

# Multipronged Understandings of Teacher Wellbeing: School Teachers' Lived Experiences in Nepal

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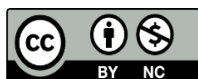
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## Abstract

This study unfolds how the teachers' professional, psychological, cognitive, emotional, economic and social experiences intersect in shaping their overall wellbeing. Based on the review of the educational policies and the analysis of the data derived from the survey and the interviews and focus group discussions with the teachers of the schools of Nepal, this study reveals that some complex intersectionality exists among the multipronged dimensions of the teacher wellbeing. The review of the policy documents shows that the recent policies have still not explicitly articulated the issues of teacher well-being, job satisfaction, and job attrition yet. Although there exists inconsistency between the results of the quantitative survey and the narratives from the interviews and the group discussions, the analysis reveals that the teachers are experiencing dissatisfaction in their professional learning and job security. The study suggests that the emerging concerns of teacher wellbeing need to be addressed in both educational policies and practices. Else, it may lead the country to a massive shortage of qualified, competent and dedicated teachers who can contribute to promotion of the quality of education.

**Keywords:** Intersectionality, job attrition, job satisfaction, professional development, teacher wellbeing

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## Context

In Nepal, the major education policies, primarily the 'National Education Policy-2019, School Education Sector Plan-2022/23-2031/32,' and 'SDG4: Education 2030-Nepal National Framework' (2019) have reiteratively stressed teacher training, teacher quality and accountability (MoEST, 2022). However, the concerns regarding teacher wellbeing, teacher health, and job satisfaction have not been integrated into these policies yet. Amidst this policy gap, the three-tiered government system at the federal, provincial, and local levels is not very aware of addressing the issues related to teacher wellbeing and job satisfaction. Some recent studies (Khanal, Acharya & Phyak, 2022; Phyak, Khanal & Acharya, 2023) have raised issues concerning up-and-coming job insecurity and stress in the teaching profession in Nepal. Phyak, et al. (2023) argue that the teachers who work under the institutional (private) schooling system have realized such insecurity and stress even more profoundly. Poudel et al. (2024) argue that the key factors of teacher stress and burnout are "teaching in large class sizes, working with the students with disadvantaged backgrounds, limited resources to perform duties, huge workload, and lack of proper opportunities for professional development" (p. 472). Similarly, Bhatta et al. (2024) point out "student behaviour and class dynamics, financial and social rewards, excessive workload, administration and management stress, and 'conflict associated' with colleagues and parents of students" as the prime stressors of the school teachers [emphasis added] (p. 221).

The Flash I Report (2023) shows that there are around two hundred and seventy-eight thousand teachers in total in school education across the country. The population of female teachers shares around 42.9 percent. In terms of school types, the community schools share the biggest portion (67.3%) of the teacher population. Institutional and religious schools share 32.6 percent and 1.4 percent respectively. The number of female teachers at the basic level of the institutional schools is fairly higher than that of male teachers. It remarkably contrasts in religious schools (*Madarasa*, *Ashram/Gurukul*, *Gumba/Vihar*<sup>1</sup>) where the number of male teachers is almost triply more than the number of female teachers. The traditional culture of privileging males to make religious preaching and teaching for centuries has still hindered the recruitment of female teachers in these schools. Similarly, the Flash Report I also reveals that there are different categories of teachers in terms of their appointment. Among the

1 *Madarasa* is operated to educate Muslim religious beliefs, values and scriptures along with the other courses of formal literacy, language, science and mathematics. *Ashram/Gurukula* is operated to educate Vedic religious beliefs, values and scriptures are taught along with some formal school curriculum. *Gumpa/Vihar* is an educational institution to inculcate the pupils with Buddha's teachings, philosophy, values, meditation and religious practices.

187741 teachers recruited in community schools, 83.8 percent of teachers are appointed in government-sanctioned permanent positions, nevertheless, only sixty percent of these teachers are permanent. The population of teachers in temporary and *rahat* (relief quotas) is 9.7 percent and 22.9 percent respectively. Still, 16.8 percent of teachers working at community schools are appointed in temporary quotas issued in collaboration with the provincial government, local government and schools. Thus, within the framework of the community schooling system, teachers have been working in varying conditions in terms of appointment, salaries, allowances, and facilities.

This is even more unpleasant in the case of the institutional schooling system, in which, according to the Flash I Report 2023, 32.6 percent of the total number of teachers in the country work on a temporary contract basis. Subedi et al. (2014) point out that a large number of female teachers in institutional schools are appointed and assigned with a huge workload. Nevertheless, they are more often underpaid. Such a situation of payment, including job insecurity and dissatisfaction remained serious challenges during and after the Covid-19 pandemic (Phyak et al. 2023). In community schools as well, the recruitment of teachers with unequal salaries, incentives, and facilities has pushed many teachers to experience inequality and injustice in their profession (Munir & Kanwal, 2020). Although the government has propagated certain mandatory policies and procedures of teacher recruitment, training, salaries, and incentives, these procedures have not been implemented effectively. Political interference, favouritism, and weak federal governance structures are the factors responsible for weakening the active implementation of these educational policies in Nepal (Daly et al., 2020). In this context, teacher wellbeing, which is a prime aspect of quality education, is less stressed and less explored in both education policies and practice in the state. Considering it from a vantage point, this research aims to unfold teacher wellbeing in education policies, practice, and teachers' lived experiences in Nepal.

### **Conceptualizing Teacher Wellbeing**

As discussed above, teacher wellbeing is considered a major concern in educational research across the world today (Chen & Lee, 2024; Hascher & Waber, 2021; Dreer, 2024). It has now been broadly understood in terms of teacher health, psychology, emotions, engagement, and job satisfaction (Dreer & Gouase, 2022; Hascher, Beltman & Mansfield, 2021). The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) observes it as a multidimensional and interactional construct that encompasses teachers' subjective, physical, psychological, cognitive, and social wellbeing (Davila,

2024; Viac & Fraser, 2020). Cultural, political, and economic disparities and demographic shifts in a particular social context under the current globalization processes often cultivate positive or negative states of teacher wellbeing (UNESCO, 2024). Still, factors integral to the schools' institutional norms and values, teacher interaction with fellow teachers, and also, their interaction with students are all associated with teacher wellbeing (Barbieri, Sulis & Toland, 2019). Overall, teacher wellbeing is a sense of job satisfaction and happiness reinforced through a collaborative process with fellow teachers, students, parents, and community (Action & Glasgow, 2015). If teachers feel that they do not belong to their community, they experience conflict with fellow teachers, students, and parents, and are also occupied with work stress, their wellbeing is weakened (UNESCO, 2024).

Different studies have pointed out positive and negative states of teacher wellbeing (Li, Mayer & Malmberg, 2022; Costa, Chandarlis & Park, 2024). The positive states may enhance collaborative relationships with fellow teachers and students, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. Whereas, the negative states reinforce work stress, conflict with fellow teachers, students, and parents, emotional exhaustion, burn out and job attrition (Turner & Theilking, 2019; Costa, Chandarlis & Park, 2024). However, the crucial fact is that such states hugely influence the degree of self-efficacy and instructional quality that teachers deliver in classrooms (Buric & Kim, 2020; Künsting, Neuber & Lipowsky, 2016).

A multipronged understanding of teacher wellbeing unfolds all possible dynamics of wellbeing underpinning teachers' life, identity and performance. Such dynamics are represented in the form of professional wellbeing, disciplinary competence and intellectual wellbeing, economic wellbeing, psychological and emotional wellbeing, and social wellbeing. Teachers' professional knowledge, skills, beliefs, and motivation attribute to professional wellbeing and success (Lauermann & König, 2016). Teachers with strong professional knowledge and skills are motivated to perform quality instructional practices involving in classroom teaching, classroom management, lesson planning, differentiated instruction, and assessment addressing the students' needs and collaboration with both students and fellow teachers (Kunter et al., 2013). Teachers with high intellectual wellbeing regard teaching as having deep reflexivity and self-making through a process of 'being open-minded' to new ideas, thoughts, and creativity for professional learning and development (Alexander & Perche, 2024). It motivates the teachers to be a part of the professional learning community and share ideas and thoughts to open new landscapes of the teaching profession and professionalism. More recently, financial[economic] wellbeing has stood as a pertinent issue of teacher wellbeing. In this regard, Hussain et al. (2022)

unfold that the economic/financial condition of the teachers stands as one of the prime factors of job satisfaction and wellbeing. Low remuneration, poor working conditions, and lack of rewards despite a huge workload not only affect teachers' job satisfaction and wellbeing but also weaken the overall quality of their performance and work culture (Mercer, 2023). Teaching is an emotion-laden process: emotion has multiple forms, strengths, and shadings (Oxford, 2020). Psychological and emotional wellbeing is taken as an important state of teachers' mental health, which may affect self-efficacy, interaction, socialization, and networking, and personal and professional development (McInerney, 2015). Finally, teachers with high social wellbeing feel deeply engaged and connected to students, fellow teachers, and the community/society in their professional lives (Falechki & Mann, 2021). However, when teachers poorly manage the social and emotional demands of teaching, student engagement in learning and academic achievement both suffer (Schonert-Reichl, 2017).

It comes from the discussion above that the single perspective of wellbeing is always incomplete in capturing the complex nature of teacher wellbeing. Thus, in the present discussion, teacher wellbeing has been defined as the cumulative outcome of all these different forms – so termed 'multipronged' – of wellbeing, ranging from mental health of the teachers to subjective wellbeing and the efficacy measures involving identity, professional learning, and performance (Fox et al., 2023). Although these 'prongs' are sometimes treated separately, they are often simultaneously interacting while shaping teachers' mental health, emotions, professional learning, interaction with students, fellow teachers, community, and curriculum, and constituting teacher identity (Holmes, 2018; Schonert-Reichl, 2017;). This conceptual understanding provides a critical lens for exploring the wellbeing of the Nepalese school teachers.

The overarching aim of this study was to unfold the teacher wellbeing of the school teachers of Nepal through a multipronged analysis. In this regard, the study referenced multiple measures of wellbeing relating to the education policies and teachers' lived experiences. The specific research questions that this research aimed to answer are as follows:

- How do teachers respond to different dimensions of wellbeing relating to their professional engagement and identity?
- To what extent do these dimensions intersect in shaping their wellbeing, professional efficacy, and job satisfaction in Nepal?

### **Materials and Methods**

This research is based on a mixed-methods research design. Guided by this design, a survey was conducted to collect quantitative information targeting

mainly at the teachers' professional, intellectual, economic, psychological-emotional, and social measures. In this regard, a five-point Likert Scale (1 = Strongly Disagree (SD), 2= Disagree (D), 3= Undecided (UD), 4 = Agree (A), 5 = Strongly Agree (SA)) was designed and administered using the Google Form. A pilot was carried out and finalized on the basis of the inputs. Then, the Google Form was circulated to the schools of all 753 municipalities of the country. In this regard, the Google Form was emailed to the Education Sections of the municipalities, and the concerned officials of the sections were requested to circulate it to the teachers through the head teachers of the schools. The Google Form comprised of the rationale of the research and an honest request to the participants to respond to the survey only if they were interested in. The Google Form remained open for three weeks. 393 teachers submitted their responses. The Google Form comprised of the statements relating to multiple measures of teacher wellbeing. These measures were professional development and job satisfaction, disciplinary competence and intellectual wellbeing, economic wellbeing, psychological and emotional wellbeing, and social well-being. Each measure integrated a sub-set of statements with a five-point Likert Scale which included statement tuned from the respondents' perspectives, deepening into their understanding, experience and reflection, job satisfaction, and wellbeing.

Three hundred and ninety-three teacher respondents took part in the survey. Of those respondents, 32 percent were female and the rest male. In terms of the level of teaching, 60.5 percent of basic and 39.4 percent of secondary-level teachers submitted the response. However, when it comes to the subject they teach, the primary level teachers are supposed to teach all subjects, teachers involved in teaching English occupied 41.9, Mathematics 15, Nepali 16, Science 13.7, Social Studies 11.9, and Health and Physical Education 1.5 percent. Regarding, the distribution of the respondents in terms of the provinces they belonged to, Gandaki and Sudurpaschim occupied 30 and 29 percent respectively. Similarly, Bagmati and Lumbini occupied 18.8 and 12.4 percent respectively. However, from Karnali, Madhesh, and Koshi, a smaller number of teachers responded to the Google survey. In terms of caste and ethnicity, the Brahmin-Kshatriya caste group occupied 73 percent of the total respondents. The representation of the Janajati, the Dalit, and the ones from the marginalised groups was remarkably low. Although the survey was open to all teachers, the greatest number of teachers who replied to the survey were permanently recruited. The number of teachers from the other categories was low viz. temporary (5.9%) '*anudaan*' [quotas from government grants] (9.6%), *rahat* [relief quotas] (12.4%), and the school's internal fund (3%). The distribution in terms of their self-reported academic qualifications shows that



teachers with Master's degrees and Bachelor's degrees of their qualification occupied 46.3% and 28.4% respectively. 10.9 percent of the teachers reported that they had completed only an intermediate-level examination. Only a very low percentage of teachers (1.5%), teachers with secondary-level completion, participated in the survey. 3.5 percent of respondents reported that they had completed a Master's in Philosophy and above. Finally, in terms of experience, 44.7 percent of respondents had more than 10 years' experience, 27.7 percent had 6-10 years, and 27.4 percent had less than 5 years of experience in teaching.

The qualitative data was collected conducting seven interviews and six FGDs with teachers. Three of the FGDs were conducted with the teachers of community schools and three with the teachers of the institutional (private) schools. The participants of the FGDs were those who responded to the survey too. Likewise, three FGDs were conducted online to represent the teachers outside the capital and the remaining three were conducted onsite. Similarly, seven of them were interviewed online, and the rest were interviewed face-to-face. The interviews and the FGDs were conducted in the Nepali language and translated into English before they were analysed thematically. The qualitative data have been referenced to unfold the (in)consistencies resulted from the analysis of the quantitative information.

### **Results: Concepts and Lived Experiences**

This section presents the multipronged understanding of teacher wellbeing with reference to professional, disciplinary and intellectual, psychological and emotional, economic and social dimensions.

#### **Professional Wellbeing**

Professional wellbeing involves the feeling of professionalism including professional attitude and behavior, opportunities for developing professionalism, support mechanisms in this regard, and hindrances and interference experienced by teachers for deciding teaching and learning practices, and the application of the knowledge and skills acquired through participation in teacher training and workshops (Lauermann & König 2016). The analysis of the responses concerning the above-mentioned indicators shows that the greatest of respondents (86.9%) reported that they favored the teaching profession. Also, more than 80 percent of the respondents remained hopeful to proceed their careers in teaching. However, around one-third of the respondents (31%) disagreed that they had had the opportunities to participate in the professional training and workshops designed for their professional capacity enhancement. Equally, around 30 percent of the respondents reported that they had experienced some sort of interference and hindrance from

external agencies (political parties, local influencers, etc.) while engaging in the teaching profession. This echoes professional satisfaction since 36 percent of respondents reported that they were not satisfied with the existing professional support mechanisms (supervision, monitoring, and teacher support system). Only 54 percent of respondents reported that they had received the required support and inputs relating to teaching-learning activities and their jobs. The teachers also reported that the knowledge and skills received during the TPD training were useful, and nonetheless, such training was less frequent and limited in conventional approaches and methods of pedagogy. However, the overall analysis reveals a 3.72 average score of professional wellbeing implying a fairly positive result.

**Table 1**  
*Teacher Responses on Professional Wellbeing*

Statements	Responses in Percentage					Avg. Score on Five-Point Likert Scale
	SA	A	UD	D	SD	
I like the teaching profession.	69.8	18.1	4.2	1.9	6	4.40
I am hopeful to proceed with my career as a teacher in the future.	60.2	20.9	10	4.2	4.7	4.25
I studied teacher education courses to get involved in the teaching profession.	58.8	17.7	7.7	4.9	10.9	4.05
I have some knowledge and skills to get involved in the teaching profession.	39.5	26	15.1	11.2	8.1	3.76
I have had more opportunities to develop professional competencies in teaching.	36.3	30.9	13.3	9.1	10.5	3.72
I have had opportunities to participate in professional training and workshops.	20.9	24.7	23.7	13.5	17.7	3.19
I have not experienced interference from any external agencies, including political parties, while getting involved in teaching.	38.1	19.5	13.3	12.3	16.7	3.45
I am free to decide on teaching-learning activities in class.	64	23	4.9	3.7	4.4	4.35
I am satisfied with the present professional support systems (like supervision, monitoring, and the teacher support system)	21.5	20.9	22.3	16.7	18.6	3.07
I have got the required support concerning the issues related to teaching-learning activities.	23	30.5	20.5	15.6	10.4	3.38
TPD training has helped me to deal with the issues related to teaching-learning activities.	34.5	24.1	20.6	8.7	12.1	3.47
The knowledge and skills acquired during TPD training have been useful in facilitating students' learning.	36.7	24.6	20.7	8.2	9.8	3.58
Overall Mean						3.72



## Disciplinary Competence and Intellectual Wellbeing

Disciplinary competence and intellectual capital are prerequisites to teacher wellbeing and job satisfaction (Granziera et al., 2021). A teacher with a higher level of disciplinary competence performs a type of intellectual triage in terms of attempting to ascertain what goals and objectives to work on and how students are being engaged to develop short-term and long-term outcomes (Shaughnessy & Senior, 2022). The analysis of the self-reported responses of the teachers reveals that a greater number of respondents (90.7%) reported that they do not feel a shortage of content knowledge in the subject areas that they teach. They also reported that they had the required academic degrees in the subjects that they teach at schools. They further reported having ICT knowledge and skills and are familiar with the methods and approaches for providing students with a good learning environment. However, more than 40 percent of respondents disagreed that they had participated in onsite and online teacher training and workshops. The overall analysis of the mean scores, as presented in Table 2 below, approves that the teachers are found significantly above the average (4.05 against 3) in terms of disciplinary competence and intellectual wellbeing as well.

**Table 2**

### *Teacher Responses on Disciplinary Competence and Intellectual Wellbeing*

Statements	Responses in Percentage					Avg. Score on Five-Point Likert Scale
	SA	A	UD	D	SD	
I have not felt a shortage of knowledge in the subjects I teach at school.	44.9	37.2	8.1	6	3.7	4.14
I have studied additional content areas to strengthen my knowledge and skills in the subject I teach.	67.9	25.8	2.3	2.1	1.9	4.54
I have been involved in creative activities to enhance my disciplinary knowledge and skills.	46.5	43.5	6	2.6	1.4	4.29
I have the ICT knowledge and skills required for teaching.	41.9	38.1	13.3	4.2	2.6	4.12
I have used innovative methods and approaches while engaging students in learning in the classroom.	36.5	47	10.5	4.2	1.9	4.10
I have participated in onsite and online trainings and workshops conducted by MoEST and other national and international organizations.	15.6	28.8	18.6	13.7	23.3	3.00
I feel satisfied with my knowledge and skills required for teaching at the appointed level.	41.4	41.6	9.8	5.8	1.4	4.15
Overall mean						4.05

## Economic Wellbeing

Scholars often argue that the economic/financial wellbeing of teachers should be given due emphasis both in policy and practice because it may have a strong impact on their job satisfaction and quality of life (O'Sullivan et al., 2019; Manalo et al, 2024). According to O'Sullivan et al (2019), financial difficulties can have a significant negative impact on teacher health, professionalism, and wellbeing. However, the analysis of the self-administered data in this regard hugely contrasts in Nepal. It reveals that most of the respondents disagreed that they were satisfied with the salaries they were paid. They also reported that the salaries that they receive for their service are not even adequate to fulfill their basic needs. Schools afford to provide little or no incentives, no matter how much additional work teachers are assigned to accomplish. Around 75 percent of the respondents disagreed that they are provided with incentives for their additional work at schools. Therefore, particularly, as the teachers representing the city areas remarked, they always seek spaces extra income. The overall analysis of the statements reveals that, as reported, the teachers have very low economic wellbeing.

**Table 3**

### *Teacher Responses on Economic Wellbeing*

Indicators/Statements	Responses in Percentage					Avg. Score on Five-Point Likert scale
	SA	A	ND	D	SD	
I am satisfied with the salary I am paid.	14	22.1	14.9	22.6	26.5	2.73
I have been provided with my salary regularly.	32.3	25.1	11.4	13	18.1	3.40
The salary is workable to fulfill my basic needs.	10.5	18.4	17	23.7	30.5	2.53
To fulfill my basic needs, I have not been engaged in other income-related jobs.	17.4	14.4	15.1	21.4	31.6	2.64
Besides my monthly salary, I have been provided with additional incentives and allowances for my additional work.	8.4	7	9.5	15.1	60	1.90
Overall mean						2.64

## Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing

McInerney et al. (2015) argue that strong psychological wellbeing and positive emotional attachment to the teaching profession strongly nurture teachers' professional continuity, reciprocity, and normative and affective commitments. These forms of wellbeing prepare them to sense happiness

and quality of life relating to their professional being (Salavera & Urbon, 2024). Concerning the statements related to psychological and emotional wellbeing, most of the respondents reported that they were happy to have been involved in the teaching profession. They had a positive attitude towards students and fellow teachers. 86 percent of the respondents reported that they were satisfied with students' behavior. The overall analysis of the indicators with a 4.20 average score implies that the respondents have positive psychological and emotional wellbeing.

**Table 4**

*Teacher Responses on Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing*

Statements/Indicators	Responses in Percentage					Avg. Score in Five-Point Likert scale
	SA	A	UD	D	SD	
I feel happy to have been involved in teaching.	39.8	35.8	16.3	4.4	3.7	4.02
I have chosen the teaching profession on my wish.	60.9	24	7.7	4.4	3	4.38
I have not felt tensed while working as a teacher.	32.6	27.2	14.2	15.8	10.2	3.54
I feel able to deal with the problems that occur in the course of teaching.	45.8	43.5	7.7	1.9	1.2	4.30
I have not repented for being involved in teaching.	46.5	29.8	13	6	4.7	4.07
I always enter the classroom with a positive attitude.	71.6	22.8	2.3	1.4	1.9	4.60
While easily accept the feedback provided by my fellow teachers and others concerned.	57.9	30.7	5.8	3	2.6	4.38
I have received good support and help from the principal and fellow teachers.	50.2	32.6	10.9	3.5	2.8	4.20
I am fully satisfied with the responsibilities assigned to me by the school.	54.7	28.4	8.8	4.7	3.5	4.22
I am satisfied with the behavior of the students.	56.5	29.5	7.2	3.5	3.3	4.30
Overall mean						4.20

### Social Wellbeing

Social Wellbeing is the feeling connected to others (Falecki & Mann, 2021). Positive social relationships with students, fellow teachers, and school administrators promote teachers' social wellbeing, whereas family challenges and perceived loneliness in their workspace reduce it (Gozzoli et al., 2015). Social wellbeing strengthens interpersonal ties and meaningful interaction with students, fellow teachers, and professional learning communities. Concerning the statements under the survey, most of the respondents reported that they preferred to engage students in collaborative learning through interaction and provide all students equal opportunities irrespective of their gender and other social-structural categories. Nevertheless, around 50 percent of the respondents reported they are not connected to any of the national and international professional learning communities. Also, 40 percent

of respondents 'disagreed' that their schools have physical facilities that ensure gender equality and inclusion. Yet, the overall analysis of the statements with a 4.12 average score also proves that teachers in Nepal are experiencing positive social wellbeing.

**Table 5**

*Teacher Responses on Social Wellbeing*

Indicators/Statements	Responses in Percentage					Avg. Score in Five-Point Likert scale
	SA	A	UD	D	SD	
I am involved in different national and international organizations concerning my profession.	19.1	20.2	12.8	10.9	37	2.73
I prefer to learn and engage students in learning through interaction with the students and fellow teachers.	67.4	26.5	2.6	1.6	1.9	4.54
I have ensured equal opportunities in learning activities.	70.5	24.2	2.6	1.2	1.6	4.59
I have fully stressed collaborative learning while engaging students in class.	67.4	26.5	2.8	1.6	1.6	4.54
While facilitating learning, I appreciate students' ideas, feelings, and participation.	68.4	25.6	3	1.2	1.9	4.55
I fulfill my duty in collaboration with SMC, the Education Section, and the Parents.	49.5	37.4	7.4	3.7	1.9	4.27
In my school, we make decisions respecting gender equality.	53	31.2	11.2	3.5	1.2	4.27
In my school, physical facilities (walkways, toilets, ladders, labs, etc.) have been constructed keeping gender and inclusiveness in mind.	32.6	27.2	14.4	14.4	11.4	3.57
My family is satisfied and happy that I am involved in the teaching profession.	45.8	27.7	14.9	5.8	5.8	4.01
Overall mean						4.12

The multipronged analysis of teacher wellbeing based on the survey results reveals that teachers experienced higher degrees of professional, disciplinary and intellectual, psychological and emotional, and social wellbeing. However, this seriously contrasts with the teachers' response against the economic wellbeing. It implies that teachers are not satisfied with the salaries, incentives and facilities that they are provided with. Yet, the effect of this satisfaction is not apparent in professional, disciplinary and intellectual, psychological and emotional, and social wellbeing.

**Table 6***Multipronged Analysis of Teacher Wellbeing and Intersectionality*

		PW Avg.	DCIW Avg.	EW Avg.	PEW Avg.	SW Avg.
PW_Avg.	Pearson Correlation	1	.585**	.255**	.641**	.544**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	393	393	393	393	393
DCIW_Avg.	Pearson Correlation	.585**	1	.130*	.649**	.620**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.010	.000	.000
	N	393	393	393	393	393
EW_Avg	Pearson Correlation	.255**	.130*	1	.229**	.120*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.010		.000	.017
	N	393	393	393	393	393
PEW_Avg.	Pearson Correlation	.641**	.649**	.229**	1	.719**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	393	393	393	393	393
SW_Avg.	Pearson Correlation	.544**	.620**	.120*	.719**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.017	.000	
	N	393	393	393	393	393

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

PW-Professional Wellbeing, DCIW- Disciplinary Competence and Intellectual Wellbeing, EW – Economic Wellbeing, PEW – Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing, SW – Social Wellbeing, Avg.- Average

Of variables including gender, region/province, level of teaching, teaching experience, major subject that the teachers teach, appointment type (permanent, *rahat* [relief], temporary, and others] and qualification, the degree of teacher wellbeing differs significantly by gender and qualification. Female teachers tend to have a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession than their male counterparts. Interestingly, the teachers with lower academic qualifications tend to have a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession than their male counterparts. This implies that teachers with high qualification degrees are not satisfied in the teaching profession as they are paid low. Unlike the results of the quantitative data derived from the survey, analysis of the teacher narratives derived from the focus group discussions (FGDs) and interviews reveals some more complex realities. The teachers who participated in the FGDs and interviews more often raised issues

on job satisfaction and wellbeing. A female teacher appointed for the ECD at a community school explained her job as 'not manageable for livelihood', so 'frustrating.' In her own words:

*I have been working at this level for the last seven years. I am paid 15000 rupees (111.9 USD) per month, which is almost not manageable for my livelihood. Sometimes, I feel frustrated and want to leave the job. I think, why stick to this low-paid job? But, as I have already spent so much time, I cannot quit...My friend with a permanent position is paid a full salary (NRs. 32902 equals 245 USD) per month, if although we are assigned the same number of hours.*

A male teacher appointed to teach the Basic level and is paid from the school's internal fund explained:

*I have been appointed to teach Science and Mathematics at the upper basic level (Grades 6 and 7). I am paid through the school's internal fund (now Local Government). I am paid less than for the teachers appointed in permanent, temporary, and relief positions. However, I have more d loads compared to them...I am not sure I can continue here. I will quit when I find better opportunities.*

As discussed earlier, the situation of the institutional schooling system is even more complicated regarding the salaries, incentives, and facilities to be allocated for teachers. One female teacher working in an institutional school in the capital explained her dissatisfaction as:

*Financially, I feel I am paid very little umm...around 18000 rupees (134 USD) per month. I have to teach seven periods every day. It is tough as I need to check students' copies, give exams, and prepare student profiles. But I am paid very little...I am planning to look for other jobs instead of this one, though I worked here for ten years.*

The narratives from these three teachers reveal several different job trajectories. However, all of their dissatisfaction underlines the negative economic wellbeing rooted in low payment and limited incentives. Many other teachers raised the concern of limited opportunities for enhancing their teaching professionalism. A male teacher working at a secondary-level community school in a rural setting for the last fourteen years explained:

*I received TPD long ago. Then I haven't got any of the refresher training. I feel we need to have more opportunities to enhance our professional learning. The government has initiated a few programmes [TPD, ICT training]. But, they are not sufficient to enhance our disciplinary knowledge and that of innovative approaches to pedagogy...We need a strong teacher support mechanism.*



Another male teacher in a similar setting added:

I don't think we get the opportunity from these isolated places. Only a few teachers who teach in schools in the cities and towns receive [these opportunities]. We teach just what we know...In my 8-year-long teaching career, I have hardly had opportunities to attend training of any sort. I am appointed in the relief quota, and I don't think I can sustain my career (with a long sigh).

A couple of critical issues emerge concerning teacher wellbeing here. The first teacher raised the issue of the continuity of professional development. And the second teacher raised the issue of equity in teacher professional development programmes that the government agencies implement. Both these issues reinforce negative wellbeing if not addressed well.

Many teachers who seemed very satisfied and contended for being involved in the teaching profession explained that negative evaluation of teachers and their performance through 'noise' is the prime cause of frustration and demotivation in teaching. By 'noise', they meant the negative discourses rumored in Nepali society both at the national and local levels. The noises like *'teachers do not teach'*, *'teachers hardly fulfill the responsibilities'*, *'teachers engage in politics'*, etc., are reported to reinforce psychological panic in them. A teacher with a decade-long work experience at a community school explained:

I am pretty aware that I am fully responsible for students' learning; there is no compromise in the quality of my work. But, in our society, I feel tense as we are blamed for being solely responsible for the current situation of the school quality. There are several factors, but only WE [teachers] are blamed, NOT OTHERS. It is painful!

Another teacher with five years of experience working at the secondary level said:

Negative discourses are systematically rumored against the teachers of public schools, like *'teachers do not teach'*, *'teachers are involved in politics'*, *'school quality is worse because of weak teachers'*, etc. I know some teachers are like that, but we all teachers who are more responsible are forced to listen to them. Even teacher educators of the university blame school teachers. Such noises have affected our lives and identity.

The analysis of these narratives shows that teacher wellbeing is much more a social and cultural concern. The negative discourses and rumored noises often lead teachers to perceive and experience negative wellbeing. Such wellbeing, deep-rooted in the 'noises', increasingly prevailing in the social-

cultural landscapes in Nepal, has seriously affected teacher wellbeing, identity, and job satisfaction.

### Discussion

As revealed by the descriptive analysis of the teacher responses, some positive wellbeing is expressed in most of the wellbeing measures. However, a critical observation of their lived experiences and reflections reveals some more critical concerns relating to the teacher profession and wellbeing in Nepal. Such critical concerns are associated with preservice training, recruitment, transfers, in-service professional development, payments, and incentives (Jha, 2021). Lower salaries, unequal payments and incentives for those who have the appointments for the same level are the prime factors associated with increasing dissatisfaction and psychological pain (Dávila et al., 2024). In the SAARC countries, Nepal's payment for teachers for their service is apparently low. Such a situation of underpayment has pushed them to seek other opportunities for some extra income, specifically in the urban areas. It has reinforced them to feel demotivated and disengaged in their professional duties. Still, it further reinforces insecurity and diffidence in their job performances. Evans and Yuan (2018) argue that underpayment is a pertinent issue in the low-income and middle-income countries. In fact, the state's poor investment in the education sector is the main reason behind the underpayment and low incentives. For example, Nepal has invested only around 11 percent of the GDP in the education sector which is itself very low for addressing the issues concerning good payments and incentives.

Teachers are well-considered as the single most important factor in promoting quality learning in schools in developing countries. However, they should be capacitated with effective teacher-professional learning programmes (Fernandes et al., 2019). These programmes prepare them to become a part of professional learning communities, be updated with innovative approaches to teaching and learning, and apply these approaches to the enhancement student wellbeing in return (Roffey, 2012). The review of the educational policies of the country (See, SSRP 2009-2015; Teacher Competency Framework, 2014; SSDP 2016-2022; SESP 2022/23-2031/32; The Fifteenth Plan 2019/20-2023/24; National Education Policy 2019; SDG 4 Education 2030: Nepal National Framework) reveals that they have uniformly stressed on teacher professional development, teacher support mechanisms, teacher competency and accountability. SESP 2022/23-2031/32 states, "Develop and implement a comprehensive teacher professional development system, establish a teacher support system, and streamline the system to improve the motivation and

accountability of teachers” (p. xi). Similarly, the Fifteenth Plan of Nepal (2019) puts forth, “a system will be established for the review of the minimum educational qualifications of the teachers and periodical qualification assessment. Similarly, teachers' professional development programmes will be conducted for the continuous professional development of the teachers” (p. 233). Equally, SDG4: Education 2030, Nepal National Framework for Action (2019) envisions, “100 percent of teachers in basic and secondary education will receive at least the minimum organized teacher training by 2030 [98.4 percent by 2025]” (p. 66).

Of course, these policy statements have guided the current teacher training and professional learning practices in school education in Nepal. The government has initiated several approaches, including job induction training, one-month certification training, short-term customized teacher training, self-directed learning, learning networks, self-evaluation, lesson study, peer classroom observation, and teacher mentoring to enhance teacher competency (MoEST, 2023). Flash I Report-2023 claims that 72.8 percent of basic level and 84.8 percent of secondary level teachers have already received at least the minimum package of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) training. This seems to be a huge achievement when the country itself is still facing a prolonged transition, and the roles and the responsibilities of federal, provincial, and local levels regarding teacher training and TPD are still not substantially operationalized in clear terms.

However, on practical grounds, there exist certain gaps between these policy statements and policy implementation in teacher training, teacher support, and teacher wellbeing. Despite of these remarkable achievements, the impact of TPD training and programmes is not replicated well in student learning and achievement, which is irrefutably low (Schaffner et al., 2021; MoEST, 2020; Gautam, 2016). Behind such low impact of training in student learning and achievement, Schaffner et al. (2024) have identified certain weaknesses involving training uptake, training-session management, subject knowledge, adoption of new classroom practices, and student knowledge of earlier grade curricular contents. For them, limited time, resource, and capacity constraints of both trainers and teachers are the key issues. These issues resonate with Sah (2022), who points out a gap between the pre-service university courses and in-service teacher training curricula and programmes to deal with diversity, inclusion, and social justice in diverse classrooms.

One more key concern worth discussing is teacher health. The educational policies and practices implemented so far have not incorporated teacher

health, wellbeing, and satisfaction in explicit terms. UNESCO (2022) highlights the importance of teacher health and wellbeing as:

It is important not to forget teachers in this scenario. Less imaginative and sensitive leadership boards view teachers as a means to an end, there to enhance student learning and to go the extra mile for every student's wellbeing, with few resources or motivational feedback to help them do that. However, teachers are not machines that can be run into the ground. In some environments, they are burning out. If we want student wellbeing, it can only come with teacher wellbeing. (p.1-2)

Despite this fact, teachers in Nepal are forced to experience several challenges relating to their professional development and professional learning (Gautam, 2016). Though the government has made some attempts to address these challenges and issues in designing and implementing teacher development practices, such attempts are not adequate enough to enhance teacher wellbeing and efficacy for enhancing engaged student learning, instructional preparation, knowledge of innovative pedagogies, teaching skills, and learning outcomes (Shah & Bhattarai, 2023). The issues associated with teachers working in the private school sector are even more serious (Phyak et al. 2023). Referencing to the condition of those teachers during the Covid-19 pandemic, the authors pointed out that they were not paid salaries regularly, many of them even lost their jobs, and faced career uncertainties. The findings resonate with the professional trajectories that many teachers have experienced in the current educational landscape. In fact, Nepalese teachers are subjugated with negative wellbeing as they are facing serious job dissatisfaction, insecurity, and stress for several reasons, including their economic condition and the negative noises spread in the current educultural space.

### **Conclusion and Implications**

The concept of teacher wellbeing converges multiple dimensions of wellbeing involving professional, intellectual, psychological, economic and social dimensions. In the Nepalese context, the economic wellbeing of teachers is undeniably serious. The intersectionality between the economic and the other dimensions of wellbeing, notably professional, intellectual, psychological and social dimensions is substantially reflected on the teacher narratives, anecdotes and stories. Such an intersectionality certainly unveils some important implications for revisiting the teacher education programme and TPD policies and practices. At the policy level, the review unfolds that the designated and implemented TPD programmes and practices aim to capacitate the teachers with professional knowledge and skills for applying innovative

approaches and methods for productive instruction. However, the policies and programmes have not stressed teacher wellbeing in explicit terms. In the absence of teacher wellbeing, health, emotions and job satisfaction, the expected professional learning and efficacy in teachers cannot be achieved. Therefore, the educational policies and programmes should explicitly articulate teacher wellbeing, teacher health and job satisfaction as the key measures of teacher development for quality education.

At the practice level, the government needs to ensure equitable participation of all teachers in TPD and learning irrespective of their gender, social, cultural, and regional backgrounds. MoEST and its constituent bodies need to implement a participatory approach to designing and developing TPD programmes and training. Engaging teachers in continuous teacher professional development through the use of a participatory approach encourages teachers to participate in professional learning networks and a community of practice. It will capacitate them to learn and apply professional knowledge, skills, and innovative approaches to support student learning, achievement and wellbeing. Such skills and knowledge prepare them for tackling with the conflicts with the students, teachers, and community. Overall, the TPD training and workshops need to integrate teacher counseling, stress management, work-life balance, and self-care practices. These skills promote wellbeing, self-efficacy and a positive attitude towards students' wellbeing.

In this regard, there should be a strong synergy between the federal, provincial, and local constituencies of the government, which creates a supportive workspace for teachers. The government should develop a strong teacher support mechanism to monitor and facilitate teachers, particularly engaged in teaching in rural settings. Through a strong teacher support system and monitoring mechanism, the government can appreciate teachers for their productive professional learning. Finally, and importantly, the analysis has unfolded that most of the teachers are occupied with negative economic wellbeing. It seems to stand as a prime predictor for job dissatisfaction and job attrition – an emerging concern in the present context of Nepal. It may also lead the country to a serious paucity of qualified, competent, and dedicated teachers. Since positive teacher wellbeing implies the whole school's wellbeing, the government and concerned stakeholders need to mutually collaborate to tackle with the issues of underpayment, insecurity, and inadequate opportunities for professional development.

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