

The Impact of Online Schooling due to the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Mental and Socioeconomic Well-being of Parents and Guardians of Primary School Students

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Introduction

- COVID-19 caused extensive economic recession and Trinidad is no exception. Whilst lockdown slowed the spread of COVID-19, it also resulted in the closure of schools and retrenchment of workers.
- Therefore, it was imperative that the parental population be investigated to determine the impact of this pandemic on their livelihood, since challenges they encountered impacted the quality of education received by their children.
- Many families faced financial constraints in purchasing electronic devices and internet connectivity to facilitate their children's online learning. This overwhelming stress coupled with lack of technological competence had the possibility of increasing the prevalence of psychiatric disorders such as generalized anxiety and depression.

Objective

- To assess the effect of online schooling on the mental health of parents and guardians of primary school students
- To determine the prevalence of mental health issues such as anxiety, depression and stress.
- To examine the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on financial security of parents
- To evaluate how the skill set (literacy and technological skills) of parents and guardians affect the achievement of their child

Methodology

- Study Design: Cross-Sectional Study
- Study population: 5557 Parents /guardians of primary schools in the district of Port of Spain.
- Study Sample: 100 parents/guardians from two primary schools.
- Data collection: Self administered online questionnaires distributed via class social media groups
- Data Analysis: The latest version of SPSS was used to generate descriptive statistics, chi square tests and inferential statistics.
- Data Protection: Informed consent was received, and no identifying factors were employed in questionnaire.

Results

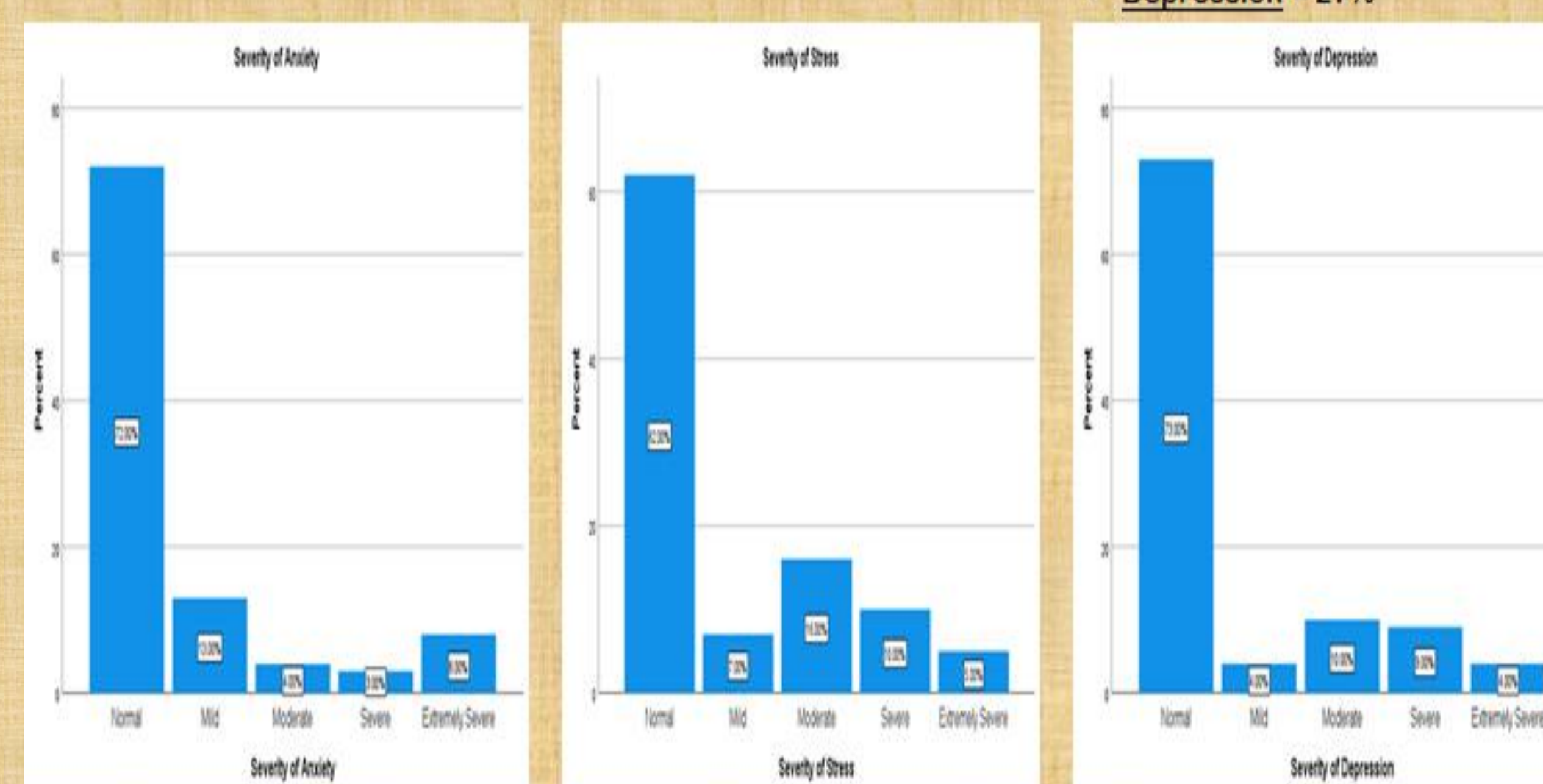


Figure 1 Severity of Anxiety, Stress and Depression among participants based on DASS-21 data.

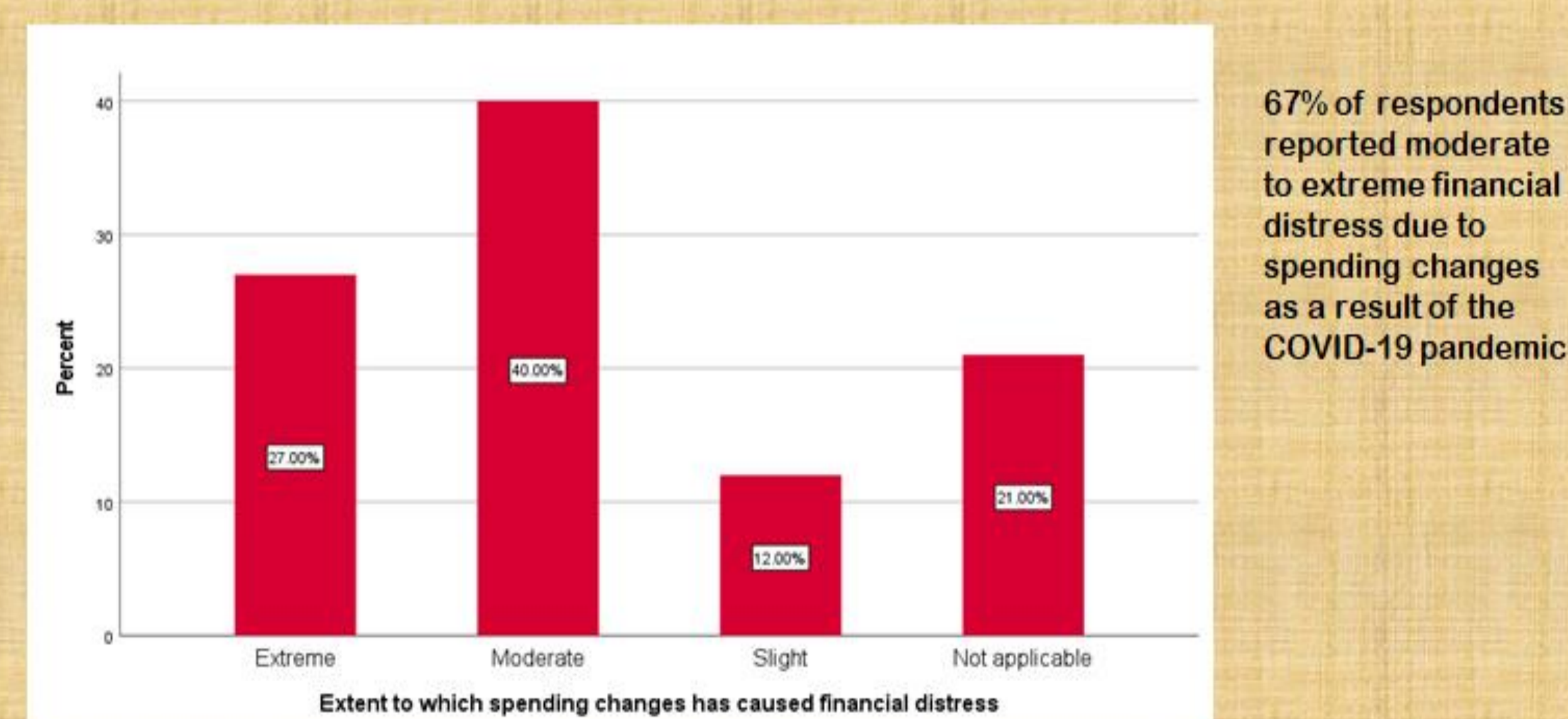


Figure 2 Extent to which spending changes has caused financial distress due to COVID-19 pandemic.

- N = 100 participants
- Anxiety = 28%
- Stress = 38%
- Depression = 27%

67% of respondents reported moderate to extreme financial distress due to spending changes as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Discussion

- Higher levels of education corresponded with lower levels of stress and anxiety.
- Increased anxiety, stress, and depression were associated with increased expenditure during the COVID pandemic.
- Respondents implied that their increased stress was associated with online school.
- Finally, a lack of computer literacy levels, among respondents were linked to a reduction in the academic performance of students as >50% of respondents could not assist their child during online school.

Conclusion

- Parents need better support systems and coping mechanisms to deal with the changes that the ongoing pandemic brings.
- To increase parents' comfort in the virtual school setting, schools should host workshops for the purpose of teaching parents how to use the online platforms their child uses.
- On a governmental level, it should be assessed how best grants can be distributed to assist disadvantaged families.

References

Acknowledgments

1. Education & Planning Division of The Ministry of Education
2. Principals and Staff Members of participating schools