Occupational Stress and Coping Strategies Among Teachers in Nepal[1]

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Abstract

This paper explored a complex problem of occupational stress among Nepalese teachers with understanding of systemic stressors and multifaceted strategies of management. Two main objectives informed the research, including finding out the systemic aspects that build up the level of occupational stress in teachers, and investigating the synergistic approach to improving teacher well-being and sustainability in their professional practice. A qualitative research design in an interpretivist paradigm, the research applied purposive sampling in choosing the secondary school teachers in Kathmandu district. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were used to gather data, which was analyzed with the help of thematic analysis. The results indicated five themes that are interrelated, which were overwhelming professional demands with excessive workloads, large classroom sizes, high administrative loads, loss of professional self-worth due to lack of support and recognition, physical and psychological manifestations such as chronic exhaustion and emotional burnout, inadequate institutional support systems with paucity of formal processes and personal coping strategies within structural constraints. The research also finds that, although personal coping strategies ensure resilience among teachers, effective stress management involves a holistic intervention strategy that combines organizational factors (including equitable assignment of workload, positive leadership, and well-organized well-being programs) with institutional support systems. These results highlight the need to implement systemic changes in Nepalese learning institutions to overcome the structural causes of stress and ensure the well-being of teachers, which will subsequently contribute to an improvement in the quality of the educational process and professional sustainability

Keywords*: Institutional Support, Occupational Stress, Stress Management Strategies, Professional Well-being, Teacher Stress.*

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Introduction

Teacher stress in Nepal is becoming important as a complex phenomenon that is conditioned by institutional requirements and the lack of institutional backing. According to the recent research, teachers experience overwhelming workloads, administrative pressures, and changes in policies that negatively affect psychological stress, emotional burdens, and the lack of professional confidence (Joshi and Bajracharya, 2021). This does not only affect their health, but it also interferes with the quality of educational institutions and student performance. Although there has been increasing understanding, however, the issue of teacher stress has been viewed as an individual issue, not a structural one, and little has been done on the interaction between systemic and institutional factors that can influence stressful experiences in the Nepalese context. The dynamics need to be examined further to inform holistic interventions that are context relevant.

Occupational stress is characterized as a negative physical and emotional reaction that ensues when work demands are not in tandem with the capacity, resources or needs by a worker. Under the education environment, work pressures, lack of communication, job insecurity, and interpersonal disagreements are some of the sources of stress.

Occupational stressors that affect teachers are numerous and interrelated and impact poorly on their professional effectiveness and well-being. The main stressors are role ambiguity and role conflict, when it is impossible to perform and make decisions due to the unclear expectations or conflicting ones, and work intensification, which is characterized by heavy teaching loads and inadequate breaks, which are the reasons of chronic overworking. Also, the instructional process is more and more provided in a low-trust professional environment where pressure is raised and where autonomy is limited, thereby decreasing morale. The imbalance between efforts and rewards also leads to the increase of stress when the professional devotion and emotional labor do not correspond with proper salary, recognition and promotion opportunities. When they are combined, they may result in a sustained occupational stress, undermining motivation, health, and professional sustainability of teachers.

Applying those frames to the educational setting, scholars differentiate between external structural settings and internal mental conditions to find out the origins of occupational pressure. According to Sauter and Murphy (2004), this stress is characterized by a negative physical and emotional reaction which takes place when the demands of the job are not within the capability, resources or needs of the teacher. Mosadeghrad (2014) noted that some job factors or professional workplace factors

are more predictive of work-related stress when compared to specific variables such as personal factors such as personality traits. Although the organisational factors are stressors, which are triggered by the policies, workload and culture of the institution, the individual factors are unique to the personality of a person, life situations and the perceptions he or she has.

Organisational triggers can be broadly classified as organisational content and context in most cases, which are the most significant predictors of mental health. According to Kahn et al. (1964), role-related stress was one of the key factors, and it encompasses role ambiguity (a deficiency of information regarding the duties), role conflict (a conflict of demands), and role overload (an abundance of tasks with insufficient resources). Jacobs and Winslow (2004) also emphasized the work intensification factor, saying that high demands and impossible deadlines are considered to be the main sources of stress among overworked faculty.

The institutional culture is also critical in these triggers. Michie (2002) fairly suggested that the stress is greatly influenced by leadership style, with hard policies in the company and the failure of the managers or team members to support an individual making stress a lot worse. Also, the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) model, which is elaborated by Derycke et al. (2013) and Siegrist (2017), indicates that in their case when high professional investments are not rewarded in an adequate way, including salary, career opportunities, or social acknowledgment, the teachers experience high levels of stress.

Personal factors determine how a teacher becomes vulnerable to stress and how one is capable of bouncing back after the impact of stress. Watson and Pennebaker (1989) wrote about the role of negative affectivity, a general tendency to experience negative moods such as nervousness or depression, that defines the perception of the potential threat by an individual. Self-esteem is one of the most important internal tools as well; according to Rosse et al (1991), people who have lower self-esteem might feel less competent in relations and they might not possess psychological energy to cope with everyday problems.

Stress profile is further added due to life circumstances and demographics of an individual. The work-life conflict, especially the inability to find a balance between work obligations and family duties such as taking care of children, was one of the stressful factors described by Gede Riana et al. (2018). According to Seaward (2017), the psychological resources that a teacher can be committed to managing professional incidents are less in situations of personal financial issues and major life transitions.

Although such demographic factors as age and gender are commonly investigated, Resmi (2018) and Rathore (2018) have stated that those are sometimes not significantly different in stress levels to the effect of the job position or role overload.

On the basis of this gap, this research intends to fulfill two research objectives, namely, first, to examine the systemic factors that lead to occupational stress among Nepali teachers, and second, to examine integrated stress management strategies that could be used to improve teacher well-being and professional sustainability. This study is expected to make practical suggestions to education policy-makers, school administrators, and teacher support systems in Nepal and other similar settings by analyzing the structural factors of stress and the interaction of individual and organisational support systems.

Research Problem Statement

The modern working world has grown to be very challenging and the teaching occupation in Nepal is not different. Occupational pressure on teachers has been intensified considerably due to rapid restructuring of the education systems, the broadening of the curriculum, the class-size, the work of the administration, and the adoption of technological tools in instruction. Middle range of stress can stimulate motivation and performance, but in Nepal; the stress faced by teachers is chronic and dysfunctional because of work overload, time, limited resources and lack of boundaries between the professional and personal life.

The teachers in most learning institutions in Nepal are expected to undertake various responsibilities in addition to teaching that must be executed in the administrative areas, running examination, recording of continuous assessment, and involvement in training and institution programs. These roles are usually supported by a lack of institutional support, poor professional acknowledgment, and the lack of promotion opportunities, which contribute to stress levels further. Also, the increased demand on teachers to be always available online has minimized rest and resting time, which is a negative impact on the balance between work and life.

Excessive exposure to such stressors has severe consequences to the physical, psychological, and professional well-being of teachers. Chronic occupational stress has been associated with fatigue, sleeping problems, anxiety, lower job satisfaction, and burnouts that eventually affect the effectiveness of teaching and learning results among students. In addition, chronic stress has adverse effects on the self-esteem and professional identity of teachers, causing low confidence, emotional burnout, losing interest in the profession.

Although the teachers are very critical in the development of the country, there is still lack of empirical studies on lived experiences of teachers on stress and coping strategies in Nepalese educational setting. The knowledge of the nature, causes and effects of stress, effectiveness of individual and organizational stress management practices is important in forming of supportive institutional policies and interventions. Thus, the current research project aims at investigating the experiences of stress management and coping strategies among the teachers in Nepal, expecting to enhance the quality of life of teachers, decrease the turnover, and improve the overall education standards.

Objectives of the Study

This research was guided by the following objectives.
1. To identify the systemic determinants of occupational stress among teachers.
2. To investigate the possibilities of integrated stress management of teachers to improve their well-being and professional sustainability.

Significance of the Study

This research can be useful in the Nepalese education sector where teachers are facing the growing occupational stresses in the form of increasing workloads and administrative tasks, lack of resources, and evolving pedagogical demands. The research by investigating the stressful experiences of teachers along with their coping mechanisms will offer some context-relevant data to fill the significant research gap in educational literature on Nepal.

The research will be useful to the teachers who will learn to improve their psychological well-being, self-worth and job satisfaction as the results will help teachers to better understand the common stressors and the coping mechanisms applicable in stress management. The research also presents feasible information to the school administrators, institutional leaders to create conducive working environments, enhance leadership styles, and adopt organized stress management programs.

Moreover, the study is policy relevant as it enlightens educational planners and policy makers on the necessity of teacher friendly policies concerning workload management, professional growth and well being. Academically, the study makes a contribution to the body of literature on occupational stress by preempting the lived experiences of teachers, in a developing-country situation. Finally, it may be concluded that evidence-based interventions are a way of promoting teacher well-being and improving instructional effectiveness and contributing to better educational quality in Nepal.

Literature Review

Stress definition has changed into a complicated psychological and physiological system as opposed to the physical science concept. It is now perceived to be a complex process of reaction to pressure and happens when the perceived demands surpass the individual's capacity to manage.

Etymology and History of Evolution

The name stress is a combination of strictus and stringere, the Latin words meaning tight and narrow respectively. Also, as Seaward (2017) clarified, the concept was originally based on physics and used to explain the inherent resistance of an object to outside force, but since then it has become one of the core terms in the field of management, psychiatry, and health sciences. According to Bernik (1998), in the early medical and psychological combination, the term started to refer to the aggression itself or the discomfort experienced by the organism due to the suffering caused by responding to a challenge.

The term was applied in a physical sense before it was brought into the field of human psychology. According to Seaward (2017), the concept initially was employed by the ancient Romans to comprehend the forces that occur when a body is in motion and the concept defined internal resistance to an external force. It did not take place until the early nineteenth century before scientists started relating these physical principles to physiology and medicine. Robinson (2018) also elaborated how the term was later incorporated as an established notion within the field of psychology as the understanding of the human reaction to both the internal and external requirements became more complicated.

The broadest classification of stress definitions into three historical and scientific viewpoints is offered by Dewe et al. (2010), who identifies them as the stimulus-based perspective of defining stress as a demand or event exerted on an individual by the environment; the response-based perspective, the most prominent expostulation by Selye (1956) and his General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) about defining stress as the internal response or reaction to pressure; and the transactional perspective, the most notable being Lazarus (1966) and his conception of

The definition offered by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has become popular in the modern academic and professional environment. According to the HSE (2010), stress is a negative response to the high pressure or certain kinds of demands, and it happens in particular situations when the individuals feel that they do not possess

the resources or competencies in order to cope with it. Lazarus (1966) extended this more psychologically by creating that stress arises when an individual evaluates a situation to be straining and beyond their means and impairs their well-being. Within the context of work, Sauter and Murphy (2004) conceive of occupational stress as the disastrous physical and emotional reactions which transpire in a circumstance when the work demands are above the capabilities, resources, or demands of the worker.

Concept of Stress

The notion of stress has traversed different fields of science, as a mechanical notion to become a fundamental component of contemporary psychology and medicine.

The effects on the personal and professional spheres of life become terrible with the increases in age, workload, financial strain to maintain the preferred lifestyle, and unhealthy habits, causing enormous stress to the body and mind (Aydin, 2022; Robinson, 2018). Although the concept of stress is often employed to refer to the negative effect on lifestyle, scientific studies also revealed that some positive reaction to stress occurred, which was named as eustress or positive stress (Kupriyanov & Zhdanov, 2014).

In fact, Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014) postulated that the eustress is a contributor of health and longevity because it improves the adaptability of an organism. This good attitude leads to a strong attitude towards adversity, and the ability to survive under extreme conditions. To depict this equilibrium, Vijayashree and Mund (2011) likened stress with a musical instrument, when strings need the right amount of tension in order to contribute to an articulate tune, in the same way human beings need the right amount of stress to be able to operate. On the other hand, when the wires are loose or too tight, no music is produced, as noted by Seaward (2017), which is why it is important to be able to differentiate between productive and dysfunctional stress. With the growing complexity of organisations brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation, it is imperative to establish the causes of all these stressors and put in place viable coping strategies to the overall welfare of society.

Psychological and Biological Definitions.

Stress has currently been conceived of as a multi- dimensional response that comprises of physical, psychological and emotional responses to certain events or demands. This current notion has been influenced by major theorists such as Lazarus (1966), who in his transactional perspective of stress, stress is seen as a dynamic process that arises when the individual feels that the demands of the exterior world exceed

their perceived coping resources. In addition to this, Bernik et al. (1998) highlight the biological aspect and present stress as the inherent response of the organism in those situations when one perceives a challenge or aggression, a response that consequently causes some form of discomfort or cascade of physiologic and psychological processes, regardless of whether the original perception is true or not.

The Dual Nature of Stress

Stress is a rather natural and paradoxical occurrence in the life of a human being as it can serve as both a catalyst of development and a possible cause of damage. Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014) pointed out that negative stress does cause ill health, but on the contrary, eustress (positive stress) can enhance adaptive abilities and lifespan. Thus, contemporary meanings can tend to believe that stress is invariably a kind of an optimum demand, as in the tension of a musical string, required to play a good tune or a high performance.

Stress is a complex process that mainly occurs in both physical and psychological aspects which have a great influence on the human body and the psyche.

Physical stress normally targets people working in labour intensive industries, which include healthcare, sales and social services where the physical activity across the long period is compulsory. Aydin (2022) and Frenk et al. (2010) emphasize the fact that medical professionals are especially prone to such stress as they have to withstand prolonged standing, carry patients with extreme weights, and suffer serious sleep deprivation because of sudden or long working hours. Morse et al. (2008) go further to note that such physical requirements especially the issue of heavy lifting is one of the major stressors of healthcare workers.

The direct effect of psychological stress on the mental health of an individual is that it is usually divided in four types, which include eustress, distress, hyper-stress, and hypo-stress.

Eustress and Distress: According to Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014), eustress is a good or rather positive stress that gives the motivation and the energy that is needed to make an individual excited about the work. The existence of eustress is usually connected with high work satisfaction, innovation, and exercise. On the other hand, the negative opposite would be distress where the individual would be negatively engaged, resulting in a huge degradation of the performance. According to Haque et al. (2016), distress may later develop into debilitating chronic stress as long as it is continued.

Hyper-stress and Hypo-stress: Hyper-stress is a condition that is still within manageable levels thereby enabling a person to work effectively over some period of time. Faizan and Hague (2019) however note that a major trigger of hyper-stress is excessive workloads that, in the long run, will see people lose their normal working capacity. Lastly, low-stress causes hypo-stress, which is caused by permanent and low-arousal stressors that cause boredom and fatigue. People in this state become deprived of inspiration and motivation in their professional activity, which has frequent manifestations in chronic and incurable outcomes.

Causes of Occupational Stress

Job stress or occupational stress is considered to be a constant and dynamic strain that employees develop as a result of their jobs, work conditions, the environment, and other work-related strains. Such stress is caused by factors known as stressors which may either be external, organizational or individual in nature. These sources are generalized into extra-organizational stressors, which refer to external factors like climate, socio-cultural forces (including the influence of digital life), economic factors, legal factors, daily hassle like commuting; inter-organizational stressors, which pertain to forces within the work environment and, therefore, comprise high workload, poor leadership, restrictive policies, adverse work environment, after-hours communication requirements, and interpersonal conflict; and individual stressors, which are specific to the individual worker and, as such, include worker perception, self-esteem, and behaviour.

Types and Categories of Stress

There are various kinds and types of stress. However, as opposed to the usual belief that stress is all bad, Selye (1980) was noted to have famously claimed that the complete lack of stress is synonymous with being a lifeless being. According to the academic sources, there are a number of different types of stress depending on their consequences and the length of effects. Seaward (2017) identifies both eustress and distress as types of stress, with the first kind being positive and encouraging people to achieve their best performance, and the second being negative and inhibiting functionality and causing illness. Further on, neustress is a sort of sensory information or stimulation that a person does not consequentialize. In terms of the temporal scales, acute stress is described as short time and intense, and chronic stress is the one that persists and in most cases is related to a disease in the long term because of the constant arousal of physiological processes. The arousal and performance are also explained by the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which demonstrates that the performance improves as arousal by the emotions increases, but then, past the optimum level, the performance declines.

According to Girdano (2009), stressors, or conditions or situations that pose a threat to the physical or psychological wellbeing of an individual, are categorised into three broad categories: Bioecological Factors, which entail disruption of the biological rhythms of a person as a result of environmental factors such as sunlight or gravity; Psycho-intrapersonal Factors, which include the disruption of the inner beliefs, values and behaviours in an individual; and Social/Environmental Factors, which entail the external pressures such as the unpredictability of In order to make an objective measure of the cumulative effects of such life events, Holmes and Rahe (1967) have devised the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, which allocates numerical values to events such as divorce or death of a spouse to predict the predisposition to stress-related illness.

Costs and Economic Consequences

The cost due to occupational stress is immense to world societies. According to the data published by the Safe Work Australia (2010), the number of claims on the basis of the so-called mental stress has increased significantly in Australia, and in most cases, it is more expensive than claims on physical injuries. Absenteeism and presenteeism which is a phenomenon where employees might be physically present but are not functional as a result of emotional overworking or sickness worsen these costs. On top of financial measures, chronic stress has dire physical health consequences, in theory vested out to coronary heart disease by Stansfeld and Marmot (2002), and in other studies, to gastric ulcers, asthma, and obesity.

Personal vs. Organisational Factors

Initial studies in the field like Ganster and Schaubroeck (1991) studies were mainly centered on individual dimensions mainly the negative affectivity personality trait, the negative attitude towards bad moods such as anger or depression. These studies indicated that work pressure is highly mediated by individual resources like high self-esteem. The position of Sauter and Murphy (2004) is, however, that organisational influences play a more powerful role in predicting stress than individual personality. Some of the institutional stressors are heavy workloads, absence of job control, role ambiguity and unsupportive leadership styles.

There are highly recognized theoretical models that have different opinions about the relationship between work environment and occupational stress. The Demand-Control-Support Model by Karasek (1979) states that high levels of psychological demands, and low levels of decision-making autonomy (control) lead to strain (especially cardiovascular risk). Simultaneously, the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) Theory by Siegrist (2017) postulates that stress can result when his or her efforts

are highly valued and rewarded not adequately, either in the form of salary, position, or job security. In addition to these, Costa and Moss (2018) develop the concept of Emotional Exhaustion as one of the essential aspects of burnout, which is the consistent exhaustion of the emotional and physical resources of a person.

Research Methodology

The research design used in this study was qualitative research based on the interpretivist paradigm to comprehensively examine the lived experience by teachers of occupational stress and stress management techniques in Nepal. The sampling strategy was purposive sampling of teachers in secondary schools in the district so that the sample has enough experience and desire to participate and the data saturation has been used to select the final sample. Semi-structured in-depth interviews with a focus group discussion were the main data collection methods and were carried out with the help of an interview guide created based on the literature and research questions. The sessions were carried out either in Nepali or English and recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim. The data was systematically coded, categorized, and developed into themes using thematic analysis and its credibility was ensured by member checking, peer debriefing, and extended interaction.

Findings and Discussions

The findings of the study are described in this section and an integrated discussion is provided by putting them in context with the existing literature on the topic of teacher stress and occupational well-being. The thematic analysis revealed five interrelated themes, which describe the richness of the concept of stress among teachers in Nepalese schools. These themes are excessive demands of the profession, erosion of the professional self-worth, incarnated, emotional effects of stress, fragmented institutional support structures and limited range of individual coping in structural limits. These findings are interpreted in the subsequent discussion in order to point to the implications of these findings to policy, institutional practice and teacher support in Nepal.

Overwhelming Professional Demands as Primary Stressors

Educators always indicated that their professional lives were full of heavy and compartmentalized workload requirements.

Teaching does not just require teaching. There is administrative work, exams, reports, meetings, all these on teachers. (T3)

It is very stressful due to the large number of classes and continuous assessment system. One is always under pressure to complete the syllabus. (T7)

Other stress factors identified by several of the teachers include the frequent change of policies and limited resources.

The policies are continuously evolving, and we have not been trained well. We are supposed to take care of all by ourselves. (T1)

The respondents noted excessive teaching workloads, high student enrollments, office work, constant need to assess, and participation in non-instructional activities as key causes of stress. Pressure was worsened by the anticipation to adjust to the frequent changes in curricular and policy changes that were often not accompanied by adequate training and resources. The teachers felt that professional demands and institutional support they received have been disproportionate and led to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion.

Wearing down of Professional Self-Worth

Another pattern that was common in the stories was lowering self-esteem caused by prolonged work stress. It was reported by teachers that they were feeling self-doubt and a lack of professional competence especially when their work was not recognized by the school administration. Lack of appreciation and positive feedback made most participants feel undermined and professionally unseen. This loss of self-esteem would lead to a lack of motivation, withdrawal of emotions and a doubt of their identity as a professional.

There are occasions when I cannot do enough no matter how much I work. Appreciation does not exist and that reduces my self-esteem. (T5)

The fact that the management does not care about what we do makes me doubt myself as a teacher. (T9)

These experiences led to withdrawal and lack of motivation. The effect of stress among teachers on self-esteem and professional confidence was negative in the long run. Most participants complained that they felt undermined even after some level of commitment.

Personal and Interpersonal Effects of Stress

The portrait of teachers showed that they both physically and psychologically experienced occupational stress. The physical manifestations were chronic fatigue, headaches, sleeping problems, and musculoskeletal pain. Psychologically, the

participants were experiencing anxiety, irritability, emotional exhaustion, and burnout symptoms. Most of the teachers said that they struggled to control their emotions and focus, which meant that the stress was not only at the work place but also at home and family. The experience of stress was considered by teachers as both physical and psychological health that was lived and embodied.

I feel tired all the time. My body is not fresh even after sleeping. (T4)

Due to stress, I experience headaches and I am not able to sleep properly at night. (T6)

Anxiety and emotional exhaustion were also significant cases of psychological effects. One of the teachers said, *in other cases, I am emotionally exhausted and annoyed with minor things.* (T2)

Disjointed Institutional Support Systems

It was shown that the institutional arrangements to address teacher stress were minimal, informal and not done consistently. Although some respondents identified supportive coworkers and understanding school administrations, most of them said that there was a lack of any form of formal assistance like counseling services, workload accommodation policies, or wellness programs. Educators affirmed that a mediating factor in teachers experiencing stress was the attitude towards leadership and the relationship among colleagues who frequently alleviated the inadequate institutional provisions. Institutional support mechanisms were seen to be insufficient or uneven by most teachers.

We do not have any formal counseling or stress management system in our school. (T8)

It is a matter of support that is based on the head teacher. With a good leadership, it is easy to cope with stress; however, in case it is bad, it becomes very hard. (T11)

Collegial support was found to be informal, but important, as a source of coping.

Discussion with colleagues is helpful, since they feel the way, we are going. (T10)

Personal Coping in the Structural Constraints

The most common personal coping mechanisms that teachers used to cope with stress were those that involved seeking social support, practicing religious or mindfulness-based coping, having brief breaks and self-regulation. Even though these strategies offered alleviation that was only short-lived, there was a general consensus among the participants that the problem could only be adequately solved through

individual efforts without a change in the organization. Systemic interventions that could enable sustainable management of stress such as the equitable distribution of work, recognition and nurturing leadership were identified by teachers as required.

Personal coping strategies were the main approaches used to deal with stress by teachers, but they were perceived as short-term ones.

I attempt to cope with stress by spending time with my family and meditating. (T12)

Short breaks or discussing the issues with fellow employees will work, yet stress returns once again. (T6)

Respondents highly stressed that interventions at the organizational level were needed.

Personal coping is not sufficient. Stress will persist until the management and work load problems are resolved. (T3)

Combined, the results indicate that the experiences of teachers under stress are dependent on the processes of coping at the individual level and organization at the organizational level. The effectiveness of teachers is limited by the historical presence of structural stressor and low institutional support even though teachers exhibit resilience through their personal strategies. The findings highlight the importance of holistic stress management techniques that combine an individual and an organizational multi-tiered approach in educational institutions in Nepal.

Conclusions

This paper examined the experiences of teachers who experienced occupational stress and stress management at Nepalese schools. The results have revealed that heavy workloads, large classes, administrative work, and frequent changes in policies without proper training are the major causes of stress that may lead to the existence of a continuous imbalance between expectations and support. The chronic stress and its effects on teachers are weakening professional self-esteem, diminishing motivation and emotional involvement, as well as impacting physical and emotional well-being, causing fatigue, sleeping disorders, and anxiety. The stress is not supported by the institution itself, and it is unstructured and informal; the relationship with colleagues and understanding the leaders provide some assistance, but such well-established interventions as counseling, workload control, and health programs are still mostly missing. This in turn is followed by individual coping strategies by teachers which only offer short-term solutions. The research findings conclude that to successfully manage stress, a systemic intervention is needed involving personal measures and institutional resources such as fair working loads, appreciation, positive leadership, and formal well-being programs to promote teacher well-being and education in Nepal.

Stress management must be holistic and should be seen in the context of organizational set up, institutional support systems and personal coping abilities. Flexibility of the workplace, job redesign and enrichment, the supportive leadership, effective communication of the policy, and the physical working environment enhancement are the key organizational stress management strategies that help cut down on the systemic stressors and help improve the well-being of the employees. In addition to these structural interventions, institutional support programs, such as employee assistance services, engagement activities, and a regular feedback and recognition mechanism, can be used to reduce the existing stress and make employees feel that they belong and are valued working there. Within the personal level, resilience and emotional recovery are achieved through personal coping mechanisms that include mindfulness, psychological, physical wellness, social support, and proper time management. Nonetheless, although personal contributions are positive, the results indicate that sustainable stress management can be realised only when individual coping mechanisms are complemented by high organizational commitment and institutional arrangements. The combination of these strategies is thus a holistic approach that should be encouraged to enhance well-being, performance, and sustainability of the professional in the long run.

Strategies of stress management reported by the teachers can be divided into several broad categories of organizational strategies and individual actions, which include coping with stresses in the institution and the personal resilience.

Educators impacted the significance of systemic support in order to alleviate occupational stress. Encouraging leadership and professional relationships were also mentioned quite often: *The head teacher relies on support. Stress can be easily handled when the leadership is good, but when it is not then it becomes very difficult to handle* (T11). Such strategies are: flexibility at work place, equitable distribution of work, clarity in policies, and physical environment (sufficient lighting and minimal noise). The institutions support programs (e.g., counseling services (Employee Assistance Programmes), involvement, and formal recognition system were also perceived to be the possible means of enhancing morale and preventing the imbalance between efforts and rewards: There is no formal system of counseling or stress management in our school (T8).

These approaches to strategies as mentioned by the teachers are in tandem with the organizational stress management concepts talked about in the literature. According to Jaggaiah and Balaji (2021), such strategies as clear policies and HR practices refer to job rotation and job enrichment are effective to align the tasks with the skills of the employees and avoid boredom caused by hypo-stress. In addition, Satpathy and

Mitra (2015) and Sahni (2016) state that institutions must provide flexibility and allow employees to work at home or in hybrid formats and excellent leader support to create a high-trust environment. The institutional support programs such as Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs), counselling sessions and frequently scheduled employee engagement activities also contribute significantly towards increasing self-esteem and solving professional or personal problems. Last but not the least, poor quality of air, reduction of noise, and proper lighting should be discussed regarding environmental conditions and improvement of employee focus and general mood.

Most of the teachers depended on their own personal strategies to deal with stress, such as mindfulness, taking breaks, social support, and spending time with family: I use the time with my family and do some meditation (T12). Other interventions include physical health (exercise, diet, sleep), recreation, cognitive interventions (mindfulness training), and proper time management. Although these measures are effective in giving some relief, the respondents consented that stress cannot be reduced on a sustainable basis unless it is combined with organizational-level support: "Personal coping does not suffice. The stress will persist until the workload and management problems are solved (T3).

Personal management of stress is centered on positive personal initiatives that are aimed at developing psychological strength and physical stability with regard to the work environment requirements. Psychological interventions, including mindfulness training, meditation, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), and so on, might help a person to re-appraise negative thoughts and also decouple aversive emotions and professional performance, according to the research by Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014) and Huelsheger (2013). Healthy lifestyle with fitness and proper diet and sleep is yet another personal wellness strategy to ensure one is not physically exhausted as in high-pressure jobs such as IT or healthcare. Furthermore, Seaward (2017), Vijayashree and Mund (2011) emphasize the significance of emotional recovery that should be provided by social support, including spending time with family and friends or conversing with co-workers, and good time management and frequent work breaks to guarantee long-term longevity and adaptive abilities. (The preparation of this research was done under the guidance of the University Grants Commission (UGC), Nepal)

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