English Language Teachers' Experiences of Emotional Well-being During COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges, starting in early 2020 and leading to the extensive shutdown of schools around the globe, necessitating a rapid transition to an alternative mode of teaching and learning. Amidst the digital divide regarding access and skills, shifting to virtual teaching-learning was a challenge in Nepal that caused a lot of stress for teachers. This study explores the emotional experiences of basic-level English language teachers in private schools as they adapted to this unforeseen shift. The study investigates the experiences of the English language teachers elicited through in-depth interviews and informal conversation particularly the impact of COVID-19, the sudden shift to virtual instruction on teachers' emotional well-being and how they adapted to this new normal. The research result revealed that they felt unprecedented psychological needs and fear, underwent loneliness and social isolation, experienced teaching challenges, uncertainty and anxiety, and frustration and helplessness. Despite these challenges, they also showed emotional resilience through peer support and collaboration, family support and work-life balance, and adaptation of new technology and innovation in teaching and learning. This article informs teachers, policymakers, and practitioners about the emotional upheavals teachers experienced during the crises and the resilience displayed, implying policy formulation and teacher support mechanisms.

Keywords: *Pandemic, emotional well-being, English language teachers, narrative inquiry, resilience*

Introduction

When the world started grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020, schools and other academic institutions shuttered everywhere. The pandemic's impact extended beyond the educational sphere. Many families suffered job and personal losses due to the virus (UNDP Nepal, 2020). The necessity of social distancing and the abrupt cessation of physical interactions were novel experiences that contributed to feelings of loneliness, boredom, isolation, stress, anxiety, confusion, insomnia, grief, irritability, and emotional disturbances within the population (Sharma et al., 2021). Remarkably, the number of individuals experiencing emotional, behavioral, and psychiatric disorders exceeded the number of those impacted by COVID-19 throughout the ongoing health crisis (Pedrosa et al., 2020). Against this backdrop of global upheaval, teachers were compelled to initiate online and remote learning without prior preparation or planning, operating within the context of a critical global health situation. This unforeseen shift introduced a myriad of challenges that took a toll on their emotional well-being.

Emotions are an inevitable part of our lives. We experience different emotions, like anger and anxiety, according to the context, situation, and environment. In addition to unpleasant emotions like anger, disgust, embarrassment, stress, and others, we also feel positive emotions like happiness, gratitude, peace, interest, hope, and pride. Emotions, as described by Bliss-Moreau (2021), are intricate phenomena that arise from underlying biological and psychological elements. They signify the interplay between an individual's physiological processes, an individual's past life experiences, and the current situations they are in. These emotions serve as valuable, context-specific information that helps individuals make informed decisions and take appropriate actions.

Well-being encompasses various dimensions, including occupational, physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual well-being (Hettler, 1976), and emotional well-being is an integral part of our overall well-being, including the teachers. Emotional wellness is the capacity to deal with life's stresses, change, and difficult circumstances. It can be developed through resilience, stress reduction, getting enough sleep, being mindful, coping with loss, and fostering social connections. Being happy with life, having pleasant feelings like love, pleasure, or compassion, and feeling satisfied are all indicators of emotional well-being (The Royal Melbourne Hospital, 2018). Feeling good is also associated with an indication of emotional well-being. Like physical health, emotional health is crucial for teachers' well-being since it affects how they deal with change, adapt to it, and react to difficult circumstances. Emotional well-being consists of balance in emotion, thinking, social interactions, and pursuits. The two main focuses of all definitions of emotional well-being are managing emotions positively and adequately responding to unpredictable and challenging experiences. Teaching can be overwhelming as it requires dealing with diverse learners, engaging with diverse

needs, planning, and preparing. Teaching is thus regarded as the most stressful work (Li, 2021), characterized by high records of burnout and attrition (Mercer, 2020). Moreover, teaching the English language is even more challenging.

Emotional well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic was seen as a crucial need for teachers, as emotions play a fundamental role in the well-being of an individual (Diener, 1984). According to Plutchik's (1980) psychoevolutionary theory of basic emotions, emotions have an adaptive role in assisting creatures in dealing with significant environmental survival difficulties when dealing with care; otherwise, they can cause serious problems. This impact has led to heightened levels of fear, anxiety, and sleep disturbances, often accompanied by less effective coping strategies when facing challenges and difficulties (Jacobs et al., 2021). Recent research suggests that teachers experienced significant stress during the lockdown period, as they had to adjust to the transition of teaching through online methods (Besser et al., 2020). This stress frequently resulted in symptoms such as anxiety, sadness, and disrupted sleep patterns, primarily attributed to the increased demands associated with remote teaching. According to our own experiences, this made them stressed and burnt out as they worked overtime and spent maximum hours in front of the screen, affecting their emotional well-being. A teacher's pessimistic and low emotional well-being can demotivate the teacher, drain their energy, and might make the teachers lose their passion for their work, affecting teaching quality, job satisfaction, and students' learning outcomes (Mairitsch et al., 2021). As Coleman (2009) argued, teachers' well-being is linked with students' well-being, and it is impossible to manage the emotional health of students if staff members' emotional needs are unmet.

In Nepal, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a profound and fundamental shift in the comprehension of what constitutes "access" to education, with at least two-thirds of children being denied access as only 8,366 public schools had computers and only 3,776 offered IT-based studies with internet access (Thapaliya & Pradhan, 2021). This is not just stressful for the students but for the teachers as well. Because of the pandemic, teachers were compelled to ensure effective student participation in learning facilitation programs, to facilitate and monitor the learning progress of the students in constant contact with the parents, to adapt to a system of continuous evaluation, to promote and motivate the students to use the usual internet tools, other teaching and learning resources, as well as the usage of, access to, and availability of free open source software among students (Thapaliya & Pradhan, 2021). The teaching profession is frequently regarded as demanding, characterized by heightened levels of burnout and a significant rate of educators leaving the field. In Nepal, where investment in teacher development is limited (Neupane & Joshi, 2022), teachers become more vulnerable. Many academics contend it is also vulnerable to extra, unique pressures, such as demanding linguistic and intercultural requirements and routine use of energy-intensive approaches (Mercer, 2020). Research on

the psychology of language teachers has generally lagged, which is detrimental to their well-being, given their worries about their working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study investigates the emotional encounters of four English language teachers from private schools in Lalitpur, Nepal, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the beginning of the crisis, because of the added demands associated with remote teaching, teachers have experienced heightened levels of stress, often accompanied by symptoms such as anxiety, sadness, and disruptions in their sleep patterns (Ozamiz-Etxebarria et al., 2021). Regulating these emotions is essential as teacher emotion regulation is taken as an important personal trait that can significantly affect how eagerly pupils are willing to engage in the learning process (Wang & Ye, 2021).

According to KC (2021), teachers were the second most vulnerable group in society, behind doctors and nurses. As a result of being forced to teach online with little to no direct human engagement, teachers were deprived of social communication and unable to attend in-person classes, making it difficult to manage their emotional demands. Likewise, Nabe-Nielsen et al. (2022) found that teachers' emotional responses and mental health changed throughout the pandemic, with the second wave causing the most fear, worry, and perceived burnout and stress. Concerns about the health consequences of an infection, as well as the dual role of teaching and virus control, may have contributed to the observed increase in COVID-19-related emotional states and poor mental health. The COVID-19 risk category for teachers had the worst emotional outbursts and the worst mental health.

Research studies on teachers' wellbeing is evident outside Nepal. However, the research in the Nepalese context primarily focused on the overall development and identity construction (Neupane, 2023, 2024; Neupane & Bhatt, 2023; Neupane et al., 2022), perception on teachers' well-being in institutional setting (Bhatt, 2022, 2023), and self-directed strategies for professional development (Bhatt, 2021) with less emphasis on their emotional well-being. Furthermore, English is a foreign language in Nepal and requires more attention on emotional well-being, which is lacking in most papers. Understanding and mitigating emotional challenges is essential for the educators' well-being, safeguarding the quality of education, and fostering positive learning experiences for the students. By thoroughly investigating the emotional health of English language instructors in Nepal during the pandemic, this study aims to fill in current research gaps. To inform the creation of support systems that improve instructor health and raise the standard of instruction in comparable circumstances, it draws on the first-hand experiences of educators instructing online throughout the pandemic. For this purpose, this study mainly delves into the following research questions:

- What were ELT teachers' emotional experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- How did they manage to cope with their circumstances during the pandemic?

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs and Moor's Appraisal Theory of Emotions

This study subscribes to Maslow's (1962) hierarchy of needs and Moor's (2013, 2017) appraisal theory of emotions as theoretical referents. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a fundamental psychological theory consisting of five models of human wants that are presented in a pyramid with hierarchically arranged levels. Maslow asserts that we have various needs, including basic needs that center on physiological requirements like food, drink, shelter, and safety, emphasizing security and safety. Similarly, he keeps self-fulfillment demands at the top of the pyramid. This need focuses on affection, belongingness, self-worth, and fulfillment requirements.

According to Maslow, physiological wants—such as those for food, safety, love, and esteem—are the most primal of all needs. In the pyramid hierarchy, the second aspect he keeps is psychological needs, where a person needs to feel loved. Similarly, according to Maslow, one of the most important needs is psychological, which can be unmet due to pandemics and lack of physical contact and socialization. Esteem, love/belonging, safety, and physiological needs are all classified as deficiency needs, with the belief that motivation decreases as needs go unmet. In contrast, self-actualization, the very last need in Maslow's need hierarchy pyramid, is classified as (growth) needs, with the belief that motivation increases as needs go unmet (Yuliastina et al., 2021). I will be connecting this theory with the

teachers' emotional well-being as during the pandemic, teachers might have gone through several types of needs, and when the needs have not been met, the students may not have been able to focus on the class.

Figure 1. *Maslow's Hierarchy of Need Theory Yuliastina et al. (2021, p. 6)*

There is a connection between Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory and social and emotional well-being. It is possible to argue that an individual's social and emotional well-being level corresponds to the level of needs attained in Maslow's hierarchy. During the pandemic, both teachers and students have grappled with various challenges, including unmet physiological needs, which can overshadow their pursuit of higher-level needs such as belongingness and love. Teachers faced many challenges with the shift to online classes and the overuse of technology in everyday teaching and learning. In this context, the theory posits that addressing the basic and minor challenges faced by teachers contributes to the promotion of social and emotional satisfaction, happiness, and fulfillment, all

of which are fundamental components of wellbeing (Bhatt, 2022, 2023). According to the theory, our perception, judgement, and evaluation of any circumstances have a direct connection with our psychology. According to Moor (2013, 2017), individuals encounter diverse emotional statements when their perception, evaluation, and judgement of an event differ from their feelings, aims, and goals.

Similarly, our efforts to regulate our emotions in response to social situations can vary depending on how we perceive or evaluate our internal processes, which can be influenced by various situational factors. Many basic assumptions compile appraisal theories, which underscore the crucial role of judgments in shaping emotional behaviors (Romeman & Smith, 2001). The judgments recognize different sensations and are reasons for personal or sequential modifications in our experiences. Additionally, situations that share the same appraisal patterns are likely to evoke similar emotional responses, emphasizing the consistent relationship between appraisals and emotions. Significantly, the appraisal process precedes and triggers emotional reactions, underlining the causal link between our cognitive assessments and emotional experiences. Moreover, appraisals enhance the appropriateness of our emotional responses to the specific situations we encounter. However, it's worth noting that conflicting, involuntary, or inappropriate appraisals can also occur, leading to complex emotional reactions.

Given the emphasis of appraisal theory on how we interpret, evaluate, and explain events or objects as triggers for our emotions, it is evident that the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown constituted significant events that elicited a range of emotional responses. How individuals appraised and interpreted the pandemic-related circumstances largely influenced these emotions. Central to appraisal theories is the idea that emotions serve as adaptive responses, reflecting our appraisals of environmental factors that are deemed essential for our well-being, as discussed by Moors (2013). In essence, how we perceived and evaluated the pandemic, and lockdown shaped our emotional reactions, reflecting our adaptive responses to the challenges and uncertainties brought about by these unprecedented events.

The appraisal theory of emotion highlights the significant role of individual interpretations and evaluations of events in shaping emotional responses. The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown constituted a shared event, yet the emotions it elicited varied based on how individuals appraised and coped with the situation. Lazarus ' cognitive-mediational theory further emphasizes the significance of primary and secondary assessments in influencing the emotional outcome of a stressful situation. The ideas of appraisal theory are consistent with the experiences of English language teachers during the pandemic, which was marked by the initial stress of switching to online instruction, various coping mechanisms, and subsequent emotional implications. The emotional experiences of educators during these unique times can be better understood by understanding how they overcame these difficulties.

Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method

Narrative inquiry offers a rich framework for researchers to investigate how humans experience the world depicted in their stories (Webster & Mertova, 2007). Identifying the meanings of people's experiences as opposed to objective, decontextualized truths is one of the main goals of narrative inquiry (Wang & Geale, 2015). Another major goal of narrative inquiry is to gather stories to understand experience as it is lived and communicated through research and literature (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). We have chosen narrative inquiry as our research tool as it emphasizes teacher reflection, where teacher knowledge, professional development, and decision-making are all being prioritized. Through stories, teachers reveal the complexity of their practices, how they have developed professionally over time, and how they make sense of and reconfigure their work (Johnson & Golombek, 2002). It examines experience from a narrative perspective. It is a way of contemplating and researching experiences.

This study aligns with Clandinin and Connelly's collaborative strategy by dialogically engaging participants and co-constructing stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). By incorporating both individual and group aspects, this narrative inquiry provides complex insights into teachers' emotional health in the face of the pandemic (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Aligning with the narrative inquiry research methodology, as scholars such as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) advocate, this study seeks to comprehensively explore teachers' emotional experiences and coping strategies during the pandemic.

Participants and Data Collection

The participants for this paper are four teachers (two male and two female) from private schools in the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal. Those teachers teaching in private schools and undergoing emotional upheavals during the pandemic were purposively selected. Basic English language teachers with at least a year of teaching experience and remote teaching experiences during the pandemic were selected. We conducted three rounds of in-person interviews with each participant. We interviewed the participants physically when COVID cases were low, and the vaccines and booster doses were available. We conducted an in-depth discussion with our participants to collect data through narrative inquiry as it is the best method to collect the experiences and stories of the teacher. We asked informal, open-ended questions so the participants would feel comfortable sharing their experiences and stories.

Data Analysis Processes

In this study, we employed the thematic analysis process involving five distinct stages outlined by Barrett and Stauffer (2009). The initial stage consists of organizing and preparing the data and gaining a general understanding. Subsequently, the coding process is undertaken, leading to the identification of categories or themes. During coding, we read and re-read the transcripts, identified the ideas relevant to research

questions, significant words, and patterns, and highlighted the main ideas from the narratives. Next, we categorized the ideas and finally clustered categories into different themes. Then, the themes were presented logically to answer the research questions, which were clustered into emotional challenges experienced by the ELT teachers during the pandemic and their coping strategies. Then, the themes are discussed, along with the findings in the past literature and Maslow's theory and appraisal theory of emotions. We used narratives as data, conducted thematic analysis, and presented findings narratively (Neupane & Gnawali, 2023) as thematic analysis can also be appropriate in narrative research.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we have analyzed the narratives of teachers who shared their emotional experiences, the hardships they encountered, and their strategies for overcoming the challenges they faced during the pandemic. Their stories vividly convey the feelings of frustration, dissatisfaction, lack of motivation, support, and grief associated with evaluating and interpreting the limitations and challenges of alternative teaching methods, such as virtual teaching and learning. The stories also conveyed their efforts, experiences, and evaluations of their progress and efficiency in addressing various situations. Their sharing elucidated the appraisal theory, which posits that our emotional responses and actions, even in the face of challenges, shape our actions. The stories of the teachers reflected their efforts and emotional balance to maintain proper teaching and learning even in

challenging situations. Here, we first present the narrative and discussion of emotional hurdles they faced and how they tackled the situations.

Loneliness and Isolation

Upon analyzing the stories of our participants, we found that they faced numerous emotional challenges when teaching English during the global pandemic of COVID-19. Narrations of experiential stories by English language teachers reflected an extreme level of loneliness and isolation, which saturated their experiences (Parte & Herrador-Alcaide, 2021). The drastic shift from traditional teaching to online or virtual teaching resulted in the destruction of teachers' frames of reference and brought about negative effects such as anxiety, uncertainty, irritations, and stress, which, according to Fernández-Batanero et al. (2021), affect the teachers' emotional wellbeing. These emotional trails invited multiple issues related to health, security, the economy, and inconsistency, resulting in the emotional struggle.

The sharing of English language teachers reveals doubts about their abilities and students' performance, leading to emotional stresses such as fear, anxiety, and self-doubt. This, in turn, necessitates a high level of emotional effort and complexity in teaching during the pandemic. Aligning with this experience, one of the participants shared feelings with complex emotional states during the pathetic condition of COVID-19. The participant expressed concern for the students who received high scores despite not adhering to the proper assessment

process, a clear indication of the teacher's tension, commitment, and genuine interest in addressing these challenging circumstances. Teachers' strong ambition, interest, and aim to enhance their students' educational success clearly demonstrated their commitment to their profession and responsibilities. Simultaneously, the concern for students' lack of dedication to study and their achievement of high scores reflected the emotional state of English language teachers during the pandemic. In this regard, Nita narrated:

> *It was terrible when we faced unhealthy scoring of hardworking students who secured maximum grade. Previously, we taught and encouraged students to compete, not just to secure a maximum grade. However, during the pandemic, we were forced to grade and submit scores without any formal assessment process. This resulted in unreliability of scoring, and students expressed their dissatisfaction with securing maximum score even after not working hard. This feeling of guilt is experienced by both teachers and students.*

Existing emotional stress and instability was captured by the emotional response of one of the participants: "It discouraged and developed my negative emotion." Teachers' frustration, dissatisfaction, and isolation increased due to a lack of face-to-face interactions, sharing of feelings, understanding of students' behavior, and heavy reliance on digital devices. This was also evident in Binu's emotional acceptance: "Virtual tutorials were ineffective... they are not as optimistic as they used to be." The reflection brought to light the emotional anguish or sorrow experienced by current teachers. There were numerous challenges in running effective online classes, including geographical complexities, inadequate internet connectivity, and a lack of digital skills necessary for the online platform. In this regard, Shrestha et al. (2022) shared that the limited facilities (digital, electricity, and connectivity) caused feelings of demoralization, demotivation, and destructiveness. Despite the challenges they faced, teachers showed strength by enthusiastically seeking and utilizing diverse virtual video conferencing tools for teaching and learning. Finding a new online platform requires flexibility and a dynamic attitude to overcome the challenges of remote teaching.

Findings revealed the complex emotional state teachers experienced while teaching learning activities during the pandemic. Despite facing challenging situations, teachers demonstrated their emotional, mental, and physical dedication to their profession and learners by taking self-initiated steps to ensure an impartial learning environment and assessment process. The teachers' tireless efforts to maintain proper teaching, learning, and assessment practices during the pandemic reflect the emotional challenges they faced. These sharing give a clear understanding of the emotional state among EFL teachers, portraying a clear picture of devotion, dedication, resilience, and multiple emotional experiences.

Challenges to Teaching Practices

During the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there appeared to be a shift in English language teaching, leading to

negative emotions such as anxiety, stress, and tensions among English language teachers. The transition from traditional teaching methods to a virtual mode utilizing online platforms and digital devices presented a range of challenges, leading to a decrease in teachers' motivation and morale. One of the major challenges teachers faced during the pandemic was teaching through an online platform that lacked digital devices, connectivity, and operational skills (Shrestha et al., 2021). This digital device brought tension among teachers because they realized all students were not able to connect distance education.

For Yadav, one of the participants, this challenge reverberated with touching echoes. With an earnest expression, he conveyed,

> *Yes, as this is a village, and we did what we could. We do not have all the facilities like in the city. Although there are few houses and some places look developed, the students here live extremely far away in extremely remote areas. Students cannot access mobiles, network connections, internet, or other facilities. All these things were a huge challenge, and delivering the lessons was a huge challenge. Only half of the students in the school were able to attend the classes delivered online. Not all the students got the chance to learn, and it was extremely difficult. We had to repeat/revise most of the things once the physical classes started later.*

Yadav explains the narrative of many EFL teachers who encountered a vast gap between the aspirations of online education and the ground realities of their students' access to digital resources. This conflict resulted the feelings of vulnerability and distress for educators suspecting the ability of providing equal learning experience opportunities for all. The teachers genuinely emphasized on revision and repetition to bridge the gap that the digital divide had created.

Despite these challenges, the teachers showed impressive adaptability and commitment toward their students' learning. They tried to ensure that the true essence of effective learning was not lost in the digital shift embracing various online platforms and innovative teaching methods and techniques. With the transformation in teaching and learning, the educators sought to incorporate innovative practices into their pedagogy, navigating unfamiliar ground with their commitment to fostering learning regardless of the challenges they faced.

The narratives of both of the participants highlight the complex challenges that the teachers encountered while moving to the online modules of teaching and ensuring student engagement. Nita's said, "I showed videos, shared screen and also searched for various virtual platforms in order to maintain quality inputs for my students." Furthermore, Binu admits that the intention and the outputs in online mode of teaching was not as expected due to several complexities. She admitted: *"Online classes were not that fruitful. It was not as effective as expected."* This highlights the changes in pedagogy caused by the pandemic, illustrating the adaptive strategies employed to maintain effective and meaningful learning experiences.

The effect of this shift in education exceeds not only in teaching practices but also in the emotional experiences of the educators. The anxiety, stress and worries highlight their resilience and commitment to cope with the unexpected complexities. Their stories of adaptation yield their dedication to their profession resonating many teachers like Yadav pursuing novice and innovative avenues to keep their learning a source of hope in difficult situations like COVID-19 pandemic.

Uncertainty and Anxiety

The shift to distant teaching induced intensive uncertainty and anxiety among the participants. This unexpected swing interrupted their accustomed teaching practices, inducing wariness about their ability to navigate digital gadgets effectively. In this regard, Hari expressed: "*The transition was unexpected, and I was afraid about the delivery of quality education virtually. It was similar to going into an unexplored territory.*" A study by Ozamiz-Etxebrria et al. (2021) concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic exposed multifarious emotional challenges for EFL teachers. Even the very foundational aspect of their well-being, their physical health, played a crucial role in determining their emotional experiences. For example, Nguyen and Pho (2024) mention that vulnerabilities in health caused big impacts on their emotions. Several types of fears were salient features in this emotional landscape. First, there was the unresolved fear of getting COVID-19 and the attendant fear about one's survival from an invisible enemy, as reviewed by Weinert et al. (2021). These issues became tightly intertwined with the psychological well-being of teachers, as happened to their sentimental accounts.

Frustration and Helplessness

The pandemic caused serious health concerns for teachers, bring fear of contracting COVID-19, even the worries of survival which deeply affected the teachers' emotional well-being (Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2022). Teachers articulated their stress, anxiety and fear regarding their health and safety highlighting the fulfillment of basic needs for emotional well-being. These personal narratives reflect strong health related fears such as stress that surged during the uncertainty of crisis, constant anxiety, and fear shadowed over daily life, showing strong effect of pandemic on their emotional health.

Technological challenges and network issues added frustration among teachers making them helpless to provide immediate remedy to their students' struggles with technology. In this regard, Binu stated, "*Seeing students struggle with ICT and becoming unable to provide them immediate solutions was frustrating. I felt demotivated.*" The technological challenges that both of the participants experienced including poor internet connectivity and the lack of smartphones can be connected to the fundamental needs of Maslow's hierarchy. As Nita emphasized: "*There was no proper internet, even if there was, it was very poor during online classes. I feld demotivated and had negative emotions.*" Furthermore, Binu added: "*No Smartphones, no internet, and several distractions.*" The lack of these basic needs affected the well-being and emphasized the urgency of security as

they adapted to online teaching during the pandemic. Binu's response on the absence of effective online classes in spite of greater efforts displayed the emotional strain linked to safety. She stated: *"Online classes were not fruitful. It was not as effective as it had to be."*

Both of the narratives describe how health anxieties went beyond practicality and became crucial for emotional balance. Their experiences emphasize that tending to physical needs was not merely necessary for survival but also pivotal for emotional constancy. These stories reveal that there is a strong linkage between physical well-being and emotional stability that shape our life.

Navigating Emotional Challenges with Resilience

In the meantime, of hardships that the teachers faced due to the pandemic, they portrayed a robust resilience employing various coping strategies to support their emotional well-being. Many of them found comfort in their social connections amid the challenges. The teachers found that reaching out to their colleagues, friends and families was essential for handling their emotional roller coaster. In this regard, Hari said:

> *I used to communicate with my friends, neighbors and colleagues. Our friendship provided emotional support and a way to share strategies and insights. These interactions helped me cope with negative emotions like fear, sadness and loneliness.*

Looking for their continuous professional development was another major strategy, allowing them to foster their skills as educators. Involvement in various activities not only helped them enhance their pedagogical skills but also served as a constructive outlet for their energy during the hard times. Furthermore, adopting mindfulness and strass management techniques showed their active efforts in handling emotional challenges and construct resilience.

The data emphasized how a strong support system helped teachers manage their emotional impact during COVID-19 pandemic. Peer collaboration played a significant role, offering crucial emotional support. The support from the school administrators, facilitating meetings and resources also demonstrated the institution's commitment to teachers' well-being. Moreover, digital communities and networks gave opportunities for teachers for sharing emotional bonding along with the resources, assisting in creating a supportive environment during the time of unprecedented situation.

Peer Support and Collaboration

During the time of challenges, teachers turned to their colleagues for emotional support and collaborative solutions, finding strength in solidarity. Yadav, in this regard highlighted the significance of peer support: *"We shared our challenges and felt relief knowing that we were not only sufferers. Exchanging strategies assisted us to overcome our obstacles and boosted our morale."* Benu's honest reflection reveals how deeply these basic needs affected her:

I used to talk to friends, neighbors and colleagues. I tried to contact other teachers to find out how they were managing their classes. We shared our experiences and exchanged ideas. This helped me connect with others and cope with negative emotions such as fear, sadness and loneliness.

Her responses reveal that seeking social support was crucial in a time filled with health uncertainties. These narratives emphasize that addressing basic physiological necessities was not only about physical health, but it was also a foundation to emotional balance. The pandemic underscored the inseparable interconnectedness between the physical and emotional well-being, showing that a stable physical foundation was pivotal for emotional resilience.

Adaptation to New Technologies and Innovation

Teachers actively worked to enhance their ICT skills showing their resilience. They altered the challenges into opportunities by engaging themselves into self-directed learning, exploring online platforms. As Binu explained: *"I learned to use online platforms and ICT tools that helped me enhance my online teaching experience confidently."* Despite the misfortune, English language teachers portrayed adaptability by navigating innovative and creative teaching methods and techniques such as videos, interactive lessons and gamified methods. Hari emphasized: "I trailed with videos, interactive lessons, and gamified activities to keep my students interactive and engaged. It was all about looking for new ways to retain their concentration."

Thus, with the help of adaptation and innovation, the teachers have tackled the hardships or challenges posed by the pandemic

Family Support and Work-Life Balance

A pivotal source of their resilience was their family support. The families provided the space and encouragement for the teachers essential for maintaining their emotional well-being, realizing the demand for remote teaching. In this regard, Yadav shared, *"My family understood the complexities and provided the space I required. Their reinforcement encouraged me even in the hard times."* This theme closely aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory explaining how the pandemic interrupted the teachers' fundamental needs. Online teaching affected their sense of safety and belonging reflecting the uncertainty and emotional strain they faced. The teachers emphasized self-actualization, enhancement of their skills and inculcation of new innovation to cope with the challenges as the theory suggests. Moreover, the support they got from their families and colleagues helped to meet their social and esteem needs, promoting emotional well-being.

The Appraisal Theory of Emotions offers insights into participants' responses. Their preliminary feelings of uncertainty and anxiety align with primary appraisal, reflecting their evaluation of pandemic's impact. Their coping tactics and resilience represent secondary appraisal demonstrating how teachers handle their emotional reactions to overcome challenges and foster growth. These stories

reveal both their struggles and adaptive responses, stressing the significance of peer support, new teaching approaches or methods, and family support in sustaining emotional well-being. These findings affirm the teachers' journey and testify the underpinning theories illustrating the strong bound between the emotional experiences, coping strategies and theoretical frameworks.

Fostering Emotional Resilience

During the pandemic English language teachers were caught between the safety needs and their emotional well-being. On the one hand there was a fear of viruses, on the other it could impact on social isolation and stigma. Despite such a situation teachers showed emotional resilience and actively engaged in teaching-learning activities maintaining social distancing by adopting online mode of teaching learning activities. And such resilience was possible due to the support of the school. Nita shared: *"The school helped us... Even my colleagues were supportive and helpful. My family members were supportive too, making the entire thing much easier."* Because of such support from family members and the school, teachers were able to cope with the challenging times. The safety net of support - from the school, colleagues, or family - served as a testament to the profound impact of addressing safety needs on nurturing emotional resilience. The narratives highlighted the significance of addressing the safety needs and support during such unprecedented times. The narratives also showed that emotional struggles are often rooted in insecurity be it physical or emotional and through the collaborative

efforts of parents, teachers and school, coping in such challenges is possible. These experiences of the participants echo Mallow's theory that fulfilling the basic safety needs is essential in order to fulfill emotional and other needs. Stories of the participants vividly portrayed that there is emotional cost of neglecting the safety needs of the teachers, underscoring the need for promoting physical and emotional well-being during the crisis. The stories of the participants corroborate the Maslow's conception that nurturing emotional well-being requires scaffolding the safety foundations.

Conclusion

English language teachers' narratives during the Covid-19 pandemic showed that they underwent unprecedented challenges and devised coping strategies. Their stories indicated the interrelationship between external circumstances and their responses to them leading to different emotional experiences. Subscribing appraisal theory of emotion, the article indicated that the feelings of teachers are intricately interconnected to their response to the situations they underwent. As they entered the unchartered territories of online teaching and learning during the pandemic, their emotions were not just random reactions rather they reflected the cognitive engagement and evaluation of their existing situations.

With the increasing impact of pandemic, teachers' health and safety needs were the prime concern that also triggered their emotions of stress and fear. The fear caused by the possibilities of contracting

COVID 19 further added anxiety in their life. Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs also underscored the value of fulfilling the basic needs to address emotional wellbeing. The fear of contraction of viruses and the social stigma and isolation that could be attached with it affected teachers with fear and anxiety. Findings of the study aligns with the proposition of the theory relating to safety needs of participants that was directly related to emotional wellbeing of them.

Besides, the social isolation and deprivation from in-person interaction escalated the feeling of loneliness and isolation leading them to seek support from family members, colleagues, and relatives. Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory echoes the stories of English language teachers relating to the love and belongingness needs. Their stories corroborate the premises of Maslow's hierarchy of needs that the emotional wellbeing thrives in mutual collaboration and supportive environments. These situations also had a positive impact on them. Their resilience, coping strategies they adopted and the technological know-how that they developed to survive in the changing context led them to grow professionally.

This study implies that navigating the emotional undercurrents of teachers during the crises and providing support, professional development opportunity, counseling and collaborative efforts is critical for their survival and growth. Establishing online peer support mechanisms, providing access to online resources, and preparing teachers for unprecedented challenges is very crucial. As this article ventures into the realm of teachers' emotion and unveils them highlighting the importance of acknowledging emotion and supporting them with resilience, empathy and their emotional wellbeing, the article is relevant to teachers, policymakers, and practitioners.

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