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## Challenges to Private School Teachers in Remote Areas of Pakistan During Pandemic: An Exploratory Study

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**Abstract:** *It was because of the worldwide lockdown, the COVID-19 had quite a significant impact on corporate organizations as well as the lives of millions of people. It had an impact on the supply chain as well. The impact of the COVID-19 period on educational systems and institutions was studied in this study. The purpose of this study is to provide an overview of the research conducted on primary school teachers working in private schools in remote areas of Pakistan. The research is based on quantitative analysis. The population of this study was 120 students from the education department of university students. The technique was simple and convenient because due to pandemics, it was not possible to collect data from individuals; data were collected through Google form. The results of this study articulated the challenges like lack of internet access, lack of administrative assistance and cooperation in Monterey terms, Parents complete absence in their children's studies. This study recommends that government should work on the private teachers in terms of incentives and professional development and take action for their professional development in remote areas.*

**Key Words:** Private School Teachers, Pakistan, Pandemic, COVID-19

### Introduction

The pandemic of Covid-19 has affected everyone and everything around the world in one way or the other. Schools and colleges were shut down globally to curtail the widespread of the disease. The education sector in the world, as well as in Pakistan, is working to counter the unexpected spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. About 188 countries closed their education institutes globally that led to over 1.60 billion children, unable to go to schools. The education system in Pakistan covers about 316,000 schools with 1.9 million teachers and almost 50 million enrolled students (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The system is further comprised of about 198,000 public schools and over 121,000 private schools. The private schools in Pakistan have about 40% of significant presence (in student enrolment and number of schools) both in remote and urban areas with different tiers of quality standards, according to ASER (2019) report. The greater part of private schools in Pakistan is low-cost schools that cater to the poor and middle-class families charging very low fees as below RS 2000. These

low-cost schools in Pakistan are producing better academic results as compared to public-sector schools, and there is a massive growth in low-cost private schooling.

### Rationale of the Study

The prolonged closure of education institutes due to the current pandemic has an immense impact on the already weak education system of Pakistan, for instance, learning gaps, mental, social or emotional well-being of teachers, parents and students. The education sector worldwide shifted towards online teaching because of lockdown. This evolution from face-to-face towards online teaching has been much difficult for Pakistan's low-cost private schools, as the low-income families lack the provision of internet access. This has deprived millions of children across the country of online education. The private education sector is especially in a greater crisis because of this prolonged closure of schools. The operational cost in private schools relies mostly on

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the revenue that is generated through tuition fees, as the government is providing no financial support to private institutes.

Moreover, the government has also imposed a discount of 20% on the fee of private schools because of lockdown, while most of the parents are unable to pay the school fee. According to the All Pakistan Private Schools Association (APPSF, 2020), only 20 to 30% of the fee is recovered that may lead to the permanent closure of schools as most of the private schools depend on tuition fees to pay utility bills, salaries of the teachers and monthly rents etc. This has influenced the private school teachers, and there is increased unemployment because of this prolonged lockdown. The Covid-19 has disrupted the economy and has a long-term impact on the education sector in Pakistan.

Covid-19 has been an overwhelming experience for all sorts of sectors on a global scale. It has affected the economy, the educational system, the transport system. In Pakistan, both public and private school teachers, students, parents and administrations encounter uncertain situations. Especially with reference to primary teachers from private sectors living in remote areas suffered very significantly, and nothing is done in favour of them. So this study poses questions of what challenges are faced by the primary school educators living in remote areas? How are you facing and coping with these professional challenges while living in remote areas? How much their administration is supporting them?

## Research Objectives

The objectives to conduct this research are

1. To present the overview of private schools teachers living in remote areas during COVID-19.
2. To analyze the challenges faced by the primary teachers in private schools of remote areas in Covid19
3. To explore the effects of a pandemic on primary school teachers in remote areas of Pakistan

## Research Questions

1. What are the challenges to the Private School teachers in Remote Areas of Pakistan during pandemics?

## Significance of the Study

Numerous studies were conducted for challenges to a public school teacher. Hereby, this research is conducted to evaluate challenges faced by private sector teachers at the primary level because primary schools are completely closed as compared to secondary and higher levels in Pakistan in particularly in remote areas where teachers face severe challenges.

## Literature Review

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected almost every country, but the first case was identified in Wuhan, China, at the end of December 2019. Many public care strategies have been implemented that can include wearing a mask, avoiding gathering, hand washing and maintaining physical distance ([Sintema, 2020](#)). In March of 2020, Bhutan was the first country which announces the closure of educational institutions and other business activities ([Kuensel, 2020](#)). The absolute lockdown was executed from August 2020 ([Palden, 2020](#)). The Educational activities due to this outbreak have been negatively affected. The pandemic has influenced the system of education all over the world, as the chief reason for the closure of Educational institutions (Wikipedia, 2020b). Due to COVID-19, Countries that have closed their education system include Italy, Iran, the USA, China, Pakistan, South Africa, Vietnam, Thailand, Germany, South Korea, Ethiopia, and many more stated only a few of them. The closure of schools have affected negatively not only the people of communities but have a severe negative impact on the individual and their families (UNESCO, 2020b). Online learning has played an important and critical role during this time of pandemic and has helped a student of schools and university to take advantage of learning even during lockdown ([Subedi et al., 2020](#)). The unexpected quick transition from the traditional classroom to the remote method of teaching has a amount of challenges with it ([Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020](#)) or 'emergency eLearning' ([Murphy, 2020](#)). The E-learning need to be carefully designed with instructional infrastructure and planning ([Hodges et al., 2020](#)).

On the 25<sup>th</sup> of February, Pakistan was detected with his Covid-19 case, and on the 29<sup>th</sup> of march first death case was reported ([Nafees & Khan, 2020](#)). In order to control the spread of this infectious disease, the Pakistan government took

some measures and imposed the lockdown thought out the country in March 2020. Different sectors of the country were affected by this virus and specifically the educational institutions. The mental health of students due to quarantine and jammed educational activities was adversely affected, which led to major causes for stress, anxiety and depression (Cao *et al.*, 2020). However, students started online learning by using different means such as Zoom, Google meet. Even before the pandemic, they were not at ease; however, they were still forced to use such platforms, which caused some behavioral and psychological issues (Anzar *et al.*, 2020). E-learning for students in well-developed countries is quite accessible because they have a well-developed infrastructure for online learning as they have the latest innovations. While in contrast, online learning in developing countries such as Pakistan have faced many difficulties as staff members and policymakers don't know how to change the difficulties in opportunities as they are not aware of advanced technologies (Farooq *et al.*, 2020). During a pandemic, the assessment has become difficult, but it is an integral part of teaching and learning as assessment help learning outcomes of students. There are many ways to assess the students, but due to ongoing pandemics, they have become limited in spite of multiple online platforms available, it's not possible to take reliable assessments or review (Khan & Jawaid, 2020).

As discussed earlier that Covid-19 has resulted in the permanent closure of millions of low-cost private schools globally. As in low-income countries, the low-cost private schools account for almost 25 percent of overall primary school enrolment, a great number of teachers and children will be affected. According to a recent survey in South Africa, over 1.5 million schoolchildren are at risk (United Nations, 2020). In Pakistan, more than 40 percent of children are studying at low-cost private schools that may result in millions of children without schools.

The closure of schools has left children without schools, teaches without salaries and schools without revenues. Even though schools can be able to overcome their debt and convince the teachers to return, it is still not sure whether the schools will remain solvent after reopening or not.

The Covid-19's social distancing measures will allow fewer children in schools, and enrollment may also drop as low-income families are struggling to afford the expenses during the pandemic. This will result in growing pressure on the public schools with growing rise in enrollment rates within few months (Anzar *et al.*, 2020). And if public schools will be unable to cater, it can reverse the progress that has been made for universal primary enrollment, perhaps for the first time in the modern history. During the pandemic, all educational institutes in the public sector halted their academic activities. However, the private schools in urban areas, especially high-fee schools continued their learning process through online systems such as online classes via Zoom, Google classroom, Moodle and even WhatsApp. There is likelihood that in urban areas, the schools will maintain social distancing through providing education via blended learning or online education. But the public and private schools in rural areas do not have access to the alternative systems to continue the academic and learning process (Yusuf, 2020).

The teaching staff at private schools in remote areas of Pakistan is negatively affected by the pandemic of Covid-19. The private schools are facing specific challenges to maintain their sustainability as well as coping with general issues faced by education systems in general. Millions of teachers and staff of private schools in remote areas of Pakistan have suffered from a great loss of income because of Covid-19, having almost no financial support from the government. In the KPK district, 50% of private school teachers have suffered a drop in salaries, whilst reports from other provinces recommend that the private teachers are getting very little or no income during the prolonged school closures. This has a huge impact on the livelihoods of the millions of private school teachers in Pakistan. Moreover, in the coming months, a great number of non-teaching staff and teachers will be laid off because of the permanent closure of many low-cost private schools in remote areas (ASER, 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has made it obvious that technologies alone are not the solution for overcoming the challenges to learning. The long-term learning gaps between students and teachers in remote areas have been highlighted during the pandemic period. Teachers of private schools in remote areas have faced different issues in online

teaching because of the existing limitations that are related to technological, pedagogical and social challenges.

First, technological issues are mostly related to the lack of electronic devices and Internet connectivity in remote areas (Faooq *et al.*, 2020). This challenge can increase inequalities because of uneven access to the technology needed by the teachers and students. Second, online learning has resulted in revising the pedagogical approaches that are used in face-to-face learning. The pedagogical patterns during the pandemic are different in virtual learning. The teacher has to act like a moderator in virtual classrooms as it is difficult to arrange lessons like physical classrooms. Teachers in remote areas are not properly trained to use digital skills for online

teaching. Third, one of the main issues of a pandemic is the lack of human interaction between teachers and students. Thus, human interaction is fundamental, especially for the students at the primary level, to learn from their teachers.

## Research Methodology

### Research Design

The research is based on quantitative analysis. It is illustrative and also exploratory. It is being examined for the query plan.

### Population

The population of this study was 120 teachers from the remote areas of Punjab, KPK, and Sindh, Balochistan.

**Table 1**

S. No	Areas	Genders	No of Participants
1.	Sindh	male/female	12
2.	KPK	male/female	37
3.	Punjab	male/female	40
4.	Balochistan	male/female	31
		Total	120

### Sampling Technique

The technique was simple and convenient because

due to pandemic, it was not possible to collect data from individuals, data was collected through Google form.

### Sample Size

**Table 2**

S. No	Areas	Population	sample	Percentage
1.	Sindh	12	10	83%
2.	Kpk	37	15	40%
3.	Punjab	40	30	75%
4.	Balochistan	31	27	87%
		120	82	

### Data Collection Tool

To conduct this research, A questionnaire comprising 12 statements has been used as a data collection tool. It has 12 closed ended questions and five levels have been given in the questionnaire.

### Data Analysis

In order to make the study meaningful the data collected was analyzed by using a simple percentage method.

## Results

**Table 3.** The Challenges of Private School Teachers in Remote Areas

S. No	Statement	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	No. of Responses	Total
1	I have all necessary pedagogical and technical skills to use digital devices for remote instruction.	48	48%	8%	25	100%
2	I have access to Internet in my area to provide remote instruction	36%	60%	4%	25	100%
3	I can use digital devices (e.g. laptop, desktop computer, portable tablets, smart phones etc.) to provide remote instruction.	52%	48%	0%	25	100%
4	I have sufficient time to prepare lessons that integrate digital devices for online teaching	60%	36%	4%	25	100%
5	My school has effective professional resources to learn how to use online collaborative learning tools.	60%	36%	4%	25	100%
6	Teachers are provided with support and incentives during the closure of schools.	92%	8%	0%	25	100%
7	I found that while online teaching, it was difficult to motivate the students.	56%	44%	0%	25	100%
8	I was able to communicate with students through digital platforms.	4%	84%	12%	25	100%
9	I was able to communicate with parents or guardians to ask for their help in students' distance learning activities.	8%	48%	44%	25	100%
10	I was able to keep track of the students' completion of online activities and assignments	40%	60%	0%	25	100%
11	I found that remote instruction was hindered by a lack of digital devices and Internet access among teachers.	72%	28%	0%	25	100%
12	I was provided with professional development activities that focused on providing remote instruction.	24%	76%	0%	25	100%

## Findings

- About 48% of the participants disagreed that they have access to digital devices, 44% agreed that they have easily approached digital devices for teaching and learning. However, about 8% were neutral about the availability of devices in remote areas. So the findings showed that private schools are not providing digital devices like laptops, computers, i-pads to teachers for online learning during pandemics. This challenge is also affecting teaching learning at primary levels, and private school teachers are unable to cope with this situation.
- About 36% of the participants agree that they have access to the internet, 60% disagree that they have access to internet. However, about 4% were neutral about the availability of access to internet in remote areas. So the finding provide that private schools are not providing internet access for online learning during pandemics. This challenge also effecting teaching learning at the primary level and private school teachers are unable to cope this situation.
- 48% participants were agree that they have all pedagogical and technical skills to use digital devices for online learning, 44% participants disagreed that they have all

pedagogical and technical skills for online learning, 8% were neutral about the pedagogical and technical skills for online learning. So the majority of the participants shows that they have all pedagogical and technical skills for online teaching.

- About 60% of the participants were agree that they have sufficient time to prepare lesson , 36% were disagree that they don't have sufficient time to prepare lesson and 4% were neutral about preparing the lesson. So majority of the participants were agree that that have sufficient time to prepare lesson.
- 60% of the participants were agree that they have effective professional resources to learn how to use online collaborative learning tools, 36% were disagree that they don't have professional resources for online collaborative learning tools. However 4% were neutral about the professional resources to learn how to use online collaborative learning tools. So the finding shows that private schools are providing professional resources for online learning.
- About 92% participants were agree that they are provided with incentives and support during closure of schools, 8% were disagree that they don't have provided incentives and support during closure of schools. So the finding provide that majority of the participants are agree that they have provided incentives and support during closure of schools.
- 92% participants were agree that they have an effective supporting and online learning platform is available for teachers, 8% of them were disagree with this statement. So the finding provide that majority of the participants are agree that they have provided an effective supporting and online learning platform.
- 56% of the participants were agree that it was difficult to motivate the students during online teaching,,44% were disagree with this statement that it was difficult to motivate students during online learning. So the majority shows that they don't have difficult to motivate students during online learning.
- About 4% participants were agree to communicate with parents and guardians

to help students during online learning, 48% were disagree that they don't have access to communicate with the parents and guardians during online learning. However 44% were neutral about the communication with parents during online learning. So the finding provide that majority of the participants were disagree that they can't communicate with parents during online learning.

- 40% of the participants were agree that they keep track of the students completion of online activities, 60% were disagree that they don't have keep the record of online activities and assignment during online learning. So the study show that majority of the participants were disagree with this statement.
- About 72% participants were agree that hindrance in lack of digital devices and internet access among students has taken , 28% were disagree with this statement statement. So the majority of the participants are agree that hindrance in lack of digital devices and internet.

24% participants were agree with the professional development activities, 76% were disagree that professional development activities provided in remote areas. So the majority shows that professional development activities were not provided in remote areas.

## Recommendations

- In distant places with a provision of internet access, the alternate answer is to use the radio-based mixed learning model using a radio network for student learning. This instruction can be implemented by working with teachers, students, and guardians on the community radio.
- In addition, teachers and students do mixed learning that integrates common knowledge with technology learning. The technology used in this situation is the radio.
- Teachers act as catalysts who guide individuals through education, and households are an incentive for students to study at their homes. They can freely use the community radio-based, dialogue-based blended learning approach to encourage critical awareness among



students and help generate transforming suggestions for student solutions to problems.

- The government should formulate action plans to overcome the challenges. The government should support the private schools to mitigate the most terrible economic impact of Covid-19.
- The leaders must examine the gravity of the difficulties and take remedial measures to improve the situation to control the drop-out rate of children at the primary level.
- Parents and government must help teachers working in remote areas at primary schools in terms of financial assistance.

## Conclusions

The shutdown of learning centers globally caused considerable distortions in the academic world, but unequal disruption to learning with significant interference in internal appraisals and qualification studies, amplified by a tampered education system, as demonstrated by the preference and penchant for even dubious foreign diplomats, all equally. However, it should be considered that COVID-19 encourages conversions to online education and developing nations such as Pakistan are ready to create a safe, dependable, and cost-effective online academic system. Whether it's an affair or an affair can be strongly impacted by the time, resources, and concerted efforts of the people in question. The study has investigated the influence of this pandemic issue on the educational process and the institutions' ways to provide learning through

different media. According to the report, people face major learning challenges and are looking for new ways of learning. Failure to provide training and assistance for students and teachers is also a major challenge for the system. The appropriate application of social distance and sanitation regulations will also raise the institutions' operational costs. Furthermore, the abrupt move to online learning would be challenging for countries and education authorities as the new method will be inadequate, with inadequate infrastructure and planning. Education institutions find it difficult to sustain operational costs and retain the pupils. Changes are needed to improve the system of education and the methods of institutions. To ensure continuity of learning and to exchange ideas with the students, the institutions are advised to utilize the technology and include students in learning. Teachers operate as facilitators who lead students through learning, and families act as a motivation to help pupils study at home. They can use the community radio-based mixed learning model freely and dialogue-based to promote student critical awareness and support the generation of transformative ideas for student solutions to real-world problems.

It is necessary to devise strategies at the government level, to overcome and face the technological, pedagogical, and social issues during the pandemic. It should be indicated by the government that all educational institutes both public and private schools integrate into their annual educational plans to offer systematic digital teaching training for their teachers. The Ministry of Education has already designed an official online teaching and learning portal.

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