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STRESS IN ONLINE LEARNING DURING THE PANDEMIC OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused major disruptions to classroom educational activities. Educational institutions are promoting online education to ensure continuity of education. However, online education is a new trend that may create some concern for teachers and students. The purposes of the study were to investigate the level of students' stress in online learning and to study factors related to students' stress in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. The samples were 65 students selected by the purposive sampling technique. The data were analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient. The study revealed that students' readiness for online learning was at a high level, while environment, barriers to online communication, and stress in online learning were at moderate levels. In addition, there were relationships between readiness for online learning and stress in online learning ($p < 0.05$, $r = -.252$), environment and stress in online learning ($p < 0.01$, $r = .666$), and barriers to online communication and stress in online learning ($p < 0.01$, $r = .674$).

Keywords: COVID-19, pandemic, stress, online learning, students

INTRODUCTION

The spread of the COVID-19 virus has affected people around the world and has disrupted normal activities including the education system (Butnaru et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021). The government needs to control viral infection by defining general lockdown, social distancing procedures, work from home, home-schooling, self-quarantine, and other procedures (Alsoud and Harasis, 2021;

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Prasertsong et al., 2021). People are concerned about their health and need to adjust themselves into new normal lifestyles to reduce the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 outbreak crisis has affected daily life, expenses, and other financial issues, as well as a huge impact on classroom teaching and educational activities. These have caused great concern among teachers and students (Inthason, 2020; Pandey et al., 2021). Educational institutions urgently need to change their teaching and learning methods. Hence, online teaching and learning platform was promoted to reduce confrontation, refrain from gathering and traveling to school. Online learning can ensure that students are still able to continue their education and keep them secure from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Online learning has several advantages. Online education is self-study through the internet. Learners can choose a subject or course to study according to their own preferences. The content of the course consists of texts, images, audio, video, and interactions. These are sent directly to the learners through the instructor's web browser. Students are able to communicate, consult, and exchange ideas just like in a normal classroom by using e-mail, chat, social networks, etc. Therefore, online learning is suitable for everyone. Learners can study from anywhere and anytime. Online learning is a highly flexible learning process, but learners need to take more responsibility for their studies because there will be no one to control them. The more they learn, the more they get (Inthason, 2020). However, online learning in the situation of COVID-19 is still a new trend. The COVID-19 pandemic is not over yet and another round may occur. Hence, online learning must continue to be operated effectively. Since June 2021, Khon Kaen University Demonstration Elementary School (Modindang) has started to organized full online teaching and learning processes; online lectures, online examination, and communications. Learners need to adjust from classroom to online learning that may cause stress, headache, back pain, tired, emotional, angry, easily irritable, decreased memory and concentration, and insomnia. The stress of online learning can be more or less due to various factors (Prasertsong et al., 2021). This study, therefore, focused on the stress of students and factors related to their stress in using online learning as a tool in seeking their educational efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Objective of the Study

The objectives of the study were to investigate the level of the students' stress in online learning and to study factors related to the stress in online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

The character of this research was descriptive with a quantitative approach. Target of population in this research was 6th grade students of the Khon Kaen University Demonstration Elementary School (Modindang), Thailand in the academic year of 2021. This research used purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire with a .932 reliability index was deployed to be the research instrument. Due to the pandemic situation, primary data collection was used to collect raw data from the respondent through online questionnaires. A Google forms questionnaire link was sent to students. 65 questionnaires were returned and provided complete information for this study. The dependent variable for this study was the stress level of the students on online learning due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and Pearson Product - Moment Correlation Coefficient were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

The results of the study found that the respondents of this study were 65 Thai students. Of these, there were 36 females with 55.4% and 29 males with 44.6%. According to the age of the sample group, 69.2% of them were at the age of 11 years old. More than half of them live in an urban area (70.8%). Regarding the internet connection, the majority (80%) of the students used WIFI at home for online learning.

Table 1. Readiness for online learning

Readiness for online learning	Mean	S.D.
Availability of equipment for online learning	4.45	0.61
Experiences of online learning program	4.38	0.70
Having access to technology and a stable and functional internet connection	4.22	0.74
Adjusting to a new routine and online learning	4.11	0.85
Financial readiness to support online learning	4.08	0.92

Readiness for online learning	Mean	S.D.
Need help from school	3.14	1.38
Total	4.12	0.45

From Table 1, the results showed that the overall readiness for online learning of the respondents was at a high level (mean =4.12, S.D. =0.45). The three high rated factors of the readiness for online learning were availability of equipment for online learning (mean =4.45, S.D. =.61), experiences of online learning program (mean =4.38, S.D. =.70), and having access to technology and a stable and functional internet connection (mean =4.22, S.D. =.74) respectively.

Table 2. Environment while learning online

Environment while learning online	Mean	S.D.
I lose my concentration in online learning when there is noise.	3.06	1.35
I do not understand the content of the study when there is noise.	2.89	1.34
Noise while studying online has deteriorated my learning outcomes.	2.68	1.35
I lose my concentration in online learning when the weather is hot.	2.60	1.51
I do not want to study online when the weather is hot.	2.55	1.46
Total	2.77	1.27

As exhibited in Table 2, the study found that the overall environment while learning online of the respondents was at a moderate level (mean =2.77, S.D. =1.27). The three high rated factors of the environment were I lose my concentration in online learning when there is noise. (mean =3.06, S.D. =1.35), I do not understand the content of the study when there is noise. (mean =2.89, S.D. =1.34), and Noise while studying online has deteriorated my learning outcomes. (mean =2.68, S.D. =1.35) respectively.

Table 3. Barriers to online communication

Barriers to online communication	Mean	S.D.
I feel less engaged in online learning.	3.38	1.31
I couldn't follow the courses because I couldn't log in or the internet was disconnected.	3.32	1.37
I couldn't follow the courses when the teaching content is intermittently missing.	3.18	1.35
I couldn't submit my work because of insufficient or unstable internet connection.	3.15	1.34
I feel uncomfortable when the pictures or slides don't match the teacher's voice.	3.00	1.34
I am confused about an assignment and not getting a timely response from my teachers.	2.92	1.27
Total	3.25	1.10

Table 3 indicated that the overall barriers to online communication of the respondents was at a moderate level (mean =3.25, S.D. =1.10). The three high rated factors of the barriers to online communication were I feel less engaged in online learning. (mean =3.38, S.D. =1.31), I couldn't follow the courses because I couldn't log in or the internet was disconnected. (mean =3.32, S.D. =1.37), and I couldn't submit my work because of insufficient or unstable internet connection. (mean =3.15, S.D. =1.34) respectively.

Table 4. Stress in online learning

Stress in online learning	Mean	S.D.
I always lack confidence with my scores in online learning.	3.92	1.25
I feel there is too much homework in online learning.	3.83	1.25
I am worried about not being able to finish my homework on time.	3.75	1.26
I feel that I have disappointed my parents when my test or exam results in online learning are poor.	3.42	1.36
My parents care about my grades in online learning too much that brings me a lot of pressure.	3.38	1.43
I am not happy with online learning.	3.31	1.37

Stress in online learning	Mean	S.D.
I feel that I have disappointed my teacher when my test or exam results in online learning are not satisfactory.	3.17	1.4
There is too much competition among classmates that brings me a lot of pressure in studying and learning online.	2.97	1.35
I still want to continue studying online, although the situation with covid 19 is normal.	2.97	1.35
I have a headache when studying online.	2.97	1.44
I feel that online learning is my problem.	2.91	1.34
Online learning makes me feel bored with food or eat more.	2.86	1.29
It is very difficult for me to concentrate during online learning classes.	2.82	1.46
Total	3.18	1.03

From Table 4, the results showed that the overall stress in online learning of the respondents was at a moderate level (mean =3.18, S.D. =1.03). The three high rated factors of the stress in online learning were I always lack confidence with my scores in online learning. (mean =3.92, S.D. =1.25), I feel there is too much homework in online learning. (mean =3.83, S.D. =1.25), and I am worried about not being able to finish my homework on time. (mean =3.75, S.D. =1.26) respectively.

Table 5. Relationships between readiness for online learning, environment, barriers to online communication, and stress in online learning

Variables	Stress in online learning
Readiness for online learning	-.252*
Environment while learning online	.666**
barriers to online communication	.674**

* P<0.05

** P<0.01

As illustrated in Table 5, the results showed that there were statistically significant relationships between readiness for online learning and stress in online

learning ($p < 0.05$, $r = -.252$), environment and stress in online learning ($p < 0.01$, $r = .666$), and barriers to online communication and stress in online learning ($p < 0.01$, $r = .674$).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the study was to examine the level of stress of primary school students as they continue using online learning as an instrument during the COVID-19 pandemic. The result of the study indicated that students were well prepared to study online. They used smartphones, tablets, and computers in pursuing their academic endeavours. This is consistent with the research of Sae-Tan et al. (2021) that the students were ready to adapt to online learning in situations where online teaching was required, especially in the current COVID-19 pandemic. However, the highest barriers to online learning were insufficient and unstable internet connectivity (Alsoud and Harasis, 2021; Sae-Tan et al., 2021).

The study revealed that readiness for online learning, environment during learning online, and barriers to online communication related to the stress of the learners in online learning. This finding is aligning with Sae-Tan et al.'s (2021) research, Pandey et al.'s (2021) research, and Prasertsong et al.'s (2021) research which revealed that a calm environment was an important condition for students to study from home because noise and hot weather could affect their concentration in online learning, as well as access ability to a stable and functional internet connection and a reliable internet connection. Some students were unable to follow their courses or submit their work because of their insufficient or unstable internet connection. The majority of the students agreed that they had difficulties managing their homework and workloads, which seemed to have increased. They, therefore, faced stress in online learning. Students reported feeling tired from staring at their screens all day. Moreover, the stress of the students also affected their academic grades. Most of the students were worried about scores in online learning and were afraid to disappoint their parents with the test or exam results in online learning.

Students and teachers concern about the health and learning process during the pandemic. Online learning is an effective and potential educational instrument during the pandemic that can ensure students' ability and possibility in continuing their education and keep them secure from the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it is much more tiring to sit and study at the computer all day long instead of the traditional way of learning with interactive classroom activities and face-

to-face lectures. Therefore, the study recommends that teachers should provide video lessons that students can learn anytime, and give them more time for their homework or assignment submission. Academic staff should pay attention and observe whether any student is facing severe psychological problems in order to assist students who are in distress in a timely manner.

This study was limited since perspective of teachers or school members was not taken into consideration. Recommendations for further studies, it is recommended to study the effectiveness and efficiency of online teaching management and conduct a study on online learning progress with new media.

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