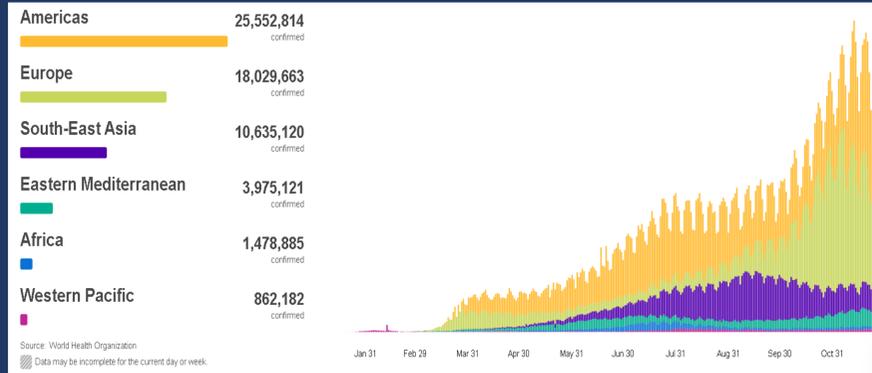


## Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic has adversely impacted every field of life (Al Omari et al., 2020; Pfefferbaum & North, 2020). Education around the globe had also been shifted to hybrid mode as only best way to resume studies. But it has accompanied a lot of **mental health issues** for students which is also evident from literature (Islam et al., 2020; Nurunnabi et al., 2020; Sundarasan et al., 2020).



**Tele school** was introduced by Pakistan's Ministry of Education for schools and colleges. University students, however, adopted the online lecture delivery mode mainly through **Zoom and Google Meet**. Online learning continues till September. But as the severity of pandemic decreases, **hybrid learning system** was introduced observing a blend of classroom and online learning.

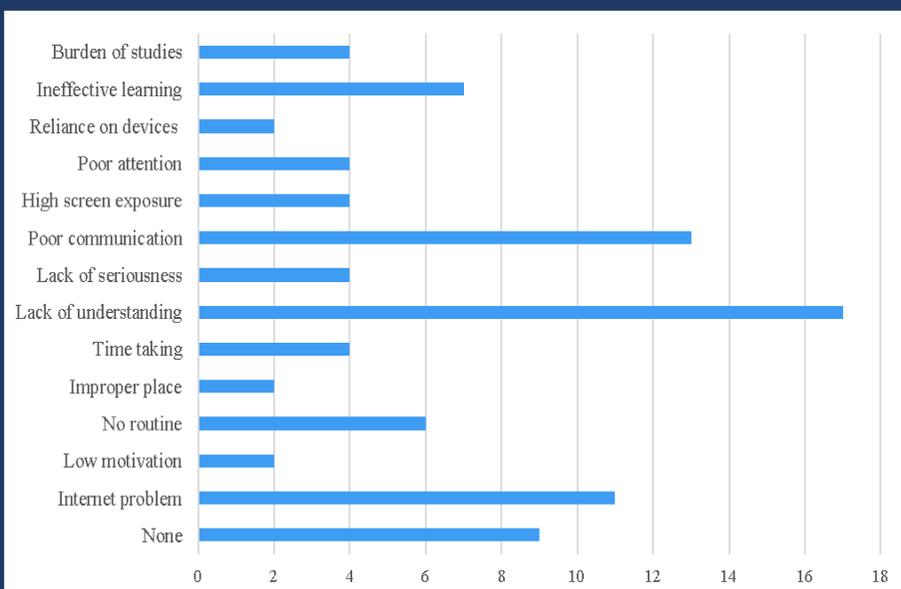
## Rationale of Study

Research evidence indicate that hybrid learning has accompanied psychological distress among the students as signified by anxiety and stress impacting their psychological wellbeing (Islam et al., 2020; Nurunnabi et al., 2020).

There exist, however, a literature gap in researches of Pakistan about the major contributors of increasing psychological distress among students. The present study thus aim to fill this gap which would also help to improve hybrid learning mode of education.

## Results

Figure 1  
Themes for Possible Contributors of Psychological Distress as Highlighted by Students (N=50)



## Method

### Research Design

This study followed the qualitative research design. **Semi-structured interviews** were conducted using open-ended questions.

### Objective

To identify the major contributors of psychological distress among the students during newly adapted hybrid learning system of education.

### Sample

Sample of **50 students** ( $M_{age} = 24.3$ ;  $SD_{age} = 10.7$ ) was collected through purposive sampling across the country from Islamabad Capital Territory, Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit Baltistan.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=50)

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	15	30%
	Female	35	70%
Education	Undergraduates	20	40%
	Graduates	15	30%
	Postgraduates	15	30%
Education Institute	Government	31	62%
	Non-government	19	38%
Residence	Islamabad Capital Territory	05	10%
	Punjab	10	20%
	Sindh	10	20%
	Balochistan	10	20%
	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	10	20%
	Gilgit Baltistan	05	10%

### Procedure

The study was conducted during first wave of COVID19. The students were briefed about the study purpose and Thematic analysis was used to generate themes of the information.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The findings suggest that some key problems mentioned by students were **lack of proper understanding, feeling miscommunicated with teacher, and poor internet connectivity**. These problems could be the possible contributors of stress and anxiety resulting in the psychological distress among students.

This is also supported by literature showing that hybrid learning system is considered as unfavorable owing to lack of or poor internet connection, financial constraints to own the requirements for learning (i.e., personal computer and smartphone), and no personal interaction with teachers as well as classmates (Baloran, 2020)

### Implications of Study

The present study could help in improving the hybrid learning system by addressing the problems faced by students and improving their psychosocial wellbeing.

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