

Gender Impact during COVID-19 on University Teachers

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University teachers have adapted to different situations during the development of distance learning due to the pandemic caused by the COVID-19 virus. 63% of the teachers working online complained that online teaching invaded their family privacy; 56% pointed out that working from home and the virtual classes affected their performance as teachers; 90% of the teachers thought that they dedicated too much extra to preparing for their classes; 15% were stressed; 4% felt negative under the new teaching scheme of virtual classes; finally, 38% of the teachers stated that repeated interaction with electronic devices had a lot of negative impacts on their emotional wellbeing.

COVID-19

pandemic

teachers

universities

faculty members

impact

1. Introduction

Since December 2019, COVID-19 has spread rapidly from China to many countries around the world because of international travel, and it became one of the global challenges placing a significant burden on the healthcare sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected many countries globally, resulting in the implementation of strict control measures to stop the viral spread. The closure of universities and the adoption of online learning were among these preventive measures [1][2]. UNESCO reported university closures in more than 160 countries that are not sure of how long the coronavirus crisis will last and how it could affect the mental health of the students and faculty [3]. The psychological effects of the sudden transition from face-to-face to online classes generated anguish and uncertainty [4]. Home confinement as a measure to avoid contagion also made many teachers feel afraid, hopeless, and stressed [5]. The closure of universities was a protective measure considered by studies comparing the impact of the spread of COVID-19 among those exposed in face-to-face teaching and unexposed teachers (online teaching), which revealed that the spread of the virus in the exposed community doubled compared to the unexposed teachers. In addition, it was also shown that those in the exposed categories also serve as a vehicle of transmission to others—mostly their partners. These studies concluded that adequate protection should be provided for the teachers; however, this has led to a high degree of social isolation among university staff and students [6][7]. The online teaching method was adapted to keep education going while not exposing the teachers to infection [8]. However, the adoption of the online or distance learning scheme opened a new chapter in the understanding of the mental health stability of teachers and students. Online education is not limited to distance

education, as it refers to a grouping of teaching–learning procedures completed in cyberspace [9][10][11]. Mental health problems can have a negative impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of students and predispose them to many unhealthy behaviors [8]. Melaku (2021) found that depression, anxiety, and stress were common problems among Arsi University medical students exposed to online teaching activities [12]. Gregori (2021) evaluated a program in which teachers served as coaches for professionals [13]. The results showed that with teacher coaching, paraprofessionals increased their behavior intervention implementation fidelity to a hundred percent. The teaching roles in the time of the pandemic include offering support for home confinement, promoting resilience, academic guidance, preventing procrastination, empathetic and active listening, emotional and institutional advising, and acting as a motivator [5][14]. Other requirements for teachers include voice modulation, becoming familiar with the equipment and software and optimizing its use, being mindful of body language, using a script to optimize the use of time, and allowing the students to express themselves freely. During the execution of the classes, teachers are recommended to give clear instructions, resolve doubts, and explain the projects and tasks, among others. In order to fulfill these roles and requirements, the mechanism for evaluating the students and assignment deadlines should be clearly stated and, as a suggestion, tutorials should have clear explanations [5][8].

Fedock (2019) explored how adjunct higher education faculty perceive using social media (SM) as an instructional tool for their students during the pandemic and found out that it is one of the most effective tools for knowledge dissemination [15]. In other related studies, the reliability and effectiveness of different information technology (IT) tools used by teachers were evaluated and it was found that most of the knowledge transfer was based on learning tools (LT), the use of mobile instruments (such as cell phones and tablets), and virtual libraries (VL), with levels of 89%, 85%, and 82%, respectively [16]. In addition, they found that the use of cell phones made the teaching–learning process more dynamic. Adopting an online learning approach has proven to be an alternative to physical classrooms in an uncontrollable situation. This has allowed universities, faculty, and students to have patience and resilience, which will be useful for future challenges in high-quality education [17][18][19]. Another effect of the pandemic is a diminishment in the quality of education that all students deserve [20]; the absence of online learning infrastructure could have worsened the situation worldwide. The physical distancing amid the pandemic has influenced the attitudes of teachers worldwide opting for social media (SM) use in online learning, mainly in developing countries. Switching to online learning using SM under challenging situations like the COVID-19 pandemic is, thus, inevitable [21][22]. Many students have lost close family members and must continue to study under these conditions. In Mexico, higher education institutions (HEIs) are classified into six large groups: public universities, technological education, technological and polytechnic universities, private institutions, normal education, and other public institutions. All the categories switched to the virtual mode of teaching during the pandemic.

There are several challenges that teachers have had in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic; most have declared that their actions were focused not only on the academic component but also on the emotional [23]. Teachers, being on the front lines with their students, were probably not trained to respond to the threats to the emotional wellbeing of themselves and their students, and they may have experienced situations of stress and anxiety [24]. Different investigations on the psychological reactions resulting from the pandemic have suggested that some factors related to anxiety or health had an impact on the vulnerability of some teachers. Among some situations that can

be mentioned are a tolerance to uncertainty, the self-perception of their susceptibility to the disease, and anxiety [25]. Other factors, such as being female, having COVID-19 symptoms, misinformation, social isolation, low educational levels, unemployment, or losing one's job were the main situations that had the reported greatest psychological effects and seem to have been associated with the highest levels of anxiety and depression [26]. Research in China found that young women were among the most vulnerable groups to mental health consequences from the pandemic, as many working women also took care of their homes [27]. Therefore, the closure of school institutions can substantially reduce job performance for fear of not maintaining employment, limiting development opportunities, and affecting one's financial status [23]. However, and paradoxically, the pandemic has also motivated teachers to have greater commitment to their academic work, and some teachers even perceive that the situation of confinement allowed them to spend more time with their families and have greater comfort and reduced their travel expenses [28][29]. In the case of teachers, the new dynamics of teaching and learning made their work more intense, and it overflowed into their personal time and lives [30]. The need to undergo continuous training predisposed them to the abandonment of leisure activities, sport, and other practices that reduce stress [31]. Alavudeen and Easwaran (2021) generated affectations such as a lack of experience or ignorance in the management of virtual learning platforms (VLPs), poor connectivity, and poor audio/video quality were impotent barriers that increased psychological stress, study discipline, and life status that caused a non-positive impact on the performance of the teaching–learning process in online education [32]. Psychological distress, technical problems associated with accessibility, inexperience, and a lack of preparation were found to be the main barriers limiting students' acceptance of learning that impacted the outcome of their assessments Mexico was not the exception, as COVID-19 altered the work of HEIs in Mexico, resulting in both expected and unexpected consequences that are yet to be identified and evaluated. Many HEIs undertook different actions and studies to determine the short- and medium-term implications [9][12][17][33]. A preliminary analysis indicated that, in general, HEIs did not have any foresight to face the crisis and its arrival took the HEIs by surprise. However, they reacted positively both to contribute to the reduction of the risks of contagion and to resume their functions and fulfill their commitments. Important institutional processes have been affected even without knowing the negative impacts of the short and medium term. The technological universities have undertaken analysis projects on the impact of COVID-19 and the effects on their academic community of teachers and students. Not all the different entities that make up the Ministry of Education in Mexico (SEP) undertook actions of this nature, which makes the results achieved a project of value for the establishment of systems to improve the teaching–learning process in a virtual way [34].

2. Gender Impact during COVID-19

Gender is an important issue as a trending topic and more during the pandemic. There are important advances in this regard throughout recent years such as technology improvements, but there are some challenges to face, such as gender equity in access, in digital devices ownership, in training for digital fluency, and ability accessing technology. Although affordability is key factor for exclusion, the analysis of that matter should be studied specific working environments and working opportunities, but also in financial inclusion. Technology represents an

omnipresent element that affects globally and internet assumes incorporating the individual to a interconnected society where inclusion represents a competitive advantage in development, integration and wellness [35][36].

Imbalanced coverage in connectivity, technology appropriation generates a digital gap between those with access and those without coverage. This gap could be attributed to a geographic, economic, cultural, and generational disparity. Alva (2015) declared the presence of a digital gap in three dimensions: access, use and appropriation. He explained that these dimensions give three particular gaps: (a) digital gap of use, (b) age range digital gap between native and digital inmigrants, and (c) gender digital gap [37].

The digital gap could be attributed to diverse factors. According to Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática de Mexico (INEGI), the factors are school attendance, being ages 15–17 predominantly male; education level, where female 15+ is lower than the years attending to school by 15+ males; lower participation of female (23.7%) in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); cultural matters as reading habits, which is lower in female 25+; low attendance of female to cultural activities (39.8%) promoting their personal development; and a lower economic participation by sector in the country which is of 95 per 100 male in population in the age range 30–49. These factors maintain a rough affectation, mainly to female, which stood up during the COVID-19 pandemic: 66.6% of female 12+ work 30.8 h to non paid activities their need to work and being in charge of the family and house keeping or by being pregnant, which make their activity a non paid one, while male use 28% of their time, or 11.6 h to those activities [38].

Korlat (2021) studied four components of digital learning that are susceptible of stereotyped gender gap [39]. While Lawal et al. (2021) did not find significance differences regarding gender, but it is attributed to the fact that both genders were submitted to similar COVID-19 protocols during the pandemic [40]. Female experience unique health risks resulting from their gender. Many of these studies identified inequity in the academic world for female [41]. The barriers include disparity in economic compensation and inequity in the three pillars of academic assessment: teaching, service and research. Due to uneven payment for female teachers, specially those non-white, it is highly probable that the stressing economic factors were exacerbated during the pandemic, particularly for homes with a female as head of the family or single mothers, and predominantly for those in incidental teaching positions [41]. Regarding scientific literature produced before the pandemic, Garduño (2020) considers that teacher exposition to psychosocial risks derived from their exposition to the school environment is also a future possibility for distance teaching. This implies a greater exposition to depression, stress and mental health issues. Literature also points out the relationship between inadequate working conditions and psychosocial consequences, sucha as stress, dysphonia and voice related problems, phisical inactivity during free time and anxiety. This reality could also be be different for male and female in the labor market. From this differences, literature centers its attention in the higher exposition of female to domestic violence due to lockdowns and in the working environment it is legitimate to consider that female could be overwhelmed [42].

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