PERCEPTION OF ONLINE EXAMINATION STRESS AMONG STUDENTS OF TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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The outbreak of the pandemic, due to the spread of COVID-19, has catapulted the educational scenario throughout the globe. After the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the situation as a global pandemic on March 11, 2020, most of the countries went into a complete lockdown. Millions of stakeholders in the field of education, like researchers, academicians as well as students were forced to stay safe indoors by isolating themselves from the physical campuses. Thus, teaching-learning suffered the most and the mental health of learners stood threatened. To save the situation from getting worse, the conduct of classes switched over to online mode and e-learning environments were built in order to keep the process of education in momentum. In India, since face to face mode of teaching has been more prevalent, to stay connected, both the teachers and students were acclimatized with the collaborative technologies through workshops, webinars, and training in online mode. But the successful implementation of e-Learning systems came to depend on the receptivity and skill development of the learners, the attitude of the instructors, and the quality of learning content.

Though online teaching emerged as one of the promising alternatives to the physical classroom, students exhibit a negative perception of online learning behavior (Rohman, Marji, Sugandi, & Nurhadi, 2020), and perhaps this seems accountable for psychological distress amongst them. Various other causes can also be attributed to e-Learning crack-up such as course quality, the usability of content, technological ease, availability of technical assistance, and the likelihood of interaction with peer students (Penna and Stara, 2007, Ssekakubo et al., 2011). But stress

due to online mode of examination, specially amongst teacher-trainees, has been sparsely reported in developing countries

With the apprehension of the outbreak of third wave still lurking, teaching-learning and assessment of learning outcomes i.e. examinations, continue to be conducted in the online mode. They are being recognized as one of the more efficient assessment methods both in blended or traditional forms of learning, and, if appropriately administered, have been found to be beneficial to both learners and the learning process. However, the online exams have posed a potent threat to the mental health of the learners. A research carried out by National Children's Bureau in May 2019 in the United Kingdom has shared its finding with the BBC Correspondent which affirms that the mental health of pupils threatened by online world and exams. In such a scenario, learners' perceptions of stress in online exams requires exploration.In addition, finding out learners' perceptions could reveal factors that would make online examinations more accurate and effective.

Literature Review

It is important to surf and mention the outcome of studies related to the topic in hand. Many studies have analyzed learners' online exam experiences and perceptions.

- Cabı (2016) investigated master's students' perceptions of various e-assessment methods. The results showed that students preferred e-exams because they offered immediate feedback, motivation for study, and self-assessment. Yet, students had concerns related to cheating possibilities, technical failures, and the limited number of sessions for online exams offered throughout the term.

- The work of Laine et al. (2016) found that students were satisfied with both the electronic versions of exams and the appropriateness of exam questions. Their only challenge related to mathematical problems and calculations, in which they indicated the difficulties entering mathematical calculations and unpleasant use of the calculator.

- Böhmer, Feldmann, and Ibsen (2018) investigated part-time engineering students' opinions about the e-exam system and found that they were generally satisfied since they could easily take e-exams and receive their grades quickly.

- Elsalem (2020) found that:

    (i) remote E-exams are more stressful in one third of students from faculties of medical sciences.

    (ii) Exam duration, mode of questions navigation and technical problems are

major causes for students stress with remote E-exams.

(iii) Remote E-exam experience has a negative impact on students' habits
are related to diet, sleep, physical activity and smoking.

- Hillier (2014) surveyed undergraduate students. According to the findings, learners generally had positive attitudes toward online exams. However, they indicated concerns that this approach would favour students from technology majors over those from other departments. The students surveyed felt that students in computer departments would more easily adapt to online exams since they had more typing experience. Other concerns included the risk of technical failure and the possibility of cheating.

- Research in the UAE by Elmehdi and Ibrahem (2019) showed that students felt positively about online exams due to facilitated logistics and improved learning. Moreover, researchers reported no difference in perception in terms of age and gender.

The literature review demonstrated that learners had generally positive attitudes toward online exams. However, differences according to demographic variables were less clear. In addition, the review revealed that the concerns of learners in developed countries were also being reported by learners in developing countries. In general, these concerns include the possibility of cheating, risk of technical failures, lack of exam time, and lack of quality of questions.

Objectives of the Study

1) To study the perception of Online Examination Stress among pupil teachers of B.ED programme.

2) To categorise the level of stress pupil-teachers experience before or during online examination

3) To know the type of environment pupil-teachers find more congenial for appearing in the online examination

4) To know the coping strategies pupil teachers adopt to overcome the online examination stress.

Population & Sample

The students studying B.Ed course constitute the population.

The sample has been drawn from 152 students studying in B.Ed course in the constituent Institutions of University of Allahabad.

Purposive Sampling technique has been employed to collect data from the sample through Google Forms using online mode

Delimitation

1)The study is limited to the pupil-teachers of Bachelor of Education course of Teacher Education Programmes

2)The study has been limited to the pupil-teachers undergoing training in the city of Allahabad

3) The study has been done on the pupil-teachers pursuing B.Ed from the University of Allahabad

Methodology

For gathering the perception towards online examination stress, the researcher has constructed a scale consisting of 22 items. Five-point Likert scale has been employed to procure the responses from the participants. The scale consists of 20 objective items expressed in terms of the experience one underwent while attempting examination in the online mode. The responses have been sought through five options ranging from "Never", "Sometimes", "Many times","Mostly" and "Always". Items nos. 21 and 22 are subjective in nature. 21st item is an open-ended question that seeks for, from the participant, any other stressful experience he/she may have encountered before or during the exams. 22nd item is also an open-ended question seeking the coping strategy one adopts to overcome stress.

The questions have been categorised under the following dimensions to assess the perception of participants:

S. No.	Dimension/Aspect	Number of Questions
1.	Affective aspect (includes technical e-learning problem)	5
2.	Internet Connectivity problem	11
3.	Exam duration (time limit)(inclusive of problems related to management of online exam processes)	4
4.	Accountability	2
5.	Security	1
6.	Exam environment	2
7.	Reliability	1
8.	Output/performance- (dependent on other students, on teacher's content delivery)	2
9.	Satisfaction derived from the conduct of practicum/other evaluatory activities	2
10.	Open ended questions (i) (asking for any other stressful experience) (ii) (coping strategy used)	2

Scoring of the responses to objective items

The responses have been scored by assigning numerical values to eachstress response type-
Never=0, Sometimes=1, Many times=2, Mostly=3 and Always=4

Statistical technique used:-

1) To categorise students under different levels of stress, Mean & Standard Deviation of the total Online Exam Stress score has been used. By taking the Mean and S.D. on the total score obtained in each dimension, the perceived stress in students was categorised into High, Moderate and low. Students scoring above the value obtained using Mean+S.D. were found to be perceiving high stress, whereas students scoring below the value obtained using Mean-S.D. were found to be perceiving low stress and those scoring between the values of Mean+S.D. and Mean-S.D were considered as perceiving moderate stress.

2) Percentage (%) analysis on each dimension has been carried out to know the amount of its contribution in making the pupil-teacher experience stress in online mode of examination stress pupil-teachers encounter while giving examinations in online mode.

3) For the 21st and 22nd items, the qualitative methodology has been employed to identify the types of coping strategies pupil-teachers use to overcome Online Exam Stress

Results

(A) To study the perception of Online Examination Stress among pupil teachers of B.ED programme. With reference to the first objective the percentage analysis was done on the 8 dimensions and is being diagrammatically represented below

i) Affective aspect (includes technical e-learning problem)
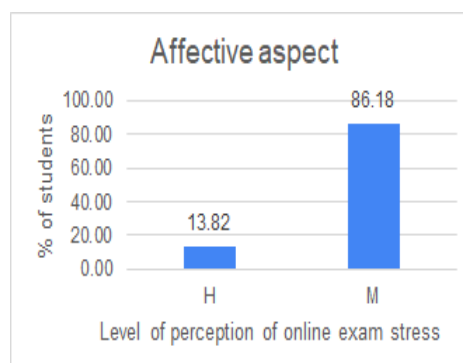
The affective aspect evoked perception on "Giving exams in an online mode is more stressful than an in campus handwritten exam", "I experience discomfort when giving exams in an online mode", "I feel I am at a disadvantage when attempting exams in an online mode", "The unknown aspects of the online mode of exam make me feel nervous" and " Problems faced in technical know-how make examination quite stressful". Thus, 13.82% of students have been found perceiving high online exam stress, whereas 86.18% have been found to experience moderate stress.

The students perceive stress due to online mode of exam as it is a new phenomena to them forced by circumstances. Since they lack the required skill and training to effeciently handle technology. They need to be trained in the skill of handling technology, which in turn will spiral their confidence and mitigate the experience of stress.

ii) Internet Connectivity problem
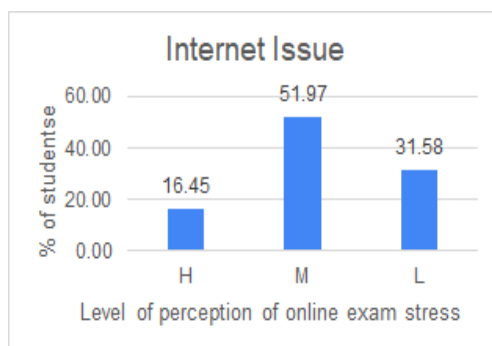
This dimension sought perception on the experience of fear and stress due to problems like weak/poor connectivity issues. Almost 52% of students perceive moderate stress whereas 16.45% perceive high stress and 31.58% perceive low stress.

Perhaps, connectivity issues are caused by factors beyond the control of students, a larger number of students perceive moderate stress. The situation caused during examination such as poor connectivity or snapping of connectivity spurs tension and anxiety amongst the students as, probably, they feel the situation getting out of their control and they are unable to correct it.

iii) Exam duration
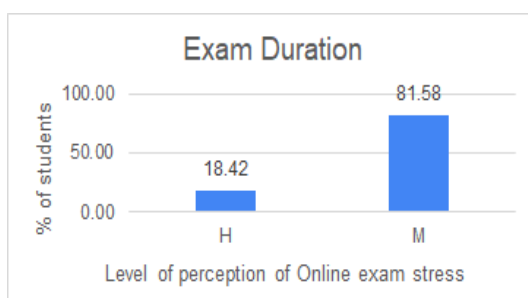
This dimension sought perception on the experience of online exam stress on issues concerning "access of question paper in time", " complete exam in time", "might not be able to upload/submit answer script in time" and "uncertainity about the receipt of answer script by the Institution". The

students have been found to perceive either high online exam stress (18.42%) or moderate online exam stress (81.58).

The students perceive that the given exam duration in online mode is inadequate.To overcome this perception the students should be given practice sessions through mock tests so that they learn to manage the entire online examination process within limited time.

iv) Accountability
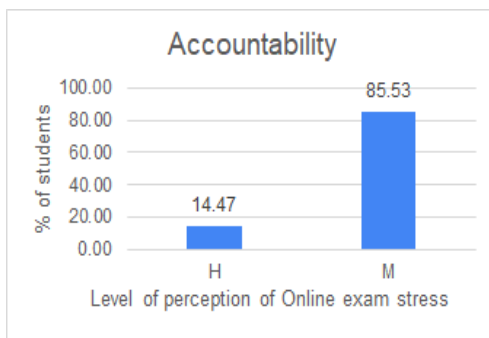
This dimension sought the perception on how stressful do the students find the proctoring in the online exam and to what extent does the online exam pressure hinder their performance. 14.47% of students perceived high stress and 85.53 % perceived moderate stress.
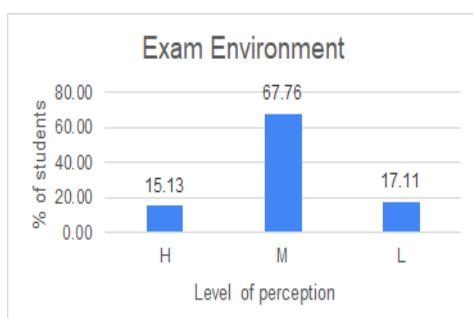
v) Security
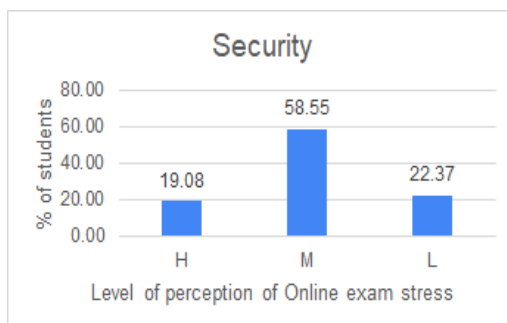
In this dimension 19.08% of students perceived online exams to be highly secure and safe than the paper-based in-campus exam, whereas 22.37% perceived online exams to be less secure and safe. However, more than half of the students i.e. 58.55% of them found online exams to be moderately secure and safe.
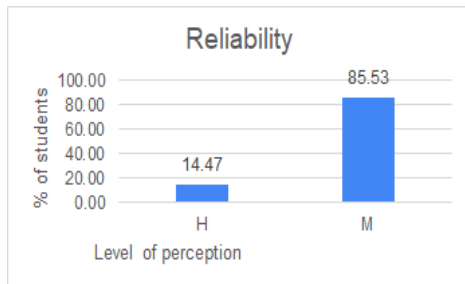
vi)Exam environment

In this dimension 67.76% of students have moderate level of perception about home environment to be more motivating and appropriate for giving online mode of examination than the campus environment. Whereas only 15.13% perceive home environment to be highly motivating and
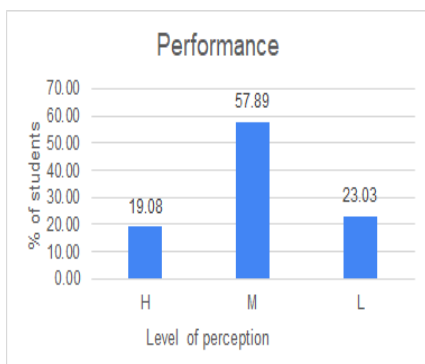
appropriate for online exams.

vii) Reliability

Reliability

In this dimension 85.53% of students hold a moderate level of perception on reliability of online mode of examination whereas 14.47% have a high level of perception about the reliability of online exam

viii) Output/performance

In this dimension 19.08% of students highly attribute other students good performance because of cheating and faulty content delivery of teachers' as a factors for one's poor performance. 57.89% of students have a moderate perception and 23.03 hold   a low level of perception regarding dependency of one's performance on the performance of other students and teachers' role in not covering the syllabus appropriately

ix) Satisfaction on conduct of practicum in online mode
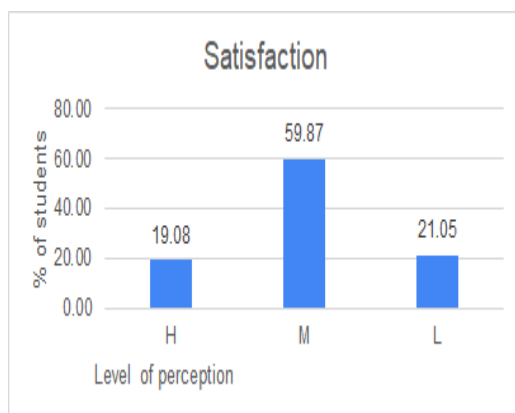
In this dimension 19.08% of students are highly satisfied with the conduct of practicum/evaluatory activities, assignments whereas more than half of the students (59.87%) perceive moderate level of satisfaction on the online conduct of evaluatory activities.

(B) To categorise the pupil-teachers on the basis of the level of perception of online examination stress
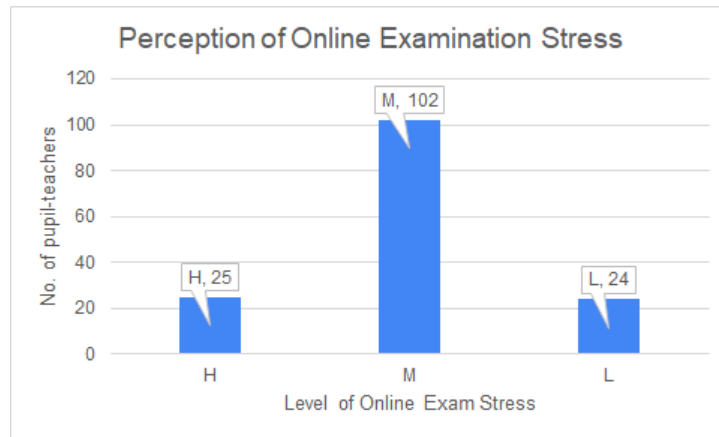
All the dimensions taken together 68% of students perceive online exam as moderately stressful, while 16% perceive online exam as highly stressful and the other 16% perceive them as less stressful

The qualitative analysis on the question asking for any other factor causing online exam stress, reveals that lack of confidence and motivation to handle technology are other factors leading to perception of online exam as stressful experience.

As far as the coping strategies students adopt to overcome online exam stress are taking mock tests, practicing accessing of documents and uploading them within time limit before the exam, listening to music and keeping oneself calm.

Thus, for effective implementation of online exam in professional programme such as B.Ed. it is necessary to provide hands on training to the students in the skill to handle technology. They should also be administered mock tests so as to induce confidence and hence increase motivation to take on online exam. Moreover, majority of students found home environment more congenial than the in-campus environment for giving online exam. This indicates that in case of adoption of online evaluation system in the campuses in regular course, the exams environment will have to be made friendly- strong network connections, updated systems, assistants to extend help if any technology related problem arises. This would boost the confidence of the students in the online mode of exam and also prepare them for the adoption of this evaluation system as an alternative to pen-paper based exam.

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