

Teacher Wellbeing And Stress Management During Covid-19**Dr. G. M. Sunagar**

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girishsunagar@gmail.com**Abstract**

Teachers play an important and influential role in the lives of their students, and in many cases, their families, and the community. Their duties and responsibilities extend far beyond meeting learning outcomes, to caring for the social and emotional needs of their students. But who's looking out for our teachers? The health and safety of teachers and their families must be a priority as they try and balance the different demands at work and home.

Teachers' play an important and influential role in the lives of their students, and in many cases, their families, and the community. Their duties and responsibilities extend far beyond meeting learning outcomes, to caring for the social and emotional needs of their students. COVID-19 has shed light on the important role that teachers play in supporting students' learning and well-being. Adapting to new and sometimes, uncertain situations and events, is not an uncommon feature in the lives of teachers, like dealing with unexpected student behaviour, teaching classes with different student levels and abilities and making adjustments to timetables and lesson plans as a result of curriculum changes. In fact, their role requires adaptability on a regular basis to navigate the demands of their everyday work in schools and classrooms.

Introduction.

Education as a proximate means progress of society. Thus, one of the aims of education is to bring about desirable changes in the learner in respect of knowledge, skills and attitudes, in such a way, that one may effectively perform the changing roles in a changing society. Therefore, education has been regarded a matter of Primary national importance, and an indispensable agency in the difficult task of building a nation.

Sharma (2010) states that teachers are the pillars of the society, who help students to grow to shoulder the responsibility of taking their nation ahead of others. They desire security, recognition, new experience and independence. When these needs are not fulfilled they become tense. Dissatisfaction among workers is undesirable and dangerous in any profession; it is suicidal if it occurs in teaching profession. If factors responsible for dissatisfaction can be differentiated, attempts can be made either to change those conditions or to reduce

their intensity so as to increase the holding power of the profession.

As educators, a high level of multi-tasking is usually part of the routine, and multiple hats are worn in schools and in classrooms, for example, as teacher, advisor, mentor, administrator, lesson planner, classroom manager, support worker to name a few⁶. Teaching is both a rewarding as well as an extremely challenging profession. Teachers' roles have increasingly become complex, requiring them to work with a diverse student population, an ever-crowded curriculum using limited resources, dealing with parents and community, and still be expected to provide quality learning opportunities for students. In the absence of ongoing training, mentoring and other support mechanisms, high workload levels combined with stressful conditions in classrooms are known to result in emotional exhaustion, burn-out, ultimately leading to teacher attrition from the profession.

Psychological well-being consists of positive relationships with others, personal mastery, autonomy, a feeling of purpose and meaning in life, and personal growth and development.

Psychological well-being is attained by achieving a state of balance affected by both challenging and rewarding life events.

Domains of Psychological Well-Being.

Self-Acceptance.

Which refers to the degree positive attitudes you have about yourself, your past behaviors and the choices that you have made. Someone with high self-acceptance is pleased with who they are and accepting of multiple aspects of themselves, both good and bad. In contrast, individuals with low self-acceptance are often self-critical, confused about their identity, and wish they were different in many respects.

Establishment Of Quality Ties To Others.

An individual with positive relationships feels connected, respected, and well-loved. They can share aspects of themselves, experience intimacy, and usually feel secure in their relations. In contrast, individuals with poor relationships often feel unappreciated, disrespected, unloved, disconnected, hostile, rejected, or misunderstood. They tend to feel insecure and sometimes alone or distant from others.

Sense of Autonomy.

It refers individuals with high levels of autonomy are independent, self-reliant, can think for themselves, do not have a strong need to conform, and don't worry too much about what others think about them. In contrast, individuals low in autonomy feel dependent on others, are constantly worried about the opinions of others, are always looking to others for guidance, and feel strong pressures to conform to others' desires.

Mastery Over The Environment

Which is the degree to which you feel competent to meet the demands of your situation. Individuals high in environmental mastery feel they have the resources and capacities to cope, adjust and adapt to problems, and are not overwhelmed by stress. Those with a low level of environmental mastery may feel powerless to change aspects of their environment with which they are unsatisfied, feel they lack the resources to cope, and are frequently stressed or overwhelmed.

Personal Growth

It refers individuals with high levels of personal growth see themselves as changing in a

positive direction, moving toward their potential, becoming more mature, increasing their self-knowledge, and learning new skills. Individuals low in personal growth feel no sense of change or development, often feel bored and uninterested in life, and lack a sense of improvement over time.

Sense of Purpose in Life

It refers individual with a high sense of purpose sees their life has having meaning, they work to make a difference in the world, and often feel connected to ideas or social movements larger than themselves. Such individuals have a sense that they know what their life is about. Individuals low in this quality often question if there is a larger purpose, do not feel their life makes sense, and attribute no higher meaning or value to life other than the fulfillment of a series of tasks.

Importance of Teacher Well-Being And Management of Stress.

Even though teachers are used to new and uncertain situations, the pandemic has thrown a whole set of complex and unexpected challenges. Actions, based on medical advice, are needed to be swiftly understood and interpreted, appropriately implemented, and suitably communicated to students and their families. Learning methods and tools need modification, while adapting to students' individual needs and circumstances as best as possible. In the face of uncertainty around the pandemic, flexibility and the ability to shift between learning modes, with provision of appropriate support to students is key, but this is by no means an easy task. Remote working has substantially increased teachers' workload, with a recent study indicating that some teachers were working an extra 20 hours per week. Those who teach in low socio-economic or disadvantaged schools face additional barriers, having to perform their roles with less support and less resources, consequently compounding the existing challenges and inequities facing these school systems. Reduced opportunities for teachers to collaborate and work with colleagues is shown to impact their performance and commitment to the profession. The health and safety of teachers and their families is also a priority as they try and balance the different demands at work and home. Teachers are supporting their students, while also managing their own physical health, stress, anxiety,

and supporting their family's needs. In addition to this, because women disproportionately represent the teaching profession, they are worse off during the pandemic due to the nature of their work as described above as well as having to be the primary career of their families, including caring for their children's health and educational needs. Being a woman and being a teacher during the pandemic has been a double whammy. Teachers' mental health and well-being can truly be tested, with far reaching implications both for themselves and for those under their care.

Teachers' mental health can no longer be ignored, and we need to do much better to prioritize the wellness and management of stress of teachers.

Strategies To Consider.

1. Encourage school colleagues and senior executive to collaboratively develop and design a teacher well-being plan including stress-management techniques.
2. Generate support from senior executive and leadership staff to recognise and acknowledge challenges and ongoing hurdles.
3. Apply adaptability and adjustment skills to current and future scenarios that maybe unfolding as a result of the pandemic.
4. Where available, enlisting the support of school psychologists and counsellors who have complementary and specialist skills, to communicate their feelings.
5. Recognize and accept uncertainty and what is achievable within the current situation.
6. Being part of or establishing supportive network of colleagues and friends within local community. Online teacher support groups can be useful to help gain a shared understanding of the causes of stress and suggestions to overcome them.
7. Wider community appreciation and valuing of teachers' professional roles to student contribution.

Healthy Ways To Cope With Stress

- **Know** what to do if you are sick **and are concerned about COVID-19**. Contact a health professional before you start any self-treatment for COVID-19.

- **Know where and how to get treatment** and other support services and resources, including counseling or therapy.
- **Take care of your emotional health**. Taking care of your emotional health will help you think clearly and react to the urgent needs to protect yourself and your family.
- **Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories**, including those on social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- **Take care of your body**.
 - Take deep breaths, stretch.
 - Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
 - Exercise regularly.
 - Get plenty of sleep.
 - Avoid excessive alcohol and drug use.
- **Make time to unwind**. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- **Connect with others**. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.
- **Connect with your community- or faith-based organizations**. While social distancing measures are in place, consider connecting online, through social media, or by phone or mail.

Conclusion

Teachers make up a crucial component of the social fabric of our society. Our concern for schools and students during COVID-19 should also extend to teachers and their families. Failure to recognise and provide suitable support might leave some teachers vulnerable and unable to cope with their professional and personal demands, severely impacting their mental and physical health. Some might even be forced to re-consider leaving teaching, resulting in not just a huge loss to the profession and to students they teach, but will add to the current economic burden facing our society. So there is a very important need of being psychological well and managing stress of the teacher.

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