Emotional Intelligence, Mental Distress and Handling Bullying in School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In process to combat bullying, it may be integral for well-being of students to have a teacher who they perceive as active, emotionally intelligent, resilient, and using an effective strategy of intervening to reduce bullying. The major goal of this study is to explore nexus between Mental Distress and Handling Bullying of School Teachers and Emotional Intelligence. A cross sectional Correlational research design was used and non-probability sampling technique was used to recruit the participants. The participants included private and government school teachers, N=292 (114 males and 164 females) with the age range of 25-50. The assessment tools (Urdu translated versions) used for this research were Handling Bullying Questionnaire (Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008), Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) and Emotional Intelligence scale (Batool & Khalid, 2011). A significant mean difference between private and government schools on handling bullying and emotional intelligence was evident by the results. Moreover, a significant difference was found between teacher's emotional intelligence and number of years of experience. The results also indicated that there was a negative correlation between emotional intelligence and mental distress. Positive correlations were also found between subscales of handling bullying and emotional intelligence. It was revealed that emotional intelligence was a significant negative predictor of mental distress. This study likely to give insight to the policy makers of Anti-bullying programs to focus on emotional intelligence of teachers to help them deal with bullying in students. Moreover, strategies can be planned to deal with mental distress of teachers so that they can perform their role well.

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1.   Introduction

Teachers play an influential role as educators and facilitators, fostering relationships among pupils and preventing conflict (Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004). Bullying is frequently described as repeated damaging behavior, among students with intentional or unintentional motive and includes the inequality of power between the bullies and victims (Olweus, 1993). Bullying is generally acknowledged as a widespread issue impacting all schools, whether they are public or private (Aluede, Adeleke, Omoike, & Afen-Akpaida, 2008). A study stated that children coming from low socio-economic status face more bullying from children of middle or high-socio economic status (Wolke, Woods, Stanford, & Schulz, 2001). Research conducted in China indicated that prevalence of bullying victimization was 11.59%, with 4.04%

of incidents occurring in schools, 3.37% online, and 4.18% overall (Li, 2023). According to a study which took place in Pakistan, the results indicated that majority of the sample was lying on moderate level of victims (42.6%), at bullying level (50.5%)and at fight level (43.2%) (Shahzadi, Akram, Dawood, & Ahmad, 2019). When bullying takes place, teachers are often there, and teachers are frequently the first person that students' approach (Wachs, Bilz, Niproschke, & Schubarth, 2019). It is in teachers' hand that how they would play their role in reducing bullying situations and they are responsible for implementing the programs in the way which is beneficial (Crothers & Kolbert, 2004). The goal framing theory states that environments where students are free to speak to their mentors against bullying are conducive for reducing bullying incidences (Lindenberg, 2013). Teachers have an essential function in tackling bullying since their attitudes and behaviors regarding it influence students' behavior in schools and the effectiveness of programs meant to reduce bullying (Byers, Caltabiano, & Caltabiano, 2011).

Teachers also demands a high level of emotional intelligence because it demands interaction with many different people. Researches on teacher's emotional intelligence is less and there is limited research on teacher's Emotional intelligence and classroom conflict management (Hopkins & Yonker, 2015). The discovery that emphasizing feelings over facts is crucial in teacher professional development concerning the effects of indirect bullying is another indicator of a potential function for emotional intelligence (Shute, Didaskalou, & Dedousis-Wallace, 2022). The phrase "mental distress" (or "psychological distress") is used by certain mental health professionals and people who receive mental health services to characterize a variety of internal symptoms and experiences that are generally seen as distressing, confusing, or out of the ordinary. Workplace issues including workload and classroom factors (i.e., student misbehavior) not only affect teachers' self-efficacy but also cause them to experience high levels of stress (Boyle, Borg, Falzon, & Baglioni, 1995). The World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labor Organization (ILO) studies and reports on the promotion of mental health in the workplace show the growing recognition of this issue as a public health concern (Harnois & Gabriel, 2000). Moreover, the teachers' stress and burnout may be brought on by burdens, setbacks, conflict, lack of justice, and other factors (Znoj, 2011) hindering them to intervene in bullying situations as it is a distressing task to deal with in school setting.

2. Theoretical Framework
2.1 Theory of Emotional Intelligence
Emotional Intelligence involved in the acknowledgment, application, regulation, and comprehension of individual's and other's emotional conditions to address emotionally charged issues and control behavior are usually referred to as emotional intelligence (EI). Emotional intelligence is demonstrated by skills to recognize and expression of emotions, effective management and control over emotions, use and rationalize emotions in thought (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). There are three primary theoretical approaches that can be used to classify EI models as a result of decades of analysis, study, and scientific studies. The first is ability models, which classify emotional intelligence (EI) as a basically related set of mental capabilities associated to emotions and its processing's (Mayer & Salovey, 1993). The second is "trait" models, which characterize EI as a collection of socio-emotional attributes like assertiveness (Bar-On, 1997). The final one is competency models, which are a collection of learned emotional capacities based on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2020).

2.2. Goal framing theory
Lindenberg (2013) proposed in his goal framing theory that when a wider range of socially acceptable behavior prevails then improper behavior can be removed. When individuals in important roles avoid ignoring bullying behavior and rather confront it then this will help to reduce bullying behavior. Likewise, teachers are authority figures and have significant influence on students therefore when a teacher responds to bullying and speaks up against bullying behavior, this promote the norm that bullying will not be tolerated. The results of this study elaborate this theory further. It was concluded that emotionally intelligent teachers are better equipped at handling bullying. This emphasized the importance bestowed upon the role of teachers in controlling unacceptable bullying behavior in class room settings.

2.3. The Bystander Effect Theory
This theory stated teachers are particularly crucial because as adult bystanders, they witness or learn about bulling more than parents, particularly when it occurs in a school environment. However, literature has shown that frequently fail to intervene in bullying situations

(Eldridge & Jenkins, 2020). According to bystander theory (Darley & Latane, 1968), there is a shared diffusion of responsibility in every sort of social situation. This bystander effect results in lack of intervention in and involvement from anyone. Likewise, in real class room settings it is seen that teachers generally do not intervene in bullying behavior because of lack of intervention by other teachers and the administration. The results of the current study suggest that due to poor administrative control in government schools this phenomenon of bystander effect becomes more evident.

2.4. Rationale

Bullying is an issue which is increasing in Pakistan day by day. According to a study, the statistics of bullying is alarming as they reported 89% of 6th graders reported 75% bullying victimization (McFarlane et al., 2017). This situation creates a need for teachers to intervene in bullying situations as they are integral part in reducing the occurrence of bullying. Previous literature has stressed that teachers in numerous countries across the globe including Portugal, China, Philippines, Argentina and Pakistan are victims of burnout due to school workload and also have compromised mental health (Candeias, Galindo, Calisto, Borralho, & Reschke, 2020; Jomuad et al., 2021; Vargas Rubilar & Oros, 2021; Zhao, Liao, Li, Jiang, & Ding, 2022). The compromised mental health of teachers further exaggerates the phenomenon of bullying as they are less likely to intervene when mentally distressed and therefore less keen to handle bullying promptly. Likewise, several researches have emphasized that emotional intelligence plays a significant role in dealing with bullying profoundly (Alvarado, Jiménez-Blanco, Artola, Sastre, & Azañedo, 2020; Rueda, Pérez-Romero, Victoria Cerezo, & Fernández-Berrocal, 2021). There is scarcity of literature in Pakistan on the role of teachers' mental health in association with bullying behavior therefore the present study would help to fill in this gap. Moreover, this study is a groundwork to help in understanding the association between emotional intelligence and mental health in managing bullying. This would in turn help to devise a teacher orientated anti-bullying intervention plan to cope with classroom bullying behavior. Likewise, this study would be a stepping stone to devise new policies to manage bullying. Given this background, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H1: There is likely to be a significant relationship between teacher's emotional intelligence, mental distress, handing bullying.
H2: There is likely to be significant relationship between the subscales of emotional intelligence mental distress and handling bullying of teachers.
H3: Emotional intelligence is likely to be a negative predictor of mental distress.
H4: There is likely to be significant mean difference between private and government schools on teacher's emotional intelligence, mental distress and handling of bullying.
H5: There is likely to be significant difference between years of experience of teacher's emotional intelligence.

3. Method
3.1. Research Design

Cross sectional Correlational research design was used to determine the relationship between teacher's emotional intelligence, mental distress, handling bullying.

3.2. Sample and Sampling Strategy

The study involved (N=292) school-teachers from both public (N=145) and private (N=147) school in Lahore Pakistan, with a gender distribution of 114 male and 164 female. participants. Non-probability, purposive sampling technique was used to collect the data form the relevant population for this study.

3.3. Inclusion Criteria
- Male and female school teachers with an age range of 20-50.
- Male and Female school teachers with experience of 1 year in school teaching.
- Male and Female teachers from Government and Private Schools.
- Male and Female teachers with minimum qualification of Intermediate.

3.4. Exclusion Criteria
- Male and Female school teachers who are retired.
- Male and Female teacher with an experience of six months.

- Male and Female teacher who belongs to the elite schools.
- Male and Female teachers who belongs to the special schools

3.5. Measures
3.5.1. Demographics
The demographics questionnaire was formed to gain the personal bio-data to each participant of this study. It included the gender, age, level of education, School type and years of experience in teaching.

3.5.2. Handling Bullying Questionnaire (HBQ)
Handling bullying questionnaire (Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008) was used to measure the construct of handling bulling in teachers. It was a 22- item scale with 5-point Likert Scale (1= I definitely would not, 5= I definitely would) that measured how a teacher respond to a hypothetical case described in the scenario given. It consists of 6 subscales namely; Ignoring the Incident, working with Bully, enlisting other Adults, working with the Victim, Discipling the Bully and assertiveness. The validated Urdu version of HBQ by Shahzadi et al. (2019) was used in this study. The Urdu translated HBQ scale is a strong linguistic equivalent of the English version of HBQ and has acceptable psychometric properties which ensure that it is a suitable measure for bullying among school going Pakistani children.

3.5.3. Scale of Emotional Intelligence (SEI)
This was developed and validated Scale of emotional intelligence in Pakistan in Urdu Language by Batool and Khalid (2011) was used. It consists of 56-items rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1=never true, 2= true sometimes, 3= more often true and 4 as always true. It is developed for age range of 16-60 years. The scale has 10 scales measuring assertiveness, self-regard, empathy, impulse control, interpersonal skills, stress tolerance, flexibility, problem solving, self-awareness and optimism. Higher scores of the scale indicates greater EI levels. It has good validity and reliability as reported by authors. The scale has a good reliability of value of .88 (Batool, Parveen, & Batool, 2017).

3.5.4. Depression, Anxiety, Stress scale (DASS21)
To measure the mental distress of the teachers Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS21) by Lovibond and Lovibond (2011) was used. It measures three related negative emotional states of depression, anxiety and stress. It consists of three subscales with 7-items each rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (Did not apply to me at all) to 3 (Applied to me very much, or most of the time). The Urdu translated version by Naz & Batool (2019) was used in the present study.

3.6. Procedure
Firstly, permission was taken from authorities of University of Central Punjab to conduct this research. After that, permission was taken through a formal permission letter from every government and private school for the research. Sampling technique was used as the purposive sampling technique. A consent form was signed after informing every participant about the research goals in the schools. In the form, the aim of this study was clearly mentioned that we are looking to access teacher's emotional intelligence and handling bullying by teachers. Participants were assured that their confidentiality and information was kept private and it was be solely used for the study requirement. After that, the participants were given instructions for all the measures that to fill the questionnaire, the duration 20-25 minutes was required. The responses of the questionnaires were added in (SPSS 21) for statistical analysis.

3.7. Ethical Considerations
After getting the permission, the participants were approached formally and the forms for Emotional intelligence and handling of bullying of school teachers were given after taking the consent from them. The confidentiality of the data was ensured. The right to withdraw was given to participants in the consent form. Likewise, the data collected from the participants was kept save with identification code so that the anonymity of the participants was intact. The entire data was secured in a password protected file with aim to discard after 5 years. Moreover, participants were debriefed after completing forms to ensure their well-being.

4.   Results

The following results were analyzed by using SPSS-21. The variables on which the analyses were run are, The Handling Bullying, Depression, Mental distress and Emotional Intelligence. The total data collected was of N= 302 out of which 10 was deducted after completing the data cleaning phase. The remaining data is N= 292 in which 114 were male and 164 females. Descriptive analysis, T-test for independent sample, ANOVA, correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data. At first, on the basis of demographic information descriptive analysis was run (see table 1). After that, T-test was run to see the mean difference between private government and male female on emotional intelligence, mental distress and handling bullying of school teachers. Also, there was no significant mean difference found on the basis of age and teachers' qualification.

Table 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Participants

Demographics	Categories	f	%	M	SD
Age	25-30	31	10.5	39.31	7.46
	31-35	46	15.6		
	36-40	26	8.8		
	41-above	78	26.5		
	Others	23	7.8		
Gender	Male	114	38.8		
	Female	164	55.8		
School type	Private school	147	50.0		
	Government school	131	44.6		
	Semi Government school	8	2.7		
Level of education	Completed teaching diploma	13	4.4		
	Completed secondary Education	3	1.0		
	Completed Bachelor's Degree	23	7.8		
	Completed Master's Degree	144	49.0		
	Completed MPhil Degree	101	34.4		
Years of experience	1-5	78	2.65		
	6-10	73	24.8		
	11-15	42	14.8		
	16-20	24	8.2		
	21-above	14	4.8		

Note. Sample Size n=292, M= mean, SD= Standard Deviation, *f*= frequency

Figure 1: showing demographical information of the sample of the study
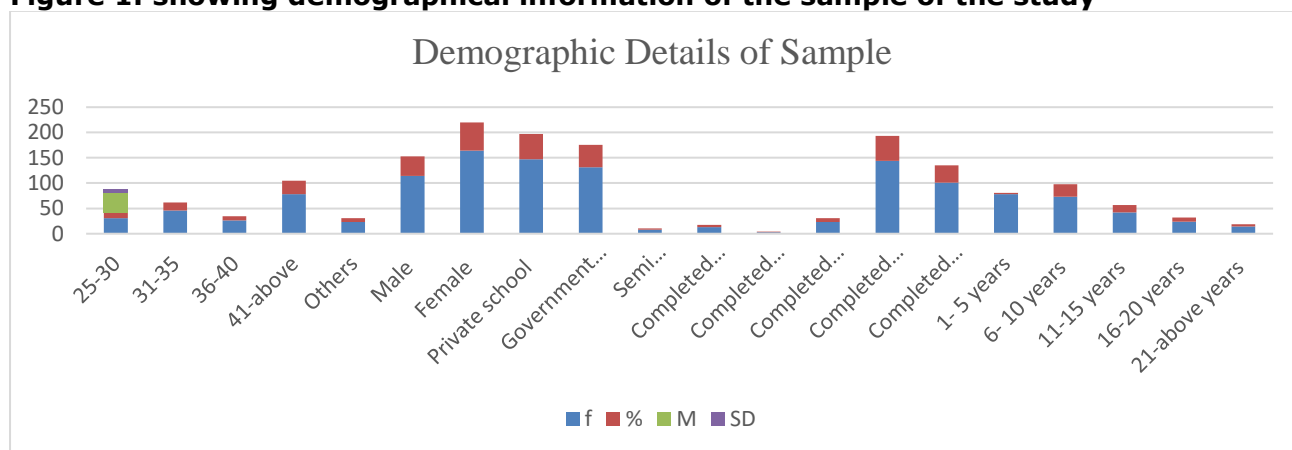
4.1.   Reliability Analysis

The reliably analysis for each scale was carried out using Cronbach's Alpha.

Table 2: Reliability Analysis and Alpha Coefficient of Scales

	Scales	K	M	SD	α	Range
1.	Handling Bullying Questionnaire	16	3.08	8.1	.74	26-80
2.	DASS-21	21	067		.93	0-57
3.	Emotional Intelligence	56	3.1	21.0	.95	112-234

Note. K= Number of Item, M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation and a= Cronbach Alpha

The above table has shown the reliability of scales. The reliabilities of all the scales are acceptable i.e. Handling Bullying Questionnaire of 16 items (a = .74), DASS 21 items (a = .93) and Emotional Intelligence (a= .95).

4.2. Person Product Analysis

The prime hypothesis of the research was to understand the association among teacher's emotional intelligence, handing bullying, mental distress as well as to study relationship among the subscales of emotional intelligence, mental distress and handling bullying of teachers. Pearson product correlation is shown below in Table 3 and Table 4.

Table 3: Pearson Product Correlation Emotional Intelligence, Mental Health and Handling Bullying

	Scales	M	SD	1	2	3
1	Emotional Intelligence	176.29	21.01	-	-.454**	.091
2	Mental Distress	14.1	11.95		-	.028
3	Handling Bullying	60.86	8.1			-

Note. Sample size (n=294) p<0.0

In the above table 3, it can be seen that emotional intelligence is significantly negatively correlated with mental distress (r= -.454, p<0.01) and there is nonsignificant positive correlation between emotional intelligence and handling bullying. The above correlation matrix (Table 4) is obtained through Pearson Product Correlation analysis to find out the relationship between handling bullying, mental distress and emotional intelligence. The bivariate relationship between the sub scales of emotional intelligence (i.e. interpersonal skills, self-regard, assertiveness, emotional self-awareness, empathy, impulse control, flexibility, problem solving, stress tolerance, optimism) handling bullying (i.e. ignoring the incident, working with bully, enlisting other adults, working with victims, disciplining the bully) Mental distress (i.e. depression, anxiety and stress) was analyzed using correlation analysis

Mental distress is negatively significantly correlated with emotional intelligence (r=.454, p<0.01), interpersonal skills (r=-.372, p<0.01), self-regard (r= -.434, p<0.01), assertiveness (r= -.354, p<0.01) emotional self-awareness (r= -.291, p<0.01), empathy (r= -.314, p<0.01) , impulse control (r= -.189, p<0.01) , flexibility (r= -.449, p<0.01), problem solving (r= -.399, p<0.01), stress tolerance (r= -.475, p<0.01), optimism (r= -.359, p<0.01), disciplining the bully(r= -.122, p<0.05). Additionally, mental distress is significantly positively correlated with depression (r= .931 p<0.01), anxiety (r= .949, p<0.01) and stress (r= .931, p<0.01). Mental distress is insignificantly positively correlated with ignoring the incident, working with bully, disciplining the bully, and negatively insignificant with working with victim. Handling bullying is significantly correlated with Interpersonal skills (r=.168, p<0.01), emotional self-awareness (r=.165, p<0.01), empathy (r=.154, p<0.01), optimism (r=.106, p<0.01), ignoring the incident (r=.518, p<0.01), working with bully (r=.722, p=0.01), enlisting the adults (r=.723, p<0.01, working with victims(r=.725, p<0.01)   and disciplining the bully (r=.745, p<0.01). Handling bullying has insignificant positive correlation with emotional intelligence sub scales which are self-regard, assertiveness, impulse control, flexibility, problem solving, stress tolerance and of mental distress, depression, anxiety and stress. In addition to date, emotional intelligence is significantly positively correlated with interpersonal skills (r=.719, p<0.01), assertiveness (r=.524, p<0.01), emotional self-awareness (r= .299, p<0.01), empathy (r= .697, p<0.01), flexibility (r=.734, p<0.01), problem solving (r= .761, p<0.01), stress tolerance (r=.711p<0.01), optimism(r=.601,p<0.01), working with victim(r=.141, p<0.01), emotional intelligence was significantly negatively correlated with depression (r= -.431, p<0.01), anxiety (r= -.413, p<0.01) and stress (r=-.413, p<0.01). However, emotional intelligence is insignificantly positively correlated with its sub scales, self-regard, impulse control, and sub scales of handling bullying, ignoring the incident, working with bully, enlisting the adult, disciplining the bully.

Table 4: Pearson Product Correlation analysis between Emotional Intelligence, Mental Distress, Handling Bullying and their sub-scales among School Teachers

	Scales	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1	HBQ	60.86	8.12	-	.028	.091	.168**	.071	.021	.165**	.154**	.036	.058	.106	.081	.106**	.518**	.722**	.723**	.725**	.745**	.063	.004	.063
2	DASS	14.10	11.95		-	-454**	-.372**	-.434**	-.354**	-.291**	-.314**	-.189**	-.449**	-.399**	-.475**	-.359**	.105	.063	.122	-.064	-.122*	.931**	.949**	.931**
3	EI	175.2	21.01			-	.719**	.646	.524**	.299**	.697**	.078	.734**	.761**	.711**	.601**	.044	.854	-.032	.141*	.100	-.431**	-.413**	-.413**
4	IPS	27.82	3.63				-	.517**	.328**	.313**	.562**	.084	.463**	.462**	.475**	.406**	-.045	.175**	.120*	.253**	.159**	-.332**	-.373**	-.332**
5	SR	18.82	2.46					-	.422**	.410**	.488**	-.009	.487**	.492**	.502**	.445**	-.074	.156**	.036	.132*	.079	-.403**	-.429**	-.403**
6	A	20.12	2.53						-	.338**	.404**	.071	.446**	.427**	451**	.424**	-.032	.026	-.037	.025	.091	-.359**	-.328**	-.359**
7	ESA	14.44	2.19							-	.235**	200**	.347**	.397**	.336**	.389**	-.090	.243**	.178**	.207**	.139*	.263**	-.278**	-.263**
8	E	16.66	2.20								-	.033	.467**	.418**	.430**	.377**	.001	.102	.021	.192**	.228**	-.298**	-297**	-.298**
9	IC	12.78	3.28									-	.104	.133*	.120*	.068	.075	.045	.005	.060	-.038	-.162**	-.181**	-.162**
10	F	14.92	2.76										-	.575**	.610**	.555**	.077	.010	-.069	.069	.090	-.418**	-.391**	-.418**
11	PS	15.36	2.94											-	.587**	.570**	.002	.149*	.051	.145*	0.79	-.357**	-.369**	-.357**
12	ST	14.16	2.44												-	.505**	-.004	.061	-.023	.111	.145*	-.449**	-.421**	-.449**
13	O	15.09	2.36													-	.046	.144*	.053	.163**	.168**	-.316**	-.347**	-.316**
14	ITI	15.58	3.09														-	.061	.037	.207**	.185**	.131*	.102	.131*
15	WWB	8.59	1.59															-	.727**	.587**	.402**	.062	.030	.062
16	ETA	12.45	2.55																-	.497**	.393**	.107	.072	.107
17	WTV	8.80	1.68																	-	.439**	-.032	-.106	-.032
18	DTB	15.43	3.09																		-	-.069	-.109	-.069
19	D	4.31	4.08																			-	.842**	1.000**
20	A	4.29	4.30																				-	.842**
21	S	4.31	1.08																					-

Note. Sample size: 292. HBQ= Handling bullying, DASS= Depression, Anxiety, Stress Scale. EI= Emotional Intelligence, IPS= Interpersonal Skills, SR= Self Regard, A= Assertiveness, ESA= Emotional Self Regard, E, Empathy, IC= Impulse Control, F= Flexibility, PS= Problem Solving, ST= Stress Tolerance, O= Optimism, ITI= Ignoring the incident, WWB= Working with bully, ETA= Enlisting the adult, WTA= Working with victim, DTB= Disciplining the bully, D= Depression, A= Anxiety, S= Stress

4.3. Regression Analysis

It was hypothesized that Emotional intelligence is likely to be a negative predictor of mental distress of school teachers. Linear Regression was applied as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Linear Regression Enter Method Analysis for Predictor of Emotional Intelligence

Variables	B	SE	B	P
(Constants)	59.401	5.23		.000
EI	-2.58	.030	-.454	.000
R^2	.206			

Note. Sample size (n=294) EI is for Emotional Intelligence, SE for Standard Error, CI for Confidence Interval.

The above table was obtained by Linear Regression through the enter method which was used to predict the variable of Mental distress on the variable of Emotional Intelligence. A significant regression equation was found [F (1,292) =75.9, p<0.01] where the value of R is .545 and R^2 is .206 which shows that the variance is 20.6%. Emotional intelligence negatively predicted Mental distress.

4.4. T-Test Analysis

It was hypothesized that there is likely to be mean difference between private and government schools on teacher's emotional intelligence, mental distress and handling of bullying.

Table 6: Comparison between Private and Government Sector on Emotional Intelligence, Mental Distress and Handling Bullying

Variables	Private		Government		t(276)	p	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Handling Bullying	60.89	8.63	60.66	7.66	.237	.005	0.02
Mental Health	13.83	12.07	14.23	11.36	-.283	.256	
Emotional Intelligence	179.22	22.76	170.81	17.81	3.47	.002	9.94

Note sample size (n=294). M= Mean, SD= Standard Deviation P <0.05

The above table was obtained by using T-test which was used to see any mean difference between private and government sectors. The table shows that there is a significant mean difference between Private (M=179.22, SD= 22, 76) and Government (M=170.81, SD=17.81) (t= 3.74, p=0.05) sector on the level of Emotional Intelligence.

Figure 1: showing Comparison between Private and Government Sector on Emotional Intelligence, Mental Distress and Handling Bullying.
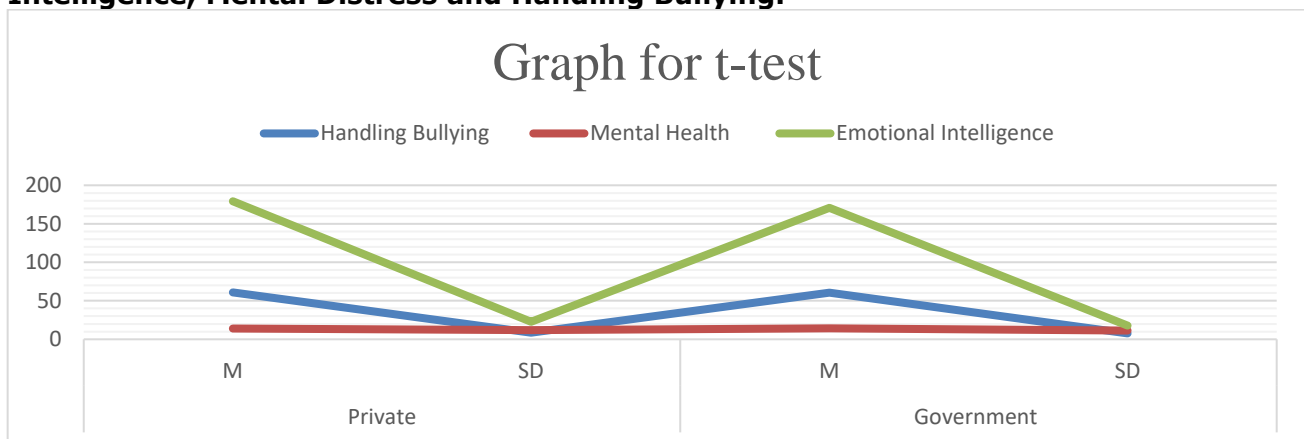
4.5. Anova Analysis

Following table has shown the results of One Way Anova to assess difference in years of experience on the level of emotional intelligence.

Table 7: One Way Analysis of Variance to Assess Difference in Years of Experience on Emotional Intelligence

Measures	1-5		6-10		11-15		16-20		21-above		F(4,226)	η^2
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
EI	177.64	21.02	177.98	19.07	169.47	21.59	174.45	23.33	160.35	19.65	3.19	0.14

A one-way Anova was conducted to compare mean difference of years of experience on emotional intelligence. There was a significant difference of years of experience on emotional intelligence [$F_{(4,226)} = 3.1$, P= 0.05)].

5. Discussion

The study aimed to understand and measure relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Mental Distress and Handling Bullying of School Teachers as well as how these variables have its influence on one and another variable. According to numerous studies conducted on the bullying, it affects students negatively and is a widespread issue in schools around the world including well-being, psycho-social adjustment, and school engagement (Huang, 2021; Jimerson & Swearer). Teachers are typically present when bullying occurs and are regularly approached by students as the first person to speak to them. Bullying may be decreased if teachers are perceived as effective intervening body (Yoon, Sulkowski, & Bauman, 2016). For handling the bullying situations, teachers need to be free of mental distress and emotionally intelligent. The first hypothesis of the study assumed that there is a significant correlation between teacher's emotional intelligence, mental distress and handling bullying of school teachers. Results of previous studies revealed that teachers with high emotional intelligence abilities are more likely than people with low emotional intelligence to be able to deal with environmental demands and pressures related to mental stress and health outcomes then those with less emotional intelligence (Blain-Arcaro, Smith, Cunningham, Vaillancourt, & Rimas, 2012; Pulido-Martos, Lopez-Zafra, Estévez-López, & Augusto-Landa, 2016). Teaching is not an easy profession; in fact, it can lead to feelings of stress, demotivation, and burnout. Hence, emotional Intelligence is required for teachers to manage the stress that comes with their jobs (Pyne, 2017). According to the results of present study, a moderate correlation was found between teachers less Mental Distress and sub-scale of Handling Bullying Questionnaire, disciplining the bully. It can be said that a teacher who have less Mental Distress can handle the bully well because such kind of teacher would not be affected by their own mental health conflicts and can better discipline the bully by having a clear plan in place for how to deal with bullies and carry out appropriate actions (Yoon, Sulkowski, & Bauman, 2016). Also, the results showed that there was a moderate correlation between teacher's emotional intelligence and subscale of HBQ, "working with victim". A study concluded that focusing on other people's feelings, such as the victim's pain, can be especially helpful if a teacher notice bullying since it can make them aware of how serious the situation is and motivate them to take steps to address it (Blain-Arcaro et al., 2012).

There was no significant difference between emotional intelligence and handling bullying of teachers and no correlation were found between mental health and handling bullying of teachers. The impact of Emotional Intelligence was however, minimal (Shute, Didaskalou, & Dedousis-Wallace, 2022). This reference from a result show that emotional intelligence plays its role in handling the bullying but there is no direct impact of it in handling the bullying situation. Moreover, other plausible reasons for non-significant result of Emotional Intelligence and bullying can be certain policies of school administration including lack of organizational support–which might prohibit teachers to act vigilantly in case of bullying. Lack of organization support in dealing with bullying can be another reason which prevents teachers from intervening independently in managing bullying. They may feel that if the situation gets out of control, they would be held responsible for not acting accordingly or might be blamed for taking sides and favoring one party over other. Furthermore, schools of 21st century are seemingly becoming inspired by corporate ideology where student is not merely viewed as a learner but as a profit earning entity. This new found identity of a student as a customer by schools halts them from taking any definable action against the practice of bullying. Hence, the school fears that if they act justly and introduce punishments and strict rules and regulations then they might offend the student client and would have to face financial loss in their school business.

Likewise, laws surrounding bullying are a rare phenomenon in third world countries such as Pakistan which further overstress the situation as no one is held accountable. This further leads to less active role of teachers in handling bullying despite being emotionally intelligent. Furthermore, role of parents is very crucial in bullying in developing countries where literary rates are radically low. Less educated parents might unfairly blame teacher for taking sides and acting unfairly. Furthermore, role of power dynamics can neither be ignored here where the system

favors the powerful and overshadows the weak this also fairly contributes in ill management of bullying where the stronger emerge as victorious and weak is blamed. With evident power dynamics in play nobody (school, teacher) wants to take responsibility which is explained by the bystander effect theory where responsibility is diffused. The second hypothesis of our study assumed that the correlation between the subscales of emotional intelligence, mental distress and handling bullying of school teachers would be present. Interpersonal skills were significantly positively correlated with working with bully, working with victim and disciplining. It is quite obvious that when a teacher has good interpersonal relationships, he/she can easily work with both the bully and the victim and discipline the bully so that he does not repeat the behavior. Also, self-regard was positively correlated with working with bully. When a teacher has positive self-view, he/she can foster that positive view in the bully by telling him to act in a good way in school. Assertiveness was positively correlated with working with bully and the victim.

Also, it was indicated that teachers with depression is more likely to ignore the incidents of bullying. As teachers are dealing with their own mental conditions thus less bothered with the issues of students. The fourth hypothesis assumed that there is a significant mean difference between private and government schools on teacher's emotional intelligence, mental distress and handling bullying. Private schools make every effort to protect students from showing negatives behavior and to improve their mental health. When compared to teachers in government schools, they are more self-centered, place less importance on students' problems, and neglect to offer assistance (Niwaz, Khan, & Naz, 2021). No significant mean difference was found between mental health of both government and private school teachers. It can be said that no matter what, teachers in both government and private school go through similar job stress and pressure. The challenges are somewhat similar. Both the teachers are working in the same environment which can affect their mental distress on some level (Dagar & Mathur, 2016). Results of last hypothesis were revealed in another research that it can be a probable reason of increase in emotional intelligence with years of experience that, teachers are interacting with different people in the school such as their students, colleagues, administration etc. There are different emotions linked to different people and situations occurring in school. Teachers have to deal with each thing different portraying different emotions. Sometimes, teachers have to deal with such people in the school with whom they have some issues but, as their experience increases teachers learns to be emotionally intelligent and deal with students, staff and colleagues in most effective manner so with years their emotional intelligence increases (Vaezi & Fallah, 2011). Contrary to intelligence quotient, which is often believed to be constant and unchanging, this is consistent with earlier research that suggested emotional intelligence is learned and grown through learning and repeated experience (Goleman, 2020). No significant difference was found on teacher's emotional intelligence with age and level of education. Multiple researches support this result that emotional intelligence is not specifically linked to the age (Rastegar & Memarpour, 2009; Salami, 2007). It can be said that increase in emotional intelligence is more relevant to experience in life. Age does not have much of its impact on one's emotional intelligence.

6.   Conclusion

The research concludes that there is a significant negative correlation between Mental Distress and Emotional Intelligence which suggests that an emotionally intelligent teacher will encounter less mental distress. Additionally, strong correlations were found between the subscales of emotional intelligence, mental distress and handling bullying. Also, it was found out that that there is a prominent difference between government and private sector teachers in emotional intelligence and handling bullying. It was found that there is a significant difference of years of experience on emotional intelligence of the teacher.

6.1.   Limitations, Suggestions and Implications

Firstly, the tool to measure handling bullying was not adaptive although was translated. It is suggested that to take the responses which was culturally adaptive. Secondly, the administration of school authorities was not much facilitating. In addition, teachers have busy schedules therefore it was difficult for them to take out time and fill the forms. This made data collection a tedious task. Moreover, future studies can use better sampling technique instead of purposive sampling used in this study in order to increase generalizability of the findings. Teachers from elite and special schools were excluded in this study which might limit the findings' applicability across different educational contexts. This exclusion criterion was added since teachers from elite schools may have better access to resources and support groups which could

influence their role in handling bullying. Likewise, teachers belonging from special schools encounter different challenges unique to their setting which are beyond the scope of this study. Future studies can explore the phenomenon of bullying in these specific contexts to enhance understanding across diverse educational settings. Qualitative studies can be conducted to explore the contextual factors (reasons, impact, perceptions, coping mechanisms and challenges faced by teachers and students) occurring in bullying for adequate management. Mediating and moderating factors involved in handling bullying can also be explored in future studies. Interventions aimed at improving teachers' emotional intelligence and coping strategies for managing mental distress can also be explored. The implications of this study are far reaching and not only limited to creating awareness of mental distress and emotional intelligence among teachers. The findings of the study will help in school administration in devising policies for recruiting teachers scoring high on emotional intelligence as it was concluded that teachers high on emotional intelligence are better equipped at handling mental distress and bullying. Moreover, clear rules and regulations can be established by schools to encourage teachers to take strict measures to handle bullying. Furthermore, the findings will stimulate schools to conduct workshops and seminars to enhance emotional intelligence of the teachers and maintaining healthy mental status. Likewise, anti-bullying programs can be designed focusing on emotional intelligence of teachers through role playing and case scenarios to help them deal with bullying.

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