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Inequalities in Private Tutoring of English: A Phenomenological Qualitative Study Based on Bangladeshi Higher Secondary Students

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Abstract

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Keywords

private tutoring of English, private supplementary tutoring, qualitative research, lived experience, shadow education, inequality, Bangladesh

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This phenomenological qualitative study analyzes the lived experiences of eleven Bangladeshi higher secondary students in mainstream schools to provide insight into their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values, and assumptions of private tutoring in English (PT-E). The study also focused on PT-E that contribute to inequalities between students who have access to private tutoring and those who do not. Each participant participated in a one-to-one in-depth semi-structured interview. Using phenomenological analysis, 321 significant statements and three themes emerged. The data show that unequal practice, discrimination due to financial capability, and social psyche for PT-E that influences students to widen the negative impacts of PT-E between students, particularly those who do not have an access in private tutoring of English (PT-E).

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Introduction

In recent times, research on Private Tutoring of English (PT-E) has gained visibility in many parts of the world (Bray, 2020; Hamid et al., 2018; Yung & Chiu, 2020). There are some researchers that deal with PT-E literature. These studies can be categorised into three phases. In a first phase, some researchers have tried to find the function of PT-E. For doing this, they do not openly focus on the PT-E participant or the role of PTE for gaining the academic result (e.g., Bray & Kwok, 2003; Hamid & Baldauf, 2011). In the second phase, PT-E researchers want to relate to PT-E activities with the academic result of students such as test score and public examination grades (e.g., Lee et al., 2010; Park et al., 2011). In the third phase, PT-E researchers deal with the importance of PT-E practices (Hamid et al., 2009; Yung, 2014; Yung & Chiu, 2020).

Despite the fast growth of PT-E and its potential effect on inequality (Bray et al., 2014; Dawson, 2010; Mahmud & Bray, 2017), the role of PT-E in creating educational inequality has received relatively little attention in academic research. One emerging issue of the PT-E literature is the problem of educational inequality. In recent time, some literature has focused on school factors that shape demand of PT-E and assists to contribute to the disparities between rural and urban students. For example, Mahmud and Bray (2017) show the opportunity of

taking up PT-E is not the same between rural and urban secondary school students in Bangladesh. The study reported that around 84.7% of urban secondary students involved in PT-E, whereas about 60.7% of rural students did so. Likewise, Pallegedara (2012) demonstrates Sri-Lankan's middle-class families compete with each other because of the current demand for tutoring that contributes to creating irregularity between secondary school students.

Therefore, further research is needed to investigate how PT-E contributes to inequality among students in developing countries, such as, Bangladesh. The present study provides empirical evidence from higher secondary students who take up PT-E. In order to address the gap mentioned above, this investigation adds to research still unexplored. While previous research has adopted an economic approach to examining inequalities arising out of PT-E (Bray & Kwok, 2003; Byun et al., 2018; Dang & Rogers, 2008), this study uses a phenomenological perspective to focus on the lived experiences of secondary students who participate in PT-E (see Research Design for details). The study is guided by the research question: How does private tutoring in English contribute to inequality between students who have access to private tutoring and those who do not?

The influence of the English language in Bangladesh, rural-urban disparities in learning English language, academic and financial status of learners and their families on PT-E and its impact on educational inequality is examined while investigating the research question.

PT-E and Inequality

Recent studies have reported PT-E has more negative effects on students' education than positive effects that contribute to craft educational inequality (De Silva, 2015; Mahmud & Bray, 2017; Zhan et al., 2013). De Silva (2015) argues that private tutoring ultimately contributes to a general degradation of school education that creates difficulty to provide equal educational opportunities among students, and, so, the effectiveness of formal schooling is questioned. Nevertheless, scholars have contradictory opinions regarding the role of private tutoring in creating inequalities (Dawson, 2010; Kang, 2007; Park & Kim, 2014).

The first of the two views on the negative effects of PT-E claim that every family has the right to exercise their beliefs regarding education, and to take tutoring as one of the ways, along with attending private or selective schools, in which families can pursue their choices. Bray and Kwo (2013), in a study, conclude that middle or low-income parents in a developing society are motivated to invest in private tutoring along with public education. PT-E is in demand in both urban and rural areas because there is normally a higher level of competition among students, which is related to parents' wealth. When a family possesses higher levels of educational attainment, by logical extension, they have higher achievement expectations for their children's education (Tan, 2017; Mazawi et al., 2013; Pallegedara, 2012; Southgate, 2013). For instance, a 2010 household survey of 600 students found students who lived near Nairobi and possessed higher educational accomplishments participated in private tutoring (Buchmann et al., 2010). This pattern has been found to be consistent in Egypt (Hua, 1996), Cambodia, and in the Republic of Korea (Bray, 2013).

The second view states that PT-E undermines the goal of mass education, which is to provide an equal opportunity to all children, regardless of their socio-economic status (Dang & Rogers, 2008). Therefore, Biswal (1999), in his study, argues that private tutoring contributes to the masking of inadequacies in the government education system. Some recent literature echoes this conception and shows socio-economic disadvantage groups are the object these governments' limitation of getting suitable schooling that may influence them to get involved in tutoring (see e.g., Burris, 2014; Oakes, 2005; Zhan & Bray, 2018).

Thus, PT-E has been viewed as a mechanism for maintaining educational inequalities between students, particularly, those who do not have access to private tutoring. Furthermore, not only PT-E creates academic inequalities, but its effects also impact the whole social body by influencing family income, and thus, family status in the society. Southgate (2013), for instance, notes families with high levels of cultural capital are most likely to purchase supplementary tutoring. That is, PT-E is common demand by which parents with higher amounts of economic, social, and cultural capital try to continue their leads (Keister & Southgate, 2012). However, some of the research findings argue that PT-E is one of the factors in building a better society with socio-economic balance and equality rather than contribute to educational inequality between students (e.g., Byun et al., 2018; Dawson, 2010; Kang, 2007; Park & Kim, 2014). Using cross-national data from 64 countries, Byun et al. (2018) show students of higher socioeconomic status are more likely to get involved in private tutoring. These families believe that this investment has many important effects on their children's job opportunities and well-being.

English and Inequality in Bangladesh

Despite its limited use in daily communication, English has a powerful existence in the education system of Bangladesh (Hamid et al., 2018). However, resource allocation for education in general, in particular English teaching, has been one of the lowest in the world (Hamid et al., 2009). Consequently, the quality of English teaching, particularly, in rural schools, is far from adequate. However, proficiency and equality of teaching and learning English is a must for the nation to abolish poverty, illiteracy, and impoverishment, especially, in rural areas, although the chance of learning English is kept unlocked to all irrespective of social class, religion, or geographic locations. Rural students, most of whom are poor, are disadvantaged regarding equal access to English learning. They must take the same national school-leaving examination as students from all over the country including those from the urban areas. Consequently, many of them turn out as failed students.

Apart from the educational and examination issues, the question of embedded linguistic environment is essential for learning English. Obviously, there is a gap in access to English skills acquisition between urban and rural learners of English. It is in this context that situation of teaching-learning English has been worsened through the practice of PT-E (Mahmud, 2019). The present scenario shows PT-E is on the increase throughout Bangladesh. This scenario is not going to change for the better soon. So, the possibility of the prevailing inequalities between privileged and disadvantaged groups of young learners at higher secondary level is not going to decrease soon.

PT-E in Bangladesh shows different characteristics and nature from those in Asia Pacific and Europe (Hamid et al., 2009). Although over one-third of about 160 million citizens of Bangladesh do not have formal literacy (Hamid & Honan, 2012), PT-E has been popular among many guardians here Mahmud, 2019). It has drawn substantial media attention in the last decade. As an outcome, Bangladesh Higher Court issued a rule to the authorities to clarify why teachers' involvement in an out of school hours (OoSH) practice should not be considered illegal. In response, a government regulation on private tutoring as unauthorized has been declared legal by the High Court in a rennet hearing[1].

Although the ban was well-intentioned, a hard-line stance (see Bray & Kwo, 2013) continued the existing PT-E with parents actively engaged and highly interested in PT-E for their children. This offered additional ingredient for spreading PT-E on a large scale in Bangladesh. It highlights current concerns about the widespread practice of private tutoring,

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[1] *Daily Star*, 7th February 2019.

which has questioned the quality of mainstream schooling in the country. Indeed, PT-E emerged as a dominant form of language learning beyond the classroom in Bangladesh.

English has a powerful existence in both private and public education in Bangladesh (Hamid et al., 2018). The current study focuses on the first two categories of "Government and Nongovernment" schools which cover around 98% of secondary and higher secondary schools in Bangladesh (see the methodology section for details). These are schools run by the mainstream education where English is a compulsory subject from Grade 1 to Grade 12 (Hamid et al., 2018).

Finally, a difference from metropolitan city to the rural areas regarding involvement in PT-E has implications for education, educational performance, and research. In a study, Dang & Rogers (2008) examine the biases of American education by presenting the urban and rural context and concludes how American education has failed to look into educational issues in rural areas even in recent time. In the case of Bangladesh, the urban-rural gap in income and wealth (Karim, 2007) is reflected in educational performance in the national school-leaving examinations.

Design of the Study

The phenomenological qualitative method was chosen in this study to derive insights on the high school students' lived experiences involving private tutoring of English (PT-E). According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), the phenomenological methodology allows the scholar to understand the meaning or to uncover common themes that participants spotlight through their functions, opinions, moods, principles, ideals, and assumptive worlds. That is, the researcher identifies common themes that emerges from the rich description. The main benefit of this form of design is that it enables the researcher to assess the "essence" of PT-E phenomenon from the lived experiences of high school students at the time of the study (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). So, the approach provides for a fast, convenient, and rich way of obtaining data on the status of PT-E in higher secondary level students in Bangladesh.

So, by selecting a phenomenological research design, this study has no intention to predict the future incident rather it provides a thoughtful opinion to them who are concerned with the actions of a specific situation and period. To do that, we conduct a micro level design, i.e., a small scale, in-depth investigation, to ensure a rich and intensive description of students' experiences of the PT-E phenomenon. Epistemologically, the study draws on pragmatism to argue that some realities exist independent of human subjectivity. That is, the researchers identified common themes that emerged from the experiences described. The main advantage of this type of design is that it enables the researchers to assess the "essence" of PT-E phenomenon from the lived experiences of high schools students at the time of the study (Creswell, 2007). Therefore, this approach adds to a previously ignored perspective on the experiences of participants in PT-E. Previous research has typically used large scale, macro-level quantitative design.

Participants

Using purposeful sampling, the researchers selected 11 higher secondary school[2] students who had been taking private tutoring of English (PT-E) and had at least four to seven years of experiences of PT-E for in-depth interviews. All students' names were given pseudonyms. The purpose of selecting higher secondary school students was to paint a bigger

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[2] In Bangladesh, school has three levels: primary, secondary, and higher level. Generally, higher secondary schools are called "college." Usually, college teaches 11th and 12th grade students.

picture of their PT-E experience. English learners in Bangladesh have substantial exposure to English through teaching-learning at school for over 12 years. So, their involvement in PT-E at the higher secondary level offered insights into their experiences that may have contributed to the question of inequality between students. Finally, this study needed selective sampling to examine data inductively, recursively, and interactively in order to provide a holistic view of PT-E as a phenomenon.

Selecting participants of the study, two different areas, urban (metropolitan city) and rural (sub-district), were identified to present the different backgrounds of the participants. The first site was Rangpur, a regional metropolitan city in the northern Bangladesh; and the second one was Rajarhat, a sub-district under Kurigram district in the same region. Both government and non-government schools were randomly selected within these two sites. Selected schools follow the national curriculum and use Bangla as a medium of instruction.

However, after selecting the study sites, both government and non-government higher secondary schools were selected within these two sites to get the target participants. Specifically, these two types of higher secondary schools have been funded by the government. Government colleges (e.g., higher secondary schools) have fully been funded and administrated by the government. On the other hand, non-government colleges have partially been subsidised and administrated by the state administration. However, both colleges follow the national curriculum and use Bangla as the classroom instruction. For this reason, the researchers carefully selected participants to cover each type of school, so lived experiences of different participants were achieved.

Besides the regional and institution variations, the selected samples were identified from among those participating in different types of PT-E. The types of tutoring had been divided into three kinds: "one to one private tutoring," "small-group private tutoring" for 2 to 9 students in a group, and tutoring 10 or more students which is considered large-group popularly known as "coaching" in large-scale centres sometimes having branches across the country.

In brief, out of 11 participants, seven were selected from urban colleges and four were selected from rural colleges. In terms of types of institutions, six colleges were non-government and five were government colleges. Six participants were chosen from one-to-one tutoring and group tutoring respectively while the remaining five were selected from coaching centers. Five participants had four to five years of experience of taking up PT-E, while other six had six to seven years of experience. Finally, the frequency of participating PT-E was three to six days per week as the duration of lesson and tuition fee varied based on the types of tutoring. The following table shows the thumbnail sketch of participants:

Table 1
Participant Profiles

No.	Participant pseudonyms	Region	Types of Institution	Types of tutoring	Years of PT-E experience	Frequency (per week)	Duration per lesson (hours)	Monthly Cost (TK$)
1	P-1	Urban	Non-Government	One to one	7	3	1.30	3000
2	P-2	Urban	Government	Group tutoring	6	4	1	750
3	P- 3	Urban	Government	Group tutoring	5	3	1	500

4	P- 4	Urban	Government	Coaching	7	3	1	400
5	P-5	Urban	Non-Government	One to one	7	3	1-1.30	2500
6	P-6	Urban	Government	Coaching	4	5	1-1.30	700
7	P- 7	Urban	Non-Government	Coaching	4	4	0.45	600
8	P-8	Rural	Non-Government	Coaching	5	5	0.45	600
9	P-9	Rural	Non-Government	Coaching	7	6	0.50-1	1000
10	P- 10	Rural	Government	Group tutoring	4	3	1.30	900
11	P-11	Rural	Non-Government	One to one	6	4	1-1.30	1500

Data Source

The phenomenological qualitative data came from the student interviews. Specifically, the study used a face-to-face semi-structured formal interview for an in-depth understanding of PT-E that contribute to inequalities between students who have access to private tutoring and those who do not. In face-to-face interviews, participants were present not only as "conversing minds, but as flesh-and-blood creatures" (Leavy, 2014, p. 290) who gave much information in terms of gestures, body language, and facial expressions that provide the richest source of knowledge available. As a result, the purposeful sampling interview was deemed most appropriate for the study. According to DeMarrais (2004), an interview is one kind of procedure where the interviewer and interviewee are involved in a discussion that emphasizes the research question relevant to the study. This type of interview also provided reliable, valid, and theoretically satisfactory results compared to a questionnaire, especially in a situation where the phenomenon was highly a debatable issue and demands individual personal opinions. Therefore, face to face interview ensured better cooperation and desire more informative answers than a questionnaire. Like any other dataset, however, face to face semi-structure interview also had demerits by captivating more time to recruit and conduct. Likewise, the data quality needed to take away the biased response. In the end, the enrolment procedure and interview process were the most significant portion of an in-depth face to face semi-structured interview to avoid any other demerits.

Thus, the main purpose of this type of phenomenological interview was to obtain accounts of the practical experiences in view of realizing the understanding of the designated phenomena (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interview was used to look at the inner views of somebody mind (Patton, 1990, p. 341). The key words of this study were "purpose," "descriptions," "lived world," and "interpretation of meaning." Therefore, the interview instrument was designed by the open-ended questions to allow for probing of the respondents to elicit insightful information.

Sampling Procedure

The purposeful sampling procedure was followed to provide insights about the lived experience of PT-E participants who had been motivated to participate in PT-E besides their mainstream schoolings. Consistent with Patton (1990), purposeful sampling implies selecting information for the study in-depth. Although the sample size (only 11 participants were

analysed) was appropriate for the research design, all the participants studied in higher secondary schools. Therefore, the sample may be considered as not adequate for generalizing the participants' surroundings and the forms of tutoring they got involved. Secondly, despite the researchers' struggles to motivate students to provide details of their experiences, it is inevitable that sometimes students might not be capable to recollect all their memories very precisely and to the point. Finally, other higher secondary level pupils, such as those reading at occupational training institutions, were outside of this study and may have also provided useful findings. Despite these few drawbacks, the present study, the researchers claim, opens a new window of innovative research on the role and scope of PT-E in the field of education, in the light of the complex phenomena of micro-level scrutiny and investigation.

Data Collection Procedure

As the present study was designed based on phenomenological research procedure, interviews were set up to gain an in-depth understanding of the meanings of participants who had been involved in PT-E. For collecting interview data, at first, the participants' parents or any elder member of participants' family were asked to sign the Informed Consent Form before interviews were conducted. In this form, the research provided the background information of the study as well as the procedures of taking up the interview. The consent form also supplied the brief information about risks and benefits of participating in the study, confidentiality, and voluntary nature of the study along with contacts information of the researcher. However, all data collection took place during four months' time frame between July and October of 2015. Individuals open-ended semi-structures questions were asked to understand how participants felt about their experience with private tutoring of English (PT-E).

To get the verbatim voice and reflections, all conversions were digitally recorded. Primarily, the Bangla language was used to take up the interviews as this is the common language for both parties. Conversations were translated as soon as the interviews were finished and rechecked by the researcher. The researchers decoded the recording to confirm the worth of the study. To approve the authenticity and correctness of the data, interview transcripts were delivered to participants. Furthermore, to talk details of the transcriptions and interview, the researchers called interviewees through the telephone time to time when it was needed. Finally, the researchers sent the thanks note to all interviewees. At the end, the researchers preserved all data in a shaving cupboard.

Data Analysis

For phenomenological qualitative data analysis, coding is the principal procedure for growing ideas within the raw data by identifying significant sentences or phrases in the data and encoding it before analysis. For this reason, following the open coding strategies, this study applied a thematic coding procedure which has been considered one of the most recognizable methods of investigation in a phenomenological qualitative study (Guest et al., 2012). More clearly, themes, in this study, were patterns across data sets that were significant to the explanation of PT-E phenomenon and were associated to a specific research question (Daly et al., 1997).

For analyzing data, we audio-recorded and transcribed all interviews verbatim immediately after the interview. Transcripts were (reviewed) cross-checked by the researchers for accuracy. Once the transcription was finished, a phenomenological style of analysis was conducted with the assistance of NVivo 8, a qualitative software program. The NVivo 8 software program assisted the researchers in coding themes, managing, and analyzing unstructured information. Primarily, the process began with reading through the written

transcripts several times to capture initial impression (Lieblich et al., 1998). The process of memo creation was applied immediately, and this procedure led the early coding. To assist in the coding process a log was maintained through the process. Then, from each transcript, significant phrases or sentences that pertained directly to the lived experience of PT-E was identified. That is, the "open coding" process was assigned to sort out various aspects of the data that had been retrieved to generate answers to the research question to refine a list of codes that identified the major ideas and perspectives through themes.

After finishing memo creation and coding, the researchers identified "abstract themes" that emerged from the analysis of the data. The formulated meanings were then clustered to develop themes similar to the interviewee's whole responses. That is, the researcher developed "clusters of meaning" from these important sentences into themes. The major common themes found in the data became the key results of the research. After that, the researcher integrated the results into an in-depth, exhaustive description of the PT-E phenomenon. Finally, the researcher validated the results with the interviewees and included interviewee's comments in the concluding report.

These important speeches or common themes were then employed to set down a description of what the participant's experiences ("textual description"). These were also used to write a description of the motivational and societal factors that influenced how the participants experience the PT-E, called "imaginative variation" or "structural description" (Creswell, 2007). From the structural and textual descriptions, the researcher then wrote a composite description that presented the "essence" of the PT-E phenomenon, called the "essential, invariant structure." Hence, the following table 3.1 shows the summary of data analysis:

Table 3.1
Data Analysis and Representation

Data Enquiry	Phenomenological Depiction
Data handling	Make and establish records of the data
Understanding, documenting	Reading transcriptions, enter into the NVivo 8 software for coding
Unfolding	Define particular understandings through the epoch processing, Sort out the essence of the phenomenon
Categorizing	Find out the important sentences or phrases for identifying the themes
Deducing	Write a written report exactly Improve an essential explanation, "How the phenomenon was experienced."
Demonstrating, envisaging	Display the description of the central phenomena from the participant's experience; make diagram, tables and argument and discussion.

Note. (Based on Creswell, 2007)

Trustworthiness and Ethical Consideration

We applied the member check techniques to certify the reliability of the research as member check is considered one of the most critical credibility techniques (Lincoln & Guba, 1999) to justify the trustworthiness of the qualitative research. According to Merriam (2009), the creditability and reliability of the qualitative study depend on the member check. In fact,

each interviewee received a special entrée into the transcribed data through the member check and then requested them to read the transcription for transparency and exactness and to give added perception and evidence.

The pseudonyms were given to confirm the privacy of the participant as well as students' institution names were also given pseudonyms. Before studying the study, the consent form was provided to each participant. The detailed info and explanation were delivered in the form and any interviewee could give up the research at any time. All relevant notes, recorder, and documents were piled in a secure place and would be kept for five years, and then, the documents would be donated to a university library for the future graduate students who would like to explore more the study issues. Data and field notes are also available to the researchers.

Findings

To frame all facets of PT-E that contribute to inequality between students, data were analyzed to validate the research question of the study. As of 321 significant statements, three themes originated from the analysis of the participants' responses to the interview questions. These include unequal practice, financial disparity, and social psyche.

Each theme focuses on several off-putting consequences of PT-E that contribute to inequality between students who have access to private tutoring and those who do not. For instance, participants considered the PT-E as an unequal practice that was associated with the denial of the equal opportunity for everyone. That is, interviewees concluded the PT-E was responsible to contribute to irregularity in education that undermines our system of education, discussed in Theme 1. Therefore, in Theme 2, students talked about the discrimination between them due to their poor financial background. But PT-E phenomenon has created a social syndrome that may be considered as "social psyche" regarding motivation of parents for PT-E and this situation constitute Theme 3.

Theme 1: Unequal Practice. Interviewees were unanimous in their opinions that PT-E was a barrier to ensure better opportunity for all, meaning it creates an educational inequality between those that took up PT-E and those that did not. Participants agree classroom teaching alone is not enough to learn English language skills, which are important for their future vocations and prosperity in life. However, they believe PT-E surely divides the English learning community as a result of parents'/guardians' being socio-economically privileged or disadvantaged. Hence, the principle of equal opportunity for all cannot be ensured in the country. So, the overall outlook is that PT-E is an unequal practice that contributes to inequality not only among current community of students but also in their future strives to prosper in life.

This belief was evident in a description of an urban student (P-1) studying in a non-government school, undergoing one-to-one PT-E since Grade 5, who stated, "Yes, hmm... I believe that the current practice of PT-E has been creating an educational inequality between us, because I see that some of my friends, who are not taking PT-E, are very weak in English lessons." Another urban student (P-4) from a government school, involved in PT-E with a schoolteacher since Grade 5, responded:

> As a student of Government College, I have many friends who do not have opportunities to take up PT-E. For example, as a science student, I have to take five subjects tutoring which is not possible for everyone. In this sense, they are deprived of the opportunity though they are interested to take up tutoring.

Furthermore, some urban students confessed reluctantly that the existing practice of PT-E helped to build their negative attitudes towards the society and widened their frustrations for un-fulfilment of hopes and aspirations. For example, P-6, a government college student taking up PT-E in a coaching centre, expressed, "At present, we are not getting the same opportunity as other friends [from rich family] are getting due to various types of tutoring."

In the same way, like an urban student, a rural student, P-10, from the government school with 4 years of PT-E in a small group concluded, "Yes, I think that private tutoring contributes to inequality among us because...hmm...what I see my all friends are not getting the same opportunity. So, I believe that it is increasing our inequality."

Consistently, focusing on the reflexive consequences of the unequal practice of PT-E, respondents expressed their depressing experiences and beliefs about the inequality between those who had access to private tutoring and those who did not. This was understandable as a rural non-government school participant, P-9, who has 6 years' experience of PT-E, reported, "Actually, what I have been experiencing since Grade 6, inequality between us is very common in Bangladesh due to private tutoring. Now it is increasing as more students are getting involved in private tutoring."

In general, participants have been experiencing a lack of equal opportunity between them regardless of their locations and type of tutoring (e.g., one-to-one, small group and large group). They feel that discrimination among them is a very common phenomenon as they have been experienced since the very first of their schools. They affirm that the inequality between them has gradually intensified more in recent time and become a common phenomenon in Bangladeshi mainstream school education.

Theme 2: Financial Disparity. Discrimination due to financial capability is another area that has been pointed to strongly by the participants. Participants, irrespective of locations and types of school and tutoring, reported the inequality between them due to the poor/rich financial condition of their parents or guardians was a grim reality. That is, students need to consider their parental financial capability before taking up PT-E. For this reason, students are forced to be in a competition to purchase PT-E to acquire their desired academic credentials. For instance, P-8, an urban non-government school student said:

> I believe that it is really hard for my parents to manage money for my private tutoring as I am taking 3 subjects tutoring at a time and I think that every parent does not have. The same financial capability to take up private tutoring.

Like all urban students, rural students viewed the payment of private tutoring as an extra financial pressure for their parents. A rural non-government school student, P-11, having 6 years of experience, said, "I need to consider the financial strength of my family, and I also need to consider how much amount they are able to pay for my tutoring at a time." Likewise, P-10, a rural government school student opined:

> Yes, it is the heavy financial burden to my family. Though I wear a nice dress to come to the school, people do not know my actual condition… My father is a farmer. It is really financial burden as I have been taking four subjects PT in a PT tutor batch.

Consistently, participants from both types of locations, and schools also viewed PT-E as a heavy financial burden for the family that made a barrier to participate in PT-E despite what they want. An urban non-government school interviewee, P-7, having 4 years of

experience of PT-E, reported, "Yes, I think so because it creates extra financial pressure on our family expenditure."

It was also understandable in a report of an urban government school participant, P-2, having PT-E since Grade 5, who said, "I also check PT tutor's payment because sometimes many PT tutors demand more money than average."

Despite the poor financial condition, sometimes students cannot do without PT-E as they do not have an appropriate alternative to boost their academic achievement. An urban non-government school student, P-5, taking up PT-E from Grade 5, said, "I do not have any alternative option to avoid this expenditure."

P-6 from a non-government school, taking PT-E in a coaching centre since Grade 6, described more elaborately:

> So, by thinking the financial condition of my parents, I am taking private
> lessons in a coaching centre because my coaching tuition fee is 600 taka per
> month only, but if I go to the PT tutor batch, I may need to spend around 1200
> taka per month.

So, most responses from the participants of this study testify that discrimination in the opportunity to access the provisions of PT-E happens according to the financial capability or incapability of parents, which is a glaring example of the negative effects of PT-E.

Theme 3: Social psyche. A commonsense assessment based on the elaboration of the themes above would lead on to the last theme of the influence of the social psyche of the Bangladeshi parents and guardians, which, very strongly, push an overwhelming majority of young learners to take up PT-E. This push contributes to the existing inequality of access to further education. This social psyche creates many problems in the mainstream education that gradually amplifies the general negative public attitude to undermine the education system in Bangladesh. P-4, an urban respondent, taking up PT-E in a coaching centre since Grade 5 described the public attitude by saying:

> Yes, I think that private tutoring is undermining our education system because
> my school teachers also believe that only classroom teaching is not enough to
> do the best in the public examination and we need… to take up PT-E. So
> whatever learning and teaching have been done in the classroom teaching, we
> need to go to the coaching. Furthermore, schoolteachers do not take the class
> regularly. So, I believe this situation contributes to inequality between us.

P-1, a non-government school student with 7 years of experience of one-to-one PT-E at home stated, "I think PT-E has been threatening our mainstream education because schoolteachers are now very much busy for PT-E and coaching centre that creates discrimination about the quality of education… so… contribute to inequality."

That is, this "booming business" (a common public expression) of PT-E has clearly been posing a threat to the mainstream education as an alternative to their schools English teaching. An urban public-school student, P-3, with PT-E experience since Grade 6 reported:

> Due to my private tutoring, I do not get enough time to do my study at home.
> I think that… hmm… on the one hand private tutoring helps me to fill up my
> classroom teaching gap on the other hand I am gradually depending on it. I
> think… hmm… that makes an irregularity in the county education.

Like all urban students, a rural respondent, P-9, involved in PT-E since Grade 5 summarized:

> I think that one of the top obstacles… means... wrongdoing in education is that coaching centre… challenges our mainstream schooling and weaken our education system. Because I believe if there is no coaching centre then students are not going to take up PT-E lessons.

P-11, a participant from a rural school, engaged in PT-E since Grade 6 concluded, "The importance of school class is very low. Coaching destroys our education system completely because schoolteachers now believe that we have to go to the coaching centre."

Similarly, other participants spoke of negative consequences of the existing practice of PT-E and believes that PT-E influenced them to move their concentrations from the classroom teaching to PT-E. This belief was evident in a description given by a rural government school student (P-10), who participated in PT-E in a schoolteacher group. This participant said,

> But we, most of them, do not concentrate in the class, but we concentrate in the PT-E lessons. Whatever happens in the class, we do not care of it as we have PT-E... Every month we spend money for PT-E without caring of school English class. I think… hmmm. It's really a great irregularity that contributes to educational inequality.

Thus, the surge of PT-E appears to be an unstoppable educational phenomenon that has been conquering the hearts and minds of the learners to patronise PT-E as an alternative to mainstream school. And the current "social psyche" empowered by the somewhat unhealthy competition in a world where globalization is a powerful player.

Discussion

Regardless of scholars interested in PT-E research, few studies have examined whether PT-E contributes to creating educational inequalities. This study takes a step forward in addressing this issue by analyzing the lived experienced of students who have been participating PT-E. The findings show higher secondary students in Bangladesh identify PT-E as an unfair practice (Theme 1) and were responsible for creation of educational inequality between students who had access to PT-E and those who did not. It was evident that they consider PT-E as an unfair practice creating negative impact on the society in general and on education specifically. Interviewees' experiences of irregularity and inequality in education were strong in Theme 1. However, taking into consideration the total number of statements the participants made during the semi-structured interviews reflect three major themes about the impacts of PT-E. Participants in this study were aware of this situation, and some spoke about it and asserted their understandings that PT-E would be responsible for deterioration of the education as a whole in Bangladesh. Therefore, Mahmud, (2019), in a study, concluded PT-E tutors did not pay much attention to their classroom practice, could not interested to creating good interaction with students, and sometimes could not complete syllabus within the academic year. Similarly, studies including De Silva (2015) and Zhan et al. (2013) reported negative effects private tutoring on the students' education, but the present study goes further to report that private tutoring is not only damaging but also unfair for all disadvantaged learners in terms of equality of opportunities in education.

As noted earlier, researchers (e.g., Dawson, 2010; Pallegedara & Mottaleb, 2018) considered PT-E as a destabilizing phenomenon that undermine the principles of equal

opportunity in education in the country. The participants also opined the existing practice of PT-E in Bangladesh had reduced their learning opportunities and increased the inequality between them (Theme 3). With the increase of GDP in the country, many people can afford to buy luxuries of life including education that influences students to participate in PT-E. The surge of privatization of literally everything in the world has hit hard the ethical and moral land of the social psyche (Theme 3) of the people of Bangladesh, and about 20-30 million learners at schools and colleges in the country. The uneven competition between the rich and the not-so-rich, the crisis of the urban rural divide (Mahmud & Bray, 2017) coupled with the rampant corruption in every sector of the country including the service sectors like healthcare and education have created this particular type of "social psyche."

Furthermore, studying PT-E as an OoSH paid provision allows the researchers to raise the question of inequality. The study scrutinized the question of how the impact of PT-E contributes to the inequality between students. In this study, the equal opportunity issues of Bangladeshi society are viewed as like other countries of Asia. The colonial practices of English still prevail in its power over EFL teaching and learning practices. Hence, the role of English (see the Theme 3) has strong influence in the educational decision-making process that shows the way of the unequal practice and educational inequality in education.

In a nutshell, the results of the present research have significant consequences for ELT strategies in relation to out of school hours' practices, because the low-level English outcomes from public examination in both urban and rural students indicate that English teaching-learning has consumed national capitals and has involved a big volume of curriculum space, but has not provided expected results that have been created an obstacle to obtaining the government purposes of developing human capital. This situation has also been undermined the principles of social justice because all students do not get equal access to PT-E that contributes to creating the educational inequality between them. In the same way, if the English language skill is an important issue for getting an extra opportunity, students involved in the current research would be denied access to those paybacks because of their low levels of English attainment that motivates them to receive PT-E.

Consequently, the study provides certain practical implications both mainstream education and its supplementary tutoring. Researchers in mainstream education and private tutoring must be open to a more comprehensive view of tutoring which incorporates the participants as well as the contexts to capture the complexity and dynamics of tutoring. For instance, Bangladesh's education policy (Ministry of Education, 2010) emphasizes the importance of developing students' talents and creativity, but PT-E tutors focus on the rote learning and examination skills so that participants can improve their grades. For this reason, Al Amin and Greenwood, (2018) reported the learning goals of Bangladeshi students are not evaluated in the examination that demotivates students to attend the school English class. Moreover, the data for this present research has drawn from Bangladesh and has been taken into deliberation by very few PT-E researchers. Many people around the world have been taking a keen interest in Bangladesh, which has taken some significant turns over the years. Education is a crucial sector, and the delivery of good education is very critical for the development of this developing nation. Unfortunately, very little literature is currently available (see e.g., Nath, 2008; Hamid et al., 2009; Mahmud, 2019; Mahmud & Bray, 2017) that examines English teaching-learning beyond the formal school classroom and their dynamics in the urban and rural part of Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi people have been shifting to coaching centre business through the government ban on private tuition by the schoolteachers. In this context, the study explores PT-E and examines language teaching and learning beyond the classroom. Thus, it can help to fulfil the current gap in the literature.

Finally, the results of the present research have significant consequences for ELT strategies in relation to out of school hours practices because the low-level English language

outcomes from public examination in both urban and rural students indicate English teaching-learning has consumed national capitals and has involved a big volume of curriculum space but has not provided expected results that have been created an obstacle to obtaining the government purposes of developing human capital. In fact, this situation has also undermined the principles of social justice because all students do not get equal access of PT-E which contributes to creating the educational inequality between them. In the same way, if the English language skill is an important issue for getting extra opportunity, students involved in the current research would be denied access to those paybacks because of their low levels of English attainment that motivates them to receive PT-E.

The study concludes students are losing their confidence in schooling as a result of private tutoring, which throws a challenge to the mainstream education that creates lack of equal opportunity, inequality, and irregularity in educational provisions of the country. There should be a sense of urgency among policy makers to consider curricular and teacher education overhauling to enhance English teaching efficiency in line with students' needs, preferences, and concerns. In addition, the topic is more interesting in the case of developing countries where demand for a better education system is rising day by day. In such a situation, comparing urban and rural settings of private tutoring of English at the higher secondary level becomes crucial to education researchers and the policymakers.

Limitations of the Study

The present research is not out of its margins. In fact, the study has several limitations. The first limitation is the participant numbers. Although the number of participants was suitable for the study design, only 11 interviewees, who are currently involved in PT-E, were chosen for the interview. Therefore, the number of participants kept small to simplify study to determine if there was an association between participants' backgrounds and the forms of tutoring in which they engaged. Second, though the researchers attempt to motivate the participants to narrate details of their authentic experiences, it is inescapable that participants might not be able to recollect all their memories. Finally, the present study only used the mainstream schools' and students' interviews data. Other higher secondary institutions like technical college and vocational training institutes may deliver the value.

To summarize, the conclusion of this study does not end the researchers concern for tutoring and education of Bangladeshi students. In fact, it is the beginning of more inquiry and research. The researchers hope the questions raised in this study will invite more research so more understanding of tutoring and the welfare of Bangladeshi students can be developed.

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