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RESEARCH PAPER

Impact of Psychological Distress on Quality of Life, Self-Efficacy, and Emotional Intelligence among Female Teachers Serving in Government and Private Schools

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ABSTRACT

The core purpose of this study was to address the psychological anomalies preferably the level of psychological distress and its impact on the teacher's quality of life, their self-efficacy and on the level of their emotional intelligence. This is an acknowledged fact that Psychological distress is a vital issue now a days prevailing among school teachers particularly among females. Persistent stress, workload, and lack of support contribute to emotional exhaustion and reduced professional effectiveness. This was a quantitative study with a cross-sectional research design. Data was collected by using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale. Quality of life scale, Self-Efficacy scale, and emotional intelligence scale. The results revealed that the psychological distress significantly predicts each facet of the quality of life and the overall quality of life. This was also reported that psychological distress significantly and negatively predicts self-efficacy and emotional intelligence in both school types. On the basis of the findings this is suggested to the higher authorities to start prevention programmes to reduce the psychological distress of school teachers.

KEYWORDS Quality of Life, Self-Efficacy, Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Distress

Introduction

Nowadays, psychological distress is one of the most pressing issues which confronting the teachers. The teaching profession is related to a high level of psychological distress. Workload makes life difficult for them. If it is not managed timely it can lead to other psychological or physical disorders. A stressful environment makes it difficult to maintain happiness most of the time. Psychological distress can be dealt with through emotional support, humour, religion, self-control, the use of positive reframing, and planning (Rahman et al., 2022).

Likewise, the demands of the job coupled with insufficient support lead to high levels of stress, burnout, and mental health problems. This leads to poor quality of life, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. Several studies have shown that teachers are particularly vulnerable to high levels of stress due to the demanding nature of their work and factors contributing to this include long working hours, high workloads, insufficient support, and the emotional labour associated with teaching (Heffernan et al., 2022).

For instance, a survey conducted by the American Federation of Teachers (2017) revealed that 61% of teachers and school staff reported that their work was always or often stressful, compared to 30% of the general working population. This chronic stress has severe psychological outcomes such as depression, anxiety, and burnout, ultimately impacting their quality of life, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence. In the United Kingdom, a study by the Education Support Partnership in 2022 found that 77% of teachers reported experiencing work-related stress, and 56% considered leaving the profession due to stress and lack of support (Marchant et al., 2024). Similarly, a 2021

survey in Canada by the Canadian Teachers' Federation reported that 70% of teachers experienced high levels of stress during the school year, with 45% indicating symptoms of anxiety and depression (Agyapong et al., 2022). So, there is a need to find out the causes of such distress among teachers.

Psychological distress relates to some symptoms that are non-specific such as stress, depression, and anxiety. It keeps the people unhappy and they feel uncomfortable in their daily life. If there is a high level of psychological distress then it can lead to different disorders such as anxiety and depressive disorders. Symptoms of psychological distress are more common in women than men because women are prone to more psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression (Viertiö et al., 2021). There are many professions in the world but the nature of every profession is different such as some people are doctors, engineers, lawyers, and teachers. They do different kinds of work in different environments. Therefore, the nature of stress is also different in every environment. Some environments are more stressful than others which affect the physical and mental health of people and causes psychological distress. Sometimes, stress becomes so eminent that it becomes difficult to overcome it and sometimes it causes many people to remain absent from work or exit their jobs (Titheradge et al., 2019).

Literature Review

Higher level of psychological distress, poor quality of life, self-efficacy and low emotional intelligence among teachers has been remain a topic of concern for psychologists because the prevalence of psychological distress among teachers varies significantly across different regions due to cultural, economic, and systemic factors. Globally, for instance, in North America, the United States and Canada report high levels of teacher stress. One study highlighted that in the United States, nearly 50% of teachers considered quitting their jobs due to stress and burnout (Rumschlag, 2017), according to the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) 2023 report, Canadian teachers report similar levels of distress, with significant impacts on their mental health and job satisfaction (Bocanegra et al., 2024).

As well, in Europe, the United Kingdom has documented some of the highest levels of teacher stress, with 77% of teachers experiencing work-related stress (Naghieh et al., 2015). As it is famous that Finland is known for its strong educational system, also teachers experience lower stress levels compared to their counterparts in the UK and the US. Rather than that, Finland is attributed to better support systems, smaller class sizes, and a more collaborative work environment (Jerrim & Sims, 2022).

Some studies demonstrated that teachers in Asian countries like China, India, and Japan report varying levels of psychological distress. For instance, in China, rapid educational reforms and high expectations have led to significant stress among teachers (Li & Kou, 2018), in India, large class sizes, lack of resources, and administrative pressures contribute to high levels of stress (Joshi et al., 2019), likewise, Japanese teachers also face considerable stress due to long working hours, high expectations, and a culture of perfectionism (Taylor, 2020).

As well, Australian teachers report high levels of stress and burnout, with significant impacts on their mental health and job performance. Various organizations like The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety, and Wellbeing Survey highlight that teachers in Australia experience higher levels of stress compared to other professions, largely due to workload and administrative pressures (Riley, 2018).

Not only this, Otu et al. (2023) identified that in African countries also teachers faced unique challenges that contribute to psychological distress, including inadequate infrastructure, lack of resources, and socio-economic instability. In the same way, in South

Africa, for example, teachers also report high levels of stress due to large class sizes, safety concerns, and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the student population (Abreu, 2023).

Surprisingly, the prevalence of psychological distress among teachers in Pakistan is notably high because recent studies highlight that around 40-60% of school teachers in the country experience significant levels of psychological distress (Özü et al., 2017). Researchers identified the factors that are contributing to this, including heavy workloads (Arif et al., 2017), low salaries (Zafar et al., 2023), and lack of resources, social support, spousal absence (Fazal et al., 2022), job insecurity (Ahmad et al., 2022), and the pressure to meet high educational standards (Aslam et al., 2022).

So, similar to their global counterparts, teachers in Pakistan are also facing a multitude of stressors, including not only professional challenges but also the socio-economic context they operate within due to the lack of support from the administration, inadequate professional development opportunities, and the high teacher-to-student ratio further exacerbate their stress levels. Also, the socio-political instability and economic hardships prevalent in Pakistan add to the overall burden on teachers and impact their mental well-being (Khalid & Singal, 2023).

These issues were further intensified during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, with the abrupt shift to online teaching, teachers had to adapt quickly to new technologies and methods of instruction, often without adequate training or support. Due to that, this sudden transition increased their workload and stress, as many struggled with connectivity issues, maintaining student engagement, and balancing personal and professional responsibilities from home (Shaukat et al., 2022).

In light of these challenges, it is evident that psychological distress among teachers in Pakistan is a critical issue that requires immediate attention. Addressing this distress is necessary not only for the well-being of teachers but also for the overall quality of education and student outcomes in the country.

Material and Methods

Keeping in view the above alarming condition of psychological distress among teachers and its shreds of evidence from the literature review the problem statement was rephrased as “Exploring the Impact of Psychological Distress on Quality of Life, Self-Efficacy, and Emotional Intelligence among Female Teachers Serving in Government and Private Schools”.

In this current study, the researcher considered the participants that consisted of female school teachers from both government and private schools in the Layyah district, Punjab, Pakistan to address the gaps in the literature regarding the psychological distress experienced by female school teachers and its relationship with their quality of life, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence. This was a quantitative study data was collected from the school teachers belonging from different areas. All the participants belong to different age groups, education, socio-economic status etc. Therefore, a cross-sectional research design was used and a multistage sampling approach was used to ensure that the selected population can effectively address the research inquiries intended by the researcher.

Operationally, in this study, psychological distress was measured by using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10). The K10 is a widely used tool designed to screen for psychological distress in the general population with 10 questions that assess the frequency of specific symptoms over the past four weeks by rated on a five-level response scale ranging from 'none of the time' (score of 1) to 'all of the time' (score of 5) and the total score ranges from 10 to 50, with higher scores indicating higher levels of psychological distress.

Quality of life will be assessed operationally by using the WHOQOL-BREF instrument, containing 26 items that measure four broad domains: physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environment, rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where higher scores indicate a higher perceived quality of life. Similarly, the researcher operationally identifies self-efficacy by using the Teacher Self-Efficacy Scale (TSES), developed by Schwarzer et al. (1999) the TSES consists of 10 items designed to assess teachers' confidence in their abilities across four domains: job accomplishment, skill development, social interaction, and coping with job stress. It is a 4-point scale from 'not at all true' to 'exactly true', in which higher scores on the TSES indicate greater perceived self-efficacy. Like that, operationally as well, in this study, emotional intelligence will be assessed using the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS-10). It is a validated tool that measures emotional intelligence through 10 items covering five domains: an appraisal of own emotion, appraisal of others' emotions, regulation of own emotions, regulations of others' emotions, and utilization of emotions by rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating higher levels of emotional intelligence (Davies et al., 2010). Lastly, for ensuring the protection and well-being of participants some ethical considerations are fundamental to any research. So, the researcher also followed the strict ethical guidelines to safeguard the participants from any physical, behavioural, or psychological risks. All the variables of the study were tested by the following supposed hypotheses.

1. There will be a significant impact of psychological distress on quality of life, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence among female school teachers

2. Prevalence of psychological distress, level of quality of life, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence would vary among government and private female school teachers.

Results and Discussion

The present chapter dealt with the results of the study in detail by exploring the impact of psychological distress on quality of life (QoL), self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence among female school teachers.

Table 1
Impact of Psychological Distress on Quality of Life and its Facets among Government and Private Female School Teachers

School Types	Variables	B	SE	B	T	p	R^2
Government School→	PD→Physical Health	.84	.08	.71	10.25	.000	.05
Private School→	PD→ Physical Health	.56	.12	.50	4.82	.000	.03
Government School→	PD→Psychological Health	.39	.07	.49	5.70	.000	.24
Private School→	PD→ Psychological Health	.50	.08	.58	5.93	.000	.33
Government School→	PD→Social Relationships	.23	.08	.28	2.95	.004	.08
Private School→	PD→ Social Relationships	.26	.08	.36	3.22	.002	.13
Government School→	PD→Environmental Life	.48	.13	.34	3.61	.000	.11
Private School→	PD→ Environmental Life	.52	.12	.45	4.24	.000	.20
Government School→	PD→Quality of Life	1.93	.27	.59	7.30	.000	.34
Private School→	PD→ Quality of Life	1.84	.35	.53	5.27	.000	.28

PD = Psychological Distress

Note: The above findings presents the predictive impact of psychological distress on quality of life and its facets (physical health, psychological health, social relationships, and environmental life) among female school teachers in government and private schools.

Table 2
Impact of Psychological Distress on Self-Efficacy among Government and Private Female School Teachers

School Types	Variables	B	SE	B	T	p	R^2
Government School→	PD→Self-Efficacy	-.50	.04	-.79	-13.02	.000	.62
Private School→	PD→ Self-Efficacy	-.23	.04	-.55	-5.48	.000	.30

PD = Psychological Distress

Table 2 examines the predictive impact of psychological distress on self-efficacy among female school teachers in government and private schools.

Table 3
Impact of Psychological Distress on Emotional Intelligence and its Facets among Government and Private Female School Teachers

School Types	Variables	*B*	*SE*	*β*	*t*	*p*	R^2
Government School→	PD→Appraisal of own Emotions	-.15	.02	-.63	-8.14	.000	.39
Private School→	PD→ Appraisal of own Emotions	-.07	.02	-.43	-3.98	.000	.19
Government School→	PD→Appraisal of others' Emotions	-.12	.03	-.41	-4.47	.000	.16
Private School→	PD→ Appraisal of others' Emotions	-.02	.03	-.10	-.81	.420	.01
Government School→	PD→Regulation of own Emotions	-.13	.02	-.52	-6.18	.000	.27
Private School→	PD→ Regulation of own Emotions	-.04	.02	-.23	-1.98	.052	.05
Government School→	PD→Regulation of others' Emotions	-.15	.02	-.60	-7.54	.000	.39
Private School→	PD→ Regulation of others' Emotions	-.07	.02	-.43	-3.98	.000	.19
Government School→	PD→Utilization of Emotions	-.12	.02	-.48	-5.49	.000	.23
Private School→	PD→ Utilization of Emotions	-.04	.02	-.24	-2.10	.039	.06
Government School→	PD→Emotional Intelligence	-.67	.08	-.62	-7.97	.000	.38
Private School→	PD→ Emotional Intelligence	-.25	.09	-.34	-3.00	.004	.11

PD = Psychological Distress

Table 3 presents the impact of psychological distress on emotional intelligence and its facets, including the appraisal of emotions (self and others), regulation of emotions (self and others), and utilization of emotions, among government and private female school teachers.

Table 4
Prevalence of Psychological Distress, Quality of Life, its Facets, Self-Efficacy, Emotional Intelligence, and its Facets are by School Type

Variables	Government School		Private School		T	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Psychological Distress	38.83	4.13	36.79	5.05	2.93	.004	.45
Physical Health	26.84	4.85	23.39	5.70	4.32	.000	.66
Psychological Health	15.53	3.29	15.43	4.34	.17	.865	.03
Social Relationships	8.55	3.36	8.63	3.69	-.14	.886	-.02
Environmental Life	26.25	5.84	24.92	5.77	1.50	.136	.23
Quality of Life	77.16	13.62	72.36	17.42	2.05	.042	.31
Self-Efficacy	13.54	2.60	14.75	2.07	-3.30	.001	-.51
Appraisal of own Emotions	3.43	1.01	3.56	.85	-.84	.400	-.13
Appraisal of others' Emotions	3.53	1.27	3.72	1.19	-1.02	.309	-.16
Regulation of own Emotions	3.41	1.03	3.57	.98	-1.01	.314	-.16
Regulation of others' Emotions	3.45	1.01	3.56	.85	-.71	.478	-.11
Utilization of Emotions	3.60	1.00	3.75	.87	-1.06	.292	-.16
Emotional Intelligence	17.42	4.47	18.15	3.80	-1.13	.260	-.17

Note: The above table 4 shows the level of psychological distress, quality of life, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence and their facets among government and private school teachers.

Discussion

The first hypothesis was supposed to check the impact of study variables among female school teachers it was hypothesized that "There will be a significant impact of psychological distress on quality of life, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence among female school teachers". The results revealed that the psychological distress significantly predicts each facet of the quality of life and the overall quality of life. In government schools, psychological distress strongly predicts physical health ($B = 0.84$, $\beta = 0.71$, $t = 10.25$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.05$). Similarly, it predicts psychological health ($B = 0.39$, $\beta = 0.49$, $t = 5.70$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.24$), social relationships ($B = 0.23$, $\beta = 0.28$, $t = 2.95$, $p = .004$, $R^2 = 0.08$), and environmental life ($B = 0.48$, $\beta = 0.34$, $t = 3.61$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.11$). The overall quality of life is significantly influenced by psychological distress, with a standardized regression coefficient of $\beta = 0.59$ ($B = 1.93$, $t = 7.30$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.34$). In private schools, psychological distress also significantly predicts physical health ($B = 0.56$, $\beta = 0.50$, $t = 4.82$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.03$) and psychological health ($B = 0.50$, $\beta = 0.58$, $t = 5.93$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.33$). The effects extend to social relationships ($B = 0.26$, $\beta = 0.36$, $t = 3.22$, $p = .002$, $R^2 = 0.13$) and environmental life ($B = 0.52$, $\beta = 0.45$, $t = 4.24$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.20$). Psychological distress predicts the overall quality of life in private schools as well, with a β value of 0.53 ($B = 1.84$, $t = 5.27$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.28$). Thus, these findings suggest that psychological distress notably impacts quality of life and its various dimensions in both government and private school teachers. Furthermore, the results indicate that psychological distress significantly and negatively predicts self-efficacy in both school types, though the strength of the relationship differs. In government schools, psychological distress shows a strong negative relationship with self-efficacy ($B = -0.50$, $\beta = -0.79$, $t = -13.02$, $p < .001$), accounting for 62% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.62$). This suggests that higher levels of psychological distress are strongly associated with lower self-efficacy among government school teachers. In private schools, psychological distress also significantly predicts self-efficacy, though the relationship is less pronounced compared to government schools ($B = -0.23$, $\beta = -0.55$, $t = -5.48$, $p < .001$). Here, psychological distress explains 30% of the variance in self-efficacy ($R^2 = 0.30$), indicating a moderate effect. Overall, these findings highlight a substantial negative impact of psychological distress on self-efficacy, with the effect being notably stronger among government school teachers than their counterparts in private schools. In relation with emotional intelligence the results reveal significant differences in the strength of these relationships across school types. In government schools, psychological distress negatively predicts the appraisal of one's own emotions ($B = -0.15$, $\beta = -0.63$, $t = -8.14$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.39$), the appraisal of others' emotions ($B = -0.12$, $\beta = -0.41$, $t = -4.47$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.16$), regulation of one's own emotions ($B = -0.13$, $\beta = -0.52$, $t = -6.18$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.27$), regulation of others' emotions ($B = -0.15$, $\beta = -0.60$, $t = -7.54$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.39$), and utilization of emotions ($B = -0.12$, $\beta = -0.48$, $t = -5.49$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.23$). Psychological distress also significantly predicts overall emotional intelligence ($B = -0.67$, $\beta = -0.62$, $t = -7.97$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.38$), indicating a robust negative impact. In private schools, psychological distress also negatively predicts the appraisal of one's own emotions ($B = -0.07$, $\beta = -0.43$, $t = -3.98$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.19$), regulation of others' emotions ($B = -0.07$, $\beta = -0.43$, $t = -3.98$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = 0.19$), and utilization of emotions ($B = -0.04$, $\beta = -0.24$, $t = -2.10$, $p = .039$, $R^2 = 0.06$). However, the impact on the appraisal of others' emotions ($B = -0.02$, $\beta = -0.10$, $t = -0.81$, $p = .420$, $R^2 = 0.01$) and regulation of one's own emotions ($B = -0.04$, $\beta = -0.23$, $t = -1.98$, $p = .052$, $R^2 = 0.05$) is weaker and not statistically significant. Overall emotional intelligence is moderately influenced by psychological distress in private schools ($B = -0.25$, $\beta = -0.34$, $t = -3.00$, $p = .004$, $R^2 = 0.11$). These findings indicate that psychological distress has a stronger and more pervasive negative effect on emotional intelligence and its facets among government school teachers compared to their private school counterparts. While significant relationships are

observed across many facets in both groups, the magnitude and consistency of the effects are notably higher in the government school context. Hence, the second hypothesis accepted. The findings are in line with the previous researches such as Abbas et al., (2023) concluded the same findings and reported that the psychological distress significantly predict the quality of life, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence among teachers. Another study also reported that chronic stress and distress among teachers resulted in a lowering of self-efficacy and emotional resilience, thus making them less able to cope with difficulties (Zee & Koomen, 2016).

The second hypothesis was supposed to check the level of prevalence of the study variables and to compare the prevalence among government and private school teachers. It was hypothesized that "Prevalence of psychological distress, level of quality of life, self-efficacy and emotional intelligence would vary among government and private female school teachers". The findings from the collected data revealed that psychological distress was significantly higher among government school teachers ($M = 38.83$, $SD = 4.13$) compared to private school teachers ($M = 36.79$, $SD = 5.05$), with $t(174) = 2.93$, $p = .004$, and a medium effect size ($d = 0.45$). Similarly, government school teachers report better physical health ($M = 26.84$, $SD = 4.85$) than private school teachers ($M = 23.39$, $SD = 5.70$), with $t(174) = 4.32$, $p < .001$, and a medium to large effect size ($d = 0.66$). However, there are no significant differences between the groups for psychological health ($t = 0.17$, $p = .865$, $d = 0.03$), social relationships ($t = -0.14$, $p = .886$, $d = -0.02$), or environmental life ($t = 1.50$, $p = .136$, $d = 0.23$). Overall quality of life is significantly higher among government school teachers ($M = 77.16$, $SD = 13.62$) compared to private school teachers ($M = 72.36$, $SD = 17.42$), with $t(174) = 2.05$, $p = .042$, and a small to medium effect size ($d = 0.31$). Self-efficacy is significantly higher among private school teachers ($M = 14.75$, $SD = 2.07$) compared to government school teachers ($M = 13.54$, $SD = 2.60$), with $t(174) = -3.30$, $p = .001$, and a medium effect size ($d = -0.51$). For emotional intelligence and its facets, no significant differences are observed between the groups in the appraisal of one's own emotions ($t = -0.84$, $p = .400$, $d = -0.13$), the appraisal of others' emotions ($t = -1.02$, $p = .309$, $d = -0.16$), regulation of one's own emotions ($t = -1.01$, $p = .314$, $d = -0.16$), regulation of others' emotions ($t = -0.71$, $p = .478$, $d = -0.11$), utilization of emotions ($t = -1.06$, $p = .292$, $d = -0.16$), or overall emotional intelligence ($t = -1.13$, $p = .260$, $d = -0.17$). Hence, these findings suggest significant differences between government and private school teachers in psychological distress, physical health, overall quality of life, and self-efficacy, with private school teachers exhibiting better self-efficacy and government school teachers reporting higher psychological distress and better physical health and quality of life. However, emotional intelligence and most of its facets do not significantly differ between the two groups. Hence, the hypothesis partially accepted. The results of these findings are in accordance with the previous studies such as Anasori et al., (2020) concluded the same findings.

Conclusion

As such, this study sheds light on the complex dynamics between psychological distress, Quality of life, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence among school teachers who are female. It points out the important impact of psychological distress in relation with the self-efficacy, quality of life and emotional intelligence. So, in the light of study findings this concludes that level of psychological distress emerged as a critical predictor of Quality of life, self-efficacy, and emotional intelligence. The impact was more profound among government school teachers, who experienced higher distress levels, leading to reduced emotional regulation and lower self-efficacy.

Recommendations

The findings of this study are a vital message for policymakers because there is an urgent need to prioritize teachers' mental health. Policies should include comprehensive

well-being programs that involve regular psychological assessments, mental health training, and funding for interventions such as CBT. Furthermore, to ensure the quality of teaching first we address those variables that are negatively linked with their self-efficacy, quality of life and emotional intelligence.

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