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Perceived Roles and Lived Experiences of Early Childhood Education Teachers Following Urban Flooding in Lahore, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Urban flooding is a recurring hazard in Lahore, yet little is known about how early childhood education (ECE) teachers in public schools understand their role and experience the aftermath of a flood. This study aimed to explore (a) how ECE teachers perceived their role in the school community after urban flooding and (b) their lived experiences of urban flooding in their school community. A qualitative, phenomenological design was used. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with twenty-five female ECE teachers working in public schools in flood-affected urban areas of Lahore and were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis. The first finding, related to the first objective, was that teachers described a role that expanded beyond classroom instruction to include emotional support, caregiving, and crisis management, and they placed children's emotional wellbeing ahead of academic progress. The second finding, related to the second objective, was that teachers described the flood as a disruption to both schooling and children's emotional state, marked by low attendance, forgotten learning, a delayed curriculum, and children who returned anxious, quiet, and less confident. The study concludes that, after urban flooding, ECE teachers saw themselves as caregivers and emotional supporters as well as instructors, and that the flood disrupted both learning and children's emotional wellbeing, with gradual improvement over time.

Introduction

Environmental hazards linked to climate change are a growing threat to health, livelihoods, and education (IPCC, 2022; UNICEF, 2025). A UNICEF (2025) analysis found that extreme climate events disrupted the schooling of at least 242 million students in 85 countries in 2024, and that South Asia was the most affected region, with about 128 million students affected. Floods are one of these hazards. In cities, heavy rainfall combined with built-up land and limited drainage can turn even short rainfall events into flooding, and Lahore is one of the Pakistani cities where this happens during the monsoon (Ali & Mahmood, 2024; Zia et al., 2023). The cost of such floods is not limited to damaged buildings. The 2022 floods in Pakistan were assessed as causing more than USD 30 billion in damages and economic losses (World Bank, 2022), and the education of children was interrupted alongside the loss of homes and property. The problem has not gone away. UNICEF (2026) reported that severe monsoon floods in August 2025 delayed the return to school of more than 28 million students in Pakistan, and a case study of South Punjab described long suspensions of educational activity, lower enrolment, and higher dropout after floods (Ali, 2025).

Young children are among the most affected. They depend on adults for protection, comfort, and routine, and they have limited capacity to cope with disaster by themselves (Kousky, 2016; Peek, 2008). Teachers are often the adults who help them feel safe again, yet teachers belong to the same flooded communities. They return to their own damaged homes and families and are still expected to be present in the classroom. In an interview study with forty teachers after an earthquake and tsunami in Indonesia, Parrott et al. (2024a) examined how teachers conceptualized their role after a major disaster and concluded that teachers showed the capacity and willingness to play a central part in students' psychosocial recovery. A related study noted that teachers need psychosocial support themselves and often lack training to support students psychologically (Parrott et al., 2024b). Evidence from early childhood settings points the same way. Preschool teachers who returned to work after the 2023 earthquakes in Türkiye shifted classroom emphasis from cognitive to social and emotional activities, yet felt psychologically unsupported (Aydos et al., 2025). In flood-affected public schools in Balochistan, Karim and Ajmal (2026) found that fear and worry disrupted students' sleep and concentration, and that a supportive school climate and predictable routines eased distress.

Three gaps limit what is known. First, much of the information on flooding and education describes damage to buildings and the number of children affected, and says less about what happens in the classroom after school resumes. Second, research on teachers' roles after disasters has been conducted largely in other countries and after other types of disaster, such as earthquakes and tsunamis, rather than recurrent urban flooding. Third, where teachers are studied, they are usually not early childhood teachers, although these are the teachers whose pupils depend most on adult support. In Pakistan, the lived experience, emotional burden, and coping of ECE teachers who keep caring for displaced and traumatized children remain little studied (Ahmad et al., 2025). Little is therefore known about how ECE teachers in Lahore's public schools perceive their role after urban flooding, or about how they experienced the period after the flood in their school communities (Nawaz, I., Kadirova, Z., Gazieva, S., Ismoyilov, B., & Nawaz, M. (2025, June).

This article addresses that gap. It reports two parts of a wider master's thesis on ECE teachers' roles, experiences, and practices regarding urban flooding in Lahore: teachers' perceived roles and their lived experiences. The study gives priority to teachers' own accounts. It does not measure children's learning or recovery, and it does not claim that teachers' descriptions are verified outcomes.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by two objectives, which are reported in this article.

1. To explore early childhood education (ECE) teachers' perceived roles following their experience of urban flooding in their school community.
2. To examine ECE teachers' lived experiences of urban flooding in their school community.

Research Questions

1. How do ECE teachers describe their role in their school community following the experience of urban flooding?
2. What are the lived experiences of ECE teachers who have faced urban flooding in their school community?

Literature Review

Urban flooding is shaped by land use, built-up density, and drainage as well as by rainfall (Zia et al., 2023). A geospatial assessment of the Lahore district linked flood risk to urbanization and rainfall intensity and identified the central, heavily built-up part of the district as the most hazardous (Ali & Mahmood, 2024). Past floods in Pakistan show that the educational effects reach beyond the flood itself. A study of the 2010 floods linked them to children leaving school and to lower educational attainment and completion, partly because families lost income (Khan & Hussain, 2023). A survey of 121 teachers in flood-affected government schools in District Chiniot, Punjab, reported that floods harmed the learning process, closed schools, damaged infrastructure, and displaced families (Sarfraz et al., 2022). That study concentrated on enrolment, attendance, and performance, but it shows that public school teachers in Punjab face disruption directly and are expected to manage it (Nawaz, I. (2026).

Children's wellbeing is affected too. Ali et al. (2024) examined behavior problems and mental health among children affected by the 2022 floods in Pakistan. A systematic review and meta-analysis reported a high prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder among flood victims (Golitaleb et al., 2022). Because Lahore floods repeatedly, children and the teachers who work with them every day may face stress more than once. Research on how teachers in Pakistan cope after floods remains limited. In Balochistan, primary school teachers used adaptive strategies such as remote teaching and collaboration to keep education going after the 2022 floods

(Arif et al., 2025). That study treats teachers as active responders, but it was conducted in another province and cannot be applied directly to ECE classrooms in Lahore (Nawaz, I., & Lyu, R. (2026).

Young children are especially vulnerable because they depend on others for protection and have limited ability to understand or control their environment (Kousky, 2016; Le Brocque et al., 2017; Peek, 2008). Children who go through a disaster may show fear, depression, guilt, nightmares, separation anxiety, loss of interest in attending school, attention difficulties, and aggression (Baggerly & Exum, 2008). Because young children often lack the verbal skills to express fear and helplessness, their distress can appear as changes in behavior, including regression (Perry & Szalavitz, 2006). Routine therefore matters in the classroom. Schools can help children re-establish routine and psychological stability, and Le Brocque et al. (2017) argue that teachers and education professionals have a special role in supporting children's mental health after natural disasters.

Several authors describe how this role extends beyond instruction. Teachers may need to adapt their approaches, offer emotional support, communicate with parents, and check on the safety of children and families, often while coping with the disaster themselves (Le Brocque et al., 2017). Tolentino (2017) explored the beliefs, practices, and perceived roles of teachers after flooding in Louisiana, a study that is directly relevant here because it treats teachers' own accounts as the evidence. Teachers' professional roles are also understood to be shaped by personal, contextual, emotional, and institutional factors, which links the idea of role to teacher identity (Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In ECE this matters particularly, because teachers act as both educators and caregivers for children who depend on them for mobility, hygiene, communication, and emotional security.

The study draws mainly on Bandura's (2006) social cognitive theory, which treats people as active agents who contribute to their life circumstances and are not merely reactive to them. In this view, what a person believes (person factors), what a person does (behavior), and the surrounding environment influence one another continuously. Applied here, the flood and its effects on school and children form the environment, teachers' understanding of their role and professional identity form the person factor, and their caregiving and emotional support form the behavior. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory situates this interaction within the wider context of home, school, community, and policy in which the flood occurred.

The reviewed studies describe the flood risk in Lahore, damage to schools and learning, distress among children, teacher coping in another province, and teachers' roles after disasters in other countries. None of them examines how ECE teachers in Lahore's public schools perceive their role after urban flooding or what the period after the flood was like for them. This article contributes that evidence.

Research Design and Approach

The study was situated in an interpretivist paradigm, which holds that there is no single objective reality and that people's understanding of the world is influenced by their own perspectives and social environment (Omodan, 2022). The paradigm suited the purpose of the study because the researcher did not aim to measure the effects of flooding on teachers but to understand how teachers experienced it and what meaning they gave to their role. Teachers' own accounts were therefore treated as the main source of knowledge, and the researcher interpreted them.

A qualitative approach was adopted because the study explored personal experiences, perceptions, and meanings that numbers could not capture (Creswell & Poth, 2024). A phenomenological design was chosen because it aims to describe how a particular phenomenon is experienced by those who live it (Neubauer et al., 2019). The phenomenon here was urban flooding and its effect on the roles of ECE teachers in urban school communities of Lahore. The design allowed the researcher to ask questions from the teachers' point of view and not through pre-set categories.

Two consequences of this choice should be stated. First, teachers' accounts were given in retrospect, so the study treats them as perceived experiences and not as objectively measured change. Second, the aim was to understand a specific group of 25 teachers and not to produce findings that can be generalized to all ECE teachers. Figure 1 summarizes the design and procedure.

Figure 1

Research Design and Procedure of the Study



Data Collection

Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews, which let participants speak in their own words about their experiences and let the researcher ask follow-up questions (Kallio et al., 2016). The interview guide was developed by selecting and adapting questions from the protocol used by Tolentino (2017) in her study of teachers' experiences of a flood in their school community. Following the five-phase framework of Kallio et al. (2016), the researcher established the need for semi-structured interviews, drew on previous knowledge from the literature, the theoretical framework, and Tolentino's protocol, selected and adapted the relevant questions, pilot-tested the guide, and presented the full guide. The final guide contained 17 main questions derived from the 24 questions in Tolentino's protocol. Questions that did not fit the aims or context of the present study were dropped, and the rest were modified for urban flooding and ECE in Lahore.

Before the main data collection, the guide was piloted with five teachers from flood-affected schools in Lahore (Johar Town, Model Town, Ichra, Bahria Town, and Township) who had between 7 and 10 years of teaching experience. The pilot checked the clarity and relevance of the questions and whether they produced meaningful responses.

The researcher approached an accessible public school, explained the purpose of the study to the teachers, and reminded them that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any point without negative consequences. After informed consent, each teacher was interviewed individually and face to face. With the participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded, and they lasted approximately 40 to 58 minutes. Teachers were asked to describe their experiences before, during, and after the flooding and the effect it had on their work and responsibilities. The interviews were transcribed verbatim, and the researcher read the transcripts carefully before analysis began. The data were collected several months after the flood, so they rely on teachers' recollection of the event.

The interview data were analyzed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2021) in six phases: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, generation of initial themes, development and review of themes, refinement, definition, and naming of themes, and writing up the analysis. The researcher read and reread the transcripts, coded significant excerpts that captured teachers' perceived roles and experiences, grouped related codes into potential themes, and checked these themes against the coded extracts and the entire dataset. Themes were adjusted, merged, split, or dropped where needed. The phases were treated as iterative and not strictly linear. In reflexive thematic analysis, themes are actively constructed through the researcher's engagement with the data and are not simply found in it (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The whole dataset was analyzed within the wider thesis and produced nine themes. This article reports the four themes that address the first two objectives. Frequencies of participants per theme were not recorded in the analysis, so the findings below use descriptive terms such as many and several, and no counts are claimed.

Credibility was supported by in-depth interviews with teachers who had first-hand experience, by probing questions, and by rereading transcripts when developing themes. Dependability was supported by systematically documenting the interview questions, responses, codes, and themes. Confirmability was addressed by grounding the findings in participants' actual responses and not in the researcher's opinions or assumptions. Transferability was addressed by describing the participants, public schools, ECE settings, and the flooding context so that readers can judge whether the findings apply elsewhere.

Participants were informed about the purpose of the study before the interviews, told that participation was voluntary, and told that they could withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, names and personal details were not revealed, and codes were used to identify participants. Because teachers were asked to talk about difficult experiences, the researcher conducted the interviews respectfully.

Sample and Population

The population comprised ECE teachers working in public schools in urban areas of Lahore who had first-hand experience of teaching during or after an urban flooding event. Lahore was chosen because urban flooding is a significant problem there and affects educational activity, school infrastructure, and the learning environment (Zia et al., 2023). The study was limited to public schools because these schools face particular constraints in infrastructure and resources when recovering from environmental disruption. The target group was female teachers working with young children at the early childhood level.

Purposive sampling was used, which is widely used in qualitative research to identify information-rich participants (Campbell et al., 2020). The researcher first identified the urban context, then contacted accessible public schools, and then invited teachers who met the inclusion criteria and were willing to take part. The procedure therefore combined convenient access to schools with purposive selection of teachers. The final sample consisted of 25 female ECE teachers. The researcher stopped collecting data once enough information had been gathered to identify patterns and themes. Participants were aged between 28 and 39 years and had between 4 and 13 years of ECE teaching experience (Table 1). To protect anonymity, participants are identified by codes (P1 to P25), and school names are not reported.

Table 1

Age and Teaching Experience of Participants (N = 25)

Code	Age (years)	Teaching experience (years)	Code	Age (years)	Teaching experience (years)
P1	29	5	P14	38	12
P2	31	7	P15	35	10
P3	34	9	P16	33	8
P4	28	4	P17	30	6
P5	33	8	P18	39	13
P6	36	10	P19	32	7

Code	Age (years)	Teaching experience (years)	Code	Age (years)	Teaching experience (years)
P7	32	7	P20	36	11
P8	35	8	P21	31	6
P9	37	11	P22	29	5
P10	30	7	P23	37	12
P11	29	5	P24	34	9
P12	34	9	P25	32	7
P13	31	6			

Note. All participants were female ECE teachers working in public schools in urban Lahore.

Findings

The findings are organized by objective. Four themes were developed from the interviews with the 25 teachers: two address the first objective (perceived roles) and two address the second (lived experiences). Figure 2 shows how the themes map onto the objectives, and Table 2 presents the themes, sub-themes, and initial codes. Quotations are identified by participant codes. All of the findings are teachers' reported perceptions and recollections and are not independent measurements of children's learning or recovery.

Figure 2

Mapping of Emergent Themes to the Research Objectives

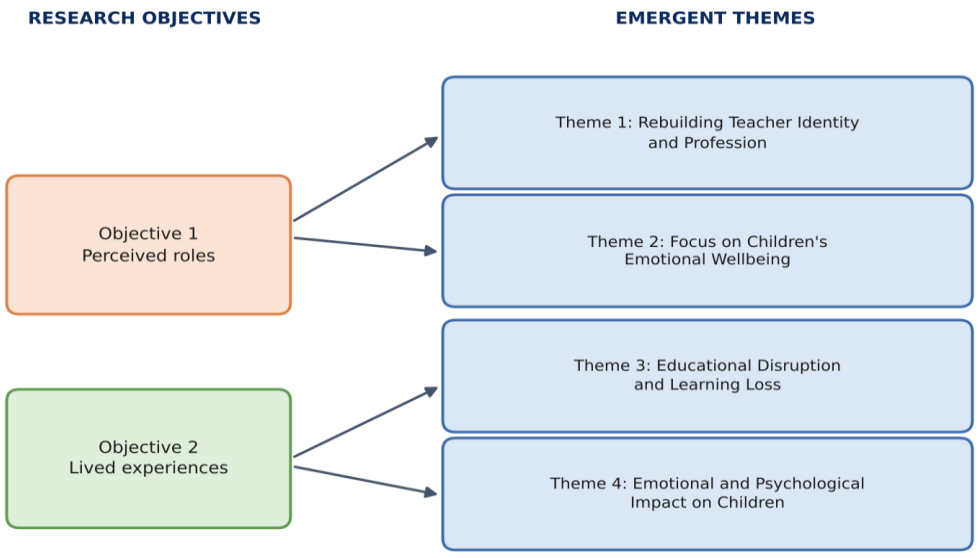


Table 2

Themes, Sub-Themes, and Initial Codes Related to Objectives 1 and 2

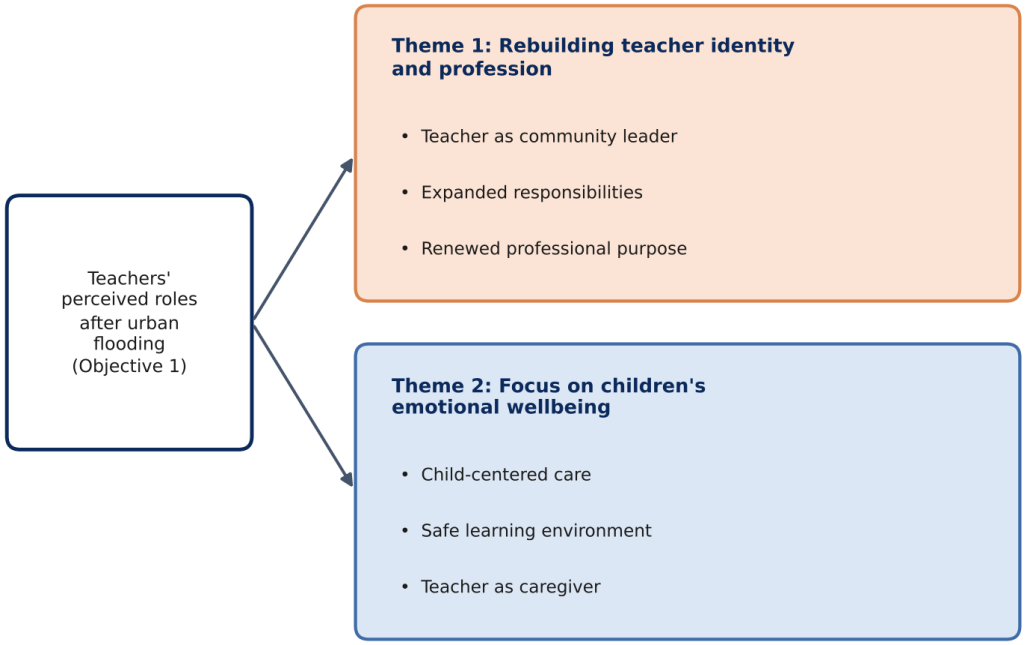
Theme	Sub-theme	Initial codes	What teachers described
Objective 1 Theme 1: Rebuilding teacher identity and profession	Teacher as community leader Expanded responsibilities Renewed professional purpose	Guidance, leadership, advocacy Counselling, caregiving, crisis management Stronger educational mission	Teachers became key support figures for children and families during recovery, took on responsibilities beyond teaching, and described a renewed sense of purpose.
Objective 1 Theme 2: Focus on children's emotional wellbeing	Child-centered care Safe learning environment Teacher as caregiver	Student welfare, safety, emotional needs Protection, comfort, nurturing classroom Beyond teaching, emotional support role	Children's emotional recovery became more important than academics, and teachers worked to create a safe atmosphere in which learning could resume.
Objective 2 Theme 3: Educational disruption and learning loss	School closures and absenteeism Learning loss and academic regression Curriculum delays	Low attendance, flooded roads, school access problems, missed classes Forgotten lessons, poor retention, revision needed Interrupted teaching, incomplete syllabus, repeated lessons	Flooded roads and displaced families reduced attendance, children forgot earlier learning, and teachers spent extra time revisiting material before moving on.
Objective 2 Theme 4: Emotional and psychological impact on children	Fear and anxiety Reduced confidence Emotional recovery needs	Fear, worry, insecurity, emotional distress Hesitation, withdrawal, lack of participation Comfort, reassurance, emotional support	Children returned nervous, quiet, and less engaged, and needed comfort and reassurance before they could re-engage with learning.

Note. Sub-themes and initial codes are listed in the same order.

The first objective was to explore how ECE teachers perceived their role in the school community after urban flooding. The responses were organized into two themes (Figure 3). Taken together, they show teachers describing a role that was wider than instruction and that put children's emotional safety first.

Figure 3

Themes and Sub-Themes Related to Teachers' Perceived Roles (Objective 1)



The first theme, rebuilding teacher identity and profession, reflects a change in how participants understood their professional role because of the flood. Teachers spoke about supporting children's and families' emotional needs, giving guidance, and managing crisis situations that took place outside the classroom. The theme has three sub-themes: teacher as community leader, expanded responsibilities, and renewed professional purpose.

Beyond the classroom, participants became key people in guiding and supporting children and families during and after the crisis. P14 described the reach of this role: "I'm not just teaching a child; I'm teaching a family," and added, "When I teach a child to share, I'm teaching a whole community." In addition to teaching, teachers described providing emotional support, care, and crisis management. Several described their role in terms of healing, protection, and presence. P4 said, "I think my job is to be a healer and not a teacher," while P16 stated, "My job is to protect them. Physically, yes, but also emotionally." P21 described herself as "a safe adult" in children's lives, and P8 saw herself as "a bridge between the child and the world, between their fear and their courage, between what they lost and what they can still have." P24 used the image of a gardener: "My role is to create an environment."

Participants also felt that the experience strengthened their sense of responsibility and purpose as ECE teachers. P1 explained, "My goal was not only to teach but also to make them feel safe." P3 described her role as providing stability for children living amid disruption: "I must be one thing that remains the same." Overall, this theme shows that the flood did more than add new tasks to teachers' workloads. It reframed the purpose and scope of their work, placing them in the role of caregiver, guide, and crisis responder as well as teacher.

The second theme, focus on children's emotional wellbeing, concerns the consistent focus on children's emotional safety, and not on academic achievement, in the weeks and months after the flooding. Participants said that formal instruction was often secondary because children were afraid, distressed, or insecure. The theme has three sub-themes: child-centered care, a safe learning environment, and the teacher as caregiver.

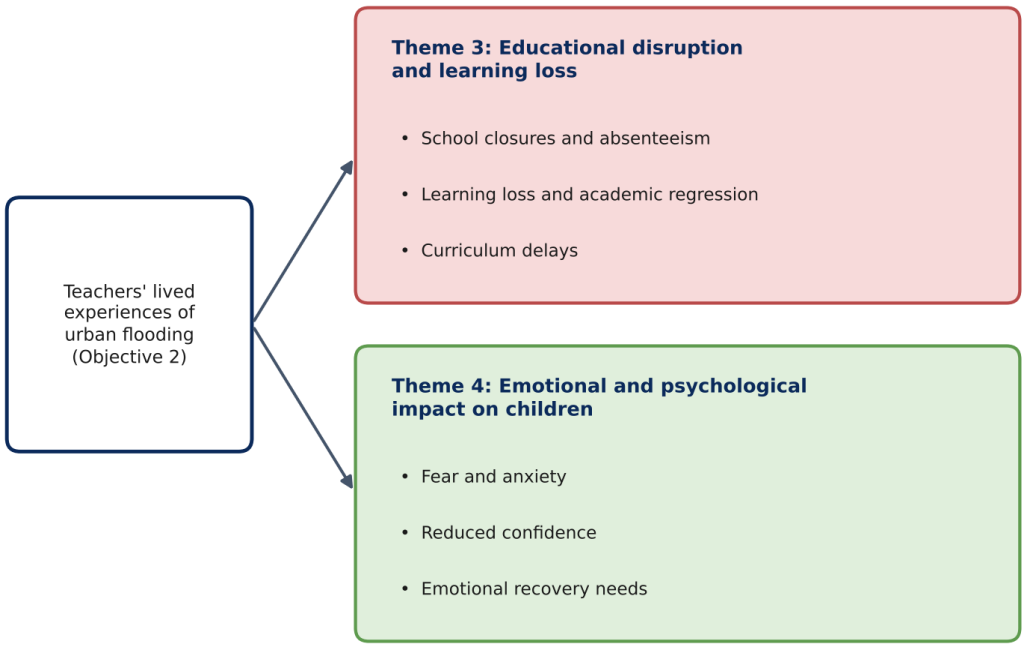
Teachers treated children's safety, welfare, and emotional needs as a prerequisite for teaching. P10 recalled, "The first thing that came to mind was the emotional health of children, and learning was secondary since they required reassurance, comfort and a sense of a normal routine." P8 said that children initially needed more emotional support than academic instruction: "First, we helped children feel safe, then with studies." The same ordering appears in other teachers' accounts. P1 stated, "Love first, everything else second," P12 said, "trust first, teaching second," and P4 said, "Healing comes first." P5 described how emotion shaped her use of time: "before they could learn much, I had to spend extra time talking to them and calming them."

Teachers took deliberate steps to create a safe, secure, and supportive classroom in which children could slowly regain a sense of security. P16 explained that children "needed to be encouraged and given security before they were ready to take part in lessons," and P11 described listening as her major role: "Listen to what they don't say. Listen to their silence. Listen to their drawings." P23 observed that the effects "were more emotional than academic initially." This theme implies that emotional wellbeing was not an add-on. In teachers' accounts it was a core element that had to be in place before learning could resume.

The second objective was to examine teachers' lived experiences of urban flooding in their school community. The responses were organized into two themes (Figure 4). Both concern how flooding disrupted schooling and children's emotional state, as teachers saw it when they returned to their classrooms.

Figure 4

Themes and Sub-Themes Related to Teachers' Lived Experiences (Objective 2)



The third theme, educational disruption and learning loss, relates to the disruption of the school's normal functioning and of children's learning. Participants spoke about school access, attendance, continuity of teaching, and progress through the curriculum. It has three sub-themes: school closures and absenteeism, learning loss and academic regression, and curriculum delays.

Flooding made it difficult for children to reach school, which led to closures, low attendance, and missed classes. P1 said that "many of my students were unable to attend school for weeks," and P4 described how transport was disrupted and "teachers and students were not going to school very much for a few weeks." P6 reported "a drop in attendance and some children arrived after many days, so they missed work." Family circumstances added to this. P2 explained that many children "missed out on lessons and were struggling to make up for the lost time with the rest of their class." P17 added that some children missed examinations and school evaluations, which were retaken when they returned.

Prolonged absence resulted in learning loss. Children who missed several days often did not remember what had been covered before, and teachers had to spend extra time reviewing earlier work. P1 said, "children forget a lot of what they had learned prior. It took some weeks to help them catch up with their learning." P14 noticed that children "required more revision than usual" and that teachers "had to go over lessons as they had forgotten many concepts because of not attending school." P25 likewise said that children "had forgotten what they had been taught." The curriculum was delayed as a result. Planned lessons were often not completed, and some teachers spent additional time reworking earlier material before introducing new content. P1 observed that "Revising previous lessons and helping kids settle in took up a much larger share of my time," and P20 noted that teaching was harder because of "the difference in learning levels amongst the students after the flood," since some children had attended regularly and others had missed many classes.

Together, this theme shows that teachers experienced the flood not as a brief interruption but as a disruption that affected continuity and progression in teaching and learning for weeks. Some teachers also described improvement. P10 said that attendance became nearly normal after a time, and P25 said that after a few months the school's difficulties had improved.

The fourth theme, the emotional and psychological impact on children, concerns the changes that teachers observed in children after the flood. Teachers described effects that went beyond the physical and that they often saw as more significant. The theme has three sub-themes: fear and anxiety, reduced confidence, and emotional recovery needs.

Teachers described fear, worry, and insecurity that continued after the event. P3 reported that "some children were frightened and not willing to leave their parents" and that children "could not concentrate as they used to, had expressions including worry, and were distractible during lessons." Environmental triggers were also mentioned. P13 said that teachers continued to ensure children's safety "when hearing heavy rainfall," because children still asked questions about another flood, and P3 noted that a few children were still upset when it rained.

Participants also noted that some children became quieter, more cautious, and withdrawn, with less participation and confidence in class activities. P5 said that "some children became very quiet, and no longer responded to questions." P7 described children who became "quiet and less active in the classroom" and "were not interested in playing games or participating in classroom activities as before." P22 said that children "returned to school not so confident and required additional support." Children's need for comfort and reassurance came before full re-engagement with learning. P16 said that children "became more reliant on teachers for additional attention and guidance before they could begin to learn confidently," and P18 recalled that many children were at first "interested in speaking about the event" and not in learning activities.

Overall, the theme suggests that the psychological effects of flooding continued after children had physically returned to the classroom, so teachers attended deliberately to emotional recovery as a precondition for learning. Teachers also described gradual improvement over several months. P22 said that children were later more confident and engaged in classroom activities again, and P24 said that children were learning well again and the classroom atmosphere was happier.

Table 3 shows how each objective was linked to a research question, to the interview questions that addressed it, and to a finding.

Table 3

Alignment of Research Objectives, Research Questions, Interview Questions, and Findings

Research objective	Research question	Interview questions	Finding
RO1: To explore ECE teachers' perceived roles following their experience of urban flooding in their school community.	RQ1: How do ECE teachers describe their role in their school community following the experience of urban flooding?	What are the most important parts of your teaching philosophy? What do you think is most important in your work as a teacher? What do you think is your major role as an early childhood education teacher? What parts of teaching are you most passionate about? Can you describe how you worked to fulfill your professional ideals in the face of challenge?	Finding 1: ECE teachers reported that their jobs expanded beyond teaching in the classroom because of the flooding. This included emotional support, caregiving, and crisis management. They put children's emotional wellbeing before academic progress. (Themes 1 and 2)

Research objective	Research question	Interview questions	Finding
RO2: To examine ECE teachers' lived experiences of urban flooding in their school community.	RQ2: What are the lived experiences of ECE teachers who have faced urban flooding in their school community?	How would you describe your experiences during the flooding? How would you describe your school community during the flooding? How would you describe your school community right after the flooding and now a few months after? Do you think the flooding impacted how students learned? If so, in what ways?	Finding 2: Teachers experienced flooding as a disruption to both schooling and children's emotional state. The data showed flooded roads, low attendance, forgotten concepts, a delayed syllabus, and children who returned anxious, quiet, and less confident. (Themes 3 and 4)

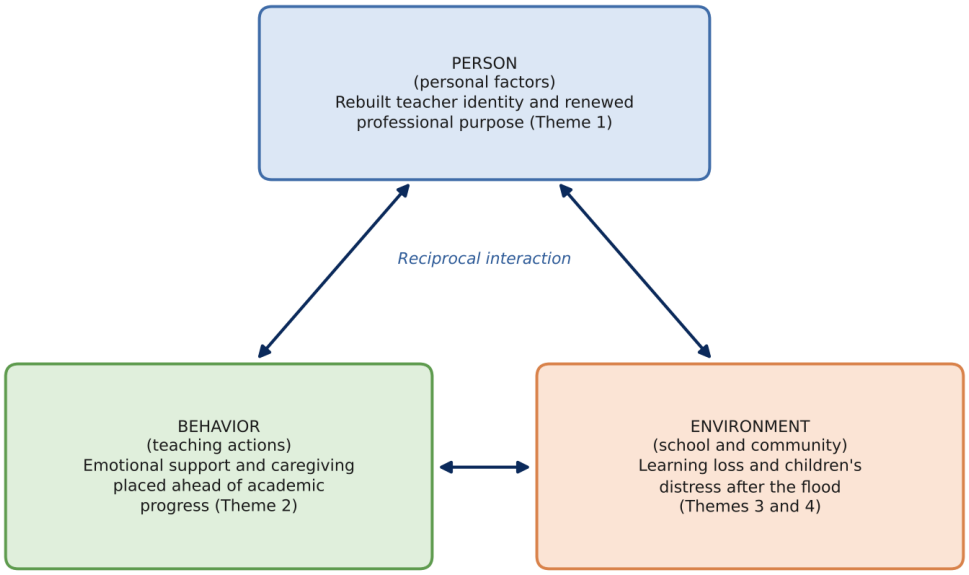
Note. Interview questions are those aligned with each objective in the study's alignment table.

Discussion

This study set out to describe how ECE teachers in public schools of urban Lahore perceived their role after urban flooding and how they experienced the flood in their school communities. Throughout, the discussion separates teachers' descriptions from any verified effect, because the study did not observe classrooms or measure children's learning and recovery. Bandura's (2006) social cognitive theory is used as an interpretive lens: the findings are read as showing person, behavior, and environment influencing one another after the flood (Figure 5). This reading is a theoretical interpretation of teachers' accounts and was not tested.

Figure 5

Findings Mapped onto Bandura's Triadic Reciprocal Causation Model



In answer to Research Question 1, teachers described a role that expanded beyond classroom teaching to include emotional support, caregiving, and crisis management, and they placed children's emotional wellbeing before academic progress. This is consistent with international work that treats teachers as central to students' psychosocial recovery after disasters (Le Brocque et al., 2017; Parrott et al., 2024a). It is also consistent with Tolentino's (2017) study of teachers after flooding in Louisiana, in which teachers likewise took on additional emotional and practical roles for children who had lost possessions and were distressed. In both settings, teachers appear to have taken on a more caring role without a formal mandate. In the present study, the expansion was also experienced as a change in professional identity: teachers described themselves as healers, protectors, a bridge, and a safe adult, and not only as instructors. Read through social cognitive theory, the changed environment may have led teachers to adjust their behavior and to see themselves differently. That the same teachers also reported a stronger sense of purpose suggests that the role change was not only a burden.

In answer to Research Question 2, teachers experienced the flood as a disruption to schooling and to children's emotional state. Flooded roads, displaced families, and closures reduced attendance. Children forgot earlier learning, and teachers spent time revising before moving on, which delayed the curriculum. These accounts agree with Pakistani evidence that floods harm learning, close schools, damage infrastructure, and displace families (Sarfraz et al., 2022) and that flood effects on schooling continue beyond the event (Khan & Hussain, 2023). The teachers' descriptions of fearful, quiet, and withdrawn children also match the signs of distress described in the literature on children after disasters (Baggerly & Exum, 2008; Perry & Szalavitz, 2006) and the concern for children's mental health after the 2022 floods (Ali et al., 2024). Tolentino (2017) also reported challenging behaviors and lack of interest in learning among children after flooding, so that the difficulty continued after the water had gone. The present study adds a classroom-level view of this continuation in an urban Pakistani setting, seen through ECE teachers' eyes. It also shows a more graded picture: teachers described effects lasting weeks to months, and several also described gradual improvement, while some triggers, such as heavy rain, remained.

Taken together, the two findings show teachers as active agents and not only as victims of the disaster. They were affected by the flood themselves, yet they adapted their role and gave priority to children's safety. This matches the picture of teachers as active responders in a study of another Pakistani flood (Arif et al., 2025) and in post-disaster settings elsewhere (Parrott et al., 2024a). It also raises a question about recognition. The role that teachers described, which included counselling, caregiving, and crisis management, goes beyond ordinary instruction. Parrott et al. (2024b) note that teachers with added responsibility for students' recovery need psychosocial support themselves and often lack training to give it. The present data cannot show whether the Lahore teachers were trained or supported for this role, because that question belongs to other objectives of the wider thesis. What the findings do show is that teachers took on this work and described it as central to their professional identity.

Several cautions apply. Teachers' accounts were recalled several months after the flood and may be shaped by memory, emotion, and the wish to present oneself positively. The study did not include classroom observation or any assessment of children, so teachers' statements that children forgot concepts or became less confident are teachers' perceptions and not measurements. The analysis also did not record how many teachers contributed to each theme, so the findings cannot be read as indicating how common each experience was. In addition, the sample of 25 female teachers in public schools of urban Lahore was selected purposively and conveniently, so the findings cannot be generalized to all ECE teachers, to private or rural schools, or to other cities.

Recommendations

These recommendations follow from the findings reported here. They are suggestions for practice and further inquiry, not proven interventions.

For education authorities and school managers: Teachers described a role that included emotional support, caregiving, and crisis management. Education authorities and school managers should therefore consider including ECE teachers in disaster planning from the start and defining their roles in child protection, psychosocial support, and continuity of education, so that teachers have a clear mandate and guidance when a flood occurs. Because children in this study returned frightened and behind, authorities might also allow schools a flexible recovery period in which emotional safety takes priority over completing the prescribed syllabus.

For teacher educators and training providers: Because teachers took on caregiving and emotional support, short, ongoing, and practical in-service training on psychological first aid, recognizing signs of trauma in young children, and play-based support would be a sensible response. Such training can build on the child-centered strengths that teachers already showed.

For schools: Teachers reported lost learning and delayed curricula. Schools should be able to run catch-up or remedial sessions after a flood in which children learn at their own pace and are not under immediate pressure to finish the syllabus.

For future research: Future studies should include a larger sample from several districts, private and rural schools, and other flood-affected cities. They should collect data during or soon after a flood and not rely only on recall, add classroom observation to check whether what teachers say matches what they do, and include the views of children, parents, school leaders, and government. Quantitative or mixed-methods designs could measure the effect of flooding on ECE enrolment and learning loss, and other theoretical frameworks could be tested.

Conclusion

This study examined how ECE teachers in public schools of urban Lahore perceived their role after urban flooding and how they experienced the flood in their school communities. Teachers described a role that went beyond classroom instruction to include emotional support, caregiving, and crisis management, and they placed children's emotional wellbeing before academic progress. They experienced the flood as a disruption to both schooling and children's emotional state, marked by flooded roads, low attendance, forgotten concepts, a delayed syllabus, and children who returned anxious, quiet, and less confident. Teachers also described gradual improvement over time. Because these findings rest on teachers' recalled accounts, they describe perceived roles and experiences and not measured effects on children, a question that requires evidence beyond interviews.

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