not capture extreme values or outliers from Indone-

sian data and might suggest a lack of diversity or variation.

Students from Bangladesh who are uncomfortable and comfortable with online learning have a shared percentage of around 38% whereas there are only 17% of Indonesian students comfortable with online learning. There is a nearly equal percentage of the ability to adapt to new online learning platforms reaching around 40% of students, however, the rest of the majority of Bangladesh students have difficulties in adapting to the platforms. Over 60% of students in both countries stated that they have low academic performance in online learning. Overall, regarding satisfaction, more than 40% of students in Bangladesh are satisfied with online

teaching and learning processes while few students in Indonesia are satisfied with merely around 11%. Over half of the students in all countries recognise that online learning is expensive.

The university student's experiences toward online learning in Bangladesh and Indonesia are relatively comparable although there are differences in some points. First of all, university students in Bangladesh seem a little more comfortable with online learning compared to those in Indonesia. The two countries are still under development, and many students from low and middle-income families live in suburban and rural areas that have unstable signals and insufficient Internet data (Agung et al., 2020; Mamun et al., 2020; Fatonia et al., 2020). With particular respect to Indonesia, these issues get worse due to lecturers who use significantly limited media and methods to implement emergency online learning (Rahiem, 2020). Meanwhile, in Bangladesh, lectures deliver online learning materials by using digital media features to actively engage students in learning (Sultana & Khan, 2019). Technological and pedagogical instruments influence the enjoyment of online learning.

University students in Bangladesh and Indonesia have relatively no problem with adaptation to avant-garde online learning platforms. However, many students in both countries experience lower learning performances. The study by Al-Amin et al. (2021) reports that university students in Bangladesh pay little attention during online classes, and as a result, they have a low understanding of the lesson. Similarly, those from Indonesia have also poor comprehension and acknowledge that online learning is less interesting (Giatman et al., 2020; Bahasoan et al., 2020). The low performance can be predicted as a consequence of certain pedagogical constraints in emergency remote learning.

Neither students nor lecturers received adequate training in digital teaching and learning strategies. Although the students themselves reported minimum obstacles in dealing with new educational technologies, it is not a guarantee that they are familiar with online learning formats. It is clear that COVID-19 has negatively impacted students in many ways including educational, financial and psychological matters (Begum et al., 2020; Rahman et al., 2021). Therefore, students learning and well-being should be kept in balance with flexible learning (Huang et al., 2020; Kusumaningtyas et al., 2023) and multiple healthcare supports (Sahu, 2020) without compromising academic quality and curriculum (Crawford et al., 2020). By doing so, students would be able to well perform in learning events during critical times.

University students in Bangladesh appear a little more satisfied with online teaching while those in Indonesia tend to be less satisfied. Satisfaction is one of the critical aspects in determining the effectiveness of learning programmes (Weerasinghe & Fernando, 2017). Meanwhile, the student's satisfaction with online learning depends on contextual circumstances and variables. A study by Surahman and Sulthoni (2020) reports that there are 60% of students who satisfied and 40% of students who unsatisfied with the quality of online learning in Indonesian higher education during the COVID-19 pandemic. From the Bangladesh side, Bishwas et al. (2020) report that university students have fairly low satisfaction towards online classes during the pandemic. Measuring student satisfaction at a sudden transition from face-to-face to virtual learning is sensitive and the results are more likely to be negative despite several advantages of online learning (Garris & Fleck, 2020).

Finally, university students either in Bangladesh or in Indonesia have considered

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online learning as an expensive learning mode. Several studies conducted in other developing countries such as Pakistan (Adnan & Anwar, 2020), Ghana (Agormedah et al., 2020) and the Philippines (Baticulon et al., 2020) reported similar findings that learning through the net requires more expense than conventional learning. This is the case because the students need to purchase Internet data to access online learning. From the other perspective, the cost seems comparable with the daily commute budget since by learning virtually students can learn from their home and they do not need to come to universities (Rahiem, 2020). The cost of online learning may be less overburdened for students in developed countries.

Overall, online learning brings opportunities and challenges in light of the Covid-19 crisis. Despite several challenges encountered by students and lecturers, the most positive aspect is that no doubt conducting online classes is a praiseworthy initiative to minimise the loss of students' academic activities (Alam, 2020). This fact indicates the affordance and sustainability of online learning mode as it provides solutions in the critical time of Covid-19. Meanwhile, in future endeavours, lectures are urged to actively harness proper technologies (Rahmadi, 2021), mix between conventional and virtual learning (Septiani & Putra, 2020) or blend synchronous and asynchronous learning (Fernandez et al., 2022) to provide more enjoyable and interesting online learning thus the students can be more satisfied with the learning. Students' well-being is as important as learning itself during the pandemic (Mamun et al., 2020). Educational institutions and teachers could support the student's well-being by conducting mindful and stress-free lessons as learning sessions that are engaging, interactive and paced appropri-

ately to prevent overwhelm and reduce stress. Online learning is more of an option and is not a panacea for the crisis (Dhawan, 2020; Maghfiroh et al., 2023). Having more flexible learning is a win-win solution to deal with effective learning in an emergency.

Respecting post-pandemic agendas, more flexible and personalised learning may be promoted in universities. It is a drawback to moving backwards to the old tradition of mainly face-to-face lectures. Higher education institutions must move forward to more advanced instructional systems that allow students to learn ubiquitously as a supplement to conventional classrooms. This action could promote richer students' learning experiences and empower lecturers to provide dedicated instructions.

4. Conclusion

The present study depicts an early online remote learning experience of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was highly challenging for students and faculty members as they had a sudden shift from face-to-face to remote learning without formal preparations. This study focuses on examining and comparing university students' experiences of online learning in Bangladesh and Indonesia. It was found that regarding comfortability and satisfaction, university students in Bangladesh are more comfortable and satisfied with online learning. There was no difference in the adaptation to online learning platforms, students from both countries could manage themselves with current technologies. Likewise, they consider the higher cost of online learning.

The results of this study indicate the need for lecturers to creatively utilise educational technologies to deliver either synchronous or asynchronous emergency online learning. The attempt to maximise techno-

logical features could elevate positive learning experiences. It is crucial to consider students' psychological aspects during the emergency so that providing flexible learning may be a great solution in future endeavours. Educational institutions may consider flexible learning as a way of promoting stress-free courses. Due to the nature of the descriptive comparative study focusing on Bangladesh and Indonesia, the study results may not be generalised. Specific factors underlying their experiences are in need of further investigation. It is also suggested to consider other variables and involve more countries. Examining university students' online learning experiences in neighbouring countries such as Singapore and Malaysia will complement the current findings.

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