

ONLINE CLASSES DURING THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK CAUSED A VARIETY OF ACADEMIC STRESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract:

Purpose – This study seeks to uncover the many types of academic stress faced by students in higher education institutions as teaching methods shifted from offline to online during the Covid-19 outbreak.

Design/methodology/approach – The underlying reasons for students' academic stress will be investigated using the author's self-prepared Student Opinion Questionnaire (SOQ). A total of 205 students from one of the best academic institutions in North Bengal, which is located in the Indian state of West Bengal, were chosen for this study from the first, third, and fifth semesters.

Findings: The Student Opinion Questionnaire (SOQ) took into account two factors: socio-demographic stress and academic stress. The fact that 42% of respondents were first-generation students was the most significant source of socio-demographic stress. The instability of the internet, lack of academic recognition, submission of online answer scripts, and different guidelines of offline classes in different states of India were identified in academic stress parameters out of nine parameters given in the SOQ.

Originality/value – To the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is an empirical study of one of the premier higher education colleges in North Bengal, where a large percentage of students are first-generation learners, highlighting the types of academic stresses they experience.

Key words: Online, Stress, Socio-demographic & Academic.

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Introduction:

One should definitely treasure their college years because they are among the most unforgettable days of one's life. The worsening pandemic emergency has compelled educational establishments to go under lockdown alongside the rest of the globe since March 2020, and classes were held online. Students and professors equally are missing the weightage of regular courses in college. The study is being carried out at one of North Bengal's most prestigious colleges. North Bengal, in India's West Bengal state, acts as a gateway for seven north-eastern Indian states as well as three international borders with Bangladesh, Bhutan, and Nepal. It's famous for its tea gardens, particularly Darjeeling Teas, diverse animal population, forested landscapes, and Educational Institutions.

The online classes conducted during the pandemic had a different impact in various parts of the world. In North Bengal, before the pandemic, the system of online classes was not in operation therefore the rapid transition from offline to online classrooms caused a lot of stress among the students. The paper will focus on the real-world issues of student academic stress and how they are linked to socio-demographic factors.

Literature review: It is essential to quickly review prior research investigations in the connected topic of work undertaken by notable authors. Academic responsibilities, financial demands, and a lack of time management skills have resulted in many college students experiencing high levels of stress throughout their online lectures at predictable times. Frustration, anxiety, and sadness, according to Keinan and Perlberg (1986), are among the potential effects of a high level of stress. Higher levels of stress can have a detrimental impact on college student's health and academic performance (Campbell & Svenson, 1992). The tools available to a person in order to deal with various stressful events and situations determine the amount of stress experienced (Zeidner, 1992). Stressors are described as events that disturb or threaten to disrupt people's daily functioning and force them to make changes (Auerbach & Grambling 1998). Stress is defined as a negative emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological reaction that happens when a person attempts to cope with or adjust to stresses (Bernstein, et al 2008).

Objectives: The research will be focused on two key goals:

1. To be aware of and realize how socio-demographic factors influence a student's academic stress in online classes.
2. Recognize and explain the actual cause of academic stress in online classes.

Methodology: The research methodology used for this study is an empirical analysis where a total of 205 students from one of the best academic institutions in North Bengal, was chosen from the first, third, and fifth semesters. The author's self-prepared Student Opinion Questionnaire (SOQ) was prepared after analyzing various previous related questionnaires.

Findings and Discussion:

Socio-demographic: Eighty-six of the 205 respondents were first-generation learners, according to the Socio-demographic questions. During the epidemic, the students were not in a position to accept any assistance from their parents. As a result, they are more resilient to stress. The second sort of socio-demographic stress resulted from their parents' professions throughout the epidemic. In relation to the father's occupation, the author distinguished four sorts of professions. Surprisingly, twenty-five were government workers, twenty-five were private employees, seventy-two were self-employed, and eighty-three were classified as other miscellaneous occupations. As a substantial majority of respondents' fathers were self-employed and involved in miscellaneous professions we can see that they have lost their source of income, which is one of the causes for their stress. Because stronger women build stronger nations (Zainab Salbi), the author sought to know how many mothers had jobs to support their families throughout the epidemic. It was disturbing to learn that 90.2 percent were housewives, with 1.5 percent working for the government, 2.9 percent in the business sector, and

5.4 percent self-employed. As a result, in the vast majority of cases, there was no assistance from the mother's side. As a result, even the most basic essentials of life were a struggle for these children. Annual family income characteristics were separated into six levels in the questionnaire: 0-1 lakh, 1-2 lakh, 2-3 lakh, 3-4 lakh, 4-5 lakh, and 5 lakh and beyond. It was clear from the above parents' professions that 132 respondents chose their annual family income in the range of 0-1 lakh, 35 in the range of 1-2 lakhs, sixteen in the range of 2-3 lakhs, five in the range of 3-4 lakhs, ten in the range of 4-5 lakhs, and only seven in the range of above 5 lakhs. As a result of the socio-demographic variables, we can conclude that students were stressed by major factors such as first-generation learners, parent occupations, and family incomes. These variables had an impact on their academics, causing the majority of them to be stressed and unable to study.

Table 1: Socio-demographic items

Sl.No.	Measure	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Total Respondents		205	100
1.	Gender wise	Male	105	51.2%
		Female	100	48.8%
2.	Age wise	17 years	1	0.5%
		18 years	35	17.1%
		19 years	63	30.7%
		20 years	57	27.8%
		Above 20 years	49	23.9%
3.	Semester wise	1 st	71	34.6%
		3 rd	74	36.1%
		5 th	60	29.3%
4	Home States	West Bengal	130	63.14%
		Sikkim	45	21.95%
		Uttar Pradesh	08	3.90%
		Bihar	19	9.26%
		Rajasthan	03	1.45%
5	1 st generation Learners	Yes	86	42%
		No	119	58%
6	Father's profession	Govt. sector	25	12.2%
		Private. sector	25	12.2%
		Self employed	72	35.1%
		Others	83	40.5%
7	Mother's profession	Govt. sector	03	1.5%
		Private sector	06	2.9%
		Self employed	11	5.4%
		House wife	185	90.2%
8	Annual Family income	0-1 lakh	132	64.4%
		1-2 lakh	35	17.1%
		2-3 lakh	16	7.8%
		3-4 lakh	05	2.4%

		4-5 lakh	10	4.9%
		5 lakh & above	07	3.4%
9	Place opted for online class	Own House	174	84.9%
		Rented House	19	9.3%
		Paying guest	12	5.9%
		Friend's house	00	00%
10	Attended Covid awareness programme	Yes	166	81%
		No	39	19%
11	Preferred mode of Learning	offline	31	15.1%
		Online	92	44.9%
		Blended	72	35.1%
		Self-Learning	10	4.9%

Academic Stress: The academic stress was classified using a five-point Likert scale and nine criteria. Surprisingly, online teaching was not determined to be the primary source of academic stress. Other aspects of online academic learning, such as Internet instability, a lack of academic recognition, the submission of online answer scripts, and varied forms of offline classrooms in different parts of India, were cited as major sources of academic stress.

Table 2: Academic Stress items

Sl.No.	Measure	5 Point Likert Scale				
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Total Respondents	205				
1	How do you perceive doing Online classes during this pandemic?	2.4%	7.8%	35.6%	44.9%	9.3%
2.	How do you perceive the class routine set for online classroom during pandemic?	3.4%	7.8%	31.2%	54.6%	2.9%
3	How do you perceive Online Assignment based examination for evaluating your marks	2%	5.4%	25.9%	58.5%	8.3%
4	How do you perceive your chance given to clear your doubts during online classroom	3.4%	8.3%	30.7%	48.8%	8.8%
5	How do you perceive missing of classes due to bad internet connection	4.4%	13.2%	23.4%	40%	19%

6	How do you perceive the problem you faced during online submission of Answer scripts	1.5%	14.1%	28.8%	41%	14.6%
7	How do you perceive not being able to get academic recognition during online classes	2.9%	14.6%	48.3%	27.8%	6.3%
8	How do you perceive the lockdown rules of higher educational institutes different all over the world	2.9%	8.3%	36.6%	43.4%	8.8%
9	How do you perceive when colleges of different states of India were having offline classes during the pandemic and affect your performance	4.9%	13.7%	30.7%	40%	10.7%

Conclusion:

It was discovered that the major cause of academic stress during the Covid-19 epidemic was not online classes. The major problem was internet unreliability, which was compounded by additional factors such as online submission of answer scripts, academic recognition, and differing class rules in different Indian states. It was found in many cases, socio-demographic variables were also to blame for academic stress. Future research on academic stress may be conducted in association with other academic sub-parameters. This will aid in the understanding and exploration of the fundamental cause of academic stress, as well as the de-escalation of student stress.

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