

*Comparison of Public & Private Universities Regarding their Perspective about
Secondary Traumatic Stress, Its Causes & Effects on Teaching Approach*

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Abstract

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is an emotional pressure that occurs during the traumatic experience of another individual. Secondary traumatic stress is one of the factors that affect teaching approaches. This study aim to examining secondary traumatic stress as factor affecting the teaching approaches of teachers working in Pakistani public and private universities. The study used a descriptive research approach in order to investigate the phenomena. The population was all university teachers working in government and private sector universities functioning in capital of Pakistan i.e. (Islamabad). A sample of 200 university teachers from 04 public and 04 private universities was selected using a simple random selection method for data collection. For data collection, the researcher adapted the instrument developed by Bride et al., (2004) in the form of closed-ended questionnaire. Before using the specified instrument, its validity and reliability was checked through obtaining experts' opinion and pilot study will be conducted. The researcher collected the data personally and online method, and same were analyzed with SPSS using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Results revealed that the majority of university teachers occasionally experience secondary traumatic stress during the teaching-learning process. The study found an insignificant difference among teachers, based on their universities, regarding students' trauma, its causes, and its effects on teaching approaches. However, this investigation identified an insignificant difference among teachers based on gender concerning students' trauma, but significant differences in the causes of trauma and its effects on teaching approaches, favoring female teachers.

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Keywords: Factors, Secondary Traumatic Stress, Teaching Approach, University Teachers.

Introduction

According to Ormiston et al., (2022), while teaching is recognized as a “helping profession” by nature, it is currently rated as one of the most stressful professions. According to ESP (2020), teachers are reporting significant levels of behavioral, psychological, and physiological symptoms as a result of job-related stress, and they are hesitant to disclose and address their issues with owners. Additionally, Eddy et al., (2020) highlighted that the behavioral and mental health issues displayed by students in the classroom have a direct impact on the mental health of class teachers.

According to Baicker (2020), Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is an emotional state or pressure that occurs during the traumatic experience of another individual. When someone witnesses another’s tragedy, they experience Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS). Caregivers, particularly teachers, might develop compassion fatigue from experiencing the suffering of others. Teachers face emotional distress every day when working with traumatized students at universities.

Objectives of the Study

1. Teachers’ university-sector comparison regarding their perspective about Secondary Traumatic Stress.
2. To investigate the causes and effects of Secondary Traumatic Stress on teaching approach.

The Profession of Teaching

Teaching is regarded as one of the noblest professions. Individuals that pursue this career are known as instructors. The primary goal of the teaching profession is to educate individuals on a variety of subjects, skills, and concepts. Teachers have an important role in shaping students' minds, personalities, and futures from elementary to higher education. Teachers with high subject matter expertise, great communication skills, and the ability to engage and inspire pupils to learn are regarded efficient and successful teachers (Bilbao, 2015).

Characteristics of an effective Teacher

Walker (2020) identifies twelve criteria of an excellent teacher. These include passion for teaching, have strong subject matter knowledge, have effective communication skills, adaptability, have classroom management skills, have higher expectations from students, use differentiated teaching, engage and motivate students, apply student-centered approach, focus on continuous professional development, use reflective practice, and focus on caring and supportive. These characteristics are essential in order to promote effective learning environment.

What is Stress?

The term “Stress” is defined as a condition or a state of mental tension occurred through a difficult situation (Schuh, 2021). According to Schuh (2021), the human body is naturally created to react to stress in order to assist it manage with difficulties. The human body

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produces hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) that initiate the “fight or flight” response. Stress occurs in two forms: acute and chronic. Acute stress can be useful in some situations, but chronic stress can have a harmful influence on a person’s physical and mental health over time. Stress creates physical, emotional and behavioral symptoms. Physical symptoms include headaches, stomachs, muscle tension, fatigue and sleeplessness. Emotional symptoms involve anxiety, irritability, depression, and mood swing. Behavioral symptoms comprise overeating, substance abuse, and social removal.

An overview of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

According to Figley (1995), the term “Secondary Traumatic Stress” is a kind of stress that happens as a result of hearing about a traumatic event experienced by another individual. This stress occurs when an individual hears about a traumatic incident and wants to help traumatized individual. In addition, Baicker (2020) also describe that secondary traumatic stress (STS), also known as vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue, is a type of stress response that arises when somebody is indirectly exposed to painful experiences that other individuals have experienced. Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) can apparent in those professions that involve providing support to others, such as healthcare practitioners, social workers, law enforcement personnel, firefighters and now in teaching. It can also affect those who have close relationships with someone who has had a traumatic event, such as family members or friends.

Types and Symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is an emotional and psychological stress and it has some common types that includes emotional symptoms, physical symptoms, cognitive symptoms, behavioral symptoms, relational symptoms, and spiritual symptoms (Meyer & Carolina, 2019). According to Meyer and Carolina (2019), emotional symptoms occurred in individual after secondary traumatic stress are anxiety, depression, guilt, shame, anger, fear, sadness, hopelessness, irritability and change in mood. Fatigue, headaches, muscular discomfort, stomach pain, loss of sleep, decreased attention, elevated blood pressure, sweating, and shaking are some of the physical symptoms that might occur after hearing a traumatic incident. Cognitive signs of secondary traumatic stress include trouble concentrating, memory issues, flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance of trauma memories, and negative thinking. Secondary traumatic stress can cause behavioral symptoms such as limited social activities, sleepiness, drug use, hazardous conduct, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts. Relational signs of secondary traumatic stress include a lack of confidence in others, difficulty with intimacy, disagreement with others, and social isolation. Spiritual symptoms that develop in secondary traumatic stress are loss of faith, difficulties finding meaning in life, and feeling disconnected from God.

According to Pryce, Shackelford, & Pryce, (2007) STS or compassion fatigue can be hard to recognize in oneself or others. It often manifests through cognitive, behavioral, emotional, physical, and sometimes spiritual symptoms, such as questioning meaning or losing faith. Common signs include:

1. **Cognitive:** Lower concentration, Apathy, Rigid Thinking, perfectionism, preoccupation with trauma

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2. **Emotional:** Guilt, anger, numbness, sadness, helplessness
3. **Behavioural:** Withdrawal, sleep disturbance, Appetite change, hyper-vigilance, elevated startle response
4. **Physical:** Increased heart rate, difficulty of breathing, muscle and joint pain, impaired immune system, increased severity medical concerns

Anyone who has these symptoms may find them unsettling and overpowering. Once identified, compassion fatigue may be handled and healed, and the carer or helper can recover and even develop from the experience.

Importance of STS in the Context of Teaching-Learning

According to Oberg et al., (2023), Learning and understanding about secondary traumatic stress in the context of teaching learning is very important in following ways:

1. **Impact on teachers' Wellbeing:** STS has long lasting impact on teachers' well-being. Teachers working with traumatized children are at high risk of experiencing STS that can severely affect their emotional and physical well-being. Teachers can experience symptoms of STS including anxiety, depression, fatigue and physical health problems. So, learning and understanding about STS, teachers and policy makers can make strategies to help and support teachers' well-being in order to maintain their health and conducive learning environment inside the classroom. Brunzell et al., (2021) findings revealed a new set of trauma-informed teacher wellbeing dimensions to help educators improve their own well-being while collaborating with children. This research is topical and important because of the expected increase in instructors and students suffering primary and vicarious trauma symptoms worldwide as a result of the COVID-19 global pandemic.
2. **Influence on Teaching Effectiveness:** There are strong evidences that STS had negative influences on teaching effectiveness. It impact on teachers' abilities to perform their job responsibilities effectively. As when any teacher experience STS may struggle with concentration, decision-making and forming a positive classroom teaching-learning environment. Teachers who experience STS are unable to engage with students, deliver lesson, and manage classroom behaviours properly. Thus, learning and understanding about STS is very essential to develop interventions in order to help teachers to maintain their teaching effectiveness. According to Christian-Brandt et al., (2020) the perception of TIC's efficacy was linked to reduced burnout, higher compassion satisfaction, and secondary traumatic stress (STS). It was more common for older instructors to indicate plans to leave teaching, as well as those with greater levels of burnout and lower compassion satisfaction. The intention to flip over was unrelated to STS or the perceived efficacy of TIC. The findings imply that employee buy-in to TIC and teacher retention are influenced by occupational welfare, particularly compassion fulfilment.
3. **Influence on Teaching Approaches:** A teachers use two basic approaches in their teaching learning such as teacher-centered and students-centered. In both approaches, STS can influence how teachers use their approaches in the classroom. When teachers experience STS, they feel stress and this stress alter their instructional methods, classroom management, and interactions with learners, which affect the learning environment. Teachers who experienced STS are unable to incorporate creativity and innovation in their teaching methods. Teachers' psychological and emotional fatigue with STS unable to use adaptive

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approaches into their teaching. Teachers only focus on traditional and routine-based methods of teaching instead of innovative or student-centered approach. Smith (2021) highlighted that there had a significant influence of STS o teachers' teaching approaches. Teachers who experience STS unable to practice innovative teaching approaches, making conducive classroom learning environment and supportive relationship with their students.

4. Influence on Teacher-Student Relationship: A Teacher-Student relationship play a vital role for the successful delivery of teaching-learning process. Supportive relationship among teachers and students are considered as basic requirement for effective teaching and learning. Teachers who experience STS are unable to form and maintain strong and supportive relationships among their students due to the symptoms of STS. Therefore, learning and understanding about STS can provide ways for preserving the quality of teacher-students relationships. Simon et al., (2022) found that teachers' judgements of their students' socio-emotional problems were strongly correlated with their STS symptoms; that is, the more symptoms teachers reported, the more difficulties students reported. In contrast to the hypothesis, it was discovered that teacher reports of the quality of their relationships with students did not moderate this link. Students' assessments of their socioemotional challenges were inversely correlated with the strength of the teacher-student connection. Teachers' evaluations of socioemotional challenges declined as their assessments of relationships improved. According to Honsinger and Hendricks Brown (2019), children may find it difficult to establish consistent relationships due to the need for brain regulation to access higher order thinking and reasoning skills necessary to maintain healthy relationships. They may also be discouraged from forming these healthy relationships due to lagging social and emotional skills. It might start to badly affect the instructor and the students' knowledge of their emotions since the pupils can find it difficult to develop these interactions. Studies have shown that these feelings and the challenge of forming connections might affect how instructors react to particular circumstances. The relationships and circumstances that need to be resolved in the classroom might lead to an indirect exposure to secondary trauma.

5. Influence on Students' Outcomes: Students' outcomes are directly connected with their teachers' support, help and guidance. Teachers who experience STS are unable to provide the proper care, attention and best instruction to their students. So, learning and understanding about STS is necessary to form a healthy and supportive learning environment for students in order to promote equity in education.

6. Influence on institutional climate and culture: The healthy and conducive climate and culture of an educational institution help their teachers and students to be healthy mentally and emotionally. Institutions who provide proper support to the teachers for managing STS empower teachers to contribute a positive, supportive and resilient teaching learning environment. So, studying about STS help in making good teaching learning environment in the institution.

Research Design

The purpose of this research is to gather quantitative information from college instructors on secondary traumatic stress as a factor influencing their methods of instruction. In order to gather quantitative data using a survey approach, this study used a descriptive research design.

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Population of the Study

A study population is a specified group of people or subjects who have similar characteristics (Kothari, 2019). In this study, all the male and female university teachers working at public and private sector universities functioning in the capital city of Pakistan i.e. Islamabad formed the population. The following table is showing the population of the present study:

Sample of the Study

A sample is a small group of a population which represent the entire population. For this study, the researcher has selected a sample of 100 teachers from public sector universities and 100 teachers from 04 private sector universities functioning in the capital city of Islamabad of Pakistan. The following table is showing the exact sample of the study: The below table shows the sample of the study:

Sampling Technique

The researcher has used a simple random technique in order to select 08 universities in which 04 belonged to public sector and 04 belonged to private sector. In this regard, at first step the researcher has selected 04 public sector universities, and 04 private sector universities functioning in Islamabad. After the selection of 08 universities, the researcher has selected various departments and distributed questionnaires to the teachers. In this way a sample of 200 was selected.

Research Instrument

In this research, the researcher has developed a scale based on literature review. The first section of the scale is adapted from The Secondary Traumatic Stress Scale (STSS) developed by Bride et al., (2004). It was created based on a five-point Likert scale starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree in order to measure teachers' level of agreement or disagreement regarding the phenomena under investigation.

Validity of Research Instrument

The validity of instrument is very essential in all studies. To confirm the validity of the constructed scale that was developed in the form of a questionnaire, the researcher has acquired expert comments from her supervisor and two others from the field of education.

Data Collection Procedures

The required data were collected through personal visits of the researcher and online technique. Moreover, the instrument was developed in Google Form for online data collection from the respondents of the study.

Inferential Analysis of the Teachers' Responses

Teachers' university-sector comparison regarding their perspective about STS, its causes and effects teaching approach.

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Variables	University_ Sector	N	Mean	SD	p-value
Students_Traumas	Public	87	3.5654	.32507	.055
	Private	113	3.6401	.22244	
Causes_of_Traumas	Public	87	3.7851	.31384	.421
	Private	113	3.8159	.22739	
Teaching_Approach	Public	87	4.0368	.43884	.350
	Private	113	3.9602	.65772	

t-test results are demonstrated in table that were used to compare teachers' perceptions regarding students' traumas, causes of traumas and its effects on teaching approach on the basis of their university sector. Results revealed insignificant difference among teachers regarding students' traumas ($p=.055>.05$ level), causes of traumas ($p=.421>.05$ level), and its effects on teaching approach ($p=.350>.05$ level).

Recommendations:

Based on the conclusions, this study recommends that a professional development program or workshops may be started to train the teachers regarding how to deal and manage students who experienced traumatic stress due to any incident. The said training should be based on identifying the major signs of traumas, its impact of teachers' emotions and teaching approach and conducting learning environment for traumatic students.

Conclusion:

It has been concluded that based on teachers' university sector there had insignificant difference among teachers regarding students' traumas, causes of traumas and its effects on their teaching approach. Results revealed a moderate positive effects of students' traumas on teachers' teaching approaches.

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