



PERCEIVED STRESS IN COLLEGE TEACHERS DURING ONLINE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT During this sudden shift from traditional teaching and unannounced change of responsibilities, teachers have seen a surge of conflict due to pressure to perform at the best level. This paper highlights key intrinsic social factors contributing to perceived stress among college teachers during online teaching.

Gender and perceived stress were strongly correlated, with most teachers showing high stress levels ($n = 78$, $r = 0.111^{**}$). Sleep and perceived stress were inversely correlated, which shows that higher levels of stress lead to fewer sleeping hours in teachers ($n = 98$, $r = 0.05$). Lack of irregular exercise is negatively correlated with perceived stress, showing high stress in teachers who were not regularly exercising ($r = -0.05^{**}$). Social support is correlated with perceived stress, which means support from family and friends adds to teachers feeling stressed while teaching online ($r = 0.13^{**}$). Lastly, workplace support was inversely correlated with perceived stress, showing that lower technical and professional aid from the university added pressure on teachers ($r = -0.01^{**}$).

KEYWORDS : Perceived stress, self-awareness, college teachers, online teaching, problem solving.

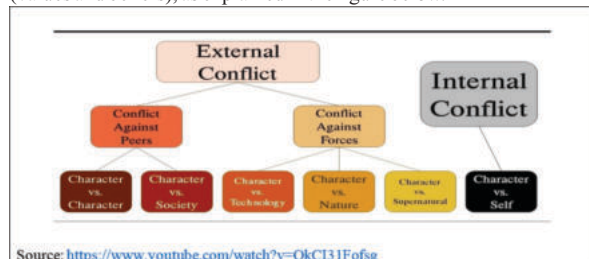
INTRODUCTION

Conflict is a negative human interaction that creates animosity and unease. We all go through periods of internal as well as external clashes, which at times are distressing. But to look for a flow in relationships, we must accept our shortcomings as well as those of others and work towards reconnections.

Conflicts commonly occur when there are clashes of values, and resolution of the same at that heated moment becomes challenging. Grey and Stark (1986) explain conflict as a concept that can affect the relations and experiences of people as social entities during their interaction with the public, either positively or negatively.

Conflict develops between people as well as within oneself. It is important to note that in a conflict, we feel vulnerable cognitively (thoughts) before the behaviour (actions). Thus, looking for intrapersonal conflicting triggers becomes equally important in resolution.

Broadly speaking, conflict is both external (environment) and internal (values and beliefs), as explained in the figure below.



External conflict arises from people with whom we collaborate, like peers, seniors, or neighbours, having a tough time adapting to technical changes, global warming, pandemics, and supernatural forces. Internal conflict arises from self-doubt, past experiences, traumas, fear of rejection, abandonment, and insult.

People harness negative attitudes towards people where they work as colleagues or anyone in hierarchy, leading to resentments and gossip.

Conflicts are events that occur because of problems in teams in which individuals or groups have difficulty working together, thus leading things to a standstill or simply leading to chaos (Eren, 1984).

While we address conflict, it is important to focus on how we individuals resolve it to return to homeostasis, as being in a constant state of stress leads to anxiety. At work or in personal commitments, being in a state of conflict can disturb the rational flow of ideas. However, resolution of that conflict helps us recover from a temporary state of anxiety and restlessness.

An understanding of the reasons for and nature of the conflicts is necessary for proper conflict management and to fight effectively against these conflicts (Türnükli, 2004).

Wu S-Y (2021) explains that since 1990, Internet-based distance teaching has become a global trend, and software, hardware, and educational training have been evolving. Words like e-learning, such as online learning, distance teaching, digital learning, mobile learning, and recent massive open online courses (MOOCs), have shown a trend of learning via the Internet. However, despite active promotion by governments, there are still many limitations to the online educational environment from teaching and learning perspectives (Meskhi et al., 2019; Sadeghi, 2019), such as the support of the administrative system, the establishment of a network bandwidth, and teachers' willingness to record e-learning materials. Since the first report of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Wuhan (China) in December 2019, COVID-19 has rapidly spread worldwide (Zhu et al., 2020). The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared a public health emergency of international concern on January 30, 2020, and named the disease COVID-19 on February 11, 2020. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (Singhal, 2020; World Health Organisation, 2020).

With the sudden surge in respiratory cases and strict vigilance on social distancing, curtailing all face-to-face interactions is forcing changes in all streams of work, especially teaching. All over the world, schools and colleges had to adapt without any prior training, putting strain on teachers to continue supplying education to students, something known as *emergency remote education*. In response to COVID-19, educational institutions needed an immediate shift towards online education, which was seen as both an opportunity and a challenge (Toquero, 2020).

With teachers adjusting to these sudden changes, students became nonresponsive and careless (from keeping cameras off to late submissions) under the concern of network issues and social isolation. Teachers could feel they were losing that firm grip they once had in class and had concerns with the delivery of lectures due to increased absenteeism. Students equally suffered setbacks with respect to a lack of privacy at home and a lack of concept clarity during online classes.

The main barriers to learning were the number of participants and technical failures during class conversations. Owusu-Fordjour et al. (2020) investigated online learning among college students and found that the pandemic had a negative effect on their learning because students were not comfortable with learning effectively on their own.

Noticing drastic changes in their curriculum and method of teaching, teachers had to face complaints from parents, pressure from seniors, and internal conflict in confirming themselves as effective teachers.

The Objective Of This Research

The author was hoping that college teachers would find online teaching easy during lockdowns; however, there were poor outcomes for online learning, with 80% of teachers reporting that they felt dissatisfied with online education. The context of the present study is to analyse the role of conflict resolution for teachers who had to take online classes and handheld students who were as new as them during online classes.

Methodology

This study analyses perceived stress and conflict resolution for college

teachers during online teaching. For the same, we used convenience sampling to collect quantitative as well as qualitative data with the help of a web-based questionnaire and a perceived stress questionnaire (PSQ) by Levenstein et al. (1993). After filling in their details, we discussed conflict resolution while online teaching—their triggers and solutions. A total of 164 college teachers took part in this research.

Tool Used.

The PSQ consists of thirty items for assessing stressful life events and circumstances that tend to trigger or worsen disease symptoms. With stress bearing significantly on the quality and consistency of the sleep cycle, the PSQ is a potentially valuable tool for evaluating the underlying causes of sleep disturbances.

Administration

The scale is a self-reported, web-based survey requiring between 10 and 15 minutes for completion.

Reliability And Validity

Developers Levenstein and colleagues conducted a psychometric evaluation of the scale and found an internal consistency ranging from 90 to 92 and a test-retest reliability of .82. Results of the PSQ correlated highly with trait anxiety and with scores on Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale.

Scoring

Respondents choose on a scale from 1 ("almost never") to 4 ("usually") how often they experience certain stress-related feelings. Higher scores show greater levels of stress. We calculate the total score by reversing the scoring for questions 1, 7, 10, 13, 17, 21, 25, and 29. We convert the raw score to the sten score by subtracting 30 from the raw score and dividing the result by 90, yielding a score between 0 and 1. The resulting score ranges from 0 (the lowest level of perceived stress) to 1 (the highest level of perceived stress). Cut-off values for levels of stress are: <0.34 (low stress), 0.34–0.46 (moderate stress), and >0.46 (high stress). 0.46 (high stress).

Research Questions

Hypothesis 1: Gender would affect perceived stress in teachers.
Hypothesis 2: Sleep pattern can affect levels of stress in teachers.
Hypothesis 3: Exercise contributes to conflict resolution in stressful situations.
Hypothesis 4: Comfort from family and friends may resolve conflicts during stressful times.
Hypothesis 5: Teachers felt less stressed when supported by seniors and colleagues at work.

RESULTS

In the present study, we took socio-demographic variables as independent variables and Perceived stress score as dependent variable to analyze factors that can be trigger conflict as well as variables those can bring about resolving conflict. Table 1 shows calculated Arithmetic Mean and SD as follows.

Table 1: Mean Of Socio-demographic Variables In The Study

S. No	Variables in the study	N	Mean	SD
1	Gender	164	1.6098	0.50
2	Sleep	164	2.122	0.62
3	Exercise in a week	164	2.9512	1.04
4	Social support	164	3.7378	0.61
5	Workplace Support	164	2.7561	0.45
6	PSQ Index	164	2.3354	0.71

Our sample had more women (n = 98) as compared to males (n = 65) teaching as college faculties. As reported, most participants sleep between 5-7 hours every night (n = 98, 60%). They were exercising daily (at least 5 days in a week) to manage stress (n = 65, 40%). They felt a powerful base of friends and family in their lives (n = 80%). Participants felt that during challenging times where they had to teach online, their workplace support helped them transition from physical to online teaching comfortably (n = 126, 77%). Our sample recorded elevated levels of stress while teaching online (n = 78, 46%).

Next, we did a correlation between variables to see their impact on perceived stress scores in college teachers, as shown in Table 2.

Table2: Correlation Analysis Between Variables Considered In

The Study.

Correlation	Gender	Sleep	Exercise in a week	Social support	Workplace Support	PSQ Index
Gender	-	-0.27896**	-0.27843**	-0.08081 NS	-0.13992 NS	0.111**
Sleep		-	0.10849 NS	0.17829 **	0.1998**	-0.05**
Exercise in a week			-	0.22014 **	0.08556 NS	-0.05**
Social support				-	0.01921 NS	0.13**
Workplace Support					-	-0.01**
PSQ Index						-

**p(2-tailed) = 0.00

The above table shows that both gender and perceived stress were strongly correlated with teachers showing high stress levels (n = 78, r = 0.111**). Sleep and perceived stress were inversely correlated, which shows that higher levels of stress lead to fewer sleeping hours in teachers (n = 98, r = 0.05). Lack of regular exercise negatively correlated with perceived stress, showing high stress in teachers who were not regularly exercising (r = 0.05**). Social support correlated with perceived stress, which meant support from family and friends added to teachers feeling stressed while teaching online (r = 0.13**). Lastly, workplace support was inversely correlated with perceived stress, showing that lower technical and professional aid from the university added pressure on teachers (r = 0.01**).

Correlation analysis reflects an inverse relationship between sleep and gender, i.e., women get less sleep as compared to men in the sample (r = 0.27**). There is an inverse relationship between gender and exercise per week, i.e., men get more exercise in a week as compared to women (r = 0.26**). Gender and social support to resolve conflict (r = 0.07**).

There is a positive correlation between longer sleep hours and social support (r = 0.21**). Analysis showed a positive correlation between exercise taken per week and the encouragement one gets from home (r = 0.13**).

Next, we used a paired t-test between socio-demographic variables and perceived stress in teachers to evaluate research questions in the sample, as shown in the following table 3.

Table 3: Paired T-test Between Socio-demographic Variables And Perceived Stress In Teachers

Variables	Paired-t-test with Perceived Stress
Gender	11.278162**
Sleep	2.816065*
Exercise in a week	-6.074155**
Social support	0.917219 NS
Workplace support	-6.333388**

** The result is significant at p < .01 *p < .05

We used paired t-tests on our dependent variables (socio-demographic variables) and perceived stress (an independent variable) to analyse our data.

As clearly said in Table 3, there is a significant t-test value between gender and perceived stress, explaining that women reported higher stress as compared to men in the sample. Thus, we accept *Hypothesis 1*, which says that gender would affect perceived stress in teachers.

Next, we examined hours of sleep at night with stress, and results show bidirectionality between fewer hours of sleep and perceived stress. This means stress can cause sleeplessness, and a lack of good sleep can increase stress in teachers. Hence, we accept *Hypothesis 2*, which says that sleep patterns at night can affect the level of stress in teachers.

Our third variable in the study was physical exercise (activity) taken in a week with perceived stress. Results show less time spent on physical activity increases stress levels in teachers. This analysis helps us accept *Hypothesis 3*, which states that exercise contributes to conflict resolution while undergoing stressful situations.

The fourth hypothesis was social support and perceived stress, and a

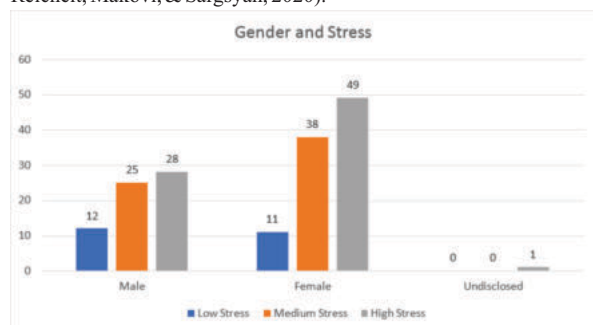
paired t-test showed no significance between better social relations and a reduced feeling of stress in teachers. Thus, reject Hypothesis 4, which says that comfort from family and friends resolves conflict during stressful times.

Lastly, we took work support and paired it with perceived stress for analysis. Results showed an inverse relationship, which said less support at work results in higher perceived stress in teachers. Hence, we accept *Hypothesis 5*, which says that teachers feel less stressed when supported by seniors and colleagues at work.

DISCUSSION

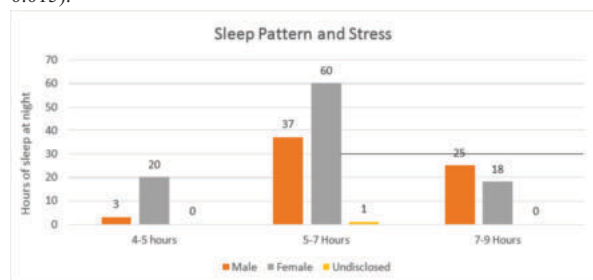
Gender And Stress

Our analysis found that female teachers have higher perceived stress as compared to male teachers, supporting results by Avci, A., Bozgeyikli, H., and Kesici, S. (2017) that concluded that the perceived stress levels of female teachers were significantly higher than those of male teachers. Our analysis found female teachers have higher perceived stress as compared to male teachers, supporting the finding that closures of schools and childcare services increased caregiving obligations, with women assuming more of the care responsibilities than men (Darmody, Smyth, & Russell, 2020; Moore et al., 2020; Reichelt, Makovi, & Sargsyan, 2020).

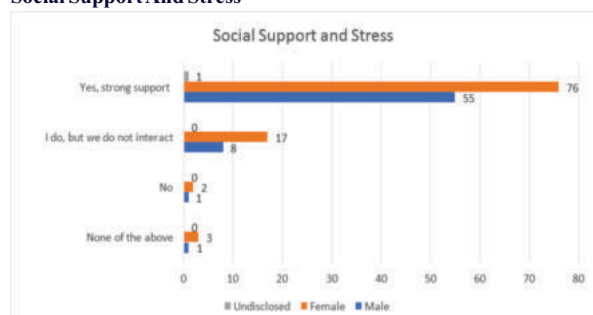


Sleep pattern and stress

Teachers in our research showed female teachers perceiving high stress due to a lack of effective sleep patterns ($r = -0.27896^{**}$) at night as compared to men. This result supports Do Valle et al. (2013), whose findings revealed that 59% of the teachers were stressed, and many of them were under the prevalence of psychological stress. Moreover, they showed that 46.7% of the teachers sleep badly, pointing out an undeniable association between sleep and both physical and psychological stress. Women, as the prevailing subgroup of the studied population (88.5%), presented more physical stress than men ($p = 0.015$).



Social Support And Stress



Analysis showed a positive relationship with social support and higher perceived stress in teachers. Our findings were confirmed by Alnazly, E. (2021), where the participants felt that they received high social support but also showed higher psychological distress.

As well, Moeller, C., and Chung-Yan, G. A. (2013) support the hypotheses that the effects of occupational stressors on professors' psychological well-being vary depending on the level of perceived workplace social support.

However, although workplace social support buffered the effects of occupational stressors (i.e., work overload), social support worsened the adverse effects of others (i.e., decision-making ambiguity).

CONCLUSION

Research findings suggest that perceived stress is different with respect to gender. Women perceive more stress as they have less time to do any physical exercise to calm themselves. Social support guides through conflicts, as a lack of technical support and guidance from the workplace (college) increases perceived stress in teachers. In teachers (especially females), poor sleep patterns and a lack of exercise have been shown to increase their perceived stress levels.

Better social relations and workplace support enhanced better coping skills. Few participants reported a better sleep routine, were conscious of their exercise routine, and had better personal and professional relationships. Encouragement from family and inspiration from friends helped participants exercise (at least five days a week) to manage conflicting situations.

Lastly, relations with colleagues and seniors, technical support, and a strong family connection to fall back were protective factors against perceived stress in teachers during online teaching.

Limitations And Recommendations

This study took samples from only one college and would recommend further analysing data from government and private colleges as well as from different universities for a comparative study. It is recommended to include personality when looking at conflict resolution.

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