“I didn't even want to turn my head because I was so scared of the prof”: Student Perceptions of e-Proctoring Software

DISTINGUISHED POSTER AWARD

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The use of e-proctoring among higher education institutions rose by approximately 500% during COVID-19 lockdowns.



What are student perceptions of e-proctoring software in terms of experiences, concerns, and privacy implications?

Methods and Analysis

- Semi-structured interviews with 14 students
- 60-min online sessions
- Inductive thematic analysis using open-coding

Results

Experiences: Tech Issues, Stress/Anxiety

P4: *"The software was really glitching out the whole time, and it kept on making a lot of noises and stuff, which was like really hard to focus on my exam."*

P12: *"I just think it has a negative impact on my mental health. I don't know. Like, it's scary to just be worrying the whole time that something's going to go wrong."*

System Perceptions: Punitive, Uncertain

P7: *"I've had to take longer on tests by making sure that I don't do anything out of place, even just in the way I act. I don't want [the software] to like, think I got up and went and checked my notes. So just to make sure, I just keep sitting for the whole time."*

Privacy

P5: *"Well, I don’t know [how well student privacy is handled in e-proctoring]. That’s what I’m saying, **we don’t know how it works**."*

P11: *"I just do it because they tell us we have to. I don't see the point with going against it if that's the way things are being done."*

- Almost all participants experienced technological issues and added stress with e-proctoring.
- Many held pre-determined beliefs on the software’s capabilities and privacy permissions, despite not being entirely familiar with what it could do.
- Privacy-related sentiments were not a primary issue for participants overall.

Underlying Pervasive Issue: <u>Uncertainty</u>

A key theme in most privacy-related discussions was student uncertainty regarding e-proctoring software capabilities; most often caused by a lack of transparency.

Discussion

Faced with a lack of information, students formed their own software perceptions and evaluations. These perceptions may be erroneous or spurious, with the potential for serious privacy implications.

"Privacy-benefit trade-off"[1]: Students recognized the benefits of e-proctored assessments, while also expressing concerns regarding the invasiveness of the software.

[1] D. Balash, et al. Examining the examiners: Students’ privacy and security perceptions of online proctoring services. SOUPS 2021.

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