



THE IMPACT OF POST PANDEMIC ERA IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES ON QUALITY OF WORK LIFE OF ACADEMIA

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KEYWORDS : Digitalised teaching, learning

INTRODUCTION:

The Covid 19 pandemic caused wide scale disruption in all realms of life owing to the economic and social measures to contain the virus. (Krishnamurthy, 2020) Educational institutes being one of the major areas to bear the brunt as in a matter of week's educational institutes had to undergo a sea change to evolve to an online teaching – learning scenario. (Mishra et al, 2020). Resulting in a quick and sudden transition from face to face interaction to online teaching, online assessment, online evaluation, online feedback, minuscular research, reduction in publications, drying up of research funds, job insecurity, concern about future of educational institutes to name a few. This resulted in a drastic impact on the quality of work life of academicians who have had to make several adjustments and witness sea changes in their work life. Educational institutions directed teachers to engage classes through online teaching using several virtual applications. The teachers who were not well versed with mobile applications had to struggle a lot to engage lectures via virtual mode, get used to teaching to blank screens with hardly any response. Assessments, presentations, examinations, evaluation had to be conducted virtually. Teachers had to formulate proper methodology for the same and spend endless hours in assessment.

Currently as the Pandemic ebbs and wanes and the world gets used to the 'new normal' there will be differences from pre pandemic to post pandemic in the functioning of educational institutes who have been exposed to newer and effective modes of operation not dependent only upon face to face interaction which will drastically alter the quality of work life of academicians who are the backbone of any educational Institute.

Thus the present research paper focuses upon changes in the work life of academicians post pandemic based upon **Leiden quality of work questionnaire** which covers the following aspects:

1. Skill discretion
2. Decision authority
3. Task control
4. Work & Time pressure
5. Role ambiguity
6. Physical exertion
7. Hazardous exposure
8. Job insecurity
9. Lack of meaningfulness
10. Social support from supervisors and co workers

Though some area of research is focusing on state of educational institutes in the post pandemic era not much emphasis and research on the academia has taken place as is noted in the section of literature review.

Review of Literature

Researchers and policy makers analysed the status of higher educational institutions post pandemic as many were unaware of what shape they would take post the pandemic (Erhan & Gumus 2020).

Zaitoun et al (2021) analysed lessons learnt from the

pandemic by the higher education institutes and how they planned for the post pandemic era. Results indicated that the institutes would work towards enhancing and expanding online learning provisions as they had already invested in them in a big way and there was an enhanced familiarity of the mode in teachers and students.

Ewing (2021) based on email interviews with the academia of several countries found that in post pandemic era learning would be online or blended. Online teaching would not involve only recorded lectures, traditional lectures or PowerPoints or simple online assessment but more improvised methods. Also higher educational institutes would increase digital component i.e. integration of online and face to face channels with large face to face lectures not being encouraged.

Thus a lot of research is being undertaken to predict the operational status of educational institutes but a lacunae exists on how these changes will impact the quality of work life of academia who will be the task force implementing these changes.

METHODOLOGY

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

Exploring the post covid Quality of work life of academia:

Quality of work life is a generic phase that covers a person's feeling about every dimension of work including economic rewards and benefits, security, working conditions, organizational and interpersonal relationships and its intrinsic meaning in a person's life. (Guest, R.H 1979).

It further gains significance as Quality of work life correlates with important dimensions such as job satisfaction, job commitment, job involvement, employee performance, work engagement, organizational citizenship behaviour to name a few. Thus quality of work life is very important both for the employee as well as for the organization.

Moreover as the post pandemic educational institutes will be significantly different from pre pandemic era an analysis of quality of work life of academia gains importance which is the aim of the current research paper.

Tools

A self-formulated questionnaire based upon Leiden quality of work questionnaire which measures ten major aspects of quality of work life was administered.

Sample

The sample consisted of hundred academicians from higher educational institutions.

Data Analysis

The scores for each of the variables were calculated and analysed to find out the areas of the highest and lowest impact on work life of academicians post pandemic.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Demographic Variables

Table 1: Shows the age, years of experience and gender of the sample.

AGE	EXPERIENCE IN YEARS	GENDER
25 -35 years(30)	5+	Male (50)
35-45 years(35)	10+	Female (50)
55 + years(35)	20+	

Table 2: Indicates the mean score obtained on all the variables by the entire sample.

Skill discretion	Lack of Decision authority	Lack of Task control	Work & time pressure	Role ambiguity	Physical exertion	Hazardous exposure	Job insecurity	Lack of meaningfulness	Lack of Social support from supervisors & co workers
25.6	18.2	19.5	24.3	15.90	20.2	12.2	22.8	13.2	11.4



Skill Discretion:

Skill discretion was the variable with the highest mean score. It refers to ability to use a variety of skills on the job and acquire new skills. One of the skills being used and acquired by the academia in a significant way in the current era are the digital skills. This may be because many teaching tasks that were previously done manually are now digitalized and this has revolutionised the teaching experience (Tiwari, Séraphin, & Chowdhary, 2021). Moreover the shift to remote teaching adapted during the pandemic has remained despite the COVID-19 pandemic subsiding. As a result educators have been forced to incorporate new emerging technology as part of the education experience (Wood, 2022). Thus Virtual classrooms are a new type of education experience (Harper, Chen, & Yen, 2004). They became popular during the COVID-19 pandemic due to necessity but have now become an integral part of educational experiences (Willermark & Gellerstedt, 2022). Virtual classrooms use augmented and virtual reality to bring a new perspective to students (Blaine, 2019). This enables tasks to be done in a virtual format without using real products. One of the most well-known virtual classrooms is Google classroom as it is a free to use tool that enables a virtual class to be built. This enables videos, questions and updates to be posted so that students can interact in an online environment. Thus the skill discretion of academicians is increasing as is seen in the mean scores.

Work time and pressure:

The second highest mean score was for work time and pressure. Academicians post pandemic find no demarcation between their work space and home space as a lot of work which was previously done manually has shifted to the online mode which can be done from anywhere even from home beyond working hours thereby impacting even the work family balance. Academicians are forced to complete assessment online, attend and conduct meetings online and complete administrative work online. Many times because of a dearth of space or other constraints such as colleges being the centre for board examinations, renovation work etc. online lectures are scheduled which were unheard of pre pandemic. Many universities are adopting teaching practices to make their education delivery flexible and accessible to meet student needs which can be blended or hybrid. Whilst blended learning involves some aspects of course delivery online, other approaches include the hybrid model which is a combination of online course delivery with face to face sessions (Meydanlioglu and Arikan, 2014)

Job Insecurity:

The third highest mean was for job insecurity as a large number of educational institutions have discovered the online method of imparting education lessening the need for face to face interaction and more reliance on self-paced learning via recorded videos and lectures. The benefit of virtual classrooms is that there is no need for physical spaces and room bookings, which means they can occur at any time or geographical location (Neuwirth, Jović, & Mukherji, 2021). Virtual classes mean that written resources or links to websites can be incorporated then updated in a real time format (Swan et al., 2000). Thereby enabling the use of social media and other interactive technology. Though it has its advantages at times it could jeopardise the job of an academician as there is limited requirement for face to face interaction and lectures and assessment can be done with help of fewer faculty. Also because of economic losses and fear of infection more students are opting for virtual modes of education thereby reducing the enrolment in educational institutes.

Physical Exertion:

The fourth highest mean is for physical exertion as post pandemic academicians have to cater to both online and offline teaching and assessment methods, academic work and meetings. This has led to more screen time which has impacted eye sight and musculoskeletal disorders within the academia. Many times they need to carry their lap tops in crowded public transport to the educational institutes further aggravating the problem of physical exertion.

Lack Of Task Control:

The fifth highest mean was for lack of task control. This is because in pre covid time academicians were given the liberty of autonomous lecture plans and a fixed and preplanned time line per semester. But now due to hybrid or blended methodology of imparting education and assessment the task control is lacking as many times the schedule for the entire institution is decided by the authorities preventing personal autonomy and scheduling.

Lack Of Decision Authority:

The sixth highest mean was for lack of decision authority as lack of task control and decision authority go hand in hand. Though in few areas of work decision rests in the hands of the academicians since online methods of working are planned for the entire institution the decision authority of academicians is reduced.

Role Ambiguity:

The seventh highest mean was for role ambiguity. This may be because of digitalisation of several aspects and newer ways of functioning there can be occasions where academicians are not sure of their duties and responsibilities. The other variables such as lack of meaningfulness, hazardous exposure and lack of social support were not much impacted in the post covid era.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic has greatly altered the quality of work of the academia which might never be the same again. The newer generation entering the work force as academia will face several alterations and challenges in their quality of work life. The age group number of years of experience and maybe the gender will also play a role in determining the impact on the above variables which further research can explore.

Significance & Findings

Policy makers and the management of educational institutes will greatly benefit from the study as will become aware of the predicted quality of work life of academia post pandemic and can accordingly make amends for a better work life for their human resources.