

BAR-ILAN UNIVERSITY

**Support and resilience sources for emotional
well-being of teachers during pandemics such as
Covid-19 or comparable future crises: Toward
policy design**

Adi Amon

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the Master's degree in the Faculty of Education, Bar-
Ilan University

Ramat-Gan, Israel

2021

Abstract

Throughout the outbreak of the global COVID-19 epidemic, teachers have faced many emotional challenges. It appears, that the well-being and emotional well-being of teachers during the outbreak of epidemics has not yet been deeply investigated in Israel and around the world. Considering this, the main goal of the study is to examine the sources of teachers' support and resilience for emotional well-being during recent COVID-19 outbreaks through group simulations. Another goal is to examine whether these simulations, which focus on events related to emotional well-being during the COVID-19 period, affect self-efficacy, psychological empowerment, emotional commitment, and the tendency to leave of the participating teachers.

Using a heterogeneous sample, four experimental groups comprising up to 24 teachers in each group, from elementary, secondarily and high schools, volunteered to participate in online simulation groups, as well as three control groups that completed online questionnaires only. The participants in the simulation groups met virtually once a week during three months and performed a role play in light of events that arose from their various work circles, and were related to well-being and emotional well-being during the COVID-19 outbreaks. An in-depth research and discussion were then conducted with all participants, led by the group facilitator, while discussing and filling out questionnaires dealing with self-efficacy, psychological empowerment, emotional commitment, and a tendency to leave.

The research findings were analyzed using a Mixed Methods, multilevel analysis and a developmental measure throughout the study. Qualitative analysis elicited 5 main subcategories describing the sources of support and resilience in the following order of dominance (from high to low): willingness to help while finding solutions and alternatives, the need for accompaniment and backup, shared destiny and identification, the care and empathy of the management towards the staff, and ability to deal with complex situations. Also 7 main sub-categories were elicited, describing the sources that impair teachers' support and resilience in the following order of dominance (from high to low): "do not see us", the supremacy of system needs, lack of flexibility of management and adjustment of the ministry, 'do not see things the same', Home-work conflict, impairment of teacher autonomy, and ambiguity and uncertainty.

The findings of the qualitative section indicated that the sources that impair support and resilience, are not necessarily the negative sources of support and resilience, but rather that they are different components. Quantitative analysis elicited that group simulations contributed to the positive development of the variables: psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, emotional commitment, while the component of the tendency to leave remained almost unchanged. In the control group, on the other hand, there was a setback in each of the indices, except for the tendency to leave, which developed positively.

These findings raise the importance of simulations for teachers coping with COVID-19 challenges while increasing their empowerment, capacity, and commitment, when the tendency to leave, despite the difficulties, did not increase. In contrast, it is evident that without an intervention process such as simulations, the COVID-19 challenges contributed to a retreat in the indices of self-efficacy, psychological empowerment, and their emotional commitment, to the point of tendency to leave the system. The findings of the current study could help the designers of educational policy to strategically plan the response and intervention system for support and resilience towards their emotional well-being, self-efficacy, empowerment, and reducing teachers' tendency to leave, through group simulations that customized for time of crisis, the outbreak of additional COVID-19 waves and additional future pandemics involving social isolation and distance learning.