FULL-LENGTH ARTICLE

Undergraduate Students' Perception of Exit Examination at Haramaya University

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to investigate students' perceptions of undergraduate programs in relation to exit examinations, employing a mixed research design. A total of 145 students participated in the study. Deans, Department Heads, and College Quality Assurance Coordinators were selected based on availability and purposive sampling methods. The study focused on three colleges each with four years program durations, including Colleges of Social Sciences and Humanities (CSSH), Business and Economics (CBE), and Natural and Computational Sciences (CNCS). Two departments were randomly selected from each college, ensuring equal representation. Survey data was analyzed using mean, stepwise regression, and one-way ANOVA, while interview data was directly cited from respondents. Results of the study revealed that students' perceptions on exit exams varied across colleges, with CBE students demonstrating a more positive perception compared to CSSH and CNCS. Stepwise regression analysis identified significant predictor variables, including anxiety, stress, risk of exclusion, and resource scarcity, all of which influenced students' perceptions of exit examinations. Overall, the study found that students generally held negative perceptions of exit exams. It was evident that factors such as anxiety, stress, unknown contents of the exam, risk of exclusion, and resource constraints contributed to the undesirable perceptions. A collaborative approach involving various stakeholders, including Ministry of Education (MoE), educational institutions and departments is necessary to reduce excessive stress and anxiety levels, emphasize the importance of exit examinations, address resource deficiencies, and undertake a nationwide study. MoE need to formulate a well-defined policy concerning students who do not successfully pass their exit exams.

Keywords: Exit Exam, Haramaya University, Students Perception. Undergraduate Program,

INTRODUCTION

The Ethiopian 1994 education and training policy, the education sectors development program (ESDP IV, V, and VI) worked for a long period of time to increase access, relevance, equity and quality of education (MoE, 2010, 2015 and 2021). As a result, we have seen significant expansion of the Ethiopian Higher Education (HE) system, harmonization of undergraduate curricula and introduction of modular teaching, continuous assessment, and the establishment and operation of quality assurance mechanisms over the last one and a half decades. However, as stated in the Ethiopian integrated education

development roadmap (2018-2030), these activities have a negligible impact on the core processes of Higher Learning Institutions (HLI) quality (MoE, 2018).

Higher education institutions across Africa, including Ethiopia, are increasingly embracing diverse resource mobilization strategies as part of their endeavor to enhance the academic and professional landscape (Teferra, 2013). A study by the World Bank has highlighted the noteworthy surge in the Ethiopian higher education budget, prompted by recent expansion efforts, now constituting approximately 31% of the overall government expenditure dedicated to education, up from the previous 15% (World Bank, 2008). More recently, the average budget allocation for higher education stands at approximately 25% of the total education budget (Feleke, 2015). Nevertheless, despite the substantial growth in the government's financial commitment to higher education in Ethiopia over the years, it remains insufficient to meet the substantial demands of the universities.

Concerns about quality in Ethiopia are not simply a result of facing a new growth scale unprecedented in the country's educational history. They are a fact rather than the outcome of skeptical academic thoughts. The poor and declining quality of education is a real phenomenon occurring in Ethiopia's educational system; the public and media do not accurately portray it (Arega, 2016). In addition to input factors, graduate competency also serves as a barometer of educational quality. When evaluating the quality of education in this area, Arega (2016) further contends that stakeholders are dissatisfied with the quality of graduates; it can be explained by the large number of graduates who are unable to find gainful employment without additional training to meet the demands of applied technical and communication skills requirements. As a result, it is suggested that some kind of assessment and monitoring mechanism should be in place to know the level of learning outcome of the graduates. Recently, there has been a growing emphasis on exit exam competency tests as an essential requirement for students upon completing their undergraduate education programs to obtain a certification (Marsidi, 2021).

Exit exam play a crucial role in program assessment and measuring student achievement of program learning outcomes (PLOs) (El-Hassan et al, 2021a). These can help a college or university make pertinent decisions to enhance the standard of institution-wide education and, in some cases, employed as a direct assessment tool to evaluate student learning and attainment of PLOs. In addition to this, Almaw (2022) analysed the role, strategies, challenges, benefits and types of exit examinations (EEs) for undergraduate students (engineering and technology programs) and revealed that exit examination is very crucial in achieving institutional level, program level and course level objectives of the institutions around the globe. The global experiences from Germany, India, Arab Emirates and the USA showed that there are different strategies to implement EEs for different programs in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Exit exams are different from other exams in that they are used to examine the basic level of education obtained by students at the end of their program. They play a crucial role in program assessment and measuring student achievement of program learning outcomes (PLOs).

The goal of the Ethiopian exit examination is to increase the quality of graduates produced by both public and private universities (MoSHE, 2019). With this goal in mind, MoE has implemented an exit exam for all undergraduate programs in Ethiopian universities. The goal of the exam is to ensure that all graduates of higher education institutions have achieved appropriate mastery of the basic competencies specified in their individual curriculum, thereby satisfying labour market requirements and boosting employability.

The MoE in Ethiopia, in its Integrated Education Development Roadmap (2018-2030), recommended the implementation of a university ranking system based on key performance outcome indicators such as publication in reputable journals, patented technologies, number of students enrolled, graduates passed exit exams, employability of graduates, and number of international students attracted to assure quality standards in Ethiopian universities (MoE, 2018). To ensure students' eligibility for admission to HEIs and to ensure that graduates are adequately prepared for the job market, the new Ethiopian Education and Training Policy (ETP) also suggests the implementation of exit examinations in HEIs, regardless of the level of education and the type of training (MoE, 2023).

Accordingly, "University Exit Examination in Ethiopia: Strategies for Institutionalization and Implementation" was submitted to the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (now called Ministry of Education) (MoSHE, 2019). According to the report, exit exams have already been introduced in Ethiopian higher education institutions for health and medical sciences and law graduates as part of the reform. The report identifies much strength of exit exams, including their ability to help ensure common standard knowledge and practical competencies, improve public trust, improve the consistency and accuracy of assessment tools, serve as a tool for quality assurance to benchmark any potential problem, and assist faculty in performing ongoing global assessments. It means that Ethiopian universities, including Haramaya University, have experience in administering and managing exit examinations within their College of Law, in addition to conducting licensing exams for the College of Health and Medical Sciences. To provide insight into the exit examination experiences, we present the experiences of Haramaya University law students from 2019 to 2021(Table 1).

Table 1. Haramaya University Law Student (Regular and Non-Regular) Exit Exam result from 2019/11 to 2021/13

Year	Number of Examinees	Pass	Fall	Pass %
2019/11	166	71	95	42.7
2020/12	167	86	81	51.5
2021/13	103	68	35	66

Source: (Haramaya University Law School Registrar, 2023).

The combination of the pass rates for the regular and non-regular exit exams at Haramaya University from 2019/11 to 2021/13 are shown in Table 1. As evident from the table, the passing rate exhibited an upward trajectory over time. In November 2019, it was recorded at 42.7%, but it experienced a significant improvement, rising to 51.5% in December 2020,

and further increasing to 66% in January 2021. This positive trend can be associated with the growing familiarity with the exit examination and the strong collaboration between instructors and students. It is believed that the implementation of exit exams emerges as a promising strategy to enhance educational achievement and overall quality. In this regard, Eyob and Abreham (2022) clearly indicated the exit exam is part of a sector reform initiative aimed at improving education quality at universities. Therefore, taking into consideration the positive impact of exit exams in ensuring quality education, the Ethiopian Ministry of Education implemented exit exams in all undergraduate university programs beginning in June 2023. This decision can be interpreted as a manifestation of dwindling trust in university degrees and student grades, both of which are no longer regarded as accurate indicators of actual academic performance. As per the Ministry of Science and Higher Education report, there exist both challenges and prospects concerning the institutionalization and implementation of exit exams. Among the challenges are the absence of a well-defined regulatory framework, limited stakeholder readiness and awareness, inadequate resources and infrastructure, as well as potential adverse effects on student motivation and learning (MOSHE, 2019).

There are various opportunities to address these issues, such as the development of a comprehensive strategy and roadmap, involving and capacitating key stakeholders, ensuring alignment and coherence between curriculum and assessment, and establishing a rigorous monitoring and evaluation system. It's worth noting that in addition to the MoSHE investigation, understanding the perspectives and views of students is considered crucial. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to delve into students' perceptions and viewpoints regarding undergraduate programs, with a specific focus on exit examinations at Haramaya University.

Statement of the Problem

Several authors, including Bishop (2001a & b), Parrish (2020), El-Hassan et al. (2021b), Eyob and Abraham (2022) as well as Ahmad et al. (2014) have conducted assessment and reported on exit exams both locally and internationally. Furthermore, the MOSHE(2019) report have explored the practices, challenges, and prospects of exit exams in Ethiopia from the perspectives of policymakers, examiners, and educators. The report strongly indicates that raising awareness and enhancing preparedness among all stakeholders, including students, is imperative to guarantee the effective execution and influence of exit exams. However, it's important to note that the existing studies have predominantly centered on practices and challenges related to exit exams and have not placed a significant emphasis on exploring the perceptions of undergraduate students towards these examinations.

In recent years, the perception of the Exit Exam in Ethiopia has stirred controversy, eliciting differing opinions from various quarters. Certain stakeholders, such as high-ranking university administrators and officials within the Ministry of Education, have commended it, while students and instructors have voiced doubts regarding its effectiveness as a precise assessment of students' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Unlike prior local studies, the current study intends to fill the gap by concentrating only on the perceptions of Haramaya

University students toward exit exams using a range of instruments for data collecting and analysis. Examining students' perceptions of exit examinations, as well as their broader views on learning and teaching, is considered essential for customizing instruction to meet individual needs and cultivating a constructive and productive learning environment. This practice yields valuable insights into the student's experience and equips educators and institutions with the knowledge needed to make informed choices regarding their teaching approaches and curriculum. Accordingly, the present study carries practical significance in assisting students in their preparations for exit exams, aiding teachers in the implementation of their curriculum, and providing valuable input for policymakers across different tiers of the educational system. Furthermore, it serves as baseline for subsequent research in related areas.

Overall, stakeholders at both public and private institutions share the responsibility of ensuring that students possess the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary for academic and professional success. Collaborative efforts in preparing students for exit exams can help ensure that graduates excel in their respective fields and make meaningful contributions to their communities. To achieve these goals, it is imperative to consider students' positive outlook and perception of exit exams, the availability of facilities, and the provision of essential resources to support their preparation for these exams and attain the expected level of learning outcomes. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate students' perceptions and identify both the factors that motivate and hinder the achievement of success in exit exams. The outcomes of this study are poised to assist students in better preparing for their exit exams. Furthermore, these findings can offer valuable insights to policymakers across various levels of the education system. Ultimately, this study can serve as a foundation for future research endeavors, paving the way for more comprehensive and in-depth investigations into exit examinations.

Research Questions
The research questions below were established to deal with the aforementioned issues.
1. What is the perception of students toward the exit examination at Haramaya University?
2. Is there any statistically significant mean difference in the perception of students toward exit examination across the colleges?
3. What pulling and pushing factors were there in Haramaya University for the success/failure of students in exit examination?
4. Which factor(s) is/are significantly affecting students' perception of exit examination?

MATERIALS AD METHODS
Research Design
The research was conducted at Haramaya University, employing a mixed research design that incorporated both qualitative and quantitative methods. A concurrent triangulation strategy was employed to address the research questions effectively. With this approach, the researcher collected data of both types simultaneously throughout the study, and

meticulously integrated data analysis and interpretation to arrive at robust and well-founded conclusions.

Sources of Data

Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained from respondents such as students, department heads, and college deans, while secondary data was derived from document analysis, including records on previous exit exam results and manuals.

Study Population and Samples

Excluding the College of Law and the College of Health and Medical Sciences, this research included three colleges of similar program durations, namely, CSSH, CBE, and CNCS, which were chosen randomly for participation. The study involved respondents, primarily students, selected through a stratified random sampling technique, specifically from those attending the aforementioned colleges. Additionally, Deans (DN), Department Heads (DH), and College Quality Assurance Coordinators (CLQAC) were invited to take part in the study, particularly in the interview sessions. When selecting the department heads, their experience in teaching and academic coordination was taken into consideration. Information on the target population, samples, and the sampling techniques employed was as indicated below (Table 2).

Table 2. Population, sample size, and sampling techniques

Colleges	Students			DN			DH			CLQAC		
	P	S	%	P	S	%	P	S	%	P	S	%
CBE	76	49	64	1	1	100	6	2	33	1	1	100
CSSH	68	45	66	1	1	100	4	1	25	1	1	100
CNCS	71	46	65	1	1	100	4	1	25	1	1	100
Total Sample	215	140	65	3	3	100	14	4	29	3	3	100
Sampling Techniques	Stratified			Availability			Purposive			Availability		

Key: CSSH, Colleges of Social Science and Humanities; CBE- College of Business and Economics; CNCS - College of Natural and Computational Science; DN- deans; CLQAC - College quality assurance coordinators.

Tools for Data Collection

Questionnaires and interviews were employed as methods of collecting the necessary data. Student opinions were obtained through questionnaires, while the perspectives of deans (DNs), department heads (DHs), and CLQACs were through semi-structured interviews. The researchers designed a questionnaire employing a five-point measurement scale, which ranged from "Strongly disagree" to "Strongly agree," and distributed it to the participants. Prior to collecting the actual data, the legitimacy and reliability of the survey items were assessed. The average reliability coefficient was 0.75, illustrating the items' internal

consistency and found that the tool is reliable in measuring students' perceptions of the exit exam. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation. Moreover, inferential statistical methods such as ANOVA and stepwise regression were applied to analyze the quantitative data. To supplement the quantitative data, excerpts from interviews were included in the form of direct quotations. For the analysis of qualitative data, narrative and thematic descriptions were employed to interpret the data.

RESULTS

In this section, data were presented and summarized to identify the primary findings and initiate discussions. The subsequent section delves deeper into these findings.

Students Perception of Exit Exam (Quantitative Data)

Students were requested to indicate their level of agreement regarding their perception of the exit exam using pre-designed questionnaire. The subsequent findings are presented below in Table 3.

It is evident from Table 3 that, except for items #3 and 4, the mean scores (M) for students' perception (the need for exit exam is to produce competent graduate; exit exam makes student to perceive positively their achievement) was at the level of disagree score. As to item # 4 of the same table (I believe exit exams enhance the quality and standards of higher education graduates), it seems that students held a neutral position. The students believe that exit exam helps to prevent cheating as it provide a more comprehensive and standardized assessment of student performance (#4) with the highest means score of all.

The researchers employed a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in the mean perception of the exit exam across the three colleges. The outcomes of the ANOVA analysis are summarized in Table 4, which provides an overview of the findings regarding students' perception of the exit examination.

Table 3. Students' perception of exit examination (N=135)

No	Item	Responses	
		M	SD_1
1.	I believe that the need for exit exam is to produce competent graduate	2.34	0.84
2.	I believe that exit exam makes me to have positive perception of my achievement	2.21	0.86
3.	I perceive exit exam helps to prevent cheating as they provide a more comprehensive and standardized assessment of student performance	4.47	1.16
4.	I believe exit exams enhance the quality and standards of higher education graduates, as they ensure that students have met certain standards before graduating	2.49	1.40

Key: N represents the number of respondents, M denotes the mean score, and SD represents the standard deviation.

Table 4. A concise summary of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the perception of students towards the exit examination.

Variable	Sources of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Perception of Exit Examination	Between Groups	53.885	2	26.943	10.284	.000
	Within Groups	345.818	132	2.620		
	Total	399.704	134			

Summary of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant difference in the perception of the exit exam among the selected colleges (F (2, 132) = 10.284, p< 0.05) (Table 4). This demonstrates that students' perception towards the exit exam varies across colleges. It can be deduced that the selected colleges have distinct institutional perceptions. Therefore, it was determined that statistically significant mean differences existed in the perception of the exit exam among the three selected colleges. To determine which institutes differed significantly from each other, post hoc multiple comparisons were conducted using the Tukey test, as shown below.

Table 5. Post hoc tests related to the perception of students of the three colleges toward exit examination

(I) Colleges	(J) Colleges	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
CBE	CSSH	1.09951*	.34186	.005
	CNCS	1.43360*	.33303	.000
CSSH	CBE	-1.09951*	.34186	.005
	CNCS	.33409	.35361	.613
CNCS	CBE	-1.43360*	.33303	.000
	CSSH	-.33409	.35361	.613

* Denotes statistically significant mean differences between colleges.

The Tukey test revealed a noteworthy variance in the mean scores for students' perceptions of the exit examination among various colleges. Specifically, when comparing CBE to the other colleges, it was evident that CBE stood out as significantly different from the remaining two colleges (Table 5). This suggests that, while all the colleges under consideration had a generally negative perception of the exit examination, CSSH and CNCS exhibited a more unfavorable view compared to CBE. Consequently, in contrast to the other colleges, students of CBE held a more positive perspective on exit exams.

Factors Affecting Students Perception of Exit Examination

In this section, students were asked to express their degree of agreement on the constraints related to factors that affect students' perception of exit examination. Consequently, the results obtained are presented below (Table 6).

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of factors that affect students' perception of the exit examination (N=135)

No	Item	Response	
		M	SD_1
1.	Anxiety and stress	4.18	0.89
2.	Complexity of the exam (items are not familiar or unknown)	4.01	0.66
3.	Risk of exclusion (students who fail the exit exams may be excluded from higher education programs entirely)	4.07	0.85
4.	Lack of resource (inadequate reference materials)	3.89	0.40

Table 6 presents the average scores for items 1-3 and 4, indicating a general agreement on the identified variables which was measured through the rating scale. The mean scores and standard deviations suggest that students' perceptions of the exit examination are affected by factors such as anxiety and stress, exam complexity, the risk of exclusion, and a lack of resources.

Based on the descriptive analyses, the stepwise regression analysis was conducted and is detailed in Table 7. Stepwise regression analysis is a statistical technique employed to construct a regression model by selecting the most pertinent predictor variables from a larger pool of potential predictors. This method proves particularly valuable when working with datasets containing numerous independent variables, assisting in the identification of the variables that significantly contribute to explaining the variance in the dependent variable.

Table 7. Regression analysis on factors affecting students' perception of exit examination

Model Variables	R	R^2	Coefficients USC		SC	
	0.59	0.53	B	SE	Beta	Sig.
			3.89	0.16		0.00
Anxiety and stress			-0.19	0.04	-0.39	0.00
Risk of exclusion			-0.17	0.04	-0.34	0.00
Lack of resources			-0.09	0.05	-0.11	0.00

Key: R represents the coefficient of correlation, R2 denotes the coefficient of determination, USC represents the unstandardized coefficient, SC represents the standardized coefficient, and SE represents the standardized error.

The study investigated the impact of various factors, including anxiety, stress, the risk of exclusion, and limited resources, on students' perceptions of exit examinations. These factors collectively accounted for 53% of the variation in students' perceptions on the exit exam, making them significant predictors of students' perceptions towards the examination. Anxiety and stress to a predictor variable showed a strong statistically significant but negative relationship (B = -0.19, p < 0.01) with the perception of student indicating anxiety and stress makes student to perceive exit exam negatively (Table 7). The predictor variable risk of exclusion was statistically significant but negatively correlated variable in the model (B =-0.17, p < 0.01) indicating that the risk of exclusion causes the student to perceive the exit exam negatively in the exit examination. Resource was another predictor variable (B = -0.09, p < 0.01) in the model with a strong statistical significance but negatively associated with the student's perception of exit exam suggesting that resource is negatively affected the perception of students about exit exam even though the resource was the strong predictor/influential variable in the model. Additionally, it is evident from the regression coefficients that the predictor variable "Resource" holds the highest degree of influence, implying that dedicating more attention to this aspect could greatly enhance the successful implementation of exit examinations. Further details and insights regarding this aspect are expounded upon in the discussion section of the study.

Results of Qualitative Data

In connection with this, further explorations were carried out through interviews. As a result, one of the department heads (DH2) declared:

> *While I acknowledge the positive impact of introducing an exit exam as a graduation requirement for Ethiopian higher learning institution students, I believe it's important to address several critical considerations. Implementing such an exam in the current context might be akin to fitting new wine into an old bottle, considering factors like resource constraints, university readiness, the quality of instruction at various levels, and the caliber of the students. While there's no doubt that exit exams can enhance students' academic performance by motivating them to study diligently and place a greater emphasis on their coursework, it's essential to ensure that these challenges are adequately addressed for the system to be effective (27 April 2023)*

Consistent with the preceding interview outcome, the other interviewed college dean (DN2) stated:

> *In our college, we provide tutorial classes, revamp modules, establish an exam bank, develop model exams before students take their exit examinations, and ensure that students regularly attend their classes. I firmly believe that all these concerted efforts, made by our dedicated course instructors and department heads, would have a pivotal role in elevating the pass rates in exit exams and in the production of well-qualified and competent graduates (07 April 2023).*

Both of the aforementioned academic leaders are in agreement that all efforts directed toward the effective implementation of exit examinations have the potential to enhance the

pass rate and improve graduate competency, ultimately yielding positive outcomes for stakeholders in education.

Considering the preceding discussions about the perceptions of students, instructors, and academic leaders regarding exit examinations, it becomes evident that the respondents hold diverse perspectives on the practice and the outcomes of exit examinations. In addition to the aforementioned participants, another interviewee (DH2) provided further insights on exit examinations and stated:

> *The recent introduction of exit exams in Ethiopian universities appears to have caught us by surprise. Consequently, many students are not fully aware of its significance and view it as a politically motivated measure by the government. Instructors, too, are grappling with this new phenomenon, as there was no prior awareness campaign or adequately prepared guidelines for exit exam preparation. This has necessitated starting from scratch, involving efforts such as offering tutorial classes, revising course modules, creating an exam bank, and preparing model exams before students sit for the exit exam. However, I have concerns that this sudden shift may not necessarily lead to student success, both in the examination and in overall learning outcomes (07 April 2023).*

In summary, the aforementioned study was carried out using the information gathered through interviews and questionnaires. The result obtained from the students questionnaire clearly indicates that the students have a negative perception toward the need for the exit exam, and the management body(DH, DN, and CLQAC) perceives the beliefs as the need for the exit exam to produce competent graduate but with a great challenge. The perceptional differences that occurred between students and the management bodies are due to lack of understanding of students on the the importance of exit exam. Previous local study done on law students also reveals importance of exit exam in producing qualified legal professionals. For instance, Bishop (2001a) findings clearly show that the existence of such an exam has positively contributed to the improvement of law schools' efforts in preparing their students for the legal profession, and as a result, it is preventing the legal profession from being swarming by graduates who lack competence. From this, one can conclude that students may have lack of understanding of the need to take part in exit exam at all levels.

DISCUSSIONS

This paper aims to investigate the perception of Haramaya University students regarding the exit examination. In this section, for the sake of emphasis, perception of students on exit exam and factors influencing their perception of exit examination are discussed. Consequently, regarding perception of student toward exit exam there are four variables (the need for exit exam is to produce competent graduate; exit exam makes student to perceive positively their achievement; exit exam helps to prevent cheating; exit exams enhance the quality and standards of higher education graduates).

To begin with the students perception on the need for exit exam is to produce competent graduate, the Ethiopian Integrated Education Development Roadmap (2018-2030), stated that the MoE intended to implement a university ranking system based on important

performance outcome indicators, such as graduates passing exit exams, to ensure quality standards at universities. Although the Ministry of Education believed that exit exam is important to produce competent graduate, the findings from the present study (Tables 3), on contrary, perceive undesirably on the importance of exit exam in producing competent graduate.

Another issue that needed to be addressed was the student's perception on the importance of exit exam in making the students perceive their achievement positively and most of the responses show as their response is alarming concerning exit exam makes them to have positive perception of their achievement. Some scholars are interested in how exit exams affect students' opinions of their own learning and future prospects, and they used a variety of methods and data sources, including surveys, interviews, focus groups discussion, and case studies. The findings are not uniform across situations and populations, but the literature does reveal some common trends. One recurring theme is that exit examinations may have a negative impact on students' perceptions of their accomplishments or graduation, particularly for low-achieving or underprivileged students who are at risk of failing the exams. For example, Caves and Balestra (2016) discovered that failing a high school exit test in 10th grade had no influence on students' subsequent course taking, achievement, persistence, or graduation, but it did lower their self-confidence and future expectations. Similarly, Holme et al. (2010) observed that exit tests increased dropout rates among low-income and minority students who felt discouraged and stigmatized on account of the exams.

Another recurring theme is that exit examinations may have a beneficial impact on students' perceptions of their accomplishment or graduation, particularly for high-achieving or advantaged students who are certain of passing the exams. For example, Warren et al. (2006) discovered that high-achieving students who evaluated exit exams as an indicator of academic quality and rigor were more likely to graduate (Merki and Oerke, 2017). Similarly, Holme et al. (2010) discovered that exit examinations improved the college enrolment rate of high-achieving pupils who saw the exams as a postsecondary education credential. As a result, the consequences of exit tests on student perceptions of their achievement or graduation vary depending on the circumstances. They may be affected by factors such as difficulty and content, support and preparation provided by schools and teachers, the stakes and repercussions, and the traits and preferences of the students involved.

The perception on exit exam importance in preventing cheating is an additional interesting point for discussion. Most of respondents (CM=4.47) responded that they believe that exit exams are important in combating cheating. Exit exams can help prevent cheating by providing a standardized test that is difficult to cheat on. They can also help identify areas where students may need additional support or instruction. However, exit exams are not foolproof and can be cheated on if students have access to the exam questions ahead of time

or if they are able to cheat during the exam itself by offering a standardized test that is challenging to cheat on; exit exams can aid in the prevention of cheating (Newton, 2021).

Although Exit exams are designed to evaluate student performance and determine whether they have acquired the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in their chosen field, respondents' response is at disagree level regarding their perception on exit exams enhance the quality and standards of higher education graduates. In connection to this, many claim that exit exams can improve the quality and standards of graduates from higher education (Caves and Balestra, 2016). Exit exams can assist guarantee that graduates have the information and abilities needed to succeed in their chosen careers by requiring students to demonstrate mastery in specific areas of study. This can lead to increased confidence among employers and a more highly skilled workforce overall (Warren et al., 2006). However, there is some disagreement about whether exit exams are the best way to achieve these objectives. Some critics argue that these exams may be too focused on rote memorization and test-taking skills rather than critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Furthermore, some worry that relying too heavily on exit exams could lead to unhealthy competition, grade inflation, and other negative consequences (Caves and Balestra, 2016). In short, while exit exams have the potential to enhance the standards of higher education graduates, their efficacy is dependent on a number of factors, including the design of the exams themselves, the goals of the educational system in question, and the resources available to implement them effectively (Grodsky et al., 2008).

So far, discussions have focused on perception of students on exits examination. Now, let us turn to students' perception of exit examination (such as anxiety and stress, complexity of the exam, risk of exclusion and lack of resource). Consequently, respondents were asked to make their judgments if anxiety and stress is affecting students' perception of exit examination in the study areas. In light of this, the vast majority of responses of respondents (M=4.18) indicated that as anxiety and stress is negatively affected their perception of exit exam. In congruent with this finding, Mofatteh (2021) found six distinct risk factor themes: psychological, intellectual, biological, lifestyle, social, and economical. Different risk factor groups have varying degrees of influence on students' stress, anxiety, and depression (Mofatteh, 2021). Another study (Bedewy and Gabriel, 2015) discovered that the most often stated reasons by students contributing to exam anxiety were heavy course loads (90.8%), a lack of physical activity (90%), and extended exam durations (77.5%). The authors also stated that most students lacked understanding about exam preparation and anxiety reduction.

Risk of exclusion was the other crucial issue presented to the respondents (Table 6, item 3). With M value = 4.07, most of the respondents (81.4%) reported that risk of exclusion is a factor that makes the student to perceive the exit exam negatively. Consistent to this finding, Kumar et al. (2019) stated that students perceive exit examination adversely due to the risk of exclusion. Students who fail the exit exams may be barred from furthering their study. Students who are unable to pass the exam may develop a sense of hopelessness and despair as a consequence of this. The study also discovered that students who believe the exit

examination to be unfair or biased are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards it (El-Hassan et al, 2021b &Wang et al, 2020.).

The first before the last is the variable, lack of resources (inadequate reference materials). The vast majority of responses (77.8%) with M value = 3.89 revealed as lack of resource as a factor that makes the student to perceive exit exam negatively. According to study reports, including Getinet et al. (2021), a lack of resources, such as poor reference materials and textbooks, might have a negative impact on students' performance in exit tests. The study also discovered that a lack of resources had a detrimental impact on students' perceptions of the examination.

CONCLUSIONS

Exit exams encourage students to put in extra effort on their work, which improves the quality of education, information transfer, and graduate competency. However, based on the study's findings, it may be assumed that the student had a negative perception towards the exit exam. Based on ANOVA's result, the conclusion was that the mean differences were statistically significant in perception of exit exams across the selected colleges. This shows that there is no common understanding of the exit examination among the different colleges in the university. Furthermore, based on Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons, it was established that CBE students had a better perception of the exit examination than students from the Colleges of Social Sciences and Humanities and Natural and Computational Sciences. Thus, in order for students to be effective in their learning and secure the full academic benefits of the exit examination, it is strongly suggested that the following recommendations be followed. First, exit examination, as part of the examination policy package, should be accompanied by implementation guidelines, clear directions, and reinforcement directives to help students be more effective in their instruction and obtain the full academic benefits from the exam. Students can gain a clearer understanding of what is expected of them during the assessment process when they engage in ample preparation, receive clear instructions, and foster a positive perception. Furthermore, it is crucial to offer advices that promote sustained focus and motivation among students throughout the entire exam preparation and completion process.

Second, stress and anxiety are factors that cause students to perceive the exit exam badly, making it necessary to overcome pupils. Stress and anxiousness cause students to have a bad perception of the exit exam. The university can work with the psychology department to establish training programmes on how to manage exit exam stress and anxiety. These programmes could include relaxation techniques, time management strategies, and goal setting procedures to assist students in managing their anxiety and stress levels. Mindfulness meditation and other cognitive-behavioural therapies may also be beneficial in lowering exam-related anxiety. The university should prioritize addressing the impact of exam stress on academic achievement and should take proactive steps to mitigate these challenges by implementing a range of supportive programs.

Third, in terms of risk of exclusion (students who fail the exit exams may be completely excluded from higher education programmes), MoE should clearly establish a policy for dealing with students who fail the exit exams, and it should be clearly communicated to the students so that they are aware of their options and have a fair chance to retake the exam or pursue alternative pathways for higher education. It is critical that the MoE analyse these policies and decide which ones will be most beneficial to their students. They should also think about offering extra help to students who struggle with these examinations, such as tutoring or other resources. Fourth, in order to overcome a shortage of resources, students should employ a variety of inventive tactics, such as searching for online resources (online courses, study materials, sample questions, and videos that clarify essential ideas) and engaging with their course teachers. Last but not least, it is suggested that comprehensive nationwide research be conducted, encompassing all additional factors, as well as colleges and institutions not included in this study, in order to obtain a holistic understanding of the exit exam procedures and perplexities.

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