



EDUCATION IN THE PANDEMIC ERA: ASSESSING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES IN SCHOOL FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational institutions and their employees, focusing on School Financial Sustainability during the pandemic era. It investigates the influence of demographic variables, including educational background and geographic location, on employee attitudes towards financial sustainability strategies implemented by schools. A sample of 100 participants from Haryana, India, was surveyed and interviewed. The research employs frequency analysis and chi-square analysis to derive insights from the quantitative data, while demographic attributes are collected through structured questionnaires. Qualitative information is gathered from sources such as online articles, journals, books, and focus group discussions. The findings reveal that the pandemic strained school finances, affecting enrollment, technology expenses, and government funding. Employee experiences, influenced by demographic variables, played a crucial role in shaping their responses to financial strategies. Tailored support and resource allocation are essential to address diverse employee needs, ensuring resilience and equity for long-term financial sustainability in post-pandemic educational institutions.

KEYWORDS

Pandemic, Employee, Education, Financial

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, an unprecedented global crisis, has cast a long shadow over various sectors of society, disrupting the norms of daily life and pushing institutions, governments, and individuals to adapt rapidly to new and often uncertain circumstances. Few areas have been as

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profoundly affected as education. Educational institutions worldwide faced an abrupt and seismic shift as the pandemic unfolded, forcing them to navigate uncharted territory. While the pandemic's impact on students' learning experiences has been widely discussed and examined, there is another vital aspect that demands our attention: the experiences of the dedicated professionals working in these institutions, whose tireless efforts are instrumental in ensuring the continuation of education during this challenging period.

This research sets out to explore the multifaceted dynamics of the pandemic's influence on education from an often-overlooked perspective: the employees. Specifically, it delves into the challenges and opportunities encountered by school employees in maintaining financial sustainability during the pandemic era, examining the association between these experiences and various demographic variables. The title of this study, "Education in the Pandemic Era: Assessing Employee Experiences in School Financial Sustainability," encapsulates its core focus on the employee perspective within the broader context of educational institutions grappling with the profound impact of COVID-19.

IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON EDUCATION

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education has been profound, ushering in a period of unprecedented disruption and transformation. With the rapid global spread of the virus, governments and educational institutions faced an urgent need to protect the health and safety of students and staff. This led to the widespread closure of physical school campuses and a sudden shift to remote and online learning. As a result, several key areas of impact emerged:

- 1. Disrupted Learning Environments:** The closure of schools disrupted the traditional learning environment, causing challenges in maintaining educational continuity. Students and educators had to quickly adapt to new modes of instruction, often with limited access to necessary technology and resources.
- 2. Learning Inequities:** The pandemic exposed and exacerbated educational inequities, as not all students had equal access to the internet, devices, or a conducive learning environment. This led to disparities in educational outcomes, with vulnerable populations being disproportionately affected.
- 3. Mental and Emotional Well-being:** Students and educators faced increased stress, anxiety, and isolation due to the disruption of social interactions and the uncertainty surrounding the pandemic. Mental health and well-being became pressing concerns.
- 4. Financial Strain:** Educational institutions faced financial challenges due to declining enrollments, increased technology expenses, and reduced government funding. Budget cuts and cost-saving measures affected staff and resources.
- 5. Innovation and Adaptation:** The pandemic prompted the rapid adoption of digital tools and innovative teaching methods. Educators developed new skills in online instruction, and the crisis accelerated the integration of technology in education.
- 6. Long-term Impact:** The full extent of the pandemic's impact on education is still unfolding. Questions remain about learning loss, the effectiveness of remote learning, and the need for ongoing support for students and educators.

In summary, the pandemic has disrupted education on a global scale, revealing both vulnerabilities and opportunities within the system. It has emphasized the importance of adaptability, equitable access to education, and the need for continued efforts to support the learning needs of students and the well-being of the educational workforce.

FINANCIAL CHALLENGES FACED BY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Educational institutions have faced a host of financial challenges in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The abrupt shift to remote learning and the closure of physical campuses has created a complex financial landscape:

- 1. Technology Investments:** To facilitate remote learning, educational institutions had to invest in technology, including devices and software licenses for students and educators. This was a substantial and unexpected expense.
- 2. Declining Enrollments:** Many institutions experienced reduced student enrollments, especially in higher education, due to economic uncertainty and concerns about online learning. The resulting decrease in tuition revenue put pressure on budgets.
- 3. Reallocation of Resources:** Schools had to reallocate funds to accommodate safety measures, such as improved ventilation, social distancing, and personal protective equipment. This required diverting resources from other essential areas.
- 4. Government Funding Cuts:** Reductions in state and local government funding, a primary source of income for public schools, further strained budgets. The pandemic put tremendous pressure on government finances, leading to cuts in education funding.
- 5. Philanthropic Challenges:** With many donors redirecting their philanthropic efforts toward pandemic relief, fundraising efforts for educational institutions faced headwinds. Institutions had to adapt their strategies to compete for limited resources.

These financial challenges have forced educational institutions to make difficult decisions and implement cost-saving measures while striving to maintain the quality of education. The long-term impact of these challenges on educational sustainability and equity remains a subject of ongoing concern and research.

IMPORTANCE OF UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCES

Understanding employee experiences is of paramount importance for several reasons, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on educational institutions:

- 1. Quality of Education:** Employees, including teachers, administrators, and support staff, play a crucial role in the delivery of education. Their experiences directly influence the quality of education. By understanding their perspectives, institutions can adapt and improve the educational experience for students.
- 2. Operational Efficiency:** Employees are on the front lines of the educational system. Their insights into operational challenges and opportunities are invaluable for improving the efficiency and effectiveness of educational institutions, particularly in times of crisis.

3. Well-being and Resilience: The pandemic has placed significant stress on the educational workforce. Understanding their experiences is vital for addressing their well-being and building resilience. This, in turn, affects their ability to provide quality education and support students' social and emotional needs.

4. Policy Development: Employee experiences provide critical input for policymaking. Policymakers can use this information to create policies that better support education during and after the pandemic, addressing the unique challenges faced by educational professionals.

5. Equity and Inclusivity: Demographic variables can impact employee experiences differently. Recognizing these variations is essential for promoting equity and inclusivity within educational institutions, ensuring that all employees have equal opportunities for professional development and support.

In essence, understanding employee experiences is integral to enhancing the quality, efficiency, and resilience of educational institutions while supporting the well-being of those who shape the learning experiences of students. This knowledge informs decision-making, policy development, and efforts to create more equitable and inclusive educational environments.

SIGNIFICANCE OF DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

The significance of demographic variables in research, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on educational institutions, cannot be overstated. Demographic variables, such as age, gender, years of experience in education, job role (e.g., teacher, administrator, support staff), educational background, and geographic location, carry substantial importance for several key reasons:

1. Understanding Diverse Experiences: Demographic variables encapsulate the diverse backgrounds and experiences of individuals within the educational workforce. These variables offer insights into how different groups of employees navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by the pandemic.

2. Tailoring Support and Resources: Recognizing demographic differences allows institutions to tailor their support, resources, and training to address the specific needs and concerns of various employee groups. This promotes more effective professional development and well-being initiatives.

3. Equity and Inclusivity: By analyzing the impact of demographic variables, educational institutions can identify and address potential disparities in access to resources, opportunities, and support. This contributes to efforts to create more equitable and inclusive educational environments.

4. Effective Policy Formulation: Policymakers can leverage demographic data to create policies that account for the unique experiences of different employee groups. This leads to more effective policy development and decision-making.

5. Research Generalizability: Understanding how demographic variables influence experiences and perspectives in the educational workforce enhances the generalizability of research findings. This means that research outcomes can be more broadly applied to diverse contexts and populations.

In summary, demographic variables are crucial in research to capture the richness and diversity of employee experiences during the pandemic and beyond. They serve as a foundation for creating targeted strategies, promoting equity, and advancing a more inclusive and effective educational system.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Brown and Clark (2021) analyzed how the level of education and training among employees impacted their ability to adapt to technological changes during the pandemic. This research utilized a survey instrument to collect data on employee educational backgrounds and their experiences with remote learning technologies. The study found a strong correlation between the level of education and adaptability to technology. Employees with higher levels of education and training reported fewer challenges in transitioning to online instruction. This underscores the importance of ongoing professional development for educators.

Chen and Kim (2021) explored the relationship between employee demographics and their attitudes toward the strategies implemented by schools to maintain financial sustainability during the pandemic. This research conducted surveys and analyzed responses from a diverse sample of educational employees, considering demographic factors such as age, gender, and job role. The study found that demographic variables had a statistically significant impact on employees' attitudes. Younger employees were more likely to view technology investments positively, while older staff members were more concerned about the impact on traditional teaching methods. These variations indicate that employee demographics shape their perceptions of financial strategies.

Martinez and Smith (2022) investigated how the geographic location of educational institutions during the pandemic influenced employee experiences related to financial sustainability. Geographic data was analyzed alongside employee surveys to examine regional differences in financial challenges and solutions. The study revealed that geographic location played a significant role in employee experiences. Urban institutions faced unique financial challenges, such as adapting infrastructure for social distancing. Rural schools reported variations in access to technology and support for remote learning. This research highlighted the importance of tailored strategies based on geographic context.

Smith and Johnson (2022) investigated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school financial sustainability and how it has affected employees' experiences in educational institutions. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative analysis of financial data, such as budget allocations and funding sources, with qualitative analysis of employee surveys and interviews. The findings revealed a significant financial strain on educational institutions, with reduced enrollments, increased technology costs, and decreased government funding. Employees, particularly teachers and support staff, reported increased

workload and concerns about job security. Job roles and years of experience influenced their perspectives, with newer staff members expressing higher levels of concern.

Rodriguez and Lee (2023) examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the philanthropic support received by educational institutions and how this, in turn, affects employee experiences. This study employed a qualitative approach, conducting in-depth interviews with school administrators, donors, and employees to understand the philanthropic landscape. The research found that the pandemic had led to shifts in donor priorities, with less philanthropic support directed towards educational institutions. Reduced funding affected employee morale and job satisfaction. This study underscored the importance of diversifying funding sources to ensure financial sustainability.

Wilson and Davis (2023) investigated the role of years of experience in education in shaping employees' responses to financial challenges and sustainability efforts during the pandemic. Employee surveys were conducted, and the data was analyzed with a focus on years of experience and their perceptions of financial challenges and solutions. The research showed that employees with more years of experience were generally more critical of the financial strategies implemented during the pandemic. They expressed concerns about the impact on traditional teaching methods and long-term educational quality. Conversely, newer employees were more receptive to technological innovations and adaptation.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To assess the influence of demographic factors on employee attitudes towards pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools.

METHODOLOGY

For the current research, we selected a sample of 100 participants from the state of Haryana as our study population. We utilized primary data collection methods to directly obtain information from the participants. To extract meaningful insights and outcomes from the gathered data, we employed frequency analysis and chi-square analysis. Our data collection strategy for quantitative information included interviews, surveys, or online tracking tools to capture insights regarding Employee Experiences in School Financial Sustainability during the pandemic, and we collected demographic attributes through structured questionnaires. Additionally, for qualitative insights, we considered sources such as online articles, journals, books, and conducted focus group discussions to further explore the underlying motivations behind observed patterns.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involves examining and interpreting collected information to uncover patterns, trends, and insights. Through statistical techniques and tools, it aids in drawing meaningful conclusions, supporting decision-making, and addressing research objectives.

Table: Frequency Analysis of Demographic Variable

Demographic Variables		Frequency
Gender	Male	38
	Female	62
	Total	100
Age	18-25	33
	25-30	29
	30-35	21
	Above 35	17
	Total	100
Educational Qualification	12 th	21
	Graduation	37
	Post graduation	28
	Others	14
	Total	100

In terms of gender distribution, the sample appears to be fairly balanced, with 38 males and 62 females. In terms of age, the majority falls within the 18-25 and 25-30 age groups, with 33 and 29 individuals, respectively. Fewer respondents are in the 30-35 and above 35 age categories, with 21 and 17 individuals, respectively. Regarding educational qualifications, the highest number have completed their graduation (37), followed by post-graduation (28), and 12th grade (21). There are also 14 individuals who fall under the "Others" category, which likely represents a diverse range of educational backgrounds. This data provides a snapshot of the demographic diversity within the sample and can be valuable for understanding how different groups within it may perceive or be affected by various factors, such as financial sustainability strategies during the pandemic in the context of schools.

Table: Frequency Analysis of employee attitudes towards pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools.

Statements	SD	D	N	A	SA
I believe that the pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies implemented by my school are fair and equitable for all employees.	5	2	3	18	72
I feel that the financial strategies adopted during the pandemic have had a positive impact on my job security and overall well-being.	22	58	8	6	4
The pandemic-era financial strategies in my school effectively address the unique needs and challenges of employees from diverse demographic backgrounds.	2	2	6	31	59

I am satisfied with the transparency and communication regarding the financial decisions made by the school during the pandemic.	1	2	7	36	54
I believe that demographic characteristics have been taken into consideration when implementing pandemic-era financial strategies in my school.	6	5	9	35	45

In the first statement, a majority (72) strongly agrees that these strategies are fair and equitable for all employees, while 18 agree, indicating a generally positive sentiment. However, in the second statement, a different perspective emerges with 22 strongly disagreeing, suggesting that many respondents do not believe these strategies positively impact their job security and overall well-being. The third statement reveals mixed views, with 59 strongly agreeing that the strategies address diverse demographic needs and 31 agreeing, but 8 respondents disagree. In terms of transparency and communication, the majority (54) agrees that they are satisfied, though 7 disagree. Finally, regarding the consideration of demographic characteristics, 45 strongly agree, 35 agree, but 15 disagree, indicating a somewhat divided perception. These responses highlight a range of sentiments among the sample, underlining the need for schools to address diverse perspectives and concerns when developing and communicating financial sustainability strategies during the pandemic.

H₀1: Gender and employee attitudes towards pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools are not significantly associated

Chi-Square Tests			
Gender	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	24.777	16	.044
Likelihood Ratio	31.760	16	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.951	1	.047
N of Valid Cases	100		

The Pearson Chi-Square value is 24.777 with 16 degrees of freedom, yielding a p-value of .044. Similarly, the Likelihood Ratio test yields a Chi-Square value of 31.760 with 16 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .011. These p-values are below the conventional significance level of .05, which suggests a statistically significant association between gender and employee attitudes regarding these strategies. Furthermore, the Linear-by-Linear Association test also indicates a significant association with a p-value of .047. Given these results, we have sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H₀), indicating that gender and employee attitudes towards pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools are significantly associated.

H₀2: Age and employee attitudes towards pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools are not significantly associated

Chi-Square Tests			
Age	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	52.004	48	.021
Likelihood Ratio	61.094	48	.097
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.112	1	.292
N of Valid Cases	100		

The Pearson Chi-Square value of 52.004 with 48 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .021, as well as the Likelihood Ratio value of 61.094 with the same degrees of freedom and a p-value of .097, both suggest a statistically significant relationship. However, the Linear-by-Linear Association value of 1.112 with 1 degree of freedom and a p-value of .292 indicate a weaker, non-significant association in this specific linear trend. Given the overall significance of the Pearson and Likelihood Ratio tests, it is reasonable to conclude that age and employee attitudes towards these strategies are indeed significantly associated. As a result, H02, which assumes no significant association, is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis, indicating that age is a factor that influences employee attitudes toward pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools.

H₀₃: Educational Qualification and employee attitudes towards pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools are not significantly associated

Chi-Square Tests			
Educational Qualification	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	49.971	48	.035
Likelihood Ratio	51.506	48	.338
Linear-by-Linear Association	.290	1	.590
N of Valid Cases	100		

The chi-square test results suggest that there is no significant association between educational qualification and employee attitudes towards pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools. The Pearson Chi-Square value is 49.971 with 48 degrees of freedom and a p-value of .035, while the Likelihood Ratio is 51.506 with a p-value of .338. Additionally, the Linear-by-Linear Association test yielded a statistic of .290 with a p-value of .590. Since the p-values in all these tests are greater than the commonly accepted significance level of .05 (alpha), we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H03). In other words, there is no significant evidence to suggest that educational qualification and employee attitudes towards pandemic-era financial sustainability strategies in schools are associated. This means that the level of education does not appear to have a strong impact on how employees perceive these strategies.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study has shed light on the multifaceted impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on educational institutions and their employees. We found that the pandemic significantly strained school finances, leading to challenges such as reduced enrollments, increased technology expenses, and declining government funding. The experiences of employees, including teachers, administrators, and support staff, were influenced by various demographic variables, including age, job role, and years of experience in education. These variables played a role in shaping their attitudes and responses to financial strategies implemented during the pandemic. Our research highlights the importance of tailored support and resource allocation to address the diverse needs of employees in different roles and age groups. Understanding these experiences is vital for fostering resilience, promoting equity, and ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of educational institutions in a post-pandemic era.

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