



The Voices of Teachers of Public and Private Sector Using E- Learning During the Pandemic Covid-19 and its aftermath. A Qualitative Phenomenological Study Based on Lived Experience.

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic caused never seen disturbances to educational systems globally, therefore teachers had to quickly adapt to distance learning. This qualitative phenomenological research investigates the lived experiences of Pakistani teachers who conducted distance learning both during and following the pandemic. Focus on their emotional and psychological challenges and their learning experience towards pedagogical transformation and adaptation in the distance learning. Also focus on post pandemic reflection. Based on in-depth interviews of semi structured typed was used to collect the data from the twelve teachers from 6 public school teachers and 6 from private schools in Karachi, this research reveals the emotional, technical, and pedagogical difficulties they encountered as well as the tactics they used to fit changing circumstances. The purposive sampling was used to focus specific participants. Trustworthiness was to ensure quality of research. The results show themes of professional resiliency, digital exclusion, educational transformation, and post-pandemic thoughts. Implications for educational policy, teacher preparation, and digital equity are addressed to guide future readiness and systemic change.

Keywords: *Phenomenology, teacher experience, online teaching, educational technology, Pakistan, distance education, COVID-19*



Introduction

On a worldwide level, the COVID-19 pandemic transformed education by causing a quick move from conventional face-to-face instruction to virtual formats. This change presented severe problems in Pakistan because of weak digital infrastructure, unskilled teachers, and economic inequalities. This change meant for many instructors a deep transformation in their careers, educational identities, and emotional well-being, not only a technological modification.

The purpose of this study is to learn how teachers in Pakistan felt about the distance education delivery mechanism before and after the pandemic. It examines their lived experiences, including the initial disruption, adaptation processes, emotional reactions, and post-pandemic musings drawing on phenomenological research. Few have focused the voices of teachers as main agents of this educational change, even though several quantitative studies have evaluated the technological preparedness or academic results of online learning.

Developing equitable digital initiatives, successful teacher training courses, and appropriate educational policies depends on an awareness of these events. This study advances current understanding of instructor resilience, educational change, and the human elements of educational crises in poor nations.

Objectives of the Study

1. The objective of this study is to explore the lived experiences of public and private school teachers in Karachi during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. It focuses on the emotional, professional, and technological challenges they encountered while shifting to online teaching, as well as the strategies they adopted for pedagogical adaptation.
3. The study also examines how these experiences shaped their professional identity, resilience.
4. Well-being, while highlighting differences between public and private school contexts. Finally.
5. It aims to provide insights for teacher training, policy development, and digital preparedness in future educational crises.

Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the educational scene all throughout. Schools and universities had to shut down, therefore spurring a quick move to distance learning (UNESCO, 2021). Educators, especially in poor countries like Pakistan where technological infrastructure and pedagogical preparation were poor (Jena, 2020), faced particular problems and chances with this sudden change.

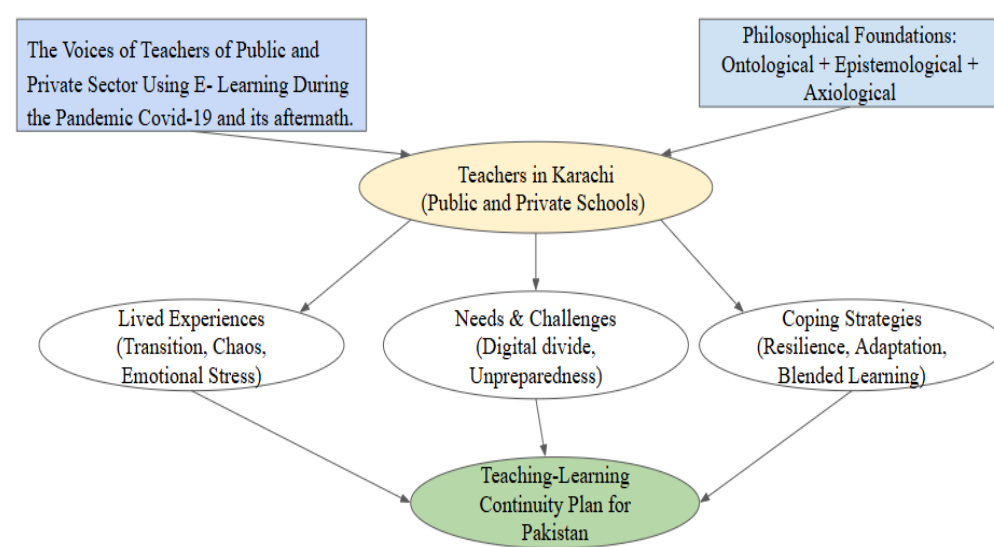
Though online learning had once been studied in several educational changes, the pandemic pushed it to prominence as a need rather than a choice (Dhawan, 2020). Coined to differentiate



this abrupt change from conventional online education, emergency remote teaching (ERT) refers to the temporary and improvised online presentation of instruction (Hodges et al., 2020). Unlike planned online learning, ERT frequently lacked teacher preparation, proper pedagogical design, and formal planning.

Digital access was among the most often recorded difficulties. In nations like Pakistan, differences in technological infrastructure greatly limited the effective distribution of internet instruction (Ali, 2020). Teachers sometimes lacked sufficient devices, internet access, and the technical support needed to teach online (Saeed et al., 2021). This digital divide particularly impacted teachers in public schools and rural areas.

Figure 1



Teachers who were not well-versed in digital tools also had to learn quickly to learning management systems, video conferencing systems, and digital resource creation (Bao, 2020). The lack of institutional support for professional growth made the problem worse. Many teachers, as Kim and Asbury (2020) point out, voiced frustration and powerlessness from insufficient instruction and direction.

Teachers had to reinvent their pedagogical approach to keep students interested and guarantee learning continuity when teaching through a screen (Reimers & Schleicher, 2020). The absence of physical presence changed classroom dynamics and limited the range of active learning, enquiry-based activities, and immediate feedback (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020).

Trust and Whalen (2020) found that teachers struggled greatly to change exams, encourage teamwork, and guarantee student motivation. Changing to student-cantered, technology-mediated techniques posed additional challenges in developing contexts where pedagogy often leans toward rote learning (Adnan & Anwar, 2020).

Teachers have felt a great emotional cost from the pandemic. Elevated levels of stress and burnout resulted from trying to balance home duties, caregiving, and remote teaching (Pressley,



2021). Teachers had to emotionally assist their students in addition to handling their own concerns about employment security and health.

MacIntyre et al. (2020) found that emotional Labor grew dramatically, with teachers frequently playing counsellor, tech fixer, and mentor. Female teachers especially those with household caregiving chores were disproportionately impacted (Fauzi & Khusuma, 2020).

The change to distance learning also changed instructors' professional identity. Originally based in face-to-face interactions, their role as facilitators, caregivers, and enforcers had to be reinterpreted (Beauchamp et al., 2021). Teachers had trouble with feelings of isolation, decreased self-efficacy, and lack of appreciation for their increased responsibilities (Bubb & Jones, 2020).

Some research, however, also stresses good changes. Teachers shown resilience, originality, and adaptability in discovering fresh approaches to engage with pupils and families (Bond, 2021). Particularly on social networking platforms, professional learning groups evolved as crucial support systems (Trust et al., 2020).

One major influence on how effectively teachers handled distance learning was institutional support. Strong digital infrastructure, active leadership, and teacher development systems helped schools and higher education institutions to better enable the change (Zhao et al., 2021).

In many public-sector institutions in Pakistan, nevertheless, teachers were left unsupported (Mukhtar et al., 2020) because of the lack of digital policies, ambiguous communication, and little leadership involvement. On the other hand, some private schools provided flexible schedules, online resources, and frequent training to ease the move (Khan et al., 2021).

School leaders' ability to help to define adaptation's culture and provide emotional support was very important. Distributed leadership and cooperation between teachers and school principals, as suggested by Harris and Jones (2020), boosted school resilience during the crisis.

Additionally changed the teacher-student relationship via distance education. Keeping students involved in virtual environments became a priority. Teachers frequently said that their pupils lacked discipline, motivation, and consistent attendance (Daniel, 2020).

Lack of space, shared gadgets, and household duties were challenges students from low-income households encountered (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). Teachers had to invent with WhatsApp lessons, voice messages, and asynchronous tools to fit these realities (Al Lily et al., 2020).

This absence of synchronous contact also hampered instructors' evaluation of learning outcomes or guarantee of academic integrity (Mseleku, 2020). Many times, dependent on student self-reporting or casual evaluations, teachers raised worries about the efficacy of distance learning.

Teaching methods were shaped still by the legacy of distance education as nations started to reopen schools. Even in conventional contexts, many instructors expressed interest in blended



learning models that include digital tools (Means et al., 2020). However, long-term policy support, resource allocation, and constant professional development remain crucial for purposefully integrating these modifications.

The National Education Policy of Pakistan must give teacher capacity-building for emotional well-being and digital literacy priority. Particularly about emergency preparedness, digital equality, and inclusive pedagogy (Khalid & Pedersen, 2021), teachers lived experiences during the pandemic provide useful lessons for policy formulation.

Any how some studies have thoroughly investigated the lived experiences of teachers in the Pakistani public education setting even if literature on remote learning during COVID-19 is expanding. Most studies concentrate on access of students, institutional preparedness, or overall online learning techniques (Soomro et al., 2021). In a phenomenological paradigm, one must comprehend teachers' emotional experiences, coping mechanisms, and professional difficulties.

Hope This study seeks to fill that gap by gathering the sophisticated views of instructors who negotiated distance education during and after the pandemic, therefore providing ideas for future crisis readiness and professional development.

Research Methodology

Research Strategies

Using a qualitative phenomenological research approach, this study seeks to investigate Pakistan's teachers' experiences providing distance education both during and after the COVID-19 outbreak. Moustakas (1994) defines phenomenology as a research method mostly concerned with learning how people interpret their life experiences in the world. It was picked to find out how instructors negotiated the technical, educational, and emotional changes brought on by the pandemic.

Table 1
Characteristic of the Participants

Characteristic	
Gender	
• Female	7
• Male	5
Age	26–40 years old
Educational Attainment	
Master's Level	5
Bachelor's Level	7
Position	English Teacher, Science Teacher, Math Teacher
School	
• Public School	6



• Private School	6
Teaching Experience	
2-5 years	3
6-10 years	6
11-15 years	3

The goal of using this approach was to get a thorough understanding of the personal experiences of instructors working in tough educational settings, particularly in the public education system in Karachi, rather than to extrapolate results. Research setting and Participants. The research was carried out in Karachi, among Pakistan's most populous and varied cities. There were 12 schoolteachers in the sample, 6 from public schools and 6 from private schools. All of them had been teaching online during the COVID-19 lockdowns and had started teaching in person again after the pandemic.

Criteria for participants:

- At least two years of teaching experience.
- Involved in distance teaching vigorously in 2020–2021.
- Resumed in-person teaching following COVID.
- Ready to engage in semi-structured interview.

Purposive sampling was used to choose participants to guarantee information-rich cases connected to the study question.

Research Methods

In-depth interviews that lasted for roughly 40-60 minutes were conducted in semi-structured ways, resulting in the gathering of data. Interviews were carried in Urdu or English according on the preference of the participant and were conducted in calm, cozy settings or over phone where in-person contact was not practical. Furthermore, concentrating on trustworthiness to guarantee credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, several techniques were used:

Member checking: For verification, participants were given transcripts and rising themes.

Peer debriefing included two qualitative researchers' examination of coding and theme creation.

- Thick description allowed findings to be transferable by means of contextual information.

Reflexivity: To bracket personal opinions, the researcher kept a research journal.

Data Analysis

Utilizing Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase method, thematic analysis was done:

1. Frequent transcript reading helps one become familiar with the information.
2. Producing first codes inductively from patterns and recurrent ideas.
3. Looking for themes that caught basic significance throughout several interviews.
4. Themes for internal coherence and consistency should be reviewed.



5. Identifying and naming themes that capture teacher lived experiences.
6. Writing the concluding report using quotations to preserve authenticity.

Both semantic (explicit) and latent (implicit) meanings were investigated to catch not just what teachers said but also what was implied about their values, stress sources, and coping strategies.

Ethical Considerations

Relevant academic review board gave ethical clearance. Participants were made aware of their rights, the voluntary nature of participation, and their right to leave whenever they wanted. Prior to gathering of data, informed consent was obtained. Pseudonyms were used to maintain privacy for identities.

Findings and Discussion

Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis approach was used to examine the information gathered from ten in-depth interviews. Six main themes that arose from the narratives of the participants group the results:

Theme 1: A Quick Shift Navigating the Chaos of Transition

Most respondents described the sudden shift to online instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic as "chaotic," "confusing," and "overwhelming." The switch was very challenging due to the absence of prior training, inadequate infrastructure, and ambiguous policies.

"We were simply instructed to begin online classes but how? No training; no explicit direction. It was like being thrown into deep water without knowing how to swim."

Teacher at Government School T-02

Many instructors from private schools reported marginally better preparation, yet they still battled with fitting teaching techniques to digital formats.

"We had Google Classroom, Zoom, everything. But instruction on screen is not identical. Children would not answer; it was as if speaking into a void".

Teacher at Private School, T-07.

This motif exposes how much each industry depended on teacher flexibility and lacked systematic readiness.

Theme 2: Technological challenges and the difficulty in Digital Divide

Teachers, notably in public schools, voiced great worry about the digital gap among pupils. Many pupils did not have access to internet, a mobile phone, or even electricity.

"Kachi abadis house some of my pupils. Mobile data and phones were beyond their parents' budget. Therefore, they merely quit."

(T-04, Governmental School Teacher)



On the other hand, private school teachers had more involvement yet remarked on the problems of digital exhaustion and lack of parental support as well.

"Students would turn off cameras, silence themselves, or simply go vanished. Parents were either employed or lacked understanding of the tech."

(T-06, Private School Instructor)

This division exacerbated socioeconomic disparities and profoundly affected the success of distance learning.

Theme 3: Teachers' Professional and Emotional Stress

A recurring subject was the emotional weight the teachers carried. Many cited anxiety, burnout, and helplessness. Particularly during lockdowns, many felt cut off and without help.

"Some days I wept following class. I had no way of knowing whether the pupils were present or were learning. It was isolated."

T-01, Teacher at a Government School.

Others found it difficult to remain professionally responsible while also juggling their own families.

While my children shouted outside, I was instructing in my room. My work-life balance was non-existent. It seemed like I was falling in both capacities.

(T-08, Teacher at Private School)

This emotional toll, together with inadequate institutional backing, had long-lasting effects on teacher morale and well-being.

Theme 4: Teacher–Student Relationship Redefined

One of the most profound challenges during distance education was the disruption of teacher–student relationships. Teachers reported feelings of disconnection, reduced motivation from students, and difficulty in maintaining classroom discipline in virtual settings.

"I could not see their faces, and most of the time, they kept the microphone off. I had no idea if they were even listening. It broke the bond I usually have with my students in class."

(T-04, Government School Teacher)

Private school teachers pointed to another shift in the relationship, student dependency on parents, which diluted the direct teacher–student connection.

"Some students became completely dependent on parents or siblings. I had to call them personally or send WhatsApp voice notes to make sure they were learning."

(T-09, Private School Teacher)

Theme 5: Assessment Challenges in Distance Education



One of the most persistent issues faced by teachers during online learning was the difficulty in ensuring fair and reliable assessment of students' knowledge. Teachers expressed concerns regarding cheating, plagiarism, and the reuse of test questions.

"Sometimes, I was not even sure if the student was answering the test or someone else was helping. This uncertainty made assessments unreliable." (T-05, Government School Teacher)

Private school teachers, on the other hand, pointed out the widespread practice of cheating, plagiarism, and grade inflation that undermined the credibility of assessments.

"Cheating became very common. Students copied homework from one another or directly from the internet. It was difficult to differentiate between original and copied work."

(T-09, Private School Teacher)

Theme 6: From Crisis to Establishment: Reflection and Resilience

Many participants said as results growth, resilience, and adaptation despite the difficulties. Teachers noted improved in-person teaching appreciation, better classroom management after the epidemic, and higher digital literacy.

"The epidemic forced me to develop. It was not all bad; now I even use online videos in face-to-face instruction."

(T-10, private school teacher)

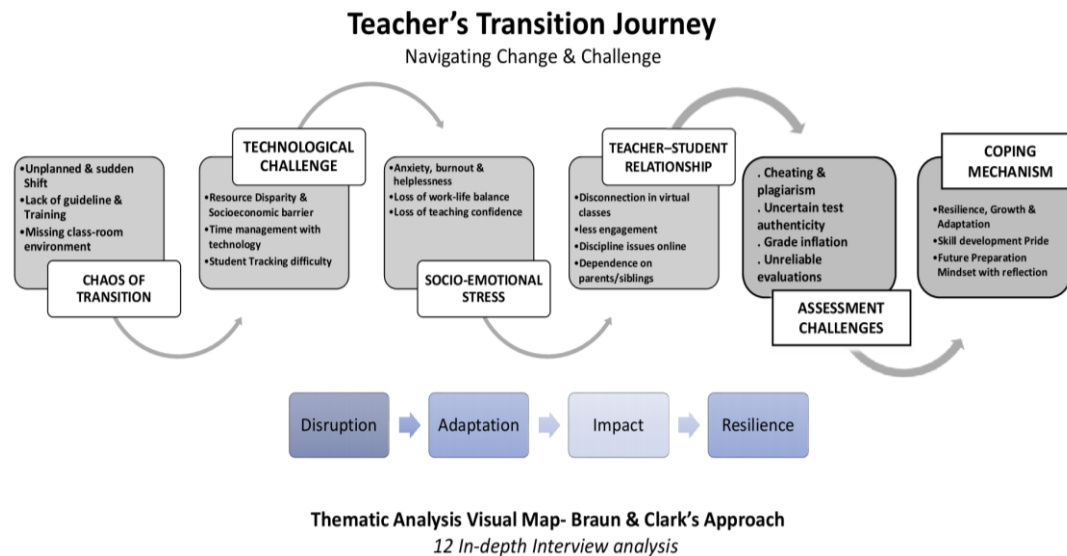
Public school instructors also considered the necessity for change.

"Things would have been better if we had adequate planning, training, and backing. I hope the government picks lessons from this."

(T-03, Government School Teacher)

These stories underscore teachers' ability to grow under duress and their wish for permanent change in education policy and practice.

Figure 2



Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The results mirror both global and context-specific problems. Although international studies (e.g., Reimers & Schleicher, 2020) point out comparable challenges in online transition and emotional burnout, the Pakistani scenario exposes severe infrastructure and digital inequalities especially in public schools.

The emotional experiences go along with phenomenological educational research (van Manen, 2016) highlighting the holistic realities of teaching involving not only knowledge conveyance but identity, compassion, and relational presence.

Teachers' resilience points to the need for post-pandemic professional development, particularly in digital pedagogy, emotional well-being, and hybrid learning approaches.

Conclusion

The lived experiences of teachers teaching distance education throughout and after the COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan's public and private educational systems were examined in this phenomenological investigation. The results show that instructors went through a complicated emotional and professional path defined by uncertainty, stress, and finally adaptation. The quick move to distant learning revealed institutional unpreparedness, a great digital divide, and a lack of systematic support—especially in the public sector. Still, some teachers showed fortitude, picked up new knowledge, and declared a dedication to better teaching methods despite all these difficulties.

The research showed that:

Teachers were mostly unprepared and unsupported during the transition to distance learning.

- Technological hurdles and unequal access greatly restricted student participation, especially in low-income areas.



- Widespread emotional exhaustion was made worse by separation and hazy boundaries between work and home.
- Teachers showed flexibility and called for changes in educational leadership, planning, and technological integration despite starting difficulties.

Though unsettling, the epidemic helped to spark a rethinking of more inclusive, resilient, and digitally ready education systems. As direct practitioners, teachers' voices should steer future educational policy and practice.

Recommendations

This study offers the following recommendations for policymakers, school leaders, and teacher training colleges based on the understanding gleaned from the participants:

Formalize Digital Pedagogy Education

Modules on thorough digital literacy and internet pedagogy must be included in teacher training programs for both pre-service and in-service teachers. These ought to be adjusted for different resource situations, including no-tech and low-tech ones.

Bridge the Digital Divide

Particularly for public schools and impoverished areas, infrastructure, equipment, and internet connectivity urgently call for investment. Collaboration between NGOs, the government, and the private sector might help to increase inexpensive digital access.

Create a National Distance Learning Policy.

One must create a clear, all-encompassing policy plan for hybrid and emergency education. It should cover:

- Approved tools and platforms for different educational grades.
- Minimum expectations for content delivery, teaching hours, and access.
- Protocols for emergency response for upcoming crises.

Address Teacher Well-being

Teachers' mental health has to come first by means of:

- Frequent counselling and wellness initiatives.
- Sensible hybrid or online workload distribution
- Adjustable working hours whenever feasible.

Utilize Teachers' Voices in Policy Making

For educational changes, teachers should be actively involved in design and feedback loops. Their firsthand knowledge during the epidemic places them among the most important stakeholders in future-proofing education systems.

Promote Post-Pandemic Blended Learning



Rather than giving up internet tools post-COVID, schools should integrate face-to-face and digital instruction in blended learning models. This improves adaptability and equips pupils and teachers for digital futures.

Perform Ongoing Research and Assessment

This research should act as a reference point for additional investigation into:

- Remote instruction's long-term effects on professional identity.
- Research comparing rural and metropolitan settings.
- Gender-based experiences in distance education implementation.

Future Direction and Limitation.

The study is limited to a smaller perspective, focus teachers on Karachi using purposive sampling. Focus on broader studies across different schools, provinces and educational levels gives a depth understanding. A longitudinal approach for future research also assesses how teachers post pandemic experiences continue to develop.



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