Teachers' Mental Well-being in Post-pandemic era: A study of selected districts in Jharkhand

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Abstract

The pandemic, Covid-19 has been challenging for every individual around the world. The teachers were also among drastically affected in terms of their increased professional demands owing to the pandemic. Teachers and learners in Jharkhand faced a mental health crisis because of the vast technical gap.

This paper presents a longitudinal qualitative enquiry among teachers from 24 schools in Jharkhand, related to their mental well-being post the Covid-19 pandemic. The study is expected to contribute to the urgently required interference from the side of policy makers and educators, so that the teachers receive much needed support in balancing their personal wellness and their professional duties.

Keywords: *Pandemic, Jharkhand, Mental health, Teachers, Social support*

INTRODUCTION

Many nations have been facing a high attrition among the teachers (Carver-Thomas & Darling-Hammond, 2019; Den Brok, Wubbels & Van Tartwijk, 2017; Jain, 2013; Xaba, 2003). Post the Covid-19 pandemic, they have been found to be struggling with lack of the required technical assistance as well as an increase in their job demands (Aldeman, Goldhaber & Theobold, 2021; Goldhaber & Theobald, 2022; Rapanta, et al., 2021). There have been cases of severe damage to their mental health and wellness owing to the reason. The reports show teachers leaving the education workforce (McKinsey, 2022; UDISE, 2022), which is bad for the financial health as well as reputation of the educational institutions.

Most of the studies done to assess how the pandemic has affected the education system, have predominantly dealt with its impact on the mental health of the students (Deb, et al., 2022; Harjule, Rahman, & Agarwal, 2021; Khattar, Jain, & Quadri, 2020; Mahapatra & Sharma, 2021)). There are not many reliable narratives available for its negative impact on the mental well-being of the teachers, except a few (Kumawat, 2020; Nataraj & Reddy, 2021), specifically in context of Jharkhand. Looking at the role that our teachers play in shaping the country's future generation, it becomes our duty to understand their emotional health needs, and work around supporting the same. Jharkhand was already witnessing lower levels of retention among the teachers (Preeti, et al., 2022); and post the pandemic, this level has further lowered.

The present longitudinal study is a qualitative research into the issue of mental wellness among the teachers in primary and secondary schools of Jharkhand, across three points of time in 2020 and 2021.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Covid-19 has affected the life of every individual in some way or the other. The lives of teachers too have become tougher in the past two years, because of the unexpected changes brought about in the world by the pandemic (Dayal, 2023). A nationwide lockdown was first announced on March 24, 2020, by the Government of India with an objective to curb the rising cases of the infection. Since the date and till December, 2021, the country was brought under full or partial lockdown for more than six times; as it battled the first, second and the third wave of the deadly coronavirus attack (Covid Lock Down, 2022). Accordingly, the schools were also implementing the regulations within the limits of

last-minute decisions from the side of the government. Jharkhand government announced shutting down of all the schools, first along the same lines as the nationwide lockdown, then next on January 04, 2022 for 12 days.

When the schools were closed and even after they were being reopened in a graded way, it was required from teachers that they quickly adapt to new technologies of teaching so that children could continuously receive education (PTI, 2022). To begin with, adapting to the new methods of teaching online was quite a task for the educators and the school management. It led to lots of confusion and desperation (Dayal, 2023; Kumawat, 2020). Gradually as this adaptation continued, they became more familiar with the technical nitty gritties of online tools for teaching, the feeling transformed to a sense of euphoria, accomplishment and tears of joy. Teachers worked over time, preparing for classroom teaching and preparing materials to send to the students through online mode. Lack of access to relevant gadgets and reliable network connection were major obstacles for the teachers and the students. A very small percentage of children in the state had an access to good network connectivity and relevant gadgets for continuing with online education (Pandit & Agrawal, 2022; Singh, Gupta, & Yadav, 2023;). Yet the educators were not disheartened. They worked with more zeal and a stronger sense of responsibility towards the community (Hassan, Mirza, & Hussain, 2020; Kamal & Illiyan, 2021).

The work environment had changed drastically after the coronavirus outbreak. The professionals were having a tough time balancing their professional and domestic duties (Alifuddin & Ibrahim, 2021; Jaiswal & Arun, 2020; Singh, Kumar & Ahmad, 2020). Teachers across the world, were living under the same struggle as other professionals employed in other sectors (Gupta & Goplani, 2020). The pandemic had created great fear in their minds. Lack of support from the administrative department was worse for the mental health of teachers (Sethi & Saini, 2020, Sudibjo, & Manihuruk, 2022; Villamarin & Pineda, 2022). There were reports of depression, burnout, anxiety, stress, among teachers (Bhat, et al., 2020). These make it a necessity to explore the area of challenges which teachers in Jharkhand had to face post the pandemic period with reference to their mental health.

Some reports pertaining to the area of this study have suggested that teachers were facing fluctuating levels of stress in their careers during the time (Kumar, 2021). Their roles had changed. They were struggling with lack of resources, lack of technical know-how, lack of support from the school administration, extended working hours which had seeped into their personal and family time, etc. The figures showing the stress levels are also pointing towards the poor mental health of teachers (Hossain, et al., 2022; Spalding, 2023).

The teachers' feelings saw different sides along the different stages of the pandemic. That is why, a longitudinal study was expected to derive a clearer understanding of the situation and a way out of it. Bakker & Demerouti (2007) gave JD-R research model (Job Demands-Resources research model). In this study the researchers draw upon the same. According to the model, mental health and well-being is parallelly affected by two processes. One of the two processes is termed as Job demands. The other process is called Job resources. Job demands are the factors related to a particular job which have a physical or a psychological cost related for the person. These include performance evaluation, work load, and role conflict. Job resources are those factors related to the job which act as buffer for the job demands effect. These include autonomy at work and social support. These cater to a person's needs of achievement and growth. Therefore, the JD-R Model for studying the mental well-being of teachers in selected districts of Jharkhand through a longitudinal qualitative study in 2022, is being used in the present study.

In the JD-R framework, it can be seen that a prominent example of job demand here, is workload, and social support is an important job resource. One simple method of quantifying workload can be the number of working hours. High workload is the main contributor of turnover among the workforce. However, when job demands negatively affect mental well-being the presence of job resources is helpful (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005). In cases like these, social support received by teachers from each other is also considered to be quite beneficial (Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). During the pandemic, teachers were engaged in a work from home arrangement, which had its own positive and negative effects. Getting and giving social support to each other in various ways proved to be a much appreciated job resource. Hence, it feels important to understand what job demands the teachers were burdened with, which job resources were beneficial and how their work is affected by the presence or absence of any of these.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Following are the objectives for the present study:-

i)   To study the patterns followed by the mental well-being of teachers in select districts of Jharkhand during the Covid-19 pandemic;

ii)   To investigate the job demands and resources which have influenced the mental well-being of teachers in selected districts of Jharkhand during the coronavirus infection;

iii)   To find out if the experience of the school management staff and that of the teachers were different or same.

METHODOLOGY

The sample of the current study included 24 school teachers in the selected districts of Jharkhand. Out of these, there were 11 primary teachers and 13 secondary teachers. The sample was made up of 18 female teachers, and there were 6 male teachers. The teaching experience possessed by them was between 1 to 32 years. The mean of the experience was equal to 12.55; and the standard deviation was equal to 8.94. The respondents were divided in sets on the basis of their functional area, and level of employment at school.

The interviews were semi-structured where the same researchers were interviewing all the participants over Zoom video calls. This was done for four times in all. Three of those that have been included here in the current study are:- Point I (P1): Between April and May, 2020; Point II (P2): Between July and August, 2020; and Point III (P3): February and March, 2021.

Care was taken by the researchers to keep the phrasing of the interviews as simple and precise, and the respondents were not interrupted during the time that they answered. They were encouraged to speak and discuss their mental well-being issues cropping up during the pandemic, and specifically about the issues which were faced by them only because of their profession. A typical question asked was: "Being a teacher by profession, what mental health issues were faced by you during the pandemic because your professional assignments?" In the next round of interviews, apart from other questions, the respondents were also asked: "Do you think your mental health has improved or worsened now as compared to the first time that we talked?", "What could be the reason for this change or no change all along this time?"

ANALYSIS

Zoom app has a feature for transcribing any video or audio. This was how the interviews were worded. The researchers conducted anonymization and editing with respect to the audio recordings. The task of reading the collected data multiple times was assigned to one of the researchers. Initial code generation for the same. The codes were assigned to the respective sections. The team of the researchers took care to indulge in exhaustive and repeat discussions while modifying and reapplying the codes and the framework before finalizing the whole thing. Past literature frameworks were referred to in case of any disagreement in the codes or the analyses.

At all three points of time of the interviews, i.e. P1, P2 and P3, the respondents were required to answer a question which was about whether they had felt any change in their mental health along the time beginning from the pre-pandemic era to the three points of them being interviewed, i.e. between Pre-pandemic and Point P1 (pre-pandemic Vs P1), Between points of time P1 and P2 (P1 Vs P2), and points P2 and P3 (P2 Vs P3). The change could be: No Change, Positive change, or Negative change. The score for 'No change' was 0, for 'Positive change' was +1, and for 'Negative change' was -1. Across the three points of time, a cumulative score was calculated for every single respondent. The possible range of this was between -3 and +3. As an example, if at all the three points of interview, a respondent answered the question with 'Positive change', then by P3, the cumulative score for the person for the question would be +3. Mental well-being trajectory for every set of respondents was visually represented after calculating the average score for respondents in each set.

Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach given by Braun and Clark (2013), was utilised in exploring the other responses related to rest of the questions. Here, the responses had to undergo both the inductive coding and deductive coding as per the JD-R Model.

The interview responses pointed at two themes. On the same lines as given in the JD-R model, one theme is Job demands. The other theme is Job resources. Job demands included those factors which made the mental health worse, and Job resources included the factors which strengthened the mental robustness of the participants. The generated codes were divided into these two themes. Steps were followed to bring out thematic patterns which were common across the participant sets. How the responses had changed for each participant and the set that they belonged to, was also found out.

Figure 1. Teachers' mental well-being changes and Points of time
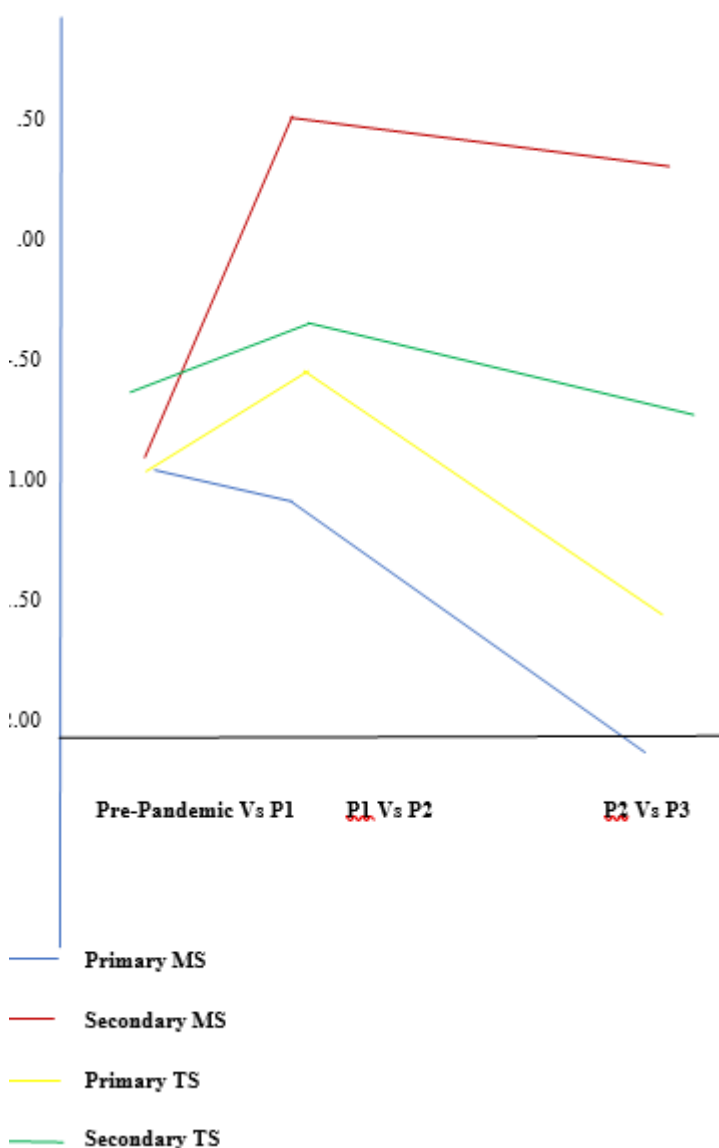
RESULTS

Study period and sample

The study explored the shift in the mental well-being of teachers across three points of time in 2020 and 2021. The special focus was on job demands and job resources related to the shift.

Figure 1 expresses how the mental well-being of teachers shifted across the three points of time as mentioned. The respondents were divided into four sets: Primary MS (Primary Management Staff), Primary TS (Primary Teaching Staff), Secondary MS (Secondary Management Staff), and Secondary TS (Secondary Teaching Staff).

The graph clearly provides the information about a negative change faced by the sets at P2 and P3. However, at P1 and P2, an interesting observation can be made through the figure that except the Primary MS, all the other three sets answered in positive about their mental health situation at P1 and P3. This indicate that there was social support available to the teachers in many ways at P3. P3 was also a time when the workload of the teachers had increased because they had to take classes in combined modes of online and offline teaching. Thus, it is interesting to study the play of the job demands and job resources during this time.

The set Secondary MS had showed a unique shift in their mental health situation between P1 and P2. All the respondents in this set had answered in positive about the mental well-being questions in their interviews held at P1 and P2, i.e. they were unique among the four sets in terms of the overall negative impact of the pandemic on them. They disclosed that compared to P1, they were less anxious at P3. They had become comfortable with the new normal and had arrived at a routine in their professional assignments.

At present, two themes had been recognised in the data. One of them is job demands, and the other is, job resources. There were six factors which were found to contribute to worsening of teachers' mental well-being. The factors are: health issues, workload, caring for others' wellness, uncertain environment, varied roles, and negative reputation about the profession. There were three job resources found to be impacting the mental well-being of the teachers positively. These are: job autonomy, social support and surviving strategies.

Table 1 depicts the shift in the teachers' mental well-being over time across the four sets of teachers and staff. The data collected showed that the pandemic was generally tough to deal with, for the respondents' mental well-being.

One of the participants, Respondent 15 (Secondary MS, female, P2) said, 'The situation has been totally unstable, moving fast and at random between positive and negative, negative to positive'.

Job Demands

Out of the six job demands, a few were more prominent in their impact. For example, almost all the participants talked about the uncertain environment as a factor for their stress. The Primary TS was the only set which was perturbed by the varied roles they had to play while teaching during the pandemic. Workload was found to be highly impactful at P2 and P3.

Given below are the job demands (presented in a descending order of how these influence the mental well-being of the participants):-

Uncertain environment

Uncertain environment was agreed upon as a powerful factor affecting their mental health during the pandemic, by all the four sets of respondents, at all points of time.

Respondent 16 (Secondary TS, Female, P1), during the interview at P1 said, 'Nothing was seeming to be real. It felt as if we are in a story. I felt and was always feeling anxious and could not think sanely.'
Another one, Respondent 13 (Primary TS, Female, P2), said, 'We had no idea what we were fighting with, and how bad the situation could be. It was mentally taxing to acknowledge that I did not know what exactly we were saving ourselves from since the variants kept on changing, with new symptoms.'

Respondent 4 (Primary TS, Female, P2) was baffled by the frequent changes in the regulations floated by the government, and said, 'Everyone is confused about how to move next. Preparing for our own role as well as communicating the same and preparing others for the same was quite hectic.'

At the point P1, it was seen that a few secondary TSs empathised with the government's decisions. However, by the point P3, almost all of the participants were found frustrated at the continuous changes introduced by the government.
According to Respondent 23 (Secondary TS, Female, P3), 'the Government has not felt any need to consult the teaching community regarding how the situation at schools can be dealt with and has continuously being taking last-minute decisions which we have to implement without proper guidance'.

Hence, the uncertain environment and the uncertainty of decisions by the government created a stressful situation for the teachers, and they were not able to plan their work well. At all the points of time, during interviews, the participants were seen to be frustrated over the factor.

Workload

Every set of the participants agreed over the increased workload as a baffling factor for their mental health. Initially though they were getting some time at hand but as the pandemic became huge, the workload of the teachers increased manifold.

According to Respondent 11 (Primary TS, Female, P1), 'Checking the students' work online is easier and less time taking'.
Respondent 16 (Secondary TS, Female, P3) said, 'The workload was less in the beginning when the schools were shut down, but gradually we are overburdened with more and more work each day'.

At P3, the classes were taken as a combination of online and offline teaching since all the parents had not agreed to send their wards to school, and the primary sections were still having online classes. In between every offline period, the classrooms had to be sanitized, and other guidelines had to be maintained. This caused more stress to the management staff as well as the teaching staff.

Respondent 10 (Secondary TS, Female, P3) said, 'Along with taking classes, we had to follow the corona guidelines diligently, and this caused additional pressure'.

Respondent 21 (Secondary TS, Male, P3) said, 'We take classes in different classrooms. In between two periods, everything is required to be sanitised. Even personally, we prepare ourselves to prevent us or others from getting infected. The mind is so full of do's and dont's that it is overwhelmed and heavy'.

Some of the teachers did not feel that there was any increase in the workload because being a teacher was anyway hectic.

Respondent 2 (Primary MS, Female, P1) said, 'A teacher's job is always tedious. They are used to working amidst frequent changes in the management guidelines'.

Respondent 1 (Primary MS, Female, P2) said, 'Even if we feel burdened, we cannot think of not doing our jobs. We have to be prepared for whatever comes next'.

A few teachers did not feel that there was an increase in their workload. But, they were stressed because the non-stop work exhausted them.
According to Respondent 16 (Secondary TS, Female, P3), 'I am always thinking about the next task in hand. The brain is working overtime.'
 According to Respondent 20 (Secondary TS, Female, P3), 'Our duties have increased manifold. I am drained.'
According to Respondent 4 (Primary MS, Female, P2), 'We are physically, psychologically and emotionally worn out'.

As more participants talked about exhaustion and fatigue, the indication was possibility of burnout among the teachers.

Negative reputation about the profession

Most of the respondents felt that there were negative talks about their professional sincerity doing the rounds. They felt undervalued even though they were putting in so much effort.

Respondent 4 (Primary MS, Female, P3) said, 'While the whole world is talking about how the pandemic has affected people in general, students, economy, etc., nobody seems to be bothered about the teachers' issues.

Respondent 9 (Secondary MS, Male, P1) said, 'Can you imagine how we are being mocked at, that we are getting paid for doing nothing, and here we are preparing study materials for children, struggling with multiple roles, working 24 hours a day for our schools'.

Respondent 8 (Secondary MS, Male, P2) said, 'The negative perception is heart breaking.'

Respondent 10 (Primary TS, Female, P3) said, 'On one hand, we are slogging day and night to finish our work which is increasing, and on the other hand, we are being branded as good for nothing since we are working from home teaching your kids!'

Respondent 17 (Secondary TS, Female, P4) said, 'People on social media are saying anything and everything negative about teachers. Who gave them the liberty to do so? It is so toxic to read these things that I have removed my account from many social media platforms'.

Caring for others' wellness

Other noticeable observation was that across all the points of time, all the participants showed care for each other's wellness.

According to Respondent 6 (Secondary MS, Female, P3), 'When I see staff overburdened yet moving ahead with all their work, I immediately feel bad about their mental well-being'.

Those in the school management did want to make the things easier for the teaching staff but were themselves bound with their own tasks.
As Respondent 1 (Primary MS, Female, P3) said, 'We are not well-equipped to assist others and make the situation easier for other teachers, and this is distressing'.

Respondent 3 (Primary MS, Female, P3) said, 'Though I try to be more sensitive towards the issues of other staff, it makes my job tougher; so I have to choose'.

Respondent 20 (Secondary TS, Female, P1) said, 'Working from home is more stressful for teachers who have kids to look after, they simply cannot concentrate'.

It was found that those employed as the school management staff were more vocal about their care for others' mental well-being.

Health issues

The participants who had been suffering from health issues before the pandemic struck were found to be more prone to health issues during the pandemic.

Respondent 15 (Primary TS, Female, P1) said, 'I have suffered from mental health struggles earlier, and this pandemic is giving me a difficult time in keeping myself composed'.

Some teachers who had been ill in the past were actually better at coping with the health fears posed by the pandemic since they were aware of the survival strategies that could be employed'.

Respondent 22 (Secondary TS, Female, P1) said, 'I have been ill in the past. This time, I feel that I am stronger and better equipped at handling the stress'.

A few teachers were constantly feeling ill and giddy more because of the health scare than the actual effect of the pandemic.

Respondent 23 (Secondary TS, Female, P3) said, 'Since the lockdown, I am suffering from cold and cough issues which does not seem to get well. This is actually how my body reacts if I am highly stressed'.

Varied roles

The job demand of varied roles was giving the teachers a tough time. Mostly those in primary sections faced more difficulties.

Respondent 11 (Primary TS, Female, P2) said, 'The burden on parents has increased since now they have to help their kids with school assignments. The parents are pissed off with us. On the other hand, we are constantly working hard to adhere to the changing guidelines from the school management. We have to bear the brunt from both the sides'.

During the interviews taken at P1, this factor did not come up as a job demand. Later at P2 and P3, as the workload of teachers saw an increase, this factor was talked about by the respondents as a negative factor for their mental health. One of the reasons might be that the stresse felt by the parents was in turn shed by them towards the teachers.

Job Resources

Not all job resources were found to be equally affecting the mental health of the teachers. All the respondents agreed over the importance of job autonomy and social support in benefitting their mental well-being. The primary teachers did not feel that survival strategies were of much help in this regard.
Given below are the job resources affecting the teachers' mental well-being in the descending order of their importance:

Social Support

All the sets of teachers who had been interviewed at the three points of time agreed over social support to be a very important job resource for their mental well-being.

Respondent 18 (Secondary TS, Male, P3) said, 'I made some unexpected friendships from school during the pandemic. Those who were going through a similar phase as me lend a helping hand as well as an understanding ear to my problems'.

Respondent 12 (Primary TS, Female, P2) said, 'The school staff has been very supportive for each other during the pandemic'.

Respondent 14 (Secondary TS, Female, P1) said, 'Being at school was far better than taking classes from home where mind is always thinking about corona scare. Surrounded by students and the school staff has always helped in distracting from personal issues'.

Respondent 7 (Secondary MS, Female, P3) said, 'When you are physically isolated, it is mentally disturbing as well'.

Respondent 15 (Secondary TS, Female, P1) said, 'We are social animals. Being around people, near and dear ones is great for our mental health'.

Job Autonomy

When a person holds more decision-making authority related to their work, that is a job resource. This gives the person a sense of freedom which is a positive factor for mental health. Job autonomy proved to be a job resource for all the sets of teachers.

Respondent 19 (Secondary TS, Female, P1) said, 'Teaching from home has given me flexibility to indulge in activities which I used to enjoy but did not have time for earlier. This is motivating'.

Many sets of teachers felt that work from home is a job resource for them because of the flexibility it gives in planning the day more effectively.
Respondent 24 (Secondary TS, Male, P3) said, 'Teaching from home is a bit more flexible than teaching in the school premises. I managed to squeeze in some personal time in between my school duties'.

The Covid-19 infection was changing its face every few days. There were new symptoms to look out for. Accordingly, the government had to issue fresh directives; which the schools were required to follow immediately. There was a general feeling of helplessness around. In the midst of all the confusion, work from home was a relief to many because there, they were able to take charge of their daily routine and plan their work.
Respondent 23 (Secondary TS, Female, P3) said, 'Everybody is scared and confused. At least being at home and continuing my teaching is possible'.

Survival Strategies

Most of the respondents shared that they had applied several strategies for surviving the scares of the pandemic; and keeping themselves positive and strong. Some took help of online resources or apps which filled them with positivity and energy; some took to exercising or yoga, or indulged in hobbies or other DIY activities.

Respondent 7 (Secondary MS, Male, P2) said, 'In between the online classes, I do meditative exercises, which help me relieve the stress of working online for longer durations'.

Respondent 17 (Secondary TS, Female, P2) said, 'I took help of certain online apps for meditating. I had to keep myself sane in the middle of all the negativity and uncertainty'.

Hence, from the above it can be asserted that although there were job resources available for the teachers, the resources were too little as compared to the job demands. The most important factor affecting the mental health of the teachers was social support.

CONCLUSION

The crisis caused by the coronavirus is unprecedented in all the respects. The challenges of teaching from home was hugely complex for teachers all over the world. The present study explores how teachers in Jharkhand were affected post the pandemic with respect to their mental health, and what measures did they take to overcome the stress around them.

They faced a rise in the job demands- the relevant factors being: health issues, workload, caring for others' wellness, uncertain environment, varied roles, and negative reputation about the profession. They were able to mitigate the stressful situation by taking help of the job resources like job autonomy, social support and surviving strategies. But it is evident that these were not enough since the teachers responded in affirmative when asked about and even talked in great length about how they continued to feel anxious, demotivated, exhausted and being worthless during and post the pandemic.

The study observed an increase in the respondents' stress and poor mental health situation, especially among the primary teachers, between the period starting from April, 2020 till December, 2020.

Job Demands

Teachers have always complained about a general thankless attitude shown by the public at large for their profession even in the pre-pandemic times. They are fed up of this behaviour since long. The pandemic resulted in an increase in the negative feelings in the mind of teachers. The respondents talked prominently about the job demands that they had been facing earlier too, and how these did not change, but rather became stronger throughout the coronavirus pandemic. Earlier too, they had been overburdened with work and longer working hours (Spalding, 2023). The pandemic saw a greater workload for teachers, resulting in extreme fatigue and feeling of helplessness among them. This became a major factor of attrition for the teachers, resulting in huge losses for students (Cardoza, 2021; TeachThought, 2021).

The present study highlights another important observation in the post-pandemic era. There are studies which confirm that people who were already suffering from mental health issues of any kind, including women and the youth (aged between 18 years to 29 years), were the most vulnerable set to have faced the mental well-being issues in the first few weeks of the global lockdown scenario (Islam, 2021; Raval, 2020). Responses received in the interviews were also found to be steeply inclined towards the above-mentioned observation. Teaching is a stressful profession. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the policy makers and the health practitioners to create appropriate systems of support for this vulnerable set within the teaching fraternity.

Job Resources

Studies across the world have shown that teachers all over were working hard to keep themselves mentally strong during the pandemic. Some were taking help from online resources, social media, apps, etc. and the survival strategies adopted by them in earlier cases (MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Mercer, 2020). Social support also proved as a major reason for uplifting the spirits of stressed out teachers. Apart from these two, another factor which was beneficial for their metal

well-being was the flexibility of deciding how and when to finish work, i.e. autonomy which online classes provided. OECD (2020) had been advocating for this even before the pandemic; that the schools should bring a change in their policies wherein they give decision making authority to the teaching staff regarding their work related decisions. The pandemic has be turned into an excellent opportunity to bring these much required changes at the workplace.

Influence on school management staff (MS) and teaching staff (TS)

The present study observed that the mental health of the school management staff in the primary sections was a bit more badly affected than those in the other departments as the coronavirus infection gripped the world. Several other researches post the pandemic have presented similar findings (Moss, et al., 2020; TeacherTapp, 2021). This effect might be due to the challenging nature of job role of those working in the school management. They not only had to implement the ever changing corona guidelines, taking care of all the budgeting and school planning, but also ensured to provide all kinds of support required by the other employees. Their sensitive post (Hatcher, 2005) also made it impossible for them to receive the kind of social support that the teaching staff received. The overall effect made the school management staff lonelier and emotionally exhausted. However, those employed in the secondary level school management were at a better emotional state than the primary level school management staff. This might be due to the greater parent-teacher interaction at the primary level than at the secondary level (Adams & Christenson, 2000).

IMPLICATIONS

The above sections discussed how job demands of the teachers negatively affected their mental well-being; and job resources available to them are not sufficient enough to overcome the demands. An effective method of doing so would be that the government can be in communication with the teaching community before adopting appropriate measures to decrease the job demands (Maqsood, et al., 2021). When these consultations happen with the government, it would help in improving the mental health of teachers, since this would make them feel valued and at a better position to contribute to their future in their profession.

It is the responsibility of the strategists and the policy makers to ensure that teachers are provided with more job resources because these have proved to be beneficial in reducing burnout and job stress (Bakker et al., 2005). Initiatives to provide the school management staff with adequate social support will also go a long way in improving their overall mental well-being.

It is a positive sign that schools have also begun to prioritise the mental well-being of their teaching and management staff. Schools can work towards building an open, collaborative and inclusive culture at the workplace (Simon et al., 2020). Agencies can be roped in to provide social support to the staff.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The present study considers the interview findings from 24 schools in select districts of Jharkhand. There were 71 interviews in all, which cannot be generalizable for the bigger population of teachers in the state. Studies which include more participants are expected to draw a broader perspective.

Quantitative studies highlighting the mental wellness issues among the teachers in the state can be conducted. Similar quantitative studies exploring job demands and resources are also recommended in this regard.

Covid-19 pandemic adversely affected teachers' lives. The job demands were too many and the resources were too little. As the world is coming out of the crisis, everyone should lend support to the teaching community.

Themes	Factors	Teaching Staff		Management Staff	
		Primary TS	Secondary TS	Primary MS	Secondary MS
Job Demands	Uncertain environment	At all points of time, uncertainty caused stress.	At all points of time, uncertainty caused stress.	At all points, uncertainty over management caused stress.	At all points of time, uncertainty caused stress.
	Workload	Greater workload with passage of time.	Greater workload with passage of time. Burnout at P2 and P3.	Some felt increase in workload. Some felt that workload didn't increase but changed across P1 till P3.	Burnout and extreme fatigue highest at P2 and P3.
	Negative reputation about the profession	Negative perception about teachers in social media caused stress at P3.	Negative perception about teachers in social media caused stress at P2 and P3. Frustration at government's ill decisions at P3.	Negative perception about teachers in social media caused stress at all points of time.	Negative perception about teachers in social media caused stress at all points of time. Considered leaving job at P1 and P3.
	Caring for others' wellness	None found	Care for each other's wellness at P2 and P3.	Care for each other's wellness across all points of time.	Care for each other's wellness across all points of time.
	Health issues	Earlier mental health condition impacted how they coped with Covid challenges, at all points of time.	Earlier mental health condition impacted how they coped with Covid challenges, at all points of time.	Earlier mental health condition impacted how they coped with Covid challenges, most at P2 and P3.	None found.
	Varied roles	Pressure from school management and parents	None found.	None found.	None found.

		high at P2 and P3.			
Job resources	Social support	Not being physically present at school was stressful at P1. Being around family was important. Presence of colleagues reduced stress at P2 and P3.	Moral support by family and colleagues found helpful at all points of time.	Moral support by family and colleagues found helpful at all points of time.	Moral support by family and colleagues found helpful at all points of time.
	Job Autonomy	Flexibility to choose the pace of work was a positive factor in teaching from home, especially at P1 and P2.	Flexibility to choose and control the pace of work was a positive factor in teaching from home at all points of time.	Flexibility of scheduling day's activities was very supportive at P3.	Being in control of own and others' work was a positive factor at P1 and P2.
	Survival Strategies	None Found	Previous survival strategies used at P1 and P4.	Survival strategies utilised in earlier situations found useful in post-pandemic era too.	Previous survival strategies used at all points of time.

Table 1. Results : Mental well-being of teachers: A Longitudinal Qualitative Analysis across four sets

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