The Psychological Status of Government School Teachers in Gampaha District During Covid- 19

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Abstract: **This research is an attempt to study the psychological status of government school teachers in the Gampaha district during the COVID- 19 pandemic. It mainly focuses on school teachers in the Gampaha district who had to transform their teaching style due to online teaching necessities. There is much research on COVID-19 and depression related to the general public, school students, and undergraduates. Yet, there is a visible vacuum in empirical data regarding the depression level of school teachers, which is intended to be bridged through this study. It followed the quantitative approach and gathered data from the government teachers by conducting an online questionnaire survey. The results indicated that among the selected sample, the majority of them appeared to be mildly and moderately depressed, while 27.2% were severely depressed. As the psychological condition is a mandatory requirement for every individual to have a healthy lifestyle, the researchers intend to highlight the importance of governmental aid and support in this regard.**

I. INTRODUCTION

The world came to a standstill with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019, and thus far it has been causing disruptions to the everyday lives of people in Sri Lanka and elsewhere. The pandemic altered our ideology and challenged all our preconceptions. Due to social distancing and other strong measures that have been taken by the government, significant alterations have taken place in social relationships, which have increased isolation at an alarming rate (Smith & Lim, 2020).

The impact of the pandemic has been felt in many fields and sectors due to its rapid transmission, which created social, psychological, health, economic, and educational consequences (Ozamiz-Etxebarria, Santxo, Mondragon & Santamaría, 2021). As a repercussion of the COVID outbreak, schools and universities were among the first places to be closed down in Sri Lanka. This was also a global phenomenon as the necessity to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students was stronly felt. Therefore, school closure was in place globally as a solution to decrease the infection rate (Van Lancker & Parolin, 2020).

The transformation towards online teaching and learning was a sudden shift that took place in the education system in this country. This was also a globally faced challenge as many government schools, universities, and other institutions were conducting more conventional onsite lessons and lectures. Even though some universities made use of the online teaching method, it was mostly limited to a selected number of courses and programmes. In the case of schools, online teaching was scarcely used, especially in Sri Lanka. However, online teaching and evaluation were perceived as an essential alternative in the face of the impending pandemic. Therefore, many countries went forth with the online teaching mechanism and implemented it within a very short period of time. This transformation happened without prior notice and, as a result, many were compelled to take immediate measures to adjust to the requirements of the changing times. This transformation had diverse effects on students and teachers, despite their social standing. Studies have shown that teachers also accumulate a high level of stress due to the crisis at hand (Cachón-Zagalaz et al., 2020). This was mainly due to the necessary adaptation that was required by the teachers in order to maintain online teaching and classes. (Besser, Lotem & Zeigler-Hill, 2020). It has also been identified that the current situation has influenced teachers to face issues such as depression, stress, domestic violence, divorce, and various other personal and social issues. Such conditions have prevented them from teaching properly, effectively and efficiently (Al Lily et al., 2020).

When the world and humanity were compelled to rethink the norms and settle for the new normal, the situation in Sri Lanka was no different. COVID-19 had a massive impact and caused irrevocable changes to the political and social fabric of the country. These changes were largely felt by the education field as immediate measures were taken forward with a long period of school closures. As an alternative, online teaching was in place, which demanded the immediate transformation of teaching practices. This also required technical knowledge and competencies from teachers who found it challenging and unfamiliar. These types of changes cause anxiety and depression among the school teachers in Sri Lanka.

"Depression (major depressive disorder) is a common and serious medical illness that negatively affects how you feel, the way you think, and how you act" (Torres, 2021). According to the American Psychiatric Association, every year depression affects an estimated one in 15 adults (6.7). It also reports that one in six people (16.6%) will experience depression at some point in their life (Torres, 2021). This is concerning, and COVID-19 is a possible breeding ground for depression due to prolonged social distancing, rapid socio-cultural transformations, and isolation periods.

For these reasons, researchers have attempted to investigate the depression levels of people during the pandemic. However,

limited research has been conducted on school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Amidst the limited studies, a handful of them can be found related to the Sri Lankan context. Therefore, this research attempts to investigate the depression levels of school teachers in the Gampaha district in Sri Lanka.

1.1. Significance of the Study

This research focuses on the depression level of Government teachers in Gampaha district. Due to the extensive reading and investigation that were conducted on the empirical data, it was identified that this research area has rarely been investigated by researchers.

During the outbreak of COVD-19, many researchers conducted research on the virus itself, including its origin, transmission, variants, and vaccine, etc. In the meantime, much research has been conducted on the psychological, economic, and sociological impacts of the virus. Most of such research focuses on the mental status of people during the pandemic. Several studies focused on school teachers and their mental condition as they realised the importance of looking into that matter. However, the majority of the research was conducted in other countries, focusing on different regions. It was difficult to discover research that was based in Sri Lanka. The limited research which was carried out in Sri Lanka focused not only on depression, but also on other personal, family, and social conditions as well. Similarly, the research focused on different towns and geographical locations such as Colombo, Kandy, etc.

Hence, the significance of this research is apparent as it focuses on the Gampaha district, which has a dense population and some of the most reputed government schools in the country. Amidst the limited research that has been conducted in the world, only a few have selected the CES –D scale for the data collection process. This further emphasizes the significance of this research as it allows the researchers to identify and study the selected topic with a novel scientific perspective.

1.2. Problem Statement

Education is a fundamental right of each individual that solidifies the future of a country. In order to continue the effective and efficient dissemination of knowledge, teachers play a vital role in the education system. Despite the pandemic, government teachers attempted at their level to impart wisdom and carry out their tasks as sources of inspiration. Therefore, it is evident that the continuation of education relies on the hands of teachers, as they are the crucial benefactors in this course of events. Hence, their mental well-being is of paramount importance. If one or many tend to suffer from mental conditions such as depression, it can cause diverse effects on the system. Depression can have negative repercussions on the individual and their immediate family members. This will also negatively impact students as it will be an obstacle that will prevent the teacher from contributing to the fullest extent. Various researchers have attempted to explore the stress levels, anxiety, and other mental conditions of teachers. However, limited research has been conducted focusing on the depression levels of government teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Therefore, it is the contention that a thorough investigation of the mental condition of government school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic is of prominence.

1.3. Research Aim and Objectives

The research aims to identify the psychological status of government school teachers in the Gampaha district during the COVID-19 pandemic. The general objective of this study was to determine the depression levels of government school teachers in Gampaha District during COVID-19. The specific objectives were to describe the socio-demographic factors of government school teachers in Gampaha District and determine the depression levels of government school teachers in Gampaha District using the CED-S questionnaire.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Key variables of the study

2.1.1. COVID-19

"Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus" (WHO Int., 2021). It is believed to have originated in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and spread to other areas at a rapid pace. "In December 2019, a series of acute atypical respiratory diseases occurred in Wuhan, China. This rapidly spread from Wuhan to other areas. It was soon discovered that a novel coronavirus was responsible. The novel coronavirus was named as the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus-2 (SARS-CoV-2, 2019-nCoV) due to its high homology (~80%) to SARS-CoV, which caused acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) and high mortality during 2002–2003" (Yuki, Fujiogi and Koutsogiannaki, 2020).

A pandemic was declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the disease caused by this virus was called Coronavirus disease 19 (COVID- 19). Since 2019, the virus has been impacting people worldwide irrespective of their country, race, or reign. It is reported that approximately 200 countries and territories around the world are impacted by this virus (Yuki, Fujiogi, and Koutsogiannaki, 2020). The majority of people infected with the virus recover without special treatment. However, they indicate respiratory illness at mild to moderate levels. There are also people who will require medical attention as they become severely ill. There is a possibility that older people who suffer from other medical conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illnesses. Irrespective of age, anyone is likely to get infected with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die (WHO Int., 2021).

It is crucial to prevent or slow down the pace of transmission of the virus. The way to do this is to be educated and be aware of the virus and how it gets spread in society. Social distancing and vaccination are the proven solutions to protect yourself and others from COVID-19. Maintaining at least a 1-meter distance from each other while wearing a mask and washing hands with an alcohol-based solution is also required.

Scientists have conducted various studies to identify the ways and means of transmission of COVID-19. It has been discovered that the virus can spread in the form of small liquid particles. This happens when an infected person coughs, sneezes, speaks, sings, or breathes.

> "The virus can spread from an infected person's mouth or nose in small liquid particles when they cough, sneeze, speak, sing or breathe. These particles range from larger respiratory droplets to smaller aerosols. It is important to practice respiratory etiquette, for example by coughing into a flexed elbow, and to stay home and self-isolate until you recover if you feel unwell" (WHO Int., 2021).

Even after the vaccination process, COVID -19 has an alarming rate of cases that are reported each day. As of 21.11.2021, the total cases being reported stand at 257,303,724 while the total number of deaths is an alarming rate of 5,160,023. The total number of recovered cases is 232,299,367 (Alimetov, 2021).

Many were under the impression that Sri Lanka would be an exception to the impending pandemic. Despite that, the first COVID-19 patient was identified in late January 2020 with the report of an infected Chinese national woman. In the second week of March, the first local case was reported with the identification of an infected tourist guide. "Since then, the government of Sri Lanka has introduced various sequential measures to improve social distancing, such as the closure of schools and educational institutes; introducing a work from home model to reduce public gathering; introducing travel bans to international arrivals; and more drastically, imposing an island wide curfew, expecting to minimise the burden of the disease on the Sri Lankan health system and the entire community" (Wickramaarachchi et al., 2020).

As of 22.07.2022, the total number of cases identified in Sri Lanka stands at the whopping number of coronavirus cases at 664,647 with an alarming rate of deaths at 16,533 and counting. Due to the consistent effort and contribution of the government, general public, and national and international organizations, the COVID-19 pandemic has been successfully controlled in the country. However, the impact of it is still experienced by the people of Sri Lanka in various aspects.

2.1.2. School Teachers

The headline of The New York Daily News in the summer of 2001 indicates that "teachers are key to success". Further, the article proclaims that "a teacher can be the single most influential figure in a child's academic life" (Nieto, 2003). Teachers play a major role in the socialisation of children all around the world. This is a service that has a long history and it's seen all around the world. It is a professional service that is provided to educate children through imparting knowledge, competencies, skills, and mindset. The role and function of schools are altering with the requirements of the time and also the expectations of teachers as well. Classrooms are changing as teachers need to be associated with multicultural classrooms; be aware of students with special needs; integrate information technology and teaching; engage with evaluative and

accountability frameworks; and work towards enhancing the involvement of parents (OECD, 2009).

As the role of the school teacher is becoming more demanding each day, it is vital to identify the characteristics of an effective teacher. In the study under the name "twelve characteristics of an effective teacher: A longitudinal, qualitative, quasi-research study of in-service and pre-service teachers' opinions", Robert J. Walker highlights the following traits: being prepared, positive, holding high expectations, creative, fair, displaying a personal touch, cultivating a sense of belonging, compassionate, having a sense of humour, respecting students, forgiving, and admitting mistakes (J. Walker, 2008).

Similar to many other countries, school teachers play a significant role in educating children. There are government, semi-government, and private schools in this country, and accordingly, teachers are employed in each. Being a school teacher is considered a prestigious profession and more of a service than a job. The nature and role of school teachers have altered over time, and currently, it is more towards a student-centered approach. However, this was challenged by the impending pandemic, and teachers were compelled to alter their teaching strategies and approaches due to the trying times. Online teaching and assessment mainly demand technological competencies and the need to acquire technical devices on their own. This created an additional burden for teachers who were already suffering due to COVID-19.

The following graphs indicate the 2016 census gathered by the Ministry of Education.

Table 1: Administrative System of Education in Sri Lanka

Administrative system of education

Table 1.1 Districts, Education Zones and Education Divisions by province, 2016

Province	No. of districts	No. of education zones	No. of education divisions
Western	3	11	38
Central	3	15	40
Sourthern	3	11	39
Northern	5	12	35
Eastern	3	17	48
North Western	2	8	31
North Central	2	8	30
Uva	2	9	23
Sabaragamuwa	2	7	27
Sri Lanka	25	98	311

source: Annual School Census, 2016

Table 2: Comparison of basic information by type of School

Comparison of basic information by type of school

Table 1.3 Type of Schools by No. of Schools, Students & Teachers

Type of school	Schools		Students		Teachers	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
National Schools	353	3.5	803,499	19.4	36,739	15.8
Provincial Schools	9,809	96.5	3,339,831	80.6	195,864	84.2
All Schools	10,162	100	4,143,330	100	232,608	100

2.1.3. Depression

Table 3: Number and Percentage of Schools by number of teachers

No. of teachers	No. of Schools	(%)
1 teacher	27	0.3
2 teachers	108	1.0
3-5 teachers	801	7.9
6-10 teachers	2,418	23.8
11-15 teachers	1,520	14.9
16-20 teachers	1,714	16.9
21-50 teachers	2,681	26.4
50-100 teachers	669	6.6
>100 teachers	224	2.2
Total	10,162	100

Source: The Ministry of Education, 2016

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression is defined as a mental disorder that is commonly seen among people. Data indicates that depression affects more than 264 million people worldwide. The main characteristics of depression include persistent sadness and a lack of interest or pleasure in activities that are rewarding and enjoyable. This disorder is one of the main contributors to the global burden of disease. Depression can cause long-lasting or recurrent. There is also a possibility for depression to impact a person's ability to function in day-to-day life. Complex interactions between social, psychological, and biological factors are considered to be the main causes of depression. Dysfunctional families, toxic childhood experiences, the loss of jobs, and unemployment can act as catalysts to develop such a state of mental disorder (WHO Int., 2021).

The official website of the World Health Organization states that the estimated number of adults who suffer from depression is 5.0%. It is estimated that 3.8% of the population is affected by depression, and among adults who are over 60 years of age, the rate is 5.7%. Nearly 280 million people in the world suffer from depression, which is a serious condition as it can negatively affect them and their loved ones as well. This is mainly due to the fact that depression is different from the usual mood fluctuations that can occur in people from time to time. There is a possibility for this to become a serious health condition if it tends to be recurrent. It can be great suffering for a person, and they can perform poorly at school, work, or in social events. At its worst, it is possible for people who suffer from depression to resort to suicide as their last option. They can have recurrent suicidal thoughts and may attempt to commit suicide in several instances. Though they may fail at a few attempts, there may come a moment in which their attempt might be successful. According to the WHO, over 700,000 people die by suicide each year, making it the fourth leading cause of death in people aged 15 to 29 (WHO Int., 2021).

There are several stages of depression that span from mild to moderate to severe. For moderate and severe depression, psychological and pharmacological treatments are available. Yet, in certain low and middle-income countries, such treatment and support services are either absent or underdeveloped. It is estimated that 76–85% of people who suffer from such mental disorders in these countries do not have access to the treatment they need. There are different obstacles that prevent effective care, which include lack of resources, a limited number of healthcare providers, and social stigma related to mental disorders. The site also indicates that despite the income level of the country, most are not correctly diagnosed and prescribed antidepressants.

There are various symptoms that can be noticed in people who suffer from depression. Mostly, they experience prolonged sadness, irritability, and loss of pleasure for at least two weeks. There are a few other symptoms that tend to be present, which may indicate poor concentration, guilty consciousness, low self-worth and esteem, hopelessness, thoughts of self-harm, disrupted sleep, alterations in appetite or weight, exhaustion, and loss of energy (WHO Int., 2021). If a person tends to experience such emotions for a period of two weeks or more, it is recommended to seek help from a professional who is capable of helping out the person in order to address the situation at hand. In the meantime, constant attention, love, compassion, and care of the closest loved ones and family members are also essential to strive for change for the better.

2.2. Similar studies

The intention of this section of the report is to highlight studies that were conducted on similar grounds. It enabled the researcher to identify the theories and methods used by other researchers in order to investigate the COVID-19 pandemic and the depression level of school teachers.

Mukahit Dilekman and Buket Erdem (2013) conducted research in Turkey among elementary school teachers using the Beck inventory and found that there is a significant difference in depression levels with demographics and type of employment.

A study was conducted in the north of Spain on the levels of stress, anxiety, and depression experienced by teachers. It involved a sample that consisted of 1633 teachers from the Department of Education of the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) and Navarre, and all of them were working in various educational centers. The Spanish version of the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale-21 was employed for this study. It enabled the researchers to discover that a high

percentage of teachers indicate symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression. Demographically, women indicated more symptoms of stress and anxiety than men, especially women who have children. In conclusion, the study indicated the importance of attending to the mental health of teachers, particularly women, those who have children, and those with chronic pathology (Santamaría et al., 2021).

Another study was conducted under the title "Prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic: a systematic review." This study was carried out by conducting a systematic review of original studies published in any language. It was carried out on the Web of Science, PsycINFO, Pubmed, Embase, LILACS, and SciELO databases. The descriptors were: anxiety, depression, stress, teacher, faculty, COVID-19, and their synonyms. A narrative synthesis was carried out, which enabled the researchers to identify 1,372 records. The prevalence of anxiety ranged from 10% to 49.4% and depression from 15.9% to 28.9%. The levels of stress ranged from 12.6% to 50.6%. In conclusion, the researchers state that the prevalence of anxiety, depression, and stress was high among teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic (Silva et al., 2021).

A study that was conducted in China under the title "The prevalence and correlative factors of depression among Chinese teachers during the COVID-19 outbreak" aimed to investigate the prevalence and correlation of depression among teachers during the COVID-19 outbreak in mainland China. It was carried out as a cross-sectional online survey and the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (OHQ-9) was employed in order to assess depression. This enabled the researchers to recognise that out of 1096 teachers who took part in the survey. 624 (56.9%) were suffering from depression. The researchers conclude by stating that during the outbreak of COVID-19, depression was generally seen among teachers. Several independent factors caused depression such as age, participation in epidemic prevention and control, opinions toward distant teaching and prolonged school closure, sleep duration/day, physical exercise duration, spending time with family, attitude toward COVID-19, mental resilience, and stress (Zhou et al., 2021).

Another significant research carried out in Italy is "The impact of risk and protective factors on online teaching experience in high school Italian teachers during the COVID -19 pandemic." This survey investigated the experiences of online teaching among teachers. The total number of participants consisted of 107 high school teachers from Lombardy, an Italian region. The Center for Epidemiologic Studies-Depression Scale (CES-D) was used to study their depression levels and it allowed the researchers to identify that depression and stress are the main predictors of satisfaction levels for online teaching (Truzoli, Pirola & Conte, 2021).

2.3. The instrument - CES-D scale

The Center of Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale is the tool that is being used in the research to assess the depression levels of teachers. As the research was conducted in both English and Sinhala languages, a validated Sinhala scale developed by the department of psychological medicine, Faculty of medicine, University of Colombo, was used.

The CES–D scale is a self-reported scale developed to measure symptoms associated with depression. The CES-D scale is a 20-item instrument with a four-point scale ranging from 0 to 3 (rarely or none to most or all). The total ranges from 0-60, and a higher score indicates a greater risk of depression. However, a number of studies have evaluated the validity of the CES-D scale among the general population. It suggests different cut-off scores for different population segments, for instance, elderly people and people with diabetes.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Field

The Western Province's Gampaha District was chosen as the research area under the title. Gampaha District was selected as the research area not only because of the ease of study for the researchers but also because it is the second most popular district in Sri Lanka. A study has been conducted on the mental level of teachers in public schools in the Gampaha District in the light of the COVID-19 prevailing in this field of research.

Gampaha district can be pointed out as the most famous district after Colombo district.Gampaha District is 1,387 square kilometres in size and is located in the west of Sri Lanka (536 sq. mi). It is bordered on the north by Kurunegala and Puttalam districts; on the east by Kegalle District; on the south by Colombo District; and on the west by the Indian Ocean. The district is bordered on the north by the Ma Oya, on the south by the Kelani River, and on the east by the 1,000 ft. contour line.

Each Divisional Secretary's Division (DS Division) in Gampaha District is led by a Divisional Secretary (previously known as an Assistant Government Agent). There are 1,177 Grama Niladhari Divisions within the DS Divisions (GN Divisions).

Figure 1: Location of the Study area
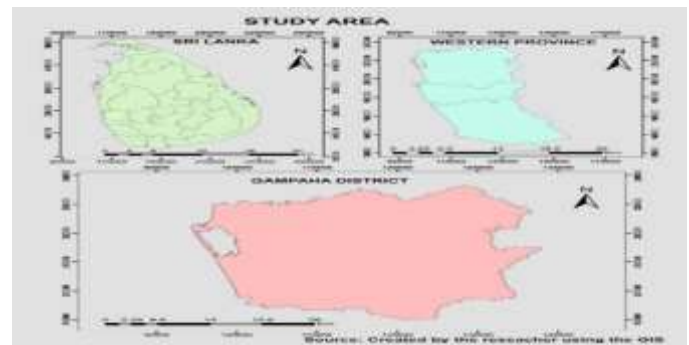
3.2. Sample

The sample selection was based on the Gampaha district. Snowball samples were used under probability sampling during sample preparation. Preliminary data collection was done online using the snowball sample, identifying another teacher through a teacher and using 161 teachers from the Gampaha District.

Sample size was calculated based on Lwanga & Lemeshow's (1991) prevalence of depression in adults aged 25–45 years in Kalutara district, 11.2% based on the study conducted by Dr. Ruwan Ferdinando (2006).

Based on a 95% confidence level, 5% precision with a 5% non-response rate, the minimal sample size was 161.

3.3. *Data collection Method*

Preliminary data collection due to the current COVID-19 situation was not feasible. Therefore, data collection was done using a Google Form. The snowball sampling technique was used to identify the target group until the final sample size was achieved.

The secondary data for the study mostly consists of online sources, and Google Scholar was the search engine that was mostly employed for this task. Apart from that, journals and websites such as Frontiers in Psychology, Academia, Science Direct, Research Gate, JSTOR, Elsevier, and SAGE were used. The keywords "depression levels in teachers," "Covid 19 pandemic," and "CES-D scale" were searched to identify the recent research conducted on relevant areas of the research topic.

3.4. *Data Analysis Method*

Data analysis is the process of cleaning, translating, and testing data with the aim of finding useful information. Data analysis is, in short, a method of putting facts and figures together to solve a research problem. It is vital to find the answer to the research question. Accordingly, in this research, data obtained from 161 databases was quantitatively analysed by SPSS software.

3.5. *Scope & the Limitation of the Study*

The study was conducted as a hands-on experience to understand the legitimate steps to follow in a research study in a real setting. Thus, the research team has made every effort to maintain the quality of the study throughout the research process. The research focused on school teachers attached to government schools in the District of Gampaha. The data collection was mainly conducted using an online Google form due to the COVID-19 situation in the country. The snowball technique was incorporated as the physical presence of teachers during the data collection was not feasible and schools were closed due to the pandemic. The Gampaha district was selected, considering the feasibility and accessibility of locating the target population within the very short duration with the available network system of data collection teams.

The scope of the present study was to find the levels of depression of government school teachers attached to schools in Gampaha District using the CES-D screening tool and describe their sociodemographic factors. The underlined causes for their current depression status and their association were not further evaluated in the present study, though the teachers experienced mild to moderate levels of depression during the data collection period. Therefore, any generalizations about the teachers in the present study should be made with caution.

Based on the study findings, the higher depression levels among the target population may be due to the blurring of professional and family work, which may be compromising the teachers' well-being as an impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic itself contributes to many changes in one's lifestyle as pandemic related experiences are mostly negative. The quality of social interaction, fear of the disease, safety of loved ones and close family members, uncertainty about their own health and life, and financial hardship can all have a negative impact on people's coping abilities in a crisis situation, making them more susceptible to symptoms of depression and anxiety (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021). Further to the pandemic, the teachers' adaptation to the virtual platform education system, the knowledge and skills they should need to adhere to was another challenging situation which may cause them to question their professional competency. Other than that, at the time of data collection, there was a massive island-wide teacher's protest organised in Sri Lanka due to salary anomalies, which may have contributed to their present levels of depression. Further, there could have been bias in referral as participants were not randomly selected, and teachers were highlighted during the pandemic for the above-mentioned reasons, which may have overstated their symptoms and, therefore, the diagnosis of depression may have been overestimated. Thus, the significance of these findings needs further analysis in future studies as it was not the prime objective of the present study design.

In the present study, 86% of the participants were women. As a result, any conclusions drawn about male teachers should be treated with extreme caution, and more research is needed to understand the gender disparity in current depression levels, as women are more likely to experience work-family conflict, despite the fact that they value both professional and family roles equally (Cinamon & Rich, 2005).

Even though CES-D is highly accurate as a screening tool to identify people who need in-depth assessment of the depressive symptoms, the results require careful attention and interpretation by a professional psychiatrist or medical professional to conclude the actual diagnosis, as this tool is not recommended as a standalone diagnostic tool, which requires additional diagnostic evaluation to confirm the diagnosis.

3.6. *Research Ethics & Limitations*

3.6.1 *Research Ethics*

- Data retrieval in research was done only at the discretion of the respondents.
- Collecting data in a way that does not harm the privacy of the respondents when inserting questions into the questionnaire.
- Protecting Data Contributors' Privacy
- Fully inform the respondents about the research objectives and the nature of the research

3.6.2 Research Limitations

- Restriction on obtaining research data entirely online.
- Focus on giving only positive answers to certain questions when answering the questionnaire.
- Limitations caused by the COVID-19 condition
- Some responses were less focused

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio Demographic Profile of the study participants

The study participants consisted of both males and females, while the majority of them were females (n = 140, 86%). The male participants were 14% (n=22) of the total study population (Figure-01).

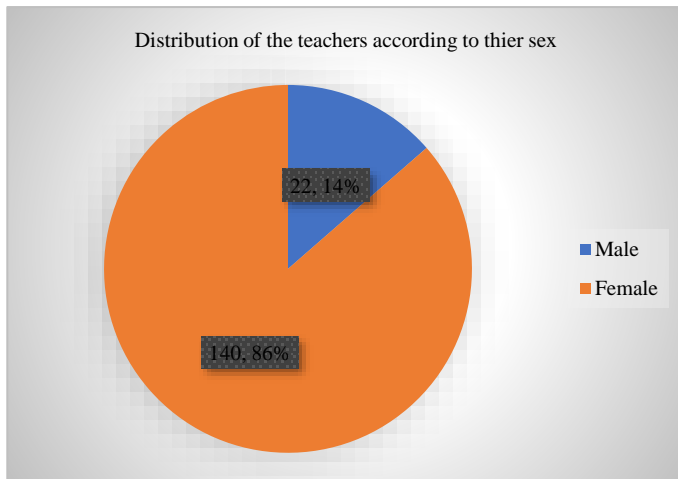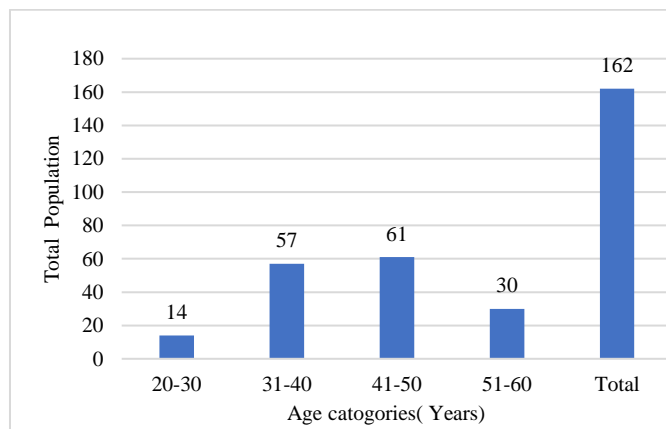Figure 2: Distribution of teachers according to Sex

Figure 3: Distribution of the study participants based on their age


The study participants consisted of people aged 20–60 years old. The majority of the study participants belonged to the age category of 41–60 years (n = 61), while the least number of participants were from the 20–30 age category (Figure-03).

Table 4: Distribution of study population based on their socio demographic characteristics

Characteristics		N=162	%
Ethnicity			
	Sinhala	158	97.5
	Moor	02	1.2
	Burger	01	0.6
	Other	01	0.6
Religion			
	Buddhist	148	91.4
	Islam	02	7.4
	Roman Catholic	12	1.2
Marital Status			
	Unmarried	20	12.3
	Married	137	84.6
	Divorce	03	1.9
	Widowed	02	1.2
Status of having children			
	Yes	122	75.3
	No	40	24.7

In the study, the majority of them were Sinhalese (n =158, 97.5%) and Buddhist (n =148, 91.4%). Nearly 85% of the study participants were married, while 75.3% of them had at least one child in their family.

Figure 4: Professional characteristics of the study population
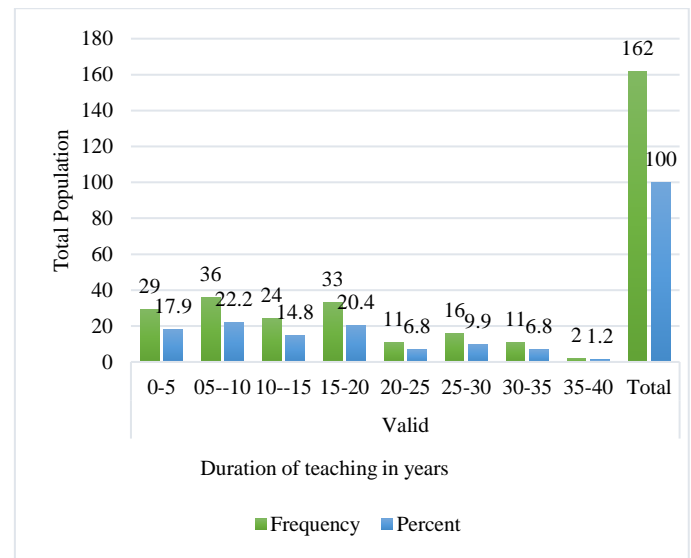
4.2 Selected perceived common challenges of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic

Table 5: Perceived common challenges of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic

		Frequency	%
Conduct Virtual platform classes (N=162)			
	Yes	148	91.4
	No	14	8.6
Have Issues related to virtual platform classes (N=148)	Yes	138	85.2
	No	10	6.2
Technical equipment Issues (N=148)	Yes	138	85.2
	No	10	6.2
Issues related to Internet data (N=148)	Yes	98	60.5
	No	50	30.9
Issues related to poor reception of internet service (N=148)	Yes	108	66.7
	No	40	24.7

Source: Compiled by author using SPSS

In our online survey, we asked the teachers to report any perceived common challenges they faced during the online teaching process. Among the total 162 participants, only 148 (91.4%) were using the virtual platforms for teaching during the data collection period. Among the teachers who were using the online teaching platforms, 85.2% (n = 138) had issues related to online classes. In what intensity they had, the issues were not further investigated and only focused on issues related to equipment, data, and Internet coverage. The majority of them had issues related to technical equipment (n =138, 85.2%).

4.3 Distribution of study population based on their psychological disease status

Among the study participants, only four (2.5%) had been diagnosed and reported to have had a psychological disease before the COVID-19 pandemic. Among these participants, only three of them were currently under treatment for psychological disease. Their disease type and status were not further described in the present study as it was not within the scope of the present study.

4.4 Distribution of study population based on their COVID-19 status and experience

Five participants (3.1%) from the total study population already had COVID-19 at the time of the data collection period, while 21 (13.3%) participants had undergone home/institute quarantine due to contact history of COVID-19 positive cases. Among the study population, 61 (37.7%) participants had their immediate family/relatives tested positive for COVID-19, while 72 (44.4%) participants had their immediate family/relatives undergone institutional/home quarantine.

4.5 Depression status of the study population

The CES-D questionnaire, is used clinically as a screening tool among diverse target groups, as it is an excellent sensitivity and reliability tool for diagnosing depression. Therefore, in the present study, we were able to screen their depression status using the CES-D tool. Based on the findings nearly 72% (117) of the study participants were having depression (Total score value >16), while 28% (n=45) were in non-depression status at the time of data collection (Figure-03).

Figure 5: Depressive status of the study participants
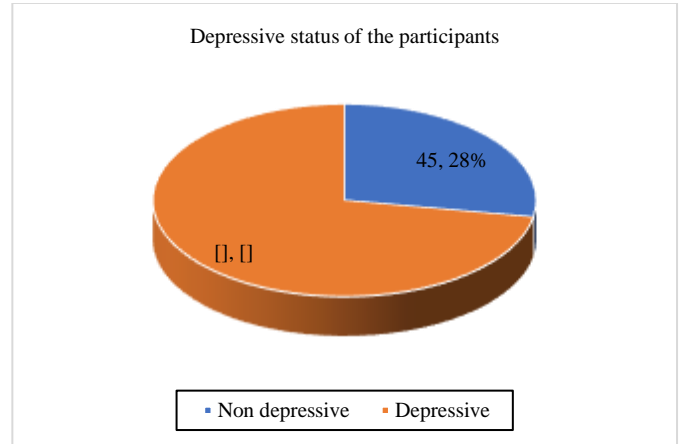
4.6 Depression severity levels among the participants

Table 6: Depression severity levels among the participants

Depression Severity	Frequency	Percentage
Non depressive	07	4.3
Mildly depressed	38	23.5
Moderate depressed	73	45.1
Severely depressed	44	27.2

The CES-D is a self-reported tool, where participants are supposed to describe how they felt during the previous week.

The scores ranged from 0 (lowest) to 60 (highest). The study participants were further categorised into four main groups: (0–9–not depressed); mildly depressed (10–15); moderately depressed (16–24); and (more than 25–severely depressed). The depression scores of the study population ranged from 0–44. The mean score for the scale among the study participants was 20.54 (SD = 7.68). Based on the study findings, 23.5% (n = 38) were mildly depressed, 45.1% (n = 73) were moderately depressed, and 27.2% (n = 44) were severely depressed out of the total study population.

V. CONCLUSION

This study is intended to investigate the psychological status of government school teachers in the Gampaha district during COVID-19. It followed the quantitative approach and gathered data from the government teachers by conducting a questionnaire survey. The results indicated that among the selected sample, the majority of them appeared to be mildly and moderately depressed, while 27.2% were severely depressed. As the psychological condition is a mandatory requirement for every individual to have a healthy lifestyle, the researchers intend to highlight the importance of governmental aid and support in this regard.

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