

Relationship Between Students' Traumas and Teaching Approach at Higher Education Level

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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 aims 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 faculty working in capital of Pakistan i.e. (Islamabad). For data collection, the researcher adapted the instrument developed by Bride et al., (2004) in the form of closed-ended questionnaire. 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 faculty 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. It was found that STS had moderate effects on teaching approach.

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

Introduction

The profession of teaching is understood as a noble profession with the goal of educating and inspiring students, shaping their lives, imparting information, and encouraging intellectual development. A teacher is responsible for creating a good and conducive learning

environment, encouraging critical thinking, and promoting a love of learning in their students. This profession demands dedication, patience and resilience in order to implement effective teaching strategies considering the needs of the students. The teaching profession has multiple challenges, including over workload, student behavioral concerns, insufficient resources, accountability, limited opportunities for professional development, limited parental involvement, mental health and well-being, and secondary traumatic stress (Simon et al., 2022).

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) originated in mental health and healthcare and is now being studied in education (Sinclair et al., 2017). According to Roberts & Murray (2023), secondary traumatic stress is described as emotional pressure caused by hearing someone's traumatic events. Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is documented as an emotional pressure that occurred when a person heard of another person's experience with trauma. Secondary traumatic stress is a syndrome that can upset individuals who have experienced the tragedy of others. Secondary trauma stress may affect persons in several professions, including healthcare workers, social workers, and emergency responders, as well as those who experienced traumatic events through personal experiences or media (Simon et al., 2022; Baicker, 2020).

There are several indicators or symptoms of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) that teachers experience on a daily basis while working. The most common symptoms are increased anxiety and concern about safety, negative ideas and images from the students' disturbances, fatigue and physical complaints, felt numbness or disconnected from students and peers, less concentration, lack of decision making, feeling of physical and emotional withdrawal from others, and professional inadequacy (Baicker, 2020).

From the perspective of teachers, research conducted by Koenig et al., (2017) discovered that 43 percent of teachers assessed exhibited symptoms associated with secondary traumatic stress. In contrast, a different study conducted by Borntrager et al., (2012) indicated that nearly 75 percent of teachers reported experiencing symptoms of secondary traumatic stress. Moreover, Ormiston et al., (2022) states that teachers reported that the secondary traumatic stress affect teachers' mental health and their approaches to teaching learning.

Objective of the study:

1. To analyze secondary traumatic stress (STS) as factor affecting teaching approach (student-centered & teacher-centered) of teachers at university level.

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)

Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) is a kind of stress that occurred when anybody hear or see other individual traumatic or stressful events. It is also known as indirect trauma or stress. It is also considered as compassion fatigue (Meadors et al., 2010).

Teaching Approach

Teaching is considered as a noble profession in which an individual imparts knowledge, understanding and skills to students at all levels of education, from primary to university. A teaching approach is a technique or strategy that an educator uses to transmit knowledge, understanding, and skills to the children (Fenstermacher, 2015). The most fundamental

teaching approaches are two such as teacher-centered and student-centered. According to Vukcevic and Zivanovic (2022), when teachers experience their students' traumatic conditions by listening to their griefs and interacting with them, they feel emotional stress due to the students' trauma and consistently believe that their students need support and help during such conditions. The students' traumatic conditions affect teacher's teaching approaches significantly.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Standards of Teaching Profession

There are certain requirements for every occupation, including teaching. Standards help people continue to provide high-quality services. Ten criteria known as the National Professional criteria for Teachers govern the teaching profession in Pakistan's educational system. Subject matter expertise, human growth and development, Islamic ethical values and social life skills, instructional planning and strategies, assessment, learning environment, effective communication and ICT proficiency, cooperation and partnership, ongoing professional development and code of conduct, and teaching English as a second or foreign language are all included in this. A person has to be well-versed in teaching professional standards and prepared to provide high-quality instruction to students in order to succeed in the teaching profession (Kalsoom & Qureshi, 2019; Ullah et al., 2022).

The Concept of Teaching Approach

An approach that an educator use for imparting knowledge to the students is known as a teaching approach. There are two primary teaching approaches such as teacher-centered teaching approach and student-centered teaching approach. The concept of teaching approach is considered as the fundamental principles, beliefs and ideas that provide guidance to the teachers' actions in the classrooms. Teaching approach includes the teachers' interpretation of classrooms dynamics and the selection of teaching methods and techniques for facilitating learners learning (Hoque, 2016). Moreover, according to Fenstermacher et al., (2015), teachers' teaching approaches incorporates the teachers' beliefs regarding the nature of learning, the basic role of the teachers, the relationship among students and teachers, and the kind of teaching and learning activities that are considered effective. It also forms how teachers explain and answer to the classroom's situation.

Teachers are generally the first to learn about their students' experiences. This might include the great things they accomplish on a daily basis, as well as the painful situations they are having. When teachers keep up with this knowledge and deal with students who have been affected by trauma, the chance of educators experiencing secondary traumatic stress rises, resulting in teaching learning activities. Most of teachers experiencing secondary traumatic stress unable to cope with it that impact on their personal and professional life significantly (Baicker, 2022). According to Honsinger and Hendricks Brown (2019) that teachers having experience of secondary traumatic stress feel ill-equipped to handle the requirements according to the need of the students. These teachers unable to develop proper student-teacher relationship in the classroom that affect all students in the classroom. A teacher's healthy and positive relationship with their students promote learning and overall success.

The Student-Centered Teaching Approach

The student-centered approach to teaching is considered as a type of teaching approach in which students participate actively in their learning process. In student-centered teaching approach the main focus of an activity is the students. It means that students are encouraged to participate in a pack of activities such as speaking, listening, writing and collaboration with peers. The main focus of this teaching approach is on students by engaging and encouraging their active participation in classroom activities. This teaching approach is different as compared to teacher-centered approach where teachers deliver information and learners passively listen it (Wright, 2011). According to Wright (2011), there are many benefits of student-centered teaching approach. These benefits include increasing in students' motivation and engagement, deep understanding of the concept, developing critical thinking in the students, promoting problem-solving skills of the students and improving communication and collaboration skills of the students.

The Teacher-Centered Teaching Approach

The teacher-centered approach to teaching is known as a traditional method of teaching in which an educator impart knowledge to the students. In this approach students participate passively while teachers participate actively. According to teacher-centered teaching approach, teacher act as an in-charge of delivering knowledge to the students and the whole teaching learning process. In this approach, students often only listeners and absorb information and considered as "empty vessels." (Emaliana, 2017). Furthermore, according to Murphy et al., (2021), the teaching approach recognized as "teacher-centered" is considered as a direction instruction that place the teachers at the center of the teaching learning activities. A teacher plays a central role in this teaching approach and act as a primary source of information, deliver knowledge through lecture, demonstrate and direct instruction. Students learning through teacher-centered approach to teaching are considered as passive participation and obtain and absorb information.

What is Trauma?

The meaning of the word "Trauma" is a deeply disturbing experience of a person in response to any natural disaster or an accident or event. Trauma is the body's emotional reaction to a terrible experience, such as a violent crime, accident, natural disaster physical or psychological abuse, neglect, experiencing or seeing violence, a loved one's death, war, and more (Sutterlin, 2020). According to Garrity (2022), our culture suffers from trauma, and a history of traumatic stress can have grave negative consequences on a person's mental and physical health. Despite the fact that trauma may be a significant obstacle for certain kids, teachers may help these students by implementing trauma-informed teaching strategies.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of this research is to gather quantitative information from university faculty 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.

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:

Data presented inside Table 3.1 shows the exact population for this study. According to this table there are 17 public sector and 09 private sector universities running in Islamabad.

Retrieved from: <https://www.hec.gov.pk/english/universities/pages/recognised.aspx>

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

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.

Reliability of Research Instrument

The researcher has conducted a pilot study. In pilot study the researcher has collected data from 20 teachers (10 from public sector & 10 from private sector universities) through self-developed instrument. The data collected through pilot study were analyzed by applying a scale reliability test in SPSS in order to calculate Cronbach's alpha values. Cronbach's alpha value is a kind of reliability that researchers use to assess the reliability or internal consistency of a set of scale or items (questions) involved in a questionnaire. The pilot study's data were not be included in the actual data. The Cronbach's alpha values occurred as below which shows that instrument is reliable and can be used for data collection at large scale.

3.7 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.

3.8 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.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Relationship between Students' traumas and Teaching Approach

Variables		Students Traumas	Teaching Approach
Students_Traumas	Pearson Correlation	1	.589**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Teaching_Approach	Pearson Correlation	.589**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

Pearson *r* test was used to discover relationship between students' traumas and teaching approach. Results revealed a moderate positive relationship among both variable ($r=.589$, $p=.000$).

Findings of Objective 3 (effects of STS on Teaching Approach)

1. It was discovered that 0 (0%) teachers strongly disagreed, 02 (1.0%) teachers disagreed, 05 (2.5%) were undecided, 190 (95.0%) agreed, and 03 (1.5%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 3.97 and an SD of 0.281 with the statement that "I modify my teaching approach to accommodate students who face trauma due to STS."

2. Results found that 04 (2.0%) teachers strongly disagreed, 04 (2.0%) teachers disagreed, 37 (18.5%) were undecided, 154 (77.0%) agreed, and 01 (0.5%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 3.72 and an SD of 0.611 agreed with the statement that "I failed to give emotional support to students facing trauma."

3. Results found that 03 (1.5%) teachers strongly disagreed, 07 (3.5%) teachers disagreed, teachers who remain neutral or un-decided were 38 (19.0%), 150 (75.0%) agreed, and 02 (1.0%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 3.70 and an SD of 0.624 with the statement that "I failed to give emotional support to students facing trauma."

4. This study revealed that 04 (2.0%) teachers strongly disagreed, 06 (3.0%) teachers disagreed, teachers who remain neutral or undecided were 26 (13.0%), 162 (81.0%) agreed,

and 02 (1.0%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 3.70 and an SD of 0.624 with the statement that "I unable to develop trustworthy relationships with students suffering trauma."

5. This research discovered that 02 (1.0%) teachers strongly disagreed, 05 (2.5%) teachers disagreed, 44 (22.0%) were undecided, 148 (74.0%) agreed, and 01 (0.5%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 3.70 and an SD of 0.574 with the statement that "I give less focus on students' well-being instead of content delivery to students suffering from trauma."

6. Results found that 04 (2.0%) teachers strongly disagreed, 03 (1.5%) teachers disagreed, 32 (16.0%) were undecided, 159 (79.5%) agreed, and 02 (1.0%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 3.76 and an SD of 0.595 with the statement that "I give less focus on students' well-being instead of content delivery to students suffering from trauma."

7. It was found that 06 (3.0%) teachers strongly disagreed, 05 (2.5%) teachers disagreed, 07 (3.5%) were undecided, 66 (33.0%) agreed, and 116 (58.0%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 4.40 and an SD of 0.908 with the statement that "I felt that my authority was challenged due to traumatized students."

8. Results discovered that 20 (10.0%) teachers strongly disagreed, 03 (1.5%) teachers disagreed, 02 (1.0%) were undecided, 36 (18.0%) agreed, and 139 (69.5%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 4.35 and an SD of 1.243 with the statement that "I think that due to experiencing students' traumas, my student-centered teaching approach has been affected."

9. This study revealed that 23 (11.5%) teachers strongly disagreed, 07 (3.5%) teachers disagreed, 05 (2.5%) were undecided, 29 (14.5%) agreed, and 136 (68.0%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 4.24 and an SD of 1.353 with the statement that "I believe that due to listening to students' traumas, my teacher-centered teaching approach has been affected."

10. This investigation found that 14 (7.0%) teachers strongly disagreed, 02 (1.0%) teachers disagreed, 06 (3.0%) were undecided, 63 (31.5%) agreed, and 115 (57.5%) strongly agreed, with a mean value of 4.31 and an SD of 1.087 with the statement that "I think that I need professional development to understand and deal with students suffering from trauma."

11. 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).

12. Results found 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).

13. Results revealed a moderate positive relationship among both variable ($r=.589$, $p=.000$).

Recommendations:

It is recommended that university should start a campaign for trauma awareness for providing deep insights to the faculty and students regarding factors contributing to traumas and how to manage it. It is further recommended that further researchers may conduct similar studies at other universities, college, and school level, using a qualitative method of research in different regions of the Pakistan.

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