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A sequential explanatory mixed method study to assess the stress and coping strategies among working members during Covid 19 pandemic in selected private health science institutions at Coimbatore

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Abstract

The study was conducted in two phases using sequential explanatory mixed method, in order to understand the stressful situations and stress coping strategies among working members during covid 19 pandemic. A total of 50 participants who were working in private health science institutions were selected using convenient sampling in Phase I and in phase II, 5 samples were selected using purposive sampling. Structured Questionnaire was used in Phase I and unstructured open ended questions by using an in-depth focus interview in Phase II. The study reveals that majority of the participants 80% had moderate level of stress and 72.5% were partially able to cope up the stress situation and had negative correlation between stress and coping strategies. The study concluded that financial crisis, lifestyle, changes in work environment are the major areas of stress at the covid pandemic and adapted various coping strategies such as financial management and life style changes influenced the participants to reduce stress level.

Keywords: stress, coping strategies, covid 19 pandemic, sequential explanatory mixed method

Introduction

COVID-19, a novel coronavirus had vigorously spread around the world and was declared as 'Pandemic' on March 11th 2020 by World Health Organization (WHO). The virus first emerged in China and was considered as one of the major global health threats. The deadly virus has strongly influenced the people by increasing fear, frustration, stress and anxiety. This Covid-19 pandemic has created a crisis in all aspects of our lives. Learning to cope with stress in a healthy way will make common people become more resilient.

The rapid emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the India and prevention measures in place have dramatically altered daily behavior, with a substantial impact on the physical, mental, social, and financial well-being of the population. Nationwide, individuals must navigate school and college closures, employment insecurity, and changes in social behavior that likely have major adverse effects on the mental health and ability to cope. Indeed, the Centers for Disease Control has emphasized the need for all individuals to manage stress and protect their mental health during this extremely uncertain time, recognizing that increased stress may lead to maladaptive behaviors to cope with stress and anxiety.

Imposing the need for various modifications for organizations and individuals to cope up with the stress in the Covid Pandemic. The outbreak of COVID-19 in the current time has led to a crisis situation and made a major switch in the regular working conditions worldwide correlated with high public uncertainty (Sahni, D.J. 2020)

[1].

Past studies have found that work load with less salary, financial imbalance and job insecurity are the main stressors for employees (Krantz *et al.*, 2005; Sahni, 2016) [7, 8]. Stress is known to have a negative influence on performance, productivity and overall satisfaction. This needs to be an urgent health issue. This motivated the researcher to select the study "to assess the stress and coping strategies among working members during Covid 19 pandemic"

Statement of the problem

A sequential explanatory mixed method study to assess the stress and coping strategies among working members during COVID 19 pandemic in selected private health science institutions at Coimbatore

Objectives

Phase I

- To identify the stress level among working members
- To identify the coping strategies among working members
- To correlate stress and coping strategies among working members
- To associate the stress level and coping strategies with demographic variables

Phase II

- To explore the stress and coping strategies among working members
- To explore other experiences faced and overcome at the COVID 19 pandemic among working members

Hypothesis

H₁: There will be a significant correlation between the stress and coping strategies

H₀: There will be no significant association between level of stress and coping strategies with selected demographic variables

Assumption

In the COVID Pandemic, stress affects many people, but individual responses may vary according to their coping strategies

Delimitations

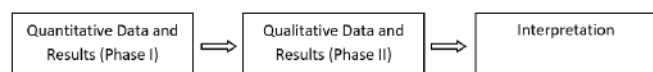
This study included only working members in selected health science institutions, teaching faculty and samples were selected by non probability sampling technique in quantitative data, due to time constraint.

Review of literature

The literature relevant for this study includes studies related to stress of working members in the COVID Pandemic, studies related to coping strategies of working members in the COVID Pandemic, studies related to stress of working members and studies related to the coping strategies

Methodology

The study will be conducted in two Phases. Mixed method approach with Sequential explanatory mixed design was used in the study.



Research Design: Seque

The variables used in the study was stress (dependent variable) and coping strategies (Independent variable). The setting of the study was private health science institutions in Coimbatore. Population consists of members aged above 25 years working in the private health science institutions in Coimbatore. In Phase I, 50 samples using Convenient Sampling Technique and in Phase II, 5 samples using Purposive Sampling Technique was included in the study. Structured Questionnaire was the technique used to assess the stress and coping strategies in Phase I and unstructured open ended questions by using an in-depth focus interview in Phase II. The tool used was 5 point rating scale consists of 24 items which included stress related to financial, health, family, domestic responsibilities, job, technology, online class to assess the stress and Dichotomous questionnaire consists of 15 items which included adaptation of new life style, involvement in family, job, domestic responsibilities, technology, recreational activities to assess the coping strategies in Phase I. In phase II, tool consists of unstructured questions which focus on experience, financial management, problems faced, life style changes, issues

related to online class during Pandemic and also focus on the coping strategies adapted during COVID 19 pandemic, the participants audio response was recorded. Five experts which includes 3 nursing professors, one Physician and one Psychologist from Coimbatore scrutinize the tool and finalized the tool by making corrections based on the suggestions given by the experts. Split half method was used for testing the reliability of stress ($r=0.87$) and coping strategies ($r=0.91$). Feasibility and practicability of the tool was ensured through the pilot study (Phase I = 5 participants and Phase II = 1 participant)

Informed written consent was obtained from the higher authority of the institutions. In Phase I, data collection was done from selected institutions at Coimbatore. The investigator introduced and explained about the purposes of the study. The confidentiality of the responses was assured. Verbal consent was obtained from the participants in the study. The data collection in phase I, took 25-30 min/subject to complete. From phase I, five subjects who had moderate and high level of stress were identified using a purposive sampling technique and the investigator introduced herself explained about the purposes of the study in Phase II. The confidentiality of the responses was assured and verbal consent was obtained individually. The data collection took 15-20 min/subject to complete. The data were analyzed using SPSS 18. The demographic variables, stress and coping strategies were analyzed using the frequency and percentages, correlation using Karl Pearson's correlation coefficient and chi-square test was used to find out the association between selected demographic variables with level of stress and coping strategies.

Result

More than half of the participants 58% were in the age group between 30-40 years and had liabilities 52.5%, most of the participants were females 62.5%, from nuclear family 72.5% and had own house 67.5%. One third 35% participants were professors, and most of the participants 62.5% had income >Rs.30,000. Nearly half of the participants 47.5% had two children and had gold loan, 67.5% had own house and their spouse also had private job. One third (30%) of the participants had < 6 hours of sleep and 27.5% had health problems either diabetes or hypertension or both. Majority participants 95% had 3 meals per day.

The study findings from Phase I reveals that majority of the participants 80% had moderate level of stress and 72.5% had partially able to cope up the stress situation. Also stress and coping strategies had negative correlation which concludes that adaptation of coping strategies influence to reduce stress level. Statistically, there was a significant correlation between stress and copying strategies was accepted ($r = -0.326$, sig value = 0.04) at 5% level of significance. Participants with liabilities had a significant association with level of stress. (χ^2 value = 5.309, df =1, sig value =0.021 at $P<0.05$)

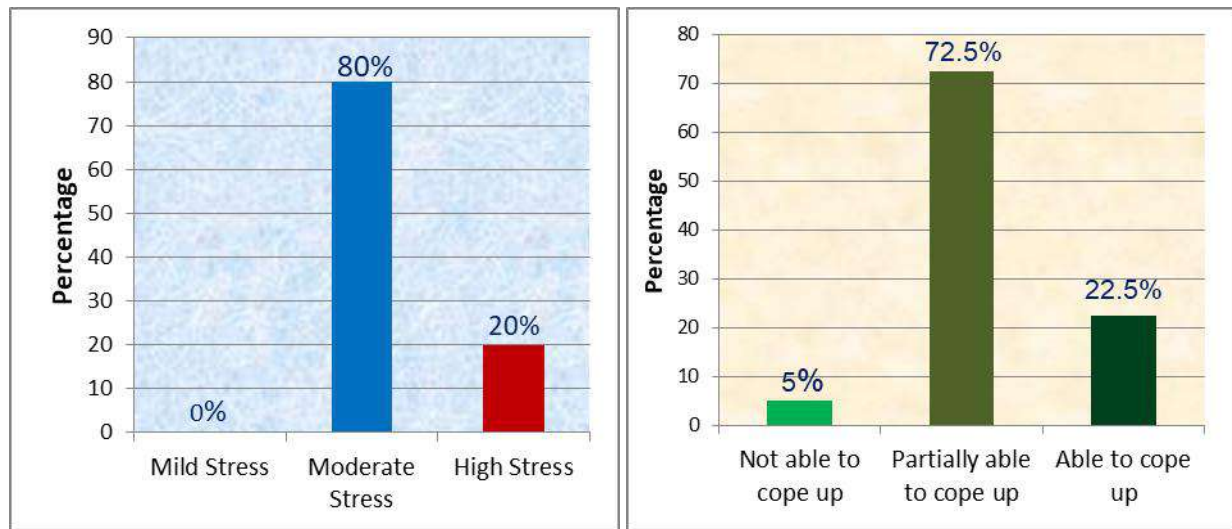


Fig 1: Presents the level of stress and coping strategies among working members in phase I

Table 1: Shows the correlation between stress and coping strategies among working members

Variables	Mean \pm SD	r value	P value
Stress	80.35 \pm 10.24	- 0.326	0.040 *
Cope up strategies	8.45 \pm 2.53		

*- Significant at $P < 0.05$ level

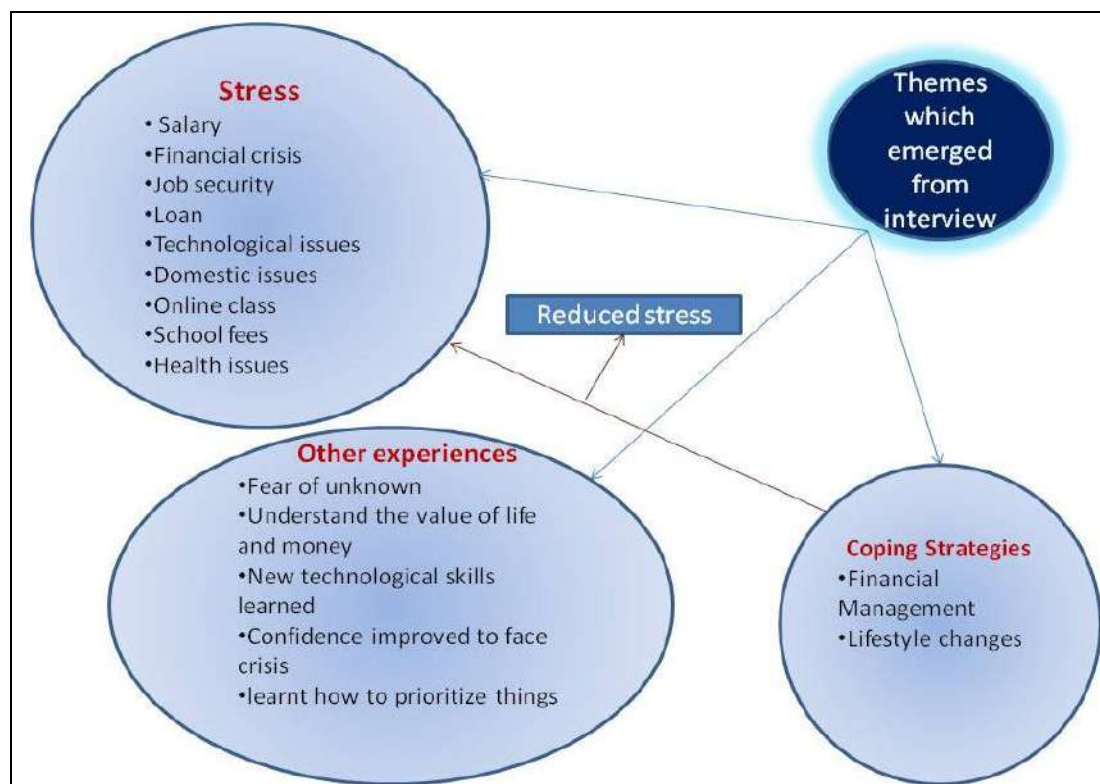


Fig 2: Presents the factors influencing the stress, coping strategies and other experience among working members in phase II

The findings from phase II, suggest that the stress was perceived in financial, salary, job, loans, school fees, technological online classes, domestic issues, health problems among majority of participants. Financial management and life style changes were adapted by majority of participants as a coping strategy. Other experienced focus on new learning values, morals, teamwork, new technological skills, support and confidence.

Limitation

- The data is self-reported in the interviews which might be subject to the mood and situations of the participants.

Discussion

The results showed that Covid 19 pandemic had moderately impact the behavioural aspects such as stress and coping

among the working members in the private health science institution. The triggering factors related to stress are job security, technological issues, financial crisis, salary, online class issues, domestic issues, liabilities and health issues. The findings were supported from the study of impact of covid 19 on employee behaviour: stress and coping mechanism during work from home among service industry employees (Dr Jolly Sahni, 2020) ^[1] revealed that the outbreak of covid-19 and its consequences made the employees with high level of stress, due to the fear of unknown, communication issues, technology related issues, incompatible timing preferences, lack of clarity and direction and interruption during work from home disturbed the employee's mental health.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the COVID-19 Pandemic has certainly created a panic and fear including the moderate and high level of stress and majority adapted coping strategies to overcome stress; and had a relation between stress and coping strategies among working members in private health science institutions. Also explored from qualitative analysis majority learnt to manage financial crisis, lifestyle, changes in work environment and adapted various coping strategies to reduce stress level

"In life there are things that we cannot change and we should learn to adapt to it."

Nursing Implication

The study finding can be utilized in education, nursing service, nursing administration and nursing research.

Recommendation

- The similar study can be conducted in different category of workers
- A comparative study can be conducted between private and government institutions
- A comparative study can be conducted between gender

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