

*Gender Wise Comparison of University Faculty Regarding Secondar 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. 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 will be 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

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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.

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

INTRODUCTION

According to Meyer and Carolina (2019) the term "secondary trauma stress" is recognized as the emotional strain that occurs as an outcome of hearing about the personal experiences of individuals who have been through traumatic events. This is something that frequently occurs in the context of education when teachers connect with pupils who have been through traumatic experiences, such as being abused, neglected, or subjected to violence.

Secondary traumatic stress is one of the factors that affect teachers' teaching approaches. Secondary traumatic stress (STS) has significant effects on teachers' both teaching approaches such as teacher-centered and student-centered according to Brown (2016), teachers acknowledged the emotional impact that learning about their students' hardships had on them at work as well as at home. Teachers expressed secondary traumatic stress symptoms such as grief, sadness, helplessness, and anger in response to their students' bad conditions. Although informal, numerous teachers wept throughout the interview when asked about the harsh situations their students face and have faced. This highlights the emotional intensity teachers have while learning about and reflecting on students' hardships. These stress affecting teachers' teaching approach significantly.

Rationale of the Study

There are numerous factors including personal, professional and contextual that affects the teaching learning process. Among these factors secondary traumatic stress (STS) is also a big factor that affects teachers' teaching approaches (Brown, 2016). Although the increasing recognition of secondary traumatic stress (STS) as a major factor in education across the globe, there is a remarkable absence in research on its influence on teachers' teaching approach in the Pakistani context. Considering the unique cultural, social, and educational challenges that teachers in Pakistan face, it is vital to investigate how secondary traumatic stress (STS) affects teachers' teaching approaches.

Objectives of the Study

The formulated objectives for this study are mentioned as under: -

- To compare the perspective of university faculty regarding secondary traumatic stress.
- To compare the causes and effects of secondary traumatic stress being practiced by male and female university faculty on teaching approach.

Delimitation of the Study

The current study was delimited to:

- Session 2023-2025
- 04 public university Teachers

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- 04 private university Teachers
- Islamabad

The primary objective of this research is to examine secondary traumatic stress (STS) as factor affecting the teaching approach of teachers in Pakistan. The topic is clearly describing the independent variable in the form of “secondary traumatic stress”, which guides the researcher to use “Trauma Theory” in this research. Many scholars contributed towards the development of this theory such as Sigmund Freud, Pierre Janet, Judith Herman, Bessel, and Cathy Caruth. This theory examines how teachers experiencing trauma of their students can experience several indication or symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. The main focus of this theory is based on the understanding of the mechanisms by which secondary exposure to trauma affect others’ psychological as well as well-being (Vukcevic and Zivanovic, 2022).

This theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted consequences of psychological trauma by investigating the nature of trauma and the many responses people have to traumatic situations, directing mental health professionals toward appropriate treatment techniques. According to this view, trauma may be caused by a variety of situations, including abuse, tragedy, loss, violence, and so on. The impacts of trauma appear distinctively in each individual, with reactions encompassing emotional, physical, cognitive, and psychological symptoms that can vary from minor to devastating (Vukcevic and Zivanovic, 2022).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The World Health Organization (2023) defines stress as a state of mental strain or worry resulting from a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that drives us to overcome challenges and risks in our lives. Everybody has stressful times. However, our overall wellness is greatly impacted by how we respond to stress. Both the body and the psyche are affected by stress. Stress levels that are moderate might even be helpful for daily work. Excessive stress may lead to both physical and mental health issues. Learning coping mechanisms may help us feel less overwhelmed and improve our mental and physical well-being. Stress makes it harder for us to relax and may result in a range of emotions, including concern and annoyance. Stress may impair our ability to concentrate.

WHO (2023) states that individuals may have headaches or other physical issues, as well as nausea or difficulty sleeping. There are moments when we lose our appetite or overeat. Long-term stress may increase the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and worsen pre-existing medical issues. The most common mental health conditions that need medical care are anxiety and depression, which may also be brought on by or made worse by stressful situations. When we have mental health problems, it may be because our daily activities, like going to work or school, are being disrupted by worsening stress symptoms.

After experiencing trauma, people frequently struggle with issues and challenges. The individual, the kinds of trauma they have experienced, and the care and support they receive from others all influence how severe these symptoms are. Individual differences in intensity can be observed in the vast spectrum of reactions that people have to trauma. A person may relive a terrible event both physically and psychologically after it has happened. A motorbike engine, for instance, might trigger intrusive thoughts or a sensation of reliving a terrible event

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that included a sound like firing. An innocuous stimulus, like the sound of a motorbike, might occasionally cause the mind to associate a traumatic event with itself. Traumatic coupling is the term for this procedure. The innocuous stimulus turns into a trauma trigger throughout this phase, also known as a trauma recall. These may cause uneasy or even excruciating sensations. People's feeling of safety, self-efficacy, and capacity to control their emotions and negotiate relationships can all be negatively impacted by reliving. To try to escape or dull the symptoms, they could turn to psychoactive substances, such as alcohol. Flashbacks are dissociative experiences brought on by certain triggers, in which the sufferer believes that the events are replaying. Distraction, total detachment, or loss of awareness of the present setting are all possible outcomes of flashbacks. Recurring symptoms indicate that the body and mind are actively having difficulty processing the traumatic event. (Goulston, 2011).

Secondary trauma is a serious professional danger as it can influence how people engage with pupils and carry out their responsibilities. Researchers Sloan et al., (2019) investigated how professionals exposed to trauma-sensitive content were affected by secondary trauma. Their web-based study, which included 155 participants from a range of occupations, revealed developing themes about the effects of secondary trauma on people and the consequences for their place of employment.

The impact of early trauma, particularly exposure to violence, on the academic achievement of first-grade urban students. The study found that children exposed to more violence prenatally had lower IQ scores and performed worse on standardized reading tests, even after accounting for factors like gender, socioeconomic status, and prenatal alcohol exposure. Children with less exposure to violence had IQ scores that were, on average, 7.5 points higher and achievement scores that were 9.8 points higher than those with greater exposure (Delaney-Black et al., 2002).

Every day, teachers deal with people who have experienced trauma. An individual may indirectly come into contact with painful content when they interact with students who have experienced trauma. This might result in secondary trauma. A person is more likely to be exposed when they work in a caring profession like teaching since they frequently interact with others who have survived trauma. Teachers have deeper insight into their pupils' personal life as they get to know them better. This is frequently the result of the kids feeling comfortable confiding in their instructor and feeling loved and trusted by them for the experiences they have had. The relationships that kids build in the classroom can also have an effect on their overall achievement (Whitfield & Kanter, 2014).

Bücker et al., (2012) investigated the impact of childhood trauma before age four on executive functioning, memory, and attention. The study found that children who experienced early trauma scored lower on attention and working memory tests and made more errors in continuous processing tasks, even after controlling for age, gender, and home wealth. Although none of the children met DSM criteria for a mental diagnosis, they exhibited significant subsyndromal issues with depression and attention. Additionally, these children had fewer years of exposure to schooling.

The Centre for Substance Abuse Treatment (2014) reports that childhood trauma can lead to internalizing behaviors like low affect, detachment, and numbness, as well as externalizing behaviors such as agitation, anger, and physical arousal. The American Psychological Association (2021) adds that trauma may also manifest as fear-based behaviors, emotional

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dysregulation, and inattention.

Kelt et al., (2022) also explained STS as “the term secondary traumatic stress” describes the psychological suffering that follows an indirect exposure to a traumatic incident. This may involve repeated exposure to mishaps, criminal activity, and abuse. STS symptoms frequently appear quickly after a few specific incidents. While STS is a different type of stress syndrome, the symptoms are similar to those of PTSD. Intense feelings of anxiety or irritability, high blood pressure, feelings of helplessness, trouble sleeping, and persistent flashbacks of the incident are some symptoms. Although new research indicates that STS also affects families of trauma survivors, digital forensic police detectives, forensic medical practitioners, and forensic science practitioners, it originated in the human services sector.

When a teacher finds out about a student's traumatic experience, they frequently assist the student in processing the incident, coping, and getting the assistance they need. But in the process, the instructor can suffer secondary injuries. Although not all will suffer from secondary trauma, almost all teachers will come across a pupil who has experienced trauma. While the causes for this are yet unknown, research by Sloan, et al., (2019) indicates that certain educators are affected by secondary trauma, but not all of them. To fully comprehend the effects and exposure rates among people who are at risk, more study is required.

Teachers in economically disadvantaged areas in the US have reported feeling restless, hyperarousal, self-doubt and remorse, and intrusive pictures of their victimized kids. Teachers who struggle to strike a balance between the need to provide adequate education and the reality that many students require assistance in overcoming trauma in order to participate in the learning process may find that their negative reactions are increased (McMakin et al., 2023).

Teachers should be aware of traumatic stress and comfortable working with students who have experienced trauma. But the majority don't. Because of this, instructors frequently find it difficult to keep proper boundaries with their pupils and to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Students are more likely to reveal trauma and abuse to their teachers than to other adults, in part because of the emotional bonds and special connections that form between them (Stevens et al., 2019).

The protection of the impacted person is the first priority when it comes to trauma in the classroom. In order to protect both teachers and kids, it's critical to identify trauma, establish positive connections, and use trauma-informed techniques. Bell, Limberg, and Robinson's (2013) research emphasizes the significance of trauma identification, symptom comprehension, and the teacher's involvement in intervention. One important result is that trauma has a substantial influence on a student's capacity to learn effectively in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research method including research design, population of the study, sample of the study, instrument development and data analysis in detail.

Research Design

The purpose of this research was to gather quantitative information from college instructors on secondary traumatic stress as a factor influencing their methods of instruction. In order

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to gather quantitative data using a survey approach, this study used a descriptive research design.

Population of the Study

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.

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.

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 Analysis

In this research, the researcher was analyzed the data results through Mean, standard deviation and P value. These techniques were helpful for described the data in detail.

RESULTS

Teachers' gender-wise comparison regarding their perspective about STS, its causes and effects on teaching approach.

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	p-value
Students Traumas	Male	107	3.5777	.26107	.097
	Female	93	3.6421	.28499	

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Causes of Traumas	Male	107	3.7551	.29016	.007
	Female	93	3.8570	.23003	
Teaching Approach	Male	107	3.8692	.59865	.001
	Female	93	4.1366	.50815	

Teachers Views Regarding Students Traumas

Results of *t- test* are demonstrated in above table that were used to compare teachers' perceptions regarding students' traumas and its effects on teaching approaches on the basis of gender. Results revealed that insignificant difference among teachers regarding students' traumas ($p=.097>.05$ level) and teaching approaches. Teachers can used various effective strategies to reduce student's stress while using establish routine system, keep the students open mind and with the accessibility of resources. In this regard, they can manage and reduce secondary students' traumas stress.

Teachers Views Regarding Causes of Students Traumas

Results of *t- test* are demonstrated in above table that were used to compare teachers' perceptions regarding causes of students' traumas and its effects on teaching approaches on the basis of gender. Results ($p=.007<.05$ level), revealed that significant difference among said variables. There are various causes including harassment, bullying, shaming, isolation and academic failure etc. are affecting on teaching approaches. Teachers should provide training to handle various causes these are found in the classroom to reduce students' traumas. Teachers can move quickly to address causes and separating those and take action if necessary. These techniques were very helpful to manage and reduce traumas in an effective manner.

Teachers Views Regarding Teaching Approaches and Students Traumas

Results of *t- test* are demonstrated in above table that were used to compare teachers' perceptions regarding causes of students' traumas and its effects on teaching approaches on the basis of gender. Results ($p=.001<.05$ level) revealed that significant difference about its effects on teaching approach. Teachers can cope their teaching strategies in an effective manner. They should create positive classroom environment in this regard teacher can reduce student's stress. Classroom environment is very effective strategy to manage this said phenomena. Physical students' activities as part of teaching also very effective strategies to reduce traumas. Teachers having active role in classroom to manage and resolve all type of student's traumas.

Results of *t-test* are demonstrated in above mentioned 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 gender. Results revealed insignificant difference among teachers regarding students' traumas ($p=.097>.05$ level), significant differences about causes of traumas ($p=.007<.05$ level), and significant differences about its effects on teaching approach ($p=.001<.05$ level).

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DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

It was descriptive research. A sample of 200 university teachers was selected to collect data through a survey questionnaire. After analysis this research 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. Moreover, this study found a significant positive but moderate effect of STS on teachers' teaching approach.

CONCLUSION

Every day, teachers deal with people who have experienced trauma. An individual may indirectly come into contact with painful content when they interact with students who have experienced trauma. This might result in secondary trauma. A person is more likely to be exposed when they work in a caring profession like teaching since they frequently interact with others who have survived trauma. Teachers have deeper insight into their pupils' personal life as they get to know them better. This is frequently the result of the kids feeling comfortable confiding in their instructor and feeling loved and trusted by them for the experiences they have had. The relationships that kids build in the classroom can also have an effect on their overall achievement.

Secondary traumatic stress" describes the psychological suffering that follows an indirect exposure to a traumatic incident. This may involve repeated exposure to mishaps, criminal activity, and abuse. STS symptoms frequently appear quickly after a few specific incidents. While STS is a different type of stress syndrome, the symptoms are similar to those of PTSD. Intense feelings of anxiety or irritability, high blood pressure, feelings of helplessness, trouble sleeping, and persistent flashbacks of the incident are some symptoms. Although new research indicates that STS also affects families of trauma survivors, digital forensic police detectives, forensic medical practitioners, and forensic science practitioners, it originated in the human services sector.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that teachers experiencing psychological strains due to secondary traumatic stress may be offered mental health services through counseling to manage emotional stress and other traumas signs.
- It is further recommended that university may provide flexible academic policies for those students experienced traumas.
- It is also recommended that universities should empower teachers to create a trauma-informed classroom learning environment for successful delivery of the lectures.
- This research found significant differences among teachers on the basis of their gender regarding traumas, so it is recommended that in professional development trainings, trainers should focus on female teachers in order to training them about the signs and symptoms of traumas.

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