COVID-19 Impact On English Language Teachers' Professional Wellbeing: A Critical Review

Rejina KC

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought significant challenges for educators, particularly English language teachers, whose professional and personal wellbeing have been affected in various ways. This review paper synthesizes empirical studies published between 2020 and 2022 to examine English language teachers' wellbeing during the pandemic. For this, I have employed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta- Analysis (PRISMA) framework for critically analyzing the studies (n=30). I identified some key areas of professional challenges that include(a) increased workload, (b) lack of technological preparedness, (c) diminished social interactions; (d) lack of opportunities, for enhanced digital literacy and the development of innovative teaching methods; and (e) absence of effective coping strategies, including peer support, self-care routines, and institutional interventions. These findings can contribute to the broader conversation on teacher resilience by highlighting actionable insights for improving well-being through coping even in the crisis contexts like the pandemic. The existing literature has contributed as an evidence- based interventions by providing a deeper understanding of the unique challenges faced by English teachers. It is also highlighting the opportunities experienced by English teachers during the pandemic. The support and lesson learned can be an instrumental to build teacher resilience, ensuring their sustained effectiveness in navigating future challenges for their better personal and professional wellbeing.

Keywords: *A critical review, ELT teacher, wellbeing, impact of COVID-19*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic transformed the global educational landscape, creating unprecedented challenges for educators worldwide. This study explores how English language (EL) teachers were significantly affected by a sudden shift in teaching methodologies and increased work pressure. The abrupt transition placed immense strain on educators, particularly in maintaining student engagement within virtual learning environments. This sudden and unprecedented shift

prompted the need for a critical analysis of EL teachers' wellbeing and coping strategies. In Nepal, however, research on teacher wellbeing remains relatively underexplored. Understanding how crises such as the COVID19 pandemic affect teachers' wellbeing is essential for designing effective support systems and policies that promote both personal and professional growth, ultimately enhancing overall educational practice.

Many studies highlight teacher wellbeing as intrinsically linked to student learning and classroom dynamics (Alder, 2016). Teachers' wellbeing is directly connected to student wellbeing: when teachers feel emotionally supported and valued, they tend to create positive and effective learning environments that contribute to student success (Ryff, 2014). Recognizing teachers' wellbeing yields multiple benefits, ultimately influencing student performance and satisfaction. Therefore, teachers play an integral role in shaping student achievement and ensuring quality education (Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2014). Understanding teachers' wellbeing and its impact is thus crucial for improving both teaching quality and student learning outcomes. To address this, I explored how wellbeing is defined and understood in its truest sense.

When people hear the term _wellbeing,' they often associate it with a medical concept; however, in education, it encompasses broader dimensions of life satisfaction and professional fulfillment. Essentially, wellbeing involves overall life wellness and subjective happiness (Diener et al., 2002). It plays a pivotal role in fostering happiness and selfcontentment. By investing in teachers' holistic wellbeing, educational institutions can create sustainable and thriving learning environments for future generations. Happiness and life satisfaction are closely tied to better wellbeing (Cann, 2019), leading to the question: does achieving a quality life naturally lead to enhanced wellbeing? To delve deeper, I examine wellbeing from a global perspective.

Today, wellbeing has become a widely discussed concept across various contexts. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines it as —a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing‖ (WHO, 2011, p. 3). In education, teachers' wellbeing can be understood as their professional and personal welfare, which directly relates to students' success, satisfaction, and academic achievement (Alder, 2016). Teachers' wellbeing is also shaped by existential and developmental factors within their professional lives (Ryff, 2014). Bakracheva (2020) defines wellbeing as —the universal strive of people for a happy and satisfying life‖ (p. 89). Research shows that recognition and appreciation in the workplace enhance teachers' life satisfaction, promoting both personal and professional growth. Indeed, happier teachers tend to perform better; acknowledging teachers' wellbeing is thus essential for improving pedagogical performance.

The pandemic, which began in Wuhan, China (Dawadi et al., 2020), reached Nepal with the first confirmed case on January 23, 2020, and the first recorded fatality on May 14, 2020 (Shrestha et al., 2020). Nepal entered a nationwide lockdown on March 24, 2020 (Gautam, 2020), lasting until July, followed by subsequent lockdowns during the second wave from April to August 2021. Prolonged school closures brought widespread uncertainty, affecting not only students but also teachers. When schools briefly reopened in early 2022, the third wave once again disrupted learning. The sudden shift from physical to online classrooms posed major challenges, especially for teachers inexperienced in digital instruction (Shrestha et al., 2020).

In Nepal, during the pandemic, only a few private and institutional schools were initially able to adopt online platforms. This created a significant digital divide between private and public schools, as well as among students. The pandemic deeply affected teachers' mental and physical health (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Lee & Ogawa, 2021), undermining both personal and professional wellbeing. Many were also uncertain about whether online education could meet learning objectives or uphold expected standards of quality. Despite these challenges, teachers continued their work under great strain, facing feelings of neglect and alienation as they adapted to technology-based instruction (Porter, 2020). The absence of human interaction and reliance on mediated communication further contributed to emotional distress. Given these issues, exploring how teachers balanced personal and professional wellbeing during this crisis became a vital area of inquiry.

Limitation of the Study

This systematic review is limited to studies published between 2020 and 2022 that examined teacher wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic. This focus excludes both pre- and postpandemic perspectives. Additionally, reliance on non–peer-reviewed sources such as online articles may have affected the rigor and credibility of some findings (Wallace et al., 2012). Nonetheless, these sources offer valuable contextual insights and firsthand perspectives. This review analyses thirty selected empirical studies on teacher wellbeing, emphasizing three major themes: English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL) teaching, coping strategies, and professional implications. The study addresses two core research questions focused on identifying the key issues affecting teacher wellbeing during the pandemic and understanding the challenges teachers faced.

Research Questions

1. What specific challenges and impacts did EL teachers face regarding their professional and personal wellbeing during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. What strategies did they adopt to manage the challenges and maintain their professional responsibilities during the COVID- 19 pandemic?

Wellbeing as a Dynamic Construct

Teaching as a profession is inherently connected to various aspects of human activities and is often accompanied by significant responsibilities, making it a highly stressful job that can lead to teacher burnout (Geving, 2007). Teacher burnout is a major factor that negatively impacts the quality of teachers' lives, as it prevents them from achieving mental and physical relaxation (Safari, 2021). The research shows that the demanding nature of the profession which results in stress for every third teacher. While teacher burnout has long been a concern, the COVID-19 pandemic brought even extra burden to almost all teachers. Teachers worldwide faced the dual

burdens of managing diverse learning needs and rapidly adapting to the dynamic demands of online teaching. For instance, many teachers lacked the proper training or using digital class to deliver effective online classes that further enhances their stress level. That is why the teachers' quality-of-life worsened even more due to the chaotic circumstances of global pandemic, adversely affecting their work performance (Sunga, 2019). The literature underscores the urgency to prioritize teacher wellbeing and implement a systematic change to support teachers during crisis and beyond.

Seligman (2011) contends that education fosters happiness by enhancing the quality-of-life experience rather than merely serving as a profession. Happiness according to Seligman, is explicitly tied to positive workplace responses, which in return attracts better wellbeing outcomes. Especially, we identified a direct link between teacher happiness, quality of life, and student outcomes. It is emphasizing the importance of recognizing and admiring teachers' job through both performance and their workplace contributions (Mercer, 2020). Diener et al. (2002) further assert that such admiration fosters self-satisfaction, which is critical to improving teacher wellbeing. Both the studies underline the necessity of understanding teacher wellbeing as a central factor in the educational experience an understanding that becomes even more urgent in light of the challenges posed by the COVID- 19 pandemic. Despite the foundational insights that is provided by these studies, the question remains here is; if quality of life is such a vital indicator of wellbeing, why is it often overlooked in educational institutions? And how can we fully acknowledge and address the importance of teacher wellbeing in fostering a positive workplace environment? This gap highlights the need for further exploration into the specific challenges and opportunities for promoting teacher wellbeing, particularly during periods of crisis.

While many empirical studies (Alder, 2016; Geving, 2007; Cann, 2019) have explored teacher wellbeing in general, only a few papers have delved into its nuances in the context of English language teaching (ELT). For instance, some research has focused on related but distinct areas, such as autonomous learning and teacher identity in EFL/ESL contexts (Yuan, 2019; Jamila & Zubairi, 2022), and leaving teacher wellbeing relatively under-explored. A systematic review on EL teachers by Sayfouri (2014) but did not address the wellbeing issues of EL teachers. Similarly, Turan and Cimen (2019) reviewed 43 studies on flipped classrooms in ELT, providing valuable insights but not directly engaging with teacher wellbeing. These studies underscore the fragmented nature of research on teacher wellbeing in ELT, particularly in relation to the pandemic. However, the systematic reviews have emerged in areas such as flipped classrooms and teacher identity construction (Turan &Cimen, 2019; Neupane et al., 2022), there is a conspicuous absence of systematic exploration into how the pandemic has affected EL teachers' wellbeing.

Introducing this study marks an important step forward in the context of Nepal, as the pandemic has fundamentally transformed the teaching landscape, bringing new challenges that have directly affected teacher wellbeing. By analyzing diverse research findings, the study reveals

a critical gap in understanding the specific experiences of EL teachers during the pandemic and how their wellbeing has been impacted. Focusing on the context of the pandemic a year after its peak, this review research seeks to address the effects of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of EL teachers. By exploring within the broader discourse on teacher wellbeing and drawing the insights from related fields has not been an easy job yet I have tried not to overlook its affected area and challenges posed by the pandemic. This study contributes to fulfilling a crucial void in the literature. This does not only advance our understanding of EL teacher wellbeing but also highlights the practical implications for fostering positive workplace environments in educational settings.

Research Method

This study adopted Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA, 2020) for analyzing teacher wellbeing and critically examined the impact of COVID-19 on English language teachers' wellbeing. I employed a basic review process of PRISMA aiming to ensure rigor and transparency in selecting relevant literature. So, to identify relevant studies, I utilized a diverse databases platform including Semantic Scholar, Academia, Oxford University Press, JSTOR. Additionally, I also incorporated influential journal articles and resources from the organization like NELTA, which emphasizes EFL/ ESL teaching and learning, serving as platforms for ELT teacher professionals. Grey literature, including conference proceedings, unpublished theses, and reprints, was not explicitly included in this review. However, I aimed to mitigate this by incorporating dialectical empirical resources such as books, journal articles, and web- based articles, to ensure a broad representation of the issues, challenges and impacts experienced by EL teachers. For this, I have employed the following review steps for identifying the related literature;

1) **Formulating specific research question:** The research questions were designed to address the study's objectives, focusing on key issues, challenges, and impacts related to EL teachers' wellbeing.

2) **Search and inclusion guidelines:** It provided us a clear understanding of guidelines established for searching through including and excluding articles with the aim of minimizing selection biasness.

3) **Transparent and rigorous screening:** It is a multiple-phase screening process (from title, abstract and full text review) which was employed to ensure the relevance and quality of selected studies.

4) **Critical appraisal of studies:** The validity of the review was enhanced by cross-referencing themes across studies from different context while reliability was ensured through independent reviews (Neupane et al., 2022).

The initial search yielded 75 downloads, from which 15 duplicates were removed, resulting in 60 papers. Title and abstract screening excluded 11 articles that were either irrelevant or non-

empirical. Further full-text assessment helped to exclude 10 articles, which were irrelevant, outside the specified period, and non-empirical. Ultimately, 30 articles were deemed relevant and included in this review study. The selected studies spanned diverse global contexts, which is covering countries such as Nepal (n=5), Australia (n=2), China (n=3), Japan (n=1), Indonesia (n=1), Malta (n=1), India (n=2), Portugal (n=1), Canada (n=1), Saudi Arab (n=1), USA (n=2), Iran (n=2), Bangladesh (n=2), Austria (n=3), Spain (n=1), Turkey (n=1) and Pakistan (n=1). This geographical distribution also highlights the global scope of the study with a significant representation from Asia (n=19) on teacher wellbeing. Despite the limited number of studies, their diverse contexts provide valuable insights into English language teachers' identity and wellbeing trajectories worldwide. It is showing the region's growing focus on EL teachers' identity and their wellbeing. A detailed description of the reviewed articles, included their thematic focus, year of publication, and geographical context, are presented in figure 1.

Figure 1: **PRISMA (2009) flow chart conducting systematic review**
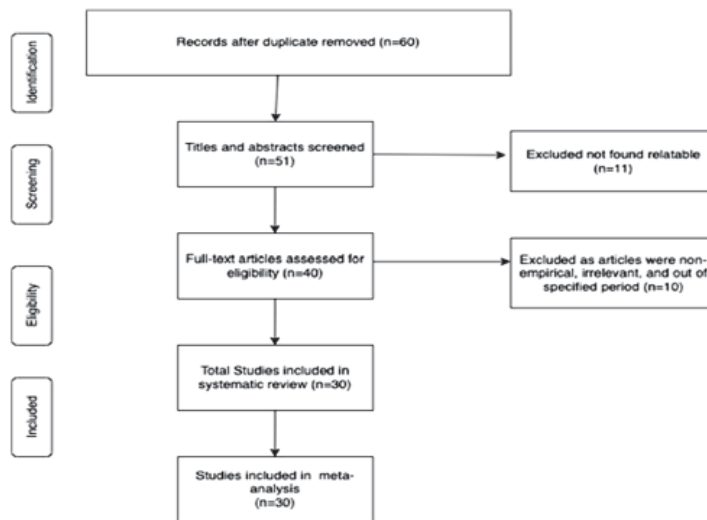
The above figure presents the process of paper selection on how I selected 60 research papers from 75 downloads. I have gone through fifteen papers which were removed out of seventy-five. Only sixty research papers were studied at this stage, where 51 articles were considered through titles and abstract screen process. After this, eleven papers were also excluded then a total number of 40 papers were studied and used as full text to assess the research eligibility. Out of these, 10 articles were out of the specified period according to the theme, which were excluded. Therefore, only thirty (n=30) papers were found to be relatable and were included in the review process through various stages of screening process of this critical review. The tabulated articles have been used for making this review process smooth and effective as per the issue which represent the pandemic crises from across the globe. The following is the list of thematic literature which helped identify the issues experienced by EL teachers during the COVID- 19.

Table 1: **ELT Teachers' Wellbeing Empirical Study Across the World During COVID-19**

Sn.	Author (s) & Year	Area of Concentration	Context
1.	Galazka (2020)	• Positive education and wellbeing in the ELT classroom	Poland
2.	MacIntyre et al.	• Language teachers' coping strategies during the Covid-19 (2020) conversion to online teaching: Correlations with stress, wellbeing and negative emotions,	Australia
3.	Kapar & Bhandari (2020)	• Teaching English during COVID-19: Nepalese Teachers' Voices	Nepal
4.	Gautam (2020)	• English Language Teacher Professional Development Nepal During COVID-19 in	Nepal
5.	Atmojo & Nugroho (2020)	• EFL Classes Must Go Online! Teaching Activities and Challenges during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia	Indonesia
6.	Baral (2020)	• ELT in COVID Pandemic	Nepal
7.	Mercer (2020)	• The wellbeing of language teachers in the private sector: An ecological perspective	Malta
8.	Dawadi et al, (2020)	• Impact of COVID-19 on the Education Sector in Nepal -Challenges and Coping Strategies	Nepal
9.	Mukhter &	• Teaching During COVID-19 Teacher and Students' India Chowdhary (2020) Experience	
10.	Ferdous & Shifat (2020)	• Dealing with Mental Health in Online Learning: A Retrospect on ELT Teachers and EFL Learners during COVID-19 Pandemic	Bangladesh
11.	Lee & Ogawa (2020)	• Online Teaching Self-Efficacy- How English Teachers feel during the COVID-19 pandemic	Japan
12.	Mercer (2020)	• An agenda for well-being in ELT: an ecological perspective	Austria
13.	Jiang & YU(2021)	• Understanding Changes in EFL Teachers' Feedback Practice During COVID-19: Implications for Teacher Feedback Literacy at a Time of Crisis	China
14.	Gadermann et al.	• The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher well Canada (2021) being in British.	Columbia

15.	Al Samiri (2021)	• English Language Teaching in Saudi Arabia	Saudi Arab
16.	Wong et al. (2021)	• Focusing on ESOL teachers' well-being during COVID 19 and beyond	USA
17.	Erarslan, 2021	• English language teaching and learning during Covid-19: A global perspective on the first year	Turkey
18.	Hassani (2021)	• The Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic on English Language Teacher Education in Iran: Challenges and Opportunities	Iran
19.	Alves et al. (2021)	• Teachers' well-being in times of Covid-19 pandemic: factors that explain professional well-being	Portugal
20.	Moorhouse &	• Responses of the English-Language-Teaching Kohnke (2021) Community to the COVID-19 Pandemic	China
21.	Jin et al. (2021)	• Understanding the Ecology of Foreign Language Teacher Wellbeing,	Austria
22.	Diez, 2022	• Teachers' well-being, emotions, and motivation during emergency remote teaching due to Covid-19	Spain
23.	Sultan et al. (2022)	• University Students' and Teachers' Wellbeing During COVID-19 in Bangladesh: A Qualitative Enquiry,	Bangladesh
24.	Babic et al. (2022)	• Language Teacher Wellbeing in the Workplace: Balancing Needs	Austria
25.	Betman et al (2022)	• In the midst of a Pandemic	Australia
27.	Ballester (2022)	• Language Teachers' Health: Emotions and Wellbeing in the COVID-19 Pandemic	USA
28.	Ghanbari & Nowroozi (2022)	• Iranian EFL Teachers' Challenges and Coping Strategies	Iran
29.	Anjum & Ahmed (2022)	• COVID-19 outbreak and Online English Language Teaching in the Indian Context	India
30.	Pan & Liu, 2022	• Chinese English as a foreign language teachers' wellbeing and motivation: The role of mindfulness	China

Thematic Review

This review is structured into three main sections. Each section of the systematic review process includes an explanation and elaboration of the theme which broadened the idea on thematic construct of this review. Number of records identified, screened, excluded and included for identifying the following themes. Here, our focus was mainly on understanding teacher wellbeing and their coping strategies during the pandemic. Even the knowledge construct helped to identify the opportunities the teachers explored even in the crises.

Overview of the Teacher Wellbeing and Online Teaching Impact

The global outbreak of COVID-19 forced schools to shift from face-to-face instruction to online learning through various digital platforms (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Although teaching and learning continued, numerous problems emerged for teachers. In particular, teachers in community schools were unable to conduct virtual classes and remained inactive for long periods, leading to learning disruptions for several months. Meanwhile, teachers in private schools transitioned to online teaching without prior training, digital literacy, classroom preparation, or institutional support (Lee & Ogawa, 2021). These abrupt adjustments posed significant educational challenges and placed strain on teachers' professional and personal wellbeing. To continue their work, teachers relied on computer-mediated screens not only for teaching but also for social connection, entertainment, and communication—professional and personal alike (Lee & Ogawa, 2021). Prolonged screen exposure led to digital fatigue, mental and physical stress, and reduced self-efficacy in maintaining work-life balance. A study by Alves et al. (2020) on teachers' wellbeing during the pandemic highlighted major disruptions caused by the rapid shift to online classes. Similarly, Ghanbari and Nowroozi (2022) examined EFL teachers' challenges, coping strategies, and new lessons for professional development during the crisis. Their findings revealed disparities in EL teachers' experiences and impacts on professional motivation. Nonetheless, the pandemic provided opportunities for long-term growth through the development of digital skills and emotional management. Reviewing these studies helped identify major themes such as teaching difficulties, coping strategies, and their implications for the profession. This systematic review focuses on empirical research published between 2020 and 2022, examining how the pandemic affected EL teachers' wellbeing and professional lives.

Impact of Covid-19 on EL Teachers

This section investigates pedagogical challenges and difficulties teachers faced during the pandemic. Fourteen research articles were reviewed to illustrate how wellbeing was intertwined with these challenges. As the virus spread rapidly, schools and universities in Nepal became among the most severely affected institutions (Gautam, 2020). The abrupt shift from physical to online teaching brought tremendous mental and physical stress for both teachers and students (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). The replacement of face-to-face education with remote learning (Kapar & Bhandari, 2020) negatively impacted teachers' experiences, as academic schedules and examinations were disrupted (Gautam, 2020). In Nepal, as in many other developing countries,

the transition exposed structural weaknesses—poor internet access and affordability, low student participation, limited digital training, and inadequate preparation. Atmojo and Nugroho (2020), in their study of Indonesian EFL teachers, for example, reported that online classes seldom achieved the same learning outcomes as traditional ones. The digital divide widened as technology became central to education (Dawadi et al., 2020). Although this shift eventually contributed new digital skills, many teachers faced severe financial stress and declining wellbeing. Purchasing digital devices became an added burden for educators and students alike. The need for technological adaptation compounded already pressing issues related to income and job stability in developing countries.

Globally, school closures brought major disruption (Mukhtor & Chowdhary, 2020). Studies identified challenges such as poor digital literacy, unreliable internet connections, and limited access to devices (Ghanbari & Nowroozi, 2022). Teachers were largely unprepared for the transition (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021), leading to burnout and technological frustration. Lee and Ogawa (2020) noted that distance learning introduced complex technical challenges for classroom management and assessment. Excessive use of digital tools for work and social connectivity soon turned into a source of anxiety (Pan & Liu, 2022), while stress and uncertainty worsened mental health conditions for both teachers and students (Ferdous & Shifat, 2020). Additionally, Mercer et al. (2022) found that wellbeing was closely related to workplace culture, relationships, and teacher identity. The issue of wellbeing thus extends beyond the individual, reflecting broader social and institutional contexts. Studies from Indonesia highlighted how unstable internet and scarcity of devices undermined ELT instruction (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Similar challenges were reported in Saudi Arabia, where poor connectivity, social isolation, and domestic distractions reduced both students' motivation and teachers' mental health (Al Samiri, 2021). Similarly, Gadermann et al. (2021) showed that stress affects not only the mind but also physical health, worsening emotional distress during isolation. Teachers faced turbulence in adapting to online teaching, encountering technical difficulties, time constraints, and increased workload (Hassani, 2021). Alves et al. (2021) found that Portuguese teachers preferred pre-pandemic teaching methods, suggesting that virtual learning could not fully meet academic needs. The loss of direct human interaction—a crucial component of social wellbeing—deepened emotional exhaustion and virtual fatigue among teachers.

Challenges Faced by ELT Teachers during the Pandemic

This section examines ELT teachers' experiences in enhancing professional wellbeing and mitigating challenges during the pandemic. Despite obstacles, many researchers have identified opportunities for growth and development. Studies from India (Anjum & Ahmed, 2022) and Nepal (Gautam, 2020) revealed that lack of digital skills, poor network connectivity, and insufficient institutional support were core challenges during the transition to online learning. Sixteen reviewed papers showed that academic instability placed teachers' jobs at risk (Sultan et al., 2022). Initially, the sudden shift caused high stress, yet over time, these challenges strengthened teachers' resilience and adaptability. Some studies recorded improvements in mental health and workplace satisfaction, noting connections between mindfulness, emotional regulation,

and wellbeing (Mercer et al., 2022; Pan & Liu, 2022). Mindful practices emerged as vital for stress reduction and enhanced teacher performance. In Bangladesh, Ferdous and Shifat (2020) documented high anxiety and frustration among teachers, mainly due to poor computer literacy and difficulty balancing home and professional demands. Nonetheless, teachers persevered to ensure continuity in education. Mercer et al. (2022) identified five interconnected factors shaping wellbeing: workplace culture, peer relationships, physical health, meaning and purpose, and teacher status. Addressing these can help foster supportive work environments and improve outcomes.

Coping strategies were also a key research theme. Studies (Awan, 2022; Dawadi et al., 2020) found that collaborative training and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) initiatives enhanced teachers' pedagogical competence. Platforms offering digital training empowered teachers to navigate new technological demands (Gautam, 2020). Despite early difficulties, many educators maintained optimism and balanced professional and personal wellbeing through positive mindfulness (Kapar & Bhandari, 2020). Research by Galazka (2020) and Ballester (2022) emphasized how crisisdriven digital transitions strengthened teachers' resilience and creativity. The incorporation of formative assessments and feedback improved classroom effectiveness (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020). Ghanbari and Nowroozi (2022) highlighted the critical role of self-efficacy in managing stress, noting that perseverance helped educators sustain their professional identities. Jiang and Yu (2021) framed the pandemic as an opportunity for reflective professional growth, with varied research methodologies documenting both challenges and coping mechanisms across contexts. Thus, these studies employing quantitative and qualitative approaches (Alves et al., 2021; MacIntyre et al., 2020; Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Dawadi et al., 2020) revealed that emergency pedagogical transformation compromised teachers' social and emotional wellbeing. Focus group discussions and interviews conducted through online platforms captured teachers' lived experiences of adapting to remote teaching under crisis conditions.

Findings and Discussions

Multiple studies confirmed increased health-related issues among teachers due to the abrupt shift to online teaching. Social isolation emerged as a major stressor, impacting emotional wellbeing and compounded by minimal institutional support (Lee & Ogawa, 2020). Teachers often lacked adequate resources and workspace arrangements at home, intensifying their challenges. However, adaptability and continuous learning helped them cope effectively. The pandemic affected teachers' wellbeing both positively and negatively. While many faced reduced income and job insecurity (Sultan et al., 2020), others viewed the shift as a career development opportunity. Teachers' resilience not only helped them sustain their roles but also provided a foundation for growth. Nevertheless, poor worklife balance and digital burnout remained major concerns. Findings derived from thirty empirical studies reveal the pandemic's significant influence on ELT teachers' wellbeing, coping mechanisms, and perceptions of professional development. Despite disruption to long-established routines, teachers' persistence and commitment throughout this transition deserve recognition and respect.

Figure 2: **Transitional period as career development opportunity**
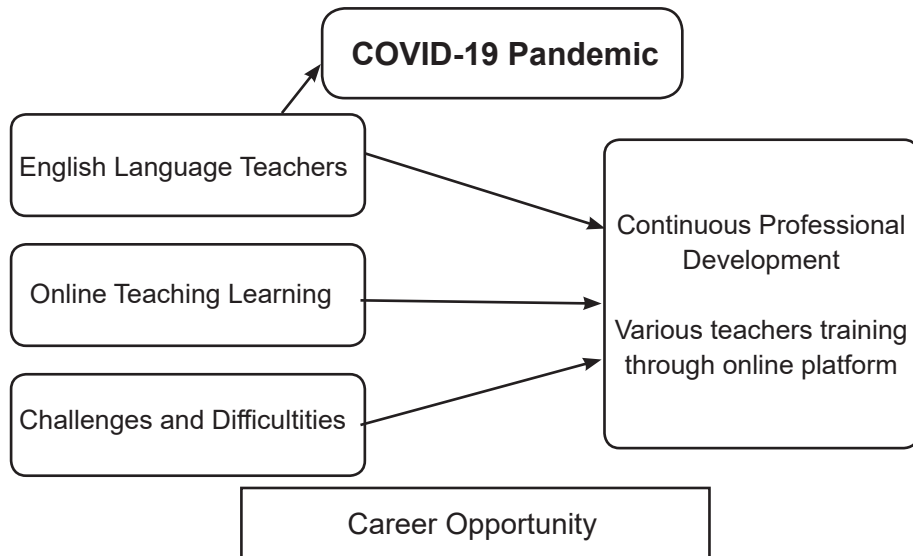
Before the pandemic, almost all teachers in Nepal primarily relied on traditional methods of assessment, such as physical examinations and in-class test. However, the sudden transition to online education required them to adopt alternative evaluation methods, including open-book and online examinations system. A study by Gautam (2020) reported, teachers faced considerable hardships in adopting to these new approaches due to lack of prior training and experience. I found that study also revealed that many teachers viewed the pandemic as an opportunity for professional growth. They actively participated in various online teacher training programs and suddenly they became busier online than physical. This has helped them to be familiar with digital tools and innovative teaching practices. These new technologies proved effective for assessing students' performance in virtual settings. This proactive engagement not only reduced job dissatisfaction and anxiety but also fostered a sense of value and professional recognition among teachers. Ultimately, the challenges posed by the pandemic contributed to teachers' professional development, making them more competent and adaptable in their roles, which benefited both educators and students in the post-pandemic context.

Conclusions And Implications

This article has offered a synthesis of thirty empirical studies completed on the impact of English language teacher wellbeing in the pandemic across three thematic reviewed areas such as; EFL/ ESL teaching challenges during the pandemic, teachers' coping strategies, and its impact during Covid-19 pandemic provides valuable insights into the dynamic nature of teachers' mental and physical emotions. Within the section of EFL/ ESL teaching challenges, the studies highlight the various challenges that teachers faced and came across and also emphasize the tailored support mechanism to overcome the challenges.

Teachers' coping strategies have emerged as a critical component of their professional development. The reviewed literature shows the diverse mechanisms that teachers employed to build resilience and enhance digital competencies, which enabled them to manage the stressors associated with the rapid transition to new modes of teaching. This systematic review identified key challenges faced by English language teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, including limited digital literacy, increased workload, and emotional stress.

By synthesizing existing studies, this review contributes to the ongoing conversation on understanding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on English language teachers' wellbeing, particularly by emphasizing the role of coping strategies and professional adaptation during the times of crisis. The findings suggest that the coping mechanisms identified during the pandemic offer a valuable insight for informing policy reforms and designing robust support systems to better prepare teachers for similar future disruptions. However, the current body of research remains limited in addressing lingterm implications. Future studies should focus on exploring the sustained impact of digital teaching practices on teacher wellbeing and investing how institutional support structures can enhance teacher resilience over time.

Acknowledgment

The author:Rejina K. C, is an ELT teacher, pursuing PhD from Kathmandu University, having masters in English Literature from TU, MPhil graduate from Pokhara University. Her area of interests is in literature in language classroom, and teachers' wellbeing   Ms. KC is currently working as an English lecturer at Pulchowk Engineering Campus.

References

Alder, A. (2016). *Teaching wellbeing increases academic performance: Evidence from Bhutan, Mexico, and Peru.* Publicly Accessible Penn Dissertations. 15 https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations/1572

Alves, R., Lopes, T., & Precioso, J. (2020) Teachers' wellbeing in the time of Covid-19 pandemic: Factors that explain professional wellbeing. *International Journal of Educational Research and Innovation,* 15, 203-217. https://www.upo.es/revistas/index.php/IJERI/article/view/5120/4541

Al-Samiri, R. A. (2021). English language teaching in Saudi Arabia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: Challenges and positive outcomes. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ),* Special Issue on Covid 19 Challenges (1) 147-159. https://awej.org/english-language-teaching-in-ksa-in-response-to-the-covid-19pandemic-challenges-and-positive-outcomes/

Anjum, F., & Ahmed, J.S. (2022). Covid-19 outbreak and online English language teaching: Interplay with the mental health of ESL learners in the Indian context. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Review,* 9 (1), 910-920.

Atmojo, A. E. P., & Nugroho, A. (2020). EFL classes must go online: Teacher activities and challenges during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. *Register Journal*, 3 (1), 49-76. https://journalregister.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/register/article/view/4051/pd

Awan, S. N. (2022). ELT, teacher education, and EMI context in Pakistan. Ali Raza, N., Coombe, C. (eds) English language teaching in Pakistan. English language teaching: *Theory, research, and pedagogy.* https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981- 16-7826-4_3 Springer.

Aziri, B. (2011). Job satisfaction: a literature review. *Management Research and Practice,* 3(4), 77–86. https://mrp.ase.ro/no34/f7.pdf

Bakracheva, M. (2020). The meanings ascribed to happiness, life satisfaction and flourishing. *Psychology*. 11 (1), 87-104. https://doi. 104236/psych.2020.11/007.

Baral, R. P. (2020). ELT in Covid pandemic: opportunities, and Responses. *NELTA ELT Forum.* https://neltaeltforum.wordpress.com/2020/07/31/elt-in-covid-pandemic-crisis-opportunities-andresponses/

Babic, S., Mercer, S., Mairitsch, A., Gruber, J., & Hempkin, K. (2022). Language teacher wellbeing in the workplace: Balancing needs. *Theory and Practices of Second Language Acquisition*, 8 (1), 11-34. https://www.igi-global.com/gateway/chapter/296865 Ballester, C.P. (2022). Language teachers' health: Emotions and wellbeing in the Covid-19 pandemic. Transferring language learning and teaching from face to face to online settings, pp 21. https://www.igiglobal.com/gateway/chapter/296865

Beltman, S., Hascher, T., & Mansfield, C. L. (2022). *During a pandemic.* Vol 230, no 31. DOI: https:// doi.org/10.1027/2151-2604/a000502

Neupane, B. P., Gnawali, L., & Kafle, H. R. (2022). Narratives and Identities: A Critical Review of Empirical Studies from 2004 to 2022. *TEFLIN Journal: A Publication on the Teaching & Learning of English, 33*(2). Cann, R. (2019). The importance of teachers' wellbeing. Education. https://cdn.theeducationhub.org.nz/wp Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE). (2014). School improvement frameworks: The evidence base. Sydney: NSW Department of Education and Communities.

Dawadi, S., Giri, R., & Simkhada, P. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on the education sector in Nepal -challenges and coping strategies. *Sage Submissions.* https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED609894.pdf

Diener, E., Lucas, R. E., &Oishi, S. (2002). *Subjective wellbeing: The Science of happiness and life satisfaction.* In C. R. Snyder & S. J. Lopz. (Eds), The Oxford Handbook. https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2009-05143-017

Erarslan, A. (2021). English language teaching and learning during Covid-19: A global perspective on the first year. *Journal of Educational Technology & Online Learning, 4*(2), 349-367. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1308102

Ferdous, A.U., & Shifat, N. F. (2020). Dealing with mental health in online learning: A Retrospect on ELT teachers and EFL learners during COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Research and Innovation in Language, 2*(3), 101-107. https://journal.unilak.ac.id/index.php/REILA/article/view/5217/2544

Gadermann, A.M., Warren, M.T., Gagné, M., Thomson, K.C., Schonert-Reichl, K.A., Guhn, M., Molyneux, T.M., & Oberle, E. (2021). *The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on teacher well-being in British Columbia.* Human early learning partnership. https://earlylearning.ubc.ca/app/uploads/2022/06/bc_teachers_and_covid-19_survey_report.pdf

Galazk, A. (2020). *Positive education and wellbeing in ELT classroom.* Humanizing language teaching. Issue 2, ISSN 1755-9715 https://www.hltmag.co.uk/apr20/positive-education

Gautam, G. R. (2020). English language teacher professional development during Covid-19 in Nepal. *Interdisciplinary Research in Education*, 5 (1,2), 103-112.

Geving, A. M. (2007). Identifying the types of students and teacher behaviors associated with teacher stress. *Teaching and teacher education, 23*, 624-640. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0742051X07000224

Ghanbari, N., & Nowroozi, S. (2022). Iranian EFL teachers' challenges and coping strategies during COVID-19 pandemic: A case study. *The Qualitative Report, 27*(3),605 - 625. https://doi.org/10.46743/21603715/2022.5066

Hansen, C., Steinmetz, H., & Block, J. (2021). How to conduct a meta-analysis in eight steps: A practical guide. *Springer*, 1-19. Httpa://doi.org/10.1007/s11301-021-00247-4

Hassani, V. (2021). The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on English language teachers' education in Iran: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Teaching Language Skills, 40* (3), 83-116. DOI: 10.22099/jtls.2021.39716.2941

Jin, J., Mercer, S., Babic, S., & Mairitsch, A. (2021). Understanding the ecology of foreign language teacher wellbeing. In: Budzińska, K., Majchrzak, O. (eds) Positive psychology in second and foreign language education. Second language learning and teaching. *Springer*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-64444-4_2

Jamila, M., & Zubairi, A. M. (2022). A Systematic review of autonomous learning in ESL/EFL in Bangladesh: A road to discovery era (2009-2022). *Canadian Center of Science and Education, 15* (4), 47- 66. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v15n4p47 / ISSN 1916-4742.

Kapar, H., & Bhandari, L. P. (2020). Teaching English during Covid-19: Nepalese teachers' voices. *Journal of English language teaching and Applied Linguistics, 2* (5), 76-81. DOI: 10.32996/jeltal.2020.2.5.8

Khan, M. H. S., Hasan, M., & Clement, C. K. (2021). Barriers to the introduction of ICT into education in developing countries: The example of Bangladesh. *International Journal of Instruction, 5*(2), 61-80.

Lee, S. C. N., & Ogawa, C. (2021). Online teaching self-efficacy- how English teachers feel during the Covid19 pandemic. Indonesian Journal, 3 (1), 1-17.

Maclntyre, P. D., Gregersen, T., & Mercer, S. (2020). Language teachers' coping strategies during the Covid19 conversation to online teaching: Correlations with stress, wellbeing and negative emotions. *ELSEVIER Ltd*.https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102352

Mercer, S. (2020). The wellbeing of language teachers in the private sector: An ecological perspective. *Sage Journals.* https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1362168820973510

Mercer, S. (2021). An agenda for wellbeing in ELT: An ecological perspective. ELT Journal, 75 (1), 14-21. https://eric.ed.gov/?q=source%3A%22ELT+Journal%22&pg=6&id=EJ1310866

Moorhouse, B. L., & Kohnke, L. (2021). Responses of the English- language-teaching community to the COVID-19 pandemic. *RELC Journal, 52*(3), 359 378. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00336882211053052

Mukhter, I., & Chowdhary, R. (2020). Teaching during Covid-19: Teacher and students' experience. *Space and Culture, 8*(2), 26-35. https://spaceandculture.in/index.php/spaceandculture/article/view/1068

Pan, M., & Liu, J. (2022). Chinese English as a foreign language teachers' Wellbeing and motivation: the role of mindfulness. *Front Psychol.* 13:906779. file:///Users/mac/Downloads/fpsyg-13-906779.pdf

Porter, T. (2020). Reflecting on teacher wellbeing during COVID- 19 pandemic. *Regional Educational Laboratory Program.* Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/pacific/blogs/blog28_reflectingon-teacher-wellbeing-during-COVID-19-pandemic.asp

Ryff, C. D. (2014). Psychological well-being revisited: Advances in the science and practice of eudaimonia. *Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics*, 83 (1), 10-28. https://karger.com/pps/articlepdf/83/1/10/3904999/000353263.pdf

Safari, I. (2021). Relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their burnout level in university and school. *International Journal of Foreign Language Teaching & Research,* 9 (35), 25-38. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349425855

Sharma, A; & Singh, P. (2017). Learning management system for virtual teaching and learning. *World Academics Journal of Engineering Sciences,* 4 (1), 5-7. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/345983706

Shrestha, S., Haque, S., & Dawadi, S. et al. (2021). Preparations for and practices of online education during the Covid-19 pandemic: A study of Bangladesh and Nepal https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10659-0

Shrestha, R; Shrestha, S; Khanal, P; & KC, B. (2020). Nepal's first case of COVID-19 and public health response. *Journal of Travel Medicine,* 27 (3). 1-24. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7107523/

Sornapudi, S. D; & Devi, G.P. (2020). Digital teaching in India during COVID-19: Teacher's perspective. *UGC Care Group-1 Journal.* 23(2), 103-117. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350650895

Sayfouri, N. (2014). An alternative method of literature review: Systematic review in English language teaching research. *Procedia- Social and Behavioral Sciences, ElSEVIER,* 98, 1693-1697. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/273850359

Sultana, S., Roshid, M. M., Haider, M. Z., Khan, R., Kabir, M. M. N., & Jahan, A. (2022). University students' and teachers' wellbeing during COVID-19 in Bangladesh: A qualitative inquiry. *The Qualitative Report,* 27(6), 1635-1655. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5265

Sunga, B. A. (2019). Quality of life and stress as correlate to mental health among teachers: Basis for a wellness program. *Asian Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies,* 2 (1) 17- 30. file:///Users/mac/Downloads/jollica,+ilovepdf_merged_pagenumber-17-30.pdf   The   PRISMA 2020 statement: an update guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021.372:n71 http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmj:n71 https://www.bmj.com/content/bmj/372/bmj.n71.full.pdf

Turan, Z; & Cimen, B. K. (2020). Flipped classroom English language teaching: A systematic review. *Computer-Assisted Language Learning,* 33 (5-6),590-606. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09588221.2019.1584117

Wallace J, Nwosu B, Clarke M. (2012).Barriers to the uptake of evidence from systematic reviews and metaanalyses: A systematic review of decision makers' perceptions. *BMJ Open* https:// doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2012-001220

Wong, C. Y., Fargnoli, A. P., Harriott, W. (2022). Focusing on ESOL teachers' well-being during COVID-19 and beyond. *ELT Journal,* Volume 76, Issue 1, 1-10. https://academic.oup.com/eltj/articleabstract/76/1/1/6408428?redirectedFrom=fulltext

World Health Organization. (2020). *Coronavirus disease* 2019.

WHO. (2011). Presentation: ―Designing the road to better health and wellbeing in Europe‖ at the 14th European Health Forum Gastein. *World Health Organization.* https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/152184/RD_Dastein_speech_wellbeing _07Oct.pdf

Yuan, R. (2019). A critical review on nonnative English teacher identity research: From 2008 to 2017. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development,* 40 (6), 518 -537. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01434632.2018.1533018