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COMMON UNIVERSITY ENTRANCE TEST (CUET) EXAMINATION: A STUDENT- CENTRIC PERCEPTION Dipika Gupta* & Prof. Rama Kant Singh** Abstract: The evaluation and examination system plays an important role in the educational framework, serving as a tool to measure the knowledge, skills, and competencies of students. In present, the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) has emerged as a new evaluation system for admissions to higher education institutions in India, replacing traditional university-specific entrance exams. The concept of a standardized entrance exam

is not completely new. The Central Universities Common Entrance Test (CUCET) was launched in 2010

and was first utilized by seven newly formed Central universities. The CUET examination was implemented to provide uniformity in admission to central universities and other participating universities to offer an equitable evaluation process. As CUET examination becomes the primary entrance examination for numerous central universities and other participating universities so, understanding students' perception is important. The CUET examination has draw out a diverse range of perceptions among students in India, reflecting both support and criticism. This study investigate the perceptions of students towards the CUET examination, focusing on various domains such as fairness, accessibility, stress, usefulness and the technical challenges. In this study a perception questionnaire is used to collect data from a diverse group of participants of Banaras Hindu University. The result obtained from questionnaire (n=140) showed that 65% students find it fair, 70.71% students find it is accessible for diverse group students, 46.42% students find it is stressful while preparation, 48.56% students find it is useful in present context and 48.57% students find it is technically suitable for students. Thus, the findings provide valuable information about CUET examination and may help for policymakers and educators in implementing educational reform. Keywords: CUET Perception, evaluation, fairness, usefulness, accessibility *Assistant Professor (Guest Faculty), Department of Education, MGKVP Varanasi. E-mail: dipikag714@gmail.com ** Professor, Department of Education, MGKVP Varanasi. E-mail: profrksinghmgkvp@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION Examination is a fundamental aspect of the Indian educational system, deeply embedded in its structure. They not only serve to evaluate students' academic performance but also play a pivotal role in shaping their future career paths. While it serve necessary functions within the educational system, it is important to consider reforms that promote a more comprehensive evaluation of student capabilities, ensuring that the examination system supports the diverse aspirations of students. Historically, admission to universities in India relied heavily on marks obtained in higher secondary examinations conducted by various state and central boards. This approach often led to significant disparities, as the curricula, grading systems, and evaluation methods varied widely across states. Students from

different educational backgrounds faced unequal opportunities, impacting their chances of securing admission to quality institutions. High-stakes examinations often create a competitive environment, compelling students to excel in subjects that may not align with their interests but are deemed necessary for career advancement. Tests are arranged to assess students' performance and thus are a fundamental component of any educational system (Anand, 1985). In present, the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) has emerged as a new evaluation system for admissions to higher education institutions in India, replacing traditional university-specific entrance exams. The concept of a consolidated entrance examination

is not completely **new. The Central Universities Common Entrance Test (CUET) was** initiated 1
in 2010 when seven newly formed **Central universities** adopted **it. In 2012, the government**
sought **to** implement **this** across **all Central universities** within **the Education Ministry, but**
the

initiative failed to launch as some prominent universities raised concerns about its effect on the quality of admitted students. Throughout the years, an increasing number of newly established

Central universities embraced **the common entrance** , while **the older ones** opted out. **In** 1
2021 , just **12 Central universities** , such as **Assam University in Silchar, Central University of**
Gujarat, Central University of Punjab, Central University of Tamil Nadu, and Central University of Jharkhand,
among others , participated in **the CUET** (Indian Express, 2024). **The** CUET examination aimed
to

standardizing the admission process across various central universities and participating universities. Its evolution reflects the changing landscape of higher education in the country and the need for a more equitable and comprehensive assessment system. Recognizing the need for a standardized entrance process, the University Grants Commission (UGC) proposed the CUET examination. The CUET examination was officially introduced in 2022 as a means to streamline the admission process for undergraduate and postgraduate programs in various universities. The CUET examination aimed to assess students' aptitude across various subjects and provide a level playing field for candidates from diverse educational backgrounds. In its National Education Policy released in 2020, the Indian government addressed the issue by requiring that a nationwide common entrance exam be used for admissions to higher education. In March 2022, the Ministry of Education declared that starting this year, undergraduate admissions to all 45 central universities, supported by the national government, must occur through the new Common University Entrance Test (Genie, 2022). After the introduction of CUET examination in the year 2022, students have different perceptions about it. Sometimes the problem caused by technical issues during CUET examination, delay in results and re-examination due to some reasons affect the positive perception of students towards CUET examination. Apart from this, preparation for the CUET examination, lack of available resources and access to those resources for students from rural areas also cause stress among the students. RATIONALE OF THE STUDY In this study, the researcher has studied the perception of students towards the CUET examination. After reviewing the literature which is available in public

domain & free access, the researcher has found literature related to the perception of students who will take this entrance exam in the future. Gupta et al. (2023) in their study "Evaluating Student Perceptions and Awareness of the Common University Entrance Test (CUET) in India" on 2142

school students studying in X, XI, and XII standards, residing all over India

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and found

that students are not apprehensive about CUET and the general perception about CUET is positive but there is a lack of awareness about its conduct and pattern which will definitely create a negative impact on their preparation and performance in exams

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. Siddharth (2023) in their study "University Entrance Examination stressors in High School Students: An Empirical Study" on 304 students of 12th class of Government schools of Delhi NCR, found that most of the students are moderately stressed about the CUET examination. Both the literatures are based on the perception of students who will take CUET in future. Since perception can be of both types of students, those who have cleared this exam and got admission in a higher institution and those who are planning to take this exam in future, hence the researcher has tried to know the perception of students who have cleared the exam and got admission. Since no study has been conducted on the perception of such students, this may provide valuable information to policy makers about the CUET examination and help in implementing educational reforms. OBJECTIVE To study the perception of students towards the CUET examination on the basis of fairness, accessibility, stress, usefulness and the technical challenges. METHODOLOGY Population All those students who have taken admission in any university by passing the CUET examination. Sample & Sampling technique In present study total 140 samples were selected through convenience sampling technique. Graph 1: Sample Distribution 36 43 38 48 44 92 92 78 62 63 77 23 4 Undergraduate Postgraduate B. E d. M. Ed. Class Male Female Gender Arts/Humanities/Social Science Science/Maths Educational Background Commerce Rural Urban Locality CBSE/ICSE State Boards Board The above graph shows the sample distribution with their demographic details. Survey Questionnaire & Data Collection A

bilingual (English and Hindi) Google form questionnaire (CUET Perception Questionnaire), consisting of 23 close-ended questions, was prepared

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The questionnaire was designed to obtain information about the demographic details of participants

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and their perception on the basis of fairness, accessibility, usefulness, stress and technical challenge during the exam. The Google form was circulated among students to collect data from a diverse group of participants from Banaras Hindu University. Data Analysis The data obtained for the present study were compiled and analyzed using percentage analysis. FINDINGS The findings of this study are shown by graphs which are based on percentage analysis. This result is analyzed on the basis of the domain of the questionnaire, which is as follows: Graph 2: Fairness Agree Disagree Neutral 81.43 75 62.85 9.29 9.29 16.42 8.57 11.43 35.71 40.71 23.57 25.71 CUET promotes a fair CUET has made the CUET does not consider the CUET favours students from admission process admission process more overall academic record of certain boards transparent than the previous methods. students, making it an unfair measure for university admissions The above graph shows that 81.43 % students agreed that the CUET promotes fair admission process, 75% students agreed that the CUET is more transparent than previous methods, 40.71% students disagree that not considering overall academic record in CUET makes it an unfair measure of assessment and 62.85% students disagree that CUET exam favours students of certain boards. Graph 3: Accessibility 90.71 Agree Disagree Neutral 79.28 83.57 47.14 29.29 23.57 5 4.29 8.57 12.14 10 6.43 Cu et provides equal rural areas & disadvantaged The CUET syllabus is aligned CUET provides standardize platform for all groups students' feel with all boards' students platform for diverse group difficulty in CUET students preparation The above graph shows that 90.71% students agreed that the CUET exam provides equal platform for all students, 47.14% students find it difficult for rural & disadvantages groups students, 79.28% students find the CUET syllabus is aligned with all board's students and 83.57% find that CUET provides standard platform for diverse groups students. Graph 4: Stress Agree Disagree neutral 45 50.71 55.71 57.86 34.28 20.71 20.71 21.43 27.14 22.14 20 24.28 CUET preparation adds I feel my stress level affect CUET preparation requires I feel my stress level are significant stress to students my performance in the additional coaching higher during the CUET already dealing with their school board exams. CUET examination exam than regular school exams The above graph shows that 45% students feel stress during preparing for the CUET, 57.86% students agreed that stress level affect their performance in exam, 50.71% students disagree that additional coaching is needed for the CUET and 55.71% students agree that stress level are higher during the CUET rather than regular school exams. Graph 5: Usefulness Agree Disagree Neutral 67.86 59.28 40 37.86 40.71 15.71 16.43 22.14 17.14 23.57 29.28 30 CUET is a useful exam that accurately assesses students' abilities for higher education I feel CUET focuses too much on memorization rather than conceptual understanding I satisfied with the syllabus There should be some other and exam pattern of CUET method of assessment for higher education other than CUET The above graph shows that 67.86% students agreed that the CUET is a useful exam to assess the students' abilities, 40% students agreed that it is focuses on memorization, 59.28% students satisfied with the syllabus and exam pattern of the CUET and 40.71% wants the another method of assessment for higher education. Graph 6: Technical Challenges Agree Disagree Neutral 87.86 69.28 72.85 55.71 17.14 13.57 24.28 20 5.71 6.43 12.86 14.28 The CUET online platform is user-friendly I have experienced technical issues during examination CUET in multiple languages The lack of proper technical makes the exam more infrastructure in some accessible for students regions negatively impacts from diverse linguistic students' performance backgrounds The above graph shows that 69.28% students agreed that online platform for the CUET is user friendly, 55.71% students agreed that they have experienced technical issue during examination, 87.86% students agreed that the CUET is accessible for diverse linguistic background students and 72.85% students agreed that lack of technical infrastructure in rural regions affect the students performance. CONCLUSION & DISCUSSION India is a country of diversity, not only is there diversity in socio-economic status, cultural and linguistic aspects, but there are also systems like state boards and central boards in the field of education. Getting admission in a good university for higher education is a turning point in

the life of students, so it becomes even more important that they get a fair and equal opportunity for it. Whether it is for their favourite course or for the University of their Choice. The CUET examination is currently providing this opportunity to students. There are several central universities, state universities and private universities for higher education which participated in the CUET examination. After analyzing the data of the study conducted to know the perception of students towards this examination, it has been concluded that overall 65% of students consider this entrance exam to be fair & transparent and 70.71% of students agreed that this exam to be accessible, 46.42% students find it is stressful while preparation, 48.56% students find it is useful in present context and 48.57% students find it is technically suitable for students. 40.51% of students believe that there should be some other entrance exam besides CUET for higher education. Thus, this study concludes that the CUET examination providing fair and equal opportunities, accessible and Useful but also brings some challenges such as stress, technical issues during examination (37.85%), which underlines that policy makers and educationists will have to make efforts to make it a more easy, stress less, useful and technically competent for students. LIMITATIONS This study has been done under some limitations. Since the CUET examination given by diverse students across the country for different universities, only students of Banaras Hindu University have been taken in its sample. The participants who take part in it are from different socio- economic status, educational background, locality and gender but these have been ignored while analyzing the data. The number of participant is 140, so its conclusions cannot be generalized on a larger scale. REFERENCES Anand, V.S. (1985). Research Implications of Abolishing External Examinations, Contemporary Issues in Public Examinations. National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110 016. Ganie, Gowhar. (2022). Why and why not a Common University Entrance Test (CUET) in India? <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/author/gowhar-rashid-ganie> Gupta, et al. (2023). Evaluating student perceptions and awareness of the common university entrance test (CUET) in India. International Journal of Science and Research, 12 (12), 168-173. <https://dx.doi.org/10.21275/SR231130091545> National Testing Agency. (2024). Common University Entrance Test (Undergraduate). <https://exams.nta.ac.in/CUET-UG/> Siddharth, G. (2023). University Entrance Examination stressors in High School Students: An Empirical Study. International Journal for Research in Education, 12 (1), 1-16. https://www.riijmr.com/ijre/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/IJRE_2023_vol12_issue_01_01.pdf The Indian Express (2023, October 11). History and evolution of the CUET. <https://indianexpress.com/article/education/cuet-2022-live-updates-nta-begins-cuet-application-process-nta-ac-in-7837372/> The Indian Express (2023, November 11). Roll out common entrance exam from 2022-23: UGC to Central universities. <https://indianexpress.com/article/education/specials/common-entrance-test-for-admissions-to-central-universities-from-7650094/> University Grants Commission. (2019). Evaluation reforms in higher educational institutions. <https://www.ugc.gov.in/e-book/EVALUATION%20ENGLISH.pdf>

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