Learners' Engagement and Motivation in Online Education during Covid-19: Challenges and Possibilities in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to find out learners' engagement and motivation in online education during COVID-19 considering the challenges and possibilities in the context of Bangladesh. Mixed methods have been used while conducting the study. Survey questionnaire has been used for quantitative purpose while in-depth interviews has been used for qualitative purpose. In survey questionnaire 105 University going students and in interview 5 students have been selected. The study reveals that almost all of the learners participated in online education and they participated for various reasons. They actively took part in online education and motivated enough in online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learners are motivated in online education because most of the learners believe that online education during COVID-19 helps them to resume their academic session, to get connected with their respective study, to reduce their stress and trauma as in online classes they can interact with their friends and teachers. Students outlined different challenges i.e., absence of full concentration, lack of appropriate learning environment, and lack of interaction. Despite these challenges, online education creates some possibilities e.g., faculty members conducted class more systematically than traditional face-to-face class, resources become available and the learning scope get widened.

Introduction

Background of the Study:

Educational institutions around the world closed their face-to-face academic activities during the Covid-19 in order to reduce the spread of the corona virus (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020) which is also true in case of Bangladesh. Covid-19 posit a substantial threat to the global education system. Online education is the possible way out of the challenges arises from Covid-19 which is applicable for both developed and developing countries (Crawford, et al., 2020). Universities in the developed countries quickly adopt online education as they have the resources of technology enabled learning but this is very challenging in the Bangladesh's education context. In Bangladesh there are 108 private universities and 50 public universities (Akter, 2017). In every country for higher education, there is a respective regulatory body that provides guidelines and direction. In Bangladesh, University Grants Commission (UGC) acts as a regulator who is very keen to promote online education during COVID-19 pandemic. From time-to-time UGC is providing support and instructions to all the public and private universities to be active in online education (UGC, 2020). University Grants Commission (UGC) of Bangladesh is very enthusiastic to save the academic year of the university students that's why they provide direction to all the universities not differentiating private and public to ensure online education as a new normal solution during COVID-19 pandemic (Hasan &Islam, 2020). During Covid-19 pandemic most of the private universities along with some public universities of Bangladesh use online education in order to address the possible solutions in continuing higher education during the lockdown period (Shama & Ikbal, 2020).

Statement of the Problem:

Due to COVID-19 outbreak Bangladesh closed their educational institutions in March 2020 (Moralista & Oducado, 2020). The academic life of the students was in a stake. Online education works as a solution to mitigate the challenges (Rahman, 2020). Online education became alternative to face-to-face education where both the teachers and students use different online platforms e.g., Facebook, Zoom, Google classroom, Google meet for online teaching and learning (Fami, 2020). In Bangladesh's perspective online education is not that easy as technical support, administrative

planning, maintaining online schedule and data, all are very much new for the teachers. Like teachers' students face several challenges i.e., poor network, lack of technological support, and lack of digital skills (Shrestha et al., 2022). In spite of having these challenges most of the students participated in online education during COVID-19. But is an issue of experiment whether students are actively engaged in online education or not, whether students found motivation in online education or not.

Objectives of the study: The objectives of the study are:

1. To find out students' engagement in online education during COVID-19.
2. To investigate students' motivation behind the participation in online education during COVID-19.
3. To ascertain the challenges and possibilities of online education in Bangladesh.

Research Questions: The study tries to address the following research questions which are:

1. How students engaged in online education during COVID-19.?
2. Why students found motivation in online education during COVID-19?
3. What are the challenges and possibilities of online education in Bangladesh after COVID-19?

Significance of the Study:

There exist few studies which discuss the engagement and motivation of the students in online education during the COVID-19 in the context of Bangladesh. Therefore, this research has been conducted to find out engagement and motivation of the students in online education during the COVID-19. This study will help policy makers to set instructional practice and institutional goals in the near future. Moreover, this study will help different stakeholders to overcome the challenges of online education in the 21st century by observing the true findings of the learners' responses. This study will help educators to improve the current teaching-learning environment which is helpful for sustainable learning.

Literature Review

Online Education

By online education we mean distance education/tele-education/internet-based learning/e-Learning/online learning/blended learning/computer-based learning/web-based learning/virtual learning/ /cyber learning/ /distributed learning etc. (Sun& Chen,2016). In online/distance education teaching and planned learning occurs through the help of different technologies (Moore & Kearsley ,2012). According to Finch and Jacobs (2012), in online education both the students and instructors located in a geographically diverse place. Although there remains controversy about online education during COVID-19 in higher education, there is no alternative to online education as it overcome different challenges e.g., limited institutional resources and non-accessibility of the education (Johnsrud et al., 2006). Several studies around the world have been conducted on online education. In the Bangladesh's context few studies have been conducted on online learning. But no studies have been conducted on the learners' engagement and motivation of online education during COVID-19. This study will mitigate the gap of the existing literature on the learners' engagement and motivation of online education and will contribute to the online education of Bangladesh to be more effective in the students' learning process.

Research Methodology:

Research Design

Mixed methods research design has been used in order to conduct this study. Mixed methods research has been chosen because mixed methods research provides comprehensive response to the research questions which helps to connect both between theory and practice (Creswell,2014). The purpose of this study was to know about the engagement and motivation of the students in online education during COVID-19. To have a clear understanding both numeric and descriptive data has been collected as it was an unexplored area of research.

Description of the Research Context

This study has been conducted among the students of both private and public universities of Bangladesh. During COVID-19 how students get engaged in online education and whether they feel motivated in online education or not is the consideration of the research among the 50 public universities and 108 private universities students.

Sampling of the Research Participants

University going students are the participants of this research. Total 105 respondents are considered as samples in the survey to conduct this research. 5 students from 5 different universities are selected for in-depth interviews. In collecting the quantitative data simple random sampling has been used in the survey questionnaires while for collecting qualitative data convenience sampling has been used in interviews.

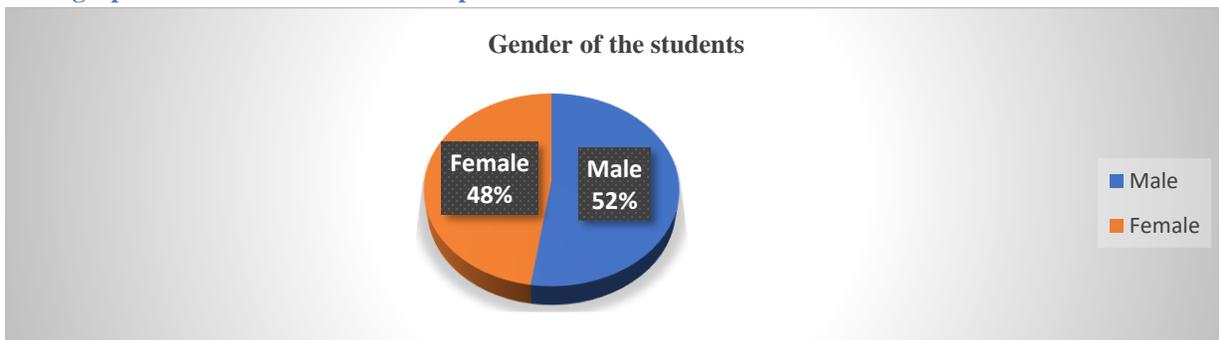**Demographic Information of the Participants**

Figure-01: Students participated in the survey questionnaire (gender wise)

Figure 1 demonstrates demographic information of the respondents (students) who participated in the survey identified males (52%) and females (48%). Out of 105 participants, program wise students were Bachelor 65 and Masters 40(Figure-2). According to the subject 45 were from Business administration, 20 from Economics, 5 from CSE, 15 from English, 10 from Pharmacy, 5 from IPE, 2 from EEE, and 3 from Statistics (Figure-3). This data has been collected from 12 different universities of Bangladesh which are: Notre Dame University Bangladesh, South East University, Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology, Daffodil International University, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University, North South University, Daffodil International University, BRAC University, Bangladesh Open University, East West University, Dhaka International University, University of Asia Pacific.
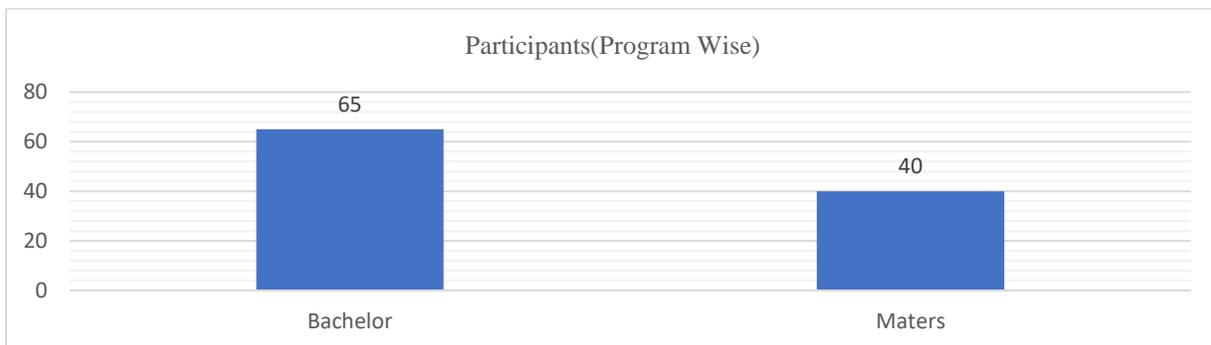
Figure-02: Students participated in the survey questionnaire (program wise)
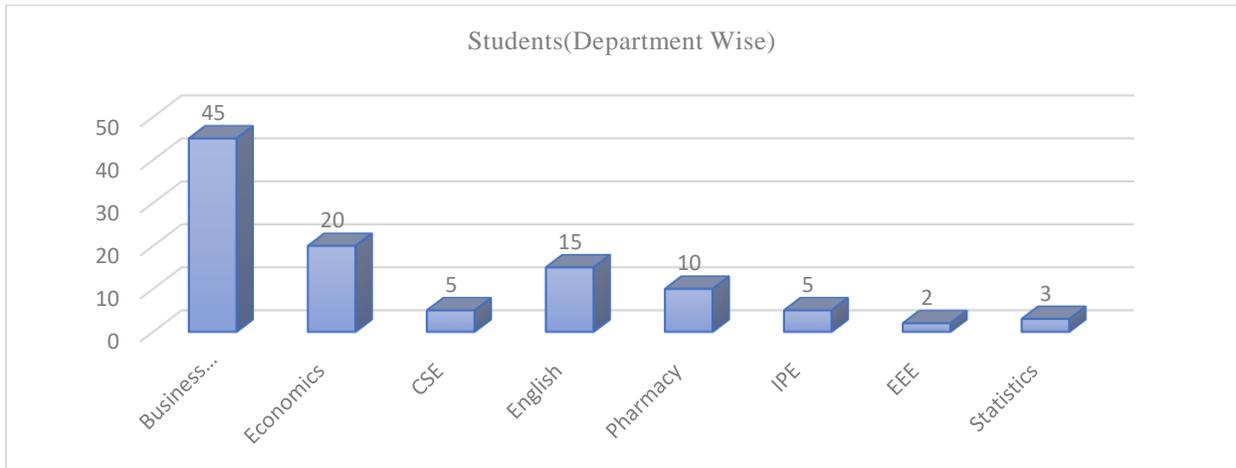

Students(Department Wise)

Figure-03: Students participated in the survey questionnaire (department wise)

Method of Data Collection

A well-structured questionnaire has been developed in order to collect quantitative data from the students. By using Google form the questionnaire has been designed. The link was shared on different online platforms. Five face-to-face one-to-one in-depth interviews have been arranged through convenience sampling in order to collect qualitative data from the students. Table 1 provides an overview of the research methodology.

Table-01: Overview of the Research Methodology

Research Question	Approach	Method	Instrument	Sampling method
1. How students engaged in online education during COVID-19?	Quantitative Qualitative	Survey Semi-structured interview	Questionnaire Interview schedule	Simple Random and Purposive Sampling
2. Why students found motivation in online education during COVID-19?	Quantitative Qualitative	Survey Semi-structured interview	Questionnaire Interview schedule	Simple Random and Purposive Sampling
3. What are the challenges and possibilities of online education in Bangladesh after COVID-19?	Quantitative Qualitative	Survey Semi-structured interview	Questionnaire Interview schedule	Simple Random and Purposive Sampling

Pilot Study

From the total sample size, 30 responses have been considered for the survey and one respondent for the interview to conduct the pilot study. The value of the Cronbach's Alpha derived from the 30 survey is .81 which is greater than the minimum threshold level of .70 (Mohajan, 2017; Tabata & Johnsrud, 2008).

Limitation of the study:

The study has been conducted in a limited scale of 105 participants. Addition of more participants may depict different scenario of students' engagement and motivation in online education during COVID-19. The respondents of learners' engagement and motivation in online education are University going students. If the responses are collected from

college and school level students then result will be quite surprising. The participants those who are selected for interview on the basis convenience sampling may represent biasness problem.

Results and Discussion:

Learners' engagement in online education during COVID-19

In survey responses out of 21 questions 6 are related to learners' engagement in online education during COVID-19. In the survey questions it is asked whether students took part in online classes or not? 105 out of 105 learners responded that they took part in online classes (Figure:04)
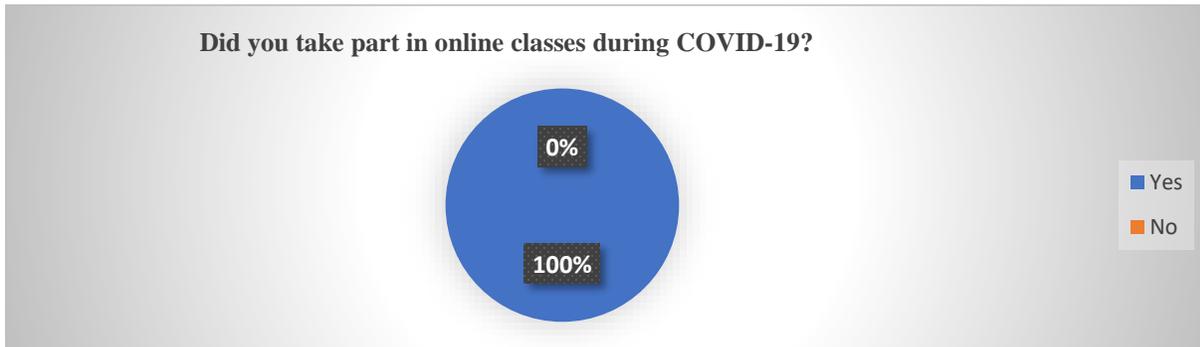
Figure-04: Students' participation in online classes
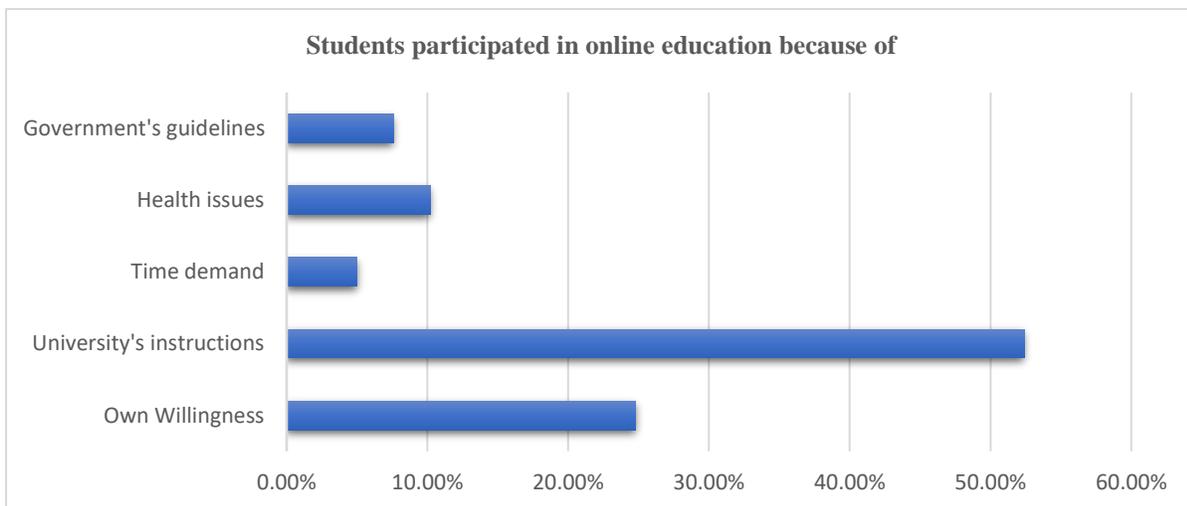
Figure-05: Reasons for the students' participation in online classes

According to the figure-05 it is shown that 52% of the students participated in online classes because of their respective university's instructions. 25% students involved in online classes with their own accord. 10% are concerned with corona virus and for health-related issues they participated in online classes. 5% students believe that online classes are the demand of the time and 8% follow the government's guidelines about the online education.

In order to know how frequently students engaged in online education questions has been asked in the survey questionnaire. 81% students always participated in online education, 12% students took part in online education sometimes, 5% students often involved in online education, 1% students never participated in online education. (Figure:06)
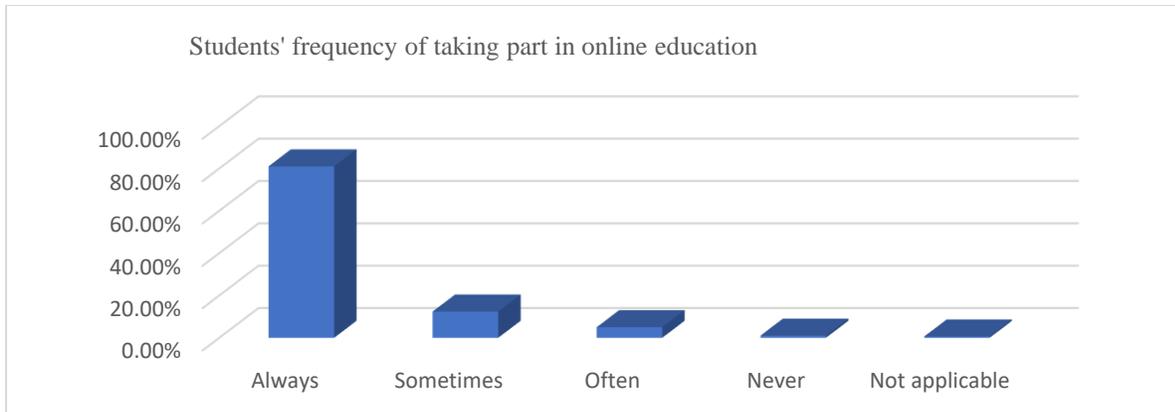
Figure-06: Students' frequency in the participation of online classes
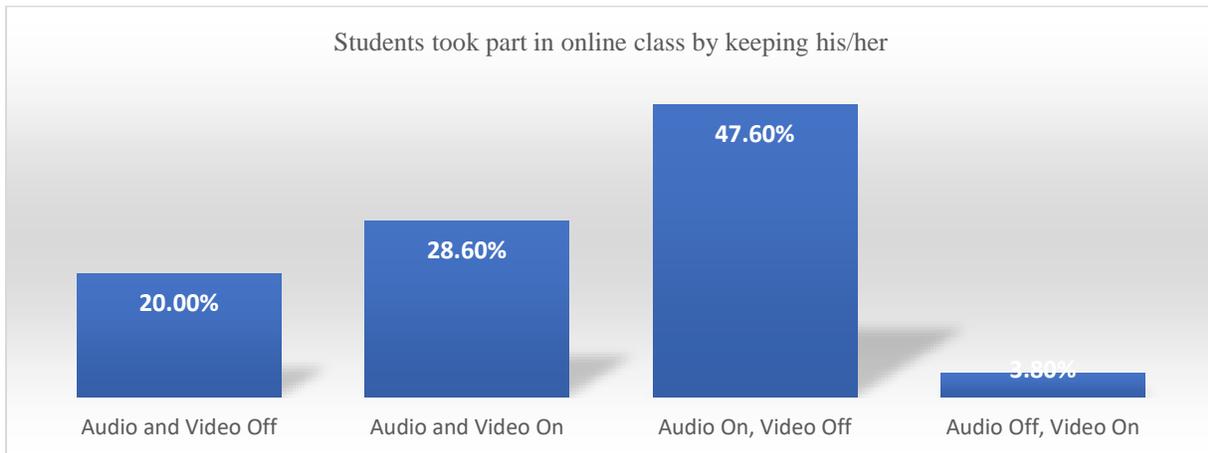

Figure-07: Status of students' online engagement in online classes

With a view to finding out students' active engagement in online education questions has been asked how students took part in online class. 48% students during the online classes keep their audio on and video off. 29% students keep their audio and video on. 20% students keep their audio and video off. 4% keep their video on and audio off during the online classes (Figure-07)

In the online/virtual classes there exists an option i.e., raise hands which indicates students' further inquiry of knowing something. 54% students use raise hands option sometimes, 12% students always use this option, 21% students never use this option, 9% students never use this option while 4% thinks that it is not applicable for them (Figure:08)
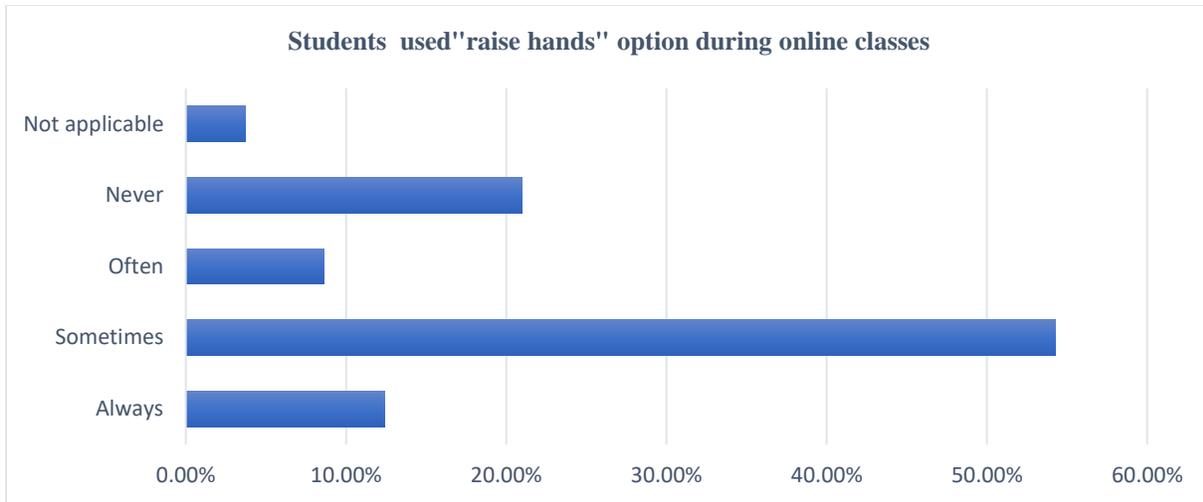
Figure-08: Students' raise hands option in the online classes

According to the figure-09 it is shown 50% students use chat option sometimes, 29% students always use this option, 10% students often use this option, while 12% students never use this option.
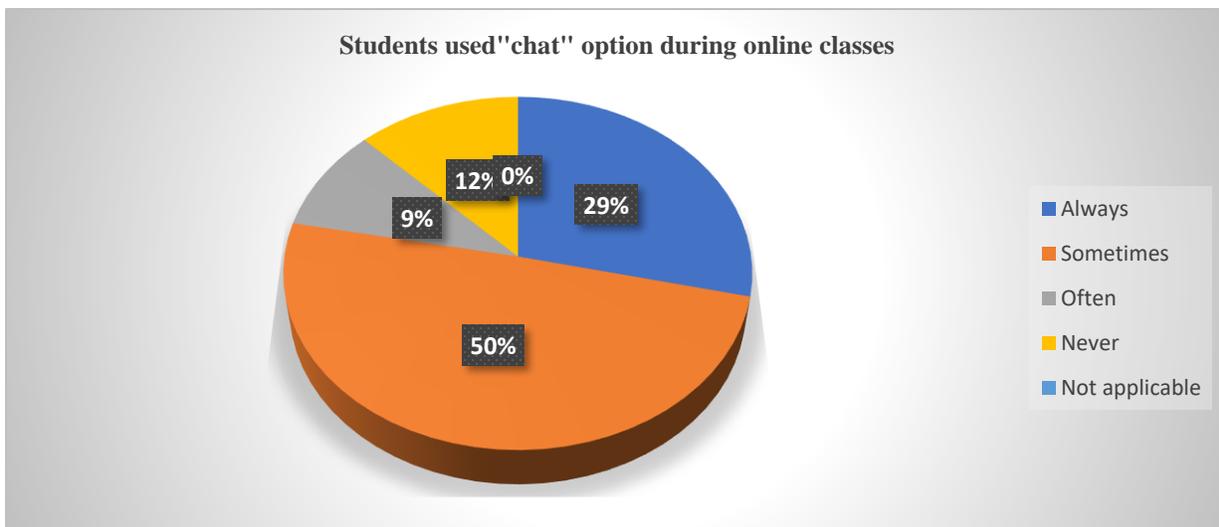

Figure-09: Students used "chat" option during online classes

In in-depth interviews 3 out of 5 students give their consent that they enjoyed online education and they did not find any significant difference between face-to-face class and online class while 2 students were not in favor of online education because of several limitations. One of the interview participants narrated that:

> *I personally enjoyed online education. I participated in the online classes according to my own will. I always took part in online education by keeping my audio and video on. I always use raise hands and chat option in the virtual class……. (Participant:03)*

One of the participants are not in favor of online education and argued that:

> *Online education is not as like as face-to-face class. I involved in online education because of the university's instructions. I always took part in online education by keeping my audio on and video off. I never try to use raise hands and chat option in the online class…… (Participant:02)*

Learners' motivation in online education during COVID-19

In survey responses out of 21 questions 5 are related to learners' motivation in online education during COVID-19. In the survey questions it is asked whether there exists any alternative to online classes during the lockdown period. 56% agree and 36% strongly agree that there is no alternative to online education during COVID-19 which motivates them to be involved in online learning. (Figure:10)
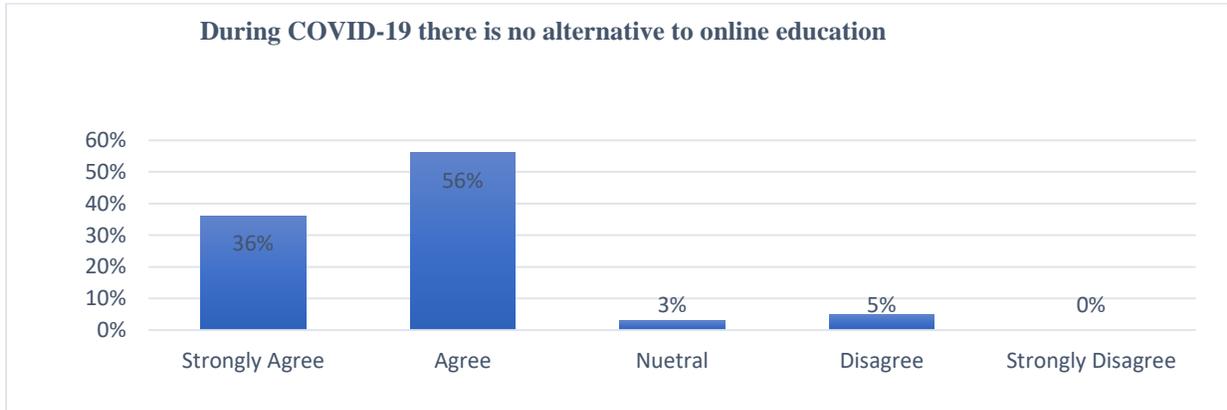

Figure-10: Alternative to online education during COVID-19
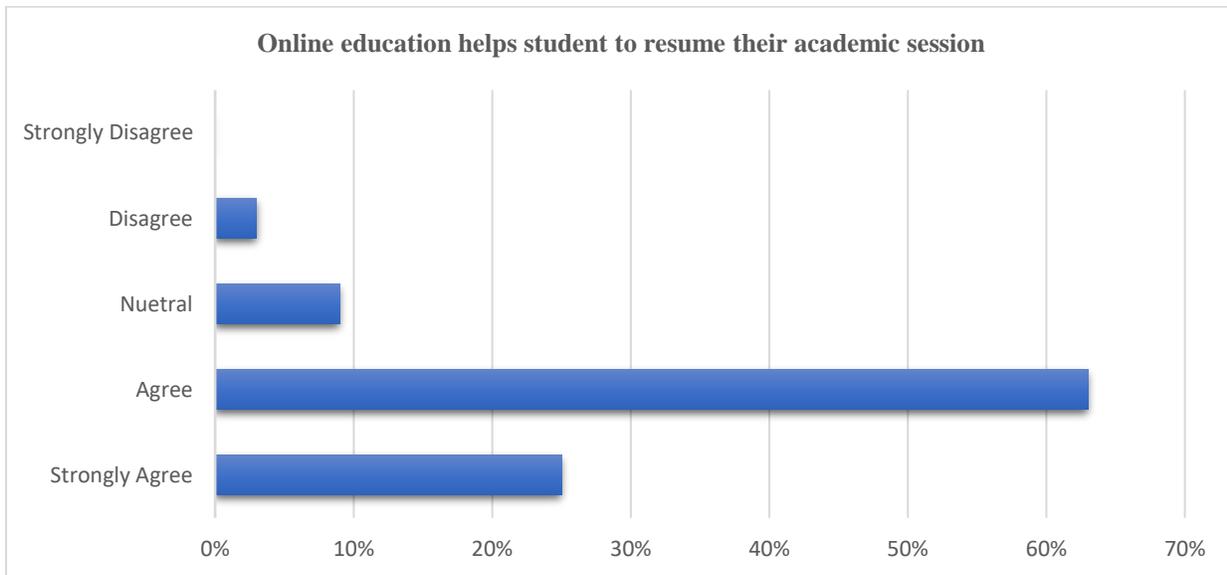

Figure-11: Online education helps students to resume their academic session

At the peak of the novel corona virus where there was academic closure and uncertainty about academic session then most of the academic institutions resume their academic activities through online education. 63% students agree and 25% students strongly agree that online education helps them to resume their academic session which depicts their motivation in online education (Figure-11).
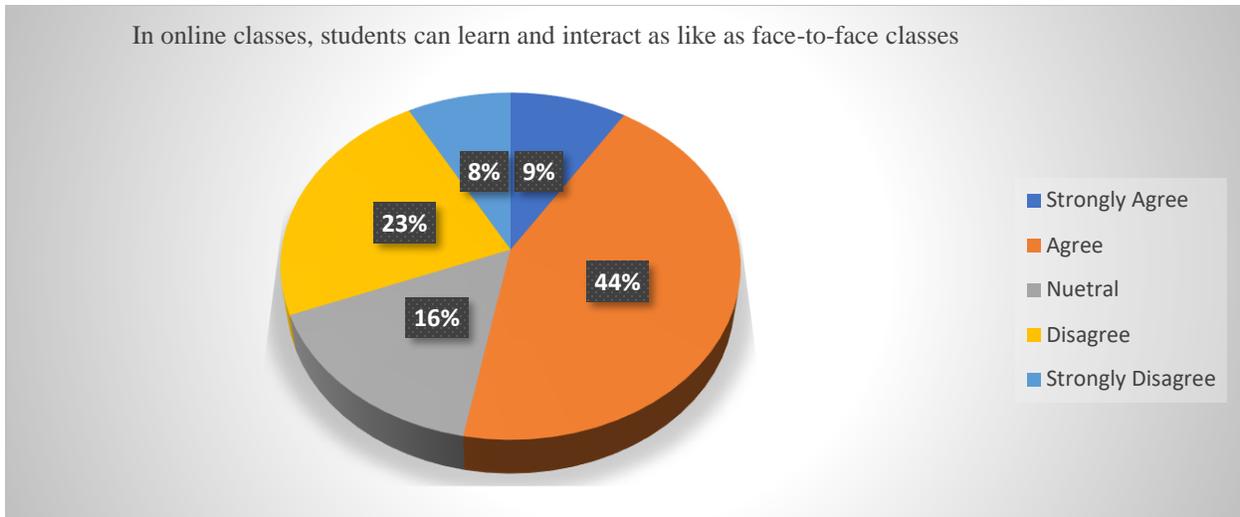
Figure-12: Students' learning and interaction in online classes

In most of the cases problem arises about online classes is the learning and interaction of the students. According to the figure:12 it is shown that 44% students agree that they can learn and interact as like as face-to-face classes in the online classes while 23% students disagree about that. 16% of the students remain neutral about the statement.
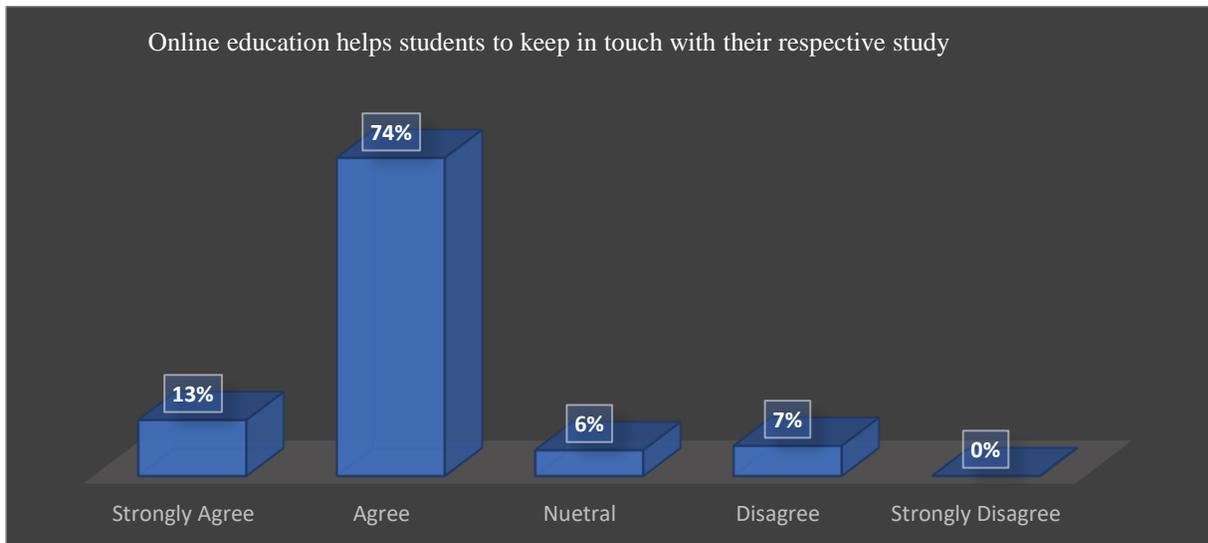

Figure-13: Online education helps students to keep in touch with their respective study

Figure-13 demonstrates that 87% of the students are in favor of online education and motivated enough to continue online education as they believe that online education helps them to keep in touch with their respective study while 7% students believe that online education is not helpful.
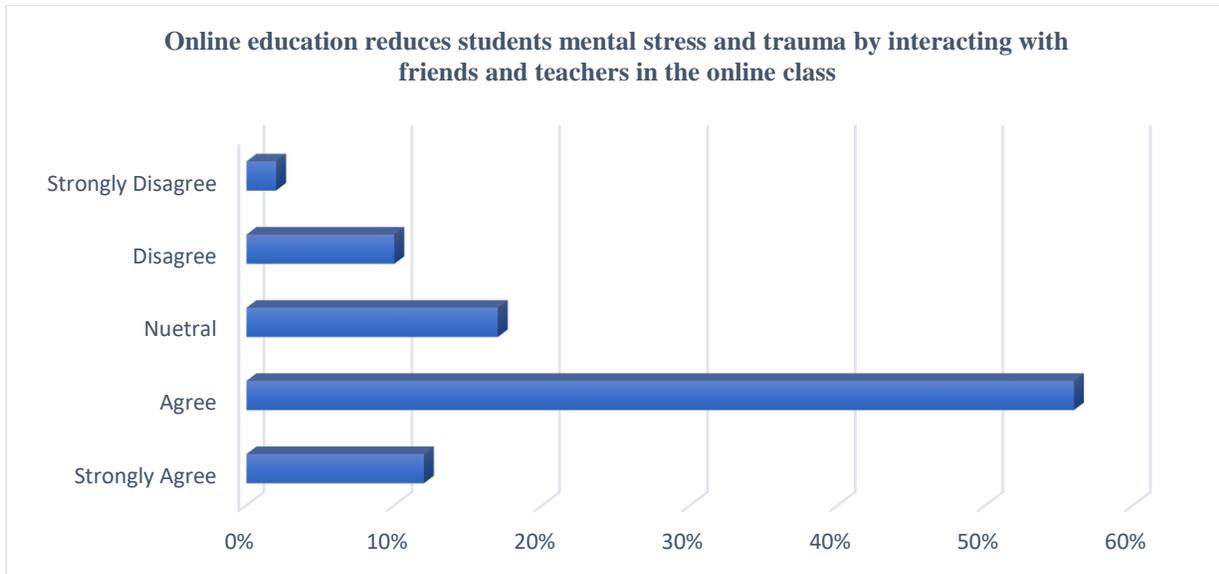
Figure-14: Online education reduces students mental stress and trauma

During COVID-19 most of the people were in mental stress and trauma which affect their physical condition. But introduction of online class where students can interact with their friends and teachers reduces their mental stress and trauma. 56% students agreed, 12% strongly agreed about that while 10% disagreed with this. 17% students remain neutral about this (Figure:14).

In in-depth interviews 4 out of 5 students demonstrates their motivation in online education and while 1 student found less motivation in online education. He narrated that:

> *During the lockdown period when we all are in the situation of death there was no need to introduce online education. Life is more important than the continuation of academic session……. (Participant:04)*

One of the participants argued that:

> *There is no alternative to online education during COVID-19 and in order to continue our academic life we need to attend online classes. We all are in the danger of death. Online class acts like a medicine where we can share our feelings, ideas. We can interact with our friends and teachers which reduces our mental stress…… (Participant:05)*

Challenges of online education

In survey responses out of 21 questions 4 are related to challenges of online education. In the survey questions it is asked whether it becomes difficult for the student to attend online classes with full concentration or not. 43% agree and 24% strongly agree that it becomes difficult for the student to attend online classes with full concentration which indicates challenges of keeping full level concentration in the online education. (Figure:15)
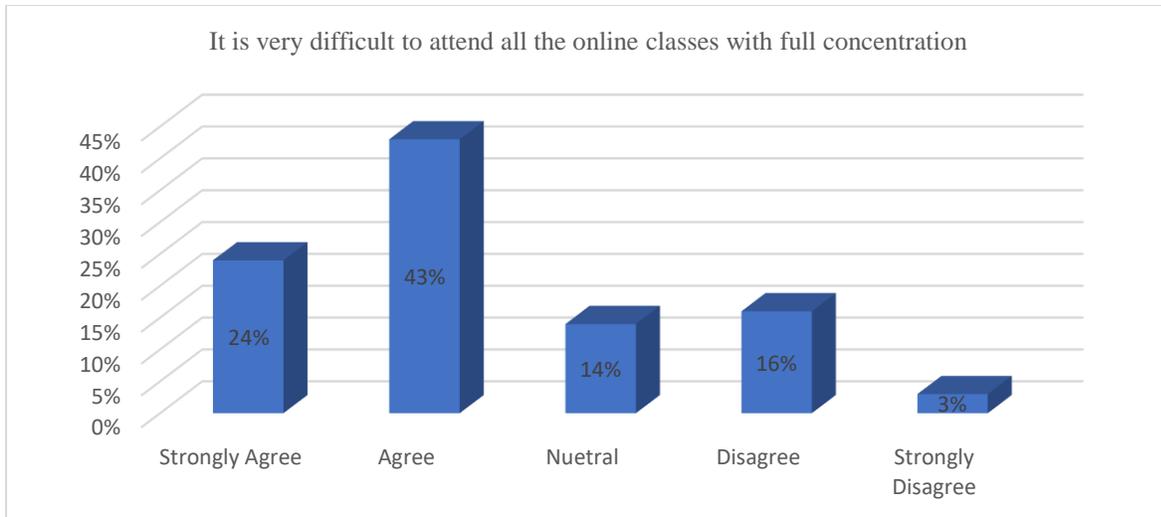
Figure-15: Difficulty of the students to attend online classes with full concentration
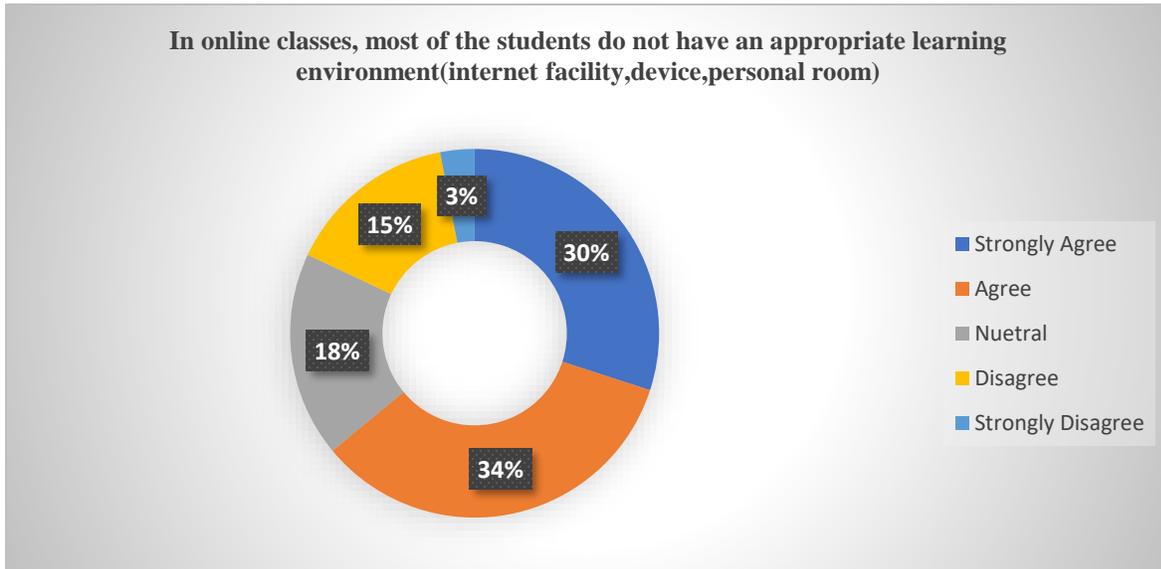

Figure-16: Appropriate learning environment of the students in the online classes

Figure-16 demonstrates that majority (64%) of the students do not have appropriate online learning environment e.g., internet facility, digital device, personal room while rest of the students have no problem in online learning environment.
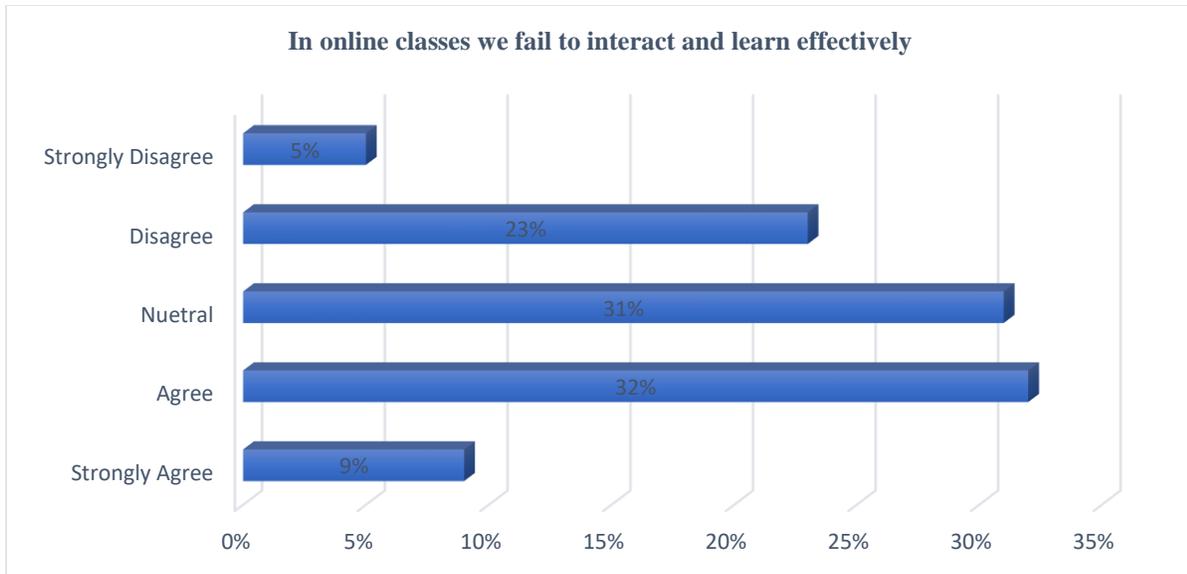
Figure-17: Students' interaction and effective learning in the online classes

In most of the cases problem arises about the interaction and effective learning of the students in online classes. According to the figure:17 it is shown that 9% students agree and 32% strongly agree that they fail to learn and interact as like as face-to-face classes in the online classes while 31% students remain neutral and 23% students disagree about that.
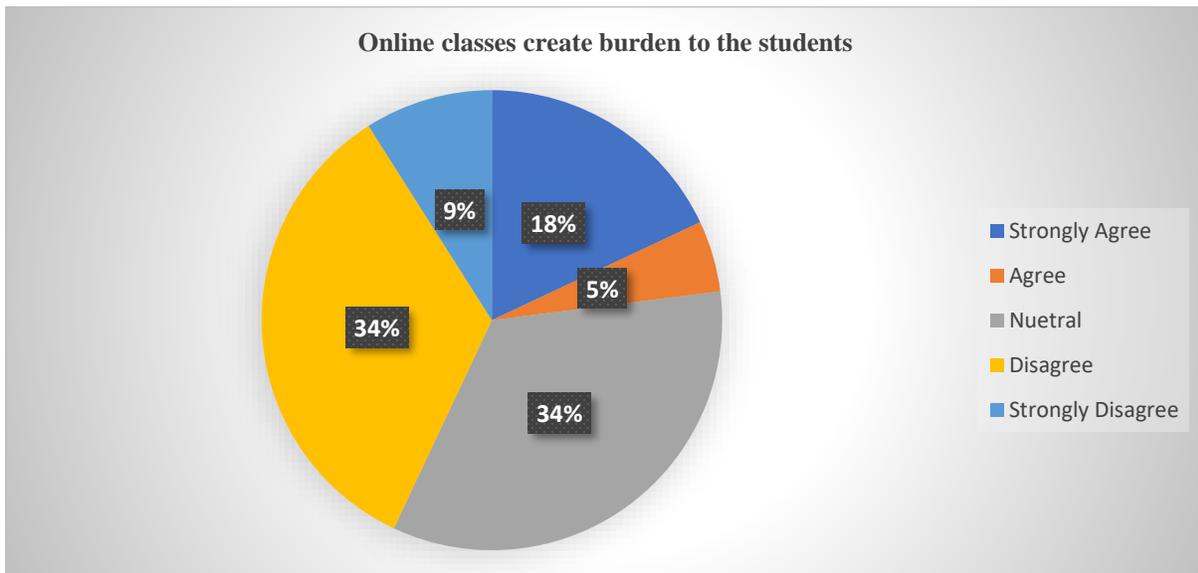

Figure-18: Burden of the students in the online classes

Figure-18 demonstrates that majority (43%) of the students do not think that online classes create burden to them while 34% of the students remain neutral. 33% of the students agree that online classes create burden to them.

In the in-depth interview session almost all of the students enumerate some challenges that they face while participated in the online classes. One of the interview participants narrated that:

> *Most of the students who lived in the remote areas during the lockdown period of COVID-19 did not have strong internet connection, digital device and personal room to attend the online classes. It became very*

difficult for the students to remain attentive in the classes. The interaction among the students and teachers are not same as face-to-face classes. ……. (Participant:01)

Possibilities of online education

In survey responses out of 21 questions 5 are related to possibilities of online education. In the survey questions it is asked whether in online classes faculty members conduct their classes in organized way or not. 60% agree and 10% strongly agree that faculty members conduct online classes in a more organized way than traditional face-to-face classes. (Figure:19)
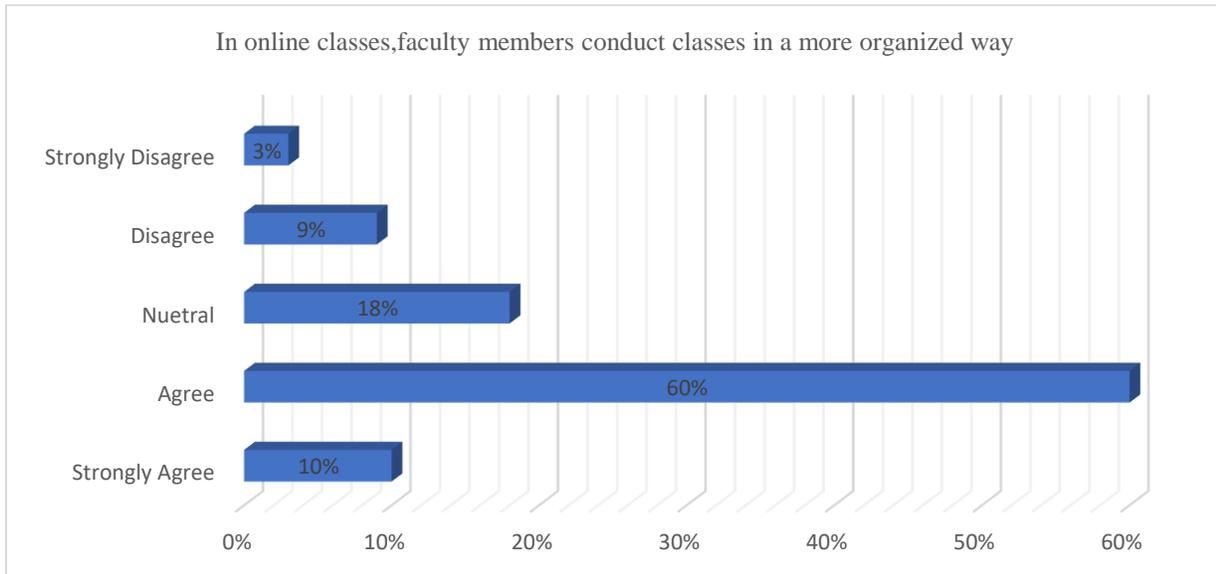

In online classes,faculty members conduct classes in a more organized way

Figure-19: In online classes, faculty members conduct classes in a more organized way

In online class students get their materials easily
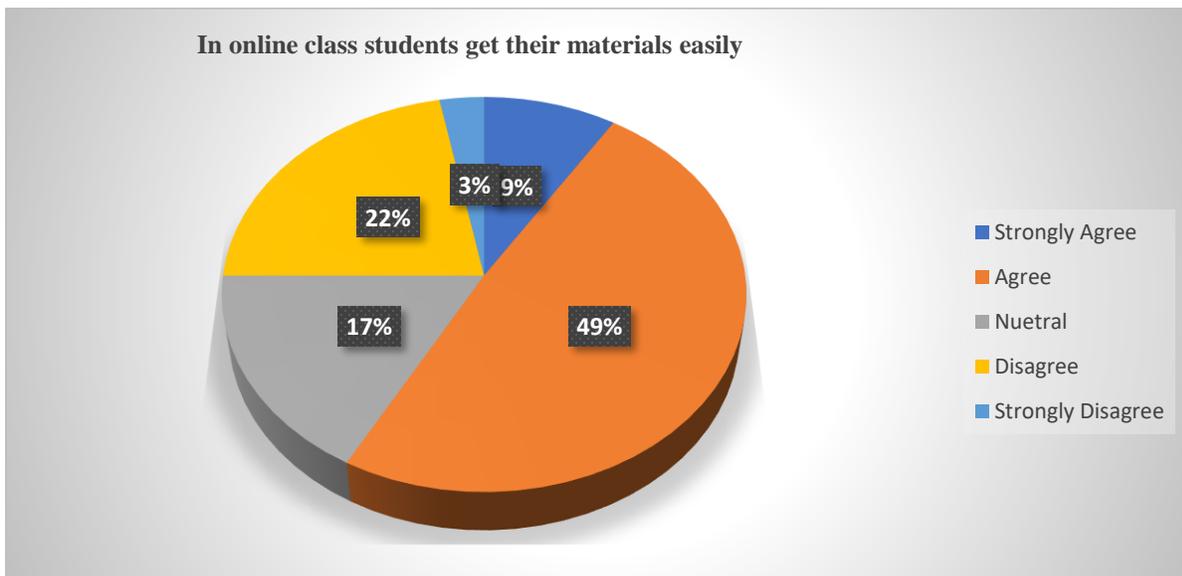
Figure-20: In online class students get their materials easily

Figure-20 demonstrates that majority (58%) of the students think that in online classes students get their materials easily. 17% of the students remain neutral and 22% of the students disagree with the statement.
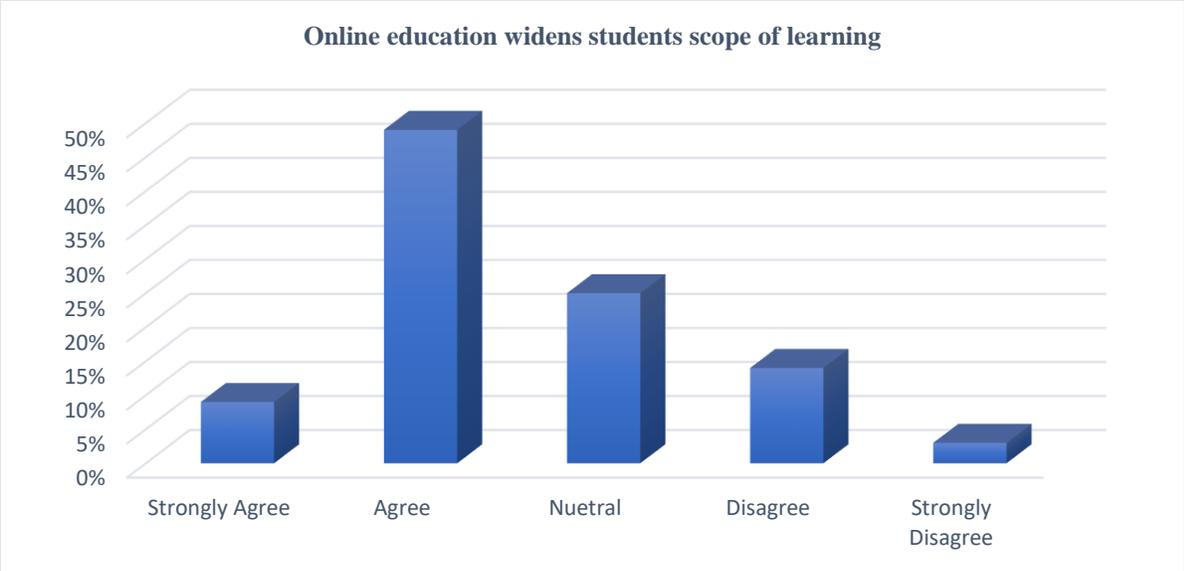
Figure-21: Online education widens students' scope of learning

According to the figure:21 it is shown that 58% students believe that online education widens their scope of learning. 25% students remain neutral while rest of the students disagree about that.
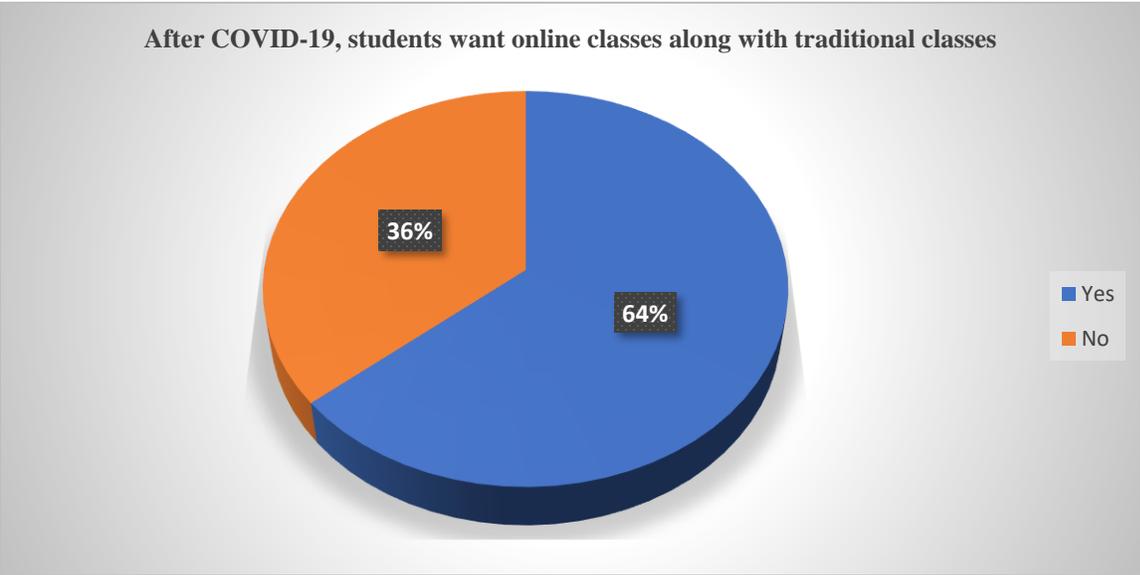

Figure -22: After COVID-19, students want online classes along with traditional classes

Majority of the students (64%) want online classes after COVID-19 along with traditional face-to-face classes (Figure:22)
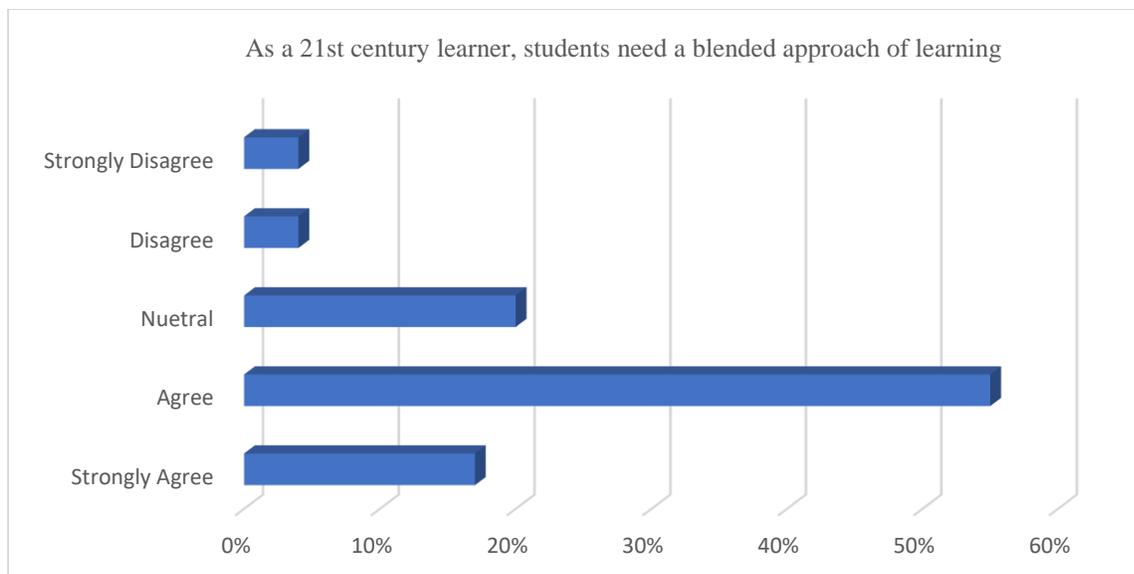
As a 21st century learner, students need a blended approach of learning

Figure-23: As a 21st century learner, students need a blended approach of learning

According to the figure:23 it is shown that 17% agree and 55% students strongly agree that as a 21st century learners they need a blended approach of learning where there will no academic disclosure. 20% students remain neutral while 8% of the students believe that they do not need blended approach of learning.

In the in-depth interview session almost all of the students agree that in Bangladesh online education has great opportunities and in order to tackle unavoidable circumstance there is no alternative to online learning. Stating the possibilities of the online education one of the interview participants narrated that:

> *COVID-19 teaches us the power of online education. In online classes faculty members conduct the class in an organized way, we get the study materials very easily. As a 21st century learners we need to adopt online classes along with face-to-face classes. I personally prefer blended approach of learning after COVID-19 (Participant:05)*

Conclusion:

After the spread of COVID-19 around the world when each and every educational institution destined to academic closure then online education become a possible solution to keep pace with the contemporary world (Islam & Selim,2006) and online education is considered as the only solution for this new-normal situation for the developed as well as developing country like Bangladesh. The government of the different states in India is promoting and instructing educational institutions to participate in online education (Jena, 2020). University Grants Commission (UGC) of India instructed all the universities to conduct online education ensuring active participation of the learners during the lockdown phase. During COVID-19 pandemic private universities of Bangladesh use online education in order to address the possible solutions in continuing higher education during the lockdown period (Shama& Ikbal, 2020). The key objective of this study is to find out learners' engagement and motivation in online education during COVID-19 considering the challenges and possibilities in the context of Bangladesh. The findings of this study reveal that almost all of the learners participated in online education and they participated for various reasons. They actively took part in online education and motivated enough in online education during the COVID-19 pandemic. Learners are motivated in online education because most of the learners believe that online education during COVID-19 helps them to resume their academic session, to get connected with their respective study, to reduce their stress and trauma as in online classes they can interact with their friends and teachers. In online education several challenges e.g., the poor internet connection of rural students, lack of teacher's positive attitude and literacy for online teaching (DeAlwis & David, 2020), lack of electric devices, lower participation due to less interaction in online classes (Surkhali & Garbuja, 2020). Despite these challenges, online education creates some possibilities e.g., faculty members conducted class more systematically than traditional face-to-face class, resources become available and the learning scope get widened. As a 21st century learner there exists no alternative to online education as artificial intelligence and machine

learning take place rapidly. To keep students updated blended approach of teaching and learning should be introduced in the country like Bangladesh.

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