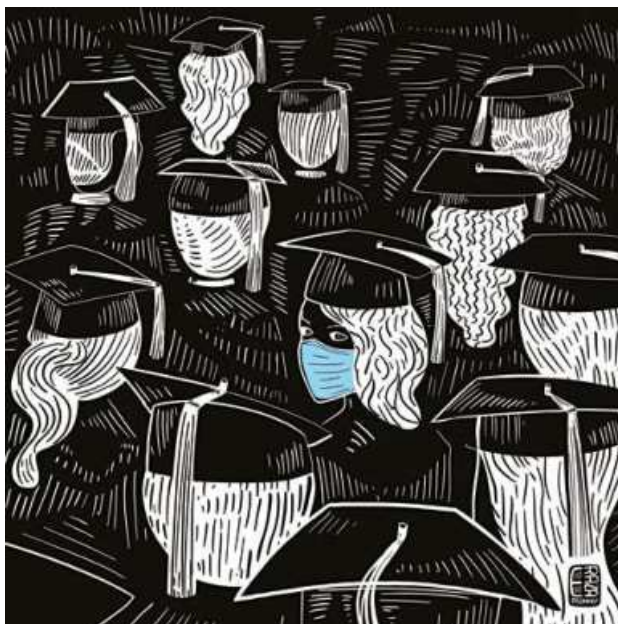


How the class of 2020 is surviving Covid-19

JINAT JAHAN KHAN



The coronavirus pandemic has disrupted the usual hiring process that has affected the job seekers and the job market. The job seekers, especially those who have graduated just before the outbreak or during this pandemic are suffering the most. Many of them are grappling with uncertainty and complexity. Some, however, have got the opportunity to figure out what they want to do, to take preparation for their desired job or to start something on their own.

We talk to a few recent graduates to help us paint a bigger picture. Here's what we found out:

Time to start something new

The pandemic period, especially from March to July, has left these graduates with no choice but to stay at home and to plan everything from the very beginning. This unprecedented time was an eye-opener for many of them. Samiha Zaman, a marketing graduate from Dhaka University shared how she became conscious on developing her skills when she dropped out of a Master's program and was finding a suitable job when the pandemic hit, "I used this period to identify my skill gaps, work on them and also to learn household chores", she said.

Some started online businesses to fight against both uncertainty and unemployment. Mahbub Neon, an economics graduate from the University of Dhaka launched his online grocery service Bazaro during the pandemic, when the lockdown limitations were more strict and challenges were more complex, especially to ensure proper and clean

groceries for the customers and safety of the staffs. "This pandemic has mentally prepared me to change plans midway if needed and always be ready to embrace new opportunities with open arms", he said.

Taking preparation for a better future

For aspirants to pursue higher studies abroad, this lockdown has somehow been a blessing. Fariha Islam, a graduate with a bachelor's degree in Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology from SUST has found this period turned out to be a great opportunity to get prepared and to develop her skills for a better future. She wasn't able to invest this much time in preparation being a Master's student in SUST before the pandemic. "This quarantine life has provided me with the scope and time to take preparation for exams such as GRE and IELTS. I've also completed several online courses to develop skills during this period", said Fariha.

Uncertainty and depression

Undoubtedly, there is a cloud of uncertainty that has engulfed most of the graduates and job-seekers amid this outbreak. Ratul Ahmed, who has graduated from MIST and earned his Master's degree from BUET shared how this situation is lagging him from his aspirations and dwindling his confidence. "My dream is to have a government job so that I can serve his nation. But due to the unsteadiness of the COVID-19 pandemic, I'm left with no choice but to look for private jobs or other available options", said Ratul. He also mentioned how his friends are also in distress and despair like him

and most of the graduates. According to him, amidst these constraints only a few graduates can garner new things, others are facing difficulties as expected.

What the recruiters think

An official from a leading multinational, who wishes to stay anonymous, shared her views on some of the common queries of graduates with us. According to her, the entire job market may not be vulnerable to tackle new graduates. Though the smaller companies are not hiring due to their cost-cutting policies, there are still some companies which have not stopped their recruitment process, and they have almost the same job requirements.

However, it may matter how efficiently a candidate can handle his work virtually or present himself on video calls or an online interview. Online etiquette holds more importance than ever, even if this condition is not explicitly mentioned. Many companies are offering opportunities to do online internships. Graduates may try their luck there too. "These internships always may not ensure better job offers after the pandemic. But if one leverages this scope to learn better, this will definitely add some value when he'll apply for a full-time job", she explained.

"One more factor that may affect our decision positively while selecting a candidate in the post-pandemic world is how flexible and adaptive he was to the new changes during the pandemic. The reason is that it shows his capability to manage a hostile situation in professional life too", she added.



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