

What if we had a four-day school week?

ZIBA MAHDI

The pandemic has made us re-evaluate traditional methods. With everything being moved online, many have found that their flexible schedules allowed them a healthier work-life balance.

This has brought renewed interest in the four-day workweek. The impetus for this schedule is that it would boost productivity and prevent burnout. Countries such as Scotland and Japan are also proposing giving it a trial run.

Students are at as high a risk of being fatigued as adults. School hours vary across the world, but it's not unusual to find students spending about 8 to 10 hours on schools and tuition, excluding commute time. A four-day school week would take some of the pressure off, let students re-energise over a long weekend, and boost productivity. It would also provide them time to pursue extracurriculars, which are at times discouraged by teachers and parents, especially when exams are around the corner.

The extra day can be used to participate in athletics, another activity commonly ignored in our educational institutes. Sports and extracurriculars aside, students would also get to spend quality time with their families. Both student and teacher



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attendance have seen increases in four-day schools according to several studies. The flexible schedule would allow teachers more time to come up with lesson plans or invest in professional training.

Not to mention, a shorter workweek would make teaching an attractive job to many. Less school days would mean fewer vehicles on the roads, which would un-

doubtedly be a boon for the environment.

On the other side, there's a chance that students who were disinterested in school to begin with will disregard their studies even more. Academic momentum may be disrupted over the course of a lengthy weekend and extended leisure time always has the potentiality to be abused.

Additionally, to compensate for the lost

day, all four days could need longer classes which could prove to be hectic for young learners.

Even after compensating for lost time, many may perceive this system to be a lax educational policy. Schools who have implemented this system have received mixed results so far.

A study of schools in Colorado, USA revealed increased juvenile crime after implementing a four-day schedule. Whereas, another study from MIT's *Education Finance and Policy* found improved academic performance in maths and reading.

Then, there are the biggest stakeholders to consider – the students and the parents. Students might welcome the extra day, but parents are likely to be divided on this issue. For single or working parents, arranging care for their younger children on a working day might prove to be a hassle.

The long-term effects of the shorter school week also need to be mulled over. If universities and workplaces continue the five-day workweek, it would be a tough transition for students to handle. Nevertheless, with more emphasis being put on mental health around the world, it's definitely an approach worth considering.

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First Time at a Concert

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It doesn't start easy. You don't start headbanging to the first song, the second one or even the third. Initially, you simply tap your legs. You notice some people jumping up and down like there's no tomorrow and conclude that your social anxiety will never let you be one of them.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

And then it happens. You can't pinpoint when or why you started banging your head, but before you know it, you're grabbing onto your friend's shoulder, shouting your lungs out to a song you barely know and jumping up and down.

The impossible happened. You're one of them now.

My idea of a concert was that you're supposed to know the lyrics to all the songs being performed. The haunting vision of me standing awkwardly in the middle of a crowd, not knowing the lyrics to a popular song as my friends bang their heads made me cringe.

So I did my homework and spent an entire evening rediscovering Bay of Bengal, Conclusion, Warfaze and Meghdol. At 3.30 AM, with my neck aching after headbanging to "Je Shohore Ami Nei" by Bay of Bengal, I heard someone in the back shout to her friend, "I have four reports to complete this mid-break and I have no idea how I'm going to do it!"

I looked back and there she was, jumping to a song she didn't even know. Concerts, ironically enough, aren't all about the music. It isn't really about knowing the lyrics or loving the bands, not as much as we think it is. It's about being a part of the crowd and forgetting your stress, your grief, your anxiety.

It's an escape from reality, even if

for those 40 seconds you're capering until your knees hurt and you run out of breath.

Friends crying to "Purono Shei Diner Kotha" or Warfaze singing "Boshe Achi" at six in the morning in front of a crowd that's been waiting 13 hours for this moment – it all sounds overwhelming once reminisced. I saw the soft glimmering ray of the sun shine above a roaring campus, saw someone cover his loved one with a shawl in that piercing winter morning and sing "Purnota" together.

Yet, something else stood out.

Around 2.30 AM, as Meghdol sang "Maya Cycle", I looked up at the foggy night sky. The moon was just shy of a full one. In a crowd of hundreds, the chaos didn't reach my ears anymore. Maybe it was 18 hours of sleeplessness paying off or maybe it was the solace in Shibu Kumer Shill's voice. I closed my eyes. "Ei Nai Hoye Jawa Shunnota" sang the last lines of the song which roughly translates to "this vanishing desolation."

After one and a half years of the pandemic, after fear engulfed our minds and anxiety agonised our souls, even if for those six seconds on a shivering December night, the desolation left in our hearts did vanish.

Remind Ifti to be quieter at hasibur-rashidifti@gmail.com