



# **Research Project to Identify Challenges Hindering Educational Development in Poraai**

Internship session: 2025 (June - July)

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report sheds light on the difficulties and obstacles that students connected with Poraai encounter in their everyday lives. Through various research methods, we strive to understand the unique challenges they face. Furthermore, we explore potential solutions and

resources that can help alleviate these challenges, reflecting our commitment to supporting these students and enhancing their experiences.

The interns conducted extensive background research, interviews and surveys. Interns sifted through past research papers to gather data and information that has already been found out through research conducted in the past to enrich the information provided in this paper. Along with that, interns conducted multiple surveys, most of which were conducted on students of PC1 and PC2. Each intern conducted their surveys to gather various information to help reach a conclusion for this paper. Moreover, questionnaires were prepared and answered by other social groups from different environments while interviews were also conducted by interns to interview both Poraai affiliated students and other groups.

The interns identified resources and developed solutions that target much of the issues that were identified from interviews, surveys and background research. This not only revealed some general problems, but also many deep-rooted issues which would not have been uncovered otherwise. After the interns compiled all the information, they identified possible ways to help fix these issues ranging from many different aspects of the lives of Poraai affiliated students, from family issues, societal issues to personal challenges, etc. Furthermore, interns developed many ideas to carry out these solutions in a viable manner, keeping mind funds, outreach and time. Finally, interns proposed the idea of “Poraai hub”.

“Poraai hub” is a low cost student led solution which aims to be all-encompassing in resolving many different issues faced by Poraai affiliated students. This mission will provide students with a safe space to study in groups to further their educational development along with easy access to the internet for near-endless information to achieve this result as many of these students still don't have access to the internet in their areas. Along with that, counselors will be installed such that students can express their personal struggles and feelings as the surveys found that some students do not have anyone to talk to on these matters. Moving on, “Poraai hub” will let senior students tutor their fellow juniors while also providing more opportunities for extra-curricular activities. This solution will lead to students being heard, having additional academic support, having access to information, being more involved with extracurriculars.

## **OVERVIEW OF INTERNSHIP COORDINATOR:**

### Tanha Nihum

Coordinating this research project with five talented and motivated students from Scholastica has been a great journey for me. From the earliest brainstorming sessions to the final stages of writing and analysis, I've had the opportunity to witness their growth, not just

as students, but as thoughtful young individuals who are eager to learn and navigate the process of inquiry and collaboration.

My role was to support and guide them in shaping their ideas, refining their methodology, and staying focused and organized as they worked through each phase of the project. I aimed to create an environment where they felt encouraged to ask questions, challenge assumptions, and learn from each other. There were moments of uncertainty and revision, but those, I believe, were some of the most valuable parts of the experience.

What stood out most to me was the team's curiosity, resilience, and commitment to the work. This paper is a reflection of not just academic effort, but also of the teamwork they brought into it. I'm pleased to have been part of this process and look forward to seeing where their paths take them next.

### Sumyya Binte Mahmud

As the Coordinator of this 1.5-month internship program, it has been a privilege to lead and support a group of five talented interns from Scholastica. While we have conducted three internship programs in the past, this particular design introduced a new and more structured approach, making it a truly distinctive experience.

The internship was organized over six weeks; two weeks were dedicated to preparatory training focused on equipping interns for their upcoming research work, followed by four weeks of research activities. These research tasks were carried out in multiple formats: individually, in collaboration with PC1 and PC2 students, and through team-based assignments, fostering both independence and teamwork.

My role as the Coordinator involved conducting sessions, offering practical guidance and supporting the interns throughout their research work. The interns' vibrant thinking and youthful energy brought fresh insights and a dynamic spirit to the program.

This internship not only facilitated the professional and intellectual growth of the interns but also provided me with a fulfilling and inspiring experience as a mentor. I thoroughly enjoyed working with this youthful team and look forward to continuing and refining this model in future internships.

## **DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY:**

Poraai.com is an online educational platform that provides free education to middle and high school students across its classrooms in Bangladesh. The company was founded by CEO Mr. Muntasir Mubin Sauvik, who oversees its operations from overseas. Mr. Asif Rahman Akash serves as the Operations Manager, handling all on-the-ground activities. Ms. Tanha

Ahmed Nijhum and Ms. Sumyya Binte Mahmud are the Internship Coordinators and serve as online instructors.

Poraai currently operates three classrooms:

- PC1, located in Netrokona, provides quality education in a range of subjects to 67 students, preparing them for national board examinations. It is overseen by offline teachers Mr. Mofazzal and Mr. Joynal, with support from assistants Rubel and Maria. English and Social Norms subjects are taught online.
- PC2, located in Gazipur, was established in collaboration with Utsho Bidyaniketon. It offers an alternative English curriculum taught online. It is overseen by Mr. Mohsin and Mr. Muradul.
- PC3, the newest addition to Poraai's network, is operated by Ms. Jhinu and serves 10 middle school students across a variety of subjects. English and Social Norms subjects are taught online.

## **INTERNSHIP DESCRIPTION:**

This June - July internship consisted of 6 weeks, Starting from June 15th 2025 and ending on the 27th of July. Where interns had to attend sessions 5 days a week on the days: Sunday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Each session lasted 4 hours from 6pm to 10pm, altogether 20 hours a week. Along with that, we interns had to maintain logbooks throughout every session as well as create meeting minutes when required.

During this period, interns were taught many new skills that most of the interns had no prior experience with. The first 2 weeks consisted of interns being familiarised with Poraai and all its operations. Furthermore, they were informed about our responsibilities, expectations and schedules.

NDA's, slide preparation and public speaking are some of the topics the interns were educated on early into the internship. As per their responsibilities, they were expected to be present and complete assignments on time, conduct or assist in class, maintain logbooks, etc. The later weeks consisted of interns completing assignments, gathering information from the students of Poraai themselves and conducting surveys for background research for the final report.

## **DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT METHOD:**

Initially, the interns were provided with a range of topics to choose from, based upon which they would make their report. After topic selection, the interns started their background research by analyzing relevant and reliable research papers online to cite valuable insights for their project. Additionally, the interns, along with their teammates from PC1 and PC2,

conducted interviews and surveys in the classrooms, from which they were able to understand the problems that those living in rural areas regularly face. Afterwards, the interns went on to identify and list down the resources needed for solving the identified problems. Finally, the interns brainstormed and noted possible solutions.

The project was divided into a set timeline as shown below :

- Resource identification
- Ideation
- Decision matrix
- Project review
- Final report submission
- Logbook submission
- Certificate ceremony

The basic outline of a report project has also been mentioned below :

- Topic selection
- Problem statement
- Background research
- Objectives identification
- Challenges identification
- Resources identification
- Ideation
- System design
- Prototype
- Testing
- Feedback & adjustment

## **BACKGROUND RESEARCH:**

### Personal Challenges

This section explores the individual-level challenges students face on platforms like **Poraai**, which serves underprivileged learners across Bangladesh and similar contexts. While online learning offers the flexibility and accessibility that traditional schools often lack, these benefits can be undermined by personal barriers such as poor mental health, irregular attendance, low motivation, and deep academic insecurities. These challenges are particularly prevalent among learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, where systemic issues—like trauma, malnutrition, and lack of academic support—are internalized and reflected in the learner's day-to-day ability to engage, persist, and succeed. Below are five major issues affecting these learners on an individual level:

#### **1. Mental Health & Childhood Trauma**

Many students in low-income and marginalized communities face emotional distress stemming from poverty, family instability, abuse, or early exposure to violence. This can lead

to anxiety, depression, or behavioral issues that interfere with concentration, motivation, and consistent academic effort. Research shows that children dealing with trauma often display lower cognitive performance and reduced classroom participation—whether online or in-person. When emotional support is absent in both home and educational spaces, it creates a toxic loop that severely impacts learning outcomes.

## **2. Lack of Confidence & Academic Self-Esteem**

Children in under-resourced settings often feel “less than” due to their limited access to quality education from early childhood. If they fall behind in basic skills like reading or numeracy, they begin to believe they are “not smart enough.” Over time, this internalized belief discourages them from trying or participating in online classes. One study observed that students with low academic self-esteem were more likely to avoid assessments, skip classes, or remain silent during live sessions, especially in virtual learning environments where peer validation is minimal.

## **3. Poor Health & Malnutrition**

Health problems, particularly among children from impoverished communities, remain a serious obstacle to learning. Malnourishment, chronic fatigue, and untreated illnesses reduce students’ ability to focus and retain new information. Many students using platforms like Poraai attend class hungry or sick, which affects their engagement and performance. Studies in South Asia link undernutrition with delayed cognitive development, low energy, absenteeism, and reduced attention span.

## **4. Irregular Attendance & Dropout Patterns**

Unlike formal schools with enforced attendance, online learning platforms depend heavily on self-regulation and family support, which many underprivileged students lack. If children are responsible for caregiving, household chores, or part-time work, their learning becomes irregular. Additionally, technical limitations—such as broken phones, poor internet, or no data—further interrupt their studies. Repeated breaks lead to disengagement, and eventually, dropout. Research shows that students with inconsistent online attendance are 3–4× more likely to permanently abandon their studies.

## **5. Learning Gaps from Early Grades**

Many learners come into platforms like Poraai already several years behind grade level. This is often due to poor-quality primary education or early dropout. When students lack foundational skills but are expected to follow standardized content, they fall further behind. Without individualized support or bridging resources, these learning gaps widen over time, especially in subjects like English, Math, and Science. A World Bank report highlights how learning poverty—the inability to read and understand simple text by age 10—is a massive barrier in South Asia.

### **Related Sources & Research Papers**

- [BMC Public Health – Emotional trauma & learning](#)
- [Punjab University Study – Academic self-esteem in marginalized learners](#)
- [NCBI – Nutrition and education outcomes in developing countries](#)
- [UCL Journal – Parental education, attendance, and dropout patterns](#)
- [Amherst Study – Work burden, poverty, and educational decline](#)

## Bangladesh Context

In Bangladesh, students from underprivileged backgrounds face a unique set of personal challenges that directly hinder their academic development—especially when learning online through platforms like Poraai. Research conducted during and after the COVID-19 lockdowns has revealed that mental health struggles, lack of digital access, and academic anxiety are widespread among Bangladeshi students, particularly those from rural or low-income families.

### 1. Mental Health and Academic Stress

A study by *Hossain et al. (2022)* revealed that over 60% of Bangladeshi university students experienced moderate to severe psychological distress during the pandemic, largely due to online classes, uncertainty about academic sessions (commonly referred to as "session jam phobia"), and increased pressure at home. These emotional burdens also affect school-aged children, who face **anxiety, low motivation, and burnout**, particularly in unsupervised learning environments.

### 2. Digital Divide and Technical Barriers

Many students lack reliable internet access or appropriate devices for online learning. UNICEF reports that approximately 63% of school-age children in Bangladesh do not have home internet access. This digital divide significantly restricts participation and engagement, leading to irregular attendance and increased dropout rates.

### 3. Economic and Family Pressures

Economic hardships during the pandemic forced many families to depend on children for income or household responsibilities, reducing time and focus available for learning. Such factors compound the personal challenges students face and disrupt consistent

**Survey on personal challenges:**

As part of the research project titled "Challenges Hindering Educational Development in Poraai.com", the survey aimed to explore the personal challenges faced by students on an individual level. While external factors like poverty and infrastructure often get more attention, it's equally important to understand the internal struggles that affect a child's ability to learn—such as mental health, motivation, trauma, and self-esteem. The survey was conducted among a group of students and young learners associated with Poraai.com through a series of multiple-choice and open-ended questions. The goal was to identify common patterns, emotional barriers, and support needs that are often overlooked but deeply influence educational outcomes.

### Outcomes:

#### **1. Mental Health & Emotional Well-being**

- Over 65% of respondents reported frequent feelings of anxiety, stress, or lack of motivation, with several children mentioning constant worry about family issues or the pressure of falling behind.
- One student shared, "I always feel like I'm not good enough, even when I try my best."
- Only 15% said they feel mentally strong and motivated on most days.

#### **2. Personal Hardships & Trauma**

- About 52% of children admitted to facing ongoing personal issues, including family instability, grief, or peer bullying.
- 20% specifically mentioned family problems, such as financial stress, parental conflict, or loss of a parent.
- Bullying was also highlighted as a common barrier, especially among girls and younger students.

#### **3. Academic Confidence & Motivation**

- When asked about confidence in their academic abilities: ○ 39% said they often doubt themselves
- 25% feel they are always behind in class
- Only 18% feel confident in their abilities

#### **4. Health, Nutrition & Energy**

- Around 60% of respondents admitted to irregular eating or sleeping patterns.
- Fatigue, skipped meals, and headaches were commonly reported.
- Around 60% of respondents admitted to irregular eating or sleeping patterns.
- A few mentioned, "I skip breakfast almost every day, so I can't concentrate during the first half of school."

#### **5. Attendance & Study Routine**

- Just 22% of students claimed to have consistent attendance and study habits.
- The rest cited reasons like illness, housework responsibilities, or lack of motivation.
- Many expressed guilt about being inconsistent but said they lack support or structure at home.

## **6. Learning Gaps & Falling Behind**

- Over 70% of children admitted they had fallen behind in at least one subject.
- The top reasons included missed classes (43%), and not understanding concepts (34%).
- Some students said they didn't have anyone to help them with difficult topics.

## **7. Support Needs**

When asked what support they needed most:

- 36% chose emotional support or encouragement
- 28% wanted more academic help, like tutoring
- 18% said teachers needed to be more understanding
- A few expressed frustration that teachers "only help the good students."

## **8. Suggestions for Schools**

in open-ended responses, children shared ideas like:

- "Please check on us when we're quiet. It doesn't mean we're fine."
- "Make separate sessions for weak students instead of shouting at them."
- "Give us more breaks when we feel overwhelmed."

# PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

This section covers how parents/guardians are largely responsible for the education and future of their children. Subsequently, children face issues with their studies. Whether it be being married off at a young age, which happens to a lot of females in villages, or having to labour in the fields to support their family financially which is the case for many boys also in less privileged areas. There are few main factors to these issues which have been discussed below.

### **1. Lack of parental education**

Parents' or guardians' own educational attainment strongly influences their children's academic success. When parents are illiterate or have low levels of education, they often struggle to understand the school system or provide the academic guidance their children need. As a result, studies show that children of parents with limited education tend to have lower school enrollment and higher dropout rates. Moreover, when parents lack awareness about the importance of higher education, they are less likely to encourage their children to continue beyond basic schooling.

In many rural or marginalized communities, this issue is even more pronounced. Parents who never attended school themselves may not see the value of formal

education at all, especially for girls. Instead, they often believe it is more beneficial to marry off their daughters early or have their sons contribute to the family income by working in the fields. Consequently, education takes a back seat to immediate economic or cultural priorities, making it even harder for children to break out of the cycle of limited opportunities.

## **2. Economic pressure (forcing children to work)**

Poverty often forces families to depend on their children to help earn money, which can seriously disrupt their education. When parents struggle to cover basic needs, sending children to work can seem like the only option. As a result, child labor often leads to lower school attendance, less time for studying, and poorer academic performance overall.

Even if children stay in school, they are often too tired from work to concentrate properly or may have to skip classes to help support the family. This challenge is even harder for families facing sudden economic hardship or single-parent households with limited income.

Unfortunately, when children are pushed into work instead of school, they miss out on opportunities that could help break the cycle of poverty for the next generation.

## **3. Lack of motivation or value placed on education**

When parents do not value or prioritize education, children often develop the same mindset. Families struggling to meet daily needs may see school as less important than immediate survival. In some communities, traditional gender roles and early marriage limit how much families invest in girls' education. When parents are indifferent or neglectful, students can lose motivation, skip classes, or even drop out altogether.

In areas with high illiteracy rates, many parents see no point in schooling if they believe it won't lead to steady work or better income. This lack of belief in education's benefits can seriously hold children back.

## **4. Inconsistent or no communication with school**

When parents stay involved with schools—by meeting teachers, checking on progress, and attending events—it often leads to better results for students. However, when there is little or no communication, parents can miss early signs of poor grades or behavior problems.

Sometimes, parents face barriers like not having enough time due to work, struggling with language differences, or feeling unwelcome at school. For migrant families especially, not speaking the main language of instruction can make it even harder to connect with teachers. When this link between home and school is weak, students often feel less supported and have fewer people looking out for their needs.

## **5. Cultural beliefs around education**

Cultural norms have a powerful influence on whether education is promoted or hindered within families and communities. For example, in many cultures, boys' education is still prioritized over that of girls, which often results in early marriage or

increased domestic responsibilities for girls instead of schooling. Moreover, certain communities may prefer religious or traditional forms of education over formal schooling, or they may distrust mainstream schools if they believe that these institutions could undermine their cultural or religious identity.

In more conservative settings, families sometimes withdraw girls from school during adolescence due to beliefs about propriety, safety, or readiness for marriage. On top of this, the wider family environment plays a crucial role in shaping children's future opportunities and educational outcomes. Therefore, addressing these barriers—through community awareness campaigns, poverty alleviation, parental education programs, and stronger, more inclusive partnerships between schools and families—can make a significant difference. By doing so, communities can help ensure that more children stay in school, complete their education, and build brighter futures for themselves and their families.

#### **Related papers:**

<https://journals.uclpress.co.uk/lre/article/id/2423/>

Explains how parents' / guardian's education affects their children's academic success, emphasizing on how more educated parents place more value on their children's education and are more supporting towards it,

[https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/Edmonds\\_Theoharides\\_HBK\\_final\\_post.pdf](https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/Edmonds_Theoharides_HBK_final_post.pdf)

Research on how due to poverty, less fortunate families rely on children in their families for labour and earning enough money for necessities, and the correlation between their children's work time and academic performance. Furthermore, explores what choices parents make when faced with this dilemma.

[https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Child\\_marriage\\_paper-in-South-Asia.2013.pdf](https://www.icrw.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Child_marriage_paper-in-South-Asia.2013.pdf)

Research centered around how parents in villages marry off their daughter at an early age, limiting their educational advancements. Furthermore, it expands into some cultural norms in those communities which also contribute to the hindering of education.

#### **Surveys on parents & guardians:**

Below is a summary of surveys and interviews conducted to find what struggles students face in furthering their educational development in regards to their family life.

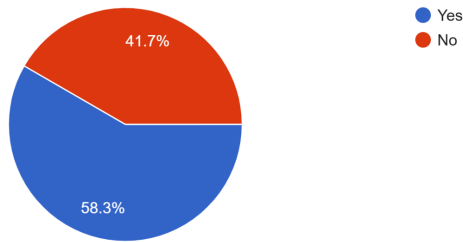
##### Survey 1

The majority of the participants of the first survey are between the age bracket of 17-18, a quarter of whom are female. Additionally, their area of residence spans across many different regions within Dhaka city, including: Gulshan, Banani, Bashundhara, Badda, Mirpur. These are students mostly from Scholastica.

As per their family life, about 60% of the participants live together with their entire family as shown below:

Do all the members of your family live together?

12 responses

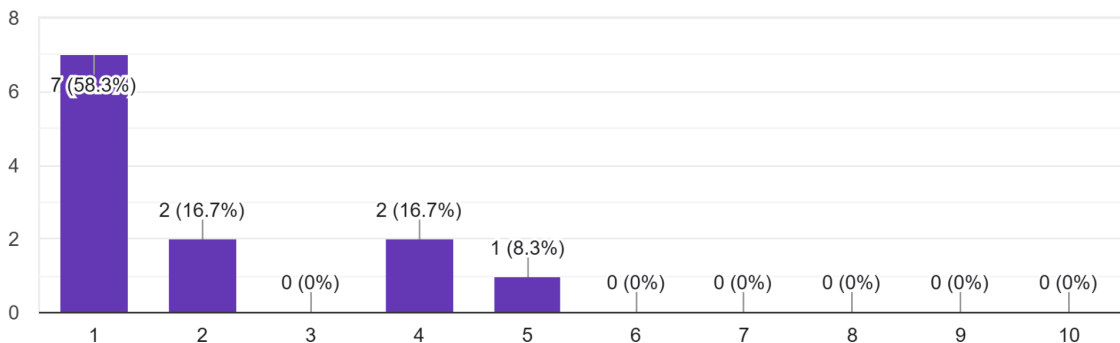


For all of the applicants, their fathers mostly take responsibility for their family, if not both their parents. All-the-while, none of the surveyees felt any pressure from their parents to earn income while in school nor to marry (in cases where the student is female).

However, there are cases where women are sometimes taken away from education to take care of family and other family issues, but they are few and far between in these areas. This is reflected by the degree of how strongly one feels that parents want their daughters to be married off early as shown in the graph below:

How strongly do you feel that families or society want girls to stop studying and get married in your area?

12 responses



The freedom of these respondents have also been questioned, as oftentimes parents in Bangladesh can be enforcing. However the survey shows the majority are relatively free to make their own choices, choosing a 7 on a 1-10 scale, with 10 being complete freedom and 1 being strictly prohibited to make their own choices. On the contrary, almost all feel that their voice is not heard in the family when it comes to decisions being made which might affect everyone involved.

These ideas are reinforced in the interviews where the interviewees gave answers similar to the trends found in the survey. More so by Muntasir Mubik Sauvik, from Poraai.com, who said, "Sometimes it was very hard to make yourself heard, and you had to fight your way through". Showing how more-than-not guardians had more of a say in their lives than

them. Although he did later state he did not have to earn income while involved in his education.

At the end of the survey, the respondents were finally asked about what other issues they might face with their family when it comes to their studies. Some noted how they have siblings to take care of when their parents or guardian is not available.

Along with that, the majority of participants stated how there was a large communication gap between them and their parents which leads to them not being able to emotionally confide in them or share their ideas with parents, leading to a negative effect on their studies. This is demonstrated by the response from one of the surveyees stating,

“most of the opinions or feelings represented by me are invalidated due to my age or lack of "experience". This is one of the factors that causes me to have somewhat of a poor state in regard to mental health, causing my performance in education to fluctuate extremely frequently”.

This response only regurgitates the feelings of lack of independence students feel. Another recurring theme seems to be how students are forced into the ideals and path of education their parents want them to pursue instead of their own.

In conclusion, female students are a lot less likely to be married off in urban areas in this new age, free to pursue their education. Moreover, students are less pressured to earn income while getting their education, however, this can be chalked up to the fact that the respondents come from better-off families in more developed areas.

On the other hand, students still feel a disconnect between their parents, particularly on ideals, their future and career path along with the inability to share their feelings without repercussions. All of which may lead to hindering their educational performance.

### Survey 2

This survey was answered by students of Poraai's PC1 classroom with students from grades 7-9. They come from more rural, less developed areas in the country, living with small communities and having more traditional cultural norms.

Half of these students live with both parents while the other half report to only live with their mother, while also having relatives who have been deceased. This 50-50 split can also be seen when asked if family issues hinder their education, where one half said no while the other half replied with sometimes. Two-fifths of the participants admit to taking care of their brother/sister or any other relatives who have disabilities or have fallen ill, which might be a contributing factor in the students' decreasing academic performance.

The responders noted how they did not face much pressure from their family to earn income while pursuing their education. Furthermore, these students demonstrated how they are eager to continue their educational journey. Almost all students answered that they want to continue with their education and finish their education later on in life if they will be able to. However, some students did mention the fact that they face financial struggles to stay in school.

On the other hand, ten out of the fifteen participants said how they often feel anxious and stressed over long periods of time. Along with that, while eleven of them have people to talk to when they are feeling low, a minority do not have any people in their life with whom they can freely talk to about their issues.

To summarise, Students from PC1 face a plethora of challenges when it comes to continuing their studies even though they are very eager to. This sometimes includes financial issues, taking care of relatives or both. However, the main issues the students face is with their mental health, regularly being stressed and anxious, sometimes not even having anyone to help them out.

## **SOCIETAL CHALLENGES**

### **1. Economic Hardship**

100% of the dropout students and parents cited financial hardship as a key reason for leaving school. Many children had to work to support their families. Early signs include frequent absences, tiredness, and inability to afford books or uniforms.

### **2. Environmental Displacement**

80% of the children reported that natural disasters like cyclones and floods directly disrupted their education. These events damaged homes and schools or forced families to relocate. Warning signs include long absences after disasters and sudden displacement.

### **3. Gender and Cultural Norms**

60% of dropout students mentioned early marriage or domestic responsibilities as key reasons, especially affecting girls. Cultural beliefs often devalue girls' education. Watch for declining attendance in girls and talk of marriage or household duties.

### **4. Dissatisfaction with School Environment**

60% of students described their school experience as dissatisfactory, citing poor quality of teaching and lack of engagement. Only 40% found their education positive. Early signs include boredom, lack of participation, or frustration with schoolwork.

### **5. Lack of School Supplies and Support**

All 10 interviewed dropout children reported lacking basic resources like books, uniforms, or school bags. This scarcity made them feel excluded. Warning signs include borrowing supplies, incomplete assignments, and visible embarrassment.

### **6. Unmet Psychosocial Needs**

100% of the teachers confirmed there were no school-based mental health services available. Many children face trauma from poverty or disasters. Signs include emotional withdrawal, anxiety, or behavior changes—especially after disruptive events.

## **7. Lack of Teacher Support or Infrastructure**

83.3% of teachers lacked training in mental health support, and many reported inadequate salaries, housing, or facilities. Students in such environments often disengage. Warning signs include complaints about classroom conditions or lack of interest in learning.

## **8. Parental Disengagement**

All 12 parents interviewed prioritized income generation over education and saw school as a long-term cost. Many sent their children to work. Signs include no parental follow-up on absences, little communication with teachers, or early involvement in labor.

<https://journal.wiseedu.co.id/index.php/sakaguru/article/view/184/163v>

### **Food and Nutrition affecting education:**

Over 60 percent of all primary school students in Bangladesh suffer from malnutrition.

Quote: **"Malnourished children not only have increased morbidity and mortality but also are more likely to suffer from mental retardation, poor school performance and reduced intellectual achievement."**

### **Core problems limiting education in Bangladesh's primary schools**

Primary schools in Bangladesh face major obstacles that hinder their ability to ensure quality education. These challenges fall into four broad categories:

#### **1. Guardian Challenges**

- Low parental involvement and cooperation.
- Conflicting demands and misinformation that disrupt school operations.
- Unrealistic expectations for individual attention from head teachers.

#### **2. Community Interference**

- Financial extortion and political pressure on school management.
- Misuse of school property and resources.
- Harmful comparisons with other schools that ignore context.

#### **3. Internal School Issues**

- Teacher conflicts and group divisions.
- Generational tension between staff and head teachers.

- Gossip and disputes over training opportunities.

#### **4. Systemic Limitations**

- Lack of resources and infrastructure.
- Emotional burnout among head teachers.
- Weak governance and policy enforcement.

### **Core problems limiting education in Bangladesh’s high schools**

#### **1. Exclusion from Coaching and Tutoring**

- Coaching is essential but expensive: High-stakes exams like SSC and HSC have made private coaching almost mandatory to succeed.
- Underprivileged students can’t afford it: Many families—especially rural or low-income ones—simply don’t have the money. In some schools, less than 20% of students receive coaching, only those from better-off families.
- Missed opportunities: Without tutoring, these students fall behind academically, limiting their chances of getting into elite colleges or securing scholarships.

*“Most of the students are from low socio-economic families, so they actually can’t afford it.” — Headteacher, Salimpur Girls School*

#### **2. Poor-Quality of Public Schooling**

- Underfunded system: Bangladesh spends only 1.3–2.3% of its GDP on education, leading to overcrowded classrooms, outdated materials, and unmotivated teachers.
- Teachers neglect classroom teaching in favor of paid coaching, especially in government schools. Underprivileged students, who rely solely on classroom instruction, suffer the most.
- These students are left with a “shell” of schooling, without the enrichment or focused help wealthier students receive through private means.

#### **3. Psychological Pressure Without Support**

- Test pressure is universal, but the ability to cope is not. Wealthier students can reduce anxiety with extra tutoring or parental support; poorer students must face it alone.
- Many cram without understanding, memorize to survive, and forget everything afterward—a cycle that kills motivation and reinforces failure.
- In extreme cases, the mental toll leads to severe emotional distress or even suicide, with no access to mental health support.

*“Last week one of her best friends committed suicide... This is a regular case for teenage students.” — Parent interview*

#### **4. Locked Out of Opportunity**

- GPA 5 is a gatekeeper: Admission to top colleges and universities depends on perfect or near-perfect scores, which are hard to achieve without private help.
- Underprivileged students are systematically filtered out of higher education pipelines, regardless of talent or motivation.
- The education system thus reinforces existing class divides—the privileged rise, the poor are left behind.

## 5. Social Discrimination and Stigma

- Even within schools, students without access to coaching may face discrimination or differential treatment by teachers.
- Parents of underprivileged students are often pressured or blamed for not sending their children to coaching, even though they can't afford it.
- This creates a cycle of shame and exclusion, where poverty becomes both a cause and a visible marker of educational failure.

### Surveys on societal issues

1. All of the responders have felt judged for not being able to perform as per expectations at some point in their lives.
2. 63% of them think that students rarely face discrimination in their community.
3. Half of the responders have felt left out due to their family background/material possessions (phones, clothes, etc.).
4. 63% of them think that their communities equally value the education of both boys and girls.
5. 88% of them have someone who inspires them to study harder.
6. All of them follow study/career influencers on social media
7. 63% of their parents regularly encourage them to aim higher while 25% of them do so rarely.
8. 63% of them feel safe in their commutes to school and coachings
9. 50% of them however, find roads uncomfortable/unsafe
10. Traffic has made it harder for all of them to attend school and coachings
11. 63% of them think their parent's financial situation does not affect how they are treated in school.
12. 63% of them think students from English Medium/more expensive schools have greater opportunities.
13. 88% of them have a quiet place to study at home.
14. 63% of them think that coaching is needed to keep up with their studies
15. All of them know someone close to them who has had to drop out of school or drastically change their study plans due to financial/family pressure
16. 5/8 of the responders blame themselves and their lack of self-discipline as their biggest hurdles in their education development. 2 of them blame the high expectations placed upon them and 1 other blames their conflicting schedule.
17. 6 of them would like to change the education system, making it less focused on rote memorization and more on practical skills and research and giving students the freedom to learn what they want to.

## SCHOOL, IT'S ENVIRONMENT & TEACHERS

This section explores the school-level challenges that hinder educational development for students enrolled in platforms like Poraai. While initiatives like Poraai aim to bridge educational gaps for students in rural areas, their impact is often limited by the realities of the physical schools these students attend. Below are key issues within school environments and teaching practices that significantly affect these students' ability to learn, participate, and thrive.

### School & Infrastructure

#### **1. Physical infrastructure**

Many rural schools in Bangladesh continue to suffer from inadequate physical infrastructure. Classrooms are overcrowded, with a very high student-teacher ratio. Students often need to sit on the floor or squeeze into overcrowded benches, which hampers both comfort and concentration during lessons.

Electricity is either unstable or nonexistent in several rural schools, meaning fans and lights cannot be consistently used. These missing essentials not only lower school attendance but also degrade the learning experience for those who do attend.

#### **2. Technological infrastructure**

Perhaps most critical for students relying on digital support from programs like Poraai is the lack of technological infrastructure in rural schools. Very few schools have internet access, and fewer still have functioning computers, projectors, or audio equipment. Even when schools do have access to computers and other equipment, they seem to be faulty or of low quality.

Network interruption has been reported as a significant impediment to learning in online classes. A bad internet connection can cause classes to be disrupted and/or delayed.

### School Environment

#### **3. Peer Interaction**

The social dynamics in rural schools can have a significant impact on the well-being and learning experience of the students. Many students reported having faced exclusion and bullying from their peers. Behavior like teasing, bullying, and irritation, such as calling unusual names, and laughing at their peers when anyone failed to answer the teacher's question, made them more hyperactive and as a result, students experienced inattentiveness, restlessness.

#### **4. Classroom culture**

Findings revealed that roll number creates a class difference among the students, where academically poor students perceive that they were not accepted by others. No one would show a supportive attitude toward them. In consequence, they showed withdrawn behavior as they suffer from an inferiority complex. This leads to being less attentive in class and even skipping school.

## Teachers

### **5. Teacher training and qualifications**

A major barrier to educational development in rural schools is the lack of properly trained teachers. 77% of teachers had zero formal training in English teaching, and 66% had below-average subject knowledge. About 60% of teachers taught English classes in Bangla, with most relying solely on lecture-based methods without lesson plans or teaching aids. Critical language skills like listening and speaking were neglected. Many teachers don't attempt to engage students actively or adapt to different learning needs. It was found that 7% teachers have good in-depth knowledge of subject matter, 20% have average in-depth knowledge, and 66% are below average.

### **6. Teaching practices**

The teaching methods of teachers in rural areas were found to be outdated, rigid, and demotivating. Most of the teachers conduct classes with lecture methods where students' participation is absent. Long lectures with no student interaction make them sleepy and inattentive towards the lesson. Teaching aids, lesson plans, and interactive strategies were rarely used.

### **7. Teacher-Student relationship**

Students expressed a lack of supportive behavior from the teacher, such as discouraged questioning, and less motivation when facing trouble with a lesson. Some teachers are often seen expressing resentment in the classroom. Sometimes they refuse to answer students' questions. Most students agree that teachers do not support every student equally. Such biases are responsible for students' adverse attitudes toward their teachers. Such unsupportive behavior makes a student not only inferior but also aggressive. Inconsistent teacher-student ratios and big class sizes play major barriers for teachers to manage classes efficiently.

Researched data-

[https://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10361/15716/19263009\\_ENH.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://dspace.bracu.ac.bd/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10361/15716/19263009_ENH.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<https://www.banglajol.info/index.php/TWJER/article/view/67557/46308>

### **Surveys and Interviews on school, its environment and teachers:**

This section provides a summary of a series of interviews and surveys conducted on students and teachers of rural and urban backgrounds. 8 students from PC2 and 12 students from an English medium background in Dhaka were asked about their opinion and experiences on various topics about their school, teachers, and the school environment. There seems to be a large disparity in answers between PC2 and English medium students. When asked if they ever felt scared or nervous to ask the teacher a question, 63% of PC2 students answered yes, whereas only students in Dhaka felt the same. However, 75% of PC2 students agreed that teachers help them recover if they fall behind on their studies, whilst 66% of students in Dhaka answered the same.

Both groups agreed unilaterally that they have access to clean toilets, drinking water, and adequate seating in classrooms. On the other hand, 62% of PC2 students and 59% of students in Dhaka agree that their peers in school do not speak with each other with respect. Moreover, 50% of PC2 students said they have experienced discriminatory behaviour due to being a part of Poraai.

PC2 students have shared concerns over teachers speaking too fast, which makes it hard to concentrate and listen to lectures. Furthermore, the main problem hindering concentration in the classroom for both groups seems to be their peers. A large majority of the students mentioned that loud chatting, laughing, and taunting hamper their ability to focus and finish their task.

A PC2 student stated that teachers scolding students for asking questions is a common and unfortunate practice that demotivates the student and decreases concentration and participation in the classroom. This appears to be a frequent and dreadful issue, which has resulted in the majority of students being afraid to ask questions.

### **GENDER BASED CHALLENGES**

Bangladesh has one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world. Around two-thirds of women aged 20 to 24 marry before the age of 18, despite the minimum legal age being 18 for females.

According to a 2011 UNICEF report, one-third of women aged 20 to 24 in Bangladesh were married by the age of 15, and approximately two-thirds were married by the age of 18.

According to this study, a higher proportion of women (71%) in rural areas are married before 18, compared to 54% of women in urban areas. The study also shows a strong association between child marriage and education and economic status, with higher rates of child marriage among women with low or no education and for those from families living in poverty.

### Causes :

1. Poverty was the factor most commonly cited by girls and family members as driving decisions to have girls marry when they were still children.
2. Natural disasters in Bangladesh, and the lack of an adequate government safety net for families affected by them, compound the poverty that drives child marriage.
3. There is a strong connection between access to education and child marriage in Bangladesh. Many of the girls interviewed by Human Rights Watch explained that they were married as soon as their families could no longer afford to educate them.
4. In communities where child marriage is the norm, many girls and parents cited social pressure as a key factor driving child marriage.

### The following has been done by the Bangladeshi government to prevent it :

1. Under the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929), the legal age of marriage in Bangladesh is 18 years for a female and 21 years for a male. Penalties for child marriage according to the Act are imprisonment for one month or a fine of up to 1,000 taka (€9.4) or both. Any adult or guardian arranging and permitting child marriage can be convicted under the law. Girls cannot be sentenced to imprisonment.
2. Enhancing the agency and Voice of Adolescent Girls Government-owned adolescent clubs are key venues through which girls are being reached. Club members, who include both adolescent girls and boys, are provided with leadership and life skills, along with peer education training focusing on the prevention of child marriage and other issues. Research shows that empowering girls through clubs for adolescents has contributed to their knowledge about their rights and discriminatory social norms. It has also enabled them to raise their voices about the choices available to them and to engage in dialogue with peers, parents and community influencers.
3. Investing in and supporting adolescent girls through community engagement and positive behaviour. Families, communities and local and religious leaders are being mobilized through community dialogues to act as allies to end child marriage. Positive gender norms and key behavioural issues are also being introduced through communication at the household level, social mobilization among local/ward-level community groups, and conversations with parents, among others. In addition, messages about the negative consequences of child marriage and actions to stop the practice are being disseminated through multimedia and social media, reaching more than 150 million people.
4. Increasing resources and opportunities for adolescent girls. A key thrust of the program is building the capacity of systems to deliver integrated, coordinated and quality programmes and services for adolescent girls. The main focus is on education, health and WASH. Education interventions seek to improve access and develop gender-equitable learning and skills. Many of these interventions target barriers faced by both girls and boys but have a greater impact on girls' access to education and learning. An abilities-based accelerated learning approach is being used to provide non-formal primary education to out-of-school girls who are 8 to 14

years old. The most marginalized out-of-school adolescents receive informal on-the-job apprenticeship training to which theoretical and life skills training have been added. Improving health and well-being through gender- and age-responsive adolescent health services is another key intervention, focusing on gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, nutrition and mental health.

### Safety Concerns regarding education

#### **Violence and Bullying**

Bullying, whether physical, verbal, or cyber, can lead to long-term psychological trauma and even tragic outcomes. The impact of bullying extends beyond the immediate victims, affecting the overall school climate and potentially leading to higher dropout rates and reduced academic performance.

To combat these issues, institutions must implement comprehensive anti-bullying policies, ensuring that they are not only in place but also actively enforced. Regular training sessions for staff and students on recognising and addressing bullying behaviours are crucial. Additionally, creating an environment that fosters open communication can empower students to report incidents without fear of retribution.

#### **Mental Health**

Mental health is a pressing concern in academic institutions as students deal with pressures from academic performance, social dynamics, and personal issues. Factors like exam stress, social media influence, and transitioning to adulthood can worsen existing mental health conditions or create new ones. Ignoring these issues can lead to severe consequences, including self-harm and suicide, which are increasingly affecting young people.

Institutions should prioritize accessible mental health resources, such as counseling and wellness programs. Staff training to recognize mental distress and fostering a supportive atmosphere can encourage students to seek help. Workshops on stress management and resilience building are also beneficial.

#### **Emergency Situations and Natural Disasters**

Educational institutions must prepare for emergencies such as fires, medical crises, and natural disasters. Comprehensive planning and training are vital for safety. Regularly updating emergency response plans and conducting drills help familiarize students and staff with necessary procedures.

Training should encompass not only evacuation protocols but also specific roles and responsibilities during emergencies. Involving local emergency services in training exercises can offer valuable insights and help build relationships that may be essential during actual incidents. Furthermore, equipping facilities with necessary safety measures—such as fire alarms, emergency exits, and first aid kits—greatly enhances preparedness and response capabilities.

#### **Inadequate physical infrastructure**

The condition of physical infrastructure significantly influences the safety of educational environments. Deteriorating buildings, inadequately maintained facilities, and insufficient safety equipment can lead to accidents and injuries. Structural deficiencies, including unstable staircases and faulty electrical systems, present considerable risks to both students and staff.

Regular inspections and maintenance programmes are crucial in identifying and addressing potential hazards. Institutions should invest in infrastructure upgrades to ensure compliance with safety standards. Additionally, creating a reporting system that encourages students and staff to report safety concerns can help institutions proactively address issues before they escalate into more significant problems.

### **Transportation risks :**

Transporting students to and from school or on field trips involves risks that institutions must manage. Accidents with school buses or private vehicles can lead to serious injuries or fatalities. Ensuring student safety during transport requires following strict safety regulations and protocols.

Institutions should conduct thorough background checks for drivers and provide safety training. It's essential to implement clear protocols for field trips, including risk assessments and contingency plans. Regular vehicle maintenance and equipping buses with safety features like seat belts and emergency exits are also crucial.

### Period poverty and menstrual hygiene issues

Period poverty, characterised by inadequate access to menstrual products, hygiene facilities, waste management, education, and associated services, is a pervasive public health challenge among women and girls in Bangladesh. According to a study conducted in 2008 in the slums of Dhaka, about 95% of women and 90% of adolescent girls reused rags during menstruation without adequate cleaning, which resulted in various health issues. In a more recent public health intervention among juvenile girls in Bangladesh, it was observed that 70% of girls continued to adopt suboptimal menstrual management practices such as the reuse of clothes.

### Problems associated with period poverty :

Period poverty is poised to continue disproportionately impacting socio-economically vulnerable women and girls, further deepening existing societal disparities. In the coming years, we can expect to see ongoing challenges for this community, including potentially lower retention rates for girls in schools, persistent disparities in women's employment and empowerment, and missed opportunities that could hinder progress toward gender equity in healthcare and overall well-being. As awareness grows, it will be crucial to address these issues to create a more equitable future.

The intersectionality of factors such as limited education, economic opportunities, decision-making autonomy, and entrenched gender inequalities within Bangladesh further

compound the challenges faced by these vulnerable groups in safeguarding their sexual and reproductive health (SRH) rights. Thus, addressing period poverty requires targeted interventions that not only provide access to menstrual hygiene products and education but also tackle broader socio-economic and gender inequities to ensure the dignity, health, and empowerment of all women and girls, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds. Furthermore, women and girls encounter obstacles in accessing SRH facilities or making informed health decisions, often due to a lack of autonomy rooted in oppressive socio-cultural norms and practices.

Furthermore, challenges such as poor access to sanitation, water, private spaces, and affordability of menstrual hygiene products, along with limited education on reproductive and sexual health, and social stigma related to menstruation are widespread among women and girls of all ages in Bangladesh. Insufficient water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities not only pose critical health risks but also make it challenging for women and girls to manage menstruation effectively. The prevailing silence surrounding dialogue on menstruation fosters myths, misinformation, and stigma, perpetuating a harmful cycle of period poverty. The lack of proper facilities, coupled with shame and fear of stigma exacerbates the problem of rampant absenteeism during menstruation due to concerns about stained clothes and dysmenorrhea. Therefore, while efforts to improve menstrual hygiene continue, there is a critical need to focus on promoting the use of biodegradable menstrual products alongside establishing proper disposal systems.

#### Solutions of period poverty :

1. Student health centers, wellness offices, and other healthcare access points should provide menstrual products to students at a free or reduced cost (as they do with other healthcare products) and make their student body aware of this practice.
2. Residence buildings could carry menstrual products on hand for residents in need.
3. Medical and health professions trainees need to be taught how to identify and discuss period poverty with their patients in a culturally competent manner, as well as be equipped to intervene and provide patients with the necessary products. This could lead to opportunities to discuss menstrual health more adeptly with patients, with improved attention to cycle characteristics and needs while normalizing menstrual conversations and combating stigma simultaneously.
4. Clinicians and public health practitioners should be made aware of this consequential public health concern, as specific public health education on the topic of menstruation in any regard is currently lacking.
5. Donate menstrual products to local libraries, food pantries, homeless shelters, schools, and churches and ensure physicians' offices and clinics have products on hand. When donating, consider a variety of product types, sizes, and absorbency levels to be as inclusive of the diversity of menstruators as possible. While donation is absolutely necessary, even more important is making the public aware of donation sites and places to receive donations to ensure that all menstruators have products when they need them.

#### Cultural pressure on boys/girls differently :

Cultural norms are poised to shape the roles and responsibilities of girls in significant ways, which will likely influence their access to education in the coming years. It's anticipated that, in many communities, expectations will still steer girls and boys towards prioritizing domestic chores or early marriage rather than pursuing schooling. These entrenched beliefs are expected to continue creating barriers to education, potentially exacerbating gender discrimination. As these trends persist, it's likely that the youth will remain unprepared for valuable opportunities that could enhance their lives and futures.

#### Cultural pressure on girls :

Girls in many communities face significant obstacles to receiving an education, often due to deeply rooted cultural beliefs and practices. These problems in girl education hinder their ability to grow, learn, and achieve their full potential. Some examples are :

1. Perception of limited benefits: Families, especially in rural areas, often see little value in educating girls.
2. Early marriage and household responsibilities: These are prioritized over girls' education in many communities.
3. Restricted mobility: Girls face limited freedom to travel, affecting their school access.
4. Stigma around co-educational schools: Negative attitudes toward mixed-gender schools further discourage girls from attending.

#### Cultural pressure on boys :

In recent years, cultural pressures on boys have intensified significantly, particularly in rural areas grappling with poverty and deprivation. In these communities, boys are often expected to conform to traditional roles that prioritize family welfare above all else. This expectation places an immense burden on them, compelling them to abandon their right to pursue an education and instead take on the daunting responsibility of caring for their families and younger siblings. They are seen as the pillars of support, tasked with navigating the challenges of daily life while sacrificing their own aspirations and dreams for the sake of familial obligation.

#### **Survey result on gender based challenges :**

In the near future, schools are poised to become vibrant spaces where children can fully exercise their right to education, amplify their voices, and embrace remarkable leadership opportunities. However, the privilege of accessing this transformative experience remains elusive for many. As highlighted by the UNESCO Human Rights Association, which was established in 2004, the vision is clear: every child, regardless of race, religion, gender, or colour, deserves the right to education. Yet, as we look ahead, there are still 129 million children who will need support and innovative solutions to guide them back into classrooms globally.

It is accurate to state that Bangladesh comprises a significant portion of the 129 million underprivileged children globally. Based on a recent survey I conducted, it was evident that

girls are disproportionately affected by this systemic discrimination. This bias is not attributable to a single cause but is the consequence of various forms of inequality, which range from early marriage to societal expectations.

Research indicates that 50% of girls faced educational deprivation during their early years due to the responsibilities of caring for younger siblings while their parents struggled to make a living. Some girls managed to attend school until the 8th grade, but others never experienced the educational opportunities that schools provide. Notably, two respondents had to leave school before reaching the 5th grade because they were compelled to work as domestic helpers in the capital. Furthermore, only one female respondent had the opportunity to continue her education, but she was limited to completing just the 10th grade. Unfortunately, she was unable to pursue higher education, as the financial resources allocated for education were directed toward her brothers instead.

In a surprising revelation, three of the respondents reported having been married by the tender age of 12. The circumstances surrounding these early marriages were deeply concerning and raised significant ethical questions—many cited that their parents were faced with the challenge of caring for multiple children and saw marriage as a solution to ease their burden. Despite the legal minimum age for marriage being set at 18 for females, approximately two-thirds of women aged 20 to 24 reported having entered into marriage before reaching 18 years old. This trend raised alarm about the prevalent practice of child marriage in certain regions of Bangladesh.

The primary reason driving these decisions, as noted by both the young girls and their family members, was poverty. Families often feel compelled to marry off their daughters at a young age due to financial constraints and the belief that marriage may provide stability or relief from their economic hardships. This troubling reality highlights the urgent need for societal change and intervention to address the factors that contribute to child marriage and to safeguard the rights of young girls.

Several respondents expressed the belief that pursuing secondary education was unnecessary for them, as their aspirations and life goals diverged significantly from traditional educational paths. Many of them held the mindset that they would be content working as labourers in factories, where formal education is seldom a requirement. They felt that a basic level of education, such as what is provided by primary schooling, would be adequate for their future employment and practical needs.

This catastrophe affects not just females; it has also profoundly impacted males. Many of my male respondents have faced significant obstacles that interrupted their education at a young age. For instance, one individual had to abandon his studies to care for his family after the tragic loss of his father. His story highlights the broader implications of this crisis, showing that it touches lives in countless ways, regardless of gender.

Only two of the respondents received the necessary support and determination to pursue university education. They completed their master's degrees from prestigious institutions in Bangladesh. Now, they are excelling as top performers in both government and private sectors.

## **PROBLEM DESCRIPTION :**

In Bangladesh, countless children from underprivileged communities continue to be left behind in the education system due to a combination of social, institutional, familial, personal, and gender-based challenges. Initiatives like *Poraai.com* have stepped in to provide online classes and learning resources to disadvantaged students across the country, these efforts alone cannot fully overcome the deep-rooted barriers many children face on a daily basis. Children from Poraai struggle with a lack of community support, discrimination, and social stigma that affect their sense of belonging and motivation to stay in school. Parental challenges such as low literacy, economic hardship, and limited understanding of the importance of education further add to the problem. On a personal level, students deal with mental health issues, poor nutrition, irregular attendance, and low self-confidence, all of which severely impact their academic progress. Additionally, gender-specific obstacles, especially for girls, including early marriage, safety concerns, menstrual health barriers, and restrictive gender norms, continue to widen the gap in educational outcomes. This research aims to identify and understand the full range of challenges affecting Poraai's access to quality education across societal, institutional, familial, individual, and gender-based dimensions. By investigating these areas in depth, the project seeks to offer evidence-based insights that could inform more inclusive, equitable, and effective educational interventions for the community.

## **PROBLEM STATEMENT:**

A problem statement is a concise description of the issue or challenge a research project aims to address. Writing a problem statement helps define the focus of the research, explain why the issue is significant, and provides a clear direction for finding solutions. The problem statement for this report is:

“Research Project to Identify Challenges Hindering Educational Development in Poraai.”

## **OBJECTIVES:**

Before starting my internship, I set several clear and purposeful objectives that I hoped to achieve throughout the duration of the experience. As a student transitioning from an academic environment to a professional setting, I recognised the importance of using this opportunity not only to gain practical experience but also to explore the broader context of my future career Path.

Another significant objective was to develop and strengthen my professional skill set. This included both technical skills specific to my field and essential soft skills such as communication, time management, teamwork, and adaptability. I was particularly interested in learning how to operate within a structured work environment, how to manage responsibilities under deadlines, and how to interact effectively with colleagues and supervisors.

The main objective of my internship was to gain practical, hands-on experience in a professional environment and to apply the theoretical knowledge I had acquired during my academic studies. I aimed to understand how real-world tasks and challenges are handled within an organisation, and to improve my technical and soft skills in the process.

During my 5-week internship, I focused on understanding the limitations of distance education in rural regions and the difficulties encountered by students in those areas.

Here is a list of things I did to achieve my goals effectively :

1. Spoke with students from Chittagong and Netrokona about their experiences and well-being during these online classes. It was heartening to hear their thoughts on online classes and how they are coping with the transition. Their feelings and perspectives truly matter, and I appreciate the chance to listen to their stories.
2. Posed some important and reflective questions to the students regarding sensitive subjects such as bullying and mental health to further emphasise their well-being.
3. Created thoughtful questionnaires and vibrant posters featuring questions that encourage reflection on how students are feeling about their online classes, which were aimed at creating a safe space for sharing experiences and emotions.
4. Conducted research on the valuable resources available at Poraai that effectively address common challenges faced by all.

5. Organised personal Zoom calls for female students to discuss menstrual issues and hygiene concerns in a supportive and open environment.

## IDEATION

### Resource Identification :

#### 1. Human resources :

- Instructors and mentors can play a crucial role
- Local teachers and educators – Increasing the number of teachers, especially female teachers at Poraai, who serve as role models for girls.
- Parents and guardians – Critical influencers of their children whose awareness and support is necessary.
- Volunteers and peer educators at Poraai – Can provide tutoring or run awareness campaigns for the importance of girl education.
- Trainers to instruct new teachers on proper conduct and behaviour.
- Monthly or annual appraisals of teaching performance by trainers.
- Trainers to instruct teachers on class management.
- Assigned student councillors to support any peers that face bullying.
- Trainers to guide teachers on how to identify and stop bullying.

#### 2. Material Resources

Tangible items needed to enable and support girls' access to education.

- School buildings and classrooms – Safe and accessible structures that will encourage the students to join classes.
- Sanitary facilities – Especially for menstrual hygiene, which impacts attendance of female students.
- Learning materials – Books, stationery, digital devices, etc should be present in the learning room so that students are enthusiastic and fascinated by digital education.
- Transportation – Bicycles or buses for girls living in remote areas can be provided so that they feel safe to come to school alone without parental support.
- School uniforms and supplies – Reduces financial burden on families and let families not think about the additional costs of going to educational institutions.
- Financial backing from other corporations or investors for funding projects organized by Poraai
- Financial aid packages with support from Poraai, government or other organisations for students of Poraai
- Medical professionals as volunteers
- Wireless microphone system that can be passed around students and teachers.
- New blackboard and projector

- New ID system not based on grades.
- Structured workshop and posters to promote awareness
- Complaint box for students to anonymously report bullying

### 3. Informational Resources

- Data, awareness, and propaganda tools that inform decision-making and mobilization.
- Research and data – Statistics on dropout rates, access gaps, etc should be sent to the parents in newspapers to raise more awareness.
- Awareness campaigns – Poraai can have radio, posters, social media and propagandas to shift the mindsets of parents.
- Training and capacity building – For teachers, parents, and community workers that the student will be fascinated to see.
- Case studies and success stories of previous Poraai students – Inspire replication and policy change.
- Conduction of an orientation which focuses on education parents / guardians on the importance of education and communication
- Printing pamphlets and making other physical media including information regarding mental health, physical health and communication in the family
- Posters to spread awareness about discipline

### 4. Providing supplies :

Providing supplies will attract students to get to learn their share of knowledge at minimum cost.

- Books : Providing colourful and attractive course books for younger grade students in Poraai will motivate them to join classes.
- Food : Supplying food for the students at their breaks will encourage more students to come to the Poraai classroom and as a result they will become a part of the classroom.

### **Solutions of the Poraai interns:**

1. Introduce mental health counselors on a monthly basis.
2. Make a coaching centre in the Poraai classrooms where the students can take the classes and earn some money.
3. Offering complimentary breakfast items such as bread, butter, and eggs to students each morning will motivate more learners to participate in the Poraai classroom. Students who attend the class should be provided with breakfast only if they commit to pursuing their education with Poraai in the long term.
4. We ought to request prominent newspapers such as Prothom Alo and Ittefaq to feature Poraai publicity on their front pages, ensuring that a larger audience across Bangladesh becomes aware of Poraai and its complimentary educational offerings.
5. Inviting distinguished alumni, who have greatly benefited from Poraai at some stage in their lives, to speak in the Poraai classroom and deliver compelling speeches will encourage parents to enrol their children at Poraai.
6. Creating separate classrooms for male and female students is likely to inspire more girls from rural areas to join Poraai in the future. This approach could foster an environment that promotes their education and participation, leading to greater enrollment and engagement for girls.

Student-led group study/tutoring and counseling sessions in after-school hours. It is a physical place students can come to in their free time for studying. Poraai students can attend after hours sessions for the following:

- Group study sessions amongst peers.
- Private or group tutoring for junior students by their seniors.
- Student councillor support
- Access to the internet
- Student led after school activities

How Poraai Hub can be utilized:

### **1. Student council program**

Student councilors can be elected or selected by teachers from senior students. Councilors will work as a medium to communicate the issues and problems the students are facing to the teachers. Furthermore, councilors can work as class monitors in Poraai hub sessions in order to maintain discipline.

### **2. Internet access**

Students can have a designated computer with internet access which will provide with them any information or knowledge they want to get. Even though student councilors may help as class monitors, a computer expert may be required to attend the sessions to assist the students.

### **3. Group study**

Students can come in during session hours and study together with their peers and help each other on their weak points. This can help them with any confusions they had in their teachers' lectures.

### **4. Tutoring program**

Talent senior students can apply for the tutoring program, where they can tutor their fellow juniors in small groups or private during Poraai hub sessions. The senior students can be paid an incentive which will keep them motivated, and turn this program into an enticing opportunity for the senior students to work towards.

### **5. Extracurricular activities**

Students can work on any activities they find interesting or fun besides studies. A club program will motivate students to expand and express their creativity in their own areas of interest.

Conclusion

The classroom should be accessible to all Poraai students where everyone can be in a safe and inclusive space for academic and emotional support, access to information, and extracurricular activities. This allows students to earn money by tutoring, get extra help on their academics by group study sessions, express and get support for their emotions and problems they are facing in school through student councilors, access information and knowledge from all over the internet, and get involved in extra-curricular activities.

Poraai hub can be used as a marketing strategy by featuring this revolutionary solution on social media, newspapers.

## **PROJECT REVIEW:**

### **Personal statements of internship coordinators**

Sumyya Binte Mahmud

As the Coordinator of this internship program, working with the interns was a refreshing experience. Each of the five interns from Scholastica brought their own perspective and enthusiasm to the table. Throughout the six-week journey, spanning preparatory training and research work, they showed creativity and a willingness to explore. Their ideas often sparked thoughtful discussion. Guiding them through both individual and collaborative research tasks allowed for meaningful academic exchange and I found it fulfilling to see how they approached challenges with fresh insight and initiative.

### **Personal statements of interns**

Namera

Looking back on my internship at Poraai.com, I feel genuinely grateful. What began as a way to gain experience quickly turned into a journey of growth, purpose, and meaningful connection. From day one, I was welcomed warmly and given real responsibilities, which helped build my confidence and skills. I never felt like “just an intern”—I was part of the team, trusted, and supported throughout.

The highlight was interacting with students from Netrokona and Chittagong. Their resilience and determination to pursue education despite daily hardships deeply inspired me. Their stories were powerful reminders of the value of learning.

Working on surveys and questionnaires was also a rewarding part of the experience. It gave our team deeper insight into each other’s motivations and built a strong sense of community. I learned to communicate better, manage my time, and adapt quickly. Most importantly, I

discovered more about myself—what I value, where I thrive, and what kind of impact I want to make.

This internship was a joyful chapter in my life—filled with learning, laughter, and growth. I'm sincerely thankful to everyone who was part of it: Sauvik Bhaiya, Akash Bhaiya, our supervisors Tanha and Summya apu, and all my peer

### Arshan Rahman

During my internship, I did face a few issues. For instance, I always struggled with communication and public speaking because of my introverted nature. Along with that, it was difficult to keep up with the logbooks and all the assignments at the beginning due to not having any previous professional experience. However, towards the end I found myself being more outgoing, confident and more able to get work done after this astonishing journey.

I have had many memorable moments. Some of my favorites being our interactions with the PC1 and PC2 classrooms because it gave us an insight into the lives of students around different areas. Moreover, the research work we conducted where each intern worked with many students from PC1 and PC2 to gather research for our report, which was another part of the internship which was a very knowledge-enriching experience for me. In which, I conducted multiple surveys and interviews to help make a report with my other colleagues. Finally, I looked forward to every Friday where we all would discuss with Sauvik bhaiya and gain a new perspective on many things from his words.

If I had to suggest any more improvements, I wouldn't have many recommendations. As this is the 4th iteration of the internship program of Poraai, it is very streamlined and well thought-out. Most of the faults are mostly in part due to us interns, with late submissions and not showing up on time sometimes. However, there is room for improvements in the Poraai classrooms as we had difficulty hearing the students a lot of times due to the classroom mic and their wifi connections.

To conclude, the Poraai internship program was a very informative journey, with us learning many new things about the professional world that we would not have thought of otherwise. Along with meeting many new amazing people that I have had the pleasure to work with.

### Chowdhury Sajeed

The internship was an immersive and rewarding experience, as I learned many things from working alongside the intern coordinators and my fellow interns. During the internship, I had the opportunity to develop my teamwork, leadership, public speaking, and writing skills. Talking to the students of PC1 and PC2 has not only been very enjoyable but also very insightful and humbling, as I had the opportunity to hear about their struggles and challenges that they face in their daily lives. These conversations have made me more empathic and committed to making a difference. Moreover, working on the final report has been especially enlightening as I had the opportunity to sharpen my research and writing skills, along with my critical thinking, which helped me develop a solution for the problems that the students face.

Being a part of Poraai has been a priceless experience that has pushed me to grow both professionally and personally. Beyond skill development, the sense of purpose and community I found at Poraai was invaluable. I built meaningful friendships with my fellow interns and learned the value of teamwork. I walk away from Poraai more confident and inspired to create an impact on a larger scale.

#### Zaheen:

I had a very enjoyable and fulfilling experience in Poraai. All of the people who were tasked with guiding us were very patient and friendly with us. Tanha apu and Sumyya apu were constantly looking out for us, correcting our mistakes and making us feel at home. Sauvik bhaiya and Akash bhaiya shared their experiences and valuable wisdom that they have accumulated over the years as people with a foreign education and as working professionals who have worked in diverse environments. This internship also gave me new insights into the resilience and struggles of people who are less fortunate than me.

As we are the fourth batch of students who are doing this kind of internship with Poraai, there were no significant hiccups. Moreover, Poraai has fostered an environment that is very helpful and efficient with the type of work we were assigned, namely, surveys and interviews. The students of Poraai had plenty of experience with doing interviews and surveys which meant they knew exactly how it is done and presented their information in a very concise manner, making our work much easier. I was pleasantly surprised to see their resourcefulness and insight.

#### Aniya Tansin

My internship experience at Poraai.com was both eye-opening and deeply rewarding. As a virtual intern, I had the opportunity to work closely with a platform dedicated to improving education for underprivileged children in Bangladesh. Although the entire internship was conducted online, the experience was rich in learning, collaboration, and meaningful impact.

During my time at Poraai.com, I was responsible for conducting surveys and research projects on educational challenges faced by students from disadvantaged backgrounds, interacting with students virtually to gather insights on their learning struggles, motivation, and mental well-being, creating reports, PowerPoint presentations, and logbooks to document data, findings, and recommendations, and collaborating with fellow interns on research-driven tasks and group discussions to better understand systemic barriers in education.

This internship pushed me to grow both personally and professionally. Initially, I expected a more theoretical or observation-based experience. However, I was surprised at how hands-on and immersive the internship turned out to be—even in an online setting. I learned that impactful work can happen remotely, and that even digital interactions can carry emotional weight when dealing with real stories and struggles. Overall, my internship at Poraai.com has made me more socially aware, professionally prepared, and emotionally grounded. It taught me that education is not just about curriculum—it's about understanding people. This experience

has inspired me to continue working on projects that bridge educational gaps and make learning accessible for everyone, regardless of their background.

## **OVERALL TAKEAWAYS FROM THE INTERNSHIP:**

Internship at Poraai.com was a valuable bridge between academic theory and real-world application. Initial feelings included excitement and nervousness, but a welcoming team helped ease the transition.

### **Key Learnings and Skills Gained**

#### Effective Communication:

- Learned the importance of clear, professional communication in various formats (meetings, presentations, questionnaires).
- Became more confident speaking in team settings and giving/receiving feedback.

#### Adaptability & Continuous Learning:

- Faced unfamiliar tasks like data analysis, elevator pitch creation, and writing meeting minutes.
- Learned to embrace uncertainty and solve problems proactively.
- Maintained progress through logbooks as part of reflective practice.

#### Teamwork and Collaboration:

- Gained appreciation for how planning, accountability, and cooperation lead to successful project outcomes.
- Understood that no project succeeds in isolation.

#### Personal Growth

- Discovered personal strengths: organization, problem-solving, and research.
- Identified areas for improvement: public speaking and time management.
- Found joy in meaningful, challenging tasks and critical thinking.

#### Sense of Purpose

- Internship reinforced interest in supporting underprivileged communities.
- Inspired by a commitment to making learning more accessible and equitable.

## **LIMITATIONS:**

1. Time: Our entire internship session took place over a 6 week period over which we had to do many things that were not entirely focused on the report itself. A lot of our time was spent not-working for the report itself. Moreover, since we (the interns) have never worked on something like this before, we had to spend a lot of time learning the ins and outs of reports.
2. Reach: The amount of data that could be collected by us is quite limited and the honesty of the responders could not always be ensured.
3. Experience: This was our first time making such a report and this meant that we were unaware of the best practices and generally were very inefficient with our work.
4. Remote workspace: Since our internship program is being conducted remotely, we cannot see the actual on-the-ground workings of Poraai. We would have gotten a better understanding of the issues plaguing Poraai if we were physically in the classrooms.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE INTERNS**

- Attend the work hours regularly and maintain logbooks and meeting minutes up to date.
- Be respectful and professional with other fellow interns and intern coordinators.
- Communicate clearly and remain confident.
- Try not to be absent unless it is absolutely necessary and inform coordinators beforehand.
- Limit use of AI while doing tasks

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