

# **Rumor Management: Challenges and Ways to Address while Reopening the Educational Institutes of Bangladesh**

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## **Abstract:**

Rumor has a definite effect on our life. Many a times rumor creates chaos in the society which hampers the overall stability of the country. Same thing happening since the eruption of Covid-19 in Bangladesh. There were many rumors regarding death and rate affected people around the globe. As all educational institutions were shut down for long period there by many rumors erupted while Government of Bangladesh decided to reopen physical classes. Students and guardians became frightened to participate in physical educational activities. In this backdrop, rumor management became obvious for the betterment of students as well as all stakeholders related to education. This paper, evaluates the rumor management and challenges & ways to address while reopening the Educational institutes of Bangladesh.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Rumor Management, Challenges

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

At present negative rumors are having an adverse effect on our society. As a result, the development of people, society and the state is being greatly hampered. However, the attitude of checking the authenticity of a subject or idea is not seen in people in that way. This may be due to the fact that human attitudes and thoughts are being controlled by others in one way or another. After an 18-month closure due to Covid-19, the government of Bangladesh announced the reopening of secondary and higher secondary educational institutions across the country on 12 September 2021. Without a doubt, the government made the correct decision in opening educational institutions; however, they still have a lot of work to do to keep children safe and prevent rumors in their schools. Rumor is the new buzzword in Bangladesh's educational arena. It was thrust back into the limelight in October when students launched a nationwide movement for road safety in 2018. Another thing is the tendency of people to consider any event lightly without going deep into it. Rumors have been making us think a lot lately.

### **Rumor: Conceptual framework**

Rumor has always played a pivotal role our daily life. In the social sciences, a rumor involves a form of a statement whose veracity is not quickly or ever confirmed. In addition, some scholars have identified rumor as a subset of propaganda. Sociology, psychology, and communication studies have widely varying definitions of rumor.

“A **Psychology of Rumor**” was published by Robert H. Knapp in 1944. Knapp identified three basic characteristics that apply to rumor:

- They're transmitted by word of mouth;
- They provide “information” about a “person, happening, or condition”; and
- They express and gratify “the emotional needs of the community.”

## **II. RECENT TRENDS AND CHALLENGES**

One year into the COVID-19 pandemic, close to half the world's students are still affected by partial or full school closures and over 100 million additional children will fall below the minimum proficiency level in reading as a result of the health crisis. Bangladesh is the only country in South Asia and one of only 14 globally that have kept schools fully closed during the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a UN report issued in August. The school closure in Bangladesh has been one of the longest occurrence in the world. There was no option before Bangladesh but to open the schools, as prolonged closure during the pandemic worsened the inequalities for millions of children across Bangladesh According to media reports, thousands of students of schools and colleges had thronged cyber cafes to apply for stipends by the stipulated time. They waited for hours but most of them could not complete the online registration. Many chose to leave their documents with the shops paying

service charges. They say they had to pay between Tk 50 and Tk 100 for certificates from their respective institutions. The Education Ministry later issued an official notice. They requested everyone not to pay heed to rumors on social media that it is giving each student Tk 10,000 as allowance. This scenario is nothing new. Taslima Begum Renu, a 40-year-old single mother of two, was beaten to death by a mob when she went to the Uttar Badda Government Primary School to learn about the admission process on July 20, 2019. But a mob beat her brutally to death in front of the school gate, suspecting her to be a child kidnapper. Such online rumor-led mob lynching is becoming commonplace around the world. According to Ain O Salish Kendra, at least 573 people have been killed by lynch mobs across the country since 2013. The frequency and casualty of these incidents tend to be more in urban, densely populated areas. Among the 573 fatalities, 237 of them were killed in Dhaka, 141 in Chittagong, and 72 in Khulna and adjacent districts. Although there is only data on mob lynching for the last six years, it is not at all a recent trend.

### **III. WAYS TO MANAGE**

Research is being done on how to free a person from the tendency to spread rumors by analyzing his psychological issues. It can happen in our country too. In such research, some of the psychological factors that influence people to be attracted to rumors and spread rumors, those factors need to be identified and prevented through research.

*Involving everyone is the key*

1. Now what the government will have to do is to involve the teachers and the guardians to maintain the health guidelines as well as prevent rumor. They should also involve the local leaders. Only then will the government be able to make it a success. Otherwise, the situation could be different.
2. The guardians as well as the teachers will play a crucial role in maintaining the health guidelines too. They have to maintain their own health guidelines. If any of the guardians or teachers shows Covid-19 symptoms, they will immediately have to be tested and placed in isolation.
3. The government should do now is to set up testing facilities at schools, colleges or near educational institutions so that one can easily get tested at a nearby booth. It will help to get the valid information. If anyone becomes Covid-19 positive, then, they will be able to isolate the person before it spreads.

*Discuss with children*

A recently published research article, titled “Prevalence and impact of the use of electronic gadgets on the health of children in secondary schools in Bangladesh: A cross sectional study,” reveals how much dependent students have become on technology. The study was conducted on 1,803 secondary school students (Classes 6 to 10) from English and Bangla medium schools as well as madrasas, between June and December in 2020. It is easy to spread rumors using various social networking sites. Regardless, one thing that was evident from the study was that students' engagement with screens increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. While 33.5 percent of the students reported using gadgets for over two hours daily in 2019, this proportion surged to almost 53 percent in 2020. Instead of imposing blanket restrictions on their screen time, it may be more useful for parents and guardians to first discuss with children why spending excessive amounts of time on electronic gadgets is unhealthy for their mental and physical well-being.

*Marinating hygiene rules*

A committee consisting of teachers of the institution should be formed to monitor and implement whether the hygiene rules are being followed properly. Class activities should be conducted through enjoyable learning activities in compliance with the required hygiene rules; Necessary steps have to be taken in this regard by meeting with the managing committee and parents of the organization.

*UNICEF guidelines to prevent rumors after reopening educational institutes*

According to UNICEF,

Understanding COVID-19, how it spreads and how we can protect ourselves and others is an important first step in establishing classroom procedures and protocols. Students need to understand what it is in order for them to follow the rules. Listen to their concerns and ideas and answer their questions in an age-appropriate manner. Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Make sure to use information about COVID-19 from reliable sources such as UNICEF and WHO, as well as the health authorities in your country. By staying informed about the situation and following the recommendations of public health experts, we can protect our own wellbeing and those around us.

*Coming up with creative ideas*

- Come up with some fun and creative ideas and rules with students for avoiding high-risk and high-touch areas in their classroom.
- Come up with some rules together as a group and write these down on a flipchart paper to hang up in the classroom
- Create fun reminders/posters that can be hung in the hallways to remind others to stick to the sanitation rules.

#### *Avoid creating stigma*

Ensure a procedure for separating sick students and staff from those who are well – without creating stigma – and a process for informing parents, and consulting with health care providers/ health authorities wherever possible

#### *Literary teachings*

Poet Shamsur Rahman’s poem ‘Pandashram’ reminds us to recheck the fact before chasing anything. Religion, personal interests or political gain — these are the reasons we spread rumors or lies. The importance of rumors at the state and social level has increased so much that rumors have to be researched scientifically.

#### *Philosophical teachings*

This triple filter test is an excellent guide, both for what we’re going to say and for what we’re going to listen to. It’s a set of parameters that represent healthy and constructive communication. It refers to an anecdote of the great Greek philosopher, Socrates. Many consider this anecdote to be a great life lesson that can help us deal with gossip and rumors. This anecdote teaches us not to pay attention to rumors and untrue, hurtful, and useless messages. It can be applied to regular gossip. However, it can also be applied to the information we find on social media. Truth, goodness, and usefulness are the foundation of Socrates’ triple filter test. Socrates thought that a person must ask themselves the following questions before they say anything: “Am I sure that what I am going to say is true?”, “Is what I’m going to say a good thing?”, and “Do I really need to say it and is it useful?” In everyday life, it’s not easy to define the true, the good, and the necessary. These are abstract concepts that are sometimes difficult to apply. That’s why there are also some additional questions that can help you when it comes to applying the triple filter test:

- **Regarding the truth:** Do I know for a fact that this information is true? Can I bet on it? Will I be able to prove it to anyone? Am I willing to compromise my reputation over this?
- **Regarding the good:** Does it benefit me or the other person? Will it make them or me a better person and evoke positive emotions? Will the situation of those involved improve?
- **Regarding the necessary or useful:** By knowing this message, will that person’s life or my life improve? Can that person take any practical action regarding this information or message? In what way does not knowing this information hurt or affect the other person?

#### *Asking yourself*

Fact checking method can be very effective in this regard. Asking you three questions before sharing anything on Facebook:

- **The first question:** Who gave the news? First ask yourself this question If the source is not trustworthy, do not share it And if the formula is new, try to know about it.
- **The second question:** What? Read the whole news by entering the link Note the picture, the number used, someone's comment Many times comments are used without mentioning the source or comments are given without context Pictures or videos with the news may be fake The voice used in the video may have changed
- **The third question:** How do you feel after reading the news? Those who spread fake news want to play with people's feelings They know that if they can make you angry or worried, you will click on the news So try to know your feelings before sharing If you feel good, share And if you find it difficult, try to verify it by looking at other sources.

#### *Free flow of information*

Free flow of information is very important. It depends on access to accurate information about the nature of the threats and the means to protect oneself, one’s family, and one’s community. The right to freedom of expression, which includes the right to seek, receives and imparts information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, through any media, applies to everyone, everywhere, and may only be subject to narrow restrictions. We need to create the opportunity to access accurate news. If freedom of expression is not given, then rumors will be created rapidly. The less freedom of expression, the more rumors- this is the rule.

#### *Institutional awareness*

According to Social researchers, the Asian and African countries are ideal spots of spreading rumors and lynching. So educational institutes must ensure the values of democracy from the very beginning of student life. Teachers may create conducive environment and conduct situation based training which lead students to practice and to bring the attribute in habit. Thus social and institutional awareness will be increased.

## **IV. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

The National Research Council of Canada says in its research that the tendency to spread rumors is inherent in human instincts. The research institute uses a special kind of measuring instrument to identify this instinctual subject of rumors. According to the study, true news makes people hopeful, happy and sad, but false

news or rumors create intense emotions like surprise and disgust among people. It is in our nature to make sense of things going on around us because ambiguity makes us uncomfortable. People use imagination, experience, knowledge, and our opinions to fill in the gaps when they do not have complete information regarding a situation. Sometimes evil side takes over and people resort to dirty tricks such as rumor spreading in order to put our competitors down. Regardless of why or how the rumor got started, what matters the most is how we manage it.

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