

## Predictors of occupational stress among teachers in Rupandehi, Nepal

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Occupational stress among school teachers is a global concern, driven by psychosocial challenges that contribute to psychological distress. Nepal, a developing country, has limited findings or data on teacher's stress. This study aims to assess the prevalence and predictors of occupational stress among school teachers in Rupandehi, Nepal, because chronic stress can lead to burnout, reduced job satisfaction, health problems and ultimately affecting the quality of teaching and student outcomes.

**Methods:** A cross-sectional study was conducted in June 2021 among 80 secondary-level teachers using enumerative sampling technique at Kanti Higher Secondary School, Butwal, Rupandehi, Nepal. The 14-item Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-14) was used to measure the stress levels. Socio-demographic and occupational variables were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics v16, with chi-square tests to assess associations.

**Results:** Of the 80 teachers, 18 (22.5%) reported low stress, 48 (60.0%) moderate stress, and 14 (17.5%) high stress. Gender ( $\chi^2=6.89$ ,  $p=0.032$ ) and teaching level ( $\chi^2=5.98$ ,  $p=0.048$ ) were significantly associated with stress levels, while age ( $p=0.356$ ), marital status ( $p=0.345$ ), and years of experience ( $p=0.342$ ) were not associated.

**Conclusion:** This study found that more than half of school teachers reported experiencing moderate stress (60%), mild stress (22.5%) and high stress (17.5%) level. Gender and teaching level as key predictors. Institutional reforms, mental health assessments, and targeted interventions are essential to enhance teachers' psychological wellbeing in developing countries like Nepal.

**Keywords:** Occupational Stress, Predictors, Perceived Stress Scale.

### INTRODUCTION

Stress is defined when an individual who had been exposed to a traumatic event, experienced, witnessed or was confronted with actual or threatened death or serious injury or threat to the physical integrity of self or other.<sup>1</sup>

Teaching is a profession marked by significant emotional, cognitive, and administrative pressures.<sup>2</sup> Prolonged occupational stress can contribute to anxiety, burnout, and reduced performance, ultimately impacting student outcomes and the quality of education. It is estimated that at least one-third of teachers suffer from stress and burnout, and this claim is supported by the fact that stress-related medical expenses and absenteeism cost over \$150 billion annually.<sup>3</sup> In

Nepal, school teachers experience high levels of occupational burnout, with emotional exhaustion being influenced by material status, lifestyle, and work-related factors, where workability emerges as a significant determinant.<sup>4</sup>

A survey by National Union of Teachers in United Kingdom showed that 81% of teachers experienced depression, anxiety and stress at work.<sup>5</sup> Mondal et al. reported significant stress levels among teachers in Kathmandu Valley. Understanding the predictors of stress in local contexts is essential for developing practical solutions.<sup>6</sup>

School teachers have been considered to be stressed due to being exposed daily to job stressors such as attending meetings, conducting a program for students, extra-curricular activities, and taking care of the welfare of the students and the duties of others.<sup>7</sup> According to epidemiological research, teachers have higher rates of mental disorders

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than members of other groups.<sup>8</sup>

Job demands–resources (JD–R) model is an occupational stress model that suggests strain is a response to imbalance between demands on the individual and the resources he or she has to deal with those demands.<sup>9</sup>

Teaching is a highly demanding profession that involves emotional, intellectual, and physical efforts. Though the teachers play a foundational role in shaping future generations and their well being directly impacts the quality of education thus this study aimed to determine the levels and predictors of occupational stress among secondary schoolteachers in Rupandehi, Nepal.

## METHODS

A cross-sectional study design was used to find out the level and predictors of stress among all secondary level 80 school teachers through enumerative sampling technique of a Kanti Higher Secondary School, Butwal-4, Nepal. It was selected purposively because this school due to high numbers of students were enrolled to study. Perceived Stress Scale-14 as adopted to measure the level of stress and pre-tested semi-structured questionnaire were used to find out the predictors.<sup>10</sup> The data were collected within six months of period (June 2021 to November 2021) and analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 16.<sup>11</sup>

Ethical approval was obtained from Institutional Review Committee (IRC) with the reference number IRC-DMCRI/033/2020 of Devdaha Medical College and Research Institute, Devdaha, Rupandehi, Nepal and administrative approval was obtained from the Principal of Kanti Higher Secondary School of Butwal, prior to data collection. Written Informed consent was obtained from each school teacher by clarifying the objectives, who were willing to participate. Exclusion criteria included teachers absent during the study period or unwilling to participate.

## RESULTS

The participants' mean age was 38.2 years. Most were married (76.3%), male (52.5%), and taught at the secondary level (77.5%). The majority had over 10 years of teaching experience.

As measured by the PSS -14 score the majority 60% teachers had Moderate stress, 22.5% had Low stress and 17.5% had high stress.

According to the Chi square results, there was statistical association between stress level and gender ( $p=0.032$ ), teaching level ( $p=0.048$ ), which is less than 0.05 ( $p<0.05$ )

**Table 1. Socio-demographic Profile**

Variables	Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Age Mean age 38.2	20–30 years	16	20.0
	31–40 years	29	36.3
	41–50 years	22	27.5
	>50 years	13	16.2
Gender	Male	42	52.5
	Female	38	47.5
Marital Status	Married	61	76.3
	Unmarried	19	23.7
Teaching Level	Lower Secondary (6-8 Class)	18	22.5
	Secondary 9-10 Class)	62	77.5
Years of Experience	<5 years	20	25.0
	5–10 years	26	32.5
	>10 years	34	42.5

**Table 2. Stress Levels Distribution**

Stress Level	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Low	18	22.5
Moderate	48	60.0
High	14	17.5

**Table 3. Associations Between Level of Occupational Stress with Selected Socio-demographic Variables**

Variables	$\chi^2$ Value	$p$ -value
Gender	6.89	0.032*
Teaching Level	5.98	0.048*

## DISCUSSION

In this study, 60% of teachers experienced moderate stress, 17.5% high stress, and 22.5% low stress. Most teachers therefore live with at

least a moderate level of occupational stress, a pattern consistent with international reports but reflecting local context. A study from Kosovo reported 33.2% severe, 38% moderate, and 10.3% mild stress among schoolteachers showing that stress is a global occupational challenge.<sup>12</sup>

The present study similarly found a majority experiencing moderate stress, underscoring a substantial burden in our setting. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model explain this by linking excessive job demands with inadequate resources, leading to strain and reduced well-being.<sup>13</sup>

Female teachers experienced more stress, likely due to the dual burden of professional and familial responsibilities.<sup>14</sup> Gender-sensitive policies, such as flexible schedules and psychosocial support, could help reduce this burden.

Secondary-level teachers also faced higher stress, possibly due to exam pressure and administrative responsibilities. Studies from China highlight how complex curricula and student performance expectations contribute to this phenomenon.<sup>15</sup>

By contrast, age, marital status, and teaching experience were not significant, suggesting that workplace dynamics outweigh demographic characteristics in shaping stress levels. This aligns with findings from other resource-limited settings.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, these results highlight the urgent need for institutional support and targeted interventions to reduce teacher stress and protect both educator well-being and the quality of education in Nepal.

## CONCLUSION

Moderate to high stress affects 77.5% of teachers. Gender and teaching level have a significant effect on teachers' stress level. Stress among schoolteachers is a critical issue that affects not only educators' wellbeing but also overall quality of education. The demands of teaching coupled with limited support and increasing responsibilities, can lead to burnout, job dissatisfaction, and mental health challenges. Addressing this issue requires a collective effort from educational institutions, policymakers, and communities to create more supportive and

sustainable teaching environment. By recognizing the value of teachers and prioritizing their mental health, we can foster a more effective, motivated and resilient education system.

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