

STRESS MANAGEMENT DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TEACHERS OF SENIOR COLLEGE

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ashwini.kulkarni@gmail.com**Abstract:**

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand. In short bursts, stress can be positive, such as when it helps you avoid danger or meet a deadline. Job stress is the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker. Job stress matters to our health and our work. When we feel stressed, our bodies respond by raising the concentration of stress hormones in our blood. We spend roughly one third of our adult lives at work. It's no wonder that workplace stress factors heavily impact both our physical and mental health. Stressful life situations such as pandemics can have significant negative implications for the mental health and psychological functioning of an individual. Stress, anxiety, mental confusion, social deprivation, and depression are a few examples of these mental and psychological issues also support that quarantined experiences due to COVID-19 lead to stress, fear, and frustration in individuals. Similarly, uncertainty due to COVID-19 is also associated with significant changes in our daily routines that can increase stress, depression, and anxiety. Likewise, a recent systematic review on the COVID-19 pandemic and mental health and a narrative review on COVID-19 related mental health effects in the workplace also concluded that COVID-19 has resulted in increased levels of depression, anxiety, and poor sleep quality. Other prior literature has investigated work stress having an impact on various work practices under normal conditions, but the literature has not taken into account the effects of work stress on employee performance in uncertain conditions such as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper takes into consideration the job stress of teachers of senior college during the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Keywords: Stress, Stress, Teachers, Senior College, COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction:

It has been the worst of times for teachers. The Covid-19 pandemic has taken away that which makes teachers who they are teaching. Sitting before screens endlessly and interacting with sounds and images of students is not what they bargained for. Teachers standing before a class and speaking before a hundred gaping eyes, and a hundred more eager ears ensure the adrenalin rush and performance anxiety. The challenge of stage, the fright of being on a platform and delivering knowledge, but not knowledge alone, prepares the mould of a teacher. A mould made out of hard discipline and soft wonder. In pandemic-induced circumstances, the stage that had placed teachers on a pedestal, literally so, has

evaporated into thin viral air and the mould of discipline has crumbled to listless routine. The pandemic has not only affected the mental state of students, since teachers have also accumulated a high level of stress since the beginning of the crisis. Recent studies have pointed out that during lockdown, teachers have suffered stress from having to adapt (in record time) in order to provide online classes. This stress has often been accompanied by symptoms of anxiety, depression, and sleep disturbance as a consequence of the increased workload resulting from home teaching. Not many studies conducted during the pandemic measure the symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression among teachers but the studies that have been carried out suggest that they have psychological symptoms and this reinforces the importance of reopening schools and universities. A recent Arab study has indicated that this crisis has caused teachers to suffer problems that are often related to a pandemic situation, such as anxiety, depression, domestic violence, and divorce, all of which restrict their ability to teach properly

Challenges faced due to the digital tools among teachers:

The rapid shift to e-learning prompted by the pandemic has brought to light long-standing issues of inequality and a digital divide that must be addressed by future economic, education and digitalization policies. While the ambition to expand e-learning is impressive, most government schoolteachers and students lack the tools, infrastructure and capacity to be a part of this digitalization process. Some of the key challenges faced by teachers are: a Low capacity in digital and e-learning skills – very few teachers had prior training or experience of delivering high quality lessons through a blended approach using digital tools and online platforms. This will lead to further inequalities in children’s quality of learning between those whose teachers had higher capacity versus those who did not. a Poor systemic support – teachers felt inadequately supported by the government. They were not provided with the digital tools (mobile phones, laptops, reliable internet connectivity etc.) they needed to continue teaching from a distance; they received no guidance on how to navigate the overwhelming content on e-learning platforms such as DIKSHA; and there was limited guidance on how to reach all children. In some states teachers did not even receive their salaries. a Inability to reach all students – with limited capacity and access to good technology, teachers struggled to reach all their children, especially learners in remote areas or at risk of dropping out. a Preference for in-person teaching – there was a consensus among teachers and union representatives that interaction with children cannot be replaced by voluminous content, no matter how audio-visually striking it may be. One of the critical challenges as countries move towards using technology to complement classroom-based learning, or even offer an alternative to face-to-face teaching, is teachers’ capacity. The digital divide for teachers must be reduced, and they must be prepared, consulted and situated within an enabling ecosystem to lead this process.

According to a report, Over 45 per cent of faculty in Indian higher education institutions have been striving hard to manage during the COVID-19 pandemic by learning continually to improve their digital skills which has led to extreme tiredness and draining of energy levels, a new report claims. The report is based on a survey conducted by QS IGAUGE, which rates colleges and universities in India with complete operational control held by the London-based Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), which comes out with coveted global university rankings. Over 1,700 faculty members from across the country participated in the Faculty Academic Review for Excellence (FARE), 2020 survey. “It is important to note that online teaching during the pandemic is not the same as the one before COVID-19. The added emotional baggage of uncertainty along with concerns around physical and psychological health, job security, finances and many more are bound to have an adverse impact and make the sudden, and for many a rather unwelcome, transition to online teaching,” the report said.

“At least 46 per cent of the surveyed faculty members said they have been striving hard to manage by learning continually to improve their digital competencies and skills which has resulted in extreme tiredness and draining out of energy levels,” it added. The report has cited factors such as being under constant observation while teaching through an unfamiliar medium with totally new tools, difficulty in engaging learners and getting them to respond and collaborate during lessons, and assessing the learning outcomes as major challenges being faced by teachers during the period.

“The transition to online classes has not been easy for teachers, and keeping them all safe in cyberspace has been a huge challenge. While approximately 9 per cent of the respondents stated that they have witnessed a sharp increase in their stress and anxiety levels, 52 per cent reported a moderate increase in anxiety levels post the shift to online teaching,” it said.

According to the report, a significant proportion of faculty responded positively, stating their rapport has improved with the students (41 per cent), colleagues (43 per cent) and administration (41 per cent).

“While a similar proportion of respondents indicated no such change, 17.4 per cent faculty members stated that their rapport with students has worsened post the shift to online teaching. The response to deteriorated rapport with colleagues was at 8 per cent and the administration at 9.9 per cent,” it said.

“The data also revealed that 30 per cent of the respondents lacked technical know-how, digital skills, virtual learning resources, while 70 per cent of the respondents emerged victorious when they managed to proudly sit before a laptop to teach their remote learner in the online class,” the report added.

Universities and colleges were closed in the country in the middle of March this year to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus. A nationwide lockdown was announced on March 25. While the central government has permitted phased reopening of educational institutions as per the local situation of COVID-19, majority teaching-learning activities continue to be online.

(Source: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/education/nearly-half-of-faculty-in-indian-colleges-striving-hard-to-manage-teaching-during-covid-19-qs-report/article33337415.ece>)

- **Data Analysis:**

- **Table 1**

Do you experience stress at your workplace

Responses	In %
Yes	100
No	0



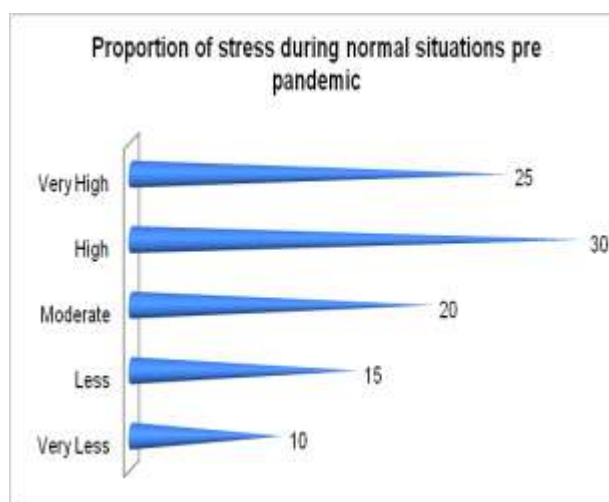
Graph 1

Among the total respondents, 100% respondents said that they experience job stress even in normal working conditions. Job stress is inevitable, whatever may be the nature of work, and people tend to experience job stress at their work place due to many factors which can be organisational or individual stressors.

- **Table 2**

What is the proportion of stress during normal situations pre pandemic?

Responses	In %
Very Less	10
Less	15
Moderate	20
High	30
Very High	25



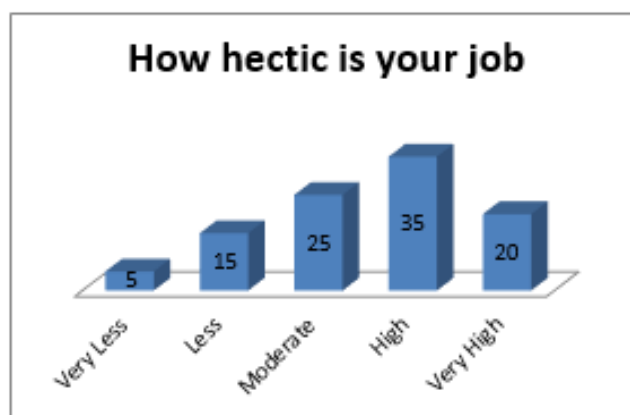
Graph 2

The proportion of stress during normal situation is as follows: 10% teachers responded it is very less, 15% said it is less, 20% said it is moderate, 30% said it is high, and 25% said it is very high.

Table 3

How hectic is your job

Responses	In %
Very Less	5
Less	15
Moderate	25
High	35
Very High	20
Total	100



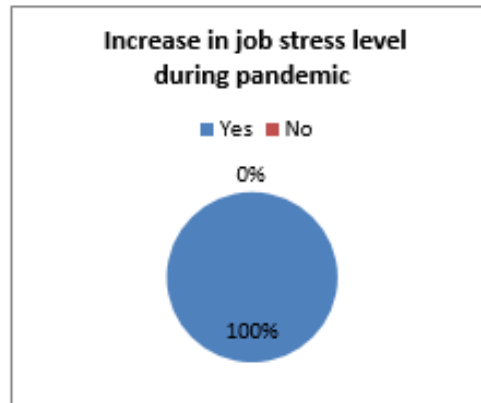
Graph 3

The proportion of stress during normal situation is as follows: 5% teachers responded it is very less, 15% said it is less, 25% said it is moderate, 35% said it is high, and 20% said it is very high.

- Table 4:**

Did you experience increase in job stress level during pandemic

Responses	In %
Yes	100
No	0



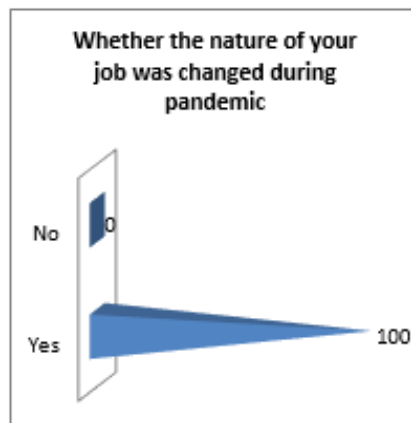
Graph 4

All respondents agreed that the level of job stress were increased during the pandemic.

• **Table 5:**

Whether the nature of your job was changed during pandemic

Responses	In %
Yes	100
No	0



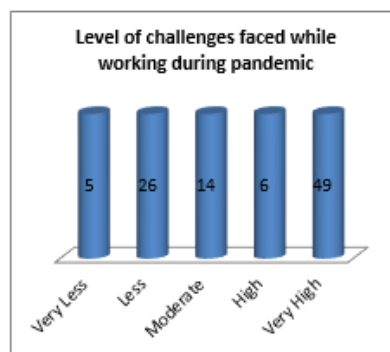
Graph 5

All teachers said that, yes their nature of job was changed during pandemic.

• **Table 6**

What level of challenges did you face while working during pandemic?

Responses	In %
Very Less	5
Less	26
Moderate	14
High	6
Very High	49



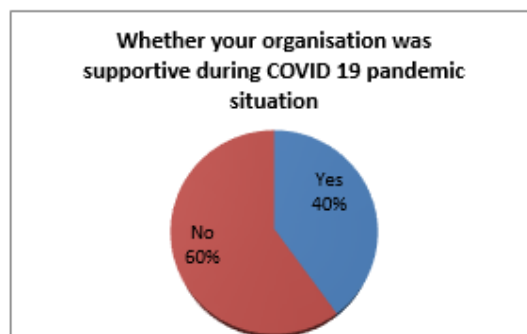
Graph 6

5% teachers responded that the challenges faced during pandemic are very less, 26% said it is less, 14% said it is moderate, 6% said it is high, and 49% said it is very high.

- **Table 7:**

Whether your organisation was supportive during COVID 19 pandemic situation

Responses	In %
Yes	40
No	60



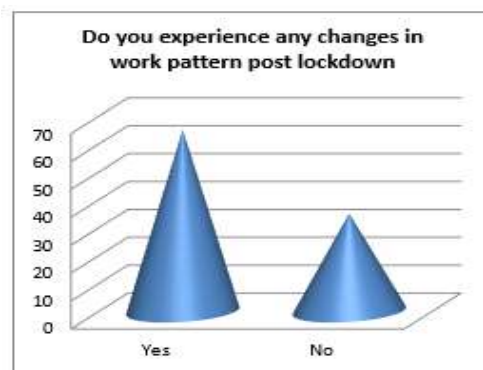
Graph 7

60% of the total respondents said that their organization was not co-operative during pandemic

- **Table 8**

Do you experience any changes in work pattern post lockdown?

Responses	In %
Yes	65
No	35



Graph 8

Out of the total respondents 65% teachers said that currently they do not experience any change in their working pattern post lockdown

Conclusion:

The results of this study have confirmed that a high percentage of teachers suffered from symptoms of anxiety, stress and depression when the universities reopened. Nonetheless, these findings are in line with those of other studies carried out from the beginning of the pandemic showing that during lockdown, teachers have suffered from stress and anxiety. Among the psychological symptoms evaluated here, the most striking findings to emerge are those related to stress. Whilst it is true that according to some studies, stress levels were already high among teachers before the onset of the pandemic. Therefore, returning to the classroom beyond being a return to normality seems to have become a new focus of uncertainty for teachers.

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