

Self Concept and Attitude of Women Teachers in Private education Sector Jobs Post COVID- 19

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ABSTRACT: The world has been under going through one of the worst pandemic ever seen .The pandemic has hit the world in many ways . The countries not only observed the setbacks in health sector but also in the economy and the education sector too. The impact of pandemic was found to be more on the private education sector which especially affected the women in private education sector job. The women teachers in private education sector , either had to lose their jobs or to compromise with their salary. Even staying back at home has also impacted their self concept and expected to have affected their attitude towards their work.

KEY WORDS: Pandemic, COVID -19, Women teachers, Private education sector, Self -Concept , Attitude

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Private Education Sector in India: India has long and rich history of education which acquired different forms in its journey from ancient times to the modern times .For long the education was related to occupations and the skills of occupations were handed from one generation to another within a family. So, the family were the schools and the parents and elderly persons of the family including women of the house were the teachers. And the learner or student happened to be the new members of the family (Kambhampati, 2014).

Later the Vedic period of ancient history presented evidences that the education had no longer remained a family matter but it broke the restrictions that prohibited any one to get the education from outside the family occupation (Altekar 1944). Even then the women were not devoid of educational jobs. But later histories observed wars and when men went out for war, women had to take charge of all the jobs at home .She was not only involved in the household but also had a role in the economy of the family with great potentials for the society. She also took charge of works outside her home. She was admired for her courage, intellect, precision and dedication to the work they did. But in later history of education, there are records that women were neither allowed to study nor allowed to come out of home. The medieval period remained .However, later the situational bargain made her to work at compromised wages or salary. Although, she was considered befitting for softer jobs , She was considered good for teaching but not for being Principal, becoming nurse not doctor or engineer. The parity still exists. And begins from high school education where the girl's enrolment in science stream is meagre in comparison to boys. Women in private education sector never complained of inequality in jobs, salary or wages.

Impact Of COVID-19 On Education Sectors: Everything was apparently fine in the education sector till December 2018 .COVID -19 worsened the situation for women teachers working in private sectors.

The plight of private school teachers can be understood by the examples of Telangana where private school teachers were forced to return to their hometowns with family as the schools were closed and lock down was imposed to check the pandemic spread .So back home they were jobless. Government's instruction to pay the teachers earned them no or lesser amount of their salary. Telangana Private Teachers Federation president told that teachers of about 11,700 recognised private schools lost their jobs .Official reports state that about 1,20,350 worked in these schools. Unofficially these numbers may expand to 250,000. Teaching being considered a softer job, these numbers undoubtedly included mostly women teachers. The situation was same all over the world. "COVID -19 has been hard on women of different countries because economy of countries were hard on women". With outburst of pandemic the number of unemployed increased many fold when millions lost their jobs. The women population working as pink collar has been supporting the childcare and schools. COVID -19 hit the economy and pushed millions of such women and their family to the joblessness. The teachers in America admitted that the pandemic has forced them to retire before they have planned. Especially those above the age of 50 and plus with more than 20 years of tenure still left for retirement. Almost 18 percent of all public and private schoolteachers are in the age group 65 and above comprising vulnerable group to virus

and its different strain.(American teachers federation and national labour union of teachers ,The American enterprises institute)

The public schools in Rhode Island reported a new challenge. The standard health and hygiene can be maintained but more help is required to accommodate individual and virtual learning needs. Laura Hart, Public Affairs Director of Rhode Island anticipated a greater need for substitute teachers in pandemic as the island was struggling with the need of ESL and STEM teachers. "Filling teacher and substitute positions is challenging under normal conditions," Hart said. "Recruitment for educators to work in brick-and-mortar classrooms has been made more challenging during the pandemic." Hart has been only pointing towards the lacunae created by the pandemic in education sector.

Richa Bhattacharya (2021) from Economic Times reported that women's participation in the Indian workforce showed sharp decline during COVID -19 Returning to work was declined to about one fourth of the population employed before pandemic. A survey of more than 300 companies conducted by Jobs For Her showed that most of the women adopted 'work from home' which widened the pre existing inequalities and created further challenges as their burden at home doubled with increased responsibilities towards children and elderly parents that too without domestic help. Al Amin and Chowdhary (2008) found that differences in salary had impacts on self confidence and self esteem of women.

Challenges Faced by Teachers Post COVID -19 : While teaching during COVID, it became more difficult for a teacher to reach the enrolled students. They were far from the contact as the only means to reach them were mobiles. It is by convention that many of the students were not given mobiles in fact many of the family has only one mobile on which the school or the teacher can contact. Moreover that mobile may or may be android one and that sole mobile remains with the head of the family .if the head of the family is earning person than he may not be near his ward. So the teacher fails to contact the students. And if the student has one or more brothers and sisters receiving education then within the same time period ,one of the student would fail to get the education as Access it is impossible for a middle class parent to buy an android mobile for each family member specially when they are school going. This problem is severe in rural schools in comparison to urban schools .It was more visual in government schools than in private schools. Such students were totally dependent on means of mass communication like TV, Radio and News papers and self study.

Digital incompetence Of School: Even if we consider that students somehow got the access to android mobile, the network availability in the schools played the game of hide and seek. Non availability of network can be attributed to the non saturation of schools with internet facilities. The same stood true at the teacher's end too. According to a schoolteacher in Bihar, her school did conduct online classes via Google Meet, but fewer per cent of the children in her school had access to laptops and the internet.

School technological infra structure: The school is supposed to be the key place which can serve as the community centre for not only the teachers and students but also for the community around too. But except for some government schools, some private schools, the condition of infrastructure are beyond explanation. The Rest of schools lack in infrastructure and basic facilities .The digitalisation of schools was affected by poor electricity, frequent power cuts lack of phone or internet connectivity. Some of the teachers were generous enough to use their own mobile data but it had a limit too. The teachers of SMART SCHOOLS also complained about the lack of continuous internet availability.

Teachers' access to technology: Another bigger issue faced during COVID -19 was the tech savvyness of the teachers. Most of the rural teachers were not ready for the sudden challenge that came in front of them as they lacked the digital literacy and were untrained in handling a computer or even working with their android mobiles . Many of the teachers having android mobile were unaware of the power of their mobile phones. They were afraid of something going wrong if they did anything except for calling or messaging with their mobiles. The government run trainings also failed to make them tech savvy by capacity building program.

Digital skills learning of teachers: Any teachers tried hard to stay by the side of changes but still there were newer tools and apps to carry out the tasks. More over the huge content could not be covered in the remaining time. The effective teachers needed supportive and functional support system. Technology was useful to learning but to a limit. Even in online education the content had a secondary role.

Soon three kinds of gap were recognized that were faced by the teachers .The **access gap**, the **pedagogical skills digital literacy gap** and the **usage gap**. These gaps added to the woes of women teachers which were making huge mental conflict in the mind of women teachers(Kumthekar2004). These gaps were prominent in women teachers at all the levels of education.

In fact the teachers badly feared that the government's strong push towards digital learning had the ulterior motive of reducing the number of teachers in the education system to save costs. This perception also made teachers reluctant to adopt the new digital initiatives by the government. These concerns needed to be directly and clearly addressed by the government if the NEP 2020 vision is to be realized.

Survey conducted by American community -2018 shows that before COVID-19 about half of all working women (46%) which quantifies to about 28 million women working in jobs paying low wages were already underpaid in comparison to their male counterpart. This not only depicts the earning disparity but also the devaluation of women's contribution to the education sector. It seems occupations where women dominated were systematically either excluded or transformed into complex forms with norms and conditions in such a way that women themselves choose to opt out of the game. It is a common observation that median wages decline where occupation becomes female dominated.

A setback was created by COVID -19 which was bound to affect the all aspiring women. A change in their socio economic position and their earning status has been suddenly affected and a sense of uncertainty and insecurity was developed in them as never before.

Self concept is an important indicator of personality. The working women, being earner of the family is readily accepted and respected. Studies show that more confidence, ambition and assertiveness is seen in the case of working women as compared to non working women. Irony lies in the fact that teaching jobs in education sector were considered to be most appropriate for women. But the social structure of society created situations that are not favourable for women. Claude Akpokavie, ILO (2013) reports that the advancement of science and technology is taking place rapidly all over the world which is bound to create immense opportunities in work place but the women are not the one to be benefitted as they will left be behind due to lack of skills and that to not because of aptitudes but because of attitudes. Jane Hodges from ILO bureau for Gender Equality held that the discrepancy in this field is linked to pervasive gender roles and attitudes in different societies. Apparently, both in developed and developing countries, the gender gap encourages women to follow softer subjects than science and technology. Thus skills required, even for softer jobs like education changed post COVID-19 for online teaching in the schools keeping women out of the race. Another cruel fact that through privatisation, governments are pulling off their hands from the responsibility of new job creation.

The need is felt to make a longitudinal as well as the cross sectional study of the self concept and attitude of the working women in education sector.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

COVID -19 resulted in either unemployment of women or stressful working conditions for them. This is expected to leave a negative self concept in the working women in private education sector who aspired for better job and thereby better life opportunities. It is also seen that prediction of satisfaction in life can be done by attitude and Self concept of a person. So it is necessary to study the self concept and attitude of working women in private education sector post covid-19. It is also seen that women teachers questioned themselves whether they have the capability to do online teaching, or whether they can perform well while teaching online or how will they survive in teaching line after privatization and digitalization. Lazarus(1991) pointed out that appraising information about any event involves two processes. During first appraisal individual tends to decide whether the event is positive or not but in the secondary appraisal individual for 'who or what is responsible for the event'. The individual tries to assess the manageability of the event and future expectations from the event resulting in the self evaluation. This leads to either to positive or negative self concept individual's and decides further course of action.

Since the positive self concept is directly related to the job performance (Timothy1998).It is also required that the appropriate measures be taken to restore the self esteem of the women teachers so that they may come back to jobs as usual and restore their positive attitude towards their teaching job.

Though schools have reopened with enthusiasm, the fear of Delta variant and Omicron variant shows a cascade of events in outside world but affecting the women's self concept inside the home. It is for education sector to look into the seriousness of the situation and its consequences.

It is also a matter of concern for the progressive societies to contemplate over the position of women so as to maintain their dignity and self esteem. The control over deadly diseases is not possible all of a sudden but the human actions and societal decision can be thought thoroughly.

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