



Since January 2020 Elsevier has created a COVID-19 resource centre with free information in English and Mandarin on the novel coronavirus COVID-19. The COVID-19 resource centre is hosted on Elsevier Connect, the company's public news and information website.

Elsevier hereby grants permission to make all its COVID-19-related research that is available on the COVID-19 resource centre - including this research content - immediately available in PubMed Central and other publicly funded repositories, such as the WHO COVID database with rights for unrestricted research re-use and analyses in any form or by any means with acknowledgement of the original source. These permissions are granted for free by Elsevier for as long as the COVID-19 resource centre remains active.



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Affective Disorders Reports

journal homepage: www.sciencedirect.com/journal/journal-of-affective-disorders-reports

Correspondence

Increased suicidal behaviors among students during COVID-19 lockdowns: A concern of student's mental health in Bangladesh



ARTICLE INFO

Keywords

COVID-19 pandemic
 Student suicide
 Mental health
 Suicidal tendency
 Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought an unprecedented natural event on life. The mental health of students has been impacted due to the long-term closure of educational institutions. The suicide rate had been significantly increased during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to previous years among Bangladeshi students. Several COVID-19 responses might be responsible for this increased suicidality among students. Therefore, family members should give them mental supports to reduce additional burdens due to the pandemic. The government and non-government organizations can take suicide prevention programs such as awareness campaigns, student counseling, internet-based interventions, etc. Also, the authority should vaccinate students, teachers, and other staff to reopen the academic institutions on an urgent basis.

The impacts of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic are not only limited to the healthcare systems. The pandemic impacted an individual's social and personal life, physical and mental health, economic condition, and many more (Das et al., 2021; Repon et al., 2021; Hossain et al., 2021a; Islam and Hossain, 2021a). After the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic, the educational institutions have been closed in Bangladesh to date. Although a series of imposing-withdrawing in lockdowns, restrictions on movement, public transports, markets, shopping malls, etc., have occurred, there is a postpone of the previously announced reopening of educational institutions (Daria et al., 2021a; Rahman et al., 2021; Moona et al., 2021). The education system in Bangladesh has been impacted tremendously. Also, Bangladesh ranked third among the countries with the highest number of days of complete school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the country ranked second in terms of the number of students impacted by these full school closures (UNICEF, 2021). Therefore, approximately 40.0 million students across the country are directly or indirectly affected by this ongoing pandemic. Sleep disturbances, loss of appetite, and involvement in addictive activities such as crimes, doing drugs, playing online video games, being forced to get early marriage, child labor, etc., are frequently reported problems of students in Bangladesh due to their long isolation from an academic institution, alternative learning methods, and changes in the schedule of daily activities (Ether et al., 2022). Therefore, stress, worry, irritation, depression, and suicidal thoughts are prevalent among students in Bangladesh (Dhaka Tribune, 2021; Hossain and Islam, 2021).

As there is no national reporting system or database for suicides in Bangladesh, we extracted their information from media reports. The methodology of the current study was conducted to extract data following the previously conducted media-reports-based online retrospective study (Mamun et al., 2020). We conducted an online media-reports-based retrospective study using several keywords (e.g. "student suicide", "COVID-19 pandemic", "suicidal tendency", "Bangladeshi students") on Google's search engine in both English and Bengali from April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2021. In the last 15 months, 151

students committed suicide in Bangladesh. Of these, 63 are school students, 42 are university-medical college students, 26 are college students, and 29 are madrasah (institution specially designed for Islamic education and culture) students. The above information depicts the mental health condition of Bangladeshi students during the COVID-19 pandemic. A large proportion of students are suffering from mental health problems that lead them to suicidal behavior. A study was conducted before the COVID-19 pandemic on suicide cases reported from January 2018 to June 2019 in the Bangladeshi print media. A total of 56 Bangladeshi students committed suicide during that period (Mamun et al., 2020). Comparing the total number of suicides among Bangladeshi students before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, it has been observed that the number of suicide cases has increased about three folds during the pandemic. Therefore, the long closure of educational institutions across the country might be associated with this increased suicidality among students. Experts assumed that the long-term closure of educational institutions during the ongoing pandemic is increasing the stress on students' personal lives (Hossain et al., 2022). They are failing to control even minor emotional issues in daily life. The frustration with education and career, inadequate pocket money, family dispute, love affairs, financial crisis, loneliness, and depression are the major causes of increased suicidal tendencies among students (Faisal et al., 2021; Islam, 2021a). Students were spending with their families at home for a long time. Therefore, they were unable to play and spend time with their friends (Islam et al., 2021a). This situation has made them more prone to violent and abusive behavior by their relatives and family members (Islam and Hossain, 2021b). Many students have lost their jobs or income sources like part-time jobs, private tuitions during the pandemic (Hossain et al., 2021b). The financial crisis led them to frustrations because of an uncertain future. Along with some physical health issues, frustrations, depression, anxiety, loneliness, sleep disturbances have increased among students that led the students to exhibit suicidal behavior and ultimately commit suicide (Islam et al., 2021b, 2021c, 2021d).

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadr.2022.100320>

Received 24 June 2021; Received in revised form 9 January 2022; Accepted 5 February 2022

Available online 8 February 2022

2666-9153/© 2022 The Author(s). Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

The COVID-19 pandemic has tremendously affected the mental health of students across the world (Daria et al., 2021b). Many students are experiencing mental health problems due to the pandemic responses, academic career, and job-related stresses. Studies suggest that about 90% of the suicide victims reported at least one mental disorder (Mamun et al., 2020). Therefore, the government, non-government organizations, and families should take immediate measures to give mental health support to the students. Also, the healthcare authorities should take initiatives for priority-basis vaccination programs for students, teachers, and other staff to reopen the educational institutions (Islam, 2021b; Hossain et al., 2021c). Reopening educational institutions might help the students to get back to their normal life like socializing with their friends and teachers, engaging in their regular activities which might improve their mental health (Islam et al., 2021e). Educational institutions must be more focused on improving mental health education, support, and provision to decrease the suicide rate, the suicidal tendency among the students. The authorities can teach the students to cope with some psychological distresses during this ongoing pandemic. Mental health education of parents and their children, awareness, the introduction of crisis centers, hotlines, and social counseling might reduce the suicidal tendencies of students. Every educational institution needs to appoint psychologists to provide adequate psychological counseling support to their students during and after this pandemic. The families should keep regular contact with mental health professionals and counseling psychologists for the mentally vulnerable family members. They should let the depressed members know that not meeting any shortcomings does not mean the end of life. With all these initiatives and realization, it is possible to reduce the increased suicidal tendencies of students.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Sohel Daria: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Md. Rabiul Islam:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors do not have any conflict of interest.

Acknowledgments

None

References

- Daria, S., Asaduzzaman, M., Shahriar, M., Islam, M.R., 2021a. The massive attack of COVID-19 in India is a big concern for Bangladesh: the key focus should be given on the interconnection between the countries [published online ahead of print, 2021 May 19] *Int. J. Health Plan. Manag.* <https://doi.org/10.1002/hpm.3245>, 10.1002/hpm.3245.
- Daria, Sohel, Bhuiyan, Mohiuddin Ahmed, Islam, Md.Rabiul, 2021b. Detection of highly mutated coronavirus variant Omicron (B.1.1.529) is triggering the alarm for South Asian countries: Associated risk factors and preventive actions. *J Med Virol.*, 27503 <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmv.27503>. In press.
- Das, R., Hasan, M.R., Daria, S., Islam, M.R., 2021. Impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health among general Bangladeshi population: a cross-sectional study. *BMJ Open* 11 (4), e045727. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2020-045727>. Published 2021 Apr 9.
- Dhaka Tribune. Bangladesh closes all educational institutions till March 31. 2020. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/dhaka/2020/03/16/govt-directs-shuttin-g-all-educational-institutions-mach-17-to-31>. Accessed 13 June 2021.
- Ether, Sadia Afruz, Emon, Faisal Abdullah, Roknuzzaman, Asm, Rakibuzzaman, Md, Rahman, Fahad Imtiaz, Islam, Md.Rabiul, 2022. A cross-sectional study of COVID-19-related knowledge, risk perceptions, and preventive practices among pharmacy

- students in Bangladesh. *SAGE Open Medicine* 10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20503121211073014>, 20503121211073016 In this issue.
- Faisal, R.A., Jobe, M.C., Ahmed, O., Sharker, T., 2021. Mental health status, anxiety, and depression levels of Bangladeshi university students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Int. J. Ment. Health Addict.* 1–16.
- Hossain, Md.Jamal, Ahmmed, Foyez, Sarker, Dr.Md.Moklesur Rahman, Sarwar, Sneha, Bari, Md.Sazzadul, Khan, Md.Robin, Shahriar, Saimon, Rafi, Md.Oliullah, Emran, Talha Bin, Mitra, Saikat, Islam, Md.Rabiul, Mohamed, Isa Naina, 2022. Factors associated with underprivileged e-Learning, session jam phobia, and the subsequent mental distress among students following the extended university closure in Bangladesh. *Frontiers in Public Health* 9, 807474. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2021.807474>. In press.
- Hossain, Md.Jamal, Islam, Md.Rabiul, 2021. Detection of SARS-CoV-2 Omicron (B.1.1.529) variant has created panic among the people across the world: What should we do right now? *J Med Virol.*, 27546 <https://doi.org/10.1002/jmv.27546>. In press.
- Hossain, M.J., Rahman, S., Emran, T.B., Mitra, S., Islam, M.R., Dhama, K., 2021c. Recommendation and roadmap of mass vaccination against COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh as a lower-middle-income country (LMIC). *Achieves of Razi Inst.* 76 <https://doi.org/10.22092/ARI.2021.356357.1824>. October.
- Hossain, M.J., Soma, M.A., Bari, M.S., et al., 2021b. COVID-19 and child marriage in Bangladesh: emergency call to action. *BMJ Paediatr. Open* 5, e001328. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjpo-2021-001328>.
- Hossain, M.J., Soma, M.A., Islam, M.R., Emran, T.B., 2021a. Urgent call for actionable measures to fight the current co-epidemic of dengue burden during the SARS-CoV-2 delta variant era in South-Asia. *Ethics Med. Public Health* 19, 100726. Dec.
- Islam, M.R., Daria, S., Das, R., Hasan, M.R., 2021d. A nationwide dataset on the mental health of the Bangladeshi population due to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Data Brief* 38, 107347. Oct.
- Islam, M.R., Hossain, M.J., 2021a. Increments of gender-based violence amid COVID-19 in Bangladesh: a threat to global public health and women's health. *Int. J. Health Plan. Manag.* 36 (6), 2436–2440. Nov.
- Islam, M.R., Hossain, M.J., 2021b. Increments of gender-based violence amid COVID-19 in Bangladesh: a threat to global public health and women's health. *Int. J. Health Plan. Manag.* 36 (6), 2436–2440. Nov.
- Islam, M.R., Jannath, S., Moona, A.A., Akter, S., Hossain, M.J., Islam, S.M.A., 2021e. Association between the use of social networking sites and mental health of young generation in Bangladesh: a cross-sectional study. *J. Community Psychol.* 49 (7), 2276–2297. Sep.
- Islam, M.R., Quaiyum, S., Pakhe, S.A., Repon, M.A.U., Bhuiyan, M.A., 2021c. Dataset concerning the mental health of healthcare professionals during COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. *Data Brief* 39, 107506. Dec.
- Islam, M.R., Qusar, M.M.A.S., Islam, M.S., 2021a. Mental health of children amid COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh: an exploratory observation. *Asia Pac. J. Public Health*, 10105395211004371.
- Islam, M.R., Qusar, M.S., Islam, M.S., 2021b. Suicide after Facebook posts-an unnoticed departure of life in Bangladesh. *Emerg. Trends Drugs Addict. Health* 1 (2021), 100005.
- Islam, M.R., 2021a. The COVID-19 pandemic and suicidal behavior in Bangladesh: social stigma and discrimination are key areas to focus on. *Alpha Psychiatry* 22, 275–276. September.
- Islam, M.R., 2021b. Urgent call for mass immunization against coronavirus in Bangladesh. *Sci. Prog.* 104 (4), Oct368504211058562.
- Mamun, M.A., Siddique, A.B., Sikder, M.T., Griffiths, M.D., 2020. Student suicide risk and gender: a retrospective study from Bangladeshi press reports. *Int. J. Ment. Health Addict.*
- Moona, A.A., Daria, S., Asaduzzaman, M., Islam, M.R., 2021. Bangladesh reported delta variant of coronavirus among its citizen: actionable items to tackle the potential massive third wave. *Infect. Prev. Pract.* 3 (3), 100159. Sep.
- Rahman, F.I., Ether, S.A., Islam, M.R., 2021. The "Delta Plus" COVID-19 variant has evolved to become the next potential variant of concern: mutation history and measures of prevention. *J. Basic Clin. Physiol. Pharmacol.* <https://doi.org/10.1515/jbcp-2021-0251>. Sep 27.
- Repon, M.A.U., Pakhe, S.A., Quaiyum, S., Das, R., Daria, S., Islam, M.R., 2021. Effect of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health among Bangladeshi healthcare professionals: a cross-sectional study. *Sci. Prog.* 104 (2), Apr-Jun368504211026409.
- UNICEF. COVID-19 and school closures: one year of education disruption. 2021. <https://data.unicef.org/resources/one-year-of-covid-19-and-school-closures/>. Accessed 13 June 2021.

Sohel Daria, Md. Rabiul Islam*

Department of Pharmacy, University of Asia Pacific, 74/A Green Road, Farmgate, Dhaka 1215, Bangladesh

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: robi.ayaan@gmail.com (Md.R. Islam).