



A study of anxiety among secondary school teachers during online teaching

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Abstract

The present investigation was undertaken by the researchers to explore the teaching anxiety experienced by secondary school teachers while teaching in online mode. A sample of 117 secondary school teachers from Bareilly district of Uttar Pradesh were used to collect the relevant data using a self-developed questionnaire Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT). An analysis of the data collected for the present investigation reveals that there is no marked difference in the perception of the secondary school teachers surveyed for the study with regards to availability of various technological facilities like high-speed internet, laptops, smartphones, headphones etc., access to online teaching tools, levels of confidence in their own capabilities of teaching online and difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching remotely when compared on the basis of numerous demographic factors. The only aspect where visible differences can be observed is with regards to availability and access to devices and online tools for rural area teachers.

Keywords: Secondary school teachers, online teaching, anxiety

Introduction

Life as we all knew it changed drastically since the onset of COVID 19. All aspects of our everyday lives transformed into new forms. Lockdowns and strong implementation of various government guidelines completely altered our lifestyle. The pandemic had far-reaching health, social, psychological, economic and, of course, educational consequences. In fact, one of the first and most stringent measures implemented for helping to maintain social distancing and to decrease infections was the closure of schools worldwide. The moment a strict lockdown began, and school going children and adolescents were confined to their homes for months together. When the de-escalation phase began in which the restrictions were gradually eased, schools and colleges were the last ones to open. Therefore, school and university teaching were transformed overnight into a virtual modality and remained this way throughout the past academic year. Teachers world wide were forced to adopt new measures to teach their students remotely. Online education became the need of the hour during the COVID 19 pandemic.

The pandemic and subsequent remote teaching via online modes helped the students keep up with their studies but it put a lot of pressure on the teachers. Although the use of online learning resources was already common, especially at the college and university level, the new reality of 100% remote classes even at the primary and secondary level was a humongous task to undertake for teachers. This may have had an adverse impact on the teachers' efficiency as well as their mental health. This is because the change took place very abruptly, in a very short span of time, with no fore warning and without providing adequate training to the teachers for the use of digital resources, as well as, in most cases, without the provision of adequate equipment for remote classes. The teachers continued to struggle throughout the school/ college shutdown period with technical issues, students' apathy and technostress. This all led to the teachers themselves experiencing anxiety in teaching their students in online mode.

Digital infrastructures and tools such as Blackboard, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams were rapidly adopted during the sudden disruption to the learning process. Such quick adaptation required new reliance on technologies that might never have been considered, often with significant difficulties. Since the teachers began to work in isolation, online and often from home, the ability to use the technology became increasingly tough to handle. Neither students nor the faculty was ready for the sudden change, lacking essential skills required to manage and control online learning resources, leading to numerous teething troubles with the onus on the teachers to micro-manage troubleshooting. In addition, there is stress associated with redesigning courses, which occupied most of the time in online lesson planning, developing assessment criteria, and synchronizing activities. Such rapid change in teaching and learning during the pandemic has placed extra demands on the teachers physically, cognitively, as well as emotionally. The present investigation was undertaken by the researchers to explore the teaching anxiety experienced by secondary school teachers while teaching in online mode.

Review of related literature

Etzebarria *et al.* (2021) ^[5] carried out a study on the psychological state of teachers during the covid-19 crisis: the challenge of returning to face-to-face teaching. For this study, a sample of 1,633 teachers from Spain were administered an online questionnaire which, in addition to collecting socio-demographic data, measured stress, anxiety and depression using the DASS-21scale. The results revealed that a high percentage of teachers showed anxiety, depression and stress symptoms. Furthermore, variables such as gender, age, job stability, the level of education at which they teach and parental status also influence this symptomatology. Akbana *et al.* (2022) ^[1] studied the EFL Teachers' Sources of Remote Teaching Anxiety among 96 EFL teachers in the Turkey. The study employed a sequential mixed-methods exploratory design where

participants initially reported their remote teaching anxiety sources and then rated each. For the analysis, inductive content analysis and statistical tests were employed. The content analysis revealed two major themes: digitalization-related concerns and online pedagogy-related concerns. Statistically significant difference was only found between anxiety sources and online teaching experience but not between gender, age, teaching experience, work setting and anxiety sources. Several studies (Çoklar *et al.*, 2016 ^[2]; Hassan *et al.*, 2019) ^[3] found digitalization-related concerns causing stress among teachers; however, remote teaching anxiety remains an underexplored construct (Russell, 2020) ^[6]. Although online pedagogy-related concerns were found to cause teaching anxiety in our study, a recent study (Lazarevic & Bentz, 2020) ^[4] found using technology helpful to decrease anxiety.

Operational definitions

For the present study,

▪ **Anxiety**

Anxiety refers to a feeling of fear, dread, and uneasiness resulting from teaching remotely in online mode.

▪ **Secondary school teachers**

Secondary school teacher refers to teachers teaching classes VI to IX in schools affiliated to CBSE and U.P. board.

▪ **Online teaching**

Online Teaching is the process of teaching remotely via the internet from any location using various methods.

Research Questions

For the present study, the following quantitative research questions were formulated:

- Were adequate technological facilities available to the teachers during the pandemic?
- Did the teachers have access to online teaching tools for teaching online?
- Did the teachers feel confident in their capabilities of teaching online using various online teaching tools and devices?
- Did the teachers face any difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching remotely?

Delimitations

The present investigation was delimited to the following areas due to constraints of time, manpower and resources:

- The study was delimited to only Bareilly district.
- The study was delimited to only UP board and CBSE board schools.
- The study was delimited to only higher secondary schools.
- The study was delimited to 117 secondary school teachers of Bareilly district.

Methodology and Research Design

The present study was based upon individual survey which is a part of the descriptive research method. For this investigation, the researchers opted for the quantitative research design. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select a sample of 117 secondary school teachers from a population consisting of male and female secondary school teachers of Bareilly district teaching in schools affiliated to C.B.S.E. and U.P. boards from urban as well as rural areas. For collecting requisite data, a self-developed

questionnaire Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT) was developed by the researchers. The data was analyzed using various statistical measures variables in MS – EXCEL. The study was based upon the perceptions of the teachers regarding various aspects of online teaching and the anxiety experienced by them during the pandemic while teaching in online mode.

Population and Sample

The population for the present consisted of male and female secondary school teachers of Bareilly district teaching in schools affiliated to C.B.S.E. and U.P. boards from urban as well as rural areas. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select a sample of 117 secondary school teachers.

Tool used

For collecting requisite data, a self-developed questionnaire Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT) was developed by the researchers. The researcher asked for personal details (name gender, age, marital status, locality, type of board) in addition to various items pertaining to online teaching anxiety experienced by the school teachers. The tool Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT) consists of 30 items with multiple options (‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘maybe’) for each item and the respondents had to select any one option. The tool items were formulated with the intention of identifying the underlying causes of anxiety (if any) including technical issues, resource availability issues, knowledge and skill related issues, difficulty in maintaining work-life balance etc.

Data collection

The researchers utilized the digital platform to carry out the survey. Survey was created on Google forms app and shared it to target sample subjects (teachers) through WhatsApp. The survey was opened for response from 25 Apr 2023 to 02 May 2023. A total of 120 responses were collected, out of which 03responses were validated out due to some reason or the other. In total, 117 responses were used for completing the research survey. The carefully chosen data response sheets (as received in online mode) were then utilized to fulfill the study objectives. The data was further analyzed using various statistical measures variables in MS – EXCEL.

The secondary school teachers selected as part of sample for the present study were of varied demography as depicted below:

Table 1: Demographic details of teachers surveyed

Demographic details	Number of teachers	Percentage of the sample
Male	46	39.31%
Female	71	60.69 %
Unmarried	66	56.41%
Married	51	43.59%
Urban	68	58.11%
Rural	49	41.89%
C.B.S.E. board	70	59.83%
U.P. board	47	40.17%
21-30 years age	73	62.39%
31-40 years age	31	26.49%
41-50 years age	11	09.40%
51-60 years age	02	01.70%

Analysis of data and interpretation

The data collected through Google forms and response sheets were collated and then combined for each section of the tool Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT) and subsequently analyzed to find answers to the earlier formulated research questions.

Availability of adequate technological facilities during the pandemic for the teachers

The secondary school teachers were asked about availability of various technological facilities like high-speed internet, laptops, desktops, smartphones, tripods with cameras, headphones etc. The scores on the section pertaining to technology and devices available in the tool Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT) were calculated and the averages indicated the state of affairs. The data presented in Table 2 indicates that the majority of teachers (76.3%) had adequate technological facilities during the pandemic at their disposal. A small section (15.3%) of the teachers surveyed did report some issues with regards to availability of adequate technological facilities during the pandemic while a very small percentage (8.5%) of the teachers were unsure regarding the adequacy of available technological devices at the disposal.

Table 2: Availability of adequate technological facilities during the pandemic for the teachers

Teachers	Yes	No	Maybe
Gender			
Male (N=46)	35	8	3
Female (N=71)	52	11	8
Board			
C.B.S.E. (N=70)	54	10	6
U.P. (N=47)	33	7	7
Locality			
Urban (N=68)	53	10	5
Rural (N=49)	35	8	6

Graphically, the views of the teachers surveyed regarding the availability of adequate technological facilities during the pandemic for the teachers has been depicted in Fig 1.

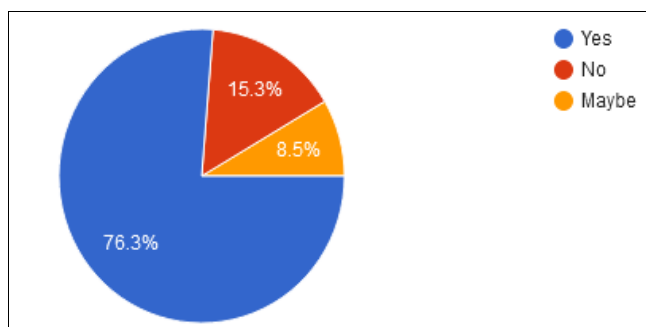


Fig 1: Availability of adequate technological facilities during the pandemic for the teachers

Access to various online teaching tools for the teachers

The secondary school teachers were asked about access to various online teaching tools. The scores on the section pertaining to access to various online teaching tools in the tool Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT)

were calculated and the averages indicated the state of affairs. The data presented in Table 3 indicates that the majority of teachers (58.5%) had access to various online teaching tools during the pandemic. A considerable section (38.1%) of the teachers surveyed did report some issues with regards to access to various online teaching tools during the pandemic while a very miniscule percentage (3.4%) of the teachers were unsure regarding the extent of satisfaction with the level of access to various online teaching tools.

Table 3: Access to online various teaching tools for the teachers

Teachers	Yes	No	Maybe
Gender			
Male (N=46)	27	17	2
Female (N=71)	41	26	4
Board			
C.B.S.E. (N=70)	42	26	2
U.P. (N=47)	26	17	4
Locality			
Urban (N=68)	42	24	2
Rural (N=49)	28	18	3

Graphically, the views of the teachers surveyed regarding the extent of satisfaction with the level of access to various online teaching tools during the pandemic for the teachers has been depicted in Fig 2.

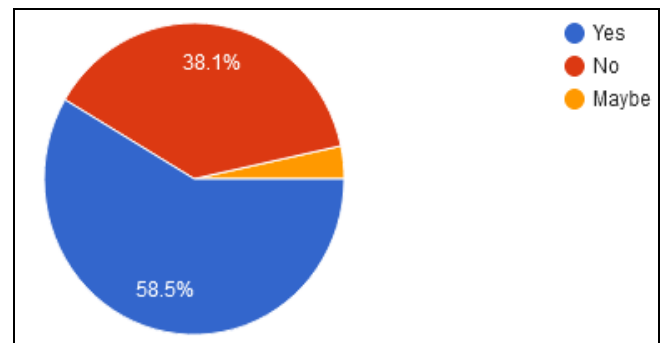


Fig 2: Access to online various teaching tools for the teachers

Confidence in their capability to teach online using various online teaching tools and devices

The secondary school teachers were asked about their confidence levels in their own capabilities to teach online using various online teaching tools. The scores on the section pertaining to confidence levels in their own capabilities to teach online using various online teaching tools in the tool Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT) were calculated and the averages indicated the state of affairs. The data presented in Table 4 reveals that the majority of teachers (51.3%) had access to various online teaching tools during the pandemic. A considerable section (30.8%) of the teachers surveyed did report some issues with regards to their confidence in their capabilities regarding use of various online teaching tools and devices during the pandemic while a small percentage (17.9%) of the teachers were unsure regarding the extent of confidence in their capabilities to teach remotely using various online teaching tools and devices.

Table 4: Confidence in capability to teach online using various online teaching tools and devices

Teachers	Yes	No	Maybe
Gender			
Male (N=46)	24	14	8
Female (N=71)	35	21	15
Board			
C.B.S.E.(N=70)	36	22	12
U.P. (N=47)	22	17	8
Locality			
Urban (N=68)	36	21	11
Rural (N=49)	23	15	11

Graphically, the views of the teachers surveyed regarding the extent of confidence w.r.t. their own capabilities to use various online teaching tools and devices during the pandemic has been depicted in Fig 3.

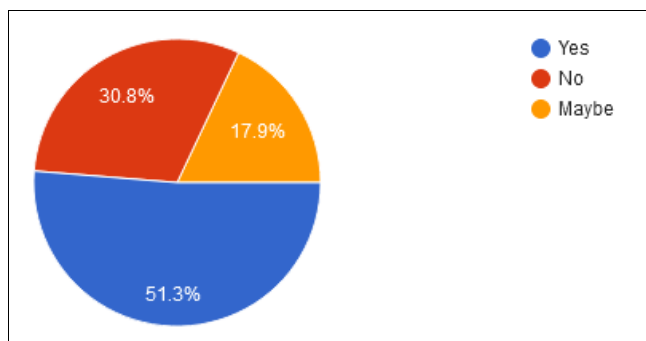


Table 3: Confidence in capability to teach online using various online teaching tools and devices
Difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance

The secondary school teachers were asked about difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching online. The scores on the section pertaining to difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching online in the tool Online Teaching Anxiety Tool for Teachers (OTATT) were calculated and the averages indicated the state of affairs. The data presented in Table 5 reveals that the majority of teachers (53.8%) had difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching online during the pandemic. A considerable section (28.2%) of the teachers surveyed did report some issues with regards to difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching online during the pandemic while a small percentage (17.9%) of the teachers were unsure regarding the extent of difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching online.

Table 5: Difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance

Teachers	Yes	No	Maybe
Gender			
Male (N=46)	25	13	8
Female (N=71)	39	17	15
Board			
C.B.S.E.(N=70)	38	20	12
U.P. (N=47)	24	12	11
Locality			
Urban (N=68)	38	18	12
Rural (N=49)	25	13	11

Graphically, the views of the teachers surveyed regarding the extent of difficulty in maintaining work-home life

balance while teaching online during the pandemic has been depicted through a pie chart in Fig 4.

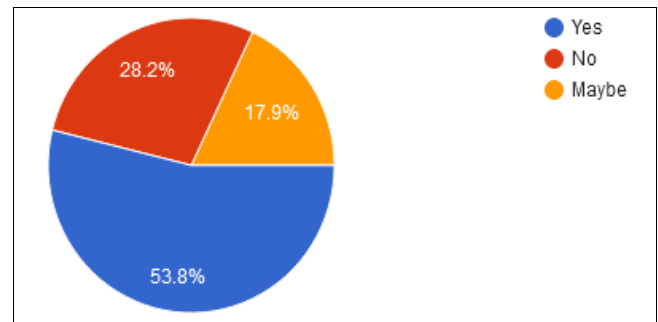


Fig 4: Difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance

Major findings of the study

- The greater majority of the secondary school teachers surveyed for the investigation felt that adequate technological facilities available to them during the pandemic.
- The majority of the secondary school teachers surveyed for the investigation felt that they had sufficient access to online teaching tools for teaching online.
- The majority of the secondary school teachers surveyed for the investigation felt confident in their own capabilities of teaching online using various online teaching tools and devices.
- The majority of the secondary school teachers surveyed for the investigation felt that they experienced some difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching remotely.

Conclusion

A deeper analysis of the data collected for the present investigation reveals that there is no marked difference in the perception of the secondary school teachers surveyed for the study with regards to availability of various technological facilities like high-speed internet, laptops, smartphones, headphones etc., access to online teaching tools, levels of confidence in their own capabilities of teaching online and difficulty in maintaining work-home life balance while teaching remotely when compared on the basis of numerous demographic factors. The only aspect where visible differences can be observed is with regards to availability and access to devices and online tools for rural area teachers.

Educational Implications

An in-depth analysis of the data collected for the present investigation reveals that the biggest hurdle in the teachers’ abilities and confidence in teaching online and the resultant anxiety is due to lack of proper training imparted to the secondary school teachers before starting the remote teaching schedule. The takeaway point from this investigation is that though devices and technologies can be easily provided to the teachers, equipping them with the technical know-how is crucial for the success of any new educational endeavour like online (remote) teaching. The stakeholders, including the school administration and the higher agencies and government policy making bodies should take note of this and always include proper training and skill-based programmes for the teachers before undertaking any such new educational endeavour in future.

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