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Analyzes of elementary school teachers' work adjustment in a period of Coronavirus pandemic Based on grounded theory

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Abstract

Aim: The present study was conducted with the aim of analyzing the work adjustment process of elementary teachers during the Coronavirus pandemic period. To conduct this research, a qualitative approach and the method of grounded theory based on the systematic design of Strauss and Corbin (2015) were used. The field of research included all elementary teachers in Qeshm who were selected 18 of participants by theoretical and convenience sampling in the findings. Research tool was a semi-structured interview and for the data analysis the three stages, open coding, axial coding and selective coding were used. In order to get assured of the validity of the data, the four criteria of Lincoln and Guba including: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were used. The theory derived from the findings was created around the category of "incompatible orientations of beneficiaries". According to the findings, the incompatible orientations of beneficiaries towards virtual education are not mainly related to its nature and functions, but are more influenced by the conditions and context of providing virtual education. In such a way that most of the teachers have taken contradictory measures to adapt themselves to virtual education.

Keywords: *Virtual education, Work adjustment, Elementary school teachers, Pandemic*

Introduction

In human resource management, one of the main factors in fulfilling the duties of teachers is the issue of work adjustment. In order to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, many countries closed face-to-face education and switched to virtual education. By reviewing the background of research in domestic and foreign databases, no research was found in the field of work adjustment of elementary teachers in virtual education. In this regard, it is appropriate to refer to some researches that are related to the present research and can be useful in explaining the subject. The research conducted on virtual education has mainly expressed the concerns and challenges of elementary teachers regarding the change from face-to-face to virtual education, such as: lack of proper instructions and guidelines for teachers (Bergdahl and Nouri, 2020), lack of familiarity with new software (Alborzi et al., 1400), lack of provision of appropriate learning opportunities in the context of virtual space and management of students' access to digital content and appropriate feedback to them (Henriques, Correia & Dias-Trindade, 2021), reproduction of classroom dynamics (Giovannella, Passarelli & Persico, 2020), the lack of proper application of what has been learned in virtual education due to the lack of support from the school management and the lack of proper infrastructure (Chuah & Mohamad, 2020), the challenge in maintaining social interaction and supporting students' motivation (Lepp et al., 2021), the lack of orientation courses and a skill for teachers (Moradi and Zarghami-Hamrah, 1400), lack of responsiveness of virtual education to students of cultural minorities (Lambrev, 2024), the role of teacher model being (Zare Sheykh

Kolaie and Javadipour, 1401), unstructured digital pedagogy (Kalia et al., 2023) and difficulty in measuring the real learning of students (Aliyyah et al., 2020; Abbasi, Hejazi and Hakimzadeh, 2019). The present study, therefore, aimed to analyzing the work adjustment process of elementary teachers during the Coronavirus pandemic period.

Methodology

Since in the present study, the purpose of the researchers was to develop a theory to explain the process of work adjustment of elementary teachers in virtual education, that is why the Ground theory approach based on the systematic design of Strauss and Corbin (2015) were used. The participants included 18 elementary teachers who were selected based on theoretical and convenience sampling and semi-structured interviews were conducted with them. Data analysis was done in three stages of open, axial, and selective coding. For validity of the data, the four criteria of Lincoln and Guba including: credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability were used.

Results

According to the results of the data analysis in the work adjustment process of elementary teachers in virtual education, the core category of incompatible orientations of the beneficiaries occurred under the following conditions including: Individual factors (lack of experience, limited perception, role ambiguity and educational preference), instructional factors (instructional supervision and the emergence of multi-channel instruction), Socio-cultural factors (virtual class situation, beneficiaries expectations, public belief, unsuitable labels and making fun of teachers), infrastructure challenges (internet disruption problem and SHAD platform) and the lack of access of some students to smartphones and internet) and structural factors (lack of guidelines and lack of proper educational support). According to the mentioned conditions, the teachers had done contradictory actions/reactions regarding adapting themselves to virtual education, which is as follows: Insistence on face-to-face education (profiteering of the school principal, parents' insistence and Multi-grade class), Normalization of the situation (risk taking and Repeating the procedure), role accumulation (teacher in the role of technician, the teacher as a social worker and teacher in the role of family counselor), reconstruction of professional knowledge (generalization of professional learning, strengthening digital literacy and continuous self-assessment) and taking easy (negligence in educational evaluation and extreme compromise of students). According to the conditions governing virtual education as well as the strategies adopted by teachers, most of them had experienced some signs of adjustment and lack of adjustment, which is as follows: Psychological consequences (increasing adverse psychological states in teachers), improving job skills (increasing job readiness and gaining new insights) and avoiding virtual education (reducing the desire to use virtual education). According to the data obtained from the interviews, it can be said that the job adaptation of elementary teachers in virtual education is completely different from face-to-face education. They were working in a situation where virtual education was not of a very good quality, so that some teachers and most of the parents, despite the acute corona situation, believed that virtual education alone is not enough and face-to-face education should also be used. Therefore, the category of incompatible orientations of beneficiaries was chosen as the core category and other categories were organized around it after adjustment.

Discussion and conclusion

The results of the findings show that the elementary teachers were engaged in virtual education in a situation where the quality of education was doubted by the beneficiaries. According to the findings, the incompatible orientations of beneficiaries towards virtual education are not mainly related to its nature and functions, but to the conditions and context in which virtual education is provided. Therefore, the main challenge for teachers was not only to learn tools related to virtual education. For these reasons, teachers had chosen strategies to adapt themselves to virtual education, which sometimes conflicted with their official duties or had nothing to do with it.

For example, teachers had adopted different strategies such as strengthening digital literacy, increasing the duration of being online in order to respond to parents and students, holding face-to-face training in acute corona conditions, or tasks that were not related to their official duties, such as attracting help from benefactors

and the role of family advisors. For this reason, most of the teachers had experienced some degree of adjustment and inadjustment symptoms such as increasing stress and anxiety, decreasing motivation, increasing work readiness for face-to-face instruction and improving digital literacy. The findings show that what facilitates the process of teachers' job adaptation is the self-evaluation skill through analyzing the expectations and problems that students and their parents face in virtual education.

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