IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)
Volume 30, Issue 8, Series 1 (August, 2025) 117-127
e-ISSN: 2279-0837, p-ISSN: 2279-0845.
www.iosrjournals.org

A Comprehensive Study on The Challenges, Adaptation Difficulties, And Declining Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students in Kanpur Colleges Following the Implementation of The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

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Abstract
The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduced major structural, pedagogical, and curricular reforms across Indian higher education, aiming to promote holistic learning, flexibility, and competency-based outcomes. However, the transitional phase has created significant challenges for students, particularly regarding adaptation to continuous assessments, interdisciplinary course loads, technology-integrated instruction, and multilingual academic expectations. This study examines the academic hurdles faced by 100 undergraduate students from a Kanpur college following NEP 2020 implementation. Using 14 detailed statistical tables covering performance metrics, study hours, stress levels, learning satisfaction, attendance, and digital literacy, the research highlights declining academic performance trends, with 62% of students reporting difficulty coping with new evaluation methods and 57% experiencing higher academic stress. Quantitative results reveal substantial variability in learning adaptability and digital readiness. Discussion links these findings to systemic gaps in institutional preparedness, faculty training, and student support systems. The study contributes evidence-based insights for policymakers, administrators, and educators to improve NEP execution and strengthen academic resilience among students.

Keywords
NEP 2020, student challenges, academic performance, higher education reforms, continuous evaluation, Kanpur college analysis

I. Introduction

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents the most far-reaching reform of India's education system since independence. Framed as a comprehensive blueprint, NEP 2020 promises to transform schooling and higher education through a learner-centric, flexible, multidisciplinary approach; foundational literacy and numeracy programmes; a revamp of curricula and assessments; teacher-capacity building; and the promotion of vocational education, multilingualism, and digital pedagogy. These ambitions are codified in the final policy document and reflected across its many prescriptions for structural change.

NEP 2020 emerged against the dual backdrop of longstanding deficits in learning quality and the deep disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic precipitated massive learning losses, widened digital divides, and created administrative pressures on states and institutions seeking to resume normal schooling while pivoting toward reform. The combination of historical challenges and pandemic-era setbacks both motivated NEP's urgency and complicated its rollout. Large-scale assessments and policy reviews since 2020 highlight persistent deficiencies in foundational skills and show that the road from visionary policy to classroom reality is neither short nor straightforward.

This introduction examines the concrete challenges and hurdles students have faced in the wake of NEP 2020's implementation, and links those challenges to observable declines or stagnation in certain academic performance indicators. Rather than evaluating the policy's aims, the focus here is on translation gaps: how policy design and implementation choices, state capacity, institutional constraints, and socio-economic reality interact to shape student experience and learning outcomes. Drawing on official documents, large-scale surveys, government progress notes, and recent academic and media analyses, the discussion maps structural, pedagogical, assessment-related, equity, language, psychosocial, and higher-education difficulties that students have encountered since NEP's rollout.

1. Structural and transitional hurdles: system complexity and implementation gaps

One of NEP 2020's strengths is its systemic ambition: it seeks to reshape the architecture of schooling (the 5+3+3+4 pedagogical structure), assessment regimes, and higher education frameworks. However, systemic change at national scale requires careful phasing, significant resources, and strong coordination between the

central government, states, district administrations, and institutions. In many states and institutions the necessary pre-conditions for a smooth transition—updated curricula, re-trained teachers, revised academic calendars, clear administrative guidelines, and adequate infrastructure—have lagged behind policy timelines. Delays and heterogeneity in state adoption have produced uneven student experiences, where learners in some jurisdictions face abrupt curricular or administrative shifts while their peers elsewhere continue under older systems.

Operationally, students have borne the cost of this heterogeneity through confusion about grade structures, altered subject groupings, and revised assessment formats. Reports from higher-education institutions and student communities describe practical problems—late course approvals, unclear credit transfer rules, abrupt changes in the number of required modules, and delays in examination schedules—that disrupt study plans and timelines for graduation. In extreme cases, administrative errors during the early phases of NEP implementation produced erroneous marksheets, absentee notations, and delays in results, causing anxiety and material setbacks for affected students. These are not isolated inconveniences: they compound learning discontinuities and can undermine student trust in institutions during a delicate period of reform.

2. Teacher preparedness and pedagogical readiness

NEP 2020 places heavy emphasis on teacher professional development: teachers are expected to shift from teacher-centric, rote instruction toward facilitation, experiential learning, formative assessment, and multidisciplinary methods. Yet a rapid change in pedagogy demands large-scale teacher re-training, ongoing mentoring, and incentives to apply new practices. Numerous state and academic reviews point to severe gaps in teacher training capacity, inconsistent access to high-quality professional development, and limited time for teachers to redesign lessons while managing full class loads. For students, the immediate consequence is uneven classroom practice: some teachers implement NEP-aligned methods and create more engaging classroom environments, while others—lacking training or resources—continue traditional methods or apply hybrid, inconsistent approaches that leave learners unsure of expectations.

Where teacher shortages persist—or where the same number of teachers is expected to assume additional roles such as mentoring, continuous assessment, and community outreach—class sizes and teacher workload can increase. Overburdened teachers are less able to individualise instruction, identify learning gaps, or introduce active learning practices. Students with diverse needs (slower learners, multilingual learners, or those requiring special education support) are particularly disadvantaged in such contexts, magnifying inequities.

3. Assessment reform: ambiguity, implementation mismatch, and student stress

Assessment reform is among NEP's most consequential agenda items: the policy advocates a shift from high-stakes, end-of-term examinations to a broader mix of formative, competency-based evaluations and periodic assessments designed to capture holistic learning. While the aim is pedagogically sound, transitioning assessment systems is technically complex. Schools and boards must redesign rubrics, train examiners, create reliable internal assessment mechanisms, and align promotion, scholarship, and admissions processes with new metrics. During the transition, students face mixed assessment regimes—some components governed by legacy high-stakes tests, others by nascent formative systems—creating uncertainty about ranking, college admissions, and scholarship eligibility. Moreover, where implementation is hurried, formative assessments risk becoming box-ticking exercises rather than genuine tools for learning. Without robust teacher training and systemic safeguards against grade inflation or arbitrariness, student grades can become unreliable indicators of true competence. The resulting mismatch between intended assessment philosophy and on-ground practice can worsen student anxiety rather than alleviate it—precisely the opposite of NEP's intent to foster lifelong, low-stress learning ecosystems.

4. Language policy and multilingual education: promise and practical barriers

NEP 2020 foregrounds multilingualism and mother-tongue/first-language instruction in early grades as a foundation for better comprehension and learning. The policy's language recommendations aim to strengthen conceptual understanding and reduce early learning barriers. Yet implementing a robust multilingual strategy at scale requires locally adapted textbooks, trained bilingual or multilanguage teachers, teacher guides, and assessment items in multiple languages. Many schools—especially in underserved rural or tribal regions—lack adequate teacher numbers fluent in the local medium, and curriculum materials in regional languages are not always available. Studies and field reports emphasise that without targeted resource allocation, the well-intentioned language provisions may remain aspirational, and students could experience inconsistent language support that adversely affects foundational learning. Language policy also intersects with socio-cultural attitudes. Parents in some urban and aspirational contexts prefer early English instruction, believing it confers future advantages. Reconciling these preferences with NEP's evidence-based emphasis on mother-tongue instruction requires careful community engagement, clear communication about pedagogy, and visible short-term wins to build trust—factors that, if neglected, can create friction and confusion for students and families.

5. Digital divide, infrastructure gaps, and unequal access to blended learning

NEP 2020 envisages extensive use of technology for content delivery, teacher learning, and student assessment—an approach that showed promise during pandemic remote learning. However, reliance on digital technologies can deepen pre-existing inequalities when access to devices, connectivity, electricity, and local language digital content is uneven. Large surveys and government assessments since the pandemic show that rural and low-income households continue to lag in access to meaningful digital learning, resulting in lost instructional time and weakened foundations for higher-order skills. For students, the consequence is clear: those with poor access are more likely to fall behind, accumulate gaps in foundational literacy and numeracy, and struggle to benefit from NEP-promoted blended or tech-enabled pedagogies. Beyond hardware and connectivity, schools need safe study spaces, libraries, laboratory access for experiential learning, and locally relevant digital content. Without these, the policy's emphasis on experiential, project-based learning and technology-mediated resources risks being aspirational rather than operational for large swathes of learners.

6. Equity, socio-economic constraints, and the risk of widening disparities

Although NEP 2020 repeatedly foregrounds equity and inclusion, implementation realities can perversely widen gaps. Wealthier private schools and well-resourced public institutions are typically better positioned to pilot multidisciplinary curricula, procure digital resources, and organise teacher training. Conversely, resource-constrained government schools often struggle to roll out even basic NEP elements. When implementation proceeds unevenly, advantaged students benefit earlier from improved pedagogy, extra-curricular opportunities, and exposure to skill-based learning, while disadvantaged students remain dependent on minimal inputs, reinforcing inequality in learning outcomes and future opportunities. Large-scale monitoring reports and civil-society surveys document a persistent gap in foundational competencies—literacy and numeracy—across social and geographic groups, underscoring the equity challenge. Additionally, socio-economic constraints—child labour pressures, household migration, food insecurity, and limited parental education—continue to shape attendance, concentration, and time available for study. Policy reforms that do not explicitly account for these realities will produce uneven results; students should not be expected to internalise new pedagogies and broader curricular choices if their basic needs and learning time remain insecure.

7. Foundational learning crisis and evidence of stagnation or decline

Perhaps the most alarming implication of the implementation gap is the persistence—and in some indicators the worsening—of foundational learning deficits. Independent large-scale instruments such as the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) and World Bank learning poverty indices have repeatedly documented that many children lack basic reading and arithmetic competencies even after several years of schooling. Post-COVID data suggest that learning poverty increased and that foundational skills did not rebound rapidly once schools reopened; this creates a precarious basis for NEP's higher-order ambitions (multidisciplinarity, critical thinking, vocational integration) because these advanced competencies rest on strong foundational literacy and numeracy. Empirical studies evaluating early phases of NEP implementation report mixed signals: while some pilot schools show promising changes in pedagogy, statewide assessment results and household surveys reveal stagnation in foundational skills for large student cohorts. The mismatch between pedagogical aspirations and ground realities helps explain why academic performance, as measured by basic competencies, has not uniformly improved—and in some pockets has worsened—during the NEP transition period.

8. Higher education transition pains: credit systems, multidisciplinary degrees, and administrative confusion

In higher education, NEP 2020's move to flexible, multidisciplinary bachelor's programmes with multiple exit and entry points, credit transfers, and an emphasis on research and vocational integration has elicited both praise and operational anxiety. Universities must rework curricula, create new administrative processes, and ensure clarity about degree titles, course equivalence, and certification. Faculty bodies and teacher associations in several institutions have raised concerns about workload, the pace of regulatory changes, and possible dilution of disciplinary depth. Students navigating these transitions report confusion about program requirements, fear of losing core disciplinary rigor, and uncertainty about how new degrees will be perceived by employers and graduate programmes. Such uncertainty can suppress academic performance, as students struggle to prioritise coursework and plan coherent academic trajectories in an evolving regulatory landscape.

9. Psychosocial stress, choice overload, and student identity

NEP's emphasis on learner choice and multiple possible academic pathways is student-empowering in principle. In practice, however, expanded choice without commensurate guidance can produce anxiety, indecision, and diffuse study patterns—especially among adolescents already navigating high-stakes transitions (secondary to higher secondary; higher secondary to undergraduate). Career counselling services, robust academic advising, and well-resourced guidance systems are limited in many schools and colleges; absent such support, students may

make suboptimal choices, spread themselves thin across too many subjects, or lose focus on depth of learning, contributing to weaker academic outcomes. Furthermore, rapid curricular change and shifting expectations can unsettle student identity and belonging in the classroom, particularly for learners from first-generation college families or marginalised communities.

10. Monitoring, assessment systems, and the evidence gap

A critical challenge for policymakers and practitioners is reliable, continuous monitoring that can reveal whether reforms are improving learning for all students. NEP calls for improved data systems and learning assessment mechanisms, but developing valid, comparable, and actionable metrics that integrate formative classroom assessments, state testing, and national surveys is difficult. Where monitoring remains fragmented, policymakers lack timely evidence to correct course, and students continue to be subject to trial-and-error reforms that may initially harm learning outcomes rather than help them. Rigorous, disaggregated data that tracks foundational competencies, socio-economic gradients, and the impact of specific NEP interventions is therefore essential to understand and address declining academic performance where it exists.

NEP 2020 is a bold, visionary statement about the future of Indian education. Its success—measured in improved learning, reduced inequities, and the meaningful flourishing of students—depends on translation from policy text to classroom practice. The hurdles described above are not inherent flaws in the policy's philosophy; rather, they are practical implementation challenges that arise when sweeping reforms meet uneven institutional capacity, resource constraints, socio-economic realities, and the aftereffects of a global pandemic. From a student-centred perspective, the immediate risks are clear: confused curricula and assessment regimes, uneven teacher preparedness, persistent foundational learning gaps, widened digital and socio-economic disparities, and psychosocial stresses from change. These factors can and do contribute to stagnant or declining academic performance for substantial student cohorts. At the same time, promising pockets of innovation demonstrate the policy's potential—where resources, training, and community engagement converge, NEP-style pedagogies are producing measurable improvements.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents one of India's most significant educational reforms since independence, aiming to transform the traditional system into a more flexible, multidisciplinary, skill-oriented higher education framework. Numerous researchers have examined the policy's strengths, but a growing body of literature highlights transitional challenges faced by students during implementation. Early studies emphasize that NEP 2020 promotes competency-based learning, holistic development, and experiential pedagogy (Rajput, 2021). However, scholars argue that such pedagogical innovations require strong systemic support, which Indian colleges—especially in tier-II and tier-III cities—often lack (Sharma & Rani, 2022). Research shows that students encountering sudden shifts in learning methods frequently experience anxiety, reduced confidence, and academic decline during initial years of policy transition (Khan, 2021). The move toward continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE) has been widely discussed. According to Prakash (2021), students previously accustomed to exam-centric systems struggle to adapt to frequent assessments, project work, and internal evaluations that demand time-management and self-regulation skills. Numerous studies note increasing stress levels among students, especially those with limited academic support at home or poor digital literacy (Nair, 2022). Empirical research from states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Madhya Pradesh shows that institutions with fewer trained faculty were unable to implement NEP-aligned assessments effectively, leaving students confused about grading criteria (Gupta & Tiwari, 2022).

Digital integration under NEP has also been highlighted as a major challenge. The policy promotes blended learning, online platforms, and technology-based pedagogies. However, researchers emphasize that digital inequality affects student outcomes significantly (Mishra, 2021). Rural students, first-generation learners, and economically weaker groups face barriers in accessing devices, stable internet, and digital skills training (Rana & Singh, 2022). Several studies on post-pandemic education reveal that technology-rich classrooms widen academic disparities when adequate training is not provided (Tripathi, 2021). Multidisciplinary learning and flexibility in course selection also create cognitive overload for students. While NEP's vision encourages exploration across fields, many students perceive multidisciplinary electives as additional burdens rather than opportunities (Mahajan, 2022). Studies report that limited faculty expertise, lack of well-structured interdisciplinary modules, and inconsistent evaluation patterns contribute to confusion among students (Rathore, 2023). Research from central Indian universities indicates that students often perform poorly in skill-oriented or elective courses due to insufficient guidance and unclear learning outcomes (Chaudhary, 2021).

Language and multilingual education reforms also pose challenges. NEP 2020 emphasizes learning in the mother tongue and multilingual communication. Yet, higher education institutions predominantly use English or Hindi as mediums of instruction. Students shifting from local-language schooling to English-medium college programs find it difficult to adapt, resulting in declining performance (Yadav & Khan, 2022). Literature shows

that poor academic language proficiency directly affects students' writing, comprehension, and critical thinking skills (Rao, 2021). Institutional preparedness has been identified as a crucial factor. According to multiple studies, many colleges lack trained faculty capable of implementing competency-based pedagogy (Sharma & Bhandari, 2021). Inadequate teacher training, insufficient resources, and unclear curricular frameworks compound implementation challenges (Kapoor, 2022). A nationwide survey found that over 60% of higher education faculty felt unprepared for NEP's pedagogical changes, indirectly affecting student experiences (Lal, 2023).

Student mental health has emerged as a growing concern. Literature highlights rising academic stress, competition, and workload after the implementation of multiple assessments and skill-based tasks (Sinha, 2022). Research using psychological scales indicates increased anxiety levels among college students adapting to post-NEP academic environments (Gill & Arora, 2022). Students with low resilience or limited support report the highest decline in academic performance. Gender-based studies reveal nuanced challenges. Female students often face difficulties balancing household responsibilities with increased academic workload under NEP's continuous evaluation model (Qureshi, 2021). Digital skill gaps are found to be slightly higher among female students, affecting performance in technology-intensive modules (Menon, 2022). Male students, meanwhile, exhibit higher absenteeism and lower engagement due to the shift from rote-based learning to active participation models (Verma, 2023).

Socio-economic background significantly shapes the student experience during NEP implementation. Research shows that students from low-income families face more challenges in accessing resources, managing workload, and coping with psychological stress (Ali, 2022). The transition to multidisciplinary, project-driven learning widens gaps between resource-rich and resource-poor learners. Overall, the literature consistently indicates that while NEP 2020 is visionary and transformative, its success depends on adequate institutional preparedness, faculty training, student support mechanisms, and phased implementation strategies. Most studies call for empirical evidence from real-world student data, particularly from semi-urban colleges. This research, focusing on 100 students from a Kanpur college, contributes to this emerging scholarly discourse.

III. EXPERIMENTAL SETUP AND METHODOLOGY

This study used a quantitative descriptive research design to analyze the academic challenges faced by students after NEP 2020 implementation. The sample consisted of **100 undergraduate students** from a private college in Kanpur, selected using simple random sampling to ensure equal representation from science, arts, and commerce streams. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of 35 items covering academic performance, stress levels, digital skills, study habits, attendance, perception of NEP changes, and adaptability to continuous assessment. The instrument followed a 5-point Likert scale for perception-based items and included objective fields for grades, study hours, and attendance percentages. The questionnaire's reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.86. Academic performance data (internal marks, assignment scores, and semester results) were obtained with institutional permission. Stress levels were measured using a modified version of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). Digital literacy was assessed using a set of performance-based tasks. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage analysis) and comparative tables. Fourteen detailed tables were generated to analyze relationships between performance and variables such as stress, attendance, gender, study hours, and perception of NEP reforms. Cross-tab and correlation analyses established connections between student challenges and academic outcomes. Ethical guidelines were strictly followed. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and anonymity was maintained. Results were interpreted to understand how NEP-related structural changes correlated with student performance decline.

TABLE 1: Gender Distribution of Students

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	56	56%
Female	44	44%

The gender distribution of the 100 sampled Kanpur College students reveals a slightly male-dominated population, with males accounting for 56% and females 44%. This moderate imbalance reflects broader enrollment patterns commonly observed in semi-urban Indian colleges, where male enrollment tends to be marginally higher due to cultural preferences, early marriage issues, and household responsibilities that influence female continuation in higher studies. Although the difference is not extreme, it may subtly affect classroom dynamics, participation equity, and academic competition. A higher proportion of male students may influence peer interactions, leadership roles, group-work patterns, and overall campus culture. From a statistical standpoint, the gender ratio provides the foundation for deeper comparative analysis across academic performance, study habits, and NEP-related challenges. For example, subsequent tables can investigate whether gender correlates with differences in attendance, performance, or technology access. This gender breakdown is also crucial for

equity analysis, ensuring that academic strategies and institutional support systems accommodate the learning needs of all groups. In future studies, a more balanced sample may provide deeper insights into gender-based academic trends; however, the present distribution is adequate for meaningful comparative evaluation of male and female student outcomes.

TABLE 2: Academic Stream Distribution

Stream	Frequency	Percentage
Science	42	42%
Commerce	33	33%
Arts	25	25%

The academic stream distribution shows that 42% of students are enrolled in Science, 33% in Commerce, and 25% in Arts. This trend closely mirrors typical enrollment patterns in Kanpur and similar urban centers where Science is considered a preferred stream due to perceived professional returns, competitive exams, and parental expectations. Commerce shows a strong presence as well, reflecting the city's commercial nature and student interest in finance-related careers. Arts, though traditionally less preferred, still represents a significant 25% of the cohort, indicating a gradual diversification of student academic choices. This distribution helps identify variations in academic pressure, performance levels, and NEP-related challenges across streams. Science students, often burdened with laboratory work and conceptual rigor, may face more performance-related stress. Commerce students typically deal with mathematical and analytical components, while Arts students may encounter challenges linked to theoretical depth and language proficiency. Understanding stream-wise distribution is essential for interpreting attendance trends, exam scores, and the impact of online or blended learning post-NEP implementation. Additionally, this table sets the foundation for comparative statistical analyses that follow, such as stream-wise exam performance and NEP-related academic disruptions.

TABLE 3: Attendance (%) Distribution

Attendance Range	Number of Students	Percentage
90–100%	18	18%
80–89%	27	27%
70–79%	33	33%
<70%	22	22%

The attendance distribution highlights that only 18% of students attend classes regularly at 90% or above. The largest group (33%) falls in the 70–79% attendance range, while a concerning 22% have attendance below 70%. This reflects a substantial engagement gap that may be linked to multiple factors—academic overload, NEP-induced curriculum changes, increased assignments, stress, part-time employment, or digital distractions. Lower attendance is a strong indicator of academic risk: students in the <70% bracket typically show weaker internal assessment scores, reduced conceptual understanding, and higher examination anxiety. The transitional phase following NEP 2020 may have introduced unfamiliar assessment formats and project-based requirements, discouraging students who lack strong academic support at home or face digital barriers. Moreover, many students reported difficulty adjusting to blended learning, which reduced classroom attachment post-pandemic. The moderate percentage attending 80–89% shows that while many students attempt consistency, they are unable to sustain full attendance due to overlapping academic and personal challenges. This distribution underscores the need for targeted attendance-support interventions such as mentorship, flexible learning hours, remedial classes, and counseling services.

TABLE 4: Internal Assessment Score (Out of 50)

Score Range	Frequency	Percentage
40–50	24	24%
30–39	36	36%
20–29	28	28%
<20	12	12%

Internal assessment performance provides insight into continuous learning, project-based engagement, and conceptual understanding, all of which are emphasized under NEP 2020. The table reveals that only 24% score in the high-performing range (40–50), while a significant 36% cluster around moderate performance (30–39). Alarmingly, 28% fall below 30, and 12% even score below 20. This polarization suggests uneven adaptation

to new assessment methods such as assignments, presentations, and competency-based tasks introduced after NEP 2020. Many students struggle with research-oriented tasks, timely submission of assignments, and project articulation, especially those with weaker digital skills or limited access to devices. Moreover, the transition from memorization-based assessments to higher-order thinking tasks has disproportionately affected students from non-English medium backgrounds or those lacking academic mentorship. Students scoring above 40 exhibit strong consistency and adaptation to NEP-assessment styles; however, the majority require structured academic support. This table highlights a critical gap: the shift in pedagogy is not matched by sufficient student training, guidance, or infrastructure. As a result, academic performance fluctuates significantly, affecting the final outcomes.

TABLE 5: Final Exam Score (Out of 100)

Score Range	Students	Percentage
75–100	22	22%
60–74	34	34%
40–59	28	28%
<40	16	16%

Final examination outcomes present a clearer summary of academic stability. Only 22% of students achieved distinction-level performance (75–100), while one-third (34%) reached the moderately good range (60–74). A significant 28% remained in the 40–59 pass range, reflecting average conceptual grasp. However, the most concerning segment is the 16% who scored below 40, indicating poor mastery and requiring remedial intervention. The post-NEP exam pattern, which incorporates analytical, competency-based, and descriptive questions, may have posed challenges to students habituated to rote learning. Many students express difficulty aligning their preparation strategies with the new question structure. The examination anxiety amplified by disrupted attendance, learning gaps from the pandemic years, and insufficient teacher support in adapting to the reformed curriculum likely influenced these outcomes. Students scoring below 40 are often the same individuals with low attendance and poor internal assessments, confirming the validity of continuous assessment as a performance predictor. These results call for academic restructuring, stronger mentoring, and curriculum bridging sessions.

TABLE 6: Socio-Economic Background of Students

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Low Income	38	38%
Middle Income	46	46%
High Income	16	16%

Socio-economic background emerges as a strong determinant of academic performance, technology access, study consistency, and adaptability to NEP-driven reforms. In this sample, 38% come from low-income families, 46% from middle-income groups, and 16% from high-income households. Students from low-income backgrounds often report difficulty affording books, devices, private coaching, and stable internet—all essential for blended and project-based learning. Their academic performance frequently lags due to limited study environments at home and competing responsibilities such as part-time work or household duties. Middle-income students show comparatively better adaptation but still struggle with rapidly rising academic costs. High-income students, though fewer, benefit from resource-rich support systems, enabling smoother adjustment to NEP's digital and multidisciplinary requirements. This socio-economic distribution reveals a likely performance disparity across groups, highlighting the risk of widening inequality post-NEP. Without targeted financial aid and digital inclusion programs, learning gaps may continue to grow.

TABLE 7: Study Hours per Day

Study Hours	Students	Percentage
4+ hours	18	18%
2–3 hours	44	44%
1–2 hours	26	26%
<1 hour	12	12%

Study duration is directly linked to learning retention and exam performance. While 44% of students study for 2–3 hours daily, only 18% engage in more rigorous 4+ hours of study. A sizable 26% study only 1–2 hours, and 12% study less than an hour. These low-engagement categories correlate highly with poor exam performance and low attendance. Students report that NEP's increased project-based requirements demand more

independent learning time, which many students, especially low-income and working students, are unable to dedicate. Students studying fewer hours also struggle with digital assignments, conceptual content, and continuous assessments. Meanwhile, high-performing students consistently fall into the 3–4 hours study bracket. The table clearly reveals that insufficient academic engagement contributes to declining performance trends post-NEP.

TABLE 8: Access to Digital Devices

Device Access Level	Students	Percentage
Personal Laptop	21	21%
Smartphone Only	57	57%
Shared Device	14	14%
No Device	8	8%

Digital access is a key requirement for NEP's blended learning environment. This table shows that only 21% have personal laptops, essential for research projects and online assignments. A majority (57%) rely solely on smartphones, which are insufficient for extended study or typing long assignments. Fourteen percent share devices with family members, meaning restricted study time and delayed submissions. Worst affected are the 8% with no device access; these students consistently face academic setbacks, highlighting the digital divide as a major barrier to NEP's implementation. The over-reliance on smartphones limits students' ability to navigate digital platforms, participate in online assessments, and complete NEP-mandated digital tasks. This disparity strongly influences internal assessment and exam performance.

TABLE 9: Medium of Previous Schooling

Medium	Students	Percentage
Hindi	58	58%
English	42	42%

Language background shapes students' ability to cope with higher-education content, especially in science and commerce subjects. Hindi-medium educated students (58%) often struggle with English textbooks, technical terms, and digital instructions. NEP 2020 encourages multilingualism but higher education still heavily depends on English resources. This mismatch causes comprehension challenges for Hindi-medium students, contributing to lower performance in internal assessments and final exams. English-medium students generally adapt better but also face conceptual challenges due to lack of foundational clarity in earlier schooling stages. This table underscores the need for bilingual teaching materials and supportive academic resources to bridge the linguistic performance gap.

TABLE 10: NEP-Related Challenges Reported by Students

Challenge Type	Students	Percentage
Difficulty with new assessments	41	41%
Increased workload	33	33%
Lack of digital skills	18	18%
Confusion about curriculum	8	8%

A large proportion of students (41%) struggle with new assessment formats introduced under NEP 2020, such as analytical questions, competency-based items, and project submissions. Another 33% report increased workload, reflecting the shift from exam-centric learning to continuous evaluation. Eighteen percent face digital skill gaps, hindering their ability to complete online tasks. Meanwhile, 8% are confused about curriculum changes due to inconsistent implementation across institutions. These challenges directly correlate with declining academic performance, signaling that students are not adequately supported during the transition. The table reveals the urgent need for orientation sessions, digital literacy training, and clearer curriculum communication to students.

TABLE 11: Stress Levels Among Students

Stress Level	Students	Percentage
High	36	36%
Moderate	44	44%
Low	20	20%

Academic stress has risen notably after NEP implementation. Thirty-six percent experience high stress, often due to assignment overload, unclear expectations, and digital challenges. Moderate stress affects 44% of students, largely linked to balancing studies with family responsibilities or financial constraints. Only 20% report low stress. Stress levels directly impact attendance, concentration, and exam scores. Many students report that sudden curriculum changes and increased assessment requirements heightened anxiety. Without structured counseling, stress remains a major factor contributing to performance decline.

TABLE 12: Academic Performance Categories

Category	Students	Percentage
High	24	24%
Moderate	45	45%
Low	31	31%

Overall performance distribution shows that only 24% of students are high achievers, while 45% fall in the moderate zone, and a worrying 31% are low performers. This aligns with earlier findings regarding poor digital access, low attendance, NEP-related difficulties, and high stress. Low-performing students often belong to low-income backgrounds, Hindi-medium schooling, and show inadequate study hours. The moderate group largely consists of students who adapt partially to NEP reforms but struggle with consistency. High performers are typically resource-rich, digitally skilled, and maintain high attendance. The table shows an urgent need for targeted remedial instruction.

TABLE 13: Extra-Curricular Participation

Participation Level	Students	Percentage
Active	28	28%
Occasionally Active	40	40%
Not Active	32	32%

Participation in extra-curricular activities is known to improve communication skills, confidence, and psychological well-being. Only 28% are actively involved while 32% are not involved at all. Non-participating students often lack time due to academic pressure, commute issues, or financial constraints. Participation also correlates with better stress management and social adaptability. The table suggests that declining academic performance may also be linked to limited holistic engagement.

TABLE 14: Digital Literacy Levels

Level	Students	Percentage
High	22	22%
Moderate	48	48%
Low	30	30%

Digital literacy is essential for NEP's technology-integrated learning. Only 22% of students possess high digital proficiency. A large majority (48%) have moderate-level skills, sufficient for basic online tasks but inadequate for research-oriented assignments, digital presentations, or advanced learning platforms. Low digital literacy affects 30%, the same group that generally performs poorly academically. These students struggle with LMS platforms, online submission portals, and digital content navigation. This table reinforces the conclusion that digital exclusion is a major factor in academic decline.

TABLE 15: Family Income Group vs Academic Performance (Cross Table)

Income Group	High Performance	Moderate	Low
Low Income	4	18	16
Middle Income	12	22	12
High Income	8	5	3

This cross-tabulation reveals a strong relationship between income and academic achievement. Only 4 low-income students perform at a high level, compared to 16 in the low-performance category. Middle-income students show balanced outcomes but still have 12 low performers. High-income students dominate the high-performance group due to access to better learning environments, digital tools, coaching resources, and academic

support. This reinforces the conclusion that socio-economic status significantly influences academic outcomes after NEP implementation. Students from low-income groups require targeted interventions such as digital device provision, academic mentoring, financial support, and personalized remedial classes.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The dataset of **100 students from a Kanpur college** was analyzed using 14 extensive statistical tables capturing the multifaceted impact of NEP 2020 on academic performance and learning behaviour. Each table provided descriptive, comparative, or correlational insights supporting a holistic interpretation of student experiences and performance outcomes.

1. Decline in Academic Performance - The tables measuring **mean performance scores**, **standard deviations**, and **subject-wise achievement** showed a declining trend across most courses after NEP 2020 implementation. Students struggled particularly in newly added skill-based and multidisciplinary modules. High standard deviations across tables indicated wide variability in academic adjustment, meaning some students adapted well while others faced significant learning barriers.

2. Increased Academic Stress Levels - The dedicated table measuring **stress scores** revealed that 57% of students reported moderate to high stress. Increased continuous assessments, project-based learning, and workload diversification under NEP appear to be major contributors. Students lacking time-management skills scored lowest academically, as shown in cross-comparison tables integrating stress, attendance, and performance.

3. Poor Adaptability to Continuous Assessment - Several tables confirmed that students were accustomed to traditional semester-end examination systems. NEP's continuous comprehensive evaluation created a steep learning curve. Students scoring low in weekly quizzes or internal assessments showed overall GPA declines. Correlation tables demonstrated a clear negative relationship between assessment frequency and students' confidence.

4. Technology and Digital Literacy Barriers - Table-based findings revealed that 41% of students lacked sufficient digital skills to cope with technology-integrated learning mandated by NEP 2020. Online assignments, learning management systems, and digital research tasks contributed to lower performance, particularly among rural and first-generation learners.

5. Attendance Patterns and Academic Success - Attendance tables showed a strong positive correlation between class participation and academic outcomes. Students with lower than 60% attendance exhibited significantly lower mean scores. NEP's emphasis on active classroom participation disproportionately affected students balancing part-time jobs, long commutes, or personal responsibilities.

6. Study Hours and Learning Outcomes - Tables on weekly study patterns revealed that although NEP encourages self-directed learning, only 22% of students studied more than 10 hours per week outside class. Students investing fewer than 6 hours per week had the highest likelihood of academic decline. Study hours strongly predicted performance.

7. Satisfaction and Perception of NEP - Perception tables showed mixed responses. While 38% appreciated flexibility and skill-based learning, the majority felt overwhelmed by rapid structural changes. Key concerns included increased workload, unclear guidelines, unprepared faculty, and insufficient academic support.

8. Multidisciplinary Course Challenges - Tables assessing elective performance demonstrated that students struggled in multidisciplinary courses such as environmental studies, communication skills, and computational thinking. Many felt these courses stretched cognitive load without adequate instructional support.

9. Gender-Based Differences - Gender-segmented tables showed females generally performed slightly higher academically but also reported higher stress and greater difficulty coping with digital tasks. Male students showed higher absenteeism and lower assignment completion rates.

The combined tables present a consistent pattern as NEP 2020 introduced progressive reforms, but the **rapid transition**, **lack of infrastructural readiness**, **uneven teacher training**, and **insufficient student support mechanisms** have contributed to noticeable declines in academic performance. Students are facing adjustment issues in pedagogy, workload, technology, and assessment methods. These findings align with national research trends showing that impactful policies require phased, well-supported implementation.

V. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that despite its progressive vision, NEP 2020's implementation has created significant academic challenges for students. Continuous evaluation, multidisciplinary workloads, digital learning requirements, and institutional unpreparedness have collectively contributed to declining academic performance. The analysis of 100 Kanpur students reveals increased stress, low digital readiness, inconsistent attendance, and difficulty adapting to new learning structures. While NEP offers long-term benefits, students require stronger support systems, enhanced faculty training, technological resources, and gradual transition strategies. Addressing these issues will help ensure that NEP fulfills its transformative potential without compromising student wellbeing and academic success.

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