

Coping Mechanisms of Anxiety and Depression Among High School Teachers Using Hybrid Teaching Methods

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Abstract

As a consequence of the COVID-19 epidemic, hybrid and completely virtual classrooms, along with socially distant classrooms, will be widely used throughout the school year 2020-2021. The focus of this study is on how COVID-19 affects teachers in hybrid and online primary schools in terms of their mental health. At the one-month point of the school year, this research focused on the worries of first-grade teachers. The study enlisted 312 primary school teachers from 16 different states and used a survey approach to collect their responses. This covers both traditional classroom teachers (104) and those who work exclusively online (208). Significant correlations and indicators of teacher strain were found. Indicators of teacher stress included scores on the COVID-19's anxiety, present anxiety, nervousness in dealing with our parents, and backing from administrators. The perspectives of educators on the researched variables were also incorporated in the results in the form of short answer responses. Academic, technological, and emotional support are all areas in which schools and school districts can help teachers.

Keywords: Coping mechanism, anxiety, depressing, hybrid teaching, COVID-19

Introduction

Due to the widespread effects of the COVID-19 coronavirus disease pandemic in the early months of 2020 (Centre for sickness and Prevention, 2020), all schools were forced to transition to an online learning environment (Wu et al., 2020). For the next 2020-2021 school year, many elementary school teachers will be returning to vastly altered classrooms, schedules, and pedagogical philosophies. Teachers had to adapt to new requirements for lessons, workplace norms, and classroom setups. Parents who have questions or concerns about the district's educational technology, safety policies, or teaching practises are encouraged to address them with their child's teacher in the first instance. School districts have urged educators to become fluent in cutting-edge online teaching practises and technologies. Due to shifts in teaching practises, hybrid and virtual education implementation was fraught with problems for teachers, schools, and districts. The requirement of educators to become acquainted with emerging platforms for technological advances (Wiggins, 2020), students who may not have a link to the internet or suitable devices (Simmons, 2020), and so on all contributed to the difficulties. Not only did teachers have trouble keeping students' attention during virtual lessons, but they also had to deal with issues related to both technology and instruction (Leech et al., 2020). It is crucial for educators who will be

delivering hybrid and virtual courses in the fall of 2020 to understand how the new requirements and Covid-19 standards will affect them.

It's possible that teachers' workloads were already high before COVID-19, so the return to the classroom amid that virus only added to the stress they were feeling (Ferguson et al., 2012). Teachers who returned to the classroom during the COVID-19 pandemic experienced a number of new demands, such as the possibility of additional factors like the possibility of catching COVID-19, having to establish fresh curriculum in order to meet the new requirements, the enactment of COVID-19 precautionary measures, and district requirements for technology.

Challenges Specific to Teaching Learning Systems: It is crucial to investigate the influence of the COVID-19 epidemic on teachers' stress levels. The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of the first quarter of the academic year 2020-2021 on the mental health of teachers in primary schools who work in hybrid online and traditional classrooms.

- 1) What aspects of hybrid and virtual instruction during COVID-19 are most likely to put strain on educators?
- 2) What do faculty members see as the most demanding parts of COVID-19?

The researcher felt it was vital to delve into these challenges in order to have a fuller understanding of how the COVID-19 pandemic affected educators. Elementary school teachers were given the first month to get used to the new procedures and technology offered by the school district. However, due to the lasting effects of COVID-19, teachers were required to alter both instructional procedures and institutional norms. Despite the apparent importance of the relationship between COVID-19 and education, scientists have paid it little attention thus far. Pressley (2021) revealed that during COVID-19, K-12 teachers experienced high levels of tension and anxiety regardless of the delivery method used (face-to-face, hybrid, or virtual). The predictor factors also included administrative support, teaching anxiety, parent-teacher communication anxiety, and COVID19 anxiety. Bintliff's (2020) research on the effects of COVID-19 on educators also revealed that teachers who operated from home had a harder time striking a balance between work and personal life, which in turn led to higher stress levels. The researchers hypothesised that four factors—*anxiety about speaking to parents, anxiety about using the COVID-19, nervousness about delivering lessons, and the presence of administrative support*—would predict teachers' levels of stress. The researcher also hypothesised that teachers' worries about district technology and virtual instruction could be able to predict their own levels of stress, since the sample consisted solely of hybrid plus virtual elementary school teachers.

Teacher Stress in Adopting Adapting Newer Teaching Methodology: Over 8% of teachers left the profession because of stress on the job prior to the COVID-19 epidemic (Fitchett et al., 2017; Harmsen et al., 2018; Herman et al., 2018), with 40% to 50% of instructors quitting within the first five years (Ryan et al., 2017). Previous studies (Ryan et al., 2017; Stoeber & Rennert, 2008) have investigated a wide range of extracurricular factors that may add to teachers' stress. According to Kyriacou (2001), a teacher is stressed when they feel negative emotions like anger, tension, irritation, or depression as a result of their job. He argues, nonetheless, that previous stress models (Kyriacou, 2001; Maslach & Leiter, 2016) also took teachers' resistance to burnout and high-stress into account. Having a good grip of the topic is vital because teacher stress can lead to a variety of undesirable effects, including burnout and resignation (Klassen & Chiu, 2010; Kyriacou, 2001).

Teachers may feel pressured by standardised testing, their students, and their colleagues. For instance, test-based methods for transparency are used as part of the teacher evaluation system in states with a greater prevalence of teachers reporting high levels of stress, as found by Ryan et al. (2017). As a result of this stress, teacher turnover increased. Teachers who reported feeling strong pressure from school administrators were more likely to leave their positions, according to a study (Ryan et al., 2017). The socioeconomic state of the school and the availability of resources may also play a role in teachers' stress levels (Bottiani et al., 2019; Herman et al., 2018). Finally, a teacher's stress may be influenced by those around them. When teachers have disagreements with colleagues or when their own goals are at odds with those of the school, their stress levels may rise. Having

colleagues in the profession may boost instructors' morale and job satisfaction (Bottiani et al., 2019; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015).

Teachers' Reports of Feeling Overwhelmed in the Classroom: Bottiani, et al. (2019), Lambert, et al. (2007), Ferguson, et al. (2012), and Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015) all found that teacher burnout was largely attributable to stress from students. Bottiani et al. discovered that pupils' disruptive behaviour was substantially connected with teachers' stress and burnout. When teachers had access to resources, there was no correlation between their stress levels and student disruption. It has been established that teachers' levels of stress are related to their students' academic achievement (Braun et al., 2019; Larson et al., 2018). a lack of organisation and efficiency in the classroom (McLean & Connor, 2015). This provides some evidence that the mental health of instructors may also have an impact on the mood in the classroom.

The majority of professors reported that work-related pressures were the most stressful aspect of their life. New curriculum and project implementation, long hours, and a lack of time to accomplish duties like lesson planning, copying, and engaging with stakeholders have all been cited as contributing factors to teachers' feelings of being overworked. Due to the intense workload, female employees had higher rates of stress and burnout than male employees did. Bottiani et al. (2019) discovered that teachers who had a lot on their plates had lower levels of self-efficacy and self-esteem. Parents, in addition to their children, place pressure on teachers. According to Stoeber & Rennert (2008), instructors' drive for excellence increased when parents were present in the classroom. Exhaustion and burnout were associated with the stress of striving for perfection. Pelletier et al. (2002) discovered an association between family participation and teacher burnout, especially in private institutions where families may have greater expectations because they are paying the money.

Taking a methodical approach to measuring tech workers' stress: The online Google Forms poll provides three options for ratings in this regard. At first, we used the COVID Anxiety Scale (CAS; Lee, 2020). The CAS is a five-item survey that probes respondents about how often they've been anxious or stressed because of COVID-19 in the past two weeks. There was a 5-point scale from 0 (not at all) to 4 (quite a little) for the responses. This is indicated by a COVID-19 anxiety score of less than 9 (Lee, 2020). Additionally, five anxiety-related survey items were included (Davey et al., 2007). For the purpose of measuring anxiety, Davey et al. (2007) discovered that a single-item anxiety scale was just as reliable as the 20-question Spielberger State Trait Anxiety Inventory. The current study employed a five-point scale where responses ranged from 1 (not frightened at all) to 5 (very concerned) to separately score each issue. In this study, researchers utilised questions like "How do you feel using the technology provided by your district?" to collect data on possible predictors. Questions we posed included, "How do you feel about teaching right now?" and "How do you feel about communicating with parents during the 2020 school year?" In addition, the outcome variables of new year's jitters and present-day worries were measured using the survey responses "How did you feel at the beginning of the 2020 school year?" and "How do you feel about teaching currently?"

According to research by Seidman and Zager (1986), teachers' levels of stress and administrative backing were each reflected by a score between 6 and 36 on a scale. To close out Covid-19, an open-ended question was posed to teachers asking, "What have been the biggest challenges you have faced as a teacher during autumn 2020?" This gave educators a chance to share their thoughts and views regarding the upcoming school year.

Pearson's correlation analysis was used to look at nine variables, including teachers' stress and anxiety about returning to the classroom in the autumn of 2020, their stress and anxiety about using district technology, their stress and anxiety about teaching virtually, their current anxiety (roughly one month into the academic year), their stress and anxiety about communicating with parents, their stress and anxiety about interacting with administrators, and their perceptions of administrators' s The researcher also used a hierarchical multiple regression model to control for any confounding factors, such as teachers' educational backgrounds, students' racial backgrounds, and the schools' geographic locations. The researcher performed a final check to ensure the data was sufficient for use in multiple regression analyses. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (2001), there were no violations of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity of residuals, nor were there any singularities, multicollinearities, or dependencies of errors. The researcher utilised open coding to extract themes from the

brief comments made by teachers at the end of the survey (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Using the qualitative data collected during COVID-19, researchers succeeded in trying to better understand the factors that contribute to teachers' stress and how educators generally perceive the pressures placed on them (Braun et al., 2020).

The qualitative data showed that 102/teachers felt they had too much on their plates. Fifty-three teachers have expressed frustration with the new demands placed on them. Twenty-one hybrid teachers were simultaneously instructing students in both traditional lecture halls and online. One hybrid teacher said, "We are being asked to work two jobs with the compensation of one." Keeping tabs on the development of my in-person and remote students is a formidable challenge. That's very irritating! "Teaching hybrid seems like doing two full-time jobs," said another. This is beyond my ability to handle.

The unreasonable expectations imposed by districts and school authorities (N = 27) was another element that contributed to teacher stress and fit with the theme of overworked teachers. Teachers also had false expectations about the amount of lesson plans they would need to create, particularly for hybrid teachers who were expected to cater to both online and in-person classes. Educators' concerns included "too much on teachers' plates" and "not enough time to complete administrative expectations for each student."

A school educator expressed her inability to live up to the lofty standards set by administration. To paraphrase a teacher, "I am sick and tired of hearing 'problem solve' and 'be creative' from individuals who have no concept what it's like to be a teacher today. Twelve educators complained about having no life outside of work due to the stress and pressure they were under. There is not enough time throughout the day to get everything done that has to be done," said one hybrid educator. Similar concerns were voiced by another hybrid educator, who said, "I am exhausted from all the work." I worked an extra 47 hours last week, on top of my regular school schedule. I'm not sure if I have the stamina for this. One virtual teacher said, "I feel like I am on call for s*t." when asked about the challenges of balancing work and personal life.

According to the qualitative data, only 11 educators mentioned COVID-19 in their short answer responses. In the comments, eight teachers said they were concerned about being exposed to the virus in a hybrid form. One hybrid educator voiced concern that "Teachers are expected to expose themselves without proper precautions taken by the district to ensure their safety." Two other educators voiced worries about catching the virus and passing it on to their loved ones.

Parents' Perspective on Teachers: 49 of the instructors surveyed in the qualitative study mentioned problems with parents within the initial month of the school year. Twenty-two teachers said that parents did not help with homework, another 22 said that parents had unreasonable expectations and even angered teachers, five said they couldn't get in touch with parents, and four said they were frustrated by parents who couldn't use technology.

When discussing parental support to promote education at home, teachers frequently noted that parents did not ensure their children completed homework or attended online classes. Hybrid educators lamented, "Parents refuse to make their kids work on virtual days," while their online-only counterparts said, "I have a hard time getting in touch with parents or getting them to support their child completing work." Another issue shared by the teachers was that parents have unreasonable expectations of teachers and are angry with them. One source of this discontent was the stubbornness of some fully online institutions to consider reverting to a hybrid schedule. One online-only educator commented that she felt the media also played a role in shaping how the public viewed educators. "Dealing with parents who are not happy about their kids learning remotely has been a daily struggle," said another teacher who uses only virtual instruction. We are not slothful; rather, we are cautious. It's unfortunate how teachers are portrayed in the media and how parents feel about them.

Educators have reported that "Belligerent parents have been the biggest challenge I have faced" and that "Parents are blaming teachers for everything from technology not working to students not completing work" since they are the first point of contact for students as they return to school in 2020-2021. Seven more educators cited "angry parents" as their biggest obstacle, but offered no solutions. An all-virtual educator also shared that parents in her area took their issues to social media and to the school board, not only to her or her colleagues.

Teachers must be doing something wrong if parents are constantly fretting and rarely appreciating their efforts. They voice their disapproval of any and all teaching strategies on social media and in school board meetings.

This exploratory study's results suggest that, by about the one-month mark of the 2020-2021 school year, instructors who had returned to the classroom during the COVID-19 epidemic were experiencing high levels of stress. Anxiety and depression are treated with the use of coping techniques. CAS, current teaching anxiety, anxiety while engaging with parents, or support from administrators were all significant predictors of teachers' stress levels. Teachers' emotional tiredness was not predicted by indicators that dealt with technology and online learning. Workload, COVID-19, & parents were all mentioned as possible sources of stress among teachers.

The current findings shed light on the aspects that are most directly associated to teacher stress and, hence, the issues which schools, districts, and researchers need to address to preserve the critical teaching staff in light of the little study on the impacts of COVID-19 on teaching. The qualitative information also provided insight into the specific elements that contributed to teachers' stress levels. Finally, the results imply that teachers' stress is being affected by the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new challenges. It's no secret that educators could use some help right now, so the current state of affairs is not surprising (Bottiani et al., 2019; Herman et al., 2018). Instruction, technological aid, and emotional support are all possibilities for relieving teachers' pressure. Anxiety, parent interaction, administrator assistance, and COVID-19 anxiety all contributed to teachers' high levels of stress during the back-to-school transition.

In addition, educators complained that they were given too much to do by school administrators and districts. Stress among educators is common because to the monotony of daily routines (Ferguson et al., 2012; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015). However, instructors during the COVID-19 epidemic had unique challenges, including the need to accommodate both traditional and online pupils and the implementation of innovative LMSs. District and school officials can help teachers feel less overwhelmed by setting clear goals for instruction and offering instructional support from the top down.

It's possible that schools should take a step back and evaluate the ultimate purposes of all homework assignments. Instead than adding to instructors' already high workload in communication, education, and administration, it may be required to have them concentrate on the skills and tasks that are essential for students' learning.

Steps to Improve Mental Health: Professional development (PD) for instructional technology, parent-teacher relationships, and mental health promotion are all ways in which institutions and administrations can aid educators. Districts can give teachers access to telehealth options so that they have an opportunity to go outside of their classroom to cope with stress. The mental well-being of educators will improve as a result of this. Districts may also provide teachers with a mental health day to help them with the extra self-care they'll need during these challenging times. Likewise, administrators may foster a positive learning environment by having open dialogue with faculty regarding their concerns, as well as the school's capabilities and desired results (Bottiani et al., 2019; Herman et al., 2018). While teachers, students, and families deal with the COVID-19 pandemic, policymakers at the local or state level may decide to reduce the amount of testing needed for the upcoming academic year.

Last but not least, none of the educators have experience instructing in a virtual or hybrid classroom. School districts have an obligation to provide teachers with support when they make use of district-provided technology and cutting-edge edtech. For this reason, it is important to solicit input from educators on relevant professional development and to provide daily assistance within the school (Bottiani et al., 2019; Herman et al., 2018). Since teachers are the primary point of contact for parents, they often bear the brunt of criticism when it comes to district or school policies that affect their children's education. Supporting teachers' connections with parents requires districts and schools to provide parents with clear information and help. While two-way communication between educators and parents is essential, schools and districts also have a responsibility to support educators, especially when facing parents who are quick to place blame on educators for students' academic struggles (Pelletier et al., 2002). Teacher exhaustion is a possible outcome.

Conclusion

After one month of the 2020-2021 school year, researchers found that hybrid and virtual classrooms were to blame for students' heightened levels of stress. Many educators have expressed frustration with their workload, students' excessive expectations, and some parents' lack of cooperation. More importantly, the results highlight predictor variables that may have an effect on teachers' stress levels.

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