PERCEPTION, LEVEL OF SATISFACTION AND CHALLENGES FACED BY HIGHER EDUCATION LEARNERS OF WEST BENGAL: A STUDY IN COVID-19 PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

In the year 2019, every human being on the planet was confronted with a nightmare situation. All educational institutions, including schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions, were forced to close their doors. This pandemic, which was caused by a lethal virus, killed the entire educational system. The entire educational system has shifted to digital teaching and learning, or online teaching and learning. As a result, it's safe to assume that the students had a lot of difficulties in their educational practices as well. The current study was carried out in light of the awkward situation. Three variables were investigated in this study: perception, level of satisfaction, and educational challenges. There were a total of 201 responses. It was discovered that 70% of people have a favourable opinion of online education. On the level of satisfaction scale, 64.18 percent of respondents said they were moderately satisfied with online teaching and learning. In the current study, it was also found that there are no significant mean differences in the educational challenges faced during the pandemic between male and female students and between science and arts students. On the other hand, when it comes to the educational challenges that students face, there is a significant mean difference between UG, PG, and Other students.

Keywords: Perception, Level of Satisfaction, Educational Challenges, Higher education students, Pandemic.

Introduction

In 2019, the spread of the Corona virus will be remembered as a dark chapter in history. In the Chinese city of Wuhan, the first evidence of this lethal virus was discovered. This lethal virus eventually spread around the world and became known as a pandemic. Worldwide, all factories, industries, transportation systems, agriculture, and education are shut down for the night. As a result, people's lives around the world change in an instant. It is enough to say that while this lockdown did not prevent the pandemic from spreading, it did limit the spread of the viruses among the general public. However, it had a negative impact on the social sphere in real life. This corona pandemic wreaked havoc on the country's overall health. The lockdown had an impact on the country's education system just as much as it did on industry, agriculture, and trade. The shutdown of schools, colleges, and universities has had a number

of negative effects on students' education. Teaching at all levels of education, from primary to higher education, was halted as a result of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, not only in India but throughout the world. The need to keep the learning process alive is felt in this situation. As a result, the teaching method underwent significant changes. Instead of traditional pedagogy, digital pedagogy was introduced in the field of education. As a result, the entire education system shifted online, serving as a backup for maintaining the system's continuity. Many higher education institutions have begun to use digital media, e-learning platforms, and video conferencing technologies to deliver instruction (Kerzic et al.,2021). Many higher education institutions were adopting this form of delivery for the first time, making the transfer extremely difficult for them because they have no such kind of experiences to prepare and adjust to the new educational horizon.

There is no doubt that during the pandemic outbreak, online teaching learning filled the gap in teaching pedagogy. However, one major concern with online teaching is that there is no physical proximity or emotional connection between the teacher and the learner. This major concern about online teaching and learning highlights the system's flaws even more. As a result, higher education students in the new learning environment faced numerous complexities and challenges. As a result, students in higher education around the world face significant challenges in continuing their studies and research. As a result, the focus of this research is on the learners' perceptions, levels of satisfaction, and major challenges faced by higher education students during the pandemic outbreak in terms of online teaching and learning.

Rationale of the Study:

From the review of related literature it has been found that many researchers have conducted numerous studies related to the challenges that higher education students face when it comes to online education all over the world. However, in the context of India, only a few studies on perceptions of online learning, levels of satisfaction with online learning, and challenges faced by higher education students during pandemics have been conducted with a small number of samples. With all of these facts and arguments in mind, the researcher became intrigued and decided to conduct research on the perceptions, levels of satisfaction, and challenges faced by West Bengal higher education students.

Review of Related Literature

In this study, the researcher reviewed and reported on the majority of relevant research studies conducted in India and abroad on the challenges, perceptions, and level of satisfaction of higher education students with online teaching learning.

A) Perception towards online learning:

Unger and Meiran (2020) conducted a study on undergraduate student attitudes toward the online environment in covid-19 period. In this study, 82 students were surveyed, and the majority of them expressed concern about rapidly changing online learning. Aside from that, 91.5 percent of students perceive a significant difference between online and face-to-face learning. Abbasi et al. (2020) investigated students' attitudes toward e-learning during lockdown in another study. A total of 383 students participated in this study, with 77 percent of them having a negative attitude toward e-learning. Students also believe that faculty and administration should take the necessary steps to improve e-learning. A case study on online learning in higher education during the covid-19 pandemic was conducted by Agormedah et

al. (2020) in their study, 467 students were surveyed, and they expressed dissatisfaction with online learning due to the lack of formal orientation and instruction. In another study by Khan et al. (2021) looked into students' perceptions of online learning and the challenges they faced during the pandemic. In this study, the majority of students had positive attitudes toward online learning. Policymakers and educational institutions should improve online classes by using the most up-to-date techniques. Coman et al. (2020) conducted another study on online teaching and learning during the pandemic at a Romanian university. The information was gathered from 762 students, and the findings revealed that Romanian higher education institutions were not prepared for solely online learning.

B) Level of satisfaction with online learning:

In a quantitative study by Gopal et al. (2021) on factors affecting students satisfaction with online classes during the pandemic, they discovered four independent factors that have a positive impact on student satisfaction in an online setting: quality of instructor, course design, feedback, and expectations of the learners. Ali et al. (2021) found that controlling the effect of student satisfaction with online learning reduces the magnitude of perceived teachers' support from the total effect, indicating partial mediation in a quasi co-relational study with the goal of studying the mediating role of student satisfaction in online learning during the pandemic in Pakistan. The t-test results showed that medical students perceived less teacher support than non-medical students. During the covid-19 pandemic, Kerzic et al. (2021) conducted a study on student satisfaction and perceived performance in the e-learning environment with 10,092 higher education students from ten countries. According to the findings of the study the impact of e-learning quality on student performance was strongly mediated by their satisfaction with e-learning,

C) Challenges faced by higher education learner in Covid-19 pandemic:

Aristovnik et al., (2021) present a comprehensive and large-scale study on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on the lives of higher education students around the world. The study included 30,383 student responses from 62 countries, and it revealed that students were concerned about their future professional careers and education, as well as boredom, anxiety, and dissatisfaction Jena (2020) conducted another study on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on education in India. The study discovered that widespread lockdown had a negative impact on the lives of students. Due to the pandemic, 32 crore students were unable to transfer to new educational institutions, and all educational activities were halted. Rapanta et al. (2020), on the other hand, conducted a study on university teaching learning during and after the Covid-19 crisis. According to the findings of the study, intelligent pedagogy is a method of designing and delivering curriculum that encourages students to actively participate in the learning process and is applicable to real-world situations. Another study by Salceanu (2020) investigated the challenges faced by higher education students during the Covid-19 pandemic. Ovidius University of Constanta provided 152 responses for this study. According to the findings of the study, educational activities in an online environment are an appropriate technique during the isolation and lockdown period. In a descriptive study by Bhowmik and Bhattacharya (2021) investigated the factors influencing online learning in higher education in the emergency shifts to covid-19. According to the findings of the above study, students in an online setting experience feelings of isolation, boredom, dissatisfaction,

and frustration. The study also revealed that one of the major challenges that both the teacher and the student faced during online learning was a lack of immediate feedback.

Research Gap:

From the variety of relevant studies throughout the world, numerous research has been conducted to determine the various elements that impact higher education in pandemic outbreak. But no one study has not attempted to examine of the challenging aspects of higher education in West Bengal in the pandemic scenario. As a result, there is a knowledge gap in this field. The researcher has used standardized online tool, which has also been used on participants of higher education to identify the variables that contribute to their educational challenges, their perception and their level of satisfaction regarding online teaching learning. Therefore this study will not be a replication of past research in terms of the Study's objectives, settings, samples, and methods of execution.

Statement of the Problem:

Covid-19 Pandemic has breakdown the educational smoothness in every institution in the country. So In this perspective, the researcher took this study to find out the perception, level of satisfaction and educational challenges faced by the higher education students of West Bengal. This study explores the challenges facing by the higher education students in West Bengal during the covid-19 Pandemic. Therefore, the researchers entitled the present Study "**Perception, Level of satisfaction and Challenges faced by higher education learners of West Bengal: A study in COVID-19 perspective**"

Research Questions:

- What is the perception of higher education students of West Bengal regarding online teaching learning?
- What is the level of satisfaction of higher education students regarding the online teaching learning environment?
- What are the educational challenges experienced by the higher education students of West Bengal during pandemic?

Objectives of the Study:

To conduct the study, the researcher has framed the following objectives:

- To study the perception of higher education students of West Bengal regarding online teaching learning.
- To study the level of satisfaction of higher education students of West Bengal in terms of online teaching learning environment.
- To study the educational challenges faced by the higher education students of West Bengal in online teaching learning during pandemic.
- To study the mean differences between male & female students regarding their educational challenges.
- To study the mean differences between UG, PG & others level students regarding facing the educational challenges.
- To study the mean differences between Arts & Science students regarding facing the educational challenges.

Hypotheses of the Study:

H0$_1$: There exist no significant mean differences between the male & female students regarding educational challenges face during pandemic.

H0$_2$: There exists no significant mean difference between science & arts stream students regarding educational challenges face during pandemic.

H0$_3$: There exists no significant mean difference between UG & PG students regarding educational challenges face during pandemic.

Operational Definition of the Terms:

Perception

In the present Study, perception refers to the conscious understanding of online teaching learning environment during pandemic.

Level of Satisfaction

In the present Study, level of satisfaction refers to the how much satisfied of higher education students with online teaching-learning in pandemic situation.

Higher Education

In the present study, higher education students are those students who have completed a high school degree and have been enrolled in different kinds of formal higher education institutions in West Bengal, India.

COVID-19

COVID-19 is an infective virus that causes illness severe acute respiratory syndrome.

Challenges

In the present Study, challenges refer to the educational barrier students faced in higher education during pandemic outbreak.

Pandemic

In the present study, Pandemic refers to affecting many people throughout the world, especially related to a sickness or illness caused by the novel Corona Virus.

Delimitations of the Study:

The present study is delimited in the following manner:

- The present study is delimited to the higher education students of West Bengal only
- In the present study, the researcher chose 201 higher education students as sample from higher education institution of West Bengal.
- The present study has been carried out on some selected demographic variables of the students, like Gender, Course, Stream, etc.

Methodology of the study

Nature of the Study

In the present study, Descriptive survey method was used by the investigator. It has also Mixed method research because the researcher has collected data both qualitative & quantitatively and also simultaneously analyze that.

Population of the Study

All the higher education students enrolled in the current academic year in UG, PG and other courses in West Bengal have been treated as the population for the present study.

Sample of the Study

The researcher has selected only 201 students from different higher education institutions of West Bengal as a sample for the present study.

Sampling Technique:

The Random sampling technique has been used for the selection of the sample. At first, the researcher has selected different kinds of higher education institutions situated in West Bengal. Then the researcher randomly selected 201 Students from higher education institutions to collect reliable, valid, and unbiased data.

Tools used for the study

The accuracy of the result is determined by the tools used for evaluation purpose. In the current study the researcher has created and used three different online questionnaires using Google Forms. The questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp, Email, and other social media platforms. A total of 201 responses were collected and analyzed accordingly.

- A scale on perception of the higher education students regarding online teaching learning.
- A scale on satisfaction level regarding the online teaching learning environment.
- A scale on educational challenges facing by the higher education students during pandemic.

| About the tools | Items | | | Scoring Principles | | Reliability | |
	Open ended	Close ended	Total Items	For positive items	For negative items	Reliability Value	Classification
1. Perception towards online teaching learning	NIL	15	15	Yes=2 No=1	Yes=1 No=2	0.82	**Good**
2. Satisfaction level towards online teaching learning	NIL	12	12	Yes=2 No=1	Yes=1 No=2	0.78	**Be Accepted**
3. Educational challenges facing by the students	02	15	17	Yes=2 No=1	Yes=1 No=2	0.84	**Good**

Table1: Description of the tools

Statistical techniques used:

The researcher has extensively used SPSS 21 followed by these techniques to analyze the data:

- Mean
- Standard Deviation
- 't'-test
- ANOVA

Findings of the Study:

A) Perception of the higher education students towards online teaching learning:

The perception of West Bengal higher education students toward the online teaching learning system was determined using a two-point Likerts' scale. A graphical representation of the findings of this aspect is shown below:
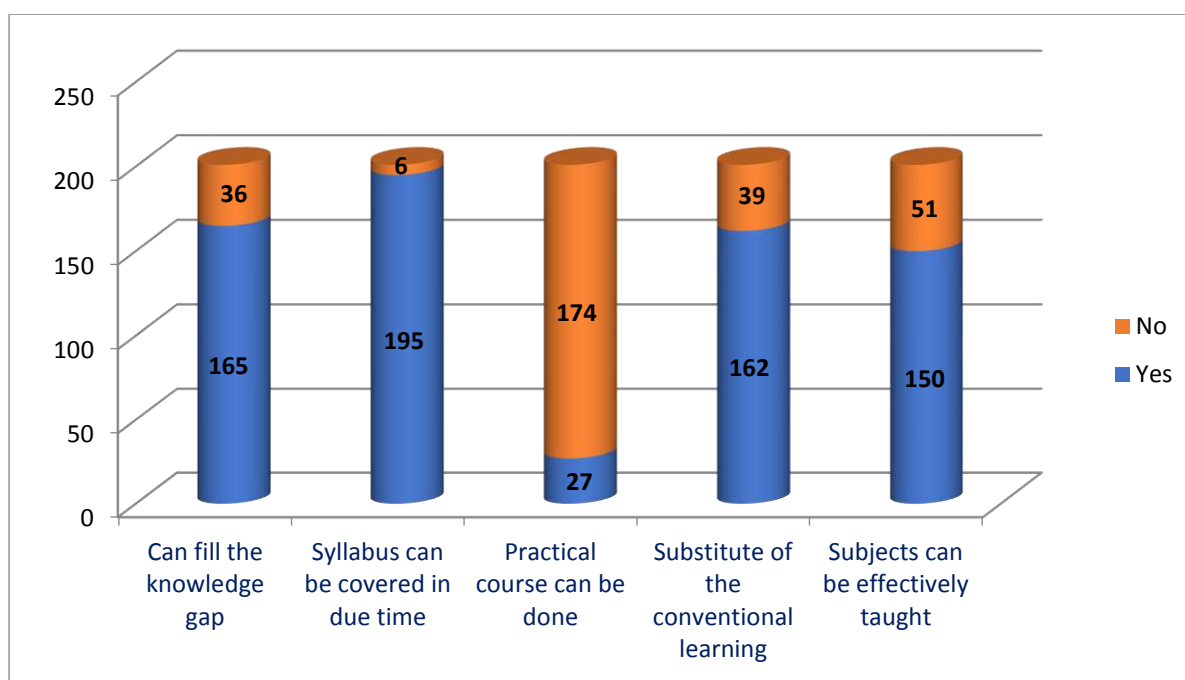

Figure1: The graphical representation of the perception of higher education students towards online teaching learning

From the above presentation, it is clear that the majority of students have a favourable attitude toward online teaching and learning. In all of the dimensions of the above presentation, 70 percent or more of the students responded positively. Only 10% of students and above said that practical courses could be completed online, while the rest of the sample said that practical courses could never be completed online.

B) Level of satisfaction of the higher education students regarding online teaching learning:

Group	Number	Mean	S.D
Higher education students	201	24.66	2.97

*Table2: **Mean, SD of level of satisfaction scale***

For determining the level of satisfaction

M ±σ

M + σ = 24.66 + 2.97 = 27.63

M - σ= 24.66 – 2.97 = 21.69

Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Level of Educational Challenges
≥ 27.63	38	18.91%	**High**
Between 21.69 to 27.63	129	64.18%	**Moderate**
≤ 21.69	34	16.91%	**Low**
Total	**201**	**100%**	

*Table 3: **Represent the level of satisfaction among the higher education students towards online teaching learning***

Based from the above table, we can observe that out of the total 201 Students38 (18.91%) of students have scored above 27.63, 129 (64.18%) Students have scored between 27.63 to 21.69, and 34 (16.91%) students have scored below 21.69 on the satisfaction scale towards online teaching learning. Therefore, we can conclude that the majority of students (64.18 percent) scored between 21.69 and 27.63, indicating moderate satisfaction with online teaching and learning among higher education students.

C) Educational Challenges faced by the higher education students

Demographic Variables		Number (N)	Mean (M)	SD (σ)	Test Employed
Gender	**Male**	97	24.47	3.02	t-test
	Female	104	24.83	2.93	
Stream	**Arts**	176	24.68	2.96	t-test
	Science	25	24.52	3.05	
Course	**Undergraduate (UG)**	84	23.86	3.08	ANOVA (F-test)
	Postgraduate (PG)	89	25.07	2.91	
	Others	28	25.75	2.22	

Table 4: **Summary of the Mean and SD in educational challenges faced by the higher education students**

H0₁: There exist no significant mean differences between the male & female students regarding educational challenges face during pandemic.

Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean Difference	S_ED	df	t-value	Result
Male	97	24.47	3.021					
Female	104	24.83	2.931	0.36	0.42	199	0.84	*Not Significant at 0.05 level**

Table 5: **The significant mean difference between Male and Female Students regarding the educational challenges face by them**

From table 5 it can be observed that the calculated *'t'-value* is 0.84 and it is less than the critical value at 0.05 level of significance with 199 degree of freedom (df). Therefore the null hypothesis is failed to reject and it imply the result is insignificant and we may conclude that there is no significant difference among the male and female Students regarding their educational challenges during pandemic outbreak.

H0₂: There exists no significant mean difference between science & arts stream students regarding educational challenges face during pandemic.

Stream	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	S_ED	df	t-value	Result
Science	25	24.52	3.057					
Arts	176	24.68	2.969	0.156	0.637	199	0.25	*Not Significant at 0.05 level**

Table 6: **The significant mean difference between Science and Arts Students regarding the educational challenges face by them**

From the above table it can be observed that the calculated *'t'-value* is 0.25 and it is less than the critical value at the 0.05 level of significance with 199 df. Therefore, the null hypothesis is failed to reject and it imply the result is insignificant and we may conclude that there is no significant difference among the Science and Arts Students regarding their educational challenges during pandemic outbreak.

H0₃: There exists no significant mean difference between UG & PG students regarding educational challenges face during pandemic.

ANOVA					
	Sum of	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

	Squares				
Between Groups	102.182	2	51.091	6.075	.003
Within Groups	1665.131	198	8.410		
Total	1767.313	200			

Table7: *Showing the differences among the UG, PG & Others students regarding the educational challenges*

*At 0.05 level of Significance 3.04
*At 0.01 level of significance 4.71

From the above table it can be observed that the calculated ***F-value*** is greater than the critical value at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, the null hypothesis is failed to accept at both level of significance. Hence, it can be interpreted that there is a significant mean difference among the UG, PG & Other higher education students in respect to their educational challenges face in online teaching learning during the pandemic outbreak.
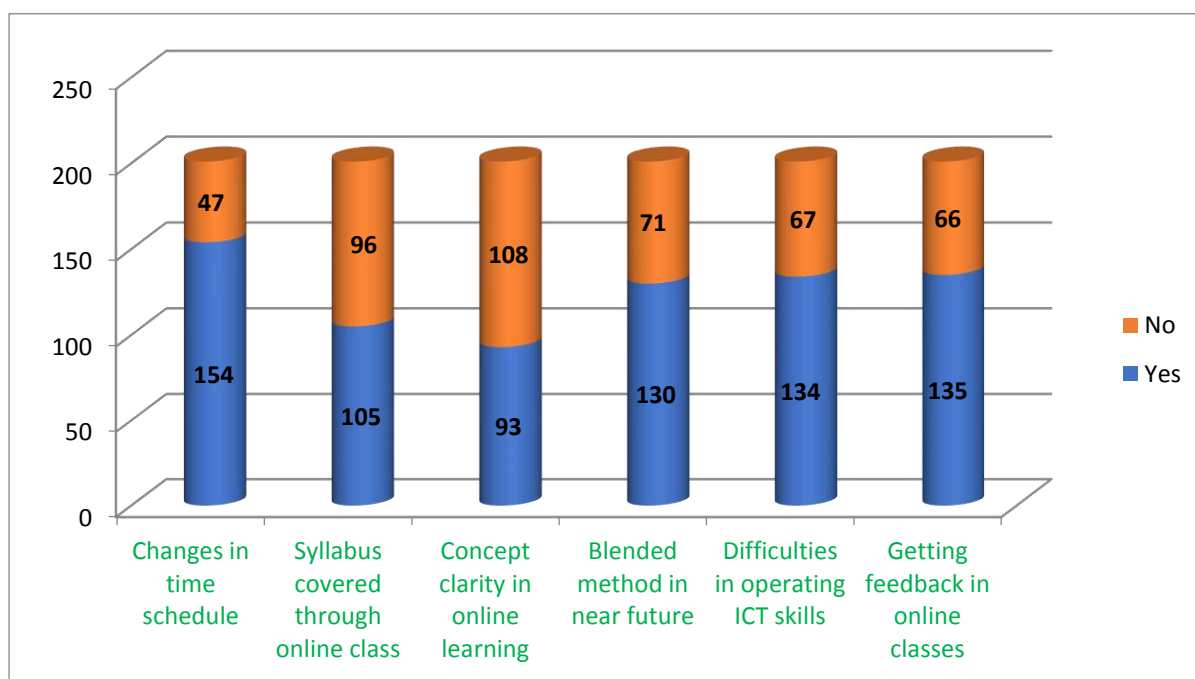

Fig 2: *Dimension wise educational challenges faced by the higher education students*

The six dimensions of educational challenges faced by West Bengal higher education students are depicted in the diagram above. In this first-dimensional graphical representation, students are dealing with a shift in their schedule. The majority of the students have given positive responses. In the second dimension, 96 students (out of 201 total) responded negatively to No. On the other hand, 105 students have responded positively to Yes. As a result, a large number of higher education students believe that the syllabus will be covered in a timely manner through online classes. In the third dimension, 108 students have responded negatively to No, while 93 students have responded positively to Yes. As a result, it is a critical aspect of online learning that the majority of students struggle with the concept clarity of their respective course. In another area, 65 percent of students and above believe that the

education system should be offered in a blended mode in the near future, while only 35 percent of students disagree. In the last two dimensions, it is also clear that majority of the students have difficulty using technology for educational purposes and have issues with the feedback system in the online teaching learning process.

Discussion:

- It was found that most of the students feel the COVID-19 Pandemic would affect enrollment numbers of the new academic session. Out of 201 students only 27(13.4%) students disagree that the Pandemic will affect enrollment numbers of the new academic session. On the other hand, 174 (86.6%) students agree that the Pandemic will negatively affect enrollment numbers of the new academic session.

- It was found that most of the students face time management problems while pursuing in online classes.

- Out of 201 students 57(28.4%) students did not face any time management problem while 144(71.6%) students faced time management problems.

- It was found from the study that a large number of the higher education students experienced changes in learning schedules in COVID-19 pandemic situation. Out of 201 students' 47(23.4%) students do not experience changes in learning schedule; on the other hand, 154(76.6%) students have experiences changes in learning schedule in a pandemic situation.

- It was found that most of the higher education students experience curriculum change in a pandemic situation. However, it was also found that out of 201 students 86 (42.8%) students do not experience curriculum change while 115(57.2%) students experience curriculum change in this pandemic situation.

- The researcher found that many higher education students think that the syllabus will be covered in due time through online classes. The researcher also found that out of 201 students 96(47.8%) students do not agree that the syllabus will be covered in due time and 105 (52.2%)students thinks the syllabus will be covered in due time.

- The researcher found that most of higher education students are dissatisfied with concept clarity in an online setting. The researcher also found that out of 201 students 108(53.7%) students responded that they do not satisfy with the concept clarity in online classes. In the contrary 93(46.3%) students has responded that in online class, their concept is cleared in a crystal manner.

- The researcher found that most of the higher education students agree with the justification that blended mode of education should be implemented in near future. However it was also found that out of 201 students 71(35.3%) students do not think that blended curriculum should be implemented in the future and 130 (64.7%) students think it should be implemented in the future.

- It was found that there is no significant mean difference between Male and Female Students in respect to their educational challenges faced in COVID outbreak. However it is also found that the Female Students have comparatively faced a high level of educational challenges rather than the Male Students.

- The researcher found a higher significant difference among the UG, PG & Other higher education courses regarding their educational challenges based on the Course of Study.

- The researcher found no significant mean difference between the students of science & arts stream in respect to their educational challenges based on their Stream of Study. However, it was also found that Arts Students are facing comparatively high level of educational challenges than the Science Students on the basis of their obtained mean score.

Recommendations for Further Study:

- A similar study may be carried out by combining more extensive samples from different locations and levels of the state.
- A comparative research of different states of India can be carried out.
- A further study can be carried out on educational challenges faced by the primary and secondary level students from different part of the country.
- A comparative study on various strategies for decreasing educational challenges may be undertaken.
- A comparison study of the educational challenges faced by urban and rural students in West Bengal's various districts and beyond the state may be conducted.
- Research may be conducted on the effectiveness of e-learning during the covid-19 Pandemic in different levels such as elementary, secondary & higher education levels in West Bengal or other states of India.

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