Can A Teacher's Mental Health Impact Teaching Pedagogies in The New Normal?

Parin Somani

London Organisation of Skills Development, England

Abstract: Teacher's globally have been required to adapt to immense change providing students within higher educational institutions (HEI) with the best teaching pedagogies, through which they can progress. The coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic has accelerated the use of technologies to facilitate learning due to remote learning regulations imposed upon HEI. Within the new normal world teachers have been required to re-skill ensuring appropriate teaching pedagogies are implemented to help students reach their educational endeavours. This study aims to understand the impacts on HEI teacher mental health within the new normal world and the implications on teaching pedagogies. A systematic review of published and grey literature is conducted. Results have revealed the following: Teachers within HEI have experienced negative mental health impacts including, stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. They have adapted teaching pedagogies to facilitate changing social circumstances leading to re-skill and up-skill ensuring student educational progression. Modes of communication altered to include social media platforms. Teaching pedagogies have included interactive video conferencing and software utilising artificial intelligence. Both students and teachers became accustomed to remote learning during the covid-19 pandemic, however post-pandemic hybrid learning has become more dominant. This study has deduced that teacher mental health does impact the quality of teaching pedagogies in the new normal world, affecting innovation and authenticity impacting student results. Teachers require flexibility and appropriate skills to ensure sustainable teaching pedagogies to support student learning. Recommendations are provided to facilitate teacher mental health and improve teaching pedagogies.

Keywords: Mental health, New normal, Pedagogies, Student, Teacher

Introduction

Teacher's globally have been required to adapt to immense change providing students within higher educational institutions (HEI) with the best teaching pedagogies, through which they can progress. Teaching pedagogies are important as they provide educators with the insight into best teaching practices to educate students. They acquire a better understanding of the student learning diversity, facilitating them towards creating bespoke lesson plans suiting student requirements. Consequently, there will be an improvement in the quality of teaching

that students receive. To ensure effective learning takes place and building upon knowledge, students are required to cultivate meaningful relationships with their educators and their peers. In addition, the is a need to foster a relationship between learning techniques and culture that is relayed through theory or practice by an educator to help progress student knowledge with the most meaningful information. Educators have an immense responsibility to impart students with the correct information through an approach that is most suitable for them despite different styles of teaching. It is the prerogative of an educator to provide an effective model to help their students to learn and build upon previous knowledge. It is a foundation through which learners can develop the appropriate skills and attitude to apply within their daily lives and obtain a clear understanding of the subject area to gain success in their examinations.

Before the coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic, teaching pedagogies were implemented within the physical settings involving educators and students. Educators employed various pedagogies and instructed their students appropriately to reach learning outcomes. Dominantly this process involved students taking instructions from their educators, and learning the content which would be sufficient to pass examinations. Some HEI's offered part-time time online courses for individuals to complete, they were especially designed for those individuals who required flexible hours to complete educating themselves alongside other commitments.

The covid-19 pandemic caused havoc with the entire educational system, particularly due to the implementation of social distancing regulations and the closure of non-essential businesses imposed by international governing bodies (Somani, Our World Before, During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic, 2020). This affected 1.2 billion learners from 186 countries around the world causing several challenges (UNESCO, COVID-19 Impact on Education, 2020). All HEI's were required to cease physical operation and students stayed at home, while international students returned to their countries. The traditional method of educating students within a face-to-face environment was no longer possible, instead HEI's were required to find innovative methods to help educate their students (Somani, 2021). This was made possible through the use of various technologies that were available.

The coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic has accelerated the use of technologies to facilitate learning due to remote learning regulations imposed upon HEI. Within the new normal world teachers have been required to re-skill ensuring appropriate teaching pedagogies are implemented to help students reach their educational endeavours. This impinged upon educator mental health as additional pressure was exerted onto them and immense uncertainty regarding the educational process was prevalent. According to the World Health Organization "Mental health is a state of mental wellbeing that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community" (WHO, 2022). Furthermore, mental health can be divided into three components including emotional health, cognitive health, and behavioural health which are important in ensuring the overall well-being of an individual. However, the covid-19 pandemic facilitated negative mental health impacts on both students and educators.

Objectives

This study aims to understand the impacts on HEI teacher mental health within the new normal world and the implications on teaching pedagogies. A review of published and grey literature is conducted via electronic and manual databases.

Results and Discussion

Negative Mental Health Impacts

It is the role of an educator to appear strong and in control of all situations when imparting knowledge to their students. However, within periods of uncertainty even educators are confronted with challenges particularly during the covid-19 pandemic, when all educational sessions were transitioned to online platforms. It was reported that educators suffered with increased anxiety, isolation and depression during the covid-19 pandemic in comparison the health care workers (Kush, Badillo-Goicoechea, Musci, & Stuart, 2022). As HEI's re-opened to students after social isolation measures were lifted, results indicated that 50.6% of educators suffered with stress, out of which 14.1% was severe stress and 4.5% was extremely severe stress. Anxiety was experienced by 49.5% of educators out of which 7.6% was severe and 8.1% was extremely severe symptoms. Depression was experienced by 32.2% of educators out of which 4.3% was severe and 3.2% was extremely severe (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Berasategi, Idoiaga, & Dosil, 2021). Educators were faced with changing their teaching methods to ensure efficient online learning was being adopted, creating additional pressure and stress on educators to learn novel methodologies to keep learners engaged. Educators were not alone in experiencing mental health challenges, students also faced heightened negative mental health implications during and post-covid-19. Several students were required to make decisions pertaining to continuing education due to restricted financial means or access to inappropriate hardware and software (Somani, 2021). Digital inequalities have been highlighted between students resulting from the covid-19 pandemic and students have endured negative mental health implications (Somani, The Impact of COVID-19 on Human Psychology, 2020). Amongst the mental health challenges faced, anxiety and depression have been prevalent (NHS, 2020) due to global uncertainty, costs of living and the use of unfamiliar technology, constant changes in rules and regulations from governing bodies and HEI's (Brooks, et al., 2020). Studies have suggested that within England, one in six people are affected with mental health challenges like depression and anxiety per week (McManus, Bebbington, Jenkins, & Brugha, 2016). It has been revealed that in comparison to January 2023, 51% of students experience heightened stress and anxiety, while 88% of students believe a mental health crisis is being experienced by their HEI (Meal, 2022).

Teaching Pedagogies

Educators have adapted teaching pedagogies to facilitate changing social circumstances leading to re-skilling and up-skilling ensuring student educational progression.

Five approaches of pedagogy learning have been identified in Figure 1.

Figure 1 (Shirke, 2021)

Constructivist relates to students not receiving information passively from the educator, instead it allows students to participate in the process of knowledge acquisition where they understand and gain appropriate knowledge. This approach promotes students' critical thinking skills and provides a learning environment allowing them to connect with the information imparted by the educator.

The collaborative approach provides a platform for students to amalgamate into groups and work together in collaboration. Students can problem solve, generate new ideas, complete tasks to reach goals, and generate strategies to implement. Students can collaborate themselves or educators can facilitate this process.

The integrative approach provides a specific learning environment for students that is designed to facilitate them to cultivate a deeper connection to the learnings within the syllabus they are being taught by the educator. The integrative approach requires students to understand the learning process, differentiate relevant issues, utilising learnings from sessions within practical situations and finally associating the concepts in daily life.

The reflective approach requires students to complete a self- evaluation of the scenarios through understanding what the educator has taught through observation of both educators and students. Through carrying out a thorough analysis and reasoning behind the actions they will take.

Within the inquiry-based learning approach, there is an expectation that educators cultivate a culture within which students understand teachings, simultaneously have the desire to explore ideas further. Students should feel challenged through which they can improve and refine their knowledge. In addition, students should feel motivated to question ideas, understand the answers and feel inspired to embark upon further questioning.

However, approaches such as these will only be successful when educators are positive and confident in their chosen approach. Thus, the need for good mental health to ensure effective reaching pedagogies is important. The quality of education can be improved via a pedagogy that has been well thought out. Students will

understand learning objectives better and reaching the learning outcomes is easier. Good pedagogies create an environment that promotes students to collaborate and help each other to complete tasks and learn. There is an increase in student learning perceptions and learning from each other, towards a cooperative learning environment which cultivates leadership qualities. Through the implementation of appropriate pedagogical methods students deviate from traditional methods of simply memorising information imparted by the educator. Instead, it stimulates creative thinking and facilitates them to analyse information, resulting in evaluating scenarios and reaching a strong conclusion, thereby creating a further awareness and receptiveness towards educator teachings. When an educator adopts the pedagogical approach, they cultivate a unified method of teaching. It utilises either constructivism, liberationism or behaviourism and uses it within their teaching approaches. The educator may deem that social pedagogy is their desired approach as this aims to create awareness, enhance social development and student well-being amalgamating moral education and teaching good values. Critical pedagogies encourage students to delve deeper into concepts aiming to understand personal thoughts on the topic being taught. Simultaneously within a diverse world, educators should expose their students to cultural diversity which will enable them to understand different mindsets associated with topics discussed. Alternatively, if an educator employs Socratic pedagogies, students are provided with knowledge while being facilitated to seek knowledge from different sources to solve challenges through alternative means. The educator requires good mental health to ensure students are provided with the right teaching pedagogical methods to achieve their goals. This will encourage educators to connect with their students and build a strengthened relationship which will result in a more positive learning experience.

Communication

The covid-19 pandemic altered methods of communication between educators and students. Pre-pandemic, face-to-face interaction was the dominant form of communication which utilised both verbal and non-verbal communication methods. The covid-19 pandemic required educators to utilise technological methods to ensure effective communication. The live interactive video conferencing dominantly used verbal communication particularly if students did not switch their video cameras on, unlike in a physical setting. Figure 2 highlights non-verbal communication and body language that is important for educators to use. However, during the pandemic it was difficult for educators to illustrate all non-verbal communication cues effectively, however limited communication was still possible through videoconferencing software like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet, Skype etc. In addition, modes of communication altered to include social media platforms as educators encouraged group chats on platforms like WhatsApp and educational forums. Teaching pedagogies have included interactive video conferencing and software, utilising artificial intelligence. Within the new normal world, communication through these methods has been minimised within full-time physical education. Although social media is still widely used for students and educators to stay connected, share knowledge and attempt to find solutions through open discussions.

iconses

**International Conference on
Social and Education Sciences**

istes
Organization

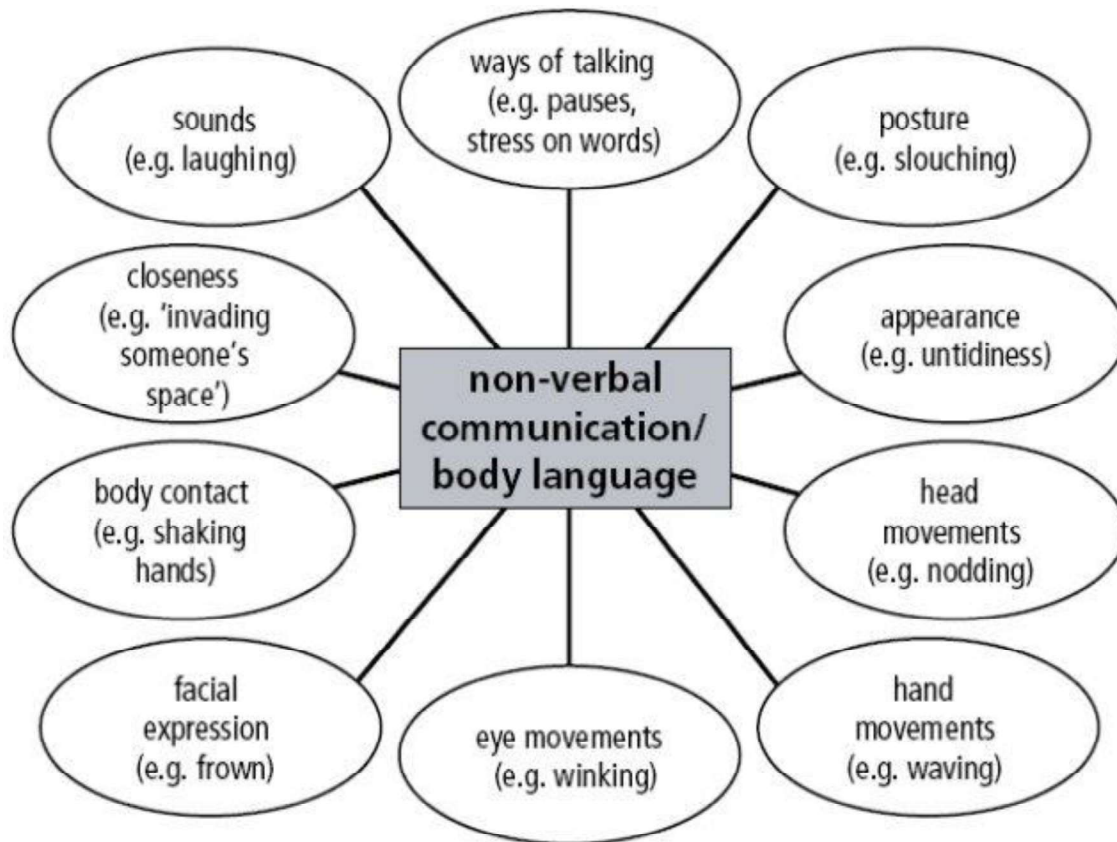www.iconses.net   October 19-22, 2023   Las Vegas, NV, USA   www.istes.org

Figure 2. Non-verbal Communication (Curtis, 2018)

Communication is a vital element that can strengthen or deter relationships between educators and students. When the educator uses effective communication strategies, they become sensitive to student needs and can identify student weaknesses through which strategies can be implemented to guide students further to reach their goals.

Many HEI's utilised artificial intelligence to provide adequate support for their students including chatbots to assist students at all times and hours, in addition to cryptocurrency to financially assist students to continue their educational endeavours (Somani, Information Technology Challenges Faced during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Higher Education, 2021). During the covid-19 pandemic, students required addition support from their educators to ensure academic engagement (Rapanta, Botturi, Goodyear, Guàrdia, & Koole, 2020). However, when educators were challenged with mental health issues, they were unable to engage with their students in an effective manner. This is still the case in the new normal world, consequently, over a prolonged period student anxiety levels are deemed to have increased. In turn this lowers academic achievement levels and future employment prospects. Good communication in contemporary life is vital to ensure optimum mental health and wellbeing is cultivated. This is deemed to contribute towards minimum misunderstandings and it provides the bases for good instructions to ensure that outcomes and goals are met.

Remote Learning Vs Hybrid Learning

Pre-pandemic the vast majority of students acquired knowledge via physical learning environments, however both students and teachers became accustomed to remote learning during the covid-19 pandemic. As students have returned to physical settings within HEI's, reacclimatising to a full seminar room, lecture theatre or laboratory has revealed social anxiety and fear of the unknown (Chen & Lucock, 2022). Thus, it is not surprising that post-pandemic, hybrid learning has been adopted. The circumstantial changes experienced have led students to adopt flexible working hours and seek education from remote locations. Therefore, within the new normal as educators continue to teach their students, hybrid learning can be adopted. Learnings from the pandemic can be amalgamated within remote education and simultaneously continue with face-to-face sessions enabling the support of physical interaction (Somani, 2021).

Students and educators both share the flexibility and independence to attain knowledge through personal pedagogical preferences. Students can still take advantage of HEI's software with installed artificial intelligence to alert educators to fill student knowledge gaps and devise the appropriate teaching pedagogies to help them. The remote learning pedagogies allowed students to participate in interactive videoconferencing software, live chat sessions, completing long and short answer assessments, in addition to viewing pre-recorded sessions to help better understand academic concepts. Educators are implementing these strategies within teaching pedagogies to engage students and develop innovative methods. This is believed to help them towards achieving their learning outcomes and reach their educational endeavours, while maintaining a community spirit.

Figure 3 illustrates potential causes and challenges that educators have faced during the transition period from face-to-face teaching to remote methods of instruction and back again. It is evident that the same challenges are continuing within the new normal world. The challenge is documented on the right-hand side, and possible reasons contributing to the challenges faced by educators and their potential solutions are illustrated. The mental health of educators can be affected by a fear of losing employment positions or changes within current roles, personal challenges affecting educator behaviour, and concerns on the effects of the covid-19 pandemic. The feelings of anxiety when delivering lessons despite preparing online or offline instruction.

Educators may have a fear stemming from new technology that they have not used before or software they do not know about. Negative mental health impacts may also be triggered if educators do not have access to the necessary resources and are unable to plan for logistics. In addition, inaccessibility to sufficient internet bandwidth and the necessary digital literacy skills. Sudden change and transition can affect teaching pedagogies and create mental health instability particularly if educators find the adaptation process challenging. This is demonstrated through machine learning and unfamiliarity associated with digital learning or limited knowledge pertaining to the technological software used or technical features.
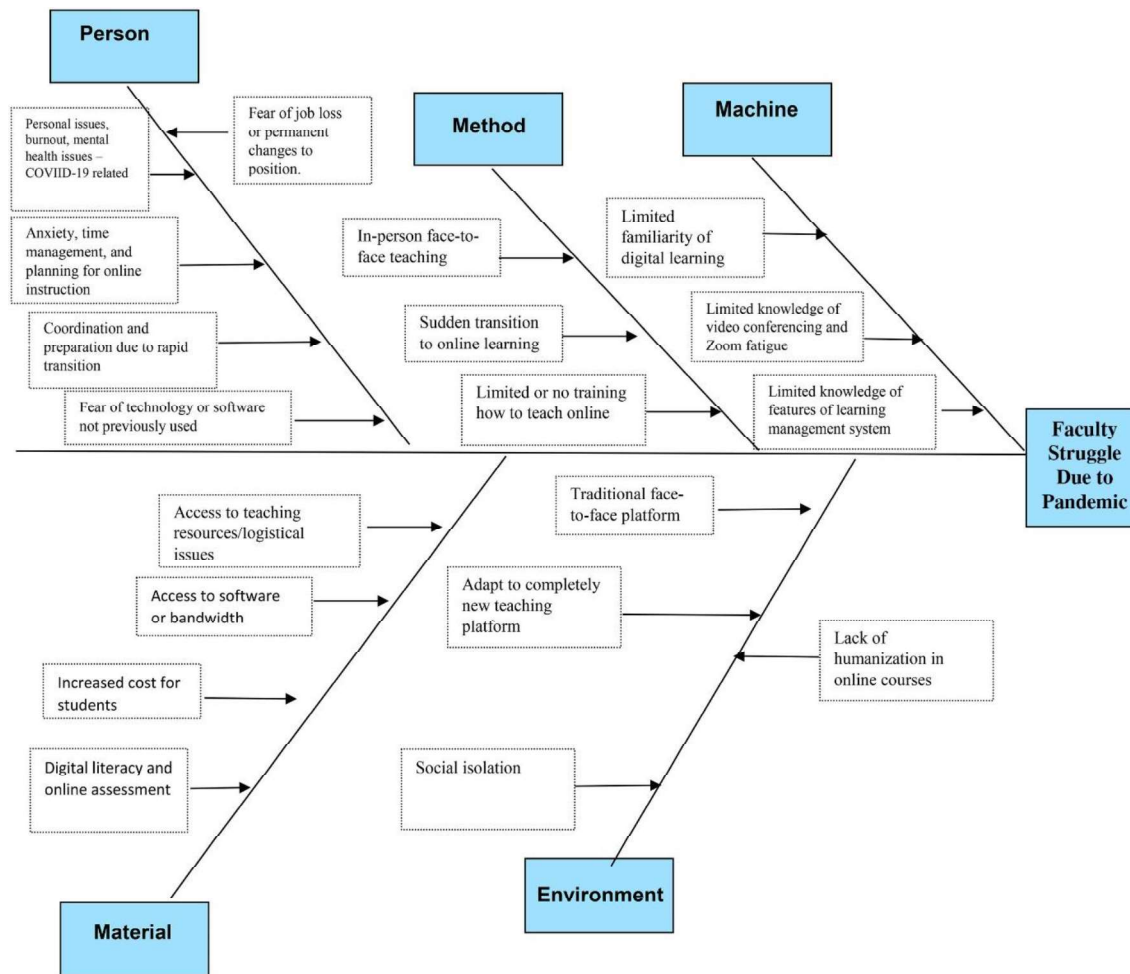
Figure 3 (Singh, Steele, & Singh, 2021)

Conclusion

Educators have endured mental health impacts during and post- pandemic including stress, anxiety and depression. However, it cannot be constituted only to lockdown because research has not revealed significant differences in mental health challenges between educators that were isolating and those that were not (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Berasategi, Idoiaga, & Dosil, 2021). Educators experienced high stress levels during the pandemic due to a variety of reasons including uncertainty, virus transmission and possible infection as educational institutions had been believed to be a hub for spreading infection. In addition, educators faced heightened mental health challenges due to a combination of personal or professional reasons including balancing the two, increased burnout levels, and employment instability impacting financial . As students and educators have entered a new normal world, an amalgamation of techniques is being utilised to ensure efficient student learning. Educators are more experienced with remote learning utilising technological hardware and software to provide students with the best learning outcomes.

This study has deduced that the mental health of an educator does have an impact on the quality of teaching pedagogies in the new normal world. It affects innovation and authenticity, consequently creating an impact on student results. Teachers require flexibility and appropriate skills to ensure sustainable teaching pedagogies to support student learning. Educators should have access to the appropriate support in order to address all mental health concerns. They require a safe environment through which educators can build trust, strengthen communication and critical thinking skills post pandemic.

Approximately seventy percent of educators suffering with mental health challenges are unaware of resources that will facilitate them towards reaching their mental health requirements. Thus, mental health stigma and fear should be eradicated, and the appropriate mental health support should be provided to all educators within their HEI's. In addition, educators are usually the first point of contact for their students, hence appropriate training should be imparted to educators to help students cope with their mental health challenges. There is a need to build a strengthened culture to recognise mental health challenges, offer support and provide access to support systems to help implement appropriate strategies and effective communication styles. Educators can participate in virtual support groups in addition to social media outreach groups. HEI's should also revise health policies and review the current strategies to support educators and students through mental health challenges.

Recommendations

It is vital to safeguard the mental health of educators within HEI's, this will ensure student well-being and provide them with a higher quality of teaching. HEI's should ensure that good psychological care and attention is provided to educators who are vulnerable and have been impacted by the covid-19 pandemic the most. Strategies should be shared and developed to impart valuable knowledge to educators through which they can better cope with crisis situations. This will constitute towards better performance in their capacity as an educator, which ultimately is a benefit to the HEI. The youth are leaders of tomorrow and are instrumental in shaping the world, hence the education provided to them must be of a high standard, thus protecting the psychological well-being of educators imparting knowledge is vital. In addition, educators should cultivate a daily routine that incorporates the recommended hours of sleep and consuming a balanced diet. HEI's have a legal duty of care towards their educators and students in line with the national equality acts within which all individuals with mental health challenges should be treated equally. It is important for all well-being policies to be understood, accessible and transparent. Educators will continue to utilise the skills they have learnt through the pandemic and apply them to teaching pedagogies in the new normal, particularly as hybrid learning continues and a multitude of new short-term and long-term online courses have been developed to educate societies.

As technology progresses, educators should continue to implement teaching pedagogies that utilise technological means to educate their students. In addition, they should be well educated on cybersecurity

threats and possible challenges. HEI's should implement strong cybersecurity systems so that student leaning is not further challenged and novel teaching pedagogies can be implemented.

References

Brooks S.K, W. R., Smith, L., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenburg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet*, 912-920.

Chen, T., & Lucock, M. (2022). The mental health of university students during the COVID-19 pandemic: An online survey in the UK. *PLOS ONE*.

Curtis, K. (2018). *Utilization of Multimodal Interaction Signals for Automatic Summarisation of Academic Presentations.* Dublin: Dublin City University.

Kush, J. M., Badillo-Goicoechea, E., Musci, R. J., & Stuart, E. A. (2022). Teacher mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Educ Res*.

McManus, S., Bebbington, P. E., Jenkins, R., & Brugha, T. (2016). Mental health and wellbeing in england: The adult psychiatric morbidity survey 2014. *NHS Digital*.

Meal, K. (2022, 01 12). *College Students More Concerned About COVID-19 Than Ever, New Survey by TimelyMD Finds*. Retrieved from TimelyMD: https://timely.md/college-students-more-concerned-about-covid-19-than-ever/

NHS. (2020, 01 23). *Counselling for student mental health problems*. Retrieved from National Health Service: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/student-mental-health/

Ozamiz-Etxebarria, N., Berasategi, S. N., Idoiaga, N. M., & Dosil, S. (2021). The Psychological State of Teachers During the COVID-19 Crisis: The Challenge of Returning to Face-to-Face Teaching. *Front. Psychol.*

Rapanta, C., Botturi, L., Goodyear, P., Guàrdia, L., & Koole, M. (2020). Online university teaching during and after the Covid-19 crisis: Refocusing teacher presence and learning activity. *Postdigital Science and Education*, 923–945.

Shirke, A. (2021, 10 07). *What Is Pedagogy? Importance Of Pedagogy In Teaching And Learning Process*. Retrieved from Master soft: https://www.iitms.co.in/blog/importance-of-pedagogy-in-teaching-and-learning-process.html

Somani, P. (2020). Our World Before, During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic. *LangLit*, 29-35.

Somani, P. (2020). The Impact of COVID-19 on Human Psychology. In B. S. Lal, & N. Patel, *Economics of Covid-19 Digital Health Education & Psychology* (pp. 328-357). New Delhi: Adhyayan Publishers & Distributors.

Somani, P. (2021). COVID-19 Lockdown Impact On Education. In P. Somani, P. Sisodia, & L. N. Jayanthi, *Lockdown Impacts* (pp. 1-10). Tamilnadu: ESN Publications.

Somani, P. (2021). From Face-To-Face To Remote Learning: Effect On Students. *International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation* (pp. 10491-10498). Seville (Spain): ICERI 2021.

Somani, P. (2021). Information Technology Challenges Faced during the Covid-19 Pandemic in Higher Education. *International Journal of Latest Research in Engineering and Technology*, 106.

Somani, P. (2021). Traditional Learning V's Blended Learning. *International Conference of Education, Research and Innovation* (pp. 8641-8647). Seville: ICERI 2021.

UNESCO. (2020). *COVID-19 Impact on Education.* France: UNESCO.

WHO. (2022). *Mental health.* Geneva: World Health Organization.