

**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 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. 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 economical shortage than others. Both male and female teachers faced increased household burden. Married teachers had moderate level of family conflicts in the home. Most of the teachers have felt the life style pattern has changed in the risk holiday. Teachers from the age group of 40-60 suffered with health inconvenient and less physical activity. More than half number of teachers (61%) put on weight without any gender and civil status differences. Most of the teachers' mental well-being was the mixture of stress (24%) and lazy (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 with 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 work load of the parents are the few causes for the challenges that teachers experienced. Moreover, the inadequate coverage and the troubles in video and sound system in online classes are the technology-oriented problems that teachers could be face. Teachers need socio-emotional and economical support to face the pressures in a time of crisis as well as support their students' emotional needs. The study can find measures of temporary policy responses in 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 an efficient productivity.

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