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Research Paper

Comparative Study of Learner Perceptions towards Assessments in Traditional vs. Online Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Assessment is one of the most important practices in universities and it is the design and implementation that has a greater impact on learning and academic performance. Due to advances in technology, online measures are steadily becoming competent to accompany-or even substitute-the conventional face-to-face processes, and hence the desire to know how the learners value the two evaluation models. This study carries out and compares the views of learners on traditional and web-based assessment by administering 406 higher-education respondents, who worked on identical questions of both designs. The criteria clarity, accessibility of the resources, quality of the feedback, equity, perceived stress, and technological effectiveness as the six dimensions that were marked as salient were rated using a 5-point scale. The findings reflect the more positive rating of online testing (mean difference 0.085, $p < 0.001$); an excellent positive correlation between the perceptions of the two assessments ($r = 0.70$) demonstrate that the modalities can be considered similar. Markedly, web-based assessment has an added advantage of larger accessibility, increased technological contribution and ease of smooth interchange between the assessment and course content, but there seems to be no significant difference in terms of perceived stress as well as feedback delay. Such findings provide the inkling that higher-educational institutions can maximize learning and satisfaction outcomes by perfecting the online assessment programs by involving timely responses (feedbacks), and stress acquisitions.

Keywords: *Traditional Assessment, Academic Integrity, Formative Assessment, Educational Technology, Online Learning*

In higher education assessment is a process that is critical in measuring student learning, a guide in instructional strategies as well as a guardian of academic standards. Traditional pedagogy has been based on on-site and direct-engagement assessment with the assessment being provided within face-to-face contexts and using physical written tests. Due to the high technological progression and the growing popularity of digital platforms, the form of online assessment has been offered as one of the dominating options. It has been a technological transition that has encouraged researchers to look into the attitude that learners maintain to these two modes of assessment, comparisons which are very critical considering the importance of learner perception on motivation, engagement, and eventual

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success. Perceptions act as efficient filters: positive evaluations can justify the judgment itself and strengthen the dedication of the learners, but the negative understanding can break down the involvement, rise stress levels, and reduce the performance. Therefore, empirical pressure evaluation of attitudes relating to obvious expectations, understandable contents, excellent comments, fair proceeding, anxiety, and technology performance is inevitable on the improvement of assessment procedures that can maximise student performance and educational achievement.

Aim and Objectives

Aim

To Compare the Perceptions of learners' towards Assessments in Online vs. Traditional Higher Education

Objective

- To identify the perception factors of learner' towards assessment in traditional higher education.
- To identify the learners' perception factors towards assessment in online higher education.
- To compare the learners' perception towards assessment in traditional and online higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the theory and practical, assessment has been greatly embedded in the higher education context with summative evaluation models. The usual objective of these models is to assess the student performance at the end of an instructional session by giving standardized tests, final tests and significant written tasks. It was meant mainly to grade and certify learning outcomes. But in time, this traditional paradigm has been criticized as being inflexible, as a consequence of placing stress, and as not being able to adequately track the entire repertoire of student learning and student abilities.

This has been a radical reconsideration of assessment- not just the up and down checking of what has been learned but part of the learning process. According to Condon and Krewer (2010), one of the learning practices that is preferred is formative assessment as indicated since it will solicit deep knowledge and critical thinking. The latest developments in digital technologies, as such, have, thus, led to the paradigmatic shift in taking traditional summative assessments in favor of formative practices incorporated into the very structure of digital platforms, which allows constant feedback to the students and tracking their progress in real-time. The ensuing early stage access to learning gaps enable the teacher to differentiate teaching and learning procedures. E-portfolios, discussion forums, instant feedback quizzes, and peer-graded assignments have become widespread in the digital assessment environment and thus, the performance-based approach system shifted towards one that is based on learning. Moreover, the artificial intelligence (AI)-powered technologies of adaptive learning enable delivering the form of individualised feedback and differentiated grading based on the study progression.

Technological, pedagogical, and situational factors walk hand in hand together to achieve the growing adoption of digital assessment methods in higher education. Technological Enhancement of the educational platforms is one of the major drivers. The abundance of Learning Management Systems (LMS) including Blackboard, Moodle, and Canvas has

increased and augmented the number of these systems available and therefore it is a possibility to administer assessments online effectively and with a sense of security. These systems allow different types of assessments, such as multiple-choice quiz, short-answer question tests, audio/video assignments, and timed assessment. Gikandi et al. (2011) describe the role digital tools play in facilitating formative assessment integration since they enable the platform to deliver feedback to the students at the right time, revise the materials, and further refine performance. Along with adoption of cloud computing, mobile learning as well as artificial intelligence (AI), there is emergence of new evaluation paradigms and hence the teaching process is taken more dynamic as well as interactive process. The important prerequisites of this change are the COVID-19 pandemic that will made this important to shift to a virtual learning environment. On the other hand, digital assessments are the mandatory modality now and not synthetic. For maintaining the scholarly process, schools and institutions resorted to some more inventive measures which compelled them to make changes to the structure of tests. Heil and Ifenthaler (2023 said that the pandemic was a catalyst and traditional organizations has been found themselves for being forced to faster paced digital transformation. Within the university, the example of this disruptor was the skyrocketing of online testing and monitoring devices, exams systems, and asynchronous learning opportunities for keeping the level of academic integrity high and, at the same time, train large numbers of learners. The overall changes showed the advantages and disadvantages of the existing digital assessment tools.

Liu et al. (2023) observe that more students are likely to acquire satisfaction and increased engagement with older submission windows and variety of assessment types. This flexibility plays an important role in the context of universities of geographically dispersed learners.

Although there are benefits, the switch to digital assessment has also revealed several issues, especially with regard to academic integrity, technical reliability and data privacy. Academic dishonesty has become one of the most burning issues. Uncontrolled or even lightly controlled online assessment is considered to raise the possibility to cheat, plagiarise, and collaborate. Etgar et al. (2019) document a considerable increase in the cases of unfair activities during the pandemic period and some students admit openly that they collaborate or consult with unauthorized materials during the examinations. Although remote proctoring- whereby an examination can be watched remotely with artificial intelligence tracking movement, the browser is locked down, and identity checked using artificial intelligence and other remote monitoring technologies- has been recently introduced, its effectiveness is still debatable.

The next level restriction has been associated with technological aspect. Digital assessment may be negatively affect at the time of technical problems affect objectivity and integrity: poor quality related to the internet connection, the inability of hardware, and mystery for the digital interface may also disadvantage students. As per the views of Kharbat and Daabes (2021), these disparities are strongly correlated for the socioeconomic disparities create an increasingly high risk related to educational inequality.

This type of as integrity and the accessibility of information, the issue related to privacy has become a leading third factor. Student are mainly associations and activist groups that reluctant to use proctoring software that eye flow, captures facial expression, and screen motion indicating about the sustained checking which is producing an unhealthy environment.

Chantal et al. (2023) note that this type of surveillance can be intrusive and it can be against the protection of data, especially in those jurisdictions where privacy laws are strict. At the same time, the assessment digitally tools are also in use related to the formal learning settings, albeit about the improvements within the the level of usage for recent times, there are doubts related to their effectiveness as well as ethical dimension. For the important is the fact that most of the existing implementations not put much consideration related to the neuro-divergent students and people along with high level anxiety disorders due to these are the two groups which are likely going to be affected most negatively and also having experiences with the given technologies the most traumatic. For example- a multiple-choice test that is offering immediate feedback which will be highly effective in facilitating learning compared related to the test that will mainly taking unnecessarily long waiting time before the results has been announced. Hence, the multimedia and interactive features ensure and the level of assessments are more stimulating and real-to-life related to problem solving. There are some negative experiences which are related by the students, who namely the perceptions concerning the fairness and the emotionally satisfying nature of digital assessment.

According to Eltahir et al. (2023), learners are complaining about inconsistent marking, absence of any clarity regarding automatized scoring, and inability to access personalized assessment online. Especially remote proctoring has been addressed as one of the biggest causes of assessment-induced anxiety, as students have reported getting a sense of being followed or having to face evaluation or unfair punishment because they naturally type slowly or look away. Besides, asynchronous assessments may cause a sense of loneliness because students do not have group discussions and the interactive learning environment provided by physical classrooms.

Overall, the literature suggests that although digital assessment presents considerable opportunities of innovation and inclusivity in higher learning, it is also necessary to design them ethically and carefully. The golden mean between using the potential of the traditional and digital approach can be the way to go.

METHODOLOGY

The term methodology is frequently used in the social sciences, and indicates the organizational process of planning and carrying out procedures by which research results are gathered, studied and interpreted. It outlines the path that the researchers would follow to answer their research questions or verify their hypotheses, including the design, methods of data collection, sampling procedures and decisions about statistical analysis. Accuracy with which such a framework is described cannot be underestimated since it supports reliability and validity of the study by explicating the steps which can be criticized or even tried to be emulated by other researchers. In a nutshell, methodology acts as a conceptual plan of operation, which determines how data are to be obtained and analyzed in a manner that makes the final conclusions meaningful and plausible.

Research Design

The survey instrument was used in the present analysis that was quantitative and comparative in its design. The subjects were requested to describe their general impressions of the traditional and online assessment in higher education through a well-defined questionnaire with Likert statement items. The 406 learners provided the data that allowed paired within-subject observations across assessment formats. Test means within-

participants were compared by a paired-sample t-test, therefore reducing intra-individual variance and increasing statistical power. The methodological decision made it easier to identify the significant difference in the perceptions across the assessment modes thereby resulting in objective measurement and successful statistical inference.

Data Collection

The research data were collected by use of structured questionnaires to 406 learners in higher education. The tool included Likert-scale surveys that evaluated the attitude to both the traditional and on-line systems of assessment in the terms of clarity, fairness, accessibility, feedback, and the stress. Subjects gave paired answers to both types of the assessments, which allowed a direct comparison to be made. This design meant that the dimensions under consideration have been covered extensively and the appraisal of learner attitudes was done easily. The answers got anonymized and were tallied in an orderly manner, thus facilitating statistical analysis, such as the calculation of means, variances, correlations, and paired t-tests.

Limitations

The current results of the data analysis of the student perceptions towards both traditional and online assessment in higher education also exhibit various limitations of its own. Report data of the surveys are often prone to measurement error as the respondents might give social-face answers or misunderstand the questions especially when using Likert scale. The generality of the findings in the present study is not too broad despite the large size of the student sample used (N=406) because not all the student demographic and institutional settings could be reached by the study participants. Moreover, the constructs of stress and timeliness of feedback received rather a large amount of neutral or negative ratings; this outcome may reflect either a sensitivity to measuring or the failure to measure specific constructs. The limitation on the insight of the learners to their experiences was also caused by the fact that the main questions were of closed type. Such external factors as control of access to the technologies, and the academic culture of the time may have played an important role in the relatively positive scores of the online checkers of the analyses. Therefore, it would be best to interpret such data with caution and another qualitative or long-range study is to be expected to confirm and finalize the findings.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Learners' perception factors towards traditional assessment in higher education

Table 1: Learners' perception towards traditional assessment in higher education

Perception factor	Frequency				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Assessment Criteria Clarity	95	169	108	17	17
Assessment material Accessibility	130	94	133	24	25
Feedback provided timely	82	139	126	36	23
Feedback is constructive	91	141	131	27	16
Assessment fairness	112	121	133	15	25
Received support for assessment	92	124	148	24	18
Diversity in assessment	111	124	130	27	14
Engagement with assessment process	110	146	119	17	14

Perception factor	Frequency				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Assessment relevancy with course content	117	129	123	19	18
Effectiveness of technology in assessment process	91	124	127	46	18
Assessment helpful in achieving learning outcomes	95	128	144	23	16
Assessment maintains academic integrity	106	140	128	16	16
Assessment stress during classroom	104	115	133	27	27
Effectiveness of oracle skills in assessment	114	121	129	27	15
Effectiveness of different assessment format	103	129	140	18	16
Effective management of group work assessment	110	133	130	13	20
Self-assessment opportunity	109	134	123	24	16
Satisfaction with assessment practice	103	125	140	23	15

The source at hand explains how learners view the traditional practice of assessment in higher education. A large proportion of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the clarity of assessment criteria; 264 (total responses) divided carefully (approximately a 75 % agreement) by a considerable majority that agreed or strongly agreed with the clarity of the assessment criteria. In the same way, learner satisfaction on the area of being able to access assessment material was also largely positive with 224 affirmation and 49 negative responses. Although learners tended to perceive the timeliness and constructiveness of the feedback as only moderate issues, still a significant percentage of answers was neutral, therefore, showing that there is the possibility to increase active feedback provision.

There was a relative balance in the learner perceptions of fairness of assessment and their support by the student, although a large proportion held neutral or opposed views, indicating a possibility of equity gaps. Aspects of engagement, diversity and relevance of the assessment formats were largely viewed in a positive manner, as more than two thirds of the respondents affirmed their effectiveness.

On the other hand, the perception worsened in other areas of the need of assessment related stress, technology effectiveness and the option of self-assessment. The integrity of academic practice and conducting group assessment was considered positive; however, the general satisfaction with assessment practice necessitates the gradual improvement by integrating assistive technologies and finding more varied forms to minimize the stress on students and help achieve learning outcomes. Altogether, students value openness and guidance, but they demand promptly provided feedback, impartiality, and less pressure in both national and international testing.

Learners' perception factors towards online assessment in higher education

Table 2: Learners' perception towards online assessment in higher education

Perception factor	Frequency				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Assessment Criteria Clarity	100	129	126	34	17
Assessment material Accessibility	140	135	96	18	17
Feedback provided timely	120	130	114	21	21
Feedback is constructive	109	136	114	27	20
Assessment fairness	140	129	90	28	19
Received support for assessment	119	124	114	28	21
Diversity in assessment	140	128	99	20	19
Engagement with assessment process	116	129	108	30	23
Assessment relevancy with course content	128	129	107	26	16
Effectiveness of technology in assessment process	154	141	86	12	13
Assessment helpful in achieving learning outcomes	120	136	112	23	15
Assessment maintain academic integrity	128	129	100	29	20
Assessment stress during classroom	113	124	104	33	32
Effectiveness of oracle skills in assessment	120	119	117	29	21
Effectiveness of different assessment format	126	122	115	26	17
Effective management of group work assessment	108	125	129	22	22
Self-assessment opportunity	128	116	121	23	18
Satisfaction with assessment practice	119	111	135	23	18

The data demonstrates more positive encompassing of evaluative perspective on online assessment among learners on higher education. Most of the dimensions of perception, that is, assessment criteria clarity, material accessibility, and assessment fairness, will draw many people or strong persons in agreement, often to more than 60 percent in every factor. It is quite interesting that a significant percentage of the respondents were strongly satisfied or rather agreed with the ease of materials in the assessment methods (275 strong agree and agree responses) and similarly satisfied with the perceived fairness of assessment processes (269). The effectiveness of the technological tools in terms of the design and administration of these tests as well as in terms of their evaluation also received positive ratings with the largest number of responses presenting the options of strongly agree and agree (in general 295 there were such responses). The respondents also confirmed that the forms of delivery

provided on the internet were consistent with the course materials and helped in attaining the targeted learning outcomes.

Despite these approvals there are still serious concerns. The responses of "neutral, disagree", and the responses marked with "strong disagree" had the themes of assessment-related stress, timely feedback, and the possibility of self-assessment; and the percentage of samples based on these responses counted about a third of the total numbers of samples. Stress due to assessment, however, seems inherent since 65 responses reportedly disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that stress can be suitably reduced through the existing assessment process.

These trends are backed up by empirical research, which demonstrates the bipolar nature of online testing: despite the fact that more and more students are becoming aware of the flexibility, open access, and improvement in technological integration advantages of online testing, issues with stress caused by an assessment, reliability of an online platform, and the timeliness of the results remain. Academic integrity and successful management of group work should be also mentioned since there were mixed answers, which means that there is space to improve.

Put briefly, student attitude to online assessment is preconditioned by the efficiency and comfort of online systems functioning as well as displays the continuous worry about the feedback system, balancing stress, and meeting of various assessment requirements.

Comparative analysis of learners' perception towards assessment in traditional and online higher education

Table 3: T-test for mean comparison between traditional and online assessment perception in higher education

	Variable 1	*Variable 2*
Mean	3.685139573	3.76683087
Variance	0.39792799	0.462461793
Observations	406	406
Pearson Correlation	0.69818423	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
df	405	
t Stat	-3.219658718	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000693441	
t Critical one-tail	1.648624693	
P(T<=t) two-tail	0.001386883	
t Critical two-tail	1.965838691	

The study of the perceptions of traditional and online assessment in higher education using paired-samples t-test has been used. There was a higher mean score of online assessment 3.77 than traditional assessment 3.69. Even when the perceptual flexibility of both the assessments were alike (with variances of 0.40 and 0.46 respectively), there was a significant positive Pearson coefficient of 0.70, which showed consistency in the perception between the two modes. The value of t statistic of -3.22 with 405 degrees of freedom reflected that there is a statistically significant difference between the means used. The p-

values were very low, 0.0007 in case of one-tailed test and 0.0014 in case of two-tailed. This has ensured that both statistics are significantly below the customary 0.05 level of significance. The negative value of t indicated that difference was in favor of online assessment as opposed to traditional assessment. Finally, students displayed a much more positive attitude to online assessment as compared to traditional assessment, implying the increased rate of favorability and preference toward online types of assessment in the context of higher education.

CONCLUSION

The results of the analyses show that learners when in higher education have significantly better perception of online assessment compared to the traditional assessment. The results of the formative assessments range, however, on average, the online modules obtained higher grades (3.77) than those done in person (3.69), which points to a significant bias in the results. In addition, students were found to have coherent attitude in their perception of the two modalities with positive correlation of 0.70. These differences are supported by the results of the paired t-test which displays $p = 0.0007$ in the one-tail test or $p = 0.0014$ in the two-tail test which is much lower than intended $p = 0.05$. The negative value of t is testimony to the overall trend in favor of online assessment. Probably the greatest consideration that goes into this trend is one of the benefits of the format, which is easy accessibility, ease of technological updating, and compatibility with course content. Both of these forms share the presence of stress due to evaluation and the lack of direct feedback. All these findings just re-emphasize that online assessment is providing measurable evidence that learners in tertiary education are willing to use the online version via greater attempt by institutions to evaluate students online and improve learning contentedness where the prevalent issues arise.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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