

# Psychological Well-Being And Quality Of Worklife Of The School Teachers During The Covid-19 Situation

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## Abstract

*The recent pandemic disease called “COVID-19 or Corona Virus”, which is prevalent the whole world is also spread in every state of our own country India. It has a wide range impact on every aspect of the life of the people everywhere. The people are sure to undergo vast variety of COVID-19 impacts like stress, anxiety, tensions, fear, remorse, disinterestedness, physical problems like pressure and heart problems, various other discomforts, frustrations, irritation, anger, etc. It is said by the psychologists that a like 'COVID-19' will have a significant impact on the mental health of the people who live any part of the world. This impact will be multifaceted: immediate effect, short-time impact, effect which could be long lasting, different types of impacts, etc. One great impact of this COVID-19 situation is felt in the educational field-education process is in a standstill. Lot stress is experienced by the teachers which has affected their psychological well-being and has reduced the degree of their employment-related experience or the total quality of their work life at the school. Teachers must remain calm so as to look after their own well-being. In this way, through different ways, they should navigate through this time and must their own psychological well-being and higher degree of quality of work life.*

**Key-Words :** COVID-19, Psychological well-being, Mental Health, Quality of work life, Stress.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The corona virus, known as COVID-19, had started at Wuhan, China in the late 2019, and now it has spread into every place in the world. As told by someone it is everywhere except Antarctica. The number of the confirmed cases is changing every day. On March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020, this new sickness ‘COVID-19’ was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization. It is a global outbreak of an illness. The speciality of a Pandemic is that there is a need to keep moving and are every now and again set apart by disarray and vulnerability. In other words, this pandemic is special by its two features of ‘urgency’ and ‘confusion and uncertainty’.

It is a fact that ‘lack of transparency and openness around the COVID-19 outbreak’ is a serious concern, through out the world, in the contemporary times. As it is said that much before it had really been known by the entire world, the Chinese government had the knowledge about the disastrous outbreak of this covid-19 or this deadly virus called ‘corona’. As they are accused of, they had intentionally hidden this very sensitive and

significant information from the rest of the world. If at all the world had known this fact well in time, then every country could have taken appropriate measures earlier itself and could have had controlled or prevented the dangerous spread of this virus. Unfortunately, this irresponsible act have taken away so many lives across the world!

As this world-wide prevalent pandemic is spreading everywhere relentlessly, the people are sure to undergo a vast range of thoughts, feelings and reactions like stress, anxiety, tensions, fear, remorse, disinterestedness, physical problems like pressure and heart problems, various other discomforts, frustrations, irritation, anger, feeling disconnected from others, etc. These things are normally expected in the face of such challenges with far reaching impacts. People are worried as many have lost their life, due to sudden changes in life, due to travel restrictions imposed on people, because of lock down and social/physical distancing, due to loss of work, etc.

It is said by the psychologists that a pandemic like 'COVID-19' will have a significant impact on the mental health of the human beings living in any part of the world, and this disastrous impact will be of different types and of various degrees. Ursano & McCarroll (1990) have said that man must keep in mind that mass deaths can leave dangerous influence on the mental health of the human persons. As we know Corona Virus has taken away so many lives of the people in so many countries, especially in India. Therefore we must expect its possible psychological impact on the people at large - especially on our teachers.

One great impact of this COVID-19 situation is felt in the educational field - education process is in a standstill. Lot of stress is experienced by the teachers and the students. I would like to focus, in this article, on the stress experienced by the teachers as a result of which their mental health and life quality at their work place is affected adversely. At such a 'long-term impact situation', it is useless to react from a place of panic and fear. Teachers need to be calm and look after their own well-being. In this way, they need to discover ways or methods of navigating through this time and must ensure their own higher degree of quality of work life.

#### *Quality of Work Life of the Teachers*

The teachers determine the future of nations. As per the Kothari Commission (1966) report, the future of India is being shaped in the classrooms and the leading role is in the hands of teachers. Thus the teachers have to be treated well, and their professional comfort, in one way or the other, has to be ensured by the public or society.

According to Lokanadha Reddy et al.(2010), "Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a comprehensive concept that includes an individual's job related well being as well as the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, fulfilling and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences". Some others look at QWL as the status of the workers' objective conditions of living at the work place. It is a function between objective conditions of life and the subjective attitude. Another definition by Harrison (1985) defines QWL as the degree of contribution from the working organizations towards the material as well as psychological well-being of their members.

QSWL is the relationship between one's workplace and his/her feeling of satisfaction in different factors like one's job, in the non-work life domains of the person, and satisfaction with overall life. It is related to personal happiness and subjective well-being. QWL is "the

impact that the sphere of one's work life leaves on the other areas of his/her life". Therefore, the more the balance between 'work life and family life, the better will the QWL be.

It is known to all that workplace-stress or the amount of stress experienced by a person at the place of his/her work can bring down one's life quality at the workplace. This stress is usually caused by various reasons. In these days, a lot of stress is caused to the teachers due to the COVID-19 situation and it causes a lot of tensions which lowers their psychological well-being and the quality of their life at the educational institution.

#### *Stress and Psychological Well-being of the Teachers*

As per the Oxford dictionary (2002), 'stress' in the life of a person can be understood as something that causes a state of strain or tension. Howard & Johnson (2004) defines 'teacher stress' as a unpleasant feeling, expressed through anger, tension, frustration or depression, etc., that will pause a danger to self-esteem or well-being. The results/impact of stress may have multi-dimensional manifestations like physical, emotional, social, psychological, etc. Among the teachers, stress can reduce sense of accomplishment, self-esteem, self-efficacy, interactions with students, etc. The present COVID-19 situation is such an occasion where the 'new circumstances' have caused unpleasant feelings among the teacher community and I am sure that this will bring down their psychological well-being and degree of their QWL.

#### *Impact of COVID-19 on the Psychological Well-being*

Those of us who are familiar with the manifest impacts of SARS pandemic of 2003, will know that how much it had affected the psychology of the people. So also with the H1N1 (Swine Flu) pandemic in 2009 and the recent Nipah Virus of 2018 in Kerala. People suffered from depression, panic, anxiety, psycho-motor excitement, suicidal tendency, delirium, etc. The same is repeated in the case of the COVID-19. Above fifty percent of the respondents who had participated in the research study conducted by Wang et al. (2020) and Javardi et al. (2020) reveal the elevated psychological distress experienced by the people of China during the beginning times of this pandemic in their country and that fact is documented. More than half of the participants in the study agree that they had experienced rather moderate degree of psychological impact. It is also reported by another group of one-third of the participants that they had experienced moderate-to-severe anxiety.

The possible psychological consequences during and after COVID situation could be elevated stress levels, elevated symptoms of depression, anxiety, worries about lack proper treatment for corona virus, panic disorder, more pessimistic outlook on life, greater number of suicides, etc.

#### *COVID-19 and Life of the Teachers*

In the outset itself we can say that COVID-19 has somersaulted the normal life of the people everywhere. We are seriously affected due to the present curative measures [the effectiveness of which are controversial and are contested] like travel bans, mandatory cancellations of public events, quarantine, contact tracing, curfews, lock down, etc. Any way it is a widely accepted fact, through out the world, that this covid-19 situation has a great irreparable impact in the educational field. As the classes are suspended for a long period of time now, it has disrupted and disturbed the academic schedules at schools and other educational institutes.

As students and their teachers remain confined to their homes, newer ways are explored to continue the process of education virtually. Unfortunately, Covid-19 situation has created a

new educational scenario by making so many schools ‘handicapped’ as they are not prepared to impart education through on-line mode! Many of them, as we see around, are forced to take recourse to various available applications or platforms of meeting their students through video conferencing - they use the facilities like whatsapp groups, googlemeet, Jiomeet, etc. But unfortunately, as we read in the news papers or hear from the T.V., these facilities are available only in the urban areas and thus these provisions are not available to the teachers and students in the rural areas. Therefore, we can say that the ‘covid-19 situation’ has deprived many even of their educational rights.

It was encouraging to see that almost six million teachers in India plunged in to action and participated in the efforts of materializing the intended ‘seamless flow of learning to students irrespective of the lockdown’ and thus in controlling and containing the unwanted impacts of the prevalent pandemic. As the schools switched over to online learning mode, the teachers picked up technical skills even though many of them did not have any formal training at all. Even with this lack of know-how in the field of modern technology and cyber safety matters, the teachers have come out successful as most of the teachers sat before the laptop with dedication before a laptop and taught their students sitting far away at their own homes.

The present ‘online mode of education’ has brought lot of stress on the teachers who are in a totally new and demanding situation. Three features of this stressful and challenging situation are that here the students are far away from the teachers physically, the teachers are disturbed/challenged as they remain in the constant surveillance of the parents, and the mode and tools of teaching is something unknown/foreign to them. Another cause of the teachers’ stress is, as we know from the media, that some of the parents make some unwanted or disgraceful comments on the teachers’ appearance, pronunciation, etc.

Thus we can say that the transition from actual classes to the virtual/online classes has affected the mental health of the teachers and has left its impact on the quality of their life at large. In spite of facing these difficulties, it is demanding on them to impart “*quality learning*”. In this process of giving quality education, the teachers are struggling a lot to keep the students engaged, to make them to respond and collaborate, to inspire them to study purposefully and profitably, to assess their actual learning, and most importantly to keep them all safe in cyber space. In addition to these difficulties, the teachers themselves have to learn continually so as to develop their own skills in the digital world.

The teachers face a lot more of problems due to the new covid-19 scenario. Let me enumerate a few of them here. First of all, for the use of applications with video conferencing facilities, many of our teachers in the rural areas do not have computers (neither laptop nor desktop). Even if they have smart phones or tablets, they do not get proper internet facility at their homes. Secondly, as this new mode of teaching is something very novel, the teachers must undergo thorough training so as to learn the mode of operation of administering on-line classes. Teachers are called upon to re-educate themselves. No more they can educate their students in the traditional class room method. They are forced to learn new methods of delivering ‘quality education’. It is very demanding and challenging for them. They will have to execute several assessment sessions so as to know the pace of learning by their students, they need to spend extra time to prepare themselves, etc. All these factors will bring in tensions, multifarious discomforts in the spheres of their work and family life, and finally it will cause conflict with their family life (W-F C) and tensions within their other relationships.

During this pandemic situation, it is a fact that the teachers need to look after themselves. They need to maintain their mental health/well-being which will tell up on the real quality of their life at school. But how? Let me mention here two of such strategies that can help to maintain teachers' psychological health and better standard of life at the work place (which is also known as QWL) during the present 'COVID-19 situation'.

#### *Social Support*

According to Waldinger (2015), for every person whether teachers or anybody else, during this time as well as at all times, social support is a must for one's well-being. Therefore 'social distancing', the adopted strategy to reduce the spread of corona virus, is a wrong thing. According to Miller (2020), some of the psychologists suggests another healthy term instead - 'physical distancing'. Many research studies like Collie et al. (2016) bring to light the fact that those teachers experience mental well-being in their life and very specially at the school who have better or constructive relationships with their companions, friends, and with their learners. It proves that social distancing can cause more psychological problems among teachers. Therefore they need to make conscious efforts to maintain strong social relationships with their superiors, colleagues, friends and family relations. This has to be done by keeping in mind the covid-19 situations. Therefore, maintain 'physical distancing' and reduce 'social distancing' by developing mutual '*connectedness*' through technological methods. In spite of the prevailing lock-downs and restrictions, we can keep up our relationships through the available online platforms like Zoom or Skype, phone calls or whatsapp video calls with family, online games with friends, etc. It is right to mention here that according to Castro et al. (2010), the support received from one's friends, superiors, co-workers, family members, etc. can be significant help for the teachers to face and overcome the tensions and challenges that come across during their work at school during this stressful time of 'corona virus pandemic'.

#### *Adaptability*

Many research studies like Collie et al. (2017 & 2018) have revealed that those teachers enjoy better mental health at work who are open-minded and are ready to adapt to changing situations. Such teachers will be more committed to their teaching profession too. Lesser degree of adaptability will cause prolonged work stress due to which the teachers put very little effort into their work. In other words, no-adaptability and stress of the teachers will result in their non-commitment to work, poor psychological well-being and low degree of quality of life at their work place.

Martin et al. (2012) say that the concept of 'adaptability' could be understood as the degree/extent to which a person is able to adjust his/her thoughts, actions, and emotions so as to face/tackle effectively with the new, changing, or uncertain situations. Such situations can be found, in a great measure, in the field of the teaching profession. For example, now the needs of the students are different from the time they were in the actual class rooms, and thus the teachers are called up on to respond to them differently. The behavioural patterns of the students are also different now from their behaviour in the real class rooms. Many teachers face now unexpected situations relating to student behaviour ! All these things demands from the teachers a difference in their lesson plan, mode of instruction and interactions, their time table, etc. Teachers are forced to adapt to the new situations. If not, then they are sure to face stress, tensions, poor quality of life at school, dissatisfaction with work, etc. They must make adjustments as per the demands of the present Covid-19 situation.

Undoubtedly, the contemporary time of COVID-19 is one of such a new situation that is changing; and it is an situation with a lot of uncertainties for every one around the world. In the present circumstance, adaptability is significantly important for teachers so that they can face effectively these uncertain times. The teachers need to change their attitudes towards technology, need to request for technical help from others, have to adjust emotions so as to avoid frustration, fear, anxiety, etc. It is in this way that they will be able to maintain better quality of life at the school and keep up better mental/psychological health.

#### *Role of Educational Leaders in Supporting Teachers*

A significant and powerful duty of supporting teachers is played by the educational leaders like school leaders and immediate supervisors. According to Slemp et al. (2018), it is the duty of the heads of the educational institutes to ensure that empowerment and self-initiation are encouraged among educators. Collie et al. (2016) and Collie & Martin (2017) are of the opinion that better positive relationship with their students and colleagues can be extracted from the teachers if and when they are supported by their educational leaders. This will ensure among the teachers, according to Maslach et al. (2001), better work-related well-being that will be projected in good and constructive way of working at the school, in greater adaptability, and in lesser degree of psychological collapse which involves feelings of inner prostration/fatigue. One of the recent studies by Collie et al. (2019) presents before us that with the support received from their school leaders, the teachers exhibit greater workplace buoyancy/cheerfulness which enables them to navigate effectively through all the ordinary challenges at work - it is so especially during this time of new challenges before them due to COVID-19.

## **2. CONCLUSION**

The teachers determine the future of nations. As per the Kothari Commission (1966) report, the future of India is being shaped in the classrooms and the leading role is in the hands of teachers. Thus the teachers have to be treated well, and their professional comfort, in one way or the other, has to be ensured by the public or society. The world today, during the COVID-19 scenario, is faced with a present that causes a mood of gloom or depression among the people and with a future that is going to be cold and miserable. Here, it is the bounden duty of the teachers to guide the people by showing them light at the end of the tunnel. Teachers are expected to be beacons of light that will guide and lead the younger generations. Therefore the general public needs to value the great services done by the educators for the good of the society.

The teachers face a lot of problems due to the new covid-19 scenario. Many of them are enumerated above. All such factors will bring in tensions, multifarious discomforts in the spheres of their work and family life, and finally it will cause conflict with their family life (W-F C) and tensions within their other relationships. It will cause problem with their psychological well-being and with the degree of their QWL. For every person whether teachers or anybody else, during this time as well as at all times, social support is a must for one's well-being. A significant and powerful duty of supporting teachers is played by the educational leaders like school leaders and immediate supervisors. During this pandemic situation, it is a fact that the teachers themselves also need to look after their own psychological health and emotional well-being and must maintain their quality of work life.

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