

We estimated prevalence ratios and took repeated measures into account.

Results:

Fear of infection and transmission of infection as well as burnout, stress, and worries increased statistically significantly with 27-84% from May to November-December 2020 ($p < 0.05$). We also found that teachers, who were particularly vulnerable to the adverse consequences of COVID-19, had the highest prevalence of fear of infection and poor mental health.

Conclusions:

The dual role of teaching and virus control along with concerns regarding the health consequences of an infection may contribute to the observed increase in emotional reactions to COVID-19 and poor mental health from the beginning of the pandemic to the beginning of the second wave.

Key messages:

- The results raise attention to the working conditions, exposure to infection and mental health of teachers being in the frontline when schools were open during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- School teachers play a major role in pandemic control along with teaching obligations, which warrants allocation of resources, clear guidelines, and possibilities for protection from infection.

The effect of COVID-19 on schoolteachers' emotional reactions and mental health

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Background:

Schoolteachers play a major role in the society's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. When schools are open teachers are responsible for hindering spread of SARS-CoV-2, while carrying out their core task of teaching. This double role as well as the risk of infection may affect mental health in this occupational group. Therefore, we investigated schoolteachers' emotional reactions to COVID-19 and mental health during three phases of the COVID-19 pandemic in Denmark. We further analyzed if teachers, who belonged to a COVID-19 risk group, had more emotional reactions and poorer mental health than "non-risk" groups.

Methods:

We collected questionnaire data in May, June, and November-December 2020 and used data from 2665 teachers employed at public schools (871 individuals participated in all three surveys). Participants reported their fear of infection, fear of transmission of infection to their home or pupils, perceived burnout and stress, and worries about their ability to manage the working conditions. We also had information about COVID-19 risk group status, sex, age, organization of teaching (physical presence or remote teaching), and the pupils' grade.