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## Psychological and Occupational Pressure Among Female Teachers in Light of the Coronavirus Disease Pandemic and Coping Strategies

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**Abstract:** This study aims at identifying the level of psychological and professional stress in light of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. It adopted descriptive and analytical methodologies. Two scales were prepared: one scale for psychological and professional stress and the other for coping with psychological and professional pressures. The study sample consisted of 608 female teachers at public schools in Al-Kharj province, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The results show a moderate level of psychological and professional stresses. The findings show statistically significant differences in teaching experience variable. The differences were in favour of female teachers with experience of less than 5 years. However, no statistically significant differences were found on the variable of academic qualification. It was found that female teachers had followed strategies to cope with psychological and professional stresses including resorting to faith, connecting with other teachers and students, planning different strategies, seeking help from others and managing time. The study recommends arranging training courses for female teachers to develop remote teaching skills and using various technologies and applications in this field particularly during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** *Coping strategies, Coronavirus, COVID-19 pandemic, psychological and occupational stresses.*

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### Introduction

The Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has led to unprecedented changes in all aspects of daily life, including all areas of human activity in all the countries of the world. Since the World Health Organization (WHO) announced in March 2020 that the spread of the COVID-19 is a global pandemic, it gradually led to a complete closure of educational institutions and the transition to distance teaching, leading to the reformulation of all the roles of the participants in the educational process.

Teachers were not well prepared to master the multiple challenges imposed on them by these changes, particularly considering the educational process which was going to heavily rely on digital tools in teaching and communication processes. Many teachers considered that distance e-teaching added more burden of work, especially in the circumstances that accompanied the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic (Quezada et al., 2020).

Several studies have been conducted to reveal the impact of this pandemic particularly on teachers. A survey conducted in Spain that included about 10,000 male and female teachers engaged at various educational stages indicated that about 92.8% of teachers suffer from emotional exhaustion, tension, or anxiety due to the pandemic, home quarantine conditions, and distance teaching (Diaz et al., 2020). A similar study which was conducted in Germany included 310 male and female teachers. It showed that about 34% of teachers considered distance teaching under the COVID-19 pandemic to be an additional burden and a source of additional work pressure (Klapproth et al., 2020).

The Ministry of Education in KSA has put huge efforts to continue the educational process during the COVID-19 pandemic. The ministry established many channels of communication between students and teachers through educational channels on the Internet, educational satellite channels, and Madrasati platform. The National E-learning site refers on its Twitter page ([https://twitter.com/NCEL\\_SA](https://twitter.com/NCEL_SA)) to the findings of the international study conducted by

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the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on distance teaching in KSA, and its response to education during the COVID-19 pandemic in comparison with 36 countries. The study concluded that the KSA had advanced in 13 out of 16 indicators on the average of 36 countries in terms of readiness and that its efforts in distance teaching are distinguished, reflecting the cooperative nature of national action.

Several studies were conducted to evaluate this experience in all its dimensions. For example, Al-Fiqi and Abul Fetouh (2020) conducted a study focusing on the students at Egyptian universities while Akour et al. (2020) focused on the faculty members in Jordanian Universities. Likewise, Klapproth et al. (2020) conducted a study focusing on male and female teachers in German schools. Further, Al-Ateeq et al. (2020) studied the experience of male and female students at different levels of study in KSA. The findings of these studies showed varying levels of pressure on all the parties involved in the educational process, including students and teachers at various levels of study. Psychological pressure is one of the phenomena of human life that the individual is exposed to in different situations and times, and it is one of the vital topics of interest to psychologists, educationists and sociologists because of its effects on the psychological and social compatibility and the mental health of individuals (Al-Batti, 2018). Selye (1979), who is known as the father of research on stress, first incorporated this term into the medical lexicon to describe the 'nonspecific response of the body to any demand' (Abu Asaad & Al Ghurair, 2008).

Psychological stress is also known as the individual's perception of an environmental situation or situations that threaten his/ her needs and personal being and hinder his/ her psychological compatibility. Any intense and permanent stimuli or changes in the internal or external environment that burdens the adaptive ability of an individual to its maximum extent may lead to impaired behaviour or incompatibility (Abdul Muti, 2006). Figley (1983) distinguish between natural stressors that include changes during the life cycle, such as changes in family relationships and the growth of family members, and catastrophic stressors that strikes individuals suddenly and often prevents their ability to cope with them. Some studies indicated that there are higher levels of pressure among female teachers during this pandemic due to the work pressures and their responsibilities towards students in distance teaching and other responsibilities including household and family tasks (Klapproth et al., 2020; Oducado et al., 2020)

In this backdrop, it becomes clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has deeply affected the educational process and added more work pressure on all workers in the educational field, especially for female teachers. Keeping in view the continuation of the pandemic, and the importance of uncovering the level of psychological and occupational pressure among female teachers at various educational stages along with their multiple responsibilities, the current study tends to identify the level of psychological pressure and occupational pressure among female teachers in Al-Kharj governorate under the COVID-19 pandemic and to identify the strategies of female teachers in coping with such psychological and occupational pressure. The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of psychological pressure among female teachers in Al-Kharj governorate under the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What is the level of occupational pressure among female teachers in Al-Kharj governorate under the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What strategies have female teachers followed in Al-Kharj governorate to cope with psychological and professional pressure under the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. Are there statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.5$ ) in the level of psychological and occupational pressure among female teachers due to the following variables: educational stage, educational experience, and qualifications?

This study is significant in terms of highlighting the role of the female teachers in the educational process, taking into consideration that they have to work from home and under unconventional conditions during the pandemic. It is also important to study psychological and occupational pressure because of its impact on the well-being, and mental health of individuals, as stress can increase tension and reduce personal well-being. The study may draw the attention of psychological counsellors to prepare guidance and training programs, to develop coping strategies to deal with the psychological and professional pressures during unusual conditions including distance teaching and any crisis like COVID-19 pandemic. Coping Strategies are defined as the constant cognitive and behavioural efforts made by an individual to cope with internal or external requirements that exceed the individual's capabilities to understand and minimize these requirements, or make them more bearable (Al-Batti, 2018). The researcher defines them as the behaviours and cognitive processes that teachers have adopted to confront and manage stressful situations during distance teaching under the COVID-19 pandemic, in a way that leads to alleviating and adapting these situations and relieving the emotional stress resulting from them.

The study may also draw the attention of educational policymakers to reconsider the organization and application of distance teaching in a way that contributes to the success of the process without putting more pressure on the teachers. The scarcity of studies conducted in Saudi Arabia, which examined the level of psychological and occupational pressure among female teachers under the COVID-19 pandemic also makes this study a significant attempt.

## Literature Review

A significant body of research has been conducted dealing with psychological and occupational stress among teachers. It can be said that the teaching profession is one of the most important professions of human service in modern society, but it is also one of the pressing professions. The pressures of work increase among workers in the educational field in general, and among teachers in particular, as the teacher is the cornerstone of the success of the educational process. A teacher is assigned various educational and administrative tasks which make him feel a great responsibility and push him to invest his/ her energies in the service of the community and nation (Al-Sameeh, 2010).

Professional pressure among teachers is defined as a condition that reflects the teacher's feeling of powerlessness to perform his/ her work due to the excessive burdens s/he faces, in various roles, and the frustrations and problems s/he faces in the school environment (Al-Nawaisa, 2013). Professional pressures are divided into negative pressures and positive pressures. Negative pressures represent challenges that hinder the professional growth of the individual, and the individual feels incapable to face the challenges and tasks of work. They negatively affect the physical and psychological state of the individual (Obaid, 2008, p. 28). They also affect the professional performance of the individual and impede his/ her creative abilities. Its effects appear in several manifestations such as absenteeism from work, job dissatisfaction, widespread apathy, and chaos (Hussein & Hussein, 2006).

Some studies deal with the professional pressure including Shadifat and Abu Saa (2019), which aimed at identifying the level of professional pressure among the teachers of vocational education. The findings showed a high level of occupational pressure among the study sample. There were statistically significant differences in the level of occupational pressures attributed to the variables of sex, experience, and educational stage. In a likewise manner, Quritee's (2016) study aimed at revealing the level of psychological stress and its relationship with life satisfaction among teachers. The results indicated a moderate level of psychological pressure among teachers. The study also indicated a statistically significant inverse relationship between psychological stress and life satisfaction.

The study conducted by Akour et al. (2020) aimed at assessing the psychological state and challenges of distance teaching. It explored the methods of dealing with concerns related to the Corona pandemic. The results showed that about 31.4 % study sample suffered from severe psychological stress, while 38.2% expressed a mild to moderate level of psychological pressure. Further, Al-Ateeq et al. (2020) explored the level of psychological tension among students because of the outbreak of the Corona pandemic. The results showed the presence of a high level of psychological tension among the study sample. There were statistically significant differences in terms of tension according to the gender variable (in favour of female students). Klapproth et al. (2020) assessed the level of professional pressure among teachers and explored the strategies to deal with it. The responses of the study sample showed that they had faced multiple levels of pressure. The results also showed that the level of those pressures differed according to the variables of the educational stage and gender. Further, they indicated that the study sample followed several strategies to deal with these pressures, including planning and seeking social support in addition to negative coping strategies such as avoiding and escaping.

Many factors cause psychological and professional stress among teachers and others working in different institutions. Several researchers (e.g., Abdul Muti, 2006; Alsamarrai, 2018) have referred to these reasons. One of the important causes of psychological and professional stress is an individual's lack of knowledge of the aspects of work and his/ her ignorance and ambiguity of the role to be performed and the lack of clarity regarding work priorities. Another cause is a conflict of roles which occurs when the individual performs multiple roles, fulfilling different expectations from multiple parties with no harmony between them. If the individual succeeds in performing certain obligations, s/he may not be able to fulfil the other obligations. In addition, a teacher may feel psychological and professional pressure as a result of his/ her dissatisfaction with work, lack of mastery over the skills and competencies required by educational situations, and lack of flexibility or the ability to renew and diversify the methods, s/he practices in his teaching performance (Al-Nawaisa, 2013).

Some researchers were interested in professional pressures among teachers. For instance, Quritee (2016) was concerned with psychological stress and Dwikat (2018) was interested in psychological and occupational stress. But these studies did not address the coping strategies. Klapproth et al. (2020) focused on the professional pressures of teachers and explored the coping strategies, which are in line with the current study. However, this study did not address the psychological pressures. The current study also matches with the study conducted by Akour et al. (2020), which dealt with methods of dealing with these pressures. It is evident from the above discussion that none of the previous studies dealt with the psychological and professional pressures of female teachers in KSA during the COVID-19 pandemic and the strategies to cope with these pressures.

## Methodology

The study was designed following the descriptive survey model which aims at collecting data to determine certain features of a group. It followed the descriptive methodology to reveal the level of psychological and occupational stresses among the female teachers, and to identify the strategies they followed to deal with these pressures in light of the Corona pandemic.

The data was collected from female teachers in Al-Kharj city. The criteria for the selection of the study sample were as follows. The teacher should be a licensed female teacher in KSA, currently employed as a full-time teacher in a public school in Al-Kharj city during the first semester of the academic year 1442 AH, and willing to participate in the survey. Participants were informed on the first page of the survey that participating in this study is voluntary and that proceeding with the online survey indicates their agreement to join the study. A total of 900 female teachers were invited to participate in the survey, while 720 took part in the survey. However, only the responses of 608 female teachers met the criteria of inclusion for this study so only they were included in the analysis. The following table shows the distribution of the sample of the study.

*Table 1. Distribution of the Sample Members According to the Variables of the Educational Stage, Years of Experience, and Academic Qualifications*

Percentage	The Number	Variable Levels	Variable
Educational level	Primary stage	254	42%
	Middle school	175	29%
	High school	173	29%
Years of experience	Less than 5 years	52	8%
	From 5 to 10 years	250	42%
	More than 10 years	306	50%
Qualification	Bachelor of	547	90%
	Postgraduate	61	10%
Total		608	100%

The scale of psychological and occupational stress was developed by reviewing the following studies: Dwikat, 2018; Humani, 2019; Quritee, 2016; Shadifat and Abu Saa, 2019. It was divided into two dimensions, namely, psychological stress and occupational stress. In its initial form, the scale consisted of 12 Items for each dimension. For assessing the face validity, phrasing, and clarity of this survey, it was administrated to a group of arbitrators and based on the results some amendments were made. For instance, 4 items were deleted. Further, the scale was administered on a pilot sample consisting of 50 teachers to verify the validity of the internal consistency of the scale. The results are shown in table 2.

*Table 2. Results of Validity of the Internal Consistency of the Psychological and Occupational Stress Scale*

Psychological Pressure		Occupational Pressure	
Item No.	Correlation Coefficients	Item No.	Correlation Coefficients
1.	0.814**	11.	0.828**
2.	0.743**	12.	0.821**
3.	0.882**	13.	0.804**
4.	0.678**	14.	0.757**
5.	0.847**	15.	0.696**
6.	0.787**	16.	0.759**
7.	0.664**	17.	0.679**
8.	0.754**	18.	0.769**
9.	0.557**	19.	0.489**
10.	0.557**	20.	0.474**

*Note: \*\*Significance level at 0.01*

The results indicated that all the items of the scale were associated with the dimension they belonged to as the correlation coefficient was significant at the level of 0.01. These results demonstrated a high degree of internal consistency for the psychological and occupational stress scale. To verify the structural validity of the scale, correlation coefficients were calculated between the total score of the two dimensions of the scale and the total score of the scale. The results were shown in table 3.

*Table 3. Results of the Structural Validity of the Scale of Psychological and Occupational Stress*

Scale dimensions	Correlation coefficients
Psychological Pressure	0.973**
Occupational pressure	0.974**

*Note: \*\*Significance level at 0.01*

Table 3 shows that the degree of each dimension of the scale is related to the overall score of the scale as the correlation coefficient was significant at the 0.01 level. It demonstrated the verification of the structural validity of the

scale of psychological and occupational stress. To verify the stability of the scale, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for the two dimensions of the scale and the scale as a whole. The results were shown in table 4.

*Table 4. Results of Stability Coefficients for the Psychological and Occupational Stress Scale*

Stability Coefficients	Number of Items	Scale Dimensions
0.902	10	Psychological Pressure
0.893	10	Occupational pressure
0.916	20	The scale as a whole

The reliability coefficients have a high degree of stability, and the results presented in table 1,2,3 and 4 confirmed the validity of the scale which was crucial for achieving the objectives of the current study. The test-retest method was used to establish the stability of the scale. The duration between the pre- and post-test was four weeks. Later, the results were analyzed. Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between scores of the two applications. The correlation coefficient was relatively high (0.85) which ensured that the scale was valid to measure the Psychological and Occupational Stress of the sample of the study.

The scale of coping strategies was developed by reviewing several previous studies and references, including, Askar, (2003); Klapproth et al. (2020) and Obaid, (2008). It consisted of six dimensions: seeking help from others, resorting to religion, planning, wishful thinking and avoiding, emotional intelligence, and time management. The scale in its initial form consisted of 22 items. To assess the face validity, phrasing, and clarity of this survey, it was administrated to a group of arbitrators and based on the results, some amendments were made. For instance, five items were deleted. So, the scale used in the study consisted of 17 items. Further, the scale was administered on a pilot sample consisting of 50 teachers for verifying the validity of the internal consistency of the scale. The results are as shown in table 5.

*Table 5. Verifying the Validity of the Internal Consistency of the Scale of Coping Strategies*

Scale Dimensions	Item No.	Correlation Coefficients	Scale Dimensions	Item No.	Correlation Coefficients	Scale Dimensions	Item No.	Correlation Coefficients
Seek Help from Others	1	0.884**	Planning	6	0.797**	Emotional Intelligence	11	0.842**
	2	0.853**		7	0.883**		12	0.801**
	3	0.889**		8	0.859**	13	0.878**	
Resort to Religion	4	0.838**	Wishful Thinking and Avoiding	9	0.883**	Time Management	14	0.799**
	5	0.923**		10	0.899**		15	0.862**
							16	0.859**
							17	0.779**

Note: \*\* Significance level at 0.01

The results in table 5 showed that all items have correlation coefficients with a significant level of 0.01 with the dimension to which they belong. They also demonstrated the availability of a high degree of internal consistency for the scale. To verify the structural validity of the scale, the correlation coefficients were calculated between the total score for the two dimensions of the scale and the total score of the scale. The results are shown in table 6.

*Table 6. Results of Constructive Validity for the Scale of Coping Strategies*

Scale dimensions	Correlation coefficients
Seek help from others	0.786**
Resort to religion	0.799**
Planning	0.774**
Wishful thinking and avoiding	0.545**
Emotional intelligence	0.838**
Time management	0.775**

Note: \*\* Significance level at 0.01

The results in table 6 illustrate that the degree of each dimension of the scale is related to the overall score of the scale as correlation coefficient is significant at the 0.01 level which demonstrates the structural validity of the scale of coping strategies. Further, like table 4, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated to verify the stability for the dimensions of the scale and for the scale as a whole. The results are shown in the table 7.

Table 7. Results of Stability Coefficients for the Scale of Coping Strategies

Scale Dimensions	Stability Coefficients
Seek help from others	0.845
Resort to religion	0.694
Planning	0.792
Wishful thinking and avoiding	0.660
Emotional intelligence	0.755
time management	0.835
The scale as a whole	0.911

The reliability coefficients were all indicative of having a high degree of stability of the scale and combined with the results of table 5, 6, and 7, confirmed the validity of the scale which was required to achieve the objectives of the current study. To establish the stability of the scale, the test-retest method was used. The duration between the pre- and post-test was four weeks. The results were then analyzed, and Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated between scores of the two applications. The correlation coefficient was 0.88 which was relatively high, and this ensured that the scale was valid to measure the coping strategies for the sample of the study.

The items of the scale were rated on a 3-point Likert-type scale was used that offered the following options: large (3), medium (2), weak (1).

Descriptive data were analyzed using SPSS (Version 20.0). The scores for the tools of the study were presented as means and standard deviations. Cronbach-alpha was used to assess the stability of the tools. Pearson's correlation coefficients were also applied to check the internal consistency of the tools. The data of the present study meet the assumptions of the parametric test. The measurements are suitable for the selected tests as they are assumed to be following a specific distribution. Further, the sample size was also large. The F values were calculated from the analysis of variance to verify the significance of the differences in the level of stress according to the two variables: educational stage and the years of experience. Scheffe post-hoc test was used as a multiple comparison test. Finally, a t-test was used to verify the significance of the differences in the level of stress according to the academic qualification.

## Results

The first research question examined the level of psychological pressure among teachers in Al-Kharj governorate during the Corona pandemic. The results are shown in table 8.

Table 8. Teachers' Responses to the Psychological Stress Dimension in the Psychological and Occupational Stress Scale

No.	Psychological Pressure	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree of Approval
1	I feel annoyed sitting in front of the computer screen to teach students remotely	1.73	0.73	Medium
2	I often felt unable to continue working in the light of the crisis	1.49	0.71	Weak
3	I was very nervous at the beginning of the application of distance teaching from home	2.24	0.82	Medium
4	Corona crisis led to increased workload and more tension	2.08	0.82	Medium
5	I was frustrated that I did not have the skills needed for a distance teaching	1.8	0.83	Medium
6	I always had a feeling of fatigue as a result of working conditions from home	1.85	0.83	Medium
7	I could not control my emotions due to work stress	1.52	0.71	Weak
8	For a long time, I had a hard time concentrating between my role as a teacher and a mother	1.9	0.82	Medium
9	I was embarrassed not being able to use some educational apps effectively	1.94	0.83	Medium
10	I could not receive the student's inquiries and communicate with them through the various educational applications	1.89	0.89	Medium
Total		1.84	0.8	Medium

The results in table 8 show a medium degree of the level of psychological stress among female teachers in Al-Kharj governorate during the Corona pandemic. The results of only two items show a weak degree of psychological stress.

The second research question investigated the level of professional pressure among teachers in Al-Kharj governorate during the Corona pandemic. The results are shown in table 9.

Table 9. Teachers' Responses to the Occupational Stress Dimension in the Psychological and Occupational Stress Scale

No.	Occupational Pressure	SMA	Standard Deviation	Degree of Approval
1.	Distance teaching was considered an additional burden without any payoff at the professional level	1.62	0.76	Weak
2.	I found it difficult to provide educational content through educational applications	1.84	0.84	Medium
3.	I no longer have time to rest while I work from home as a teacher	2.0	0.84	Medium
4.	I do not feel truly accomplished in the distance teaching experience	1.52	0.7	Weak
5.	I do not have enough time to take care of my children's teaching and family care	2.04	0.84	Medium
6.	Distance teaching assignments outweigh my academic and professional experiences	1.83	0.86	Medium
7.	Often times I do not know how right or wrong my actions are	1.88	0.83	Medium
8.	The multiplicity of distance teaching applications causes confusion and an inability to concentrate	1.86	0.82	Medium
9.	Work priorities are unclear to me in distance teaching	1.6	0.73	Weak
10.	I missed actual contact with the students and my fellow teachers	1.99	0.84	Medium
Total		1.81	0.80	Medium

The results of most of the items show a moderate level of pressure among female teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of three items show weak and seven demonstrated a moderate degree of occupational pressure.

The third research question explored the strategies the female teachers have followed in Al-Kharj Governorate to deal with psychological and occupational pressures during the Corona pandemic. To answer this question, the arithmetic averages and standard deviations of the responses of the sample members were calculated on the scale of coping strategies. The results show the degree of approval for each item of the scale separately and determine the order of these strategies according to the values of the arithmetic means and standard deviations. The results are shown in Table 10.

Table 10. Teachers' Responses to the Scale of Coping Strategies

No.	Coping Strategies	Mean	Standard Deviation	Degree of Approval	Order
1.	Seek help from others	2.44	0.89	Big	4
2.	Resort to religion	2.94	0.22	Big	1
3.	Planning	2.51	0.60	Big	3
4.	Wishful thinking and avoiding	1.87	0.73	Medium	6
5.	Emotional intelligence	2.74	0.47	Big	2
6.	time management	2.40	0.66	Big	5

The fourth research question explored statistically significant differences in the level of psychological and occupational pressure among female teachers due to the following variables: educational stage, educational experience, and qualifications. To verify the significance of the differences in the level of stress according to the education stage, an analysis of variance was used. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 11. The Significance of the Differences in the Level of Stress According to the Educational Stage

The Dimension	The Source of Contrast	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F Value	Sig.
Psychological Pressure	Between groups	0.056	2	0.028	0.110	0.896
	Within groups	153.70	605	0.254		
	Total	153.75	607			
Occupational pressure	Between groups	0.238	2	0.119	0.416	0.660
	Within groups	173.03	605	0.286		
	Total	173.26	607			

It is evident from the results that there are no statistically significant differences in the level of psychological and occupational stress among teachers according to the educational stage variable during the Corona pandemic.

The results of the Analysis of variance of the significance of differences in the level of psychological and occupational stress according to the years of experience variable, as shown in Table (12).

Table 12. The Significance of the Differences in the Level of Stress According to the Years of Experience

The Dimension	The Source of Contrast	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F Value	Sig.
Psychological Pressure	Between groups	5.73	2	2.86	11.71	0.00
	Within groups	148.02	605	0.245		
	Total	153.75	607			
Occupational pressure	Between groups	5.69	2	2.84	10.28	0.00
	Within groups	167.57	605	0.277		
	Total	173.26	607			

The results indicate that there are significant differences in the level of psychological and occupational stress among teachers according to years of experience. Scheffe post-hoc test was performed to find out which pairs of means are significant. The results are as follows:

Table 13. The Results of the Scheffee Post-Hoc Test for Multiple Comparisons

The Dimension	Years of Experience	No.	Averages	Less than 5	5-10	More than 10
Psychological Pressure	Less than 5	255	1.956	-	0.175*	0.213*
	5 - 10	175	1.781	0.175* -	-	0.038
	More than 10	178	1.743	0.213* -	0.038-	-
Occupational pressure	Less than 5	255	1.933	-	0.181*	0.209*
	5 - 10	175	1.752	0.181*-	-	0.028
	More than 10	178	1.724	-0.209*	-0.028	-

Note: \*Indication level 0.05

It is evident from the results of the Scheffe test that there are statistically significant differences at the level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the level of psychological and occupational stress in favour of female teachers with less than 5 years of experience, which means that the level of psychological and occupational stress in this category is more than their counterparts with more experience (5-10 years and more than 10 years).

Table 14. The Significance of the Differences in the Level of Psychological and Occupational Stress According to the Academic Qualifications

The Dimension	Academic Qualification	No.	Average	Standard Deviation	t Value	Degree of Freedom	Sig.
Psychological Pressure	Bachelor of	547	1.83	0.50	0.62	606	0.531
	Postgraduate	61	1.90	0.48			
Occupational pressure	Bachelor of	547	1.81	0.53	1.07	606	0.281
	Postgraduate	61	1.86	0.52			

The results of the t-test for the significance of differences in the level of psychological and occupational stress according to the Academic Qualification are shown in Table 14.

### Discussion

The study shows that the highest responses are related to the feeling of tension at the beginning of the crisis, which is normal during the pandemic that has caused a lot of feelings of anxiety and fear around the world. It is followed by the questions related to the work of teachers with students through educational applications, and what may have led to some embarrassment and confusion during the work of teachers. The results also show a medium degree of approval in the responses related to the difficulties in receiving inquiries and communicating with students, in addition to the struggle between doing work tasks and the roles of teachers at home as wives and mothers as they are also engaged in educational tasks of their sons and daughters.

The lowest responses were related to the difficulty of controlling emotions and the inability to continue working. This can be explained in the light of the teachers' commitment to their professional duties and the difficulty of abandoning the practice of their mission in education. There was a need to develop an awareness among teachers to overcome this crisis. Some measures were taken by the government of KSA to limit the spread of the pandemic, like the rapid intervention of the Ministry of Education to organize the educational process remotely.

Most of the responses are related to the pressure among female teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic and the items are linked to the shortage of time required for family care and teaching children and the problems in contacting students and other teachers. It is followed by the items concerning the application of distance teaching and the difficulty of delivering the teaching content remotely. The novelty of the distance teaching process may be the cause of



these problems as it is the first experience of distance teaching and using different technologies in teaching during COVID-19. The other causes include the closure of schools due to the continuous fear of the spread of the pandemic and the transition to distance teaching that happened suddenly and was compulsory as a response to the quarantine actions.

Psychological pressure is defined as a state of stress arising from requirements or changes that require some kind of restoring conformity of the individual, and the resulting physical and psychological effects (Obaid, 2008). The level of psychological pressure in this study is determined by the degree to which the female teacher obtains through her response to each part of the psychological pressure axis in the scale of psychological and occupational pressure adopted for the current study. The results of the present study are consistent with the results of Akour et al. (2020), which showed the presence of psychological stress to varying degrees among the sample of the study. They also conform to the results of the study conducted by Klapproth et al. (2020) where the results showed the level of stress ranging from medium to a high degree. They are also consistent with the results of Quritee's (2016) study which showed a moderate level of psychological stress among male and female teachers. However, they differ from the results of the study conducted by Al-Ateeq et al. (2020) which showed high levels of psychological stress. Al-Farrihat et al. (2009) define occupational pressure as the mismatch between the individual's skills and abilities, and their work requirements. The level of occupational pressure in this study is determined by the degree to which the female teacher obtains through her response to each part of the occupational pressure axis in the scale of psychological and occupational pressure adopted for the current study.

The study shows that most of the responses are related to the use of strategies by female teachers to confront psychological and occupational stress while the avoidance and wishful thinking strategies come with a medium degree. Strategies to face psychological and occupational pressures are defined as the strategies by which the individual faces stressful daily life events and whose positive or negative constituents depend on courage or reluctance, according to the capabilities of the individual, his/ her frame of reference for behaviour, skill in bearing the stressful daily life events, and adaptive response in coping with these events without causing any negative physical or psychological effects on him/ her (Askar, 2003).

Abdul Rahim (2016) mentioned the definition of some pioneering psychologists of stress management strategies. Dweck and Wortman (1982) define stress response as the problem-solving efforts undertaken by an individual when the requirements of a situation are related to his/ her interests, and when these requirements exceed his/ her adaptive powers. Attia (2010) refers to the strategies for coping with psychological and occupational stress. Emotional coping strategies are the strategies in which the individual resorts to using emotional reactions in the face of stress, including tension, suspicion, anger, and annoyance. Cognitive coping strategies involve an individual resort to positive reinterpretation, logical analysis, some patterns of wishful thinking, and imaginative activity. Cohen (2006) presented a set of these strategies:

- Rational thinking: where the individual resorts to logical thinking, looking for sources of anxiety and causes associated pressures.
- Imagining: the individual tends to think about the future and has a great ability to imagine what might happen.
- Denial: the cognitive process through which the individual seeks to deny the pressures.

Resorting to religion comes at the forefront of the strategies confronting psychological and occupational stress, considering that Saudi society is a religious society. Like other members of society, female teachers are also facing some problems like the pressures resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and other pressures. One of the foremost solutions is to resort to faith and then comes the strategy of emotional intelligence including the relationship of female teachers with female students and fellow teachers so that they can overcome this crisis. In addition, the competent authorities from the Saudi Ministry of Health have taken some measures to raise awareness about the COVID-19 and give the correct health information to the female teachers which contribute to allay fears of the pandemic to some extent. Further, similar actions were taken by the Ministry of Education, including, placing a guide to raise awareness of the COVID-19 on the ministry's website. It is believed that raising the level of awareness among workers in the educational system, including teachers, has contributed greatly to help them to control their negative thoughts and feelings.

The planning strategy comes in the third order. This is consistent with the nature of the teachers' work in schools and their habit of work according to quarterly and monthly plans to implement the scheduled curriculum, in addition to their planning of daily lessons. It is evident from the study that they can acquire planning skills during distance teaching. The fourth-order 'seek help from others', may also be explained by the employment of communication skills by the teachers to get help from other colleagues. The availability of multiple communication programs across many levels and the reliance on those programs and devices facilitated the female teacher in distance education. The time management strategy shows an arithmetic average less than the rest of the strategies, and this may be due to the overlapping between the tasks of female teachers in distance teaching and their commitment to their family and teaching missions. Finally, the avoidance and wishful thinking strategy come with a weak degree to reflect the teachers' preference for confrontation strategies, their belief in the importance of the role they play and not to rely on negative feelings especially during the crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study shows no statistically significant differences regarding educational stage and the academic qualification can be explained given that there are many similarities in distance teaching among the sample of the study. They include confronting the same fears associated with the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, distance teaching through Madrasti platform (a Saudi Arabian e-learning platform introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic) and bearing in mind that the practice of distance teaching does not allow the application of many teaching skills that can be applied within the traditional classroom, as shown by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2018). The differences were statistically significant according to the years of experience, in favour of the less experienced teachers (less than 5 years). This may be due to the difficulties that the teachers face at the onset of their careers, and the Corona pandemic and distance education came to exacerbate those difficulties putting more psychological and professional pressures on them.

The results are in line with the results of Dwikat (2018) which show that there were no statistically significant differences between the level of stress among the sample members according to the educational qualification variable. Further, the results showing that there were no statistically significant differences in the level of stress according to the years of experience confirm the results of Shadifat and Abu Saa (2019). However, the results showing that there are differences in the level of stress according to the educational stage are in contrast with Klapproth et al., 2020.

### Conclusion

During the COVID-19 pandemic, psychological and professional stress has increased among the teachers. The results show a moderate level of psychological and professional stresses. The findings show statistically significant differences in the variable of teaching experience. However, no statistically significant differences were found on the variable of academic qualification. It was found that female teachers had followed strategies to cope with psychological and professional stresses. The study shows that most of the responses were related to the use of strategies by female teachers to confront psychological and occupational stress. One of the foremost solutions is to 'resort to faith' and then comes the strategy of 'emotional intelligence' including the relationship of female teachers with female students and fellow teachers so that they can overcome this crisis. The 'planning strategy' comes in the third and 'seeking help from others' in the fourth-order. The 'time management' strategy shows an arithmetic average less than the rest of the strategies. Finally, the 'avoidance and wishful thinking' strategy comes with a weak degree to reflect the teachers' preference for confrontation strategies. Most of the responses are related to the pressure among female teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The novelty of the distance teaching process may be the cause of these problems as it is the first experience of distance teaching and using different technologies in teaching during COVID-19.

### Recommendations

The study recommends holding training courses for teachers to develop distance teaching skills, and using various technologies and applications in this field, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic anticipating future developments. There is also a need to arrange training courses for teachers to develop and organize time management skills, allowing them to manage the educational process smoothly remotely, without conflict between their various tasks. Further, it is highly recommended to review the experiences of distinguished female teachers in the field of distance teaching and honouring them at the level of different educational departments, to transfer these experiences to the teachers with less experience in this field.

This study recommends that some other research studies should be conducted focusing other institutes from other provinces of Saudi Arabia. Similar studies may be conducted aiming at identifying the level of psychological and occupational stress in light of the COVID-19 pandemic among school leaders and exploring strategies for coping with these pressures. Such studies will provide a broader and more comprehensive perspective of the issue under discussion. Further, based on the findings of this study, other researchers can further probe into the matter and further contribute to the existing state of research in this area.

### Limitations

This study was limited in terms of including only Saudi female teachers in government schools in Al-Kharj City. The study was conducted in the second semester of the academic year 1442 H. The tools of this study include only two scales: a scale of psychological and occupational stress and a scale of coping strategies.

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