



## EXPLORING TEACHERS' OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AND COPING STRATEGIES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN MALIR DISTRICT, KARACHI, PAKISTAN

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### **Abstract**

*Teacher occupational stress has become a significant challenge affecting teachers' well-being and educational quality, particularly in developing countries. The purpose of the study was to examine the reasons for teacher stress, its effect on the professional performance and coping strategies used by teachers working in Malir District, Karachi. The research approach adopted was the qualitative research design, with the data collected through semi-structured interviews with eight teachers indicated by purposive sampling from public and private schools. Thematic analysis method was used to analyze the data. The results showed that high workload, administrative stress, disruptive student behaviour, limited teaching materials and unrealistic parental expectations were the main contributing factors of occupational stress. It also revealed that teachers' emotional health, physical health, motivation, and effectiveness were adversely impacted by stress. Teachers primarily managed stress through peer support, spirituality, positive thinking, and effective time management. The study suggests the need for institutional support, better working environment, and teacher well-being programs to boost teacher efficiency and quality of learning.*

**Keywords:** *Coping Strategies; Occupational Stress; Pakistan; Professional Performance; Qualitative Research; School Teachers; Teacher Stress; Teacher Well-Being.*

### **Introduction**

Teaching is one of the most basic, but challenging profession to be in the current educational landscape (Arvidsson et al., 2019; Carroll et al., 2022; Richards et al., 2018). The role of the teacher is not just to educate the students with academic knowledge but to make them understand the cognitive, emotional and social development as well. The profession, however, is becoming more and more stressful driven by the higher demands in the education systems (Bottiani et al., 2019; Ghasemi, 2024). Teacher stress is described as the psychological and physiological reaction to demands related to the job which overwhelm a person's coping ability (Javaid, 2019; Puri et al., 2024).

Globally, teacher stress has come to light as a grave problem impacting teachers' performance, job satisfaction, and retention over the last few decades (Ozoemena et al., 2021; Alaiki et al., 2025). The study suggests that teachers with stress are prone to stress burnout, emotional exhaustion, and reduced teaching effectiveness (Han & Seo, 2024; Tripathi, 2025). Teacher burnout affects student learning outcomes (SLOs), which is correlated with a decrease in motivation and an increase in the teacher's intentions to quit the profession (Zaman et al., 2025; Salvo-Garrido et al., 2025).

The problem is further complicated in developing countries like Pakistan because of limited resources, overcrowding classroom, lack of training opportunities and inadequate institutional support (Ali, 2017; Yaqoob et al., 2023). Teachers may have several duties besides teaching such



as administrative duties, discipline and exam preparation. These factors all contribute to an increased occupational stress (Puri et al., 2024; Agung et al., 2024).

The Job Demand-Control model proposes that stress arises when the job lacks resources or when there is limited decision-making in the job (Ghasemi, 2024). Teachers in the school environment often have high demands and less autonomy, further increasing the level of stress felt. Other things that may cause stress in the workplace are related to social and environmental challenges such as student behaviour, parental expectations and administrative stress (Richards et al., 2018). Previous studies have shown that teachers' stress is influenced by intrapersonal and extraneous factors. Internal factors are personality traits, coping and emotional resilience while external factors are workload, school environment, leadership support (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Nwoko et al., 2024). These stressors, if not managed, can lead to burn out, absenteeism and early career attrition (Ozoemena et al., 2021).

Although there has been a considerable amount of research conducted at international level on teacher stress, however, there is scarcity of qualitative findings from the local context like Pakistan, especially Malir urban districts. It is crucial to have a deeper understanding of teachers' experience in this context to develop culturally relevant interventions and support systems (Ali, 2017; Puri et al., 2024). Therefore, the objective of this study is to explore the causes of stress among the teachers, effects of teacher stress and coping strategies used by teachers in Malir District Schools.

This is significant as a study because teacher wellbeing is connected to the quality of education. Policies, trainings and support systems that aim to better support teachers' management and coping with stress could be more effective if they are grounded in knowledge about factors that contribute to stress and what teachers can do about them (Aslam et al., 2025; Alaiki et al., 2025). Furthermore, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on occupational stress in education and more specifically, in South Asian countries, where the literature is still scarce (Chen et al., 2023).

### **Objectives of the Study**

1. To explore the factors that cause stress among school teachers.
2. To examine the impact of stress on teachers' professional performance.
3. To identify coping strategies used by teachers to manage stress.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the factors that cause stress among teachers?
2. What is the impact of stress on teachers working in schools?
3. What coping strategies are used by teachers to manage stress?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Teachers' Stress and Dissatisfaction**

Since teachers' stress and dissatisfaction ultimately impact the quality of teaching, student performance, and teacher retention (Carroll et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2023), teachers' role in the context of stress and dissatisfaction has become a focal point in educational research globally. Literature from around the world shows that teacher dissatisfaction is well correlated with workload pressure, absence of institutional supports and higher demands on teacher accountability (Bottiani et al., 2019; Richards et al., 2018). The low satisfaction with their jobs, lack of career advancement opportunities, and excessive workload are some factors that are



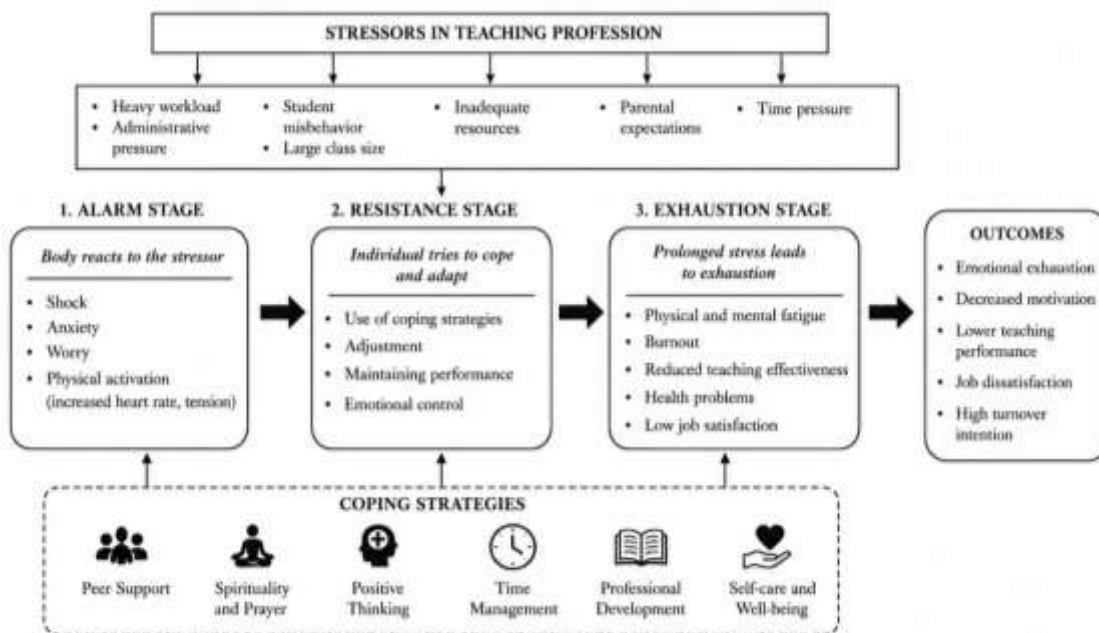
responsible for the high turnover among teachers (Han & Seo, 2024; Tripathi, 2025). For the same reason, excessive workloads also greatly motivate teachers to quit teaching, and it is reported that almost two-thirds of teachers leave education because of dissatisfaction, especially in low-resourced schools (Zaman et al., 2025; Ozoemena et al., 2021).

These issues are worsened in the developing context like Pakistan in Malir district as a result of overcrowded classrooms, lack of administrative support, and limited parental involvement (Ali, 2017; Yaqoob et al., 2023; Puri et al., 2024). Such contextual stressors cause a situation where teachers are unable to carry out their teaching properly, which eventually has an impact on the learning process and the performance of the institution (Aslam et al., 2025; Agung et al., 2024).

### **Teacher Stress: Theoretical Perspectives**

There are many conceptualizations of teacher stress, both physiological, psychological and organizational (Javaid, 2019; Ghasemi, 2024). However, previous studies have identified growing stress among teachers, followed by further studies that have shown that this stress has a negative effect on job satisfaction and teaching effectiveness (Arvidsson et al., 2019; Alaiki et al., 2025). It was again highlighted that extended occupational stress continues to drive the high turnover of teachers (Chen et al., 2023).

According to McCarty (2016), stress can be explained by a series of biological stages known as General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) proposed by Selye (1936) which has three stages—alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. The teachers enter the warning stage when the occupational stressors like high workload, administrative pressure, student misbehaviour, lack of resources, parental expectation and time constrain cause physiological and psychological responses (as shown in Figure 1). During the resistance stage, teachers attempt to adapt by employing coping strategies, including peer support, spirituality, positive thinking, time management, professional development, and self-care. If these stressors continue to be present for an extended period, however, without support or recuperation from the organization, teachers transition into the exhaustion stage, which encompasses physical and emotional fatigue, diminished teaching performance, and decreased job satisfaction, and may lead to increased intentions of leaving the school (Carrol et al., 2022; Salvo-Garrido et al., 2025).



**Figure 1.** General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) Model of Teacher Stress (Adapted from Selye, 1936)

However, the model has been criticized for paying too much attention to physiological stress reactions and neglecting emotional and cognitive aspects of stress in educational contexts (Richards et al., 2018). Cox and Mackay's demand performance model provides another explanation of stress as an imbalance between the demands of the job and the ability of the individual to cope. Moderate stress (eustress) improves performance, while too much stress (distress) will diminish efficiency (Javaid, 2019).

### Stress Factors in Teaching Profession

There are several organizational and contextual factors that affect teacher stress (Arvidsson et al., 2019). The main stressors that are identified are workload, time pressure, classroom discipline problems, and low levels of administrative support (Agung et al., 2024; Puri et al., 2024; Richards et al., 2018). Similarly, the role of demographic variables such as age, gender, and teaching experience in stress perception is highlighted (Ozoemena et al., 2021).

Furthermore, classroom problems such as students' misbehaviors, lack of motivation, and overcrowding greatly contribute to the stress levels (Bottiani et al., 2019). Emotional exhaustion is exacerbated by factors in the organization, such as lack of recognition, poor leadership, and rigid policies among teachers (Yaqoob et al., 2023).

### Teacher Burnout and Professional Consequences

Stress can cause burnout, a state of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment, which can happen after prolonged exposure (Han & Seo, 2024; Tripathi, 2025). Teacher burnout and staffing shortages are associated with teacher attrition and impact educational services (Zaman et al., 2025). Arvidsson et al., (2019) and Chen et al., (2023) found that unrealistic job demands, lack of resources and large class sizes are significant risk factors for burnout.



Moreover, teacher stress directly influences students' cognitive and emotional development (Salvo-Garrido et al., 2025). There is a correlation between high teacher stress and low performance of students and relationships with teachers (Richards et al., 2018; Ghasemi, 2024). Educational accountability systems depend on teacher well-being for quality educational outcomes (Carroll et al., 2022).

### **Coping Strategies and Stress Management**

Coping involves cognitive and behavioral strategies employed to deal with stressful situations (Nwoko et al., 2024; MacIntyre et al., 2020). Teachers use adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies based on their institutional support and personal resilience.

Mindfulness or meditation, peer support, and emotional regulation skills are some of the positive coping strategies. Teachers' emotional stability and stress level can benefit from mindfulness-based practices (Rajesh et al., 2022). Meditation techniques such as focused attention meditation have also been shown to reduce anxiety and improve concentration (Amoroso, 2025).

Social support and leadership are also important factors in controlling stress. When teachers feel supported by their peers and administrators they are less likely to suffer from burnout (Yaqoob et al., 2023; Aslam et al., 2025). Supportive leadership contributes to a positive school climate and to the reduction of stress related outcomes (Carroll et al., 2022).

However, in many cases, teachers also rely on negative coping strategies such as avoidance and withdrawal when institutional support is lacking (Nelson & Wicke, 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2020).

### **Pakistan Context and Research Gap**

The results of the research in Pakistan are not consistent in terms of the teachers' stress. The job satisfaction of public school teachers is at moderate level and for rural school teachers, the job stress level is higher because of resource limitation and stress load (Gudelos & Mabitad, 2025; Chen et al., 2023). However, there is little qualitative research that examines teachers' experiences on stress and coping strategies in specific local contexts like Malir district (Minihan et al., 2022).

This gap suggests that qualitative research is necessary to explore teachers' lived experiences of stress and how they manage it in their schools (Puri et al., 2024). Moreover, teacher resilience and adaptive capacity have been highlighted as crucial skills in effectively addressing occupational stress in vulnerable educational systems (Reintjes et al., 2025). Classroom demands and instructional complexity also help to determine teacher workload and stresses, particularly in pedagogical environments that involve learners (Piaget, 1970; Vygotsky & Cole, 1978; Helm, 2015).

Furthermore, the aspects of training and professional development in assessment practices are also seen as important supports to reduce instructional stress and increase teacher confidence (Haryono et al., 2025). Teacher performance and workload imbalance have also been directly associated with stress levels, which has a direct impact on teaching outcomes and performance (Gudelos & Mabitad, 2025). It is therefore important to have a psychological and pedagogical understanding of stress in order to design effective interventions in educational contexts.

### **Summary of Literature**

Several studies in the literature confirm the multi-qualitative nature of teacher stress as affecting organizational, psychological and contextual factors (Ghasemi, 2024). Stress theories like the



General Adaptation Syndrome and demand-performance models depict the characteristics of stress; coping literature highlights the importance of adaptive coping (e.g. mindfulness, leadership support, social interaction) (Bottiani et al., 2019; Nwoko et al., 2024). However, in Pakistan, qualitative contextual studies are greatly needed particularly in urban areas such as Malir (Ali, 2017; Puri et al., 2024). To fill this gap in the literature, this study examined teachers' experiences of stress and coping within school environments.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

This study adopted a qualitative research design to gain an in-depth understanding of teachers' lived experiences of occupational stress in real classroom settings. A qualitative approach was chosen as the methodology since it would enable the researchers to delve deeper into the individual perceptions, subjective meanings and experiences of the participants. The design allowed the researcher to obtain detailed and descriptive information about stress factors, their effects and coping strategies of the school teachers.

#### **Population and Sample**

All school teachers of public and private schools in Malir area of Karachi, Pakistan were the population of this study. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling which resulted in a total of eight teachers from four different schools. The criteria used for selecting the respondents were: teaching experience, current employment in schools and willingness to join the study. Both novice and experienced teachers were involved to capture the diversity of opinion. The sample included two male and six female teachers for varied perspectives on occupational stress experiences.

#### **Data Collection Tools**

In this study, two types of tools were employed to collect data. First, a brief self-assessment checklist was administered to obtain preliminary information regarding teachers' perceptions of stress. Second, semi-structured face to face interviews were used to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of participants. The interview protocol was designed to be consistent across interviews and to give the participants the opportunity to voice their views freely, with the goal of meeting the research objectives.

#### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data were collected through individual interviews conducted in a comfortable and distraction-free environment to encourage open and honest responses. The interviews were conducted for a length of about 40-45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded, with the consent of the participants and ensuring accurate data collection. Recorded data was transcribed word for word for detailed analysis. The researcher also made efforts to establish rapport with the participants prior to interviews in order to facilitate the environment for the discussion to be meaningful.

#### **Data Analysis**

The data collected were analyzed using thematic analysis. This approach was adopted to explore, categorize and analyze the main themes concerning the teachers' factors of tension, the effects of these tensions and coping responses. The data were systematically coded and categorized into meaningful patterns. The obtained patterns were then clustered to form major themes to get a holistic view of the problem of research. The analysis was done through an iterative reading of transcripts to guarantee the accuracy and depth of the interpretation.



### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical approval was gained before the data was collected. All participants gave informed consent prior to participating in the study. It was ensured that there was a non-coercive approach and that participants could withdraw at any time without incurring any penalties. Throughout the research process, confidentiality and anonymity was maintained. Participants' privacy was protected by not revealing any personal identifiers or institutional names in the study. All data were securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

### **Findings**

This study presents the findings of the qualitative study exploring teachers' experiences of occupational stress in public and private schools in Malir District, Karachi. The findings were based on semi-structured interviews with eight participants, who were chosen through purposive sampling. The transcripts from the interviews were analyzed through thematic analysis, allowing the researcher to identify themes and patterns that emerged from the data that were meaningful to the teachers' experiences. As a result of the analysis three major themes emerged, which directly matched the three objectives of the study: Factors causing teacher stress, impact of teacher stress and coping strategies to manage teacher stress. Each theme reflects the experiences of the participants as a whole, and there are direct quotes to foster credibility and trustworthiness of the findings.

#### **Theme 1: Factors Causing Teacher Stress**

The first aim of the study was to investigate causes of stress of school teachers. The thematic analysis revealed three sources of teachers' stress, namely organizational, instructional and interpersonal stress. The most common factors reported by participants to be a source of occupational stress were the high workload, administrative pressure, unruly student behavior, lack of teaching materials, and unrealistic parents' expectations. These stressors differed in intensity for the various participants but for nearly all teachers the character of their work had changed as a result of greater professional demands.

Teacher stress was most strongly associated with heavy workload. The participants reported that they have not only to teach in class, but also to plan lessons, prepare test papers, mark assignments, maintain students' records, maintain administrative records, and participate in extra-curricular activities. Such duties often required teachers to work outside of school hours with little rest or time for family life. One participant explained:

#### **P3 (Female, 8 years' teaching experience)**

*"Teaching itself is manageable, but the paperwork and continuous reporting make every day stressful."*

Similarly, another participant stated:

#### **P6 (Male, 11 years' teaching experience)**

*"Most of my work begins after school because I still have lesson planning, marking, and reports to complete."*

Administrative pressure was also cited as a cause of occupational stress, as mentioned by participants. They reported that sometimes the accountability, documenting and setting targets for performance was stressed in school management and sometimes emotional and professional support was lacking. Some teachers indicated that there was greater criticism than appreciation in the class, which affected their self-confidence and job satisfaction. One participant remarked:



**P2 (Female)**

*"We are expected to complete every task perfectly, but very little appreciation is given for our efforts."*

Another participant commented:

**P6 (Male)**

*"Sometimes we receive criticism instead of support from administration, which increases our stress."*

Classroom related stressors were also identified as a significant source of stress by participants as well as organizational stressors. Teachers reported that disruptive student behaviour, overcrowding of classes and lack of teaching resources impeded the ability to manage classes effectively and to meet curriculum goals. Furthermore, participants believed that some parents placed unrealistic expectations on teachers by expecting immediate improvements in students' academic performance without providing sufficient educational support at home. One participant stated:

**P5 (Female)**

*"Managing students with different learning needs without enough resources becomes mentally exhausting."*

Another participant explained:

**P8 (Female)**

*"Parents often expect excellent results but rarely understand the challenges teachers face in the classroom."*

Overall, the results show that occupational stress in teachers is multidimensional and is caused by the interaction between organizational responsibilities, classroom challenges and expectations of stakeholders. These are closely related stressors that all play a role in affecting the emotional state and effectiveness of teachers.

**Theme 2: Impact of Teacher Stress**

The second aim of the study was to explore the effect of occupational stress on teacher's professional performance. The thematic analysis showed that exposure to stress for a long period of time had a negative impact on the physical health, emotional wellbeing, motivation and teaching effectiveness of teachers. Emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, reduced teaching effectiveness and low levels of professional motivation were the most often cited consequences of occupational stress.

The most common effects of stress were reported as being emotional exhaustion. Continuous professional demands slowly diminished their enthusiasm, patience and emotional energy over time and it became more difficult for teachers to participate in classroom teaching. One participant stated:

**P2 (Female)**

*"When stress increases, my energy disappears and I cannot teach with the same enthusiasm."*

Similarly, another participant shared:

**P7 (Male)**

*"Sometimes I become emotionally exhausted before the school day even finishes."*

Participants also indicated that they experienced a number of physical symptoms related to occupational stress such as tiredness, headaches, sleep problems, and problems concentrating.



These physical issues had an impact on their lesson preparation, classroom management and their effectiveness in meeting the learning and emotional needs of their students. One participant explained:

**P4 (Female)**

*"When I am mentally stressed, I lose patience easily and my classroom performance also suffers."*

Another participant commented:

**P8 (Female)**

*"Stress affects my health as well as my confidence while teaching."*

Some teachers also reported that they became demotivated in their work over time due to stress. They said constant pressure at work had made them doubt whether they were devoted to their career and given the loss of enjoyment in teaching, they had expressed doubts. Participants felt that, if not properly managed, occupational stress could ultimately lead to teacher burnout and to a decrease in teacher retention.

Altogether, these findings show that teacher stress goes beyond the immediate emotional upset and can impact teachers' physical wellbeing, teaching effectiveness, professional engagement, and the overall quality of the teaching and learning experience.

**Theme 3: Coping Strategies for Managing Teacher Stress**

The third objective of this study was to find out how teachers are coping with occupational stress. The results showed that participants used a number of adaptive coping strategies to keep their emotions in check and to go on with their work. The most frequently mentioned responses were related to peer support, spirituality, positive thinking, good time management and temporarily removing themselves from stressful situations.

One of the most helpful supports was peer support. The sharing of work experiences, emotional support and practice advice from colleagues, were reported as helping the participants understand issues and feel better. Such supportive relationships decreased the sense of isolation and increased teachers' coping with occupational stress. One participant stated:

**P5 (Female):**

*"Talking with colleagues helps me relax because they understand the same challenges."*

Another participant explained:

**P1 (Female)**

*"We support each other whenever someone feels overwhelmed."*

Many participants also reported that spirituality is an important source of emotional resilience. Teachers felt that prayer helped them to be patient, optimistic and able to deal with stress. One participant commented:

**P1 (Female)**

*"Prayer gives me strength to continue teaching despite daily pressures."*

Similarly, another participant remarked:

**P6 (Male)**

*"I always try to stay positive because every difficult day eventually passes."*

The participants also reported that they used effective time management to manage their work-related tasks and to decrease unwanted stress at work. Others reported taking breaks or simply removing themselves from the stressful situation and then coming back to the work, fresh and



focused. These coping mechanisms helped teachers to keep emotionally stable despite ongoing workplace issues.

Overall, the answers suggest that teachers mainly used personal resilience and positive professional relationships as strategies to cope with the occupational stress. Participants also noted that coping strategies on an individual basis would not be enough and proposed that better administrative support, better working conditions, and initiatives for teachers' well-being would further decrease occupational stress and enhance working performance.

### **Summary of Findings**

The thematic analysis identified three key themes which directly related to the objectives of the present study. The results showed that the main causes of teacher occupational stress were mainly due to excessive workload, administrative stress, disruptive student behavior, lack of teaching resources, and unrealistic expectations of parents. These workplace stressors had a negative impact on teachers' emotions, physical health, teaching effectiveness and professional motivation. However, teachers implemented some coping mechanisms such as peer support, spirituality, positive thinking, effective time management and temporary avoidance of stressful situations. Overall, results indicate that teacher stress is a complex phenomenon which demands personal coping strategies as well as organizational interventions. Improving administrative support, school resources, and teacher well-being programmes can significantly decrease occupational stress and boost the effectiveness of teachers.

### **Discussion**

This research findings show that the different factors that influence the occupational stress of teachers are workload, administrative pressure, student misbehavior, lack of instructional materials and unrealistic expectation of parents. However, the results are consistent with the previous studies that found that the most important stressors affecting teacher stress and burnout were related to over-working and organizational stress (Bottiani et al., 2019; Carroll et al., 2022). The answers that the respondents gave to the question concerning the importance of administrative documentation and other tasks external to the classroom have confirmed the Job Demand – Control model (suggesting that the stress would be caused by an imbalance between job demands and resources, or job autonomy). Administrative paperwork and other responsibilities outside the classroom were significant factors affecting the respondents' lives, thus supporting the Job Demand – Control theory of stress which asserts that stress is a result of the imbalance of resources or job autonomy and job demands.

The research also found that the conditions of work stress negatively affected the emotional, physical health and teaching competence of teachers, as well as their professional motivation. The results are consistent with the earlier conducted results as indicated in the previous studies (Ozoemena et al., 2021; Han & Seo, 2024) that linked chronic stress to emotional exhaustion, burn out, decrease in teacher's quality, and an increase in teachers intention to leave the profession. Other actions expected by General Adaptation Syndrome theory is that of fatigue and diminished coping ability (Selye, 1936) with extended exposure to stress which also leads to reduced classroom productivity, lack of interest, and fatigue. These findings shed light on how a lack of a management strategy for teacher stress may affect teacher well-being and how teacher stress may also have a possible impact on the quality of education and learning outcomes of students.



Lastly, teachers' coping with workplace stress was found to be adaptive coping strategies with high usage of peer support, spirituality, positive thinking and good time management. Coping strategies reported in earlier studies highlight that social support, mindfulness, emotional resilience and supportive leadership are key factors in decreasing occupational stress and burnout (MacIntyre et al., 2020; Nwoko et al., 2024; Aslam et al., 2025). But participants said it was not enough for people to cope on their own when there was no institutional support, said the individual coping strategies. Therefore, the schools must strengthen administrative support, enhance resources, remove redundant loads on teachers and have teacher well-being programmes to improve the health and sustainability of teaching environment.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusion**

The aim of this study was to investigate the causes of occupational stress in teachers, effects on their performance and coping strategies used by teachers in public and private schools in Malir District, Karachi. The qualitative approach used evidenced that teacher stress is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that is shaped by organizational, instructional and interpersonal factors. The main sources of occupational stress identified were heavy workload, excessive administrative duties, inappropriate student behaviour, lack of teaching resources and unrealistic parental expectations. The results also indicated that long-term stress had a negative impact on the physical, emotional, motivational, and effectiveness of teachers. However, participants showed resilience by using coping strategies including support from peers, spirituality, positive thinking and effective time management. The study also showed, however, that coping strategies cannot be effective in dealing with occupational stress without the requisite institutional support. Thus, school leadership improvement, minimizing excess administrative demands, increasing the availability of resources, and addressing the well-being of teachers are important for the development of healthier and more productive school spaces. The study provides context-specific qualitative evidence on teachers' stress in Pakistan and emphasizes the need to integrate personal resilience with organizational support to alleviate teachers' professional stress and enhance educational outcomes.

#### **Key Findings Summary**

There were three key findings from the study. First, teachers had high occupational stress, which was mainly manifested as a burden of work, administrative pressure, classroom management pressure, insufficient teaching means and high parental expectations. Second, the stressful state had a negative impact on teachers' emotional state, health, professional motivation and professional competence. Third, teachers' primary way of coping with stress was through adaptive coping mechanisms, such as getting support from peers, spiritual practices, positive thinking, time management and brief emotional disconnection. Despite this, however, participants reiterated the need for better administrative support and working conditions to effectively reduce occupational stress.

#### **Policy Recommendations**

School administrators and education policy makers should create broad teacher well-being policies that take into account occupational stress as a major educational issue. Schools should have less unnecessary paperwork, have enough teaching materials, have counselling and psychological material, and have regular stress management and professional development



programs. Leaders' supportive leadership strategies can include the recognition, collaboration and talking with teachers. Furthermore, raising awareness about parents for promoting realistic expectations and better home–school partnerships should be introduced in awareness programs. These efforts can help enhance teacher satisfaction, retention and instructional effectiveness.

### **Implications of the Study**

#### **Theoretical Implications**

This study contributes to the current literature on teacher occupational stress by adding qualitative evidence from the learning environment in Pakistan. The results confirm the Job Demand–Control Model and the General Adaptation Syndrome, which emphasize that high levels of job demands and insufficient institutional support are associated with feelings of stress, emotional exhaustion and diminished job performance. The study also contributes to the literature on adaptive coping in school settings in developing countries.

#### **Practical Implications**

Based on the findings, the recommendations are in the form of practical guidelines for school principals, teachers, counsellors, and educational practitioners. The results of these findings can be used by school administrators to reimagine workloads, enhance teacher support, communicate, and foster collaborative school cultures. Emphasizing well-being and resilience-building programs, peer mentoring, and structured stress-management programmes for teachers can also be beneficial.

#### **Policy Implications**

The study calls for the inclusion of teacher well-being in educational planning and policy making by education authorities. Government agencies need to make adequate provision for teacher support schemes, develop national protocols for teacher wellbeing and include occupational wellbeing in teacher professional learning and development. The policy reforms can help to improve teacher satisfaction, quality of education and student outcomes.

#### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several limitations to this study. First, the study only included eight teachers from four public and private schools in Malir District, which means the results may not be generalizable to other educational contexts. Second, the qualitative design focused participants' self-reported experiences, which could have been affected by their perceptions and social desirability. Thirdly, the study was based solely on teachers and excluded the views of school leaders, parents, and policymakers that might have offered a more holistic picture of occupational stress.

#### **Future Research Directions**

In future studies, the findings of this research should be applied to larger and more representative samples in different provinces and at various education levels to increase the transferability of results. Longitudinal design and mixed methods might help to better understand how teacher stress levels change over time and the impact of intervention programmes. Additionally, future studies could focus on the impact of leadership style, organizational culture, teacher resilience, emotional intelligence, and institutional support on the mitigation of occupational stress. Such comparative research between public and private schools and assessment of teacher well-being interventions would also enhance the evidence base for education policy and practice in Pakistan.



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