



## Exploring Stress Coping Strategies of Primary School Teachers

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**Abstract:** *Stress at the workplace is unavoidable, but it is needed to be coped for ensuring emotional and physical health. The study explores the strategies for coping with stress among primary school teachers with varied demographic characteristics i.e. gender, locale, length of job experience, and academic and professional qualification. The sample of 315 (104 male, 211 female) primary school teachers was selected conveniently from the primary schools of tehsil Sargodha. Data was collected through a self-developed scale of stress coping strategy for primary teachers and analyzed through percentages, frequency, t-test and ANOVA. Male primary teachers use more strategies to cope with the stress as compared to the female. Teachers of various levels of academic qualifications used more strategies to cope with the stress, while no variation was found on the bases of locality, professional qualifications and experience were found. School Education Department is recommended to arrange guidance and counseling programs for teachers to use better stress coping strategies.*

**Key Words:** Stress Coping Strategy, Primary School Teachers

### Introduction

Life in the workplace environment is mostly associated with high levels of stress, which hampers the social and emotional well-being of the employees, causing burnout ([Candeias et al., 2021](#)). Besides personal emotional and cognitive losses, it decreases the ability to think clearly and decide and ultimately leads to decreased efficiency of the system (Hansen & Sullivan, 2003). As explained by [Obi and Obi \(2007\)](#) that stress is a feature of the standard human livelihood framework. This is an essential part of mastering new skills and patterns. [Okeke & Dlamini \(2013\)](#) observed

stress as "the inadequacy of one's mental and physical coping with environmental disorders." Occupational stress is now one of the costly issues of occupational health. Many workplace stress studies have revealed a variety of administrative influences that are effective in producing stress ([Sutherland & Cooper, 2000](#)).

Professional and financial liabilities of the person cannot be waved off, but they need effective stress management skills to keep a balance between liabilities, personal health and happiness for being productive. Factors causing stress are different in varied age groups, types and levels of job, targets, available resources

and cultural norms of the region. There is no universal solution for all organizations. When people are stressed, they take different ways to deal with it because they cannot keep up with the constant pressure. This is termed coping, which is nothing but a way of coping.

Teaching is one of the stressful careers, involving several fundamental deviations occurring in the system of formal education on a daily basis. These deviations are probable to intensify the level of stress in teachers. Working for a teacher becomes more complicated when there is insufficient accommodation, increased syllabus and congested teaching space (Shukla, 2008). Challenges and pressures in educational institutions arise due to increasing demands from students and administration on a daily basis, which leads a teacher towards stressful conditions (Clipa & Boghean, 2015).

Teachers are considered to have a fundamental role in attaining overall progress and school goals. There are many problematic situations for primary teachers in Pakistan where only a small fraction of GPD is allocated for education (Farooq, 2018). Several factors contribute to mounting stress for them. They receive pay but are not sufficient to fight with the day-to-day dearness and family needs. They face many stresses due to administrative structure, scarce resources, working environment, community demands, and their accountability based on students' academic performance in terms of grades. It is necessary to find out how they cope with all such stresses. Hence, it is sensed to study the strategies of primary school teachers in coping with stress.

## Objectives

It was planned to explore strategies used by primary school teachers to cope with the stress. To carry out the study, the following research questions were probed.

- i. What types of stress coping techniques are being used by teachers of primary schools?
- ii. What types of stress coping techniques are used by male and female primary school teachers?

- iii. What types of stress coping techniques are used by the urban and rural primary school teachers?
- iv. Were there any differences in coping techniques on the basis of experiences and academic and professional qualification?

## Research Methodology

In this exploratory research data collection technique was a survey. Because of limited time and finance, the study was conducted only in District Sargodha. The population was all male and female teachers teaching in government Primary Schools within district Sargodha.

Among the six, Tehsil Sargodha was selected purposively because the number of Primary schools is larger as compared to any other Tehsil in the district. At the first stage of sampling, 50% of the population of 550 government primary schools, and 250 Government Primary schools, including 125 boys and 125 girls schools, were selected randomly from the list of schools taken from the website of the Punjab School Education Department. In the second stage, from these selected Primary schools, one male teacher and two female teachers were selected conveniently on the basis of their availability on the day of data collection.

After a review of the literature and a study of available research instruments, stress coping strategies scale with a five-point Likert scale was developed with eleven factors. It has 39 items, in which 5 statements were related to 'Growth and Positive Reinterpretation', 2 statements were related to each factor, i.e 'Religion', 'Humor', 'Mental Disengagement', 'Focus on Venting Emotions', and 'Seeking instrumental reasoning social support for'. Three statements were related to each factor 'emotional reasoning seeking social support', 'Planning', 'Acceptance', 'Denial' and 'Restraint Coping'. The scale was made bilingual (Urdu and English languages). The expert opinion was taken from five PhD faculty members from the Department of Education, the University of

Sargodha, to check the content as well as face validity and difficulty level and sentence structure in both English and Urdu. After incorporating the expert suggestions, the instrument was pilot tested on 100 primary school teachers other than the sample. The reliability coefficient Cronbach Alpha was 0.79 which was appropriate. Data were collected from selected schools through a personal visit. The collected data was analyzed through percentages, frequency and t-tests.

### Review of Related Literature

In a formal school environment, Teachers are also taken as the stressor for the students and colleagues, but they are influenced by the organization of modern education and the stressors of daily activities ([Hepburn & Brown, 2001](#)). The most important thing is that teachers ought to use appropriate strategies to cope with stress, specific to their personalities. Everyone responds differently to stressors. Researching and practicing alternate coping strategies is important to help each individual. This allows teachers to be more objective, motivated and transparent about their abilities ([Bachkirova, 2005](#)).

Coping means tolerating negative events or realities or adjusting to such situations along with trying to maintain a self-positive image and equilibrium in emotions. Coping is with respect to stressful changes in life.

Coping is a struggle to prevent or diminish a threat or harm in reducing the distress that is often associated with the complications. The way a teacher handles stress in the school functioning can influence the results of stress and its biological responses to psychological well-being ([Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999](#)). Sources for coping activities may be material, social, psychological and physical factors that are helpful for teachers to overcome stressors at work and achieve valuable results with students ([Easthope, & Easthope, 2007](#)).

There are several stress coping strategies because of the situation and the way the stressors play their role. These strategies may be categorized as proactive, active coping, anticipatory coping, escaping, denying the

problem or feelings, withdrawal, self-regulation, religious support and emotional exhaustion ([Blum, Brow, & Silver, 2012](#)). Coping with a level of stress is much needed for teachers because their stress not only interferes with the attainment of their goals of education but also hampers the better quality of personal and professional life ([Austin, Shah, Muncer, 2005](#)). Literature supports some work-focused stress coping strategies like role clarity, organization of time and allocation, exploration for more information and assistance with direct work and cooperative work strategies. Role clarity refers to the clarifications to employees required from their supervisors when faced with uncertain job assignments. Another way to deal with stress is managing time effectively with knowledge through learning to plan better to do more skillful work.

Teachers face both role-based and task-based stress. Role-based stress arises due to a lack of ample ways and means to perform well, which indicates teachers' expectations of their role are reconciled with job responsibilities related to the task. Stress relevant to task mentions the problems linked with the types of particular tasks that teachers have to accomplish during their teaching ([Asaloei, Wolomasi, & Werang, 2020](#)) e.g. coping with disruptive students. Stress during the teaching process is mediated by institutional factors related to the expected functions of teachers. Institutional factors creating stress for teachers may be inappropriate time division, overwork, unrealistic goals, and pressure of inspection techniques ([Hepburn & Brown, 2001](#)).

General positive strategies adopted by teachers to reduce stress include meditation, movement, entertainment, avoidance, social resources and exercise ([Garland, & Gaylord, Fredrickson, 2011](#)). All of these coping strategies that teachers utilize can upset the perspective of the situations and change their stress insights ([Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999](#)). To struggle in facing stress, two strategies i.e. external or internal strategies to cope with stress, can be used by teachers. External lines of attack likes exercise, seeking

transplantation, distraction, and movement. Internal ways, for example, focusing on the slight things in the form of stimulus around him, comprise focus and inertia ([Gulwadi, 2006](#)). Though many usual strategies to cope with stress are present, teachers mostly depend on suppression, active planning, experiences, social support, curative and competition.

Social connections and emotional expression with coworkers tend to decrease the influence of stress on job satisfaction, teacher fitness and risk of bodily disease. Teachers communicate with friends and coworkers to receive counseling, express feelings, emotional support, empathy and understand the mental state. Personally and socially active teachers feel less stress in the workplace ([Griffith et al., 1999](#)). They further described that proper planning to carry out the usual workload permits teachers to focus on their work and not feeling of stressed. Active planning includes focused hard work, formulating plans, doing actions, and strategies, taking steps and doing what needs to be done to keep students focused rather than stressed ([Griffith et al., 1999](#)). Teachers cope with stress by releasing their emotional exhaust some time out of the school in the places like homes, market spaces, tea cafes and prayer places where they are more relaxed and they are listened to by others ([Gulwadi, 2006](#)). Withdrawal from the work and social activities is also an observed phenomenon in teachers' community at their workplaces which leads to isolation, postponing friends and family events and lots of happy moments in schools ([Ostovar-Nameghi, & Sheikahmadi, 2016](#)). Some teachers may have disputes with their colleagues due to the displaced anger effect of the long-term persistent stress. Consequently, procrastination from academic and professional responsibilities leads to low productivity in curricular jobs, a sense of low confidence and powerlessness ([Griffith, Steptoe, & Croypley, 1999](#)).

[Bhui et al. \(2016\)](#) found that dynamic management plans and promotion of health

behaviors helped instructors in reduction of stress in a job for bodily well-being. In this concern, consultation from relevant organizations, doctors and educational experts is needed ([Holeyannavar & Itagi 2009](#)). Administrators of organizations can take programs and initiatives of stress management as an investment to minimize medical expenses for the illness grieved by stress and absenteeism and improve employees' retention ([Grimshaw, 2004](#)).

[Montgomery and Rupp \(2005\)](#) identified two main strategies to cope with stress which are active and passive approaches. The active approach or method was of psychological traits (rational avoidance, self-control and change in attitude). Ways of doing things (attending relaxing exercises, asking for advice and setting boundaries of duty and emotional ways (positive thinking, quiet and calm). On the other side, passive methodology such as being astonishing, fantasizing, resignation and drinking are four-sided dimensions that are characterized by inaction with an adverse incident. [Hemmings and Hockley \(2002\)](#) described stress-facing approaches including relaxation, communication with others, better relationships with the organization and participation in sports etc. Recreation and rest simultaneously reduce stress and improve living standards and have a clear impact on self-care (regular exercise, 08 Hours of daily sleep, maintaining a strict diet, using relaxation as stress-reducing techniques to enhance the quality of life).

There are wide-ranging strategies that might be utilized to manage workplace stress. These include interventions aimed at changing the human relationship of an individual with the association. Broadly there addressed generally comprehensive goals of stress managing tools i.e. deterrence by controlling risks by designing and training workers to decrease the probability of stress employees, responding in an appropriate manner to recover managers' aptitude to meet them and dealing with problems when they occur.

## Data Analysis and Results

**Table 1.** Positive Reinforcement and Growth

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
My feeling is that I learnt something good from a stressful experience	81 25.7%	96 30.5%	77 24.4%	58 18.4%	3 1.0%	315 100%	3.62	1.08
I always see positive aspects in a problematic situation.	91 28.9%	77 24.4%	17 5.4%	111 35.2%	19 6.0%	315 100%	3.35	1.3
I avoid all the activities to cope with the stressful situation.	108 34.3%	139 44.1%	29 9.2%	38 12.1%	1 0.3%	315 100%	4.00	0.9
I do what has to be done in stressful situation.	72 22.9%	159 50.5%	66 21.0s%	18 5.7%	0 0%	315 100%	3.90	0.8
I post pond all other activities and fully concentrate on how to cope with the situation.	156 49.5%	88 27.9%	42 13.3%	26 8.3%	3 1.0%	315 100%	4.17	1.01
Total %age of factor	508 32.2%	559 35.5%	231 14%	251 16%	26 8.0%	1575 100%	3.8	1.01

Table 1 shows the reflection of the factor "Positive reinforcement and growth," which had 5 items. Many of the (56.5%) primary school teachers (with  $M = 3.62$  and  $SD = 1.08$ ) stated that they acquired something good from the stressful experience. Many (53.3%) of primary school teachers (with  $M = 3.35$  and  $SD = 1.3$ ) had views that they always see positive aspects in a problematic situation. The majority (78.4%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M = 4.00$  and  $SD = 0.9$ ) agreed that they put aside all other activities in order to cope with a stressful situation. The majority of (73.4%) primary teachers (with  $M = 3.90$  and  $SD = 0.8$ )

agreed that they do what has to be done in a stressful situation. The majority (77.4%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M = 4.17$  and  $SD = 1.01$ ) agreed that they postpone all other activities and concentrate on coping with the situation. The overall percentage of the responses (67.5%) shows that many of primary school teachers' perception regarding (with  $M = 3.8$  and  $SD = 1.01$ ) of respect to positive reinforcement and growth as a coping strategy was high. The overall trend is that majority (67.5%) of teachers use positive reinforcement technique of stress coping but handsome number of teachers do not use this technique.

**Table 2.** Seeking Social Support for Emotional Reasoning

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I get advice from my family to cope with stress	157 49.8%	117 37.1%	29 9.2%	12 3.8%	0 0.0%	315 100%	4.33	1.01
I talk to someone about what I feel during stress	112 35.6%	161 51.1%	21 6.7%	21 6.7%	0 0.0%	315 100%	4.16	0.7
I spend more time with my family during stress	73 23.2%	186 59.0%	23 7.3%	31 9.1%	2 0.6%	315 100%	3.94	0.8
Total %age of factor	342 36.1%	464 49%	73 7.7%	64 6.3%	2 0.6%	945 100%	4.14	0.8

Table 2 shows the reflection of factor “Seeking social support for emotional reasoning” which had 3 items. Many of (86.9%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.33$  and  $SD = 1.01$ ) agreed that they get advice from their family to cope with a stressful situation. The majority (86.7%) of primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.17$  and  $SD = 0.7$ ) showed agreement that they talk with someone to cope with stress. The majority (82.2%) of the primary teachers (with  $M= 3.97$  and  $SD = 0.8$ ) agreed that they spend more

time with their families to cope with stress. The overall percentage of the responses to this factor was that majority of (85%) the primary teachers (with  $M= 4.14$  and  $SD = 0.8$ ) shows that teachers' perception regarding the level of stress due to seeking social support for emotional reasoning was high. The overall trend is that the majority (85%) of primary teachers use seeking social support techniques of stress coping.

**Table 3.** Planning Technique

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I do direct action to dispose of the situation	113 35.9%	80 25.4%	26 8.3%	84 26.7%	12 3.8%	315 100%	3.63	1.3
I make some strategy about what to do with the problem.	108 34.3%	117 37.1%	33 10.5%	52 16.5%	5 1.6%	315 100%	3.65	1.2
I think about how I could best handle the problematic situation.	123 39.0%	156 49.5%	10 3.2%	26 8.3%	0 0%	315 100%	3.86	1.1
Total %age of each response	344 41%	353 45%	69 4%	162 9%	17 1.0%	945 100%	3.71	1.2

Table 3 shows the reflection of the factor "planning" which had 3 items. Many of (61.3%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.63$  and  $SD = 1.3$ ) stated that they took direct action in order to dispose of the situation. The majority (71.4%) of primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.65$  and  $SD = 1.2$ ) had the view that they made some strategy for coping with stress. The majority of (88.5%) primary teachers (with  $M= 3.86$  and  $SD = 1.1$ ) agreed that they think

about how they could best handle the problematic situation. The overall percentage of the responses to this factor was the majority of (86%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.71$  and  $SD = 1.2$ ) shows that teachers' perception regarding the use of coping strategies was high. The overall trend is that the majority (86%) of teachers use Planning technique of stress coping.

**Table 4.** Religious Support

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I think about how I could best handle the problematic situation.	123 39.0%	156 49.5%	10 3.2%	26 8.3%	3 1.0%	315 100%	4.19	0.8
I read Holy Quran in a stressful situation.	127 40.3%	138 43.8%	32 10.2%	16 5.1%	2 0.6%	315 100%	4.18	0.8
Total %age of factor	250 41%	294 45%	42 4%	42 4%	5 1.0%	630 100%	4.17	0.8

Table 4 shows the reflection of the factor "religious support," which had 2 items. Most of (88.5%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.19$  and  $SD = 0.8$ ) stated that they prayed

more than usual to cope with stress. The majority of (84.1%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.18$  and  $SD = 0.8$ ) agreed that they read Holy Quran in a stressful situation. The

overall percentage of the responses to this factor shows that the majority (86%) of primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.17$  and  $SD = 0.8$ ) show that teachers' perception

regarding the use of religious activities for coping with stress was high. The overall trend is that the majority (86%) of teacher uses religious support technique of stress coping.

**Table 5.** Acceptance Technique

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I accept the stressful situation.	74 23.5%	136 43.2%	60 19.0%	39 12.4%	6 1.9%	315 100%	3.74	1.01
I accept the reality that it happens.	78 24.8%	149 47.3%	57 18.1%	31 9.8%	0 0%	315 100%	3.87	0.8
I accept that it has happened and cannot change.	109 34.6%	135 42.9%	20 6.3%	21 6.7%	30 9.5%	315 100%	3.86	1.2
Total %age of factor	261 41%	420 45%	137 4%	91 9%	36 1.0%	945 100%	3.82	1.03

Table 5 shows the reflection of the factor "acceptance" which had 3 items. The majority of (66.7%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.74$  and  $SD = 1.01$ ) stated that they accept the stressful situation. The majority (72.1%) of primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.87$  and  $SD = 0.8$ ) agreed that they accept the fact that it happened. The majority of the (77.5%) primary teachers (with  $M= 3.86$  and  $SD = 1.2$ ) agreed

that they accept that it has happened and cannot be changed. The overall percentage of the responses to this factor was that the majority (86%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.82$  and  $SD = 1.03$ ) showed that teachers' perception regarding level of stress due to acceptance was high. The overall trend is that the majority (86%) of teachers use the acceptance support technique of stress coping.

**Table 6.** Mental Disengagement

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I concentrate on work or other activities to take my mind out of things.	131 41.6%	131 41.6%	59 18.7%	26 8.3%	0 .0%	315 100%	4.06	0.9
I watch TV and movies to cope with a stressful situation.	65 20.6%	65 20.6%	50 15.9%	55 17.5%	7 2.2%	315 100%	3.63	1.06
Total %age of each response	196 31.1%	131 37.6%	59 17.3%	81 12.9%	7 1.1%	630 100%	3.84	0.9

Table 6 shows the reflection of the factor "mental disengagement," which had 2 items. The majority of (74%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.06$  and  $SD = 0.9$ ) agreed that they concentrate on work or other activities to take their mind out of the thing. The majority (64.4%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.63$  and  $SD = 1.06$ ) were of the view that they watched TV and movies to cope with a stressful situation. The overall percentage of

the responses to this factor was that The majority (68.7%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.84$  and  $SD = 0.9$ ) show that teachers' perception regarding mental disengagement as coping strategy was high. The overall trend is that majority (68.7%) of teachers use the mental disengagement technique of stress coping while a handsome number of teachers do not use this technique.

**Table 7.** Focus on Venting Emotions

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
When I get troubled, I let my emotions out.	84 26.7%	108 34.3%	73 23.2%	47 14.9%	3 1.0%	315 100%	3.71	1.04
I feel emotional distress and I try to express my feelings to others	66 21.0%	156 49.5%	28 8.9%	49 15.6%	16 5.1%	315 100%	3.66	1.1
Total %age of each response	150 41%	264 45%	101 4%	96 9%	19 1.0%	630 100%	3.68	1.07

Table 7 shows the reflection of the factor "Focus on venting emotions which had 2 items. Many of (61%) primary school teachers (with  $M=3.71$  and  $SD = 1.04$ ) stated that when they get disturbed, they let their emotions out in a stressful situation. The majority (70.5%) of primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.66$  and  $SD = 1.1$ ) had a view that they felt emotional distress and they tried to express their feelings

to others. The overall percentage of the responses to this factor was that the majority of (86%) primary school teachers (with  $M=3.68$  and  $SD = 1.07$ ) shows that teachers' perception regarding the use of focus on venting emotions was high. The overall trend is that the majority (86%) of teachers use the technique of focusing on venting emotions to cope with stress.

**Table 8.** Denial Technique

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I pretend that stress has not really happened	69 21.9%	100 31.7%	81 25.7%	64 20.3%	1 0.3%	315 100%	3.55	1.05
I imagine that stress is not there	72 22.9%	110 34.9%	29 9.2%	75 23.8%	29 9.2%	315 100%	3.38	1.3
I refuse to believe that stress has an accord.	64 20.3%	107 34.0%	32 10.2%	107 34.0%	5 1.6%	315 100%	3.37	1.1
Total %age of factor	205 21.7%	317 33.5%	142 15.3%	246 26.3%	35 3.7%	945 100%	3.43	1.15

Table 8 shows the reflection of the factor "denial" which had 3 items. Many of the (53.6%) primary school teachers (with  $M=3.55$  and  $SD = 1.05$ ) agreed that they pretend that stress has not really happened, while 26% of the teachers showed an undecided response. The majority (57.8%) of primary school teachers (with  $M= 3.38$  and  $SD = 1.3$ ) agreed that they pretend that stress does not really exist. Many of (54.2%) primary teachers (with

$M= 3.37$  and  $SD = 1.1$ ) refused to believe that stress has accord. The overall percentage of the responses to this factor was that many (55.2%) of the teachers (with  $M= 3.43$  and  $SD = 1.15$ ) showed that teachers' perception regarding denial level for the use of coping strategies was high. The overall trend is that the majority (55%) of teachers use the denial technique of for coping with stress. But handsome teachers do not use this technique.



**Table 9.** Restraint Coping Technique

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f (%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I wait for the precise time to do something in a stressful condition.	144 45.7%	140 44.4%	19 6.0%	12 3.8%	0 0.0%	315 100%	4.32	0.7
I leave the stressful situation up to the time.	132 41.9%	145 46.0%	20 6.3%	18 5.7%	0 0.0%	315 100%	4.24	0.8
I try not to make matters worse by early action.	151 47.9%	124 39.4%	24 7.6%	16 5.1%	0 0.0%	315 100%	4.30	0.8
Total %age of each response	427 45.1%	409 43.2%	63 6.6%	46 4.8%	0 0.0%	945 100%	4.28	0.7

Table 9 shows the reflection of the factor "restraint coping" which had 3 items. The majority of (90.1%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.32$  and  $SD = 0.7$ ) stated that they force themselves to wait for the right time to do something in stressful condition. The majority (87.9%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.24$  and  $SD = 0.8$ ) agreed that they leave the stressful situation up to the time. The majority of the (87.3%) primary teachers (with

$M= 4.30$  and  $SD = 0.8$ ) agreed that they try not to make matters worse by early actions. The overall percentage of the responses to this factor was that the majority (88%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M= 4.28$  and  $SD = 0.7$ ) showed that teachers' perception regarding the use of restraint coping in coping strategies was high. The overall trend is that the majority (88%) of teachers use restraint techniques for coping with stress.

**Table 10.** Humor Technique

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I make fun of the situation for relaxing	32 10.2%	37 11.7%	33 10.5%	188 59.7%	25 7.9%	315 100%	2.57	1.1
I laugh about the stressful situation	33 10.8%	25 7.9%	47 14.9%	157 49.8%	53 16.8%	315 100%	2.45	1.1
Total %age of each response	65 10.5%	62 9.8%	80 12.7%	345 54%	78 12.3%	630 100%	2.51	1.1

Table 10 shows the reflection of the factor "humor" which had 2 items. Many of the (68%) primary school teachers (with  $M= 2.57$  and  $SD = 1.1$ ) stated that they do not make fun of the situation to relax. Many (66%) of primary school teachers (with  $M= 2.45$  and  $SD = 1.1$ ) disagreed with the statement that they make laughed about the stressful situation. The overall percentage for the factor humor was

that many (71.6%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M= 2.51$  and  $SD = 1.1$ ) responded that teachers do not favor the use of humor as a coping strategy. The overall trend is that the majority (66%) of teachers do not use humor techniques for coping with stress. But a handsome number of teachers use this technique.

**Table 11.** Seeing Social Support

Statements	SA f(%)	AG f(%)	UND f(%)	DA f(%)	SDA f(%)	Total f(%)	Mean	SD
I get help from the seniors in stressful matter	82 26.0%	145 46.0%	23 7.3%	55 17.5%	10 3.2%	315 100%	3.74	1.1
I talk to someone who could do something concrete about the problem	135 42.9%	131 41.6%	19 6.0%	26 8.3%	4 1.3%	315 100%	4.17	1.1
Total %age of each response	217	276	42	81	14	630	3.9	1.1

34.4%	43.8%	6.65%	12.9%	2.20	100%
					%

Table 11 shows the reflection of the factor "Seeing of social support for instrumental reasoning," which had 2 items. The majority (72%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M=3.74$  and  $SD=1.1$ ) agreed that they got help from the seniors in the stressful matter. The majority (84.5%) of primary school teachers (with  $M=4.17$  and  $SD=1.1$ ) agreed that they talk to someone who could do something

concrete about the problem .The overall percentage of the responses to this factor showed that the majority (78%) of the primary school teachers (with  $M=3.9$  and  $SD=1.1$ ) teachers' perception regarding the use of seeing social support for instrumental reasoning was high. The overall trend is that the majority (78%) of teachers use social support techniques for coping with stress.

**Table 12.** Gender-based Comparison of Stress Coping Strategies Primary Teachers

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T-value	df	p-value
Male	104	117.47	11.24	4.23	313	.000
Female	211	111.71	11.39			

Table 12 shows that there was a significant difference between primary teachers' coping strategies as indicated by a t value of 4.23 with  $df=313$  and p value  $.000 < .05$ . The greater

mean score of 117.47 showed that male teachers used better coping strategies as compared to the female primary school teachers (mean score 111.71).

**Table 13.** Gender-based Comparison of Types of Coping Strategies Primary Teachers

Factor	Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	P-value
F1-Positive Reinterpretation and Growth	Male	104	20.11	3.04	3.83	313	.000
	Female	211	18.51	3.66			
F3- Planning	Male	104	10.56	3.62	2.16	313	.040
	Female	211	11.43	3.18			
F5- Accept	Male	104	12.03	1.97	2.87	313	.004
	Female	211	11.20	2.60			
F8-Denial	Male	104	11.35	2.94	5.36	313	.000
	Female	211	9.79	2.11			
F9- Restraint Coping	Male	104	13.38	1.23	3.282	313	.001
	Female	211	12.61	2.26			
F9- Humor	Male	104	5.99	2.26	6.214	313	.000
	Female	211	4.54	1.77			

Table 13 shows the variation in stress management strategies adopted by male and female teachers. The table shows the analysis of the factors where there was a significant difference. The analysis reflected that male and female teachers don't adopt the same stress

coping strategies. Female teachers adopt more planning tools ( $t=2.16$ ,  $df=313$ ,  $p=0.04$ ) to manage stress in their professional life as compared to males. The male teachers are better at adopting a variety of stress management strategies. Male teachers mostly

adopt Positive Reinterpretation and Growth ( $t=3.38$ ,  $df=313$ ,  $p= 0.00$ ), Accepting the Presence of Stress ( $t=2.87$ ,  $df=313$ ,  $p= 0.04$ ), Deny / ignore of its impacts ( $t=5.36$ ,  $df=313$ ,  $p= 0.00$ ), restraint coping ( $t=3.282$ ,  $df=313$ ,  $p= 0.001$ ) and humor ( $t=6.214$ ,  $df=313$ ,  $p= 0.00$ ) as compared to female teachers.

**Table 14.** Locality based Comparison of Stress Coping Strategies Primary Teachers

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value
Rural	175	113.98	11.12	.625	313	.533
Urban	140	113.15	12.30			

Table 14 shows that no significant difference was found between urban and rural primary school teachers' stress coping strategies, as indicated by t value .625 with  $df = 313$  and p value .533 > .05. It means both rural and urban primary school teachers use the same stress coping strategies.

**Table 15.** ANOVA for Stress Coping Strategies of Primary School Teachers with Academic Qualification

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1407.894	2	703.94	5.331	.005
Within Groups	41200.627	312	132.05		
Total	42608.521	314			

Table 15 shows the comparison of stress coping strategies of primary school teachers with respect to an academic qualification. F value (5.331) and p-value was .005 i.e. less than 0.05, showed a significant difference in strategies to cope with stress among primary school teachers with different academic qualifications. To find out the difference in occupational stress of primary teachers, a post hoc test was run and offered in table 15.

**Table 16.** Differences in Stress Coping Strategies among Primary Teachers with Different Academic Qualifications

(I) Qualification	(J) Qualification	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
BA/ B. Sc	MA/ M. Sc	3.51	1.58	.02
	M. Phil	6.05	1.87	.001
MA/ M. Sc	M. Phil	2.54	1.61	.117

Table 16 shows only significant results. The mean difference value of 3.51 shows that primary teachers with BA / B.Sc qualification use better stress coping strategies than the teachers with the qualification of MA / M. Sc and also than M. Phil qualified teachers (Mean difference =6.05). Similarly, Mean difference value 2.54 shows that primary teachers with MA / M.Sc qualification use better stress coping strategies than the teachers with M. Phil qualification. The trend shows that primary teachers with lower qualification use better stress coping strategies than higher qualified teachers.

**Table 17.** ANOVA for Stress Coping Strategies of Primary School Teachers with Varied Professional Qualification

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	408.69	2	204.34	1.511	.222
Within Groups	42199.83	312	135.25		
Total	42608.52	314			

Table 17 shows the comparison of stress coping strategies with respect to professional qualification. F value (1.511) and p-value was .222 i.e. greater than 0.05 shows no significant

difference of stress coping strategies among primary teachers with different professional qualifications.

**Table 18.** ANOVA for Stress Coping Strategies of Primary School Teachers with Varied Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	246.629	2	123.314		
Within Groups	42361.892	312	135.775	.908	.404
Total	42608.521	314			

Table 18 shows the comparison of stress coping strategies with respect to experience. F value (0.908) and p-value was .404 greater than 0.05, showing that there was no significant difference of stress coping strategies among teachers with different teaching years experience

among school teachers. They found that between female and male teachers, no significant difference in strategies of coping with stress was found. Moreover, a study by [Sharma \(2019\)](#) entitled “Gender Differences in Stress and Coping Strategies among School Teachers” was carried out in Himachal Pradesh, India, on 300 secondary and primary school teachers and concluded that male teachers use more strategies about problem focused (or removing the cause of the stress like social support approach) and females use more Emotion Focused Coping Strategies (regulating negative emotional reactions like avoidance approach). But [Bibi, Kazmi, and Chaudhry \(2015\)](#) found that the difference between female and male teachers’ strategies for coping with stress was not significant and also found no link between job experience and the use of strategies for coping with stress.

## Discussion

Stress is inevitable in the life of everyone and people use different techniques to cope with it. Teachers' job is sensitive and different from all other jobs and they face many types of stress. It is interesting to know the teachers’ strategies for coping with stress. Different international and national studies revealed different findings of this. [Vereen, Butler, Williams, Darg, & Downing, \(2006\)](#) also found that "Humor technique as a stress coping is not used." Whereas a study in china by [Wu, & Chan, \(2012\)](#) found that in China, teachers use minimum frequency of humour. A study conducted by [Hussain, Zulfqar, & Aziz, \(2019\)](#) entitled “Analyzing Stress Coping Strategies and Approaches” of 400 School Teachers with varied backgrounds working in both private and public schools and revealed that ‘planning’ to actively solve the problem, ‘positive reinterpretation’ ‘Turning to religion’, and, emotion-oriented strategies are mostly used strategies, while avoidance and social-support approaches are used least. Similarly, in India which has a similar Education system to Pakistan, A study on 120 teachers in Rajpur city of Chattisgarh, India, was conducted by [Shukla, Patel, Mishra, & Parasar \(2016\)](#) to find out gender differences in stress coping styles

## Conclusions

Conclusions drawn are

1. Most of the stress coping techniques used by primary school teachers were social support, religious support, acceptance, focus on venting emotions and restraint techniques.
2. Less used stress coping techniques used by primary school teachers were positive reinforcement, mental disengagement and denial techniques.
3. The technique which was not used by the majority of primary school teachers was humor.
4. Male primary school teachers were using better coping strategies as compared to

the female teachers. Mostly female primary teachers are better at using more planning tools and male primary teachers are better at using techniques like positive reinterpretation and growth, accepting the presence of stress, denying/ignoring stress techniques, restraint coping and humor.

5. Rural and urban primary school teachers use similar stress coping strategies.
6. Primary teachers with lower qualifications use better stress coping strategies than higher qualified teachers.

7. There was no difference in strategies in coping with stress among primary school teachers having varied professional qualifications and diverse teaching experience in years.

### **Recommendation**

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It is recommended that School Education Department may arrange guidance and counseling programs to encourage teachers to use better stress coping strategies.

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