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**THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS DURING THE RISK HOLIDAYS
DUE TO COVID-19 OUTBREAK -A STUDY BASED ON NORTHERN PROVINCE,
SRI LANKA**

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has created a global catastrophe and impact in all the sectors including education. Since Sri Lankan schools have been closed for more than 4 months, teachers need to find digital platforms and distance learning methods to retrieve the loss of learning. With the mass curfews and long risk holidays teachers underwent challenges personally as well as professionally. The present study is an attempt to investigate the challenges faced by teachers throughout the risk holidays. A descriptive survey design was used in this study. A total of 500 teachers who teach secondary classes were randomly selected across the 12 educational zones in Northern Province. A combined questionnaire which inquires the personal and occupational challenges of teachers was created in Google form and pass to the teachers via social media such as Facebook, Viber, and Whatsapp and the data was collected and analyzed in order to establish the relationship of challenges with various demographic characteristic and find the differences between categorical variables by using Chi-squared test. The economical shortage, lifestyle change, health complaints, lack of physical activities, weight gaining, conflicts among family members, increased household work are the identified personal challenges. Married and female teachers experienced more economic shortage than others. Both male and female teachers faced increased

household burdens. Married teachers had a moderate level of family conflicts in the home. Most of the teachers have felt the lifestyle pattern has changed in the risk holiday. Teachers from the age group of 40-60 suffered from health inconvenient and less physical activity. More than half amount of teachers (61%) put on weight without any gender and civil status differences. Most of the teachers' mental well-being was a mixture of stress (24%) and laziness (21%) meanwhile half amount of them felt so healthy and relax. The professional challenges can be categorized as teacher-oriented, students oriented, family as well as technology-oriented. Lack of tech and soft skills, less preparation and interest, high internet charges, lecture-based teaching without activity are some of the challenges related to the teachers. Low attendance to online and distance classes, less contact and interest, poor computer literacy are student's oriented challenges. Financial hardships, Irresponsibility, less communication with teachers, and the workload of the parents are the few causes for the challenges that teachers experienced. Moreover the inadequate coverage and the troubles in video and sound systems in online classes are the technology-oriented problems that teachers could be facing. Teachers need socio-emotional and economical guidance to overcome the pressures during the pandemic time and to help their students'

emotional requirements. The study can find measures of temporary policy responses in the curriculum as well as to suggest viable recommendations to alleviate the challenges that teachers face as well as to improve the mental health of teachers in an optimum mode which is very essential in upcoming days to give efficient productivity.

Keywords: Challenges of teachers, COVID-19 risk holiday, E-teaching, Mental well-being

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) has created a worldwide health crisis and it plays a severe impact socially, economically, financially, and gender-wise (Qiu et al., 2017). COVID-19 has brought a major threat to the education sector, especially in developing countries (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). School-centered learning activities are forced to switch into online learning suddenly. It has presented many challenges to the teachers, students, and parents. In this critical period, teachers can play a vital role in society. They are the people who can console and give emotional support to their students.

On the other hand, the responsibilities and challenges of the teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic time, make the teachers into more stress and psychological agony. They need to manage their personal lockdown stressors as well as their professional stressors (Choudhari, 2020). The rapid changes in the way of life due to long term lockdown and school closures disrupted plans due to travel restrictions, social distancing measures, and the fear of spreading COVID-19 make life more challengeable.

Rather than the personal stressors of teachers, the challenges in their profession during the COVID-19 are so crucial ("Learning lessons: The COVID-19

challenge to education | Daily FT", 2020). Hence the online learning is a highly recommended solution during the pandemic time, implementing the distance teaching-learning process without adequate preparation, training, and provision of technical facilities becomes a major challenge to the teachers in developing countries like Sri Lanka. Mishra (2020) describes the scenario as:

“Teaching in this atmosphere has proven to be extremely challenging. Most of us have had to adapt to technology that we weren’t familiar with, overnight. And as a result, the working hours have increased. Our phones never seem to stop buzzing. Along with being the authority on their subjects, teachers have had to play technology trouble-shooters”.

In line with the attempt, the schools in Northern Province also initiate distance teaching-learning via electronic and mass media. Though few of urban school students and teachers in Northern Province, Jaffna able to afford online teaching-learning, many pupils from rural areas struggles to access online classes due to poor broadband service, lack of access to electronic devices, power issues and financial problems. Since Northern Province is pushed back with the remnants of the civil war for years, most of the villages are not much adopted with the technology which has to be used in e-learning (van Horen, 2002). Online teaching methodology and turning instructional materials into digital format at a short period become challenge for teachers during COVID -19 risk holidays. Teachers face trouble in keeping students on board from the social websites distractions during the learning period, motivating students while they stay in the home, and keeping records of student's progress (Vardhaman, N. 2020).

Being accountable for the students learning to their parents and education administrator, teachers fall under mental pressure. Teachers are

expected to cover the syllabus and make students to ready for the upcoming public examinations as GCE Ordinary Level and Advanced Level, though the schools are closed. Moreover, their home environment is not very conducive for online teaching and it becomes hard to Manage their household works and occupation at home itself (Betoret, 2006).

The present study is an attempt to investigate the challenges faced by teachers throughout the 110 days of risk holidays declared by the Government of Sri Lanka from 13th of March to 29th of June 2020, when COVID -19 pandemic outbreaks. The study can find measures of temporary policy responses in the curriculum as well as to suggest viable recommendations to alleviate the challenges that teachers face as well as to improve the mental health of teachers in an optimum mode which is very essential in upcoming days to give efficient productivity.

Statement of the problem

The pandemic of COVID-19 plays a significant role in teachers' stress and mental well-being. Research studies have found that educating throughout the pandemic time makes the teachers into more panic and stress. Teachers suffer from the inexperience of online teaching technology, incorporating all the students through one device, determining the teaching-learning methodologies and materials while conducting online classes. In addition, they need to manage their personal stressors while they stay in the house for a long time. Medical researchers have confirmed that stress suffered by teachers can be passed on to students. Therefore, it is obvious that the emotional state of a teacher affects the students in more ways than we would like to believe.

Schools and educational administrators must think out of the box and produce solutions that would ensure both the mental and physical well-being of teachers

and students. These solutions should be implemented consistently to get rid of the psychological impact of COVID-19.

Purpose of the Study

The present study is an attempt to investigate the challenges that teachers faced and how their well-being was during the COVID -19 pandemic risk holidays. The study will be helpful to find measures of temporary policy responses in curriculum and teaching-learning methodologies after the reopening of schools, as well as it will be helpful to find strategies to keep the mental well-being of teachers in an optimum mode.

Aim of the study

This study tries to find out the personal and professional challenges faced by the teachers in the period of COVID-19 risk holidays.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the personal challenges faced by the teachers and investigate how the routine life

pattern of teachers has changed during the COVID-19 risk vacation of schools.

2. To study the occupational hardships and challenges they faced in the teaching-learning

process in the period of COVID-19.

3. To study the mental health and well-being of teachers during the pandemic time.

4. To propose some viable recommendations to alleviate the challenges and hardships of

teachers and achieve optimum job performance in the upcoming time.

Limitation of the study

- There are some schools in remote areas whose data cannot be collected via Google form since the unavailability of networks, computers, and smartphone

facilities. Since the survey is being done during the COVID -19 pandemic period, by considering the risky situation and social distancing the authors tend to collect the data via Google form and social networks.

- Teachers who are not technically familiar with the Google form will not be able to submit their responses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background and impacts of COVID-19

The novel Corona Virus Disease (“COVID-19”) was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of Hubei Province in China. The disease gradually spread to all countries and it was declared COVID-19 a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (“Global research on coronavirus disease (COVID-19)”, 2020)

Presently the impacts of COVID-19 in daily life are extensive and multi-dimensional. Social, economic, cultural, financial, psychological, and educational impacts which immersed due to the COVID-19 is so crucial and it affects the entire world and the routine life of the people (Evans, 2020). The researchers and scientists tend to do more studies and researches on the above-related topics to find the solutions for the catastrophe.

Sri Lankan scenario of COVID-19

Sri Lanka's first COVID-19 case was identified for a tourist from China in February and the first indigenous case was found on the 11th of March, 2020. (“HPB | Live updates on New Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak”, 2021). To control the spread of the virus, the country has been placed in lockdown mode with limited services and travel restrictions (“Ministry Of Health ”, 2021).

Sri Lankan Preparedness & Response Plan COVID-19, the report of the Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medical

Services (2020) implies that Sri Lanka has a robust health system and infrastructure and it follows three levels of preparedness to halt the disease from spreading within the country. Though Sri Lanka experiences a shortage of trained health care providers, Personal Protection Equipment as well as finance, it collaborates with the WHO country office and has formed many and prepared plans policies, and actions to overcome the issue efficiently. (COVID-19) – World Health Organization”, 2021)

Impact of COVID -19 on general education

The world faces a learning crisis and The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the largest disruption of education ever. This new crisis affects more than 160 countries with the spread of the coronavirus (World Bank, 2020). More than 1.5 billion students were expected to drop out of school and at least 40 million children have missed their kindergarten. (World Bank, 2020).

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said as follows:

The coronavirus pandemic has led to the largest disruption of education in history, with schools closed in more than 160 countries in mid-July, affecting over 1 billion students. In addition, the U.N. chief said at least 40 million children worldwide have missed out on education “in their critical preschool year.”

There is no doubt t that the closure of the universities, Teacher training colleges, and training centers as well as other higher education institutions will make a huge effect on productivity as well as the future (Left behind Refugee Education in Crisis, 2021). COVID-19 made a higher risk on the learning of the children as well as the future of education.

The role of the teacher in the COVID -19 pandemic times

The teacher's role has changed as a facilitator, who guides the student to learn individually with much cooperation and communication (Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2008). Teacher plays important role in planning, organizing, directing and controlling class activities, in brief, they are the classroom manager, counselor, well-wisher and acts as a friend of students in the learning process (Xhemajli, 2016).

After the outbreak of the COVID -19, the role of the teacher has been instantly turned out to a different dimension (Mansoor, 2020). They need to find alternative options to teach in distance teaching methods. They have many questions and confusion to take over their teaching fruitfully (The Hindu,2020). They arise questions as “how to teach online”, “does online teaching platform best”, 'what can be online teaching tools”, and “ what are the online teaching techniques” (The Hindu, 2020). Anyhow teachers are expected to acquire the skills require for the 21st century and adopt the newest distance learning methods ("Google Classroom - An Effective Tool for Online Teaching and Learning in this COVID era", 2020). School administrators and policymakers need and partnership of parents need to give their support to teachers for a productive achievement (Kanojia, 2021).

The mental wellbeing impact of COVID -19

The COVID-19 pandemic doesn't only threaten people's physical health, but also worse people's mental health (Sijia Li , 2020). Long-term lockdowns and curfews make the people stay in the home for 24 hours and it leads to psychological disruptions such as hysteria, anxiety, and distress.

quarantining for 14 days also make the people feel alone and fear of spreading the infection to other family members, irritation, confusion, depression, insomnia, to extremes of consequences,

including suicide (Njiri, 2020). Moreover, the people from the middle class also undergo financial stress and losses during the long-term lockdown. It is also worse for the mental well-being of the people. (Souvik Dubey, Payel Biswas,2020). The COVID-19 infectious and carriers are treated as untouchables by society and they were forcefully isolated psychologically. They are avoided by the neighbours. Social rejection, workplace prejudice make the patients in to more mental agony. This effect can last for a long time for the people even after the pandemic. (Joseph, Gunaseelan, Bhandari and Dutta, 2020)

The challenges faced by teachers

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The impacts of this pandemic are multi-dimensional and it affects almost whole mankind. COVID-19 has brought huge disruptions and challenges to the education system throughout the world. There are many challenges faced by the teachers including personal and professional challenges which are shown briefly in the following diagram.

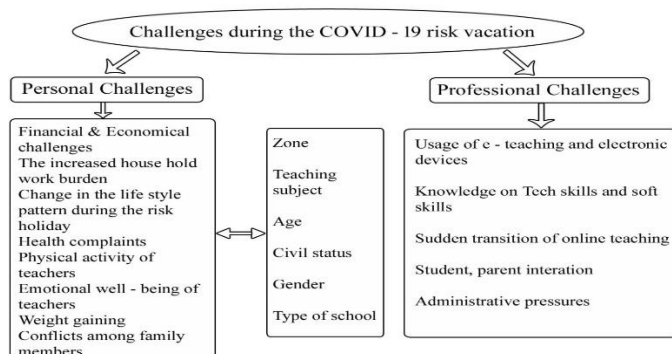


Figure 2.1 Conceptual diagram of the challenges

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study is based on a descriptive survey design to identify the challenges of teachers during the COVID-19 outbreak. A total of 250 teachers who teach secondary classes in government schools were randomly selected across the 12 educational zones in Northern Province, Sri Lanka. A combined questionnaire that inquires questions on the personal and occupational challenges of teachers on the Likert scale was created in Google form and passed to the teachers via social websites from 1st of July 2020 to 25th of July 2020. The data were collected in spreadsheets and analyzed in the SPSS

(Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to establish the relationship of challenges with various demographic characteristics and find the differences between categorical variables by using the Chi-squared test.

Google form questionnaire which includes three sets of questions. Part A of the questionnaire pertained to the demographic information of the respondents. Part B dealt with the statements to find out the challenges in their personal life and Part C questions to find out the occupational challenges and mental health of teachers.

FINDINGS

Demographic description of the participants

250 teachers who teach secondary classes were randomly selected in 12

zones of Northern Province. The zones are Jaffna, Valigamam, Mullaitivu, Thenmaradchi, Vadamaradchi, Mannar, Madu, Thunukkai, Vavuniya North, Vavuniya South, Islands, and Kilinochchi.

Demographics	N	%	Demographics	N	%
Respondents from zones			Age group		
Jaffna	48	25.5	24-30	35	18.6
Kilinochchi	24	12.8	31-35	59	31.4
Vadamaradchi	17	9.0	36-40	41	21.8
Valigamam	14	7.4	41-50	47	25.0
Themaradchi	6	3.2	51-60	6	3.2
Thunukkai	10	5.3	Civil status		
Vavuniya North	10	5.3	Married	138	73.4
Vavuniya South	5	2.7	Unmarried	49	26.6
Mullaitivu	10	5.3	Type of schools		
Island	9	4.8	1 AB	87	59.5
Madu	2	1.1	1C	59	40.5
Mannar	22	11.7	Gender		
			Female	113	60.6
			Male	74	39.4

Table 1: Socio demographic description of the participant

Personal challenges of teachers during the declaration of risk vacation for COVID19

There were few sets of major challenges were identified via the structured questionnaire qualitatively and the responses were illustrated in table 2.

Table 2. Personal challenges faced by the teachers in Northern Province, Jaffna

Challenges	Percentages of participants (%)				
	Very high	High	Moderate	Low	Very low
Financial, economic shortage	22	47	20	2	9
Increased house hold work burden	38	17	24	11	10
Lifestyle changes	61	20	10	4	5
The level of physical activities	11	9	55	25	0
Weight gaining	8	22	31	38	12
Conflicts among family members	3	10	45	42	0
Effect utility of risk holidays	3	10	45	42	0
Health complaints	0	3	2	92	3

Financial & Economical challenges

A higher amount of teachers (89%) faced a financial challenge during the COVID-19 pandemic time. This finding overlaps with the survey research measures Financial Stress and Personal Characteristics of the School Teachers: Evidence from Sri Lanka (Sivarajah K. et al, 2014).

There was a significant association found between financial challenges with the marital status of the teachers ($p=0.001$) where 79.1% of married teachers confessed they faced a financial challenge while 20.9% of single stated so. There was a strong relationship found between the genders with the financial challenge too. 51.0% of the female teachers felt shortage of finance ($p=0.000$) than the male teachers (25.0%). All age groups of teachers felt the financial issues ($p=0.000$) while teachers from 51-60 hadn't face many challenges (70%). Anyhow, the Sivarajah K points out there was not any significant correlation was found between

the age and marital status between their financial stress (Sivarajah K. et al, 2014).

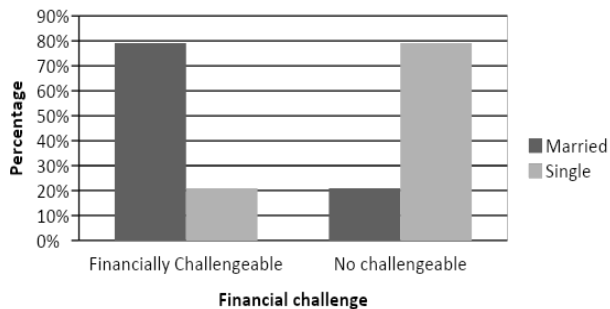


Figure 1: Comparison of financial crisis Vs civil status

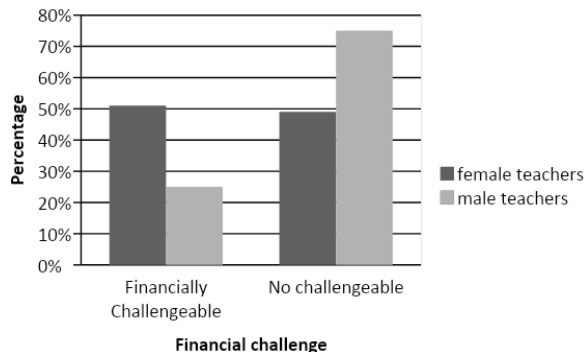


Figure 2: Comparison of financial crisis Vs. gender

The increased household work burden

One-third of the teachers accepted that their household work burden had increased. Among them, half of the female teachers felt the housework load was at an extreme level. There was no difference between the increment of work burden between male, female ($p = 0.329$) teachers as well as married and unmarried ($p=0.881$) which implies both males and females had more work burden in the home during the risk holiday.

The journal, Women's Work, Housework and Childcare, before and during COVID-19 (2020) also proves that work from home and school closures cause a burden on families, especially on women.

Change in the lifestyle pattern during the risk holiday

The majority of the teachers (80%) have agreed regardless of age, civil status, and gender, their life patterns have completely changed due to the lockdown and the general preventions and control measures of COVID -19. The study of Van der Werf, E.T., Busch, M., Jong, M.C. et al. (2021) also reveals the same results as there is a vast change has occurred in the people's lifestyle after the lockdown.

Health complaints

Eqbal (2021), states elderly workers have been undergone physical disorders and lower immune systems during the COVID-19 period. Similarly, 97% of the teachers who are below 40 years old never had any sort of illness and the rest of 3% belong to 41-50 and 51- 60 has revealed health discomforts particularly high blood sugar and joint pain.

The level of physical activity of teachers

Half of the teachers confessed their physical activity level has increased during the risk holiday than their normal routine life. 24.4% of them were found with a very low level of physical activity and 9% of them had low physical activity whereas 11.9% of them responded as an extreme increment in their physical activity during the risk vacation than their normal routine life.

There were no significant differences found in the level of physical activity with gender and civil status. But the age group influences the level of physical activity ($p=0.02$), particularly teachers who were in the age group of 51-60 have a very low level of physical activity level when compare with the other age group.

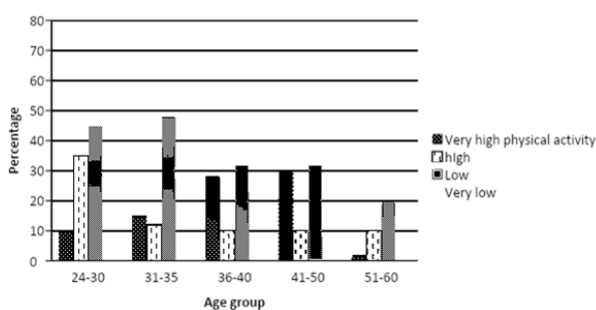


Figure 4: Variations of the physical activity level of age groups

Weight gaining

Enric (2021) conveys, sedentary behaviors during the COVID-19-induced lockdown may cause significant weight gain. In the Northern Province of Sri Lanka, a quarter part of the teachers showed a moderate weight gain was there and another quarter of teachers had the slightest weight gaining. There were no differences found in weight gaining with the gender, civil status as well as age groups.

Emotional well-being of teachers

People may feel an intense level of emotional and behavioral reactions, such as fear, boredom, loneliness, anxiety, and anger. Such conditions can evolve into psychological disorders (Felipe et al,2020)

The majority of the teachers (45%) felt their life throughout the vacation was healthy and relax. A quarter part of the respondents was led their risk holiday with stress and anxiety due to the COVID-19 outbreak.21% of them felt exhausted and bored during the long vacation. Teachers from categories of civil status, gender, age haven't shown any significant differences with the life trend change in the risk holiday.

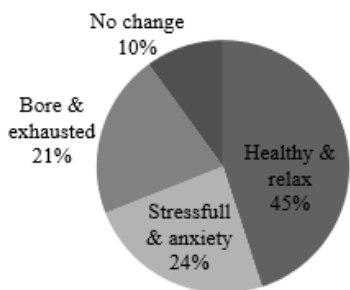


Figure 5: Emotional wellbeing of teachers

Conflicts among family members

Scott (2020) reports that massive changes of lifestyle may have created shifts in exposure to work-life conflict in families and the level of the conflict varies with the variable of age, marital status, and the number of children they have.

3% of the teachers confessed that they had severe family conflicts and quarrels with the family members because families are in each other's pockets 24 hours a day.11% of the respondents stated they had faced a high level of conflicts during the holiday. 41% of them reported there was a low amount of quarrels. 45% of teachers highlighted they never had conflicts in those days. Especially the married teachers faced higher conflicts

than the unmarried teachers ($p = 0.016$). There were significant differences can be observed that the teachers who underwent to higher work burden had higher family conflicts ($p=0.000$) too.

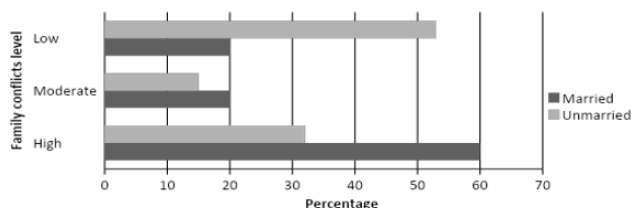


Figure 6: Comparison of family conflicts Vs civil status

Efficient utility of the risk holiday

Experts suggest many ways to spend the risk holidays productively and stress-free (Bratic et al., 2021), ("Tourism Policy Responses to the coronavirus (COVID-19)", 2021).

There were no significant differences has been found in the efficient utilization of the holiday with the category of gender ($p=0.79$), civil status ($P=-.403$) as well as age group ($p=0.422$). When considering the zones, the teachers from Jaffna, Kilinochchi, and Mannar ultimately used the holiday in a useful way and Vavuniya North and South, as well as Island zone teachers, felt their holiday has been spent in vain.

Professional challenges of teachers during the declaration of risk vacation for COVID19

E- teaching methods and electronic devices used

Sri Lankan government schools conduct their teaching, learning mostly via online channels, large volumes of material as PDF documents to students via WhatsApp and Viber ("talking economics - Distance Education during and after COVID-19: Long Road Ahead for Sri Lanka", 2021). Anyhow, most of the methods were new to the Northern Province teachers which they hardly use for their teaching previously. The education broadcasting channels were

not previously established during the outbreak of COVID-19.

Around 76% of teachers have used digital platforms for teaching on special vacations. Among the respondents, 80% of teachers used smartphones while 10% of them had desktop computers. 2% of them stated that they used tablets. Around 32% of teachers has to purchase new mobile phones, desktop computer and router to start e- teaching during the pandemic time.

The diagram showed the various distance teaching-learning ways chosen by the teachers to teach during the special holiday.

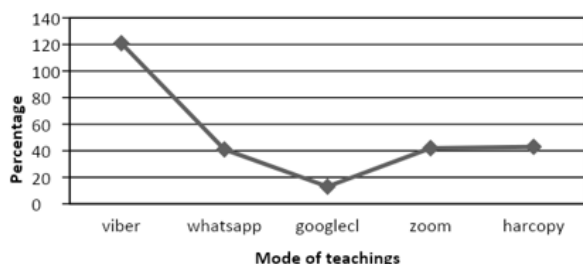


Figure7: Diversity of methods teachers used for their virtual teaching

Knowledge of Tech skills* and soft skills**

Priyadarshani (2021) accepts that teachers face difficulties in conducting online classes due to a lack of proper preparation and growth for doing online classes and the biggest challenge for online classes is technological challenges. In Northern Province, only 12% of teachers had an excellent knowledge of computer skills which require for the e-teaching who were from the age group of 25-30 and 31-35 ($P=0.000$). At the same time, the teachers from Jaffna, Kilinochchi, and Vavuniya zones had enough knowledge of computer skills. There were no differences has been observed in tech knowledge with gender ($P=0.2333$) and type of schools

($p=0.2884$). 36% of teachers confessed they had fair knowledge on computer and tech skills which they had to improve more to conduct e classes. The rest of 12% of teachers reported that they were unable to handle the mobile applications to share knowledge with the students and they need to develop with proper training.

Hewagamage (2011) suggests that ICT skill projects for teachers can be developed for teachers in various levels to strive in the same direction to improve future development.

- *Technical skills are a skill, expertise, or technical competence related to the field of the workers, whether engineering or technical (Medina, 2010).

- ** Soft skills are Personal attributes that enhance an individual's interactions, job performance, and career prospects. In other words, they are the subtle behaviors and communication styles that help make a work environment or interaction with another person easier to manage (Anju, 2009)

Challenges teachers faced with the sudden transition of online teaching

All the teachers accepted the change of teaching mode to online be unexpected and this was an uncomfortable way of teaching to them. 60% of teachers stated this was stressful for them when they initiated this teaching method. The teachers from the age group of 51-60 and teachers who teach the subjects of Tamil, Religion, and Aesthetic mainly complained this was a hard and stressful way of teaching ($p=0.000$),(0.000)

UNICEF honours the Sri Lankan teachers as heroes who work hard and sacrifice to ensure that their students could continue to develop and flourish during and after the COVID19 lockdown ("Our Hero Teachers: The many challenges of overcoming COVID19", 2021)

Since the schools were closed in the mid of March without a pre-announcement,

teachers had many challenges to reunite all the class pupils in one digital platform. The following challenges are found from their interviews.

- The contact numbers which students have given to school files were in simple mobile phone use; not a smartphone.

- Some of the mobile numbers didn't work or they belonged to another member of the family.

- Due to the financial background, the family couldn't bear a smart device to allocate to the students

- The carelessness of parents as well as students to communicate with the teacher

- Internet connection didn't suffice to conduct classes

- Pupils engaged in farming work as well as their family business with their parents to support them financially.

- Though teachers struggle to unite the students in online media to conduct classes and sharing knowledge, 80% of respondents reported 40-60% of students from their class were unable to join in digital teaching.

- Teachers had many alternative ways to teach those students who missed to join in the digital platform. Provision of prepared hard copy of study materials, printed practical cards and worksheets by hand as well as post. Teachers have joined few students who live in adjacent places and made a cluster to discuss the lessons among themselves. Some teachers have given instructions and guidance over the simple mobile phones to refer textbooks, workbooks, and websites for further exercises. Most of the teachers liked to give the lesson content in the form of questions and answers which they think is efficient for quick learning.

- As the result of the sudden closure of schools, teachers had many challenges to prepare their teaching aids while most of them have let their aids at

school. The respondents have stated the further challenges as below:

- Unavailable of printing, Xerox facility in the home while all the shops were closed

- Lack of the tech skill to browse the internet and access a lesson document from webpages

- unaware of getting suitable websites to refer the contents particularly in Tamil medium, Most of them has used <http://www.e-thaksalawa.moe.gov.lk/>, <http://www.edupub.gov.lk/>, <http://www.edudept.np.gov.lk/>

- There were disruptions while working for teaching aids in the home when all family members gathered as it was not a context for working.

- Teachers had to spend a significant amount of money for the online classes as well as for the home school preparing in the name of internet charges. There were no relationships found between the internet expenses of the teachers with the zones ($p=0.4009$) and the type of schools (0.7120). Anyhow 73% have stated they had spent more than 1000 rupees for their internet charge. The description is given in the below diagram.

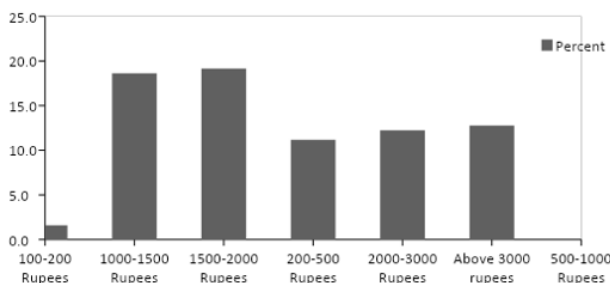


Figure8: Expenditures for the E-teaching.

- The teachers who are involved in online teaching have come up with many struggles while they teach. They are:

- Technical barriers interrupt the teaching-learning process such as shortage

of coverage, clarity, and clear of the video leads to communicative barriers.

- The lack of interest of students in the online classes felt it was a bore and exhausting.

- Attendance of students to an online class is low compare with the conventional classroom.

- Online classes were mostly lecture-based, not an activity based, So it was so hard to keep their concentration in the lesson and the teachers couldn't assess the student and do follow-up activities while they finish the class. So it was not so satisfying able to teachers.

- The students were inactive and less interested in raising questions during the online session.

- Teachers couldn't control, monitor, and evaluate in the online classroom due to that the remedial programmes couldn't be done.

Teacher-student, parent interaction during the pandemic time

60% of the teachers kept high contact with the student's family over the mobile phones as well as in various ways during the pandemic time. There were no significant differences between the communication levels with type of school or the zone. Most of the teachers had contact with the students and parents to boost and encourage them to study. Teachers have talked with the parents regarding their life thriving in the COVID-19 pandemic and discussed the homeschooling and distance learning methods.

Similar findings were obtained from the Alberta study, 45% of parents reported, that they came to aware of the demands and responsibilities of teachers after the pandemic and their respect for them increased ("Parent-teacher relations were both strained and strengthened by the COVID-19 pandemic", 2021).

The administrative pressures towards teachers throughout the risk vacation

Half amounts of the teachers revealed, they had full freedom to choose their own teaching methods. Most of the principals and sectional headteachers, as well as the officers from the zone, never interfere with the teaching and they gave their full support to teachers and students. Schools took in charge for taking Xerox copy of notes and assignments and distribute to the students. However, around 37% of teachers had a mild level of pressure and 9% of them had higher pressure from schools to conduct the online classes, prepare worksheets, assignments, and were forced to attend schools for clerical works.

On the other hand, the schools have set an expectation of continuing the learning process in the middle of the pandemic and it needs the support of the teachers for managing school activities (Schools' responses to Covid-19, 2020).

Challenges faced by the teachers and students after the reopening of school

The survey done by Nuffield Foundation between the school leaders (principals) most senior leaders predicted that they can manage to reopen the school with maximum precautions (Schools' responses to Covid-19, 2020). Teachers of Northern Province have many questions than the answers regarding the reopening of schools. They have listed out some of the challenges which they would face as below:

- To cover the syllabus within a short period
 - Prepare the students for the public examinations
 - Make the student familiarize to the corona awareness guidelines
 - Divert the mindset of students towards studies, get used to the routine life
- 4.3.6 Retrieve the mental health of teachers and students

Both educators and children can the stress and strains to schools which they have been gone through in the period of the COVID-19 crisis. Teachers cannot be expected to be successful at teaching while their mental health is unfit (Naiara et al,2020).

78% of teachers agreed that mental health revitalization programme should be needed for both teachers and students to get back the normal routine lifestyle. They suggested few more options for recovering mental health as below:

- Proper guidance and counseling session from the expertise people
- Conducting Motivating seminar, Yoga, Meditation, fun activities which can reduce the stress and strain in between the lessons without disrupting social distance
- Revocate the rules and regulations of the school in order to relax the students and teachers for a short period.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examines the challenges teachers faced during the COVID-19 risk holidays. Participants from twelve educational zones were represented the entire teachers from the Northern Province. A set of major challenges were found which teachers faced during the risk holidays.

Personal challenges of teachers faced in the period of COVID -19 outbreak

The financial crisis existed in the teachers' community since the teachers were paid with a below-average salary. Their income is not affordable to manage their expenditures during the risk holiday. Especially married teachers faced more difficulties than singles. At the same time, the female teachers have more financial troubles than the male.

Many teachers experienced this risk holiday changed their routine life

completely. Though it was stressful and agony for them, they tried maximum to make the vacation an efficient and useful one. The teachers belong to the age group of 51-60 had some health complaints such as joint pains, increased blood sugar due to their lack of physical activity.

The long-lasting vacation and lockdown made the teachers gain weight without any discrimination of gender and age group. At the same time, both the female and male teachers experienced higher household work burdens. Anyhow, most of them felt, the risk holiday was very healthy and relax to them though few of them were scared about the Corona Virus spreading, There were mild family quarrels and conflicts were reported particularly in the home of married teachers than singles while all the members stay in the home for 24 hours in a day.

Occupational challenges of teachers faced in the period of COVID -19 outbreak

The sudden transformation from the traditional teaching methods to the digital methods is a challenge to almost all the teachers in the Northern Province since it is very new to them. Anyhow, teachers initiate the distance learning method with the existing sources. Some of them had to purchase new devices with their own money to conduct e-classes. They choose different mobile phone applications such as Viber, Whatsapp, Zoom, Google classroom as well as other digital methods.

Most of the young teachers were able to manage with the technical skills acquired from their tertiary education and successfully led the online and distance classes, At the same time the teachers above 40 years, had slight struggles at the initial period but they were managed to teach in digital platform with their effort and training. Few of them were not interested in distance teaching methods.

The majority of the teachers felt, initiating online or distance teaching is very uncomfortable to them without any

preparation and training. Educational administrators have given their full support and freedom to teachers to lead their teaching and learning in their own way. The occupational challenges can be

classified as student-oriented, Family oriented as well as teacher-oriented which were listed as in the table below.

Table 2: Challenges in the distance learning in Northern Province

Teacher oriented	Students oriented	Family oriented	Technology oriented
Lack of tech skills and soft skills to handle LMS	The contact numbers in schools were not working	Financial hardships and poor family background	Inadequate coverage
Less preparation and organization	Low attendance	Not affordable for smartphones, another devices	Less clarity in video and sound system
Less interest	Less interest	Irresponsibility	
High internet charges	Poor computer literacy	Workload	
Lecture-based teaching		Less communication with teachers	
		Keep the students to involve in small trades and own business	

DISCUSSION WITH THE RECOMMENDATION

Respondents believed the outcome of the distance teaching in Northern Province wouldn't be fruitful. Teachers were in worry about covering the syllabus within a short period and prepare the students for public examinations while reopening the school. Moreover, they believe that the teachers and students wouldn't be in the mindset to involve in teaching-learning after the long vacation with a completely new scenario. They look forward to some activities and events to retrieve the mental health to get optimum output.

It is important to overcome the challenges and take necessary precautions. It is one of the primary duties of policymakers and executors to overcome the financial as well as the occupational challenges faced by the teachers.

Moreover, teachers need financial education to manage their life expenditure since the salary of a teacher in Sri Lanka is merely low.

The Ministry of Education should come up with a proper policy draft on the teacher's well-being index in Sri Lanka. The socio-economical and mental well-being of teachers becomes vital in the quickly transforming world. Teachers need more guidance and education to realize their abilities to cope with the stress of life and give their fruitful contribution to the students' community.

In this 21st century, ICT skills and technical skills have become very important for teacher professional development. The opportunities for improving fundamental Information & technology skills should be provided to the teachers via training sessions as well as efficiency bar examinations.

Education interventions during a pandemic can support the prevention and recovery of public health while mitigating the impact on students and learning. Useful new skills such as distance learning skills and deeper digital mastery should be acquired in all levels of education benefactors and commentators. They need to grow their interest in the new skills which need for their digital learning. Students and teachers have to adhere to blended learning which is going to make a great deal in the future of education to break various barriers such as crisis COVID-19.

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