

To Reduce Work-Pressure Of Teachers Caused By Online Teaching During Pamdemic COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

Objectives

COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by World Health Organization in March 2020. In India, a nationwide lockdown was announced on March 25, 2020. It was considered the safest way to break the chain of this disease. Only essential services were allowed.

This study aimed to identify the work pressure in teachers while facing challenges of online teaching during the lockdown in India and to help them cope with the work pressure by using ways to reduce the work pressure constructively.

Methodology

An online survey was conducted from June to August 2020 while schools were closed. Questions were framed to know the opinions of the teachers on different aspects related to online teaching based on their experiences. At the end of the questionnaire, the teachers were supposed to give their feedback/suggestions to improve online teaching in India.

Findings and Conclusions

This study offers effective teaching strategies for online education keeping the context of our country into consideration. During an effective online class, a teacher tries to facilitate, connect, lead and work in collaboration with students to ensure their interest, participation, and their improvement over a while.

Research Implications

Teachers need to be more competent in their roles and skills necessary to increase the students' achievements while teaching online.

Keywords: COVID-19, Teachers, Lockdown, Work Pressure, Online

INTRODUCTION

The spread of the novel coronavirus COVID-19 has led to major changes in social interaction, organizational functioning, and the education field. A countrywide lockdown was declared in India in March 2020. This sudden closure of all the educational institutions has brought a certain urgency to implement online teaching-learning strategies by the teachers (Weeden & Cornwell, 2020).

In the profession of teaching, stress is an important issue for all stakeholders in education (Kristen Ferguson, Colin Mang & Lorraine Frost, 2017). The teaching profession is an occupation with a high prevalence of work-related stress (Naghieh A. et al., 2015). A teacher's performance may suffer from high levels of stress, and this may have an impact on student learning (Borg & Riding, 1991; Manthei & Gilmore, 1996). Sudden changes in social and professional life have brought many challenges in front of the teachers. Ranjan (2020) suggests that to fulfill her role, the teacher is expected to be aware of the potential and possibilities of software support in the teaching-learning process. This study aimed to find the signs of work pressure in teachers during the lockdown in India and to help them to adjust in a better way by reducing the pressure of work constructively.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify the challenges faced by teachers during lockdown due to COVID-19.
2. To explore the constructive tactics applied by teachers to reduce work pressure.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To find out the challenges of online teaching, teachers' work pressure, psychological adjustments, and the use of technology which got changed since March 2020, we conducted a survey that was shared online in June 2020 during the lockdown, as the personal contact with the teaching faculties was not possible. The attempt was to gather the responses quickly and widely. The purpose was to find diverse issues related to online teaching. Some respondents were supportive in responding to how they were dealing with the challenges of online teaching. Most of them took the opportunity to share their experiences. Their responses have given us a vision of what matters to teachers and what concerns them most during this type of emergency. We hope, this will be valuable in framing future policies and provisions for teachers.

Research Design

An online survey was conducted to know the perspectives of the teaching faculties. The quantitative survey was prepared through google form and analyzed. The attempt was to present the qualitative interpretation of the analysis.

Participants

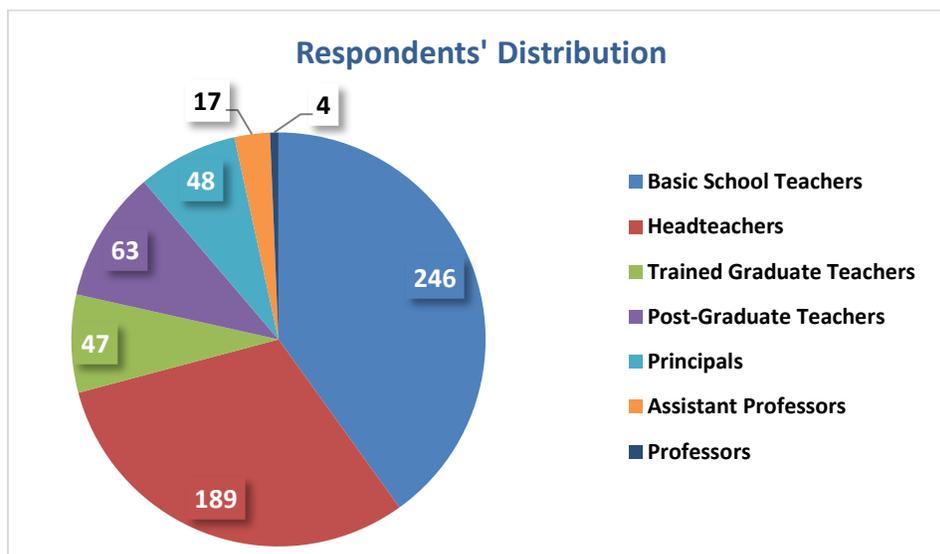
Responses were analyzed on Google. Teaching professionals belonging to different designations responded.

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Table 1: To show the number of respondents having a different designation

Designation	Basic School Teachers	Headteachers	Trained Graduate Teachers	Post-Graduate Teachers	Principals	Assistant Professors	Professors	Total
No.of Respondents	246	189	47	63	48	17	4	614

FIGURE 1: Distribution of Respondents according to their designation



TESTING TOOL

A questionnaire was prepared on Google forms having 30 items. The respondents were supposed to give their feedback/ suggestions for improvement of online teaching in India in the last section of the questionnaire.

KEY FINDINGS

Teachers have given different types of comments for online teaching. Few comments are in favor of online teaching whereas few have shared the hurdles they faced. All their comments reflect their mental states while teaching in a virtual mode during this pandemic period. Sharing few of the main findings on the basis of the feedback given by the respondents:

- Financially disadvantaged students cannot afford a computer or internet service.
- Online teaching becomes monotonous most of the time whether in the forms of lectures, presentations or videos, etc.
- Some features of online teaching are not suitable for disabled or *divyaang* students.
- Sometimes servers are unreliable. Sometimes attached files get corrupted or carry viruses.
- Young students often forget their passwords and find difficulties at the time of logging in.
- Chat boxes are a waste of time.
- Sometimes students “accidentally” delete messages or emails and want them to be resent by the teacher.

The findings from this survey also show that some teachers have experienced increased work pressure after lockdown. I have categorized overall findings under five heads-

1. *Challenge of Psychosocial Adjustments*
2. *Challenge of Work Pressure*
3. *Challenge of Teacher’s experience of Online mode.*
4. *Challenge of Communication with Students*
5. *Challenge of using technology*

1. *Challenge of Psychological Adjustments*

- Overall, teachers were satisfied. Thirty-three percent of teachers said they often felt unsatisfied, while only 17% said they did not often feel comfortable during their online classes.
- Comparing job roles, teachers were the most likely to respond feeling happy and satisfied. On the other hand, the head of the institutions was the least satisfied for reasons like attendance of the students.
- Teachers with young school-age children reported more difficulties while online teaching and homeschooling their children, as well as their regular household liabilities which affected their time management and personal adjustment badly.

2. *Challenges of Work Pressure*

- On average teachers took 2.5 hours of planning and preparation for online classes per day.
- Primary teachers were spending more hours than secondary and senior teachers.
- On average, teachers spent 6.5 hours a week making assessments during the lockdown.

3. *Challenge of Teachers' Experience of Online Mode*

- 67% of teachers reported having little or no previous experience in online teaching.
- 32% felt somewhat confident in delivering lessons online.
- 51% of teachers found online teaching stressful and only 17% felt satisfactory.
- Primary teachers were the least likely to have previous experience in delivering lessons online, and least confident in delivering lessons online. Teachers in higher education have more experience in online teaching.

4. *Challenge of Communication with Students*

- Primary teachers used to communicate with parents too.
- The most common means of communication with students was messaging or chatting in a chat box or through WhatsApp.
- Teachers also used virtual meeting platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams and google meet to communicate with students, but this was found more common in urban areas.
- Online teaching has made personal relationships and contacts difficult between the teacher and the student. Seeing the other person through a screen doesn't give the same feeling that in-person does.

5. *Challenge of Using Technology*

- In rural areas, there are more students with no IT resources like internet facilities and smartphones or laptops, as teachers reported.
- When the camera or microphone (audio) stops working, the internet shuts down or the student can't afford the internet, it leads to more issues.
- Most of the teachers had no proper technological training
- Teachers also expressed various comments about technology: *"No training for online teaching"*, *"Most of the students are working from their mobile phones, with no facility of a bigger screen"* and *"We suffer very poor internet connectivity."*

The above analysis of facts aimed for a better understanding of everyday practical challenges faced by the teachers. The purpose was to find out the ways for reducing the work pressure on the teachers by coping with the challenges of the online mode of teaching. The researchers are thankful to all the respondents for the time given to complete the survey and for supporting the research, without which we could not be able to have these findings.

DISCUSSION

The lives of teachers are frequently challenging. The study showed that the job-related pressure among teachers in India during COVID-19 has become more challenging. Our findings show that schools and teachers were not well-prepared for this change. The study has shown that not only children but some teachers who do not have access to the expected technological infrastructure and devices for working from home face challenges. These have been barriers to accessing teaching and learning during the pandemic. Efforts should be taken by the educational institutions to ensure that each student and teaching faculty has access to the required resources. They must also ensure that all the educational applications work on mobile phones as well in case students do not have laptops. Therefore, steps must be taken to reduce the digital discrimination in the society which has become more prominent these days.

Here are a few strategies which can help in coping with the pressure of the daily lives of teachers until the situations become normal for them:

- *Be positive - Stay away from negativity*
We all have colleagues and friends that are constantly gossiping and complaining. Try and avoid those types of people. Instead, find colleagues/ friends that inspire you and get to know them, spend time with them, and connect with them. They will lift your spirits and will share positive ideas.
- *Express your feelings*
This will help in overcoming unpleasant or stressful situations.
- *Proper sleep and rest*
Try to get 7-8 hours of sleep.
- *Physical exercises*
Physical exercises like yoga and meditation can support all individuals. Exercises for healthy eyes and good postures will help. Working out helps alleviate stress, gives you energy, and helps you sleep better.
- *Share your ideas*
Share your ideas with family, fellows, and students. Creative writing, posting comments on different platforms or writing diaries, and chatting are also ways of sharing ideas.
- *Learn something new*
Continue to progress in your profession but choose to grow personally too.
- *Stress buster activities*
Catharsis-Music is a stress reliever. Teachers should give some time to themselves also as developing their hobbies. This will certainly support their adjustment and will make them more contented.
- *To-Do list*
Try to make a "Must Do" and a "May Do" list for yourself. Items in the "Must Do" list are a high priority and must be done immediately and carefully. The "May Do"

list is there if I have a few extra minutes of preparation. If I don't get the time, I can try and get it in the coming days.

- *Interaction*
The hallmark of a good learning experience is the interaction between teachers and students, so we all should try to make our online classes more interactive.
- *Reasonable Expectations*
Try to have reasonable expectations from your students and others as they all are also facing different types of challenges at present.
- *Practice in advance (your session and device) before online sessions*
 - Practice before sharing any new online activity to avoid uneasiness.
 - Regularly check all links, e-resources, modules and activities that you are going to share with your students. Online content may change, which can lead to some undesirable situations.
 - Use a good antivirus for computer devices.
- *Digital Literacy: Learn about different online portals*
Many short-term online courses are available on SWAYAM and by different open universities. In India, National Digital Library, e- pathshala, e-pothi, and UGC MOOCs are different platforms that easily provide guidance and e-resources. There, ICT-related learning opportunities are provided to the teachers. These resources may help in improving the skills of online teaching and consequently, provide the opportunity for professional development.
- *Assistance from the Volunteers*
Try to enroll the volunteers through NGOs to help teachers in creating those lessons plans
- *Don't overcommit*
Try not to overcommit yourself! This one is especially hard for most of us. It's all right to say "No" or "thank you" sometimes.

CONCLUSION

We all need a high level of preparedness so that we can quickly adapt to these types of changes and can adjust ourselves to different teaching modes, for instance, remote learning or online learning in situations such as Covid-19. Technical, organizational, and psychological barriers can be overcome by practice and capacity building.

1. Online teaching should be more encouraged by creating an environment conducive to it.
2. More attention is needed for the rural sector through improved function as education remains the basis for the progress of all other sectors of our country.
3. Computer literacy and online teaching pedagogy should be brought into the curriculum of teacher education.
4. More teaching professionals/experts should be motivated to solve the related problems.

The teachers should start with something small and simpler if they wish to enter the online world of teaching. Pandemic has brought all of us to the edge where online teaching is the safest

way. Some or much of what we have found in this study is complicated; it is urged the teachers to share with their colleagues. The departments and teachers' training institutes should prepare programs to support teachers in this regard. They should apply the learnings of this phase to enrich our regular classes after this pandemic too. So, we all should be prepared for some more hard work, a little effort, and a great deal of determination in becoming more effective educators and providing excellent educational leadership.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School administration, the government, and other stakeholders may take the following steps to reduce work stress among teachers and make online teaching more effective.

- ***Supporting the teacher-student relationship***

During this period, the students were advised to stay at their homes, their outdoor activities were stopped. They were missing their peers. Sharing positive examples of overcoming life's challenges by the teachers provide students with hope and determination. The Ministry of Human Resource Development has also given directions to the educational institutes for the same. Many students are stressed and unsure about their future during this period. Teachers can also assess the emotional level of their students by taking an Emotional Intelligence survey and sharing the results with them and ways to improve in particular areas. For example- if a student scores low in social skills, the teacher can suggest them to read about inspirational leaders, give examples of the people that influence them, and can give assignments that involve actively working in a collaborative team. Giving feedback on those assignments is priceless. This also works in helping students make good decisions regarding their personal situations.

- ***Training and workshops for the teachers***

A degree of responsibility also falls on the teacher when students want to learn but are unable to do so because of teachers not being trained. There are times that there is no choice for a teacher but to teach a class that he/she may not be as comfortable with the online mode of teaching. Students consider their teachers "the guru" and they compare them with God.

In India, this lockdown period can be an excellent time to learn as many relevant class skills as possible. Preparation can overcome the lack of knowledge. During the breaks between online classes, teachers should challenge themselves to learn new skills that could be useful and effective. So many online courses are available on different platforms. Asking questions to other teachers about their success and challenges can help in keeping a student engaged in your class and can improve the situations like high absenteeism.

The main objective of human resource development in education is that the end results of the educative process will be determined by the effectiveness of the teachers who facilitate learning for self-actualization and national development. MHRD essentially is concerned

with three major issues namely:

- Assessing the need for teaching-learning
- Satisfying the need for teaching-learning and
- Maintaining and improving the conditions for teaching-learning

The other goals of MHRD are to ensure effective and safe educational functioning during and after the lockdown period for all the citizens of our country. This problem cannot be solved by copying other countries. We have to find out the solutions to these challenges by keeping the situations of our own country into consideration. It involves providing development programs and training courses that are suitable for the teachers. Many short-term courses are available on the SWAYAM portal and by Open universities in India. National Digital Library of India, e- pathshala, e-pothi, and UGC MOOCs are the other platforms that provide e-resources and ICT-related learning opportunities for the teachers. The current need for ICT usage in education is worthy but, its implementation in the nation is in the toddling stage. However, compulsory implementation of ICT skills by teachers should be given priority attention in their pre-service and in-service teacher education programs. Though it should be a priority but most of the teachers cannot buy a computer set or laptop because of poor salaries and the percentage of students having all the fundamental facilities is also very less, especially in the rural areas.

Now, many teachers and students have overcome this challenge by using their smartphones during this pandemic period and still trying to manage their resources. Many NGOs are also supporting teachers for this purpose. They support the blended model of online and traditional classes in the coming time. A joint effort by government and non-government organizations will certainly help the teachers in facing the challenges and in overcoming the unnecessary stress and work pressure.

Limitation of the Study

The data collection couldn't be done personally, so it was done by using Google form. So, the study consequently doesn't give clear signs for the future of online teaching in India.

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