

Continued Stress Among Teachers Due to Covid-19 Pandemic and Strategies of Stress Management among Higher Education Institutions Bangalore

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Abstract

Stress is normal in everyday life, to feel anxious or have lots of worries, stressed right now because of thinking about the Covid-19 corona virus and what might may happen which indirectly impacting our daily lives, insomnia or feeling intolerable which the current pandemic situation. All human beings are worried about their health, family, friends, employment, education and our access to necessary resources and finances. All are practically stressful because we do not know exactly how, or when things may change. We cannot say for sure when things will stabilize, and we worry about those we care most personally and not to be affected. The challenges will turn us down when combined with pressure, tension, strain, and tightness. If the worries and stress are not managed well it would cause serious health and mental problem to human beings. Hence, this research made an attempt to study the stress management among teachers of the deemed-to-be and private universities at Bangalore city by highlighting the causes, affect and management of stress and to project the scope of teacher's career in the long run and perception towards the stress management.

Keywords: stress, teachers, students, education system, COVID-19, University, stress management, exhaustion

Introduction

Stress affects mankind emotionally and psychologically and it affects their progress in achieving their goals. Stress also affects productivity if influenced by the employment.

Employee health is also a concern for the management, and health issues will cause delays and lower turnover. Everybody is exposed to stressful circumstances both positively and negatively. Stress is a fact that occurs in everyday of a human life, and it may not be an issue for all.

In our fast-paced world in the pandemic situation, it is impossible to live without stress, whether you are a faculty, student or working adult. Prolonged period of stress causes tension, strain, anxiety, mind-body exhaustion, erring attitudes. We tend to overlook causes of stress, tired faces, embittered looks, unwillingness to communicate with colleagues, constant dissatisfaction, and poor performance.

Stress may appear somewhat repetitive in nature and perhaps tiring to the state that there are myriads of stressors leading each one of us to abyss of stress, hour after hour, day after day, and week and week throughout mankind lifetime.

A stressor is a stimulus with a potential for triggering the fight or flight response. The stressor for which our bodies were evolutionarily trained where threats to our safety. Stressors can also originate from the person's family history in the form possible friction with siblings and parents as well as behavior of the parents, facing marital or financial problems or to difficulties encountered with work peers or supervisors. Minor stressors fairly easily by some of us, but it may be a serious challenge to some other. In simple words what constitutes a critical issue, is not only the severity of the stressor that matters but also the psychological thoughts, the personality each one of us has. And the behavioral patterns, perceptions we have adapted in dealing with various stressors.

Stress when comes to each person, it is also because of a person's biochemical reaction in their body and the people have to be handled accordingly. Each person has some level of restriction for coping mechanism and dealing with exhaustion, and not capable of handling it

themselves it may lead into depression and then prolonged same state can lead to severe depression and effect mental and emotional behavior of that person.

A person who is overly stressed suffers from the inability of managing the responsibilities, which tends to pile on more pressure and intensifies the stress conditions. All of these stressors are usually, scientific essays and articles as well as in popular presentations, classified into four different types as basic acute stress, cumulative stress (also known as episodic acute stress), critical incident stress and post-traumatic stress disorder (commonly abbreviated as PTSD).

Basic everyday stress present in our daily lives ranging from minor problem in the family to the problems at the workplace and problems with our new generation technology of social networks is known as acute stress. This can be easily manageable by themselves who are psychologically strong, through calmness.

Cumulative stress usually affects who are not well adjusted may be struck in a miserable emotional relationship, non motivating, not promising of employment, because they overburdened by stress as they have personality type characterized by pessimism, self-deprecating attitude, not supported by the necessary skills and talents required to handle them efficiently and successfully, is also known as episodic acute stress.

Critical incident stress refers to catastrophic events which are unmanageable by a person physically and emotionally.

Finally, the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is the type of stress relating from the extremely frightening or threatening experiences.

In current situation, all teachers from primary to higher education field are in this type of stress, known as chronic stress. And it involves the persons to be trapped into it, because of external social commitments, job loss, and unexpected and unnecessary demands in situations where the challenges and demeaning pressures on teachers leads to stress as continuous overbearing and they are detrimental to their health necessitating form medical intervention, in short teachers need medication with psychological support therapy in this pandemic situation.

We should note that the goal of stress management is not to eliminate all kinds of stress; life would be certainly dull without joyfulness. Stress can be stimulus in few cases, where it can be driven to achieve high performance, so it may be good to have some stress to keep few things in focus and our goal must be to limit the harmful effects of stress by maintaining quality daily lives. We should be master of controlling our stress than being slave to it.

To find out holistic picture in ongoing online teaching or learning activities during the lockdown. The purpose of the research study is also to compare learning outcomes in a stress management course delivered in an online environment with those in traditional offline (face-to-face) classroom sessions.

Problem statement

COVID-19 pandemic has brought havoc into people lives and societies; education system is not an exception in this situation and had a huge impact on student's learning and growth, along with adaptability of teachers, students, and their parents.

Teachers are stressed out by online classes. Students assume that the teacher is available throughout the day. A sudden change to online mode was a difficult phase for few faculties due to the transition to adapt, and how we need to do resource planning well.

Also, the rural, urban poor and tribal regions do not have better access to internet, modern technology, and frequent power outages which is one major factor causing stress for both teachers and students. In such situations how do we bring together and make better prepare the students towards achieving their career goals.

Because of technology changes, senior faculty members had difficulties in adapting and were asked to leave the job. Many of the teaching staff are facing financial obligations due to job uncertainty and future financial needs, and are they are falling in job security trap with fixed pay.

Does online teaching will lead to robotic teaching methods and find whether blended learning will become part of planning of teaching methodology.

Research Objectives

- To understand the concept of stress management in online environment.
- To understand the cause of stress among the educators.
- To highlight the techniques or methods used for stress.
- To check the degree of stress undergone by the employees during the pandemic due to both financial and personal struggles.
- Teacher's job-related career coping behavior and growth options.
- To understand the challenges those are faced by the teachers in handling of online learning process during COVID-19 pandemic.
- To examine and understand the stress that the teachers are going through and their overall satisfaction in the pandemic.

Literature Review

There are different causes of stress and the one that causes is the stressors which include common lifestyle stressors like threat, performance, economic downturn, health and bereavement stressors during pandemic, performance appraisal, giving speech in front of audience and too many work assignments, time management, communication gap, sudden transition from offline/face-to-face to online/remote teaching.

Researchers generally agree that certain degree of stress is a normal part of human life due to physical or socio-environmental changes which generates positive as well as negative stress. The symptoms of stress can be physical or psychological, such as cardiac illness, neurological disorders, and chronic headache.

The current technological changes, especially in online teaching methodology and social networking to connect teachers with students for teaching, attendance, conduction of exams, validating the exam papers online, publishing results and sharing progress with parents is a paradigm shift in approach the teachers are taking or adapting to which are a huge stress factors for the teaching staff. And **Daniel Goleman** had also mentioned (*Social Intelligence, The New Science of Human Relationships, 2006, page 7*) that – **“this inexorable technocreep is so insidious that no one has yet calculated its social and emotional costs.”**

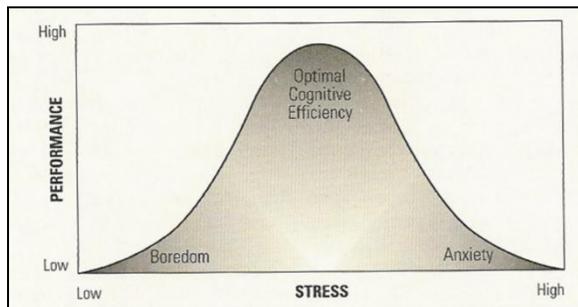


Figure 1: Sourced from Daniel Goleman (2006)©*Social Intelligence, The New Science of Human Relationships*, Random House.

The new changes from offline mode to online method of teaching, can be represented as two-factor or dual-factor theory for teachers; where certain factors like work from home (WFH) are making few teachers satisfied, whereas the technology shift and investment into new technology, remote monitoring is a dissatisfaction for few. And according to psychologist Herzberg two-factor theory – **“job dissatisfaction makes person loss in interest in job and results in low productivity”**.⁶

The first step towards developing techniques to managing stress levels is to identify the persons optimal stress levels.

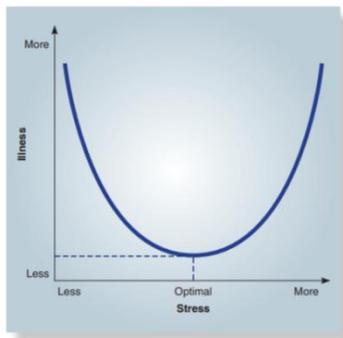


Figure 2: Sourced from **Jerold S. Greenberg**, © *Comprehensive stress Management*, Page no 31, McGraw Hill.¹

Also mentioned by Richard S. Lazarus, Susan Folkman (*Stress, Appraisal, and Coping, 1984, page 165, Springer Publishing Company Inc*) that **“The novelty and complexity of many**

stressful encounters create demands that often exceed the person's resources”². And in short, it is what we feel when we think we have lost control of events.

According to Hans Selye, who is one of the founding fathers of stress research. His view is **“stress is not necessarily something bad – it all depends on how we perceive it”**(*The Nature of Stress, published in 1956*). And he further stated that the biochemical effects of stress play a significant role and it is very important to deal with it, even if the outcome of the events may either be positive.

COVID-19 is a once in a century pandemic as per scientific community, and there is not much data and preparedness on how to tackle in such situation for the modern generations. But it is certainly causing stress for each human being and affecting the lives of families, employees, employers, industries, government and world together.

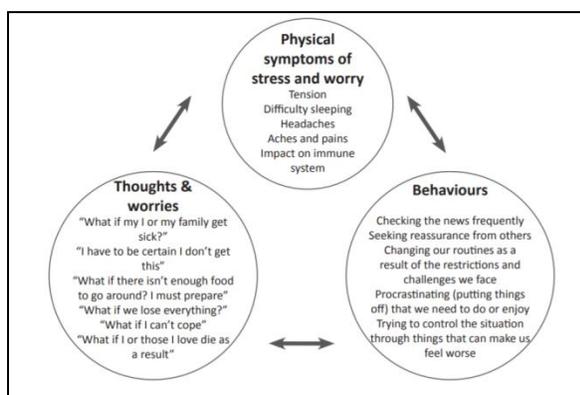


Figure 3: Sourced from © *Managing stress and worry during the COVID-19 outbreak*, Page no. 4 The CBT Resource.

After two world wars, there was a tremendous progress in humans, and their societies evolved in faster pace. But humans would have never thought if there is hold button in the progress. Now is the time for us, to collect the metrics, compare and correlate and provide the solutions for future generation on how to tackle if in similar situation.

Preliminary Stage Field Survey Data

The review of already present literature suggests that stress is common among all the people.

The survey reveals the pandemic had especially brought stress for the teachers and academicians from their teaching classroom to homes and redrawing new lines in their lives, like homes have become classrooms, the personal devices become teaching essential, changing the teaching methods, adapting to new technologies, time management, and review of students' progress.

A query on 'does a teacher feel pressure at work, due to several work assignments and extended work hours after introduction of online classes in your college?' showed that 54% strongly agree that they feel pressure at work and 37% agree, and the rest of about 9% (respondents who Cannot say, Disagree and totally disagree) as listed in Table 1 and Figure 4. And in these testing times, 91% of the respondents felt that they are overly burdened with work pressure.

Sl. No	Option	Percentage
1	Strongly agree	54%
2	Agree	37%
3	Cannot say	5%
4	Disagree	3%
5	Strongly Disagree	1%
	Total	100%

Table 1: Pressure due to extended work hours after inception of online classes

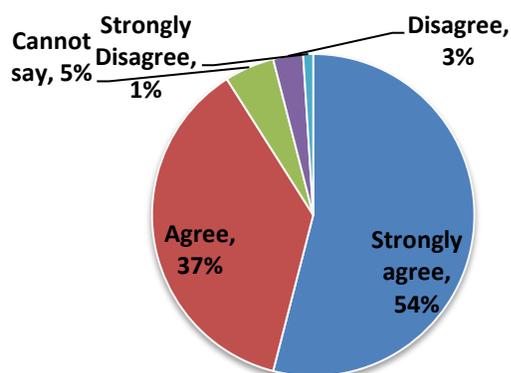


Figure 4: Pressure due to extended work hours after inception of online classes

Another query on ‘*does this new working environment change of online and remote classes causing stress?*’, as in Table 2 and Figure 5 shows that 79% respondents feel that they are stressed out, and 21% respondents are not stressed. When work location or environment moves from designated places to home, mixes with family time and eating up resources, and time in adapting and preparing for new changes in the work environment, it surely is a stressful factor to start the day.

Sl. No	Option	Percentage
1	Yes	79%
2	No	21%
	Total	100%

Table 2: Work environment change is causing stress

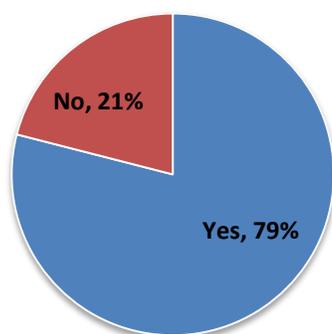


Figure 5: Work environment change is causing stress

When asked the respondents on a query for ‘*do you see the same job security after inception of online class sessions?*’ there is a mixed reaction as shown in Table 3 and Figure 6, where 28% respondents strongly agree, 26% agree, and rest of respondents opted for 28% disagree, 14% strongly disagree and 4% said cannot say. The difference between the agreements to disagreements is very narrow, and they respondents had true feeling of impact on job security in this current situation.

Sl. No	Option	Percentage
1	Strongly agree	28%
2	Agree	26%

3	Cannot say	4%
4	Disagree	28%
5	Strongly Disagree	14%
	Total	100%

Table 3:Job security after inception of online classes

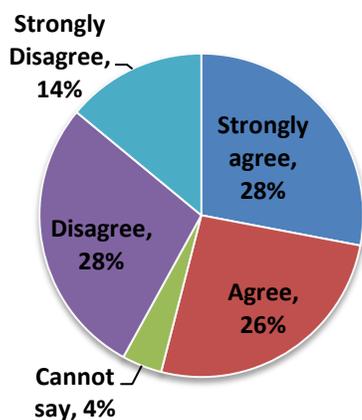


Figure 6:Job security after inception of online classes

And a query on ‘*does training and development programs helped you to cope up with technical skills and reduce stress?*’, where 68% respondents strongly agreed, 23% agreed, 4% cannot say, 3% disagree and 2% strongly disagree as shown in Table 4 and Figure 7. Even here overwhelming number feel that the teachers need to adapt to technology changes now and also in the future, and this pandemic has also made the teachers self-learners, quick adapters, fast respondents and made them more qualified and will be ready to face any challenges thrown in front of them.

Sl. No	Option	Percentage
1	Strongly agree	68%
2	Agree	23%
3	Cannot say	4%
4	Disagree	3%
5	Strongly Disagree	2%
	Total	100%

Table 4:Training and Development programs help

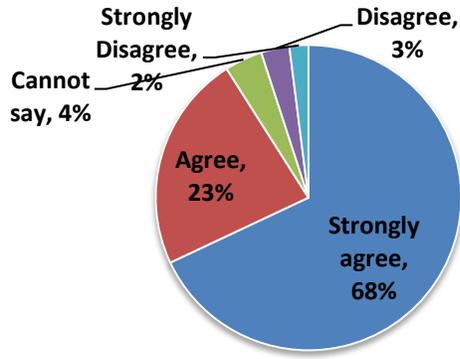


Figure 7: Training and Development programs help

Research Methodologies of Study

Conducted questionnaire-based survey, in deemed-to-be and private universities, and the colleges under it in Bangalore. The area of research gathered information of faculties, their stress levels, working hours, job security, and technology change from few participants.

Through objective and systematic method, we will find a solution to the problem of research in future.

At present as a preliminary research methodology conducted an exploratory research to clarify the exact nature of the problem to be solved.

According to the Statista Research Department, the unemployment rate shot up to 20% in mid-April 2020 to Jun 2020, and slowly recovered to 7%.

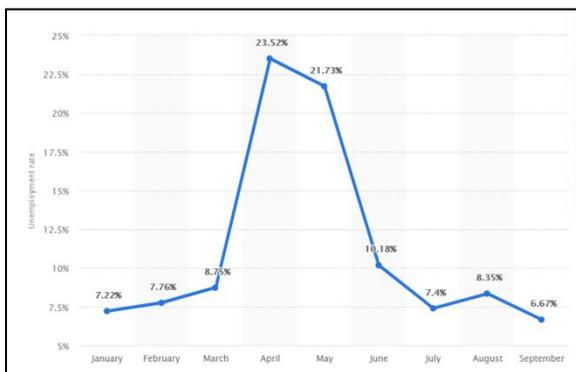


Figure 8: Impact on unemployment rate due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) lockdown in India from January to September 2020, © Statista 2020

There are a total of 15 Deemed-to-be and Private Universities in Bangalore city (GITAM University, Jain University, Christ University, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham, M. S. Ramaiah University of Applied Sciences, REVA University, Presidency University, Dayananda Sagar University, Alliance University, PES University, CMR University, Azim Premji University, Institute of Trans-Disciplinary Health Sciences and Technology, Garden City University, and Rai Technology University)⁸ who have colleges running multi-disciplinary courses⁹ under these Universities where this research will be carried out.

Another research data published by Statista Research Department¹⁷, states that there was a fall of household income in India to 46% at the state of April 2020.

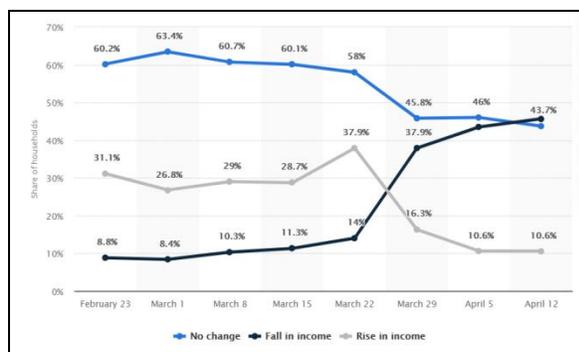


Figure 9: Impact on household income due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) in India from February to April 2020, © Statista 2020

The latest data from Government of India's Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the current Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of India¹⁵ is still in recovering state, this clearly indicate that it might take few more years for the employees across manufacturing, industrial, educational, and service sectors to be back to the early state of year 2020. It is stated in latest Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, that during September 2017 – September 2020, a total of 3,69,44,650 new subscribers joined the EPF scheme.¹⁶ This is a positive sign that the Government of India is expressing that new jobs addition means there is a

tremendous opportunity for growth in every sector and GDP will recover soon if work towards achieving the 5 Trillion dollars economy goal that the GOI has set target for year 2025.



Figure 10:Sourced from©Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Nov 2020, © Statista 2020

Findings

The findings of the present pandemic revealed the following:

- Most of the teachers form elementary to higher education fall under high stress category.
- There is a significant relationship between ages, experience, and designation i.e., demography factors versus stress.
- Personal policies and new practices of educational institutions have contribution stress among the teachers.MoHFW made extreme efforts to understand the impact of COVID causing stress among the general public and creating awareness.¹⁴
- The higher education college management sudden decisions on salary cuts, layoffs, too many work assignments is one of the major reasons for employees being stressful. Government of India tried to help employees to withdraw early provident fund and pension benefits from Employee Provident Fund (EPF) accounts.¹⁰
- Most of the employees are unhappy with new procedures and sudden decisions from higher authorities in the administration, is also one of the causes of stress where they are not given the privilege to speak up in these dire situations of pandemic.
- Lack of information or unreliable information also caused a huge communication gap between the top management of educational institutions and teachers on whether to

conduct online or offline classes also lead to a kind of stress, whether the teachers have to venture out to do the duties ignoring their health. The reduce the misinformation, Government of India had a joint action plan for all different ministries work as one group, and COVID-19 Inter-Ministerial group provided valuable information on status of state of COVID-19 across India, and also the guidelines and framework to help across all the people of India to be inline.¹²

- Revising the opening of colleges, rescheduling of examination dates and correction of exam papers in this pandemic situation also lead to stress among the teachers. And also follow the safety guidelines being set, always be vigilant and coordinate with the authorities also contributed to stress in their current daily lives. In order to help them not to get into panic mode Karnataka State government provided SOPs for educational institutes and teaching faculty.¹³
- New academic year planning and new admissions process, advertising digitally and reaching to students and parents was a difficult phase for education institutes. And each of the teaching faculty had to play a role of marketer or sales, as if the admission is a commodity that has to be sold to a student. Being in this process lead many of the teaching faculty to play dual roles for bringing in the students and help provide in finance for the college to function. Though this is a win-win situation for the education institute and teachers, but a high stressor for both.
- There is no difference in the levels of stress, employees of teaching and non-teaching staff.
- Much of the stress is also caused because of lack of recognition and appreciation during this pandemic situation, when there is a pay-cut.

Suggestions

Large percentage of teachers did have high stress, but it is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during a crisis.

Yes, if the teachers try learning to control stress and effectively manage their time, it is possible to overcome this, by following:

- Relaxation techniques.
- Practice yoga, meditation.
- Limit worries and agitation by lessening the time by spending more time with family, and by not watching or listening to media coverage which makes you upset.
- Talking to those people whom we trust the most, like by contacting the closest friends and family members.
- If there is a layoff, and were asked to stay home, be prepared with positive outlook till you get a new job by maintaining a healthy lifestyle including a proper diet, 6 – 7 hours of continuous sleep per day, exercise, social contacts and professional contacts.
- Realize excessive use of smoking, alcohol or other drugs to deal with the emotions, take them to even worse situations. If when felt overwhelmed talk to a health worker or counselor for physical or mental needs if required.
- Do self-analysis and get the facts gather information that will exactly help you to determine your risk so that you can take reasonable precautions.
- Draw skills that have been used in the past bad situations, which could have helped to manage or handle as in previous adversities.
- Maintain a sense of hope, write down things you are grateful for or that are going well.
- A teacher has to strengthen families, by doing meaningful and enjoyable work and organize leisure time to be fun and recreation.

Conclusion

Everybody is exposed to stressful and confused situation which gives rise to negative impact on physical and emotional state of health.

Unexpectedly the world has been changed in the past one year for several people and left them in solace and isolation. Humans have always emerged out of adversities and will certainly triumph in this pandemic situation.

Teachers now have to adapt to the new technology changes quickly and also adapt to the stressors it will bring upon them.

If the teachers want to survive and flourish in a rapidly changing society, then it is always better to learn how to manage the inevitable stress. It is must to adjust to our life situations to eliminate unnecessary stressors and to find comfort in rewarding routine and stable relationships and activities.

Psychological wellbeing and health of employees are important for the future growth of institutions to make more revenue as well as employee retention.

Always a satisfied employee is a productive employee for any organization.

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