

Pandemic Fatigue among Students: A Study of Research Scholars in Visva-Bharati University

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ABSTRACT

These days the word pandemic is used very frequently. We are in the middle of century's deadliest pandemic. The current pandemic has actually slowed down the entire world's activities. Due to the devastating effect of coronavirus World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as pandemic on 11th March 2020. In the present study the researchers have tried to find out the effect of pandemic fatigue on the research scholars. The researchers have adopted eclectic approach of research design and used Lockdown fatigue scale (LFS) for the data collection. The sampling technique used in the study was simple random and purposive sampling. Few case studies have also been taken into consideration for better understanding of the study. This study actually highlights on the prevalence of pandemic fatigue experienced and its association with personal resilience, coping skills, and health among research scholars of Visva-Bharati University. Personal resilience and coping skills are pivotal factors and must be strengthened in order to get protected from pandemic fatigue and other mental as well as physical health complications due to the lockdown.

Keywords: Pandemic, fatigue, lockdown fatigue scale, students, research scholars

INTRODUCTION

We are currently witnessing the biggest global health crisis due to coronavirus outbreak. In December 2019, the coronavirus also referred as COVID-19, started from Wuhan, China and spread all over the globe. Due to the devastating effect of coronavirus World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as pandemic on 11th March 2020. (WHO, 2020).

The word pandemic is quite frequently used after the surge of the deadliest virus of the century i.e., coronavirus. It is the biggest challenge for the current generation to cope with the virus. Every crisis has its own challenges. With the devastating first and second wave of the current ongoing pandemic entire generation are actually facing a lot of challenges in order to combat with the coronavirus pandemic. We all are shifting to the new normal concept of social adjustment which will eventually help to combat the virus. Pandemics are large-scale outbreaks of infectious disease that can greatly increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social, and political disruption. Evidence suggests that the likelihood of pandemics has increased over the past century because of increased global travel and integration, urbanization, changes in land use, and greater exploitation of the natural environment (Jones and others 2008; Morse 1995). It is obvious to say that COVID-19 outbreak has acted as a pivotal role in the demographic transition in the present century.

A pandemic is defined as “an epidemic occurring over a very wide area, crossing international boundaries, and usually affecting a large number of people” (Porta 2014).

The coronavirus (COVID-19) is a pandemic disease that affects the education system of different income level countries (Wajdi et al., 2020). The United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has been recognized that the coronavirus pandemic outbreak has impacted the education system in the world (UNESCO, 2020). A lot of pandemics have occurred in human history, and affected human life, education system, and economic

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development in the world (Editors, 2020). In the present study the researcher has focussed on the effect of pandemic fatigue on research scholars of Visva-Bharati University.

Pandemic Fatigue

The word pandemic fatigue is well self-explanatory. As we are well aware about the current pandemic outbreak. Amid pandemic entire population is facing a lot of difficulty while adjusting with the new normal concept. The new normal concept is quite very normal and will eventually help in combatting the current pandemic. The lockdown has been imposed by the central and state government since March, 2020. As of now some states have given some kind of relaxation in order to boost the economy and to bounce back to the previous situation. But as we are seeing the trend of coronavirus, it can be said that third wave is very near and it is inevitable.

Pandemic fatigue is nothing but the state of being exhausted by imposed restrictions and precautions while combatting any kind of pandemic. Pandemic fatigue is often caused the longer duration of lockdown, lack of employment, lack of engagement in any kind of activities, monotonous lifestyle, boredom and other issues which eventually leads to abandoning the lockdown and move out of homes in order to avoid pandemic fatigue. This will lead to gathering and eventually risks the life of the people. So, we can say that pandemic fatigue as the major contributor in spreading the disease. Currently we are amid the end of second wave and the beginning of third wave of pandemic. So, it is obvious to encounter pandemic fatigue in efficient manner in order to control third wave of the current pandemic. (Silva, C., & Martin, M., 2020)

Pandemic Fatigue among Students

The entire globe is on halt due to the COVID-19 surge. Many sectors along with academic sector are completely shut down. Due to lockdown, there is instant rise in dropouts in the rural areas. Many students have left their study in order to earn bread and butter for their family. In this study academic institution is taken into consideration. Due to government-imposed lockdown in the country the academic institutions are closed. The most affected stakeholders of academic institutions are students.

Personal resilience and coping skills are pivotal factors and must be strengthened in order to get protected from pandemic fatigue and other mental as well as physical health complications due to the lockdown. These two factors among students plays the role of catalyst so as to prevent the consequences of long-term detachment from their academic segment. (Keil, R. M., 2004).

Relevant Literatures

The literature under is presiding a solid background for a research study, investigation and comprehensive knowledge of the field are essential to all research. Hence, the researchers have presented that following review of literature to identify the problems to find previous research work related to the present study. The collection of literature relating to the study has helped researchers to probe the facts more effectively. The results of the already conducted studies helped the researchers to analyse the problems from different dimensions apart from the existing one.

Leodoro et al. (2021) in online cross-sectional study conducted on college students in the Central Philippines. This study was conducted during the 6th month of the lockdown. In this study 243 students are considered and findings of the study revealed that they experience moderate level of fatigue during the imposed lockdown. Increased personal resilience and coping skills were associated with lower levels of lockdown fatigue. Lilleholt et al. (2020) in

the study *Pandemic Fatigue: Measurement, Correlates, and Consequences* identified the related emotions and perceptions and highlights the relation between Pandemic Fatigue and Covid-19 related health-protective behaviours. Further using preregistered online experiment with U. S. participants revealed a causal link between Pandemic Fatigue and people's intention to comply with recommended health-protective behaviours. Morgul et al. (2021) in their study on COVID-19 pandemic and psychological fatigue in Turkey revealed that, 64.1% participants reported as psychologically fatigued and 35.9% as not fatigued. It was also found a significant difference between fatigued and normal participants with respect to age, educational level, occupational status, place of residence and number of family members. Other factors related to knowledge of Covid-19 were also explored. Some of them are symptoms, treatment, and ways of spreading, prevention by avoiding crowded places and isolation. It was found that normal participants generally show more positive attitudes than fatigued participants in trusting that Turkey can overcome the COVID-19 pandemic. This study highlighted that avoiding going to crowded places, keeping physical distance, isolation and antibody treatment can control the pandemic in an effective way. This study can help policymakers and mental health professionals to formulate the policies in such a way that it will help to combat future pandemic effectively. Stavem et al. (2021) in their study female sex, single/divorced/widowed, short time since symptom debut, high symptom load, and confusion during acute COVID-19 were associated with higher multivariable odds of fatigue. It was concluded that the burden of post-viral fatigue following COVID-19 was high, and higher than in a general norm population. Symptoms of fatigue were most prevalent among women, those having a high symptom load, or confusion during the acute phase.

In the present study the researchers have tried to explore the prevalence of pandemic fatigue among research scholars of Visva-Bharati University and helped the researchers to carry out the present research in an effective way. The researchers also tried to find out the effect of pandemic fatigue on the research work of the research scholars of Visva-Bharati University.

Gaps in the existing literature

The previous studies have touched the various aspects relating to pandemic fatigue among various groups, but none of the study seems to have touched the area relating to the prevalence of pandemic fatigue among research scholars and effect of pandemic fatigue on the research work of the research scholars of Visva-Bharati University. The present study proposes to fill the gap in existing literature.

Rationale of the study

Explaining the purpose of a research study and providing a compelling rationale is an important part of any research, enabling the work to be set in the context of both existing evidence (and theory) and its practical applications. In the present study the researchers have formulated the rationale of the study in which they need to find the way through which they can explore the prevalence of pandemic fatigue among research scholars and effect of pandemic fatigue on the research work of the research scholars of Visva-Bharati University.

Objective of the study

To explore the prevalence of pandemic fatigue among research scholars and effect of pandemic fatigue on their research work of the research scholars of Visva-Bharati University. And also assess the factors that actually triggers pandemic fatigue among research scholars.

METHODOLOGY

Random and purposive sampling method was used to select the sample. The current study adopted a multiple case study design in order to meet the research objectives. The PhD Research Scholars from Visva-Bharati University were included and M.Phil Research Scholars from Visva-Bharati University were excluded in the study. The sample size for the current study was 50 and to meet the research objective 4 case study has been taken into consideration. The researchers actually collected data using Lockdown Fatigue Scale (LFS) developed by Labrague (2020).

Ethical Considerations

- The researchers made sure of explaining the aims and objectives of the research study to the participants and they were asked to decide whether they wanted to participate in the study or not.
- Confidentiality was ensured and maintained during the process. In the beginning itself the participants were told that whatever they share will be recorded but not shared with anyone and remain confidential. Confidentiality was maintained during data analysis by not revealing the actual identity of the participants. The names of all the participants are not disclosed in order to maintain confidentiality.
- Participation of the respondents was not forced upon them; it was on a purely voluntary basis. Before undertaking the interview, the researchers sought the targeted participants' consent to participate in the process.
- The experiences that were shared by the respondents were not at all manipulated by the researchers. During the interview process the researchers did not force the participants to answer any questions which they were unwilling to answer.
- The data collected from the respondents was respected and used only for the purpose of research.

RESULTS

The researchers have tried to interpret all the information collected during the research through statistical representation, graphs, pie charts etc. which will further help researchers to analyse the data to have detail understanding of the findings. This section helps to understand the prevalence of pandemic fatigue among research scholars and effect of pandemic fatigue on the research work of the research scholars of Visva-Bharati University.

Prevalence of depression

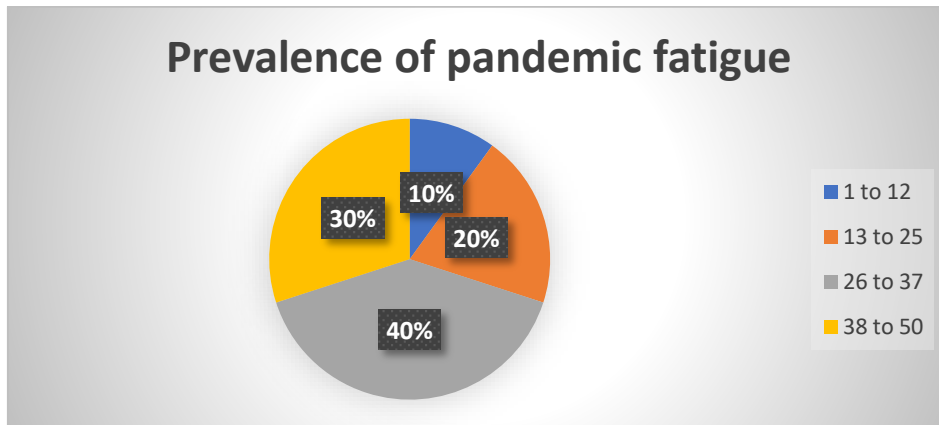
The researchers have adopted Lockdown fatigue scale (LFS). Lockdown fatigue scale (LFS) is a screening test originally developed by Labrague.in 2020 that is used to identify the prevalence of pandemic fatigue among research scholars and effect of pandemic fatigue on the research work of the research scholars of Visva-Bharati University. On the basis of Lockdown fatigue scale (LFS) researchers came to know the prevalence of pandemic fatigue among research scholars and effect of pandemic fatigue on the research work of the research scholars of Visva-Bharati University. This also helps the researchers to explore the factors that actually triggers pandemic fatigue among research scholars.

Scores	No. of respondents	Percentage
1-12	5	10
13-25	10	20
26-37	20	40
38-50	15	30

Source – Author's compilation

Table – 1, Prevalence of pandemic fatigue

Thus, from the above table we can easily conclude that 10 % of the respondents are indicating low (1-12), 20 % of the respondents are indicating mild (13-25), 40 % of the respondents are indicating moderate (26-37) and 30 % of the respondents are indicating high or severe (38-50) fatigue. So, majority of the respondents from the present study are actually indicating moderate and severe fatigue due to pandemic.



Source – Author`s compilation

Figure – 1, Prevalence of pandemic fatigue

Thus, from the above pie chart it can be said that 10 % of the respondents are indicating low (1-12), 20 % of the respondents are indicating mild (13-25), 40 % of the respondents are indicating moderate (26-37) and 30 % of the respondents are indicating high or severe (38-50) fatigue. So, majority of the respondents from the present study are actually indicating moderate and severe fatigue due to pandemic.

Outcomes from the case study

The result of the study suggests that the prevalence of pandemic fatigue among students is on the increase due to lack of social support, institutional support, delay in research work, lack of physical activity and exercise etc. Due to strict lockdown the academic institutes were shut down which eventually led to the distortion in research work. As the institutes were closed the students were not able to access the research equipment. Due to which their research time period actually goes in vain. The research scholars were not able to complete their research target in the stipulated time period. The current pandemic actually distorted their research work for the last two years. The research scholars are actually trying to bounce back to their research work amid pandemic. Some of the research scholars asked the authority to resume the research work following the necessary Covid protocols. They also asked the authority to extend the time period of their PhD along with the extension on their fellowship period so that they can provide justice to their research work. Many research scholars also reported that they were not able to use the instruments properly and timely for analysing the sample. The entire research work has been hampered due to the current pandemic. If we talk about the science department many chemicals have been wasted and even many research scholars have to repeat their research work so as to note down the readings of their experiments. Only one thing that the respondents do keeping patience many more times than usually. During initial period of lockdown work in terms of reviewing literature, formulation of study, conducting other studies for getting publications was completed by the research scholars. But now as the data collection phase arises, the continuing pandemic is an arbitrary barrier to research process. So, many of the

research scholars are actually waiting the departments to get back to their normal so that they can resume their research work. Social work research is significantly field oriented irrespective of the nature of research methodology. Qualitative Research component is often a dominant component in social work research. Thus, it enhances the need for direct fieldwork which has been completely disrupted due to multiple pandemic induced lockdown and restriction measures. Also, insecurities regarding completion of works in due time has been causing anxiety and stress resulting in disturbance in mental well-being. To cope with the mental disturbances, the respondents have been practicing regular exercises and trying to remain occupied with other activities. Some respondents have reported that their research work is actually based on laboratory intervention. So, in that case they have to visit the laboratory daily. But they were not able to resume their laboratory intervention research work. They also asked the authority to reopen the laboratories so that they can resume and research work. Stressors influences including depression, irritation, frustration, loss of socialization, money crisis. The way out is listening music, talking to family, reading recent research articles, spending more time with family, talking with them about the problems, conversing with friends regarding research areas, yoga, listening music, cooking and interaction with their loved ones. When it comes to community-based research many research scholars reported that they were not able to intervene in the community as the field is very far from their current location. Due to strict lockdown the facility of public transport was not accessible so they were not able to reach their field. Some respondents are unable to concentrate. Data collection was not done yet, which is probably a stress factor for some because they have only one year left to complete their research work. Most of the research scholars were worried about their data collection and not able to visit library in person.

In order to combat the current situation, they were seeking support (emotional support from family members and friends), and physical recreation (Yoga). Online classes hamper the natural interaction between research scholars and supervisors. Some of the research scholars reported that the current pandemic didn't influence their research work. Online classes were not as fruitful the physical one. Physical classes are more energetic and understandable. Network issue is a major challenge of online classes. The researchers also outlined the various lacunas of online learning.

DISCUSSION

The pandemic has affected the research scholars in many ways. Due to which they are worried about their personal as well as their family's safety. The researcher scholars are in deep trouble as a result of the pandemic they are actually feeling sad and depressed. Sometimes they felt like tired and weak. The research scholars have faced difficulty while concentrating on their research work and they are distracted very easily. Many research scholars have lost their interests to do their pleasurable activities. They have been experiencing a general sense of emptiness. This pandemic situation made the research scholars experiencing headaches and body pains. The research scholars have thoughts that this pandemic will not end soon. Many stressors due pandemic have influence on the research work.

Limitations of this study

1. The research study was conducted on samples taken from only one university.
2. The sample size is very small to generalize the study.
3. Due to lockdown restrictions the researchers did not reach out many respondents.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic fatigue influences the research work in a negative way according to the respondents. The respondents also explained the stressors which made them lazy to perform

their daily work. Personal resilience and coping skills are pivotal factors and must be strengthened in order to get protected from pandemic fatigue and other mental as well as physical health complications due to the lockdown.

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How to Cite this Article: Prakash, S., & Kheyali Roy, K. (2022). Pandemic Fatigue among Students: A Study of Research Scholars in Visva-Bharati University. *National Journal of Professional Social Work*, 23(2), 124-130. <https://doi.org/10.51333/njpsw.2022.v22.i2.527>