

Stressors in Electronic Exams in Covid-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Since emerging Covid-19 on March 11, 2020, universities have suspended or canceled their activities in their campus for example classroom learning, workshops, congress and examinations. Policy Makers in Higher Education and Faculty members transitioned their learning, assessment and evaluations to electronic learning and exams. Stress due to Covid 19 spreading and Stress due to exams have challenged higher education. Students may experience double stress through this situation.

Background: The pandemic of coronavirus is named COVID-19, has challenged the world during the past several months. Coronavirus is transmitted through direct contact with the patient (coughing, sneezing, respiratory droplets). Respiratory droplets spread through close contact from a person to others (hugging, kissing, and patient care) can transmit coronavirus. The COVID-19 has affected all aspects of human life, specially education and learning (1).

Examinations are the hardest part of a student life as it is associated with pressure to do well, cramming for long hours, and making up for lost work and in general, feeling your life is centered on one result (2).

Exam stress is one of the situational stresses that is closely related to the performance and academic achievement of millions of students in educational institutions. Psychological tensions in exam stress conditions affect students' academic performance. Students report stress when taking their exams, and this fact affects their performance (3). Mild stress may be beneficial in cognitive tasks and performance while persistently high stress may lead to anxiety and/or depression (2). The relationship between stress and performance in an exam now leads to an electronic test environment, which adds to the complexity of the test in terms of the performance of the technical tools. The state of the exam and the test causes psychological pressure on both the student and the professor. While the candidate is taking the test to show her knowledge and is looking for a good score, the professor feels pressured for other reasons: Are all the questions well understood, Are all the questions solvable with this information provided, Are the students trying to cheat? And do all test takers continue the process without any health problems? These are just some of the common questions that an examiner faces (4). Although e-exams have been adopted by many educational institutions as a method of assessment, these exams are based on university e-exams. However, taking e-exams remotely means that students take exams at home, which poses many other challenges.

Distance electronic exams appear more stressful in almost a third of all students, while in-university exams are reported to be more stressful by a quarter of students. Since this is students' first experience in distance electronic

exams, unfamiliarity and lack of basic features in the electronic exam system may contribute to student stress (5).

Holding exams virtually has its own advantages and disadvantages:

1. Advantages of E- exams

Among the advantages of holding exams virtually are no space and time restrictions, elimination of travel time to the test site, flexibility in modifying and changing content with interactive learning, easy access to multiple professors in the electronic system, quick knowledge of the score obtained in the exam, Economic and time savings, feeling of peace and security with the family.

2. Disadvantages of E- exams

Power outages in some areas, lack of permanent and fast internet access, lack of access to computers, possibility of test fraud, cheating lack of knowledge of new technology (8).

Among these factors, technical problems related to e-exams or Internet communication have both been reported as contributing factors to stress in approximately two-thirds of students who consider distance e-exams to be more stressful (5). Another issue with exam stress is the stress of the covid-19 pandemic and quarantine, which doubles the stress. Given that students in the quarantine period have learned lessons through e-learning, this can maximize covid-19 stress (6). Boredom and lack of concentration is another challenge during quarantine. Stress from cell phone use is an important factor in disrupting concentration, and studies have shown that working or studying at home can be inherently more stressful. Excessive use of mobile phones, monitoring various cyberspace pages and mobile games. In the living environment, tools such as computers, cell phones, televisions, telephone bells or doorbells can be a distraction, and it is very difficult to impose restrictions and boundaries at home, and on the other hand, to keep students in social isolation and distance, staying away from classmates can add to the stress (7). Students do not follow a certain structure during virtual education, then it is one of the main causes of stress in students. To reduce stress, students should first plan and adjust regular schedules, and in this schedule, sleeping and waking hours should be specified. Instead of studying for several hours, give the brain a break between study intervals. Regular and light exercise increases blood circulation in the body and reduces stress hormone. Advised to students to have healthy diet. The student should not trust negative emotions before the exam, such as feelings that I know nothing about or that I feel I have forgotten everything about, because such feelings may occur to most students before the exam (8).

CONCLUSION

Stress is an inevitable part of human. Stress may be healthy in mild level and it can unhealthy in severe level and destroy one's health both physically or mentally. Students in virtual learning and e –exams experienced different stressors and even different responses to same stressors.

The authors recommended measures and counseling to students to reduce their stresses during e-examination.

Authors Contributions

L. S. and A.A.S studied concept, design and provided the draft, edited the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the final manuscript

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