



The effect of the Covid-19 pandemic on higher education institutions in South Africa: Voices of academics' resilience

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Academic staff of higher education institutions (HEI) experienced serious challenges during the lethal COVID-19 pandemic. To curb the spread of this coronavirus, the South African government instituted stringent lockdown measures such as closure of universities. HEIs were keen to maintain their core activities and conduct business as usual. To resume academic programs, they advocated transitioning from traditional face-to-face teaching to online teaching. For effective teaching and learning to be accomplished, academics were compelled to make paradigm shifts. They had to be digitally literate and technologically savvy. Academics were also confronted with challenges of poor students who had trouble in procuring devices (iphones, ipads, laptops) and data, as well as securing access to WiFi. Using Resilience Theory to frame the study, this paper explored the impact of Covid-19 on academics and the resilience to survive this deadly pandemic. Generic qualitative research within an interpretivist paradigm was employed to determine the perceptions, and experiences of thirteen academics from various universities during the Covid-19 pandemic. Findings revealed that the academics experienced serious emotional and psychological stress which were detrimental to their wellbeing. Although academics found difficulty transitioning to online teaching, their resilience helped them cope with the extraordinary circumstances that evolved from Covid-19.

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