

Impact of COVID – 19 on Mental Health of Teachers

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Abstract– The COVID – 19 pandemic has posed numerous challenges on many fronts. It has disrupted the life of everyone, with certain professions being hit the hardest, the field of Education and education professionals fall into the *hardest hit* category. The COVID-19 crisis has taken a toll on the mental health of every single one of us. While the circumstances of education professionals across the globe vary tremendously, there is no doubt that the workforce as a whole is under stress than perhaps ever before. This paper aims to present a list of challenges or stressors which are impacting mental health of teachers during COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Words– COVID – 19, Impact, Mental Health, Teachers.

Introduction –

The COVID – 19 pandemic has posed numerous challenges on many fronts. It has disrupted the life of everyone, with certain professions being hit the hardest, the field of Education and education professionals fall into the *hardest hit* category. Many have been laid off, many have been temporarily terminated, many lost their jobs, transitioned to work from home with a very short notice. Many teachers from kindergarten to higher education never left the classroom but had to quickly adapt to changing guidelines regarding online teaching and all faced some degree of uncertainty about what the future holds as far as teaching-learning process is concerned. The COVID-19 crisis has taken a toll on the mental health of every single one of us. While the circumstances of education professionals across the globe vary tremendously, there is no doubt that the workforce as a whole is under stress than perhaps ever before.

Education and COVID – 19 Pandemic –

The pandemic emerged in 2019, called as COVID -19, has created a huge disruption in the field of Education. It has affected more than 1.5 billion learners in more than 200 countries across the globe. *‘As of July 2020, 98.6% of learners worldwide were affected by the pandemic, representing 1.725 billion children and youth, from pre-primary to higher education, in 200 countries’* (United Nations, 2020).

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Closures of physical facilities for learning have impacted the mental health of its stake-holders. It has certainly disturbed traditional educational practices at all levels of learning.

Challenges Faced by Teachers due to COVID-19 Pandemic – Following are some of the challenges or stressors posed due to COVID-19 pandemic, which impacted mental health of teachers –

1. Limited exposure to online teaching,
2. Weak online teaching infrastructure,
3. Fixed mindset of traditional teaching/offline teaching/face-to-face teaching/in-person teaching,
4. Ignorance about online teaching and e-learning tools,
5. Increased screen time,
6. Information gap,
7. Passive participation of learners in online teaching set-up,
8. Catering individual differences in online teaching set-up,
9. Catering varied learning needs in online teaching set-up,
10. Adjusting with learners of special needs in online teaching set-up,
11. Inability to support struggling learners,
12. Difficulty in accessibility and affordability of internet and technology for online teaching,
13. Learners' evaluation through online mode,
14. Personal health and health of the family,
15. Missing physical work environment and work-space human relationships,
16. Taking care of their own children at home,
17. Time management,
18. Life and work balance,
19. Loss of family members and colleagues due to pandemic.

Lack of Internet connection and online teaching challenges were the most difficult aspects of teaching during the pandemic. Studies have shown that, teachers who experienced more stressors reported worse mental health and found it harder to cope and to teach in virtual or online set-up. On the

other hand, teachers with adjusting mind-set were able to find it easier to cope and to teach in virtual or online set-up.

As published in *The Los Angeles Times*. Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC2021, Lorena SaludGadellaKamstra, a lecturer at the University of Essex in Britain, shared her research about what leads to motivation and demotivation in teachers at Reach Out's Teacher Wellness Event. According to her, common reasons for teacher demotivation include an unreasonable workload, crowded classes, low wages, lack of job security and insufficient support or resources. She also said, 'After the pandemic, new demotivating factors have emerged and the former ones have worsened, meaning that teachers are in a very tough situation right now'. Teachers have seen their learners struggle academically with only a limited amount of time to provide individualized attention. Though they have also seen students struggling socially and emotionally, still they are unable to help learners, as they used to get connected in physical learning set-up. A psychotherapist and the founder of Cellulation, Jeannette Sandoval describes this situation as – an impossible situation. Through Wellducation's pilot program, launched last year, she worked with students, staff and school leaders at three Los Angeles schools to make mental health a priority in education. According to her, 'School leadership needs to do the same for teachers'. She also added, 'Lot of teachers feel like they cannot share how they are really feeling because they think they are going to lose their jobs. We need to normalize the stress and anxiety. Otherwise, it's going to affect staff retention and we're going to lose teachers.'

Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health of Teachers – The COVID-19 pandemic has posed many challenges to face as mentioned earlier. These challenges are functioning as stressors, which have impacted mental health of teachers. Following are some of the symptoms of disturbed mental health experienced by teachers during this phase of pandemic -

Mental fatigue	Stress
Emotional fatigue	Anxiety
Social fatigue	Fear
Anger	Exhaustion

Teachers with a fixed mind-set for traditional teaching used to find and are still finding it difficult to adapt and adjust. While adapting to new changes and new teaching environment, it has been observed that there is no *one-size-fits-allegory* for online teaching-learning. There are a variety of subjects with

varying needs. Different subjects and age-groups require different approaches to online learning. (Doucet et al., 2020) Along with above-mentioned challenges, the author of this paper came across broadly identified challenges with online teaching and learning by Murgatrottd as flexibility, accessibility, affordability, learning pedagogy, life-long learning, etc. (Murgatrottd, 2020). The overall education system in schools, colleges and universities in many countries has been severely impacted due to the ongoing situation (United Nations, 2020). There are economic, social and psychological effects on mental health of teachers while they are away from physical or in-person environment of teaching and learning.

Conclusion –Teachers have been navigating the uncertainty due to outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic since March 2019. Though teachers are facing above-mentioned challenges, still they have been struggling to ensure that learners are getting best education possible. Teachers have experienced considerable stress as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was related to poor mental health, coping and teaching. At the same time, teachers reported resiliencies, which were related to better coping and teaching. Supporting teachers' well-being is important to prevent significant adverse consequences for teachers, their learners and the education system as a whole. Though our bodies are responding to this threat in ways that heighten our anxiety and stress levels, still it is equally important that we find healthy ways to cope.

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