

Letter to the Editor

Cite this article: Aditama MHR and Selfiardy S (2025). Strengthening Mental Health Resources for Educators: A Long-term Perspective. *Disaster Medicine and Public Health Preparedness*, **19**, e201, 1–2 <https://doi.org/10.1017/dmp.2025.10130>

Received: 11 September 2024

Revised: 11 September 2024

Accepted: 09 June 2025

Keywords:


COVID-19; Educational Policy; Mental Health; Psychological Resilience; Well-being

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Strengthening Mental Health Resources for Educators: A Long-term Perspective

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Abstract

The pandemic revealed significant gaps in mental health support for educators. This letter emphasizes the need for sustained mental health services, urging governments and institutions to provide resources, integrate mental health education into curricula, and create supportive work environments. Long-term strategies such as regular screenings and normalizing psychological support are essential for educators' well-being.

Dear Editor,

The article titled “Just as Essential: The Mental Health of Educators During the COVID-19 Pandemic”¹ highlights a crucial issue that has long been overlooked in our education system—the mental health of educators. As explained in the article, the pandemic has exacerbated the challenges that educators were already facing, both in their professional roles and in their personal well-being. It is essential to recognize that educators' mental health is just as important as their role in shaping the future of students. Therefore, we must adopt a proactive approach to addressing the mental health needs of educators. In this context, I would like to discuss 3 key points: the urgent need for mental health support for educators, the role of government and educational institutions, and the forward-looking perspective on mental health initiatives in the field of education.

The Need for Mental Health Support for Educators

The COVID-19 pandemic has amplified the mental health struggles of educators, significantly impacting their well-being. Furthermore, a systematic review by Rahman et al. emphasized that many educators experienced burnout, anxiety, and stress, driven by the sudden transition to remote teaching and lack of institutional support.² These findings underscore the urgent need to prioritize mental health support for educators, both to mitigate current challenges and prepare for future crises.

As the research suggests,¹ there are alarming rates of depression and social anxiety among teachers, with many experiencing unprecedented levels of stress due to abrupt shifts to online learning, hybrid models, and increased workloads. Despite the varying methods of learning re-entry (virtual, hybrid, or in-person), the study found no significant differences in the mental health outcomes between these modalities, indicating that the source of distress extends beyond logistical changes. This highlights the critical need for sustained mental health support that goes beyond temporary solutions. It is imperative that educators receive access to mental health services, counselling, and resources designed to alleviate the emotional toll they are experiencing. Without these supports, the long-term consequences could affect both the educators' well-being and their capacity to deliver quality education to their students.³

The Role of Government and Educational Institutions

The responsibility for addressing educators' mental health cannot be placed solely on individuals. Governments and educational institutions must take a central role in creating and maintaining mental health programs. First and foremost, policies that integrate mental health awareness and support systems into the education sector must be prioritized. Governments should allocate sufficient resources to provide professional mental health services, and schools should establish wellness programs specifically designed for educators. Developing mental health human resources is also essential for the effective delivery of services. This includes integrating mental health services into primary care and strengthening community support systems.⁴

Additionally, training in psychological flexibility and resilience, as mentioned in the article, can significantly reduce the impact of stress and anxiety. Educational institutions must also foster a supportive work environment by reducing excessive workloads and promoting a balance between work and personal life. Ultimately, government bodies, in collaboration with school administrators, should be proactive in ensuring that educators are not left to face mental health

challenges alone. Community mental health initiatives can significantly reduce the burden of mental disorders, but their implementation remains a challenge due to insufficient funding and resources.⁵

A Forward-looking Perspective

Looking ahead, the lessons from the pandemic should prompt a re-evaluation of the importance of mental health within the education sector. Even after the pandemic subsides, educators' mental health must remain a top priority. Implementing mental health education in schools can foster a supportive environment that benefits both educators and students.⁶ Additionally, we should view this as an opportunity to build a more resilient educational workforce by integrating mental health support into the structural framework of our education system. Long-term strategies should include regular mental health screenings, ongoing access to mental health services, and a culture that normalizes seeking help for psychological well-being. By investing in educators' mental health, we are also investing in the overall quality of education. When teachers are well-supported, they are expected to be better equipped to inspire, educate, and guide the students under their care.

In conclusion, addressing the mental health of educators is not just a temporary response to the pandemic but an essential and ongoing commitment. It is time for governments and educational institutions to step up and ensure that educators receive the mental health support they so desperately need. By taking action now, we can create a healthier, more sustainable education system that benefits both educators and students alike.

Acknowledgements. We would like to thank our fellow researchers and institutions for their moral and intellectual support throughout the writing process. We are also grateful to the reviewers who provided valuable input to improve the quality of our article.

Funding statement. The authors declare that no funding was received for this paper.

Competing interests. The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

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