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Workplace Distress and Eustress among Teachers during the Pandemic

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Abstract

Workplace stress and distress are the terms abundantly present in the literature. These terms have been studied and explored numerous times in multiple contexts. However, the literature contains evident gaps in exploring the other outcome of stress, which is eustress. This study aimed to explore the different Workplace distress and eustress among teachers during the pandemic. The current study investigates the potential stressors and their outcomes among private school teachers also the role played by COVID-19 and technology-based learning. For this purpose, the qualitative research design is used. Semi-structured in-depth analysis was used to collect data using the snowball sampling technique. The empirical findings revealed that teachers were highly stressed. Work overload, role conflict, workplace politics, organizational support, job insecurity, and financial strains are the major sources of workplace distress. Another contributing factor is technology stress, especially during COVID-19. On the other hand, positive stressors play a significant role in developing the feeling of eustress among teachers and reportedly have a positive impact on their health, satisfaction, behavior, performance, and commitment.

Keywords

Distress, Distant Learning, Education System of Pakistan, Eustress, Teachers Stress Level, Administration & Management Role

1. Introduction

Stress is something we all experience. Daily, we all face different kinds of stress and cope with them. This statement is not only backed by evidence from our personal and professional lives but also from different surveys. Gallup 2019 Global Economic Report shared the list of the most stressed countries worldwide. Greece,

the Philippines, Tanzania, Albania, Iran, Sri Lanka, and the USA have the highest stress level. The American Institute of Stress, 2020 reported that 33% of people are extremely stressed, 77% of people reported that their physical health gets affected due to the high prevalence of stress, the mental health of 73% of people is affected, and 48% people have sleeping disorders in America.

Stress could be related to anything, i.e., personal life stress, relationship stress, financial stress, workplace stress, etc. Job stress is the second most common reason for stress. The first and most common reason for stress is money.

A recent study suggested that management, workload, deadlines, and occasionally coworkers are the major stressors in the Filipino workforce (Ansis, 2017). Different researchers explore the reason for stress among employees. A survey suggested Financial strains, organizational culture, work-life imbalance, role conflict, and inadequate staff are the major concerns in alleviating employee stress levels (Sarabia & Collantes, 2020). A recent study by Rasool, Wang, Zhang, & Samma (2020) in Pakistan shows that workplace violence and occupational stress adversely affect sustainable performance. A recent study in Pakistan reported that depressive disorders are increasing rapidly. Pakistani population has more depressive disorders due to social adversity compared to the neighboring countries in Asia (Husain, Creed, & Tomenson, 2000). Depression prevails in Pakistan at 34% (Mahmood et al., 2017).

Workplace Stress is always there, and managing stress is nothing new. There is no rigid definition of stress in literature as it affects every individual differently (Kahn, 1990). According to Selye (1950), "Stress is something a body response to in reaction to any change" or "Stressor is a stimulus or any external force impacts on an individual." Workplace stress impacts are evident. Literature shows the evident relationship of workplace stress with job satisfaction, psychological well-being, physical well-being of employees, work-life balance, absenteeism, performance, workplace environment, relationship with coworkers, motivation, commitment, turnover, attitudes, behaviors, etc.

Long-term frustration or stress results in collapsing of an individual, usually termed burnout. This mental and physical burnout leads to many diseases. Literature shows an evident relationship between stress with different diseases. Different studies enforce that stress can lead to backache, muscle pain, fatigue, musculoskeletal diseases (Jia & Nussbaum, 2018; Nelson & Simmons, 2003), infrequent exercise, higher alcohol consumption, and more frequent use of painkillers (Alexandrova-Karamanova et al., 2016), and cardiovascular disease (Shahbazi et al., 2018). Not only physically but stress can effects employees mentally as well, resulting in mood swings, behavioral changes, sleep disorder and anxiety (Kim et al., 2020), hypertension (Tao et al., 2018), dementia (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2020), and depression (Rasool et al., 2020; Thompson & Gomez, 2014). A recent study in China shows that workplace job stress and suicidal mindset are positively related. 15.9% of respondents in the study indicated suicidal indications (Nie, Du, Liu, Yuan, & Ma, 2020).

Stress is an increasing problem and cruel reality. Moreover, researchers focus on the negative aspects of stress, but Hans Selye presented a rather different concept of stress that explains its benefits. He proposed two outcomes of stress naming distress and eustress. While studying stress, three concepts are important

1) The potential stressor or the reasons for stress,

2) Stress responses or the reaction of the individual,

3) The stress-related outcome.

These concepts are embodied in the theory of preventive stress management (TPSM), which deals with the stressors faced by individuals and the responses and outcomes of those stressors (Biggs, Brough, & Drummond, 2017).

Stressors are stimuli that can either be positive or negative. According to these stimuli, an individual response can either be positive or negative. Based on these responses, the stress-related outcomes can either be negative/distress or positive/eustress. Distress is associated with the negative outcomes of stress and can cause many problems for an individual. It may lead to the deterioration of physical, psychological, or emotional functioning. Stress also leads to certain beneficial, healthy, and positive outcomes. These beneficial outcomes of stress are termed eustress.

The reasons above show the importance of studying stress, its factors, causes of prevalence, and its management. A recent study reported that health, turnover, commitment, well-being, and burnout are the small behavioral aspects that are majorly discussed in the stress literature. A bigger chunk of literature focuses on stress's negative outcomes (Majeed & Naseer, 2019). However, the concept of eustress is still underdeveloped.

1.1. Problem Statement

In Pakistan, the workplace is usually more stressed than in other countries. The multiple reasons for increasing stress levels are management behavior, benefits, strict or ambiguous contracts, high unemployment rates, lack of autonomy, work overload, role conflict, culture, lack of resources, work-life balance, and much more. The study focuses on the primary school teachers of Pakistan to explore the potential stressors and their outcomes.

Teaching is supposed to be one of the most sacred professions for females. It is a female-dominated profession worldwide. Young girls and married women are encouraged to work in school because it has benefits. The perception of general pupils about working in schools is positive. They see it as beneficial as it has less timing so females can give time to their family responsibilities, fewer cross-gender interactions, less work pressure, etc. However, new policies are implemented to improve the quality of education and the number of students to pave the way toward perfectionism. These new policies put much pressure on teachers, who are the system's backbone. In recent years it has been seen that teachers are more stressed and depressed (Roberts, Gallagher, Daro, Iruka, &

Sarver, 2019).

Some recent studies suggest multiple reasons for alleviating stress levels among teachers. Teachers are more pressurized to impress their seniors, meeting targets set by the administration and attending different meetings, continuing classes, Overwork, insecurity in jobs, poor communication, poor financial benefits, and organizational conflicts give rise to burnout (Emotional Exhaustion) and stress (Akbar & Akhter, 2011; Calloway, 2003; De Clercq, Haq, & Azeem, 2019).

Another reason contributing to the importance of studying this phenomenon is COVID-19. The education sector is adversely affected by the pandemic. Private schools are contributing significantly to Pakistan's education sector. They play an important role in eradicating illiteracy and unemployment (Awan & Zia, 2015). Private schools faced many problems during COVID-19, especially financial burdens. Private schools went under huge salary cuts, unpaid forced leaves, layoffs, downsizing, furlough, etc. This created job insecurity, financial burdens, and fear of unemployment. Moreover, the sudden shift towards technology-based learning, i.e., online classes, exams, meetings, and assignments, stirred teachers' professional and personal lives. The entire situation was way too stressful for private school teachers, but this was also a huge opportunity for the teacher to learn new techniques and experience different methodologies to teach students (Rehman, 2020).

The study explores the prevalence of stress levels and their outcomes on teachers. The study will explore the potential stressor and responses by private school teachers and the coping behavior adapted by teachers to manage all the stress. This study will also help to add up the local knowledge related to the concept of distress or eustress.

1.2. Research Objectives

- To explore the myths and facts about the stress level in the educational sector, focusing on the primary school level.
- Exploring the stress outcomes of teachers, i.e., distress or eustress.
- Exploring the potential stressors that develop teachers' feelings of distress or eustress.
- Identifying the impacts of stress outcomes on employee mental and physical health.
- Exploring the experience of teachers of technology-based learning during COVID-19.

1.3. Research Question

1) What are the potential stressors that perceive distress in teachers?
2) What are the outcomes of the perceived distress?
3) What are the potential stressors that perceive eustress in teachers?
4) What are the outcomes of the perceived eustress?

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study will be significant in various dimensions.

A stressed or depressed teacher cannot connect and polish his/her student how it is supposed to be (Roberts, Gallagher, Daro, Iruka, & Sarver, 2019). So it is very important to produce good quality teachers to guide our next generation in the right direction. The general perception of the pupil is that primary school teaching is an easy profession as it is less stressful. Through this study, we will explore the level of stress in teachers and their outcomes, which will help us either support the perception of pupils about primary school teaching or reject it. This perception is being negated by a few recent studies (Sarabia & Collantes, 2020).

As sufficient literature is available about the negative outcomes/distress, this study will shed light on the positive outcomes/eustress. The results will help generate local knowledge about the construct of eustress, which is still underdeveloped in the literature (Woodruff, 2018). Furthermore, it will show different people that stress can be managed alternately, and a positive outcome could be generated. Moreover, it will also explore the impact of eustress on employee health and performance.

The results will also help managers and policymakers to understand the presence of different levels of stress and the potential stressors. Policymakers can benefit from eustress by redesigning their policies based on this construct for better outcomes, i.e., increased productivity and improvement in the quality of employees' work. Altogether this can help in better performance of the employee as well as the organization.

2. Literature Review

Stress is a feeling that has been present since the inception of humankind. Individuals feel different kinds of stress in different frames of their life. However, the concept of stress was first discussed in the literature in the 1950s by Selye. Hans Selye defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change" (Selye, 1950). It is a term borrowed from physical sciences, which means any force which causes deformation in the body.

From the beginning, there is a debate on the nomenclature, another term called stressor is used by Selye. The stressor is the term used by Selye to symbolize any external force, peripheral change, or influence/stimuli on the individual (Selye, 1956). Many other authors adopt the terminology of stress to denote the consequential responses of such forces; e.g., Maslach & Goldberg (1998) worked on the new perspective of job burnout. Langan-Fox, Wirth, Code, Langfield-Smith, & Wirth (2001) studied two mental models, i.e., the shared mental model and the team mental model.

Various definitions of stress are:
- The definition of stress presented by Hans Selye is "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change" (Selye, 1950).

- An individual feels stress in response to the interface of the person and the environment, which is the basic approach of the Transactional model presented by Lazarus in 1968 (Lazarus, 1968).
- Stress can also be defined as a liaison between individual and environment which the person evaluates as significant for his well-being and the betterment of his resources (Lazarus, DeLongis, Folkman, & Gruen, 1985).
- Stress is a feeling that arises when there is the unification of a certain type of environment with a certain type of individual, leading to intimidating appraisals (Lazarus, 1991).
- When an individual comes in contact with a certain type of work environment, this combination becomes the cause of stress because stress is the product of two factors, i.e., the person (the response) and its environment (the force). Individually none of them can cause stress (Hussain, Hameed, Shah, & Aslam, 2016; Tarafdar, Cooper, & Stich, 2019).

2.1. Models of Stress

Various stress models are present in the literature.

Person-environment fir model: The person-environment fir model emphasizes an individual's relationship with his environment. According to this model, neither the person nor the individual alone can create stress. Stress is the result of the interaction of a person with a specified environment. This model focuses on the job environment (French Jr., Kahn, & Mann, 1962; Hobfoll & Wells, 1998).

Demand-Control model: Demand-control model majorly focuses on the autonomy of the employee. Excessive demands of performance should be backed by increased autonomy. An individual should have the autonomy to craft his job according to his will to outperform. Higher job demands with greater control can lead to stress (Hussain et al., 2016; Karasek Jr., 1979).

Reward imbalance model: This model concentrates on appreciation and rewards. Rewards boost an employee's confidence and urge to perform. The employee feels stress when he perceives that the reward is not equivalent to or lesser than the efforts and hard work he put into the task (Ganster & Perrewé, 2011; Hussain et al., 2016; Siegrist, 2017).

2.2. Transactional Model of Stress by Lazarus and Folkman

The central approach of the transactional model is that stress is felt as a result of interaction between environment and individual (Folkman & Lazarus, 1984; Lazarus, 1968). According to Lazarus (1991), stress does not belong to a person or environment. Rather it ascends by the interface of a certain type of individual with a certain type of environment that awakens the sense of warning or intimidation in that individual. Lazarus's cognitive stress theory focuses on two appraisals, i.e., primary & secondary.

2.3. Types of Stressors

Physical stressors: Work-stress paradigm highlights the working condition,

which is stressful and possibly dangerous. These stressors include working in extreme physical conditions (e.g., conditions that are too hot or cold, noisy, or dirty), heavy workloads and long working hours, etc. (Al Doghan, 2020).

Psychosocial stressors: These are the job strains that can have an impact on the psychological experience of people regarding social components, i.e., interpersonal conflicts, relationships with supervisors or coworkers, etc. (Hasanati, Winarsunu, & Karina, 2018).

Hindrance stressors: play a very negative role and create circumstances that thwart goal attainment (Horan, Nakahara, DiStaso, & Jex, 2020).

Challenge stressors: These are positive stressors for an employee. These are difficult but attainable goals. Employees may get rewards for attaining goals (Horan et al., 2020; Roehling, Cavanaugh, Moynihan, & Boswell, 2000).

Income stressors: Every employee expects fair treatment. Individuals expect to get justified benefits in return for the services they offer. Unfair treatment regarding pay, benefits, and promotions and job insecurity (e.g., the threat of layoffs) are the potential stressors that adversely affect employees (Frone, 1999; Landolt, O'Donnell, Hazi, Dragano, & Wright, 2017).

Psychological stressors: One of the most important work stressors is psychological stressors. These stressors commonly cause many physical and mental illnesses in employees. These illnesses can be short-term and may result in the long-term development of different diseases. Although, there was increasing evidence for an implication of work stress on the progress of asthma, cardiovascular disease (Hauke, Flintrop, Brun, & Rugulies, 2011; Shahbazi et al., 2018), type 2 diabetes mellitus (Kelly & Ismail, 2015), metabolic syndrome (Garbarino & Magnavita, 2015) and anxiety or depression (Rasool et al., 2020), etc.

Ironically, some individuals feel less stressed despite mounting financial and performance pressures and work-related stress. They said this stress level has become normal for them (Herzog, D'Andrea, DePierro, & Khedari, 2018). It feels like people now have a habit of being stressed all the time, and it does not disturb their normal routine. Stress, up to a certain level, is a part of people's lives, and they do not perceive it as a threat.

Very practical advice suggests optimizing the stress level instead of minimizing it. However, the fact is that stress literature always focuses on the negative aspects of stress, and literature is almost silent about the positive aspects of stress, i.e., good stress or eustress. Common management through popular applications of the Yerkes Dodson Law (Ahmed, Warraich, Khoso, & Ahmad, 2014; Delorme, Lortie-Lussier, & De Koninck, 2002) assumes that the absence of stress or a reasonable amount of stress or pressure helps in alleviating employee performance level. So psychological interpretation or appraisal of stressors and stressful events must be explored by a comprehensive understanding of the transactional stress model (Woodruff, 2018) (**Figure 1**).

The major definition of stress includes two concepts, i.e., distress and eustress. Eustress is the term first coined by Selye nearly 50 years ago (Selye, 1950). It is often called good stress. The outcome of stress is either distress or eustress. Dis-

tress is too much or too little demand, resulting in an unpleasant feeling among the people (Pepe, Addimando, Dagdukee, & Veronese, 2019). On the contrary, eustress is an optimum level of demand or stress that helps employees accomplish their tasks (Rudland, Golding, & Wilkinson, 2020).

The concept of an optimal amount of stress arose from the Yerkes Dodson Law, which indicates that increasing stress is beneficial to performance until some optimum level is reached, after which performance will decline (Rudland et al., 2020). Individual perception plays a vital role in this performance curve as it is the employee who is going to decide whether a particular stimulus is good or bad for him. His perception, his cognitive approach, and his feeling are the ones that might change the role of a stimulus (Rudland et al., 2020).

Selye observed that the individual determines whether the stressor is to be eustress or distress. Harris (1970) equated eustress with pleasure. Edwards & Cooper (1988) defined eustress as a positive discrepancy between perceptions and desires (provided that the discrepancy is salient to the individual). Among all these studies, the common perception is that a negative perception of stress results in distress while a positive perception of stress results in eustress.

Selye (1976) proposed that when a person learns to use positive emotion to respond to the stressor, it is more likely to increase and decrease eustress and distress. On the other hand, those who use their emotion negatively are more likely to experience large amounts of distress. Based on the given empirical studies, Simmons & Nelson (2001) used the "positive psychological states of hope, positive affect, and meaningfulness as indicators of eustress in their study of eustress and health in nurses." Various studies supported the relation between eustress and emotional intelligence (Almazrouei, 2017). Many studies support and involve eustress practically, but it is restricted only to empirical studies; its conceptual ground and development are still limited.

This section will briefly explain several researchers' contributions to the eustress domain. Continuing in this domain, Edwards & Cooper (1988) contributed to the theoretical and methodological establishment of positive psychological states and their effect on a person's mental and physical health. This suggestion is based on the assumption that the measures of these two constructs are often uncorrelated. Watson et al. suggested a "two-factor model of stress" based on the research on mood states (Langan-Fox et al., 2001).

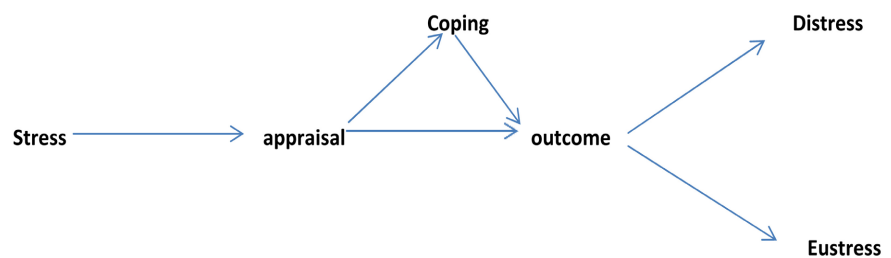Research stated that it is imperative to determine the presence of positive

Figure 1. Transactional model of stress (Woodruff, 2018).

psychological states instead of merely establishing the absence of negative psychological states. They also suggested many examples of negative psychological states; they are not just limited to anxiety or negative emotional feelings. It consists of a wide array of feelings and emotions that may have a negative effect on one's physical and mental health. They also explained the operationalization of psychological states to incorporate a multivariate assessment of work attitudes and not just emotions by applying a theoretic framework that associates positive psychological states with eustress and negative states with distress (Nelson & Simmons, 2003).

Several researchers explain eustress in a similar yet distinct way. Simmons & Nelson (2001) defined eustress as "the positive response to work demands" (Simmons & Nelson, 2001). By Dr. Keith's definition, eustress is the kind of stress that motivates one to accomplish life goals, and its positivity maintains the equilibrium in one's life. Nelson and Simmons gave three dimensions of eustress that deal with the positive states of mind, including "hope, positive effect, and meaningfulness." A positive psychological state improves an individual's healthy lifestyle by boosting confidence and energy. Eustress helps improve an individual's healthy lifestyle and welfare (Hargrove, Cooper, & Quick, 2012). It also increases an employee's job satisfaction (Sisley, 2010).

Another research explains that eustress helps psychological health, increasing an employee's interest in his/her work (Kozusznik, Rodríguez, & Peiró, 2015). Eustress increases an individual's effectiveness and efficiency (Faizan & Haque, 2019). Thus, an employee with better mental/psychological health performs better and is more satisfied with his/her job. Therefore the management is requested to motivate their employees to look at their jobs in a more positive light to increase their work engagement (Ribeiro, 2016).

3. Research Methodology

Woodruff (2018) suggested that the concept of eustress, especially in the qualitative approach, is still less developed. Very few qualitative data are available on eustress. It is a grounded theory as it aims to find the facts about the general perception of people of Pakistan that primary school teaching is an easy profession for females. Qualitative research can be conducted in several ways. Among them, qualitative interviews were conducted (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2020).

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect data. The study was cross-sectional as the data was collected in one specific period. The data was collected from the primary teachers of 9 different private school chains operating in Lahore. It is not possible to collect the data of every primary teacher. Data was collected through snowball sampling techniques. Snowball sampling was used to collect data during the smart lockdown. Teachers' referrals helped collect data (Rahi, 2017).

Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted. The recording and notes were used to transcribe the interview. Vivo software was used for the tran-

scription and analysis of the document. After transcribing the interviews, codes were generated from the data and thematic analysis was done to find the major themes running in the data. These codes and themes were then used to answer the research questions.

Fourteen codes were generated from the data given by the respondents to explain distressing situations. Ten codes were generated to portray stressful situations from 33 in-depth interviews of teachers. The detailed study of these codes and the thematic analysis show that the major themes run along the data are workload, management behavior and financial compensations and benefits, breaks, and workplace politics. Thematic Analysis (TA) is an accessible, flexible, and increasingly popular method of qualitative data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

4. Thematic Analysis and Discussion

Education is more important for the nation than any other thing. The better a nation's education system, the brighter its future is. In Pakistan, the situation is quite depressing. The literacy rate of Pakistan is 58%. Big changes in the educational system are required to alleviate it. However, changes do not mean infrastructure and material changes. Good infrastructure and good facilities are not going to create great students, but it is the teachers who do this.

Teaching is a sacred profession and the spinal cord of the education system. After parents, teachers are responsible for shaping the next generation of nations. Qualified, well-trained, and high-spirited teachers are vital for Pakistan's progress. However, the actual scenario is different. Teachers are facing highly distressful circumstances at schools. Primary education is the building block of a student's academic career. Every student needs an excellent teacher and system to strengthen his basic education. However, if the teachers are stressed, it is time to ponder. This study revealed the facts about the stress primary school teachers face. The empirical findings of this research reveal that primary school teaching is an easy profession for females and is a parable.

4.1. Under Which Circumstances Do Teachers Perceive Distress?

Teachers working in primary schools are highly stressed. This stress is affecting their personal as well as professional life and affecting the education of the students as well. The thematic analysis of the data shows the high number of distressing factors teachers face. Major themes in the data directly highlight the grey areas where policymakers and schools need to work to reduce the stress level of teachers.

The following themes related to distress were present in the data. (Figure 2)

These stressors have adverse effects on the employee's mental & physical health and effective performance of the employees. Respondents talk about multiple health issues they faced due to being constantly stressed. The common diseases were headache, fatigue, back pains, stomach issues, diabetes, anxiety, mood

swings, emotional breakdown, and in severe cases, depression. These results are persistent with the literature as literature, and theory show full support for adverse effects of workplace distress on employee's health and performance (Garbarino & Magnavita, 2015; Hauke et al., 2011; Shahbazi et al., 2018).

4.2. How Do Employees Perceive Distress?

The one major point that needs to be discussed here is people's perception. The employee's perception plays an important role in making a stressor distressful. If the employee feels insecure, threatened, and devastated at the workplace, this will directly affect their health and performance, satisfaction, motivation, and much more as a result of anxiety and fear (Khuong & Linh, 2020). Distress adversely affects various aspects of an employee's personality and life (Figure 3).

According to the empirical findings, primary school teachers perceive a high level of stress which simply denies the general perception of the pupil that primary school teaching is an easy profession for females because all the respondents of this study were females (Akbar & Akhter, 2011). This perception or myth not only prevails in Pakistan, but it can be found worldwide. Many researchers work on this phenomenon and found that the results are vice versa.

The administration often tries to impose ridiculously rigid working standards in an educational setting. The race to meet these unfair standards creates pressure on employees, and they often find the situation unjust and are offended by their employer's behavior (De Clercq et al., 2019). Calloway (2003) argued that usually, teachers feel more stressed about impressing their supervisors. They feel more pressured to meet the standards imposed by their administration. This kind of workload, job insecurity, poor communication among staff members, and organizational conflicts give rise to emotional exhaustion (a dimension of burnout).

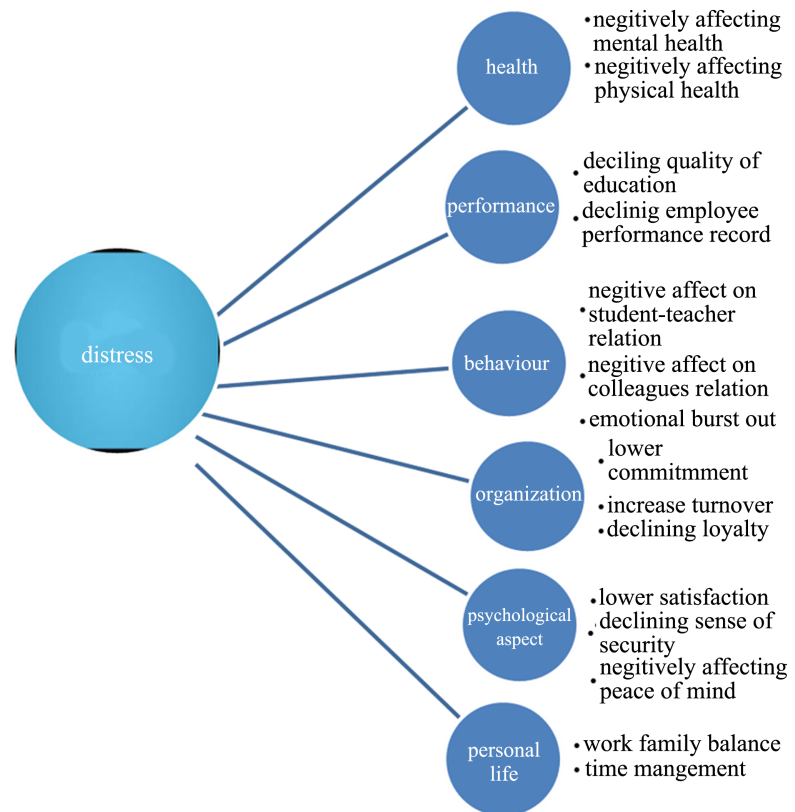**Figure 2.** Themes related to distress.

Figure 3. Potential outcome of distress.

The situation in Pakistan is even worst. Teachers are highly stressed. Excessive workload, a huge number of students in the class, consecutive lectures, administration pressures, parents' demands, financial strain, and much more contribute to this increasing stress on teachers (Akbar & Akhter, 2011; Awan et al., 2015; Bhatti, Hashmi, Raza, Shaikh, & Shafiq, 2011; Funk, 2002; Yusoff & Khan, 2013).

Another factor that plays a significant factor in increasing the stress level of teachers is COVID-19. During Covid-19, every individual is emotionally weak and exhausted. People are already in a state of fear, anxiety, and stress. The closure of schools during Covid-19 and a complete shift towards online education simply shook the teachers. The pandemic was the first online education experience in Pakistan at the primary school level. Teachers had no prior experience or training about it. Online classes, exams, and video lectures were new words for teachers. Moreover, the extreme downsizing in schools, forced unpaid leaves, shuffling duties among teachers, and arranging high-speed gadgets and internet created a lot of pressure and stress.

Adopting this new way of teaching and under excessive pressure from management to retain the students was extremely stressful for teachers. Technostress is another factor during COVID-19 for teachers. Technostress is a type of technology-related stress (Ragu-Nathan, Tarafdar, Ragu-Nathan, & Tu, 2008). A person's inability to cope with technology is referred to as technostress. Feeling

of threat, insecurity, anxiety, or fear due to technology's increased proliferation can be termed technostress (Salanova, Llorens, Cifre, & Nogareda, 2007). The literature on technostress reports impacts of technostress on performance, commitment, satisfaction, physical or mental health, behavior, productivity, job security, burnout, etc. (Chiappetta, 2017; La Torre, Esposito, Sciarra, & Chiappetta, 2019; Salanova, Llorens, & Ventura, 2014). Using certain apps, adopting new ways of teaching, recording lectures, creating online content, and being the time virtually available for students and administration is different kinds of stress teachers face during COVID-19.

Overall it was a very stressful exposure for teachers, but this was also a great opportunity for those who learn this process through the support of their organization as this sudden shift opens a new way of school education. It is a huge opportunity to incorporate those children in the education system who cannot attend regular school for any reason, i.e., physical disability, travel distance and cost, different issues of guardians, etc. Technology-based education has several benefits like time-saving, cost-efficient, removing barriers, flexibility, and quality education (McFarland & Hamilton, 2005; Wang, Tan, & Li, 2020).

4.3. In What Circumstances Do Employees Perceive Eustress?

After all this the teachers are working very well. One major reason for that is the perception and coping strategies used by the teachers. From the teacher discussion, it can be easily presumed that teachers are trying to change their perception of work stress so that it cannot affect them adversely. As discussed earlier, perception plays an important role in defining stress outcomes. Some organizations are also trying different strategies to help their employees, but that is still limited.

The common coping strategies used by the teachers are either discussing it with trustworthy colleagues, crafting their job a little bit, presenting their demand as a team in front of school management, personally hanging out with friends and family, listening to music, arranging, movie nights, trip to hilly areas in off days and other recreational activates etc. recent coping trends observed among Pakistani teachers are "Turning to religion," "positive reinterpretation" and "planning" to actively solve the problem (Hussain, Zulfqar, & Aziz, 2019). Teachers feel less worried and fear changing perceptions, organizational interventions, and coping. At this point, the outcome is eustress. Eustress is a feeling that creates a positive vibe among employees. It enhances their confidence, performance, satisfaction, commitment, better relations professionally and personally, and much more. Limited, but various researches have already shown these relations.

The potential themes present drawn from data are (Figure 4).

4.4. How Do Employees Perceive Eustress?

This study fulfills a research gap identified by Woodruff (2018). Eustress is an underdeveloped concept in literature. The study's empirical findings showed that support from organizational and manageable stress levels could help em-

ployees manage their tasks, perform better, maintain cordial relations with fellow teachers and students, and be satisfied, committed, and relaxed. The empirical findings of this study contribute to the literature as it provides contextual data about the problem of teachers in Pakistan. These findings reinforce the concept of good stress presented by Hans Selye in the 1950s (Selye, 1950). The Figure 5 below shows the eustress brings positive aspects on employees' personal and professional aspects.

The literature very much supports these findings on eustress. Different researches in different context and population showed same results (Faizan & Haque, 2019; Hargrove et al., 2012; Kozusznik et al., 2015; Nelson & Simmons, 2003; Simmons & Nelson, 2001, 2007; Sisley, 2010). The phenomenon of eustress
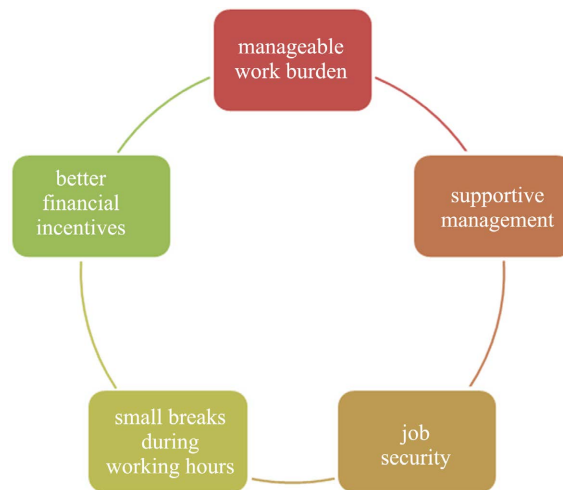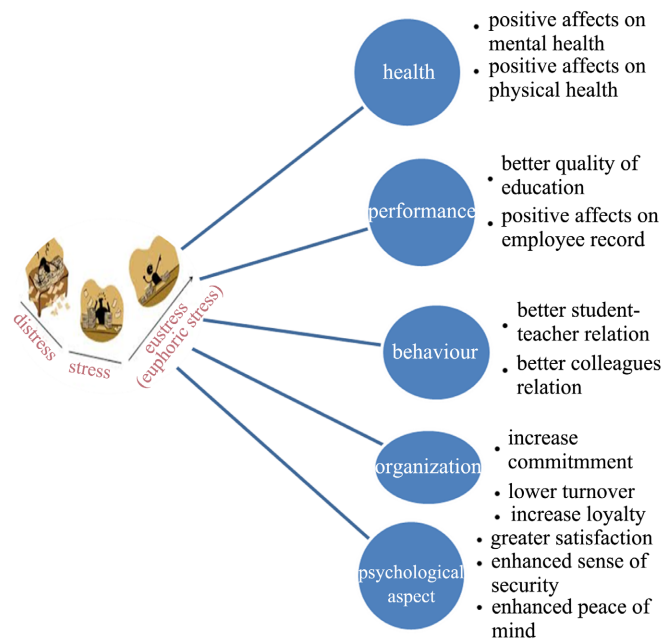

Figure 4. Themes related to Eustress.

Figure 5. Potential outcomes of eustress.

is very much applicable and useful in Pakistan. School administration can manage teachers' workload and create a less stressful environment for them by controlling the potential stressors in the study. These stressors will be helpful for the teachers and have positive outcomes for the students and the entire education system. A recent study in Pakistan suggested that organizational support, effective training, equal opportunities, and improved communication can reduce the stress level of employees may optimize the level of stress and result in better performance and management (Arshad, 2019).

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The main objective of this study was to explore workplace stress and its outcome in primary school teachers. The research questions aimed to determine the potential stressor present in schools and the outcomes of these stressors on teachers' personal and professional life. The empirical findings and the discussion of this study rightly served the purpose. The method of in-depth analysis helped a lot in exploring the exact emotions of the teachers. The study got its support from the person-environment fit approach (Hobfoll & Wells, 1998), demand-control model (Karasek Jr., 1979), transaction model of Lazarus & Folkman, resource conservation theory (Hobfoll & Wells, 1998), the effort-reward imbalance model by Siegrist in 1996 (Ganster & Perrewé, 2011; Siegrist, 2017).

It is highly important to study the stress level of the teachers as an entire nation's future is based on its education system, and teachers are the ones who hold a key position in shaping that future. Working on the stress level of teachers and finding ways to minimize it is very important, as teachers are the backbone of the education system. After all, parents & teachers play a major role in shaping the personality of the next generation. The empirical findings and discussion shows that teachers are highly stressed. Distress is harmful to teachers, students, and organizations. It affects the personal and professional life of teachers but also has a lasting impact on student's educational records and personalities.

Stressed teachers can never impart that quality of education mandatory for students to excel in this world. With a change in perception and organizational support, distress can be converted into eustress, which positively affects employees personally and professionally and can benefit the organization. Employers can benefit from this concept and make their organizations a better place to work for employees. Moreover, this will greatly help improve education quality because education is as important as oxygen for a child.

Future researchers can use this study as a base and contribute further to the knowledge body of eustress. Due to limited time, resources, and smart lockdown, only nine school chains working in Lahore were part of this study. Future researchers can incorporate the total number of private school chains for more generalized research. Future researchers can adopt the quantitative or mixed-method approach to get more generalized and triangular results. They can also incorporate the school administration as the respondent to understand their

point of view. Another aspect could be comparing the stress level of private school teachers with government school teachers.

6. Limitations

The study was only conducted on the early/primary section teachers. Future researchers can also conduct this study on middle and secondary school-level teachers to get holistic results. Furthermore, only ten private school chains were incorporated in the study due to lockdown, time, and financial constraints. Future researchers can incorporate all the private school chains to get more generalizable results. Moreover, this study can be done quantitatively to get empirical results.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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