

## **Caring Teachers Ignite Learning: Case Study of a Private School in Karachi**

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### **KEY WORDS**

Ethics of care, content-competency, rapport-building, engrossment, motivational displacement

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of the stakeholders of a private school in Karachi - Pakistan regarding the attributes of teachers who care for the learning of students. The study was qualitative in nature and embraced case study research methodology. The sample was selected using the purposive sampling technique to collect data from the sixteen stakeholders, meeting the pre-defined criteria of sample selection. Data was collected through interviews using a semi-structured interview guide, field observation and document analysis. Interview data was tape recorded and transcribed whereas data from document analysis and field observation was recorded in the diary. All the data was coded and analyzed using constructionist thematic analysis method. Data triangulation resulted into three themes namely virtuous of teachers, rapport building and content competency. The findings of the study state that various stakeholders have their own perspectives of characteristics of caring teachers depending on their roles, responsibilities, needs and interests. However, the caring attribute of teachers fall between the two dimensions of ethics of care, namely, engrossment and motivational displacement influencing the learning of students. This study offers suggestive evidence for making continuous effort to incorporate the ethics of care as an integral part of Pakistani schools as a positive means to improve the learning process and outcome.

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## Introduction

The focus of teachers' attention in Pakistani schools is on the completion and assessment of the syllabus. Students' usually struggle with their understanding of content and mastery of subject specific skills because teachers overlook to care for their learning needs (Chohan & Qadir, 2013; Khan, Jamshaid & Ramzan, 2019). Uncaring teachers influence students in a way that they are neither successful in schools in terms of being satisfied with shallow knowledge nor able to understand and apply the contents' relevant skills when encountering practical situations. Research studies have indicated that the quality of education is so poor in Pakistan that students are produced without basic understanding of the concepts (Chishti, Tahirkheli, Raja & Khan, 2011). This is due to the fact that teachers do not possess necessary skills and pedagogies to decode the required conceptual knowledge and skills for the students (Memon, 2007). As a consequence of receiving minimal academic support, students pass out from secondary schools having vague, shallow and restricted domain specific knowledge hence becoming less contributing members of the society for its growth and development (National Education Management Information System [NEMIS], 2018).

Schools in Pakistan are directed to achieve district, provincial and federal mandates that focus on the importance of mastery of academic content as compared to the development of interpersonal relationships based on an ethics of care which is supportive of the learning of students. To meet this directive, teachers often consider interpersonal relationships secondary to subject content acquisition. Because of the intensity involved in preparing students academically to reach desired benchmarks and complete assessments, many teachers find it difficult to promote caring relationships between themselves and their students. This is especially true at the secondary level where students have limited time periods to achieve multiple benchmarks for desired competency responding to specific learning outcomes. Thus, governmental directives weaken and make impossible to happen the impact of caring relationships on the learning of students (Aly, 2007; NEMIS, 2018). Minimizing "care" from schools may turn them to be merely source of transfer of knowledge remaining limited to accreditation, assessment and output rates (Joorst, 2021).

It is generally understood that teachers care about imparting knowledge to students whereas the best teachers care about the relational aspect of teaching and establish a trusting and caring connection with their students who in-turn become more receptive to what is being taught. They get to know their students' interests, talents, and needs which help them prepare lessons. Resultantly, students feel the partnership of the learning experience.

These are the types of teachers who have a significant and lifelong impact on their students' learning. Relationships developed between teachers and students on the basis of ethics of care, builds an environment where learning can flourish as directed by the teachers and experienced by the students (Aly, 2007; Engster & Hamington, 2015).

Caring relationships of teachers provides students with a greater chance of academic success in contrast to the situations where they do not enjoy such relationships. For instance, Goldstein and Lake (2000) have reported about teachers making extra efforts for the struggling students resulting in an impact on their academic achievements. Similarly, Watson, Ruiz and Jackson (2016) observed that caring relationships between teachers and students from marginalized communities helped them in achieving excellence in learning. Studies by Garrett, Barr and Rothman (2009), Narinasamy and Mamat (2018), Rojas and Liou (2017), Thornberg and Oguz (2016) assert the direct impact of caring attitudes of teachers on students' learning. A caring teacher can transform the school experience for students who face enormous difficulties, such as illiterate parents, an unsupportive learning environment at home and poor financial conditions. Thus, the greatest thing a teacher can do is to care and to understand the learning needs of students.

School education in Pakistan can rightly be questioned about its quality where its focus is on producing students with minimum understanding of content specific concepts. One strong reason for this situation is the existence of non-sensitive, non-serious and uncaring teachers and their careless attitude towards the learning of students (Aly, 2007; Chishti et al., 2011). Thus 'care' is a necessary precondition for 'education' as well as an essential ingredient for quality education to meet the needs of the students (Mortari 2016; Nguyen, 2016; Owens & Ennis, 2005).

Teachers "care" in the sense that they conscientiously pursue educational goals for their students and work hard in motivating them to achieve those goals. Such teachers must be credited with caring in the virtuous sense. However, the same teachers may be unable to establish relations of care and trust with their students (Noddings, 2005). It is not enough to hear teachers' claim to care because the relational sense of caring demands to be in relation. Teachers may obtain a high score on an instrument which may be taken to mean that the teacher cares but students may not agree or agree grudgingly. "She's tough," a student may say with some admiration or "She makes us work hard". A student may acknowledge a teacher's caring directly with verbal gratitude or simply pursue assigned projects more confidently. The receptive teacher can see that caring has been received by monitoring students' responses. Without an affirmative response from the

cared-for, an encounter or relation cannot be termed as caring (Noddings, 2005). He further clarified the ways in which the ethics of care can be an integral part of academic teaching.

In Pakistani context care is considered as a virtue possessed by the teachers having the caring qualities while ignoring the caring relationship. Caring teachers are needed in Pakistan to instill care within students. Caring relationship can be developed through developing of quality interaction and relationships between teachers and students based on engrossment and motivational displacement. In making this move, the good teacher would then not be understood by the qualities portrayed but rather the strength of relationship (Nguyen, 2016).

Student learning is a highly researched area in education which is directly related to the quality of teachers. Teacher-student's relationship is one of the most important factors in the quality of teachers' professional performance. This relationship is strengthened when overarched with care so as to impact students' learning. Teachers have the responsibility of forming caring relationships with their students to develop competent, caring citizens and resultantly teaching them how to care (Barrow, 2015; Engster & Hamington, 2015; Noddings, 2005).

This case study was conducted in a private school of Karachi. The school serves in the field of education beyond the boundaries of caste, color, creed, race or religion with the focus of preparing individuals who can contribute positively in the society. Hence, the schools focus on care as a fundamental ethical value in addition to love, respect, compassion, forgiveness, helpfulness, sharing and so on. The objective of this study was to understand the attributes of caring teachers as perceived by various stakeholder, highlighted in the official documents and observable in the school culture. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What does being a caring teacher mean to you?
2. What are the qualities of a caring teacher?

### **Literature Review**

Teacher care was introduced by Noddings in 1984, focusing on the interactions between the teacher offering care and the student being cared-for hence recognizing teacher care as the instructor-initiated behaviors promoting strong interpersonal relationships between teacher and student. Teacher's care encompasses around openness to students' needs, and empathy between the teacher and students (Derakhshan, et., al., 2022). Noddings (2015) explained three characteristics of the caring teacher. Firstly, the teacher accepts students' ideas, emotions, perceptions and

feelings. Students develop trustful relationships when they realize that their teacher is valuing their opinions and feelings. This involvement of teachers in understanding and accepting students' feeling is termed by Noddings as engrossment. The second characteristic is that of commitment. The teacher seeks to include all students in sharing their ideas and accepting their feelings through their shared experiences. This caring relation strengthens when the students view their teacher as being committed to helping them meet their needs and at the same time also respecting all of them. The third characteristic explained by Noddings is referred to as motivational displacement. This makes teachers focus less on their own selves and more to take interest in students' lives. This enables them to connect their teaching content with the lives of the students (Dalmiya, 2002; Diller, 1988; Nguyen, 2016; Owens & Ennis, 2005).

According to Noddings (2015) caring evolves naturally from the sympathetic nature possessed by human beings. Students learn how to care for others from their teachers as they model, dialogue, practice and confirm. For modeling, the teachers set good examples of caring by their own actions. Instead of asking students to care, they themselves model on how to care. The caring teacher also provides an experience with all students to develop a caring classroom culture by engaging them in activities of knowing each other. In the study by O'Connor (2008), a participant teacher explored how students develop empathy when the teacher sets an example for them. When teachers talk and listen to the students, this dialogue provides an opportunity to the caring teacher and cared-for students to interact and come close by developing empathy and better understanding of each other. It also facilitates teachers and students in arriving at mutual decisions (Dalmiya, 2002; Diller, 1988; O'Connor, 2008).

There is not a generalized specific behavior that defines caring but behaviors like empathizing, listening and understanding manifest caring attitudes. There are different ways by which the teachers exhibit caring attitudes towards students for example by providing academic support in their school work, providing emotional support to deal with challenging situations and ensuring a safe learning environment in the classroom. Caring without keeping high expectations from the students could result in low academic outcomes. Caring teachers also need to establish contact with the parents, when needed, to ensure maximizing support for the students both at school and at home (McKamey, 2011; Narinasamy, 2018; Rivera-McCutchen, 2012; Thornberg & Oguz, 2016; Velasquez et al., 2013).

In a study conducted with the students from different cultural backgrounds, attitudes of the teachers were identified as having good sense of humor, making learning fun for students, providing them with academic support,

discouraging favoritism, and treating all students alike (Garrett et al., 2009). Hence care is classified into three categories: interpersonal caring, academic caring and fairness caring. Interpersonal caring constitutes teachers' friendly and loving attitude towards students such as warm greetings, giving compliments, shaking hands with students and so on. Academic care includes supporting students in their learning needs. Fairness in caring entails treating all students fairly (Narinasamy, 2018). A study conducted in Gilgit and Baltistan in Pakistan reports the teachers named affection and empathy as being the most important values of teaching and see their role as being as a friend, kind leader, companion and a spiritual volunteer. They further claimed that they demonstrate care towards students by understanding their problems and wishes and showing empathy for them as if they were their own children (Baig & Shah, 2013). Teachers' exhibit care for students by giving them constructive feedback, being welcoming, nonjudgmental, flexible, respectful, warm and patient. A caring attitude is reflected not only in the spoken words but also expressed through body language, gestures and facial expressions (Dalton & Hrenko, 2016; Owusu-Ansah & Kyei-Blankson, 2016; Rojas & Liou, 2017; Thornberg & Oguz, 2016).

A study conducted with the students and teachers of government secondary schools in the province of Khyber Pakhtun Khwa (KPK) in Pakistan revealed that teachers take feedback from the students which provides them with insights about students' expectations of them. By doing this, teachers tailor their teaching methods according to the needs and interests of the students while ensuring students realize that they are being treated fairly and not discriminated against on account of gender, race or ethnicity. The study found that allowing students to freely ask questions during classes not only helped them academically but also created a base for building a caring relationship (Ayaz, Shah & Khan, 2013).

## Methodology

Being aligned with the interpretivist philosophy and the qualitative research paradigm, the case study research method was adopted to obtain and analyze data to support this research study (Yin, 2013). Case study methodology was feasible for this study to understand how different stakeholders within a specific school system interpret their experiences, construct their world, and the meaning they attribute to their experiences" (Merriam, 2009, p.5). Case study as the research methodology allowed for detailed exploration, depiction, examination and investigation of the phenomenon of "care" within single bounded systems in its real context (Cohan et al., 2018; Gay et al., 2015; Merriam, 2009). The term "ethics of care", administrators, teachers and students of grades nine and ten, pre-medical group, private

school and Karachi created boundaries of the case, making it a bounded system.

The population of the study consisted of administrators, teachers and students of grades nine and ten pre-medical group of the private secondary school in Karachi. Purposive sampling technique was used to obtain data on the research topic from particular group of participants who were believed to be having valid information related to the study topic based on their experiences (Gay et al., 2015; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2013). The screening of the samples was done through informal interviews of the participants, gaining their understanding about research topic and determining their availability to be formally interviewed prior to the data collection process (Creswell, 2010). The administrators, teachers and the students of pre-medical group matching the pre specified selection criteria showed their availability and willing to participate in the study. Semi structured interview guide was used to extract information and get descriptive data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gay et al., 2015; Merriam, 2009). These were coupled with field notes and document analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Interviews of each participant were recorded. The researcher kept a diary record of the happenings of each interview day which included descriptions of the people, objects, places, events, activities and conversations. Moreover, the researcher recorded ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches and noted any patterns that emerged. The field notes provided valuable records of what the researcher saw, heard, experienced and thought during the process of data collection and filled in any gaps by adding extra remarks that helped to track the development of the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Analysis of the documents such as school vision and mission statements, rule and regulation documents provided insightful information supporting data collected from interviews and field notes. Triangulation of data from different sources such a field observation, document analysis and interview transcripts was done to ensure that the particular situations and context of the school were described accurately. Triangulation added rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth to the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It further helped to comprehend and interpret the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The data was analyzed using constructionist thematic analysis methods developed by Perry (2013), Ritchie et al. (2013) and Braun and Clark (2006). The six phases of thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clark (2006) were followed in data analysis such as familiarization with and categorization of the data, systematic analysis of data through coding, capturing themes, development of potential themes, selection of quotations for the illustration of themes and concepts and presentation of the study findings and making conclusions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

## Findings

The triangulation of data supported in the formulation of three themes discussed below.

### Theme one: Virtuous of teachers

Under this theme several sub-themes emerged such as teachers being available, empathetic, good listeners, punctual, regular, polite and respectful as characteristics of caring teachers. One administrator related teacher availability with the prime attribute of caring teachers to provide academic support to students in addition to assigned teaching time slots. An administrator stated: “Caring teachers make themselves available for their students for additional academic support during free periods, break times or even after school to help them in studies by re-explaining the concepts that remained confusing during regular teaching”, (Administrator 2, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020). Teachers’ availability to students is guaranteed when they are passionate towards the learning of their students. The administrators highlighted it as: “Caring teachers have empathy for their students, feel for them, worry for students struggling in studies and follow those performing satisfactorily, taking time from their daily schedule”, (Administrator 1, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020).

Teachers can be productive when they are available for their students to listen to them attentively and empathetically because each student might have something different to share with the teachers and may need to receive guidance accordingly. The administrators stated that a caring teacher possesses the attribute of listening to students. The administrator said: “Caring teachers have the ability to listen, it’s very important that teacher should listen to students to give them a second chance”, (Admin 1, 21<sup>st</sup> August 2020). The statement gives them a second chance is an indication of a way in which caring teachers contribute to the overall growth and development of their students after listening to their issues. Teachers, unlike administrators, believed that teacher availability for their students is one of the characteristics of caring teachers. Two teachers reported teacher availability as a strong characteristic of caring teachers. A teacher stated: “Caring teachers are available for students’ help and support by giving them extra time during break, free periods or periods of physical education to re-explain the concept not understood during regular teaching hours”, (Tr. 4, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020). “Teachers were sensitive to the content related misunderstanding of students hence listened to their queries and satisfactorily responded to it during regular class timing, free time or break time”, (Extract from field notes, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020).



Caldwell and Sholtis (2008) are of the opinion that caring teachers allow ample time for students to ask questions in the class and satisfactorily respond to those questions. Two of the teacher participants endorsed it. A teacher narrated: “Caring teachers are morally bound to help students and to answer their questions or queries in the class”, (Tr. 1, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2020).

One teacher related regularity and punctuality with the qualities of caring teachers. Regularity and punctuality are the keys to completing the prescribed syllabus during the given time-frame, otherwise teachers will have to rush the given topics irrespective of whether students make sense of them or not. A teacher described: “Caring teachers are regular and punctual for classes”, (Tr. 3, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2020). The above statement was strengthened by another teacher by stating: “While being regular and punctual, caring teachers should come prepared for classes, should know the content to be taught”, (Tr. 2, 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020). “On their arrival teachers were expected to sign the attendance register”, (Extract from field notes, 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2020). Regularity and punctuality are the attributes to be inculcated in students throughout schooling in the Pakistani context and it can be done through modeling by the teachers in local schools. It is important that teachers are regular and punctual for timely completion of the prescribed syllabus.

Negative comments from teachers affect the self-esteem of students in a destructive way (Garza, Alejandro, Blythe & Fite, 2014). Five students expressed in interview responses that caring teachers are polite and respect students as individuals. The students related caring attributes of teachers with the avoidance of physical or verbal abuse of the students. The student said: “Strict in a reasonable way means caring teachers do not physically and verbally abuse students”, (St. 2, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020). “Caring teachers are not rude to students and neither do they scold them because then students will feel bad and will be disappointed”, (St. 10, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020). “If we do not complete our work on time they don’t beat us or shout at us. They just tell us to complete our work on time”, (St. 10 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2020). “Fostering personal worth and belonging, tolerance, compassion and generosity”, (Extract from mission statement, 21<sup>st</sup> September 2020).

Research studies conducted by Khan and Khan (2014) have highlighted that the abuse of students is a widespread and alarming issue in Pakistani schools because it has been left largely uncontrolled. The effects of abuse are quite negative and devastating on child psychology. According to the recent reports, the ratio of child abuse is not only high but largely practiced phenomenon in Pakistan. The way students are treated in the class can be very personal and deeply meaningful. Berliner (2004) claims that educators

believe in the power of education to transform lives, not only through the power of the intellect but also through the power of attitudes and behavior.

### **Theme two: Rapport building**

Two teachers described that school cares for students learning by promoting student/teacher relationships. These relationships have positive implications for students' academic growth and development because students begin to trust the teacher, exhibit active engagement in learning, behave better in class and achieve academically higher. The teachers said: "Building rapport with students is very important to have knowledge of their past performance. This is to help them continuously in their studies", (Tr, 2, 20<sup>th</sup> Aug 2020). "We should maintain a strong bond with our students so that they feel comfortable in approaching us to seek support for any academic problems", (Tr. 3, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2020). Two teachers also considered counselling as an important attribute of caring teachers. A teacher specified: "Caring teachers counsel the students to solve any problems encountered by them. Counselling advice is based on data gathered about the family background of students", (Tr. 3, 19<sup>th</sup> August 2020). "To create and renew respectful, compassionate relationships by which all can experience what it means to be fully human", (Extract from the vision statement, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2020). Teachers' care for the learning of students is exhibited by making a deliberate effort to establish and sustain harmonious relationships with them through the possession of virtues such as trust, availability, respect, openness and attentiveness to students' concern to affirm and encourage them towards a better vision as learners (Joorst, 2021). Positive teacher-student relationship aids in creating an effective learning environment that is vital for students' engagement in pursuing academic goals and is acknowledged by them as an essential component of effective teaching (Derakhshan, et., al., 2022).

### **Theme three: Content competency**

The extracts from participant interviews, field notes and document analyzed focus on content competency in having the knowledge and skill of decoding the prescribed content to students and help them to prepare for external exams to secure good grades. For student participants, the characteristics of caring teachers are that they explain the content explicitly while responding to the questions asked by the students. Teaching is reaching out to diversified students who differ in intelligence, aptitude, attitude, interest, motivation, needs and temperament. Teachers are expected to be accommodative to the needs of students through multiple and creative ways of content explanation (Ayua, 2017). Six of the student participants reported clear explanation of the content taught as the key attributes of caring

teachers. Whereas five students narrated that responding to questions asked by the students is also an important attribute of caring teachers. The students said: “A (sic) caring teacher gives a clear explanation of the content, someone who re-explain and repeats the concept if students do not understand at the first attempt”, (St. 4, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020). “A (sic) caring teacher explains well and when we ask any question, a caring teacher responds to those questions. For example, suppose a teacher is explaining mathematics questions and the students do not understand so, the students tell “Miss I cannot understand”, the teacher instead of ignoring the student explains the sum again”, (St. 2, 24<sup>th</sup> September 2020). Four of the student participants considered explanations of the assigned tasks for better performance during exams to secure good grades as characteristic of caring teachers. A student said: “A (sic) caring teacher is someone who is helpful by explaining and re-explaining the assigned task and gives suggestions on how to attempt those given questions”, (St. 4, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020).

Another student stated: “Caring teachers are concerned that whatever they teach, students must be able to reproduce it during exams and secure good marks,” (St. 6, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020). Therefore “A (sic) caring teacher gives second chances to students to rectify their mistakes in the assigned tasks”, (Student 4, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020). Student six and four, associated care with teachers preparing students to score high marks and high grades in the examinations or assigned tasks. This is endorsed by Bhat and Bhat (2019) who claimed that students are assessed to make academic records. A student’s result is in the format of test scores, letter grades or report cards that are used in further education processes. Thus, students must be given multiple chances to prove their best. “Teachers decoded the topic they taught in detail and were found to be competent in knowledge and skill to their relevant subject”, (Extract from field notes, 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020). “Values knowledge, excellence, scholarship and innovation”, (Extract from vision statement, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2020).

The findings of the study explicitly state that all the stakeholders, document analyzed and records of field notes emphasize on the specific virtuous of caring teachers in accordance with the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders. The administrators, students, documents analyzed and field notes disregarded rapport building as one of the characteristics of caring teachers whereas teachers brought it to limelight. The students seemed to be focused on content competency as characteristic of teachers who cared for the learning of students as emerged from document analysis and field notes whereas administrators and teachers seem to be overlooking at it.

## Discussion

As far as virtuous of caring teachers are concerned data analyzed and triangulated emphasized on teachers' being empathetic with the students as an attribute of caring teachers. They expanded empathy as feeling for the academic needs of students considering their socio-economic status and taking actions to assist students overcoming their issues (Hamington, 2010). Teacher availability is professed as one of the characteristics of caring teachers. It is determined by giving additional teaching time to students other than regular teaching hours such as during break time, when teachers have free periods, after school hours and on weekends such as Saturdays. Caring teachers are expected to be available for students so as to find a solution to their personal and academic problems faced by them. Caldwell and Sholtis (2008) state that caring teachers set aside sufficient time to answer any questions of the students without getting annoyed with the students. Noddings (2003) elaborated on disciplined teachers as those who establish a code of conduct to be followed by students in the class and bearing the consequence of ignoring it.

Though the findings of the study concentrate on caring teachers being disciplined however discipline is associated with teachers being punctual and regular. Caring teachers respect their students. The study findings elaborate respectfulness as teachers being polite with students and be conscious with their choice of words and actions with the students. Hence not to verbally or physically abuse the students because students need to learn to be confident during schooling to live successful and satisfied personal and professional life. Students who are verbally or physically abused by their teachers grow with low self-esteem and self-image. Consequently, students possess and act out negative and aggressive behaviors received from teachers that may cause further frustration and depression among students (Heid & Keleheav, 2007; Noddings 1988). The purpose of education is to transform lives through intellect and attitude. The way students are treated by the teachers can be personal and deeply meaningful to make or break them as individuals. The analysis of the document such as school policy on teacher recruitment, job designation of teachers, teachers' lesson plans, daily diaries, policy on discipline such as physical and verbal abuse of students, students and teacher attendance records and observation record of field notes directly or in between the lines focus on the characteristics of caring teachers identified in the themes and subthemes.

The study finding relate to teachers' building and maintaining rapport with students as the characteristics of caring teachers. Students in grades ninth and tenth are between fourteen to sixteen years of age. This age brings with

it many challenges of adolescence life such as social, emotional, physical and intellectual instability. Therefore, students face many disorders such as depression, aggression, delinquency and anxiety. To overcome adolescence issues, students need guidance from their teachers which is received with strong bonding between teachers and students. This is best provided by teachers and availed by students when they have strong bonding with each other. Research studies by Noddings (2015) and Louis et al., (2016) support the claims that rapport between teacher and students makes them have trust each other and accept the advice to overcome age related and academic issues after having mutual discussion. It is important for teachers to connect with students to engage them in academics because teaching and learning is believed to be revolved around the relationships established based on engrossment and motivational displacement during the course of the school year and has an impact on the learning of students. It is important to note that students in this study did not emphasize having rapport with teachers as one of the characteristics of caring teachers. This could be due to the fact that Pakistani society does not have any concept of teachers having rapport with their students because the society expects students to maintain distance from teachers. A teacher is considered an authoritative figure and students are obliged to respect the opinion of the teacher without much argument. The relationship between teacher and students is bounded within the class and is restricted to listening to the teachers, answering the questions asked and completing any assigned tasks.

Taking into consideration the attributes of caring teachers the study highlights that the content competency is the main characteristics of caring teachers as mentioned by the students. This was evident from the analysis of the triangulated data that the greater importance was given to content mastery than pedagogical knowledge in determining the quality of teaching and subsequent learning by students. This could also be due to the fact that in Pakistani context, professionally qualified and unqualified teachers serve in mainstream private schools. The importance of pre-service teacher education as an important requirement for teaching is not yet fully realized by the schools (Thomas, 2013). The perspective seemingly quite strong that teachers equipped with content knowledge, plan and deliver lessons considering the needs and learning styles of students, clarifying the misconceptions by responding to the questions asked by the students and help students understand the conceptual and theoretical knowledge of the subject while focusing on the effective delivery of the prescribed syllabus. The emphasis on content knowledge of teachers is due to the fact that for Pakistani society, education is strongly linked to the learning of content and not the acquisition of skills and modification of behaviors. Hence, teachers having the knowledge of the subject matter will be able to transfer it to the students who then are labeled by the teachers and parents as intelligent or

struggling, to be appreciated and supported for further education. Having equipped themselves with the content knowledge, caring teachers are helpful to their students to outline their academic targets and are committed to get their students to attain them using their full potential. They are concerned about the difficulties students face regarding the content taught to them and do everything within their capacity to help students succeed.

The administrators, teachers and students seem to vary regarding their perspectives on the attributes of caring teacher. Their outlook about the attributes of caring teachers is based on their requirements, expectations, needs and interest depending on their designation and roles or responsibilities associated with it. Together with the perspectives of administrators, teachers and students the analysis of the school documents and school culture and climate through field notes observations it is summed up that the school supports and provides opportunities to teachers to modify their behavior as caring teachers to have an impact on the learning of students.

### **Implications**

The study proposes opportunities of continuous professional development sessions for various stakeholders regarding the impact of caring attributes of teachers on the learning of students to understand the role of caring teachers as a prerequisite for academic accomplishment of students. Hopefully, this study will guide school administrators and teacher hiring committees in schools not to overemphasize the instructional aspect of teaching but to hire and appraise teachers on their ability to relate to, and care for the learning of students.

### **Conclusion**

The outcomes of this study indicate that caring teachers ignite the learning of students to help them grow in academics to their maximum potential. Hence, they get engrossed with the students by being available to listen to them specifically to students struggling with academic and personal issues to support them considering their individual needs, by being empathetic and having patience for the learning needs of students, by giving them extra time over weekends, during break times and the use of interactive teaching strategies to help students grow in academics to develop subject specific competency to maintain better grades. Relational aspect is important to kindle the desire of teaching and learning with the spirit of giving and receiving while accepting the role of care-giver and cared-for. Hence, teachers are empowered by the school to spark in students the love for learning by facilitating them to care for the learning of students and students

are empowered by teachers through engrossment and motivational displacement to respond to the caring of teaching by performing well in their studies.

Care is one of the necessary requirements in education to foster the learning of students. The survival of care in education could be ensured through implementation of schools' policies, commitment of various stakeholders and learning conducive school environment that invites and absorbs all the stakeholders in its caring culture. Though the relationship of ethics of care to curricula remains unaddressed in education there is a need for revived commitment to care in education to influence teachers' teaching and students' learning to illumine society with the light of knowledge and understanding.

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