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RESEARCH ARTICLE

COVID- 19 AND STRESS IN TEACHING EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

The corona virus outbreak came to light on December 31, 2019 when China informed the World Health Organization of a cluster of cases of pneumonia of an unknown cause in Wuhan City in Hubei Province. Subsequently the disease spread to more Provinces in China, and to the rest of the world and finally, World Health Organization (WHO) declared it as pandemic. The virus has been named SARS-CoV-2 and the disease is now called COVID-19. Symptoms of corona virus include, fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, sore throat and persistent pain or pressure in the chest. In extreme cases, pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome and kidney failure occurs. In few it has been found to be fatal. As a result, a panic created in the world population, when the outspread and deaths could not be controlled. COVID-19 pandemic, forced the governments to shut down not only the offices and markets but also all the educational centers like primary schools, higher secondary schools, colleges, institutes and universities to protect the students and faculty members from corona virus and community spread of the disease. This created a hurdle in face to face learning, a regular practice of education. Teachers and students were compelled to adopt Information and Communication Technology (ICT) techniques, into their teaching- learning process, as a result of lockdown and to make the efforts of continuing education, successful. Other than untrained staff, mental unpreparedness of the students, there were many technical issues in this project, the incompatible devices, slow network and remote residences caused problems in connectivity and communication issues, not only for the students but for the teachers too. Although, the institutions declared work from home for the employees, this work from home situation created psychological trifles between the employers and employees too. The employees who were quite naïve with the IT usage, online activities and record keeping of online activities, faced difficult time in compilation of data.

Objectives- This study highlights the stress faced by teaching employees due to the unexpected and unprepared changes in schedule and practices of teaching methods.

Tools- A self-structured Assessment scale of Stress Assessment was used on 72 teaching faculties who were working from home during lockdown period due to COVID- 19.

Analysis- The average and percentage of scores was calculated to assess the results. The results show that High level of stress was observed in the teaching faculties.

Conclusions- The researches concludes that such sudden changes may cause stress, anxiety and psychological disturbances. High level of stress was observed in the teaching staff due to coping mechanism. It was related to Waking and Sleep related Stress, Work duration related Stress, Rights related Stress, Insecurity related Stress, Blood pressure related Stress, Increased Risk Behavior such as smoking and drinking and Stomach related problems, high Perceived Stress and Stress Busters.

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Introduction:-

With the world engaged in a health war with one of the biggest health crises in present times, the Corona virus has brought with it, a mental pandemic as well. The unpredictability occurred due to the lockdown across the world along with the fear and anxiety of the disease that has taken a toll on mental health of a greater number of people.

Experts suggest a majority of people coming out from the lockdown showing symptoms resembling like PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder), generally associated with war. The chief victims of such mental health issues are the health care professionals and people working in other essential services (generally labeled as *Corona Warriors*) are being directly affected by the covid-19 pandemic. The symptoms of PTSD include nightmare, upsetting memories or flashbacks, being stressed, irritated and having trouble in sleeping. In a study it was found that clinically stable COVID-19 patients suffered from significant symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) linked with the COVID-19 before discharge and thus required psychological intervention(Bo et al., 2020).

We know that, "There is no health without mental health", as declared by the World Health Organization, many years ago. It is undisputed that the current Covid-19, will have long lasting consequences and effects on the mental health of all people, affecting the general population with astonishingly high ended stress.

The teaching professionals are no different. Almost all institutions of India as primary schools, higher secondary schools, university and institutes are trying to adopted advance technology including, Information and communication technology(ICT) into their teaching process nowadays, as a result of lockdown and effort in continuing education.

A review study was performed by Bhat and Beri (2016)to explore important domains like, competency, motivation, work stress and accessibility among teachers due to effective use and integration of ICT during teaching and observed the positive impacts of ICT on teachers. Study was performed to conclude which factor affects the teachers more during use of ICT and showed a comparison result among different factors(Vanderlinde et al.,2013).The primary school teachers of Greece were more interested in ICT training program to improve their skills according to modern environment(Giossi and Papastamatis, 2011). Similarly, a study was performed to compare ICT implementation in studies in Cyprus and UK and found that Cyprus teachers and students showed positive interest in ICT program (Kyriakidou et al., 1999).In contrast, a study performed among teachers of Turkish school to establish the frustrating and satisfying aspects of ICT in schools and gives the mixed results (Deryakulu et al., 2008).

Face to face lecture method and other conventional methods have been the part of teaching and learning in Indian educational system. The sudden change in education pattern put extraordinary pressure on teaching professionals and leads to imbalance both in their professional and personal life as a result of unwanted pressure, targets, ignorance and lack of computer friendliness and other correlated factors in their professional life. A review study was performed to evaluate different areas of teachers stress during teaching- learning process and how teachers successfully dealt with stress (Kyriacou Chris, 2010). The study was conducted to explore the primary school teacher's confidence and competence during use of ICT under the ICT training program. Findings suggest, it needs more involvement from teachers to achieve the goals (Schibeciet al., 2008). This study showed that a gap exists between the proposed and implemented curriculum for ICT between primary school teachers and students (Tondeur et al., 2006).

Forced use of conferences and meeting apps and online classes caused dissatisfaction while watching the screen for hours together was already considered not good for health. This increased heavy pressure on teaching professionals in India, as resources were also limited as far as the time, interests, skills and aptitude of teaching professionals are concerned. A study explored the consequences of lockdown forced upon faculties and students, due to COVID-19 in Universities'. Faculties were forced to shift from face to face learning to online learning with limited internet and computer resources available at home, both for teachers and students. As well as limited training about online learning applications/portals to teachers caused heavy stress among them and forced them to change physical examination system to online examination system minus laboratory/practical (Pradeep Sahu, 2020).

This disturbed the Work-Life Balance (WLB) and Quality of Life (QoL) too, crucial for teaching faculties to manage with highly demanding and unpredicted environment of teaching as well as new learning process today and everyday. It was observed that majority of teachers was not satisfied as far as work-life balance was concerned after use of ICT in education process (Senthikumar et al., 2012).

The present paper tries to project stress related to this unavoidable working pressure and other job related target levels of teaching professionals in maintaining the work life and mental balance.

Methods:-

Research Design:

A Cross Cultural Survey Design was adopted to assess the teaching employees' immediate psychological response during the pandemic COVID-19 by using an self-structured questionnaire using Google Form.

Sampling:

A snow-ball sampling strategy, focused on recruiting especially the teaching employees from all sectors like primary school, higher secondary school and universities, living mainly in UP-West of India during the pandemic COVID-19 was utilized. The participants were requested to assist in introducing the researcher to their faculty colleagues.

Procedure:

As the Indian government recommended the lockdown to minimize face to face interaction among public and isolate themselves at home, potential respondents were electronically invited to participate in the online introductory meeting and survey. They were requested to fill the questionnaire in English through an online survey platform "Google Form" by using Google drive, where they enrolled themselves in research and provided the data. All respondents were provided informed consent.

Tool:

A self-structured Stress Assessment Scale included questions related to possible impacts of pandemic COVID-19 outbreak and associated factors which affect the work-life of all persons, including teaching employees. This structured close-ended questionnaire was based on 5 point Likert Scale from 0(not at all) to 4(extremely). There were 17 items in the scale, finally forming nine domains i.e. 1) Waking/ Sleep related Stress 2) Work duration related Stress 3) Rights related Stress 4) Insecurity related Stress 5) Blood pressure related Stress 6) Risk Behavior such as smoking and drinking 7) Stomach related Stress 8) Perceived Stress 9) Stress Busters for Coping.

Statistical Analysis:

Mean and percentage of the symptoms and overall status was calculated using simple mathematical calculations.

Results and Discussion:-

The findings of the study clearly depicted the psychological situation of teaching employees in the present scenario. The details of the same is being mentioned below-

Table 1:- Level of Stress in Teaching Faculty.

S. No.	Domains of Stress	Mean Scores	Level of Stress (%of Subjects)		
			High (4)	Moderate (2-3)	Low (0-1)
1.	Waking/ Sleep related Stress	40	26.73	58.67	14.6
2.	Work duration related Stress	22.3	13.9	41.2	44.9

3.	Rights related Stress	39	41.7	47.2	11.1
4.	Insecurity related Stress	39	29.2	51.35	19.45
5.	Blood Pressure related Stress	43	72.2	20.9	6.9
6.	Risk Behavior(smoking& drinking)	51.5	43.0	54.9	2.1
7.	Stomach related Stress	53	37.5	62.5	0
8.	Perceived Stress	56	15.3	72.2	12.5
9.	Stress Buster	56.5	31.95	56.25	11.8

The stress was categorized in three i.e. 0-23 (Low), 24-45(Moderate), 46-68(High). Findings of study highlighted that, waking and sleep related stress was of moderate level among teaching employees who, participated in the present study.

The Overall Stress Level was found to be high, $m=49.82$ (High) during the study. Waking/ Sleep related Stress was found to be moderate ($m=40$), work duration related stress was low level in nature ($m=22.3$), rights related stress was moderate ($m=39$), insecurity in job related stress was moderate ($m=39$), blood pressure related stress was of moderate level ($m=43$), risk behavior such as smoking and drinking was found to be of high level ($m=51.5$), stress due to stomach related problem was of high level ($m=53$), perceived stress level was high ($m=56$) and use of stress buster level was high ($m=56.5$) in nature.

A research supports the results concluding that During investigation, the effects of social capital and sleep quality on quarantine people in China and found increased level of anxiety, stress and reduced sleep quality (Xiao et al., 2020).

Conclusion:-

The researches conclude that such sudden changes at workplace may cause stress, anxiety and psychological disturbances. High level of stress observed in the teaching staff was due to coping mechanism. Although it was related to Waking and Sleep related Stress, Work duration related Stress, Rights related Stress, Insecurity related Stress, Physiological Stress, increased Risk Behavior and Digestive Problems, Stress Busters and high Perceived Stress only, but many other psychological variables can be studied. It is necessary to explore gender differences too.

The World Federation for Mental Health appeals to all countries and their governments to ensure that national mental health plans are designed to manage the mental health consequences of the global corona virus health emergency (World federation of mental health, April, 2020). Infectious disease epidemics not only affect the physical health of patients but also affect the psychological health and wellbeing of the non-infected population.

Mental health is a precious commodity and a national asset and should be prioritized in the same way as physical health. Many countries of world including India are experiencing the unprecedented impact of stress because of COVID-19 outbreak at present. Good quality sleep can help improve immunity to viral infection. Therefore, mental health and sleep quality are important considerations in the population of people who have self-isolated due to their increased risk of COVID-19 infection.

This is a time of generating stress in general population due to unprecedented lock down in countries, is of grave concern and it needs to be addressed on priority basis. Further studies in future shall require addressing the issue of stress present in teaching employees during the period of corona pandemic.

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