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Nexus between COVID-19 and Emotional Well-being of Teachers: A Position Paper

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Abstract

Since 2019, the coronavirus (COVID-19), affected global economies, resulting in a ravaging pandemic. Due to the infectious nature of the virus, schools, businesses, borders, etc., were closed to help curb the spread of the virus. Given this, world economies and governments gradually got back to normal with the manufacture and news of vaccines. Schools reopened after several months of closedown, and teachers had to find creative and innovative ways to cope with the “new normal”. Therefore, this study looks at the nexus between COVID-19 and teachers’ emotional well-being. Secondary data was used, and a conceptual framework was designed to help teachers cope with the novel coronavirus. Results showed the conceptual framework affirmed the nexus between COVID-19 and teachers’ emotional well-being. It further stipulated ways and techniques to help teachers cope with the ‘new normal.’ This resulted in the use of e-learning platforms, flip classroom, blended learning and emotional intelligence, among others, by teachers of higher educational institutions as techniques and essential skills needed in this post-pandemic era.

Keywords: coronavirus (COVID-19), emotional well-being, teachers, position paper.

1. Introduction

In 2019, the coronavirus (COVID-19) affected global economies (Bamfo et al., 2020; Sarfo, Wilson, 2020; Ansah et al., 2020; Möhring et al., 2020). Due to the infectious nature of the novel virus, restrictions were laid on personal and social lives (Bamfo et al., 2020). Also, several governments took drastic decisions such as closing down schools, businesses, and borders to help curb the spread of the novel virus. Consequently, stakeholders in the health, industrial, agriculture and educational sectors were concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on livelihoods and how well the situation could be managed. Again, as put by Gorgenyi-Hegyessy et al. (2021), most people lost their jobs, while others constantly feared job security.

Moreover, health facilities got overburdened as many people contracted the virus, especially during the second and third wave of the pandemic in 2021, thus, resulting in an imbalance in the emotional well-being of many employees. With this background, COVID-19 impacted several phases of life, including the economy, social lives and the well-being of individuals (Boohene, Amita, 2020). Conversely, normalcy is gradual even after the news of a vaccine for COVID-19.

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Presently, the traditional ways of doing business which are coming into proximity with people are gradually fading out as new ways of rendering services such as “stay-at-home”, “work-from-home”, “working on shift basis”, “e-working”, “delivery” policies have been adopted by most companies (Bamfo et al., 2020; Ansah et al., 2020; Troll et al., 2020). This new turn of doing business comes with a new kind of stress and burnout (Troll et al., 2020). This is driven by excessive tiredness coupled with blurring work-life balance, suddenly adapting to new ways of doing business. Also, societal anxieties about the lack of a clear endpoint of COVID-19 consequentially result in a decrease in the emotional well-being of employees as a result of sudden coping with the “new normal” (Bamfo et al., 2020; Kara et al., 2020; Troll et al., 2020).

Previous studies have been conducted on the novel coronavirus disease; however, few studies have delved into the service industry (Möhring et al., 2020; Agarwal, 2021), particularly in the teaching sector on the stress emanating from this pandemic, especially in schools (Klapproth et al., 2020). Therefore, this study focuses on the nexus between COVID-19 and the emotional well-being of teachers: Helping teachers cope with the “new normal”. The study develops a conceptual framework and stipulates techniques and strategies to help teachers cope better with the pandemic.

2. Results and discussion

Teachers’ Emotional Well-being during COVID-19

Teaching is one of the most stressful professions to work (de Nobile, 2017; Gonzalez et al.; 2008). Teachers are responsible for dealing with themselves and their students to enable them to perform better academically (Addai et al., 2018; Adusei et al., 2016; Sarfo, Adusei, 2015). Thus, the news of the coronavirus outbreak brought a swift shift from traditional teaching and learning to remote learning, e-learning platforms, etc. Teachers were expected to support their student’s academic work and well-being whilst adjusting to the new normal way of doing things. Besides, earlier studies have shown that societal and organisational distractions negatively affect the well-being of teachers (Addai et al., 2018; Collie et al., 2015). With this new turn of events, there is more workload on the teachers as they swiftly have to cope with new strategies and techniques to help them continue the academic session amidst the coronavirus (Beames et al., 2021; Medina-Guillen et al., 2021).

Also, teachers need socio-emotional support to face the added pressure emanating from COVID-19 as teaching and learning continue in this pandemic (Cheng, Lam, 2021; Zadok Boneh et al., 2022). It was found that job satisfaction and stress are the main reasons teaching professionals to leave or stay in that field (Adusei et al., 2016; Sarfo, Adusei, 2015). Furthermore, Day and Qing (2009) claim that many teachers work in an unfriendly environment that is detrimental to their well-being. In many countries, students have returned to classrooms, and teachers have been called upon to make this return as smooth as possible (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Some teachers, especially low- and -middle income, have also shifted to online platforms to engage their students. Previous studies have shown how teachers use remote learning, blended learning, and e-learning platforms to help cope with this stressful situation (Aperribai et al., 2020; Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021).

Techniques and Strategies to Support Teachers

Several studies (Aperribai et al., 2020; Bush, 2021; Sánchez-Pujalte et al., 2021) have enumerated the essence of helping teachers cope during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recent evidence shows that if teachers can utilise personal abilities like EI, they will be aware and in control of their emotions (Soto-Rubio et al., 2020). Essentially, EI is the ability to recognise one’s own emotions and that of others and to manage those effectively to help guide one in thinking and behaviour (Salovey, Mayer, 1990). This ability is embedded with self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2005). Again, EI will help guide teachers to manage their emotions better. As stress, anxiety, and burnout take a toll on teachers, EI will help them better manage distressing emotions (Bush, 2021).

Furthermore, Teachers can cope with the “new normal” by adopting the remote learning strategy will help teachers and students continue with the academic sessions (Boohene, Amita, 2020). This way, teachers and students can be comfortable and safe in their own space as the instructional sessions proceed. Like remote learning, e-learning platforms can be utilised to support traditional teaching methods. Blended learning, combining both online and traditional

teaching methods, can help minimise teachers' and students' health and safety risks. Also, with the flip classroom, students are made to participate in online sessions and research at home.

3. Conclusion

Our paper demonstrated the nexus between COVID-19 and the emotional well-being of teachers. We further suggested ways and techniques to help teachers cope with the 'new normal.' Governments and other education stakeholders should support teachers to cope better with the COVID-19 pandemic. Our paper has implications for future studies and teaching and learning practices within the COVID-19 pandemic.

4. Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors of the manuscript declare that there is no interest in conflict, and all reference materials were dully acknowledged.

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