Examining The Perceived Stress Levels Of Teachers Returning To In-Person Classes Post-Covid: A Comparative Analysis

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Abstract

In 2019 Corona Virus stared to spread from China to all over the world. Several steps including closure of educational institutions were taken to cease the spread of virus. The conventional teaching and learning modes were replaced with online teaching and evaluation methods. After a long span of time and enormous defensive measures the regular classes were reopened by the end of 2021. But several attitude and behaviour issues of students were reported in schools and colleges reopened after lockdown. This causes some psychological issues to the faculties. This paper examines the causes of such psychological issues and level of stress to the faculties due to the issues in reopening of classes after COVID pandemic. A cross sectional study was conducted among 175 college faculties in Erode District and the collected data was analysed with the support of Chi-Square and Rank analysis techniques. The research results found that issues related to the behaviour of the students are the prominent stressors to the teachers than their academic burden. The researcher suggest that, the students are not mentally ready to come back to the regular college after pandemic sufferings which may cause some changes in their behaviour. Hence it is suggested to provide psychological counselling to the students which may help them to come over from the aftermath of COVID pandemic.

Keywords: Covid Pandemic, students, teachers, perceived stress, causes of stress.

1. Introduction

In 2019, a new virus in the name of Covid has begun to spread in a short span of time and the world health organisation (2020) has declared state of Pandemic on 11th March 2020. Several measures such as closure of organisations, maintenance of social distancing, wearing mask and vaccination were recommended by government to reduce the spread. These restrictions have completely changed the operating procedure of certain industries. Education sector was one among those industries which faced the transfiguration. The fear of exposure to infection,

subsequent risk of infection to family people and loved ones, prolonged quarantine, fear due to other's death, and concerns about educational progression have forced the educational institutions to switch over to online mode of teaching. Instead of coming to college regularly, teachers need to go to the students place through online teaching. Conventional chalk and talk technique were replaced by electronic gadgets. Even though students find difficult to adapt online mode of teaching and learning, they are forced by the situation. After a period of time government has decided to reopen the educational institutions with enormous measures such as compulsory vaccination, wearing of mask, social distancing even in the classroom. Hence the students were taken back to the regular classroom mode during the end of 2021. This is where the problem begins, the issues like long break to regular college, death of near and dears, fear of getting infection to virus, financial crisis of the family were seems to have influenced the attitude and behaviour of the students.

We have to accept that pandemic is not just medical condition that affects the health. Instead it also affects the population's social, emotional and psychological aspects. The idea of being alone and wear masks is related to anxiety, insomnia, panic, stress and other kind of mental illness. These cause major issues during Reopening the colleges and schools after Covid pandemic. Notably, the student's approach on examinations, the way they respect the teachers have changed drastically (The New Indian Express, 2022). They prefer online examination instead of offline, as the offline examinations has strict invigilation. They are not ready to obey the words of their faculties and the teachers felt that they lost their respect from the students. Further the most important think is the students are not interested to attend the classes regularly due to the long gap. With these kinds of hostile behaviour of students, the faculties are forced to produce good results and ensure the maximum possible attendance of students. This displeasing situation create lot of stress to the faculties.

Stress refers to "the bodily processes that result from circumstances that place physical or psychologic demands on an individual" (Selye, 1973). Excessive level of stress is a critical factor that could affect work environment and as well as performance, especially during an emergency (Muller et al., 2009). Moreover, the chronic work stress of faculties has impact on their level of job satisfaction, physical health (Gopinath & Chitra, 2021; Sivalumar & Chitra, 2017), also producing long term psychological consequences (Khalid, Khalid, Qabajah, Barnard, and Qushmaq, 2016). Hence, the causes of stress should be found out and the stress coping mechanisms has to be followed to improve the mental and physical health of the faculties.

They are several researches in the area of stress to the faculties during the time of pandemic lockdown (Hammerstein et al., 2021), but there are very few researches investigated the stress of faculties on reopening of educational institutions after pandemic lockdown. This paper is an attempt to analyse the level of stress and causes of stress to the college faculties during the time of reopening the colleges after lockdown.

2. Review of Literature

Oducado et al., 2021 have conducted at study on perceived Stress due to COVID-19 Pandemic among employed professional teachers. The researchers have collected 105 data with the

support of Perceived Stress Scale (COVID-PSS-10) scale from professional teachers of State College in the Philippines. Research analysis stated positive association between gender, self-rated health and perceived stress and also reported perceived risk and stress related to COVID-19. On the other hand, no association was found between age of the respondent and COVID-19 stress. Further the researcher recommended that, the Teachers may need stress reduction to improve their mental well-being and alleviate the effect of stress on their health. And this research also provides fresh insights on the psychological response to pandemic among teachers, which must be considered by health and educational authorities together with the epidemiological facets of the pandemic.

Vargas (2021) have made a study on stress and burnout of teachers during covid pandemic. The study was to identify the work situations that education professionals perceived as threats under the modality of non-face-to-face teaching, and to describe the level of perceived stress and its possible effect on psychophysical symptoms. Likewise, it sought to examine possible differences in the manifestations of burnout depending on the level of perceived stress and associated symptoms. The results found that, 60 per cent of the teachers reported stress and the fear of consequences of virus, lockdown, work overload and inadequate working environment were found as the notable causes of stress to the teachers. The research recommends development of intervention strategies to protect the mental and physical health of the teachers.

The study of Chitra (2020) on occupational stress and job satisfaction of teachers during pandemic period has attempted to analyse the perception of teachers about online mode of teaching and the level of stress, satisfaction on the same. The results reveal that, taking classes through online mode, and additional commitments associated with online classes creates stress to the teachers. Further, negative correlation was found between level of stress and job satisfaction, the level of satisfaction reduces as the stress increases.

2.1. Objective of the study

To analyse the relationship sources of stress and level of perceived stress

To ascertain the sources of stress to the faculties on in-person classes after COVID pandemic.

To investigate the association between demographic factors and level of perceived stress

3. Materials and Methods

3.1. Study Design

A cross-sectional, online survey was conducted among six selected colleges of arts and science of Erode District and the colleges for the study was selected on a random basis. The under graduate student were considered for the study, assurance was given regarding non -disclosure of faculty's identity.

3.2. Instrument and data collection

To study the level of occupational stress of teachers, the researcher has used perceived occupational stress scale and the data was collected through the mail id of the faculty. Out of

300 questionnaires sent, 183 were returned and 175 complete questionnaires were considered for the further study.

The perceived occupational stress scale includes direct questions about current levels of experienced stress. Each item provides five response options: (i.e., 0 = never, 1 = almost never, 2 = sometimes, 3 = fairly often, 4 = very often). PSS scores were obtained by reversing responses (0 = 4, 1 = 3, 2 = 2, 3 = 1, & 4 = 0) to the four positively stated items (4, 5, 7, and 8). Total scores were obtained by summing all the scale items with a total score range between 0 and 40. In this study, PSS-10 scores equal to or higher than 25 were deemed as high perceived stress, while scores <25 were considered as low perceived stress associated with COVID-19 (Pedrozo-Pupo et al., 2020).

4. Analysis

4.1. Association between sources of stress and levels of perceived occupational stress

Table 4.1. Association between sources of stress and levels of perceived occupational stress to the faculties

sources of stress	levels of perceived occupational stress			Total	F	Sig.
	Low	Medium	High			
In- disciplined behavior in Class room	2.01 (1.542)	3.42 (1.336)	3.48 (1.761)	3.28 (1.234)	1.453	0.006
Irregular Attendance of students	5.23 (1.353)	6.94 (1.451)	5.38 (1.355)	3.47 (1.354)	1.372	0.041
Students are Not being obedient	4.29 (1.236)	5.52 (1.734)	4.21 (1.672)	3.22 (1.745)	1.447	0.001
Student's Lack of interest in academics	4.16 (1.856)	5.89 (1.963)	3.33 (1.908)	3.65 (1.884)	1.349	0.032
Pressure on syllabus completion	3.82 (1.834)	3.22 (1.812)	3.43 (1.625)	3.86 (1.816)	1.543	0.023
Pressure in Result production	4.33 (1.328)	3.19 (1.117)	3.11 (1.234)	3.11 (1.518)	1.634	0.001

Table 4.1 states the association between sources of stress and the level of perceived stress of teachers. The calculated value shows the relationship between "in-disciplined behavior in classroom" and the level of perceived stress in found to be 0.006, which is less than tabulated value. This indicates positive association between the above two factors at 1 per cent level of significance. In the other hand, the association between "irregular attendance of students" and level of perceived stress has p value of 0.041 greater than 0.05 indicates no association between the factors at 5 per cent level of significance. The F value and P value of "students are not being obedient" are 1.447 and 0.001 respectively. This denotes very strong association between behavior of the students and level of perceived stress of the teachers. Whereas the calculated

value of "students lack of interest in academics" and "pressure in syllabus completion" are 0.032 and 0.023 respectively. these values are greater than significance value and no relationship was found between these factors and level of perceived stress at 5 per cent level of significance. since "pressure on result production" has p value less than 0.01, there is a strong association between "pressure on result production" and level of perceived stress of the teachers.

4.2. Rank of stressors to the teachers

4.2. Rank of factors causing stress to the teachers

Factors	Mean Score	Rank
In- disciplined behavior in Class room	5.2	II
Irregular Attendance of students	3.2	IV
Students are Not being obedient	5.7	I
Student's Lack of interest in academics	3.4	III
Pressure on syllabus completion	3.1	V
Pressure in Result production	2.9	VI

Table 4.2 elucidates the mean rank of causes of stress to the teachers. During the time of reopening of educational institutions after the pandemic lockdown the students were not obedient as they were before, this is ranked as the prime reason for stress to the teachers. In disciplined behavior in the class room is the next notable stressor followed by students lack of interest or lethargy in academic activities. Irregular attendance of the students, pressure on syllabus completion and pressure in result production were ranked as the subsequent reasons for stress.

4.3.Demographic Factors and Level of Perceived Stress

Gender of the Respondent							
Factor		Level of perceived stress				Chi-Square Value	P Value
		Low	Medium	High	Total		
Male	n	12	44	46	102	21.972	<0.001**
	%	11.7	43.1	45.1	58.2		
Female	n	06	12	55	73		
	%	8.2	16.4	75.3	41.8		
Total	n	18	56	101	175		
	%	10.2	32	58	100		
Age of the respondent							

21 – 30yrs	n	05	22	11	38	13.234	0.032
	%	13.1	57.8	28.9	21.7		
31 – 40yrs	n	09	21	29	59		
	%	15	35.5	49.5	33.8		
41 – 50yrs	n	02	23	20	45		
	%	4	51	45	28		
Above 51	n	03	11	19	33		
	%	9	33	58	19		
Total	n	19	77	79	175		
	%	10.8	44	45.2	100		
Qualification							
PG	n	10	21	31	62	25.367	0.003
	%	16.2	33.8	50	35		
MPhil	n	11	25	32	68		
	%	16.3	36.7	47	38		
PhD	n	03	22	20	45		
	%	6	48.9	44.1	25		
Total	n	24	68	83	175		
	%	13.7	38.8	47.4	100		
Experience							
Below 2 years	n	7	18	12	37	31.624	0.006
	%	19	48.6	32.4	21		
2 to 5 years	n	8	21	31	60		
	%	13	35.4	51.6	34		
5 to 7 years	n	4	15	26	45		
	%	8	33.3	57.7	25.7		
Above 7 years	n	3	21	9	33		
	%	9	63.6	27.3	18.3		

Total	n	22	75	78	175		
	%	12.5	42.8	44.7	100		

Table 4.3 explains relationship between demographic factors and levels of perceived stress. The significance value of gender is 0.001 which is lesser than tabulated value. Therefore, there is noteworthy association between gender and level of perceived stress. Compared to male female were reported more stress. On the other hand, the p value of age is more than 0.05 and no significant relationship between age of the teachers and level of perceived stress. Level of stress increases along with age of the teachers and the teachers who are aged more than 50 have reported more stress than teachers with less age.

The p value of qualification was found to be 0.003 an it is less than 0.05. hence there is a significant relationship between qualification of teachers and level of stress. Respondent with PG qualification has reported more stress than the other respondents. Similarly, experience was also positively associated with level of stress. Teachers with 5 to 7 years of experience felt more stress than others.

5. Findings

- The stressors such as In- disciplined behavior in Class room Students are Not being obedient Pressure in Result production were found to have positive relationship with level of stress of the teachers.

- On the other hand, the stressors namely, Irregular Attendance of students Student's Lack of interest in academics Pressure on syllabus completion were found to have no impact on the level of stress if the teachers.

- Rank analysis states that, students are being obedient, In- disciplined behavior in Class room Student's Lack of interest in academics were ranked as the prime reasons for stress.

- Gender of the teachers is associated with the level of stress; female teachers were reported more stress than male.

- Age is not associated with level of stress of the teachers, even though faculties from more than 51 age segment mentioned more stress than others.

- Qualification of faculty is associated with their level of stress, respondent with PG qualification perceived more stress than others

- Experience is also associated with level of stress, faculties with 5 to 7 years of experience recoded more stress.

Conclusion

The research result reveled that, the changed behavior of the student after reopening the educational institutions after pandemic lockdown has increased the perceived stress level of the faculties. When the student is not good in academics or when the management forces for syllabus completion, result that does not matter to the faculties, whereas when the students are not behaving properly in the class room, that affects the faculties a lot irrespective of their age,

qualification and experience. The research result concluded that, the in obedient behavior of the student is the prime cause of stress to the faculties and the adverse effect of stress in job satisfaction (Gopinath et al., 2021), performance (Gopinath, 2014a) and attrition (Gopinath, 2014b) is already proven. Hence it is essential to take measures to regulate the behavior of the students for the betterment of themselves and teachers.

Suggestions

The findings of the research are matching with the present behavior of the students. recent news reported that in many schools and colleges the behavior of students and their attitude towards teachers and education has changed. There is a slogan stating that "Acharya Devo Bhava" but now a day's teachers were not even getting the basic respect from their students. This has to be sorted out, not only for the betterment of the teachers but also to ensure the discipline of the future citizens. Based on the research findings and current scenario the researcher recommended to arrange for the psychological counselling for the school and college students to enhance their behavior. It is also recommended to give more power in the hands of teachers, so that the students will behave properly at least out of fear.

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