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## Mental health of secondary school teachers as the predictor of their online teaching effectiveness

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### Abstract

The concept of online teaching became more popular during the pandemic of COVID-19 as the whole education system was affected worldwide, and all educational institutions were closed. Face-to-face classes were canceled, and only through online mode did learners continue their education. However, the sudden transition from face-to-face to online learning has posed numerous challenges for teachers, administrators, and policymakers. Online teaching is a very challenging task for teachers because it was a sudden transition in the teaching method, and teachers needed to prepare for it. As a result, teachers came under pressure, and their mental health was also affected because of the stress, anxiety, and depression. This study aimed to examine mental health as a predictor of online teaching effectiveness. The study reveals exciting results and significant implications after analysing the data obtained by administering a self-constructed questionnaire to 300 secondary school teachers of Aligarh (UP).

**Keywords:** Mental health, online teaching effectiveness, secondary school teachers

### Introduction

Teachers play an essential role in nurturing the education and development of students, and their value cannot be underestimated. They are responsible for transmitting knowledge, skills, and information to their students, facilitating the learning process, and equipping students with the necessary knowledge and abilities for success in various aspects of life. Beyond academics, teachers also support students' intellectual and personal development, fostering qualities such as lifelong learning, critical thinking, and curiosity. In many cases, teachers serve as role models, influencing the character and values of the next generation through their actions, morals, and ethics. Teachers provide guidance and support to help students overcome challenges, make important decisions, and set and achieve goals. They often take on roles as mentors and advisors, boosting students' self-esteem and confidence by acknowledging their accomplishments and encouraging them to persevere through difficulties. Positive feedback from teachers can leave an everlasting impact on a student's self-perception. A dedicated and passionate teacher can instill a love for learning that extends beyond the classroom, motivating students to explore new subjects and continue their education. Additionally, teachers contribute to innovation by developing innovative teaching methods, materials, and technologies that enhance the learning experience for students. Their creativity plays a crucial role in advancing education.

Teachers are instrumental in shaping the future by educating and nurturing the next generation. Their influence extends beyond the classroom, contributing to students' personal, academic, and social development and ultimately driving societal progress. Furthermore, in today's technological era, teachers continue to adapt and embrace new tools and methods to enhance their teaching and engage students in the digital age.

### Online Teaching Effectiveness

During the COVID-19 pandemic, schools worldwide switched from regular face-to-face classes to online teaching. Many developing countries have taken steps to improve online education, from elementary to university levels. The least developing countries (LDCs) and developing nations have encountered significant difficulties adjusting to the changing circumstances of the 'new teaching-learning situation (Ramji & Sultan, 2020) [8].

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Several online platforms, such as Zoom, Skype, Big Blue Button, Dingding, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, offered valuable features and tools to facilitate online teaching. Nonetheless, educators grappled with the dilemma of whose guidance to follow and which tools to select (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021) <sup>[13]</sup>.

Educators in Indian schools, colleges, and universities have encountered numerous obstacles while conducting online classes and using the above tools. These challenges include a shortage of technological proficiency, access to digital tools, expertise in digital teaching, management skills, limited availability of digital devices and internet access, and psychological issues (Dhawan, 2020) <sup>[12]</sup>. During the COVID-19 pandemic, online education has become the only substitute for many schools, colleges, and universities in this particular situation. Consequently, there is a pressing requirement to assess the efficacy of online courses within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, it is crucial to conduct research comparing online education's effectiveness to traditional classroom teaching. This comparative analysis is valuable for stakeholders like policymakers who must make informed evaluations about online teaching (Bernard *et al.*, 2004) <sup>[19]</sup>. Online education has been widely adopted as an alternative to traditional face-to-face education. (Fawaz & Samaha, 2021) <sup>[7]</sup> Numerous research investigations have pinpointed factors that impact the effectiveness of online educators, including elements such as K-12 preparation for online teaching (Moore-Adams *et al.*, 2016) <sup>[20]</sup>, the proficiency of online education and its implementation (Sun & Chen, 2016) <sup>[11]</sup>, as well as the practices associated with online teaching and learning (Carrillo & Flores, 2020) <sup>[1]</sup>. Faculty perceptions about teaching online (Wingo *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[17]</sup>, Challenges in the online component of blended learning (Rasheed *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[10]</sup>, and Online teaching challenges (Hassan, 2021) <sup>[4]</sup>.

### Mental Health

The World Health Organization (2022) broadly defines mental health as a “state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and can contribute to his or her community.” Teachers who enjoy sound mental well-being, devoid of stress, exhibit high proficiency and effectiveness in their roles while also finding satisfaction in their work. The mental health of educators is a crucial concern, as it significantly impacts the quality of education (Yang *et al.*, 2019) <sup>[18]</sup>. Mental health refers to an individual's awareness of their capabilities, ability to manage life's challenges, effective societal functioning, and community contributions (Silver & Zinsser, 2020) <sup>[14]</sup>. Teachers are community builders and hold a pivotal position in molding the prospects of the upcoming generation. Frequently, they grapple with elevated stress and exhaustion from extended work hours, substantial class sizes, and demanding anticipation from students, parents, and school authorities. Consequently, it is imperative to prioritize and focus on the mental well-being of teachers. This endeavor represents a convergence of social psychology and the realm of pedagogy (Tsukawaki & Imura, 2022) <sup>[16]</sup>. Teachers' mental health in traditional learning has always been mentioned in multiple kinds of literature (Guoyan *et al.*, 2023) <sup>[21]</sup>.

Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront the significance of mental health at a broader scale. Throughout this health crisis, educators, academic staff, and teachers have notably experienced mental distress (Holmes *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[3]</sup>. Based on recent research conducted in the Arab region regarding the pandemic, educators encountered various challenges, including feelings of anxiety, despair, marital conflicts, and divorce. These difficulties have impeded their effectiveness in teaching (Al Lily *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[22]</sup>. As reported by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), by the conclusion of March 2020, the global closure of schools in response to COVID-19 had impacted a staggering 1,574,989,812 students, which accounted for 90 percent of the total enrollment. Eight months later, with the commencement of the 2020-2021 academic year, there were still 851,870,246 students, constituting 48.7 percent of the enrolled population, who continued to experience the effects of school closures worldwide (Bhuvanewari *et al.*, 2022) <sup>[23]</sup>. The epidemic did not just have an impact on students' mental health. (Cachón-Zagalaz *et al.*, 2020) <sup>[24]</sup>.

Teachers' mental well-being is linked to their effectiveness as educators and the overall quality of the education system. By placing a premium on mental health, teachers can enhance their equilibrium between work and personal life, their teaching proficiency, resilience, and job contentment. Furthermore, they can contribute to the well-being of students, diminish sick leave and absenteeism, boost professional growth and long-term career sustainability, nurture a favorable school atmosphere, and foster inclusivity. Schools and administrators acknowledge the significance of mental health and offer the necessary resources and support to help educators maintain their overall well-being. Various studies have identified components influencing mental health, such as job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness (Mustafa & Shafiq, 2022) <sup>[9]</sup>, Teacher satisfaction and psychological well-being (Sisask *et al.*, 2014) <sup>[15]</sup>, Occupational stress and stress management (Leung *et al.*, 2009) <sup>[5]</sup>, school climate (McLean *et al.*, 2017) <sup>[6]</sup>.

### The Rationale of the Study

Online teaching was a transition because of COVID-19, which posed significant challenges for teachers and students. This abrupt shift highlighted the need to understand better the factors influencing the effectiveness of online teaching. Given the added stressors and uncertainties associated with the new teaching environment, teachers' mental health emerged as a critical concern. Extensive research has established a strong connection between teacher well-being and student outcomes. Mentally and emotionally healthy teachers are better equipped to create supportive learning environments, engage students, and promote academic success. Given the potential impact of teacher mental health on students, investigating its role in online teaching is essential. Online teaching presents unique challenges affecting teacher well-being, including adapting to new technologies, managing diverse student needs, and creating a sense of community and belonging in a virtual classroom. These challenges can be mentally taxing, making it crucial to examine how teachers' mental health correlates with their online teaching effectiveness.

**Objectives**

1. To study the relationship between mental health and the online teaching effectiveness of secondary school teachers.
2. To investigate the impact of mental health on the online teaching effectiveness of secondary school teachers.

**Hypothesis**

**Ho1:** There would be no significant relationship between mental health and the online teaching effectiveness of secondary school teachers.

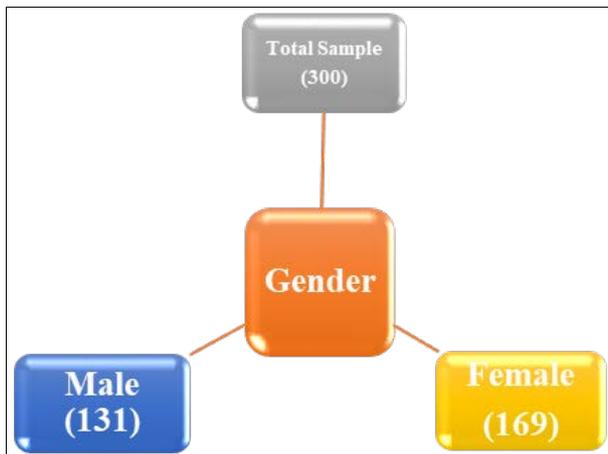
**Ho2:** There would be no significant impact of mental health on the online teaching effectiveness of secondary school teachers.

**Methodology**

In this study, online teaching effectiveness (OTE) was the criterion variable, whereas mental health was the predictive variable.

**The sample size of the study**

This study's sample was taken from government schools in the Aligarh district of UP. Its bifurcation is given below:



**Fig 1:** Distribution of Sample in Relation to Gender

**Tools of the Study**

The researcher developed two scales, the Online Teaching Effectiveness Scale and the Mental Health Scale, to collect the data. The description of these tools is given below:

**Online Teaching Effectiveness Scale (OTES)**

The researcher created the Online Teaching Effectiveness Scale (OTES) to gauge teachers' proficiency in online education. This scale comprises 54 items evaluated on a five-point Likert scale and covers five distinct dimensions. The first dimension concerns "Teaching Skills," the second dimension focuses on "Student Engagement," the third dimension assesses "Subject Mastery," the fourth dimension relates to "Communication," and the fifth and final dimension pertains to "Evaluation." To evaluate the scale's reliability, Cronbach Alpha was used, resulting in a highly significant value of 0.935. The scale encompasses both positively and negatively worded items, and respondents are required to choose the appropriate response from the following options: "Strongly Agree" (SA), "Agree" (A), "Undecided" (U), "Disagree" (D), or "Strongly Disagree" (SD). For positively phrased items, a score of 5 corresponds

to "Strongly Agree," 4 to "Agree," 3 to "Undecided," 2 to "Disagree," and 1 to "Strongly Disagree." Conversely, for negatively phrased items, the scoring is inverted: "Strongly Agree" receives 1 point, "Agree" receives 2 points, "Undecided" receives 3 points, "Disagree" receives 4 points, and "Strongly Disagree" receives 5 points.

**Mental Health Scale (MHS)**

The researcher designed the Mental Health Scale (MHS) to evaluate the mental well-being of teachers during online teaching. This scale comprises 46 items rated on a five-point Likert scale and covers five distinct dimensions. The first dimension is "dealing with pressure," the second is "perception of well-being," the third relates to "adjustment with environment," and the fourth concerns "self-concept." In contrast, the fifth and final dimension is "life satisfaction." To assess the scale's reliability, Cronbach's alpha was employed, resulting in a highly significant value of 0.925. The scale includes items with both positive and negative wording, and respondents are required to choose the appropriate response from categories such as "Always," "Most often," "Sometimes," "Rarely," and "Never." For positively worded items, a score of 5 corresponds to the "Always" response, 4 to "Most often," 3 to "Sometimes," 2 to "Rarely," and 1 to "Never." Conversely, for negatively worded items, the scoring process is reversed, with one assigned to "Always," 2 to "Most often," 3 to "Sometimes," 4 to "Rarely," and 5 to "Never." The total of these values provides respondents with their Mental Health scores.

**Statistical methods used in the study**

The statistical methods employed in this research include the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Stepwise Multiple Regression.

**Analysis and Interpretation of the Study**

Concerning the study's first objective, the research established correlation coefficients between mental health (MH), considered the predictive variable, and scores for Online Teaching Effectiveness (OTE), which serves as the criterion variable. These correlations are displayed in the following table.

**Table 1:** Correlation between Mental Health (MH) and Online Teaching Effectiveness (OTE) total sample of Secondary School Teachers

Total Sample of the teachers	Male teacher Sample	Female teacher sample
.278**	.325**	.214**

\*\* Significant correlation at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 provides insights into the connection between online teaching effectiveness (OTE) and mental health (MH) for a diverse group of secondary school teachers. It reveals that, for the entire sample, there is a statistically significant positive correlation ( $r = .278^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) between OTE and MH. Furthermore, the correlation is even stronger when looking at male teachers separately ( $r = .325^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating a robust relationship between OTE and MH. The correlation remains significant for female teachers but is somewhat lower ( $r = .214^{**}$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). These findings imply that online teaching effectiveness improves as mental health improves. As a result, the study's first hypothesis, which suggested a positive relationship between mental health and

online teaching effectiveness, is contradicted. Instead, it is concluded that a positive relationship exists between teachers' mental health and their effectiveness in online teaching across the entire sample and among male and female teachers.

For the study's second objective, step-wise multiple regression analysis was applied, and the results for the total sample of male and female teachers are shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4.

**Table 2:** For the total sample, the results of step-wise multiple regression analysis

Components of Mental Health	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	F Change
Dealing with pressure	.308	.095	.095	31.137**

\*\* Significant at .01 level

Table 2 highlights that these results demonstrate that a teacher's ability to handle pressure (as a component of mental health) has a positive and statistically significant impact on their online teaching effectiveness for the total sample. Approximately 9.5% of the variation in online teaching effectiveness (OTE) can be attributed to this factor, and including it in the model improves the overall fit of the regression analysis. However, the remaining four dimensions (perception of well-being, adjustment with environment, self-concept, and life satisfaction) are not contributing. These findings are essential for understanding the role of mental health components in predicting online teaching effectiveness.

**Table 3:** For the male sample, the results of step-wise multiple regression analysis

Components of Mental Health	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> change	F Change
Dealing with pressure (DP)	.388	.150	.150	22.817**
Dealing with pressure (DP), Life Satisfaction (LS)	.423	.179	.029	4.522**

\*\*significant at .01 level

Table 3 highlights clearly that the most important predictor for the Online teaching effectiveness for the male sample, the ability to "Deal with Pressure," around 15% of the variance in online teaching effectiveness (OTE), is positively correlated with online teaching effectiveness, and "Life Satisfaction" contributes an additional 2.9% variance in online teaching effectiveness (OTE). The results indicate that, for the male sample, the ability to "Deal with Pressure" positively correlates with online teaching effectiveness. Adding "Life Satisfaction" contributes a smaller but significant amount of explained variance in OTE. However, the remaining three dimensions (Perception of well-being, adjustment with the environment, and self-concept) are not contributing. It means both the ability to manage pressure and life satisfaction in understanding and improving teaching performance online.

**Table 4:** For the female sample, the results of step-wise multiple regression analysis

Components of Mental Health	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	F Change
Self-Concept	.258	.067	.067	11.909**
Self-Control (SC), Life Satisfaction (LS)	.329	.108	.042	7.738**

\*\*significant at .01 level

Table 3 highlights clearly that the most important predictor for the Online teaching effectiveness for the male sample, the ability to "self-concept," around 6.7% of the variance in OTE, and "Life Satisfaction" contributes an additional 4.2% of explained variance in online teaching effectiveness (OTE). The results indicate that, for the female sample, "Self-Concept" is positively correlated with online teaching effectiveness. Adding "Self-Control" and "Life Satisfaction" contributes to the explained variance in online teaching effectiveness (OTE). However, the remaining three dimensions (Dealing with pressure, perception of well-being, and adjustment with the environment) are not contributing. The role of specific mental health components in predicting online teaching effectiveness for female teachers. They highlight the importance of considering self-concept, self-control, and life satisfaction in understanding and improving teaching performance in the online context.

**Discussion of the Results**

These results provide comprehensive insights into the relationship between mental health components and online teaching effectiveness among a diverse group of secondary school teachers. The findings underscore the importance of teacher well-being, including managing pressure, life satisfaction, self-concept, and self-control, as crucial factors in determining success in the online teaching environment. These outcomes hold significant implications for educational institutions seeking to support and empower their teaching staff in the digital learning era. Suggesting that teachers are mentally healthy and easily teach online condition.

**Educational Implications of the study**

**For teacher education institutes**

- The teacher education institutions should consider implementing programs and resources to promote teachers' mental health and well-being. This could include workshops on stress management, emotional intelligence, and self-care.
- Incorporate mental health awareness and stress management training into teacher professional development programs. Teachers should be equipped with tools and strategies to maintain their mental well-being, particularly in the context of online teaching.
- Advocate for the availability of mental health services within or in partnership with schools. Teachers should have easy access to professional support when needed.

**For teachers**

- Teachers should prioritize self-care, which includes maintaining a work-life balance, managing stress, and seeking support when necessary. Teachers need to understand that their well-being directly impacts their teaching effectiveness.
- Encourage teachers to create a supportive peer network where they can discuss challenges, share strategies for coping with stress, and offer emotional support to one another.
- Teachers can benefit from training in emotional intelligence, as it can enhance their ability to manage their emotions, understand their students better, and navigate the complexities of online teaching.

**For Principals/Administrators**

- School principals and administrators should foster a supportive leadership style that values the mental health of their teaching staff. They can lead by example in prioritizing self-care and maintaining an open and empathetic approach to teacher well-being.
- Implement flexible work policies that allow teachers to balance their professional and personal lives. This flexibility can reduce stress and improve overall well-being.
- Ensure teachers access mental health resources and support within the school or through external partnerships. This includes counseling services and stress management workshops.
- The administrators should create a congenial environment in which teachers feel comfortable discussing their mental health issues. The department can encourage schools to provide access to counseling services and resources for teachers.

**For policymakers**

- Policymakers should invest in campaigns that raise awareness about the importance of mental health in education. This can help reduce stigma and encourage teachers to seek support when needed.
- Advocate for the integration of mental health education within the curriculum. Students and teachers can benefit from learning about mental health, coping strategies, and emotional intelligence.
- Enact policies that require educational institutions to provide mental health support for teachers, including access to counseling services and work-life balance initiatives.
- Support research into the relationship between teacher mental health and student outcomes. Policymakers can use data to inform decisions about resource allocation and program development.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study highlights the integral role of mental health in the effectiveness of secondary school teachers in online teaching. By recognizing the significance of teacher well-being, implementing support initiatives, and fostering a culture of understanding and empathy, the educational sector can enhance the effectiveness of online teaching and contribute to the overall health and satisfaction of its teaching professionals. In an era where online education is increasingly prevalent, this research underscores the imperative of nurturing and prioritizing the mental health of our educators.

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