# Remote Teaching and Teachers' Wellbeing in Nepal During Covid-19: A Review

## Rejina K. C.

Visiting Faculty at Kathmandu University, School of Education, Nepal
Email: rejina_phele21@kusoed.edu.np

## Abstract

Teachers' wellbeing was impacted adversely in the pandemic, which brought school closure and social distancing everywhere. Abruptly, the academic institutions had to shift from physical to remote teaching by using various online platforms. The main purpose of this study is to explore and understand teachers' experiences of remote teaching during COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to examine how the sudden change to online teaching impacted teachers' wellbeing, their personal lives, and its impact on their students' learning outcomes. The study is likely a qualitative research design, focusing on exploring teachers' experience and perceptions which involves a comprehensive analysis and synthesis of existing literature, particularly based on the empirical studies realated to remote teaching during the pandemic. It involves indentifying theme pattern, and insights related to teachers' experience of remote teaching. It also sheds light on how teachers employed effective pedagogy as coping mechanism and explored the opportunities for learning new skills as their professional development amidst crisis.

*Keywords*: COVID-19, remote teaching, teacher wellbeing, professional development

## Introduction

Wellbeing has become a buzz word in every sector but in education while talking about teacher wellbeing, it is yet to be understood in a proper way. Wellbeing has always been synonymous of pride and happiness (Cann, 2019) that is related to job performance, which can be determined by teachers and students behavior. He further added about the coorelation between teacher's wellbeing and student's achievement. However, wellbeing

has been observed from various perspective and encompassing the collective welfare it deals with a complete state of 'physical, mental and social wellbeing' (World Health Organization, 2011, p. 3). In the words of Bakracheva (2020), wellbeing is a 'universal strive of people for happy and satisfying life' (p. 89), which suggest pursuit of happiness and contentment for positive and gratifying existing. Toraby and Modarressi (2018) states that positive mindset of teachers can perform better and enjoy their jobs where students learn more in such environment. It is differed to individual values, beliefs or circumstances, as human beings share a fundamental aspiration for wellbeing and self-satisfaction (Cann, 2019). While talking about teachers' professional wellbeing, it is connected to their job performance which determines quality of life (Alder, 2016). In the education, wellbeing denotes teachers' shared values as a common goal of exploring a happy and respectful life (Pan & Liu, 2022). However, teaching is considered one of the most demanding professions that often involves navigating a multitude of responsibilities, including lesson planning, classroom management, student assessment, backhome activities for next day class preparations and enaging with diverse student needs so on.

Stress like increasing pressure to meet academic standards can place a heavy burden on educators (Porter, 2020). Classroom challenges like disruptive behavior of students or lack of resources and unappreciative work culture increses teachers' mental health issues which lower the quality of life of the teachers and that can affect their job performance (Sunga, 2019). Therefore, when teachers experience unnecessary workload and pressure that brings negative emotions towards their career. Sunga (2019) claims that the idea of teachers' emotional wellbeing plays a great value to maintain mental issues and discusses how mental health issues stem from dissatisfaction arising from an insufficient quality of both personal and professional aspects of life. An abrupt need of virtual teaching due to the pandemic brought an unprecedented situation to almost all teachers where the world was no more enough to meet any emotional needs of human beings due to the mediated mode of teaching and learning process (Dastagir, 2021). The insurgency of the pandemic had brought a sudden transition of teaching pedagogy from physical to online (Shrestha et al., 2020).

The sudden shift in teaching pedagogy from physical to online platforms during the pandemic significantly impacted teacher wellbeing. Our country Nepal also faced various challenges due to this abrupt transition which affected various aspects of teachers' professional and personal lives. This paper reveals the multifaceted challenges of remote teaching and its impact through a resrach question, that is how did the shift to remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic impact on teachers' wellbeing, personal lives and students' learning outcomes?

## Methodology

To get the answer of research question, I have employed a qualitative research aiming to comprehend teachers' experiences and complexities involved in transitioning to online teaching. Since this is a desk review article based on the study of various empirical articles related to remote teaching during the pandemic. Every section higlights the thematic analysis to identify the isuues as discussed before and follows by the discussion and conclusions of this review paper. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of teachers' experience of transitioning teaching approach and its challenges, informed by both existing literatures and emergent findings from the articles. The next section discusses how the shift of teaching learning process occurred from physical to online during the pandemic in Nepal.

## Results

### Teaching Learning in Nepal During COVID-19

While COVID-19 pandemic started spreading across the countries from Wuhan City, China (Dawadi et al., 2020), our country Nepal could not remain away from being infected. According to a UN report, around 1.6 billion learners were severely affected across more than 90 countries (UN, 2020). So, the very first case of COVID-19 happened in Nepal on 23 January, 2020, and the first casualty occurred on May 14, 2020 (Shrestha et al., 2020). The first round of a countrywide lockdown appeared on March 24, 2020, and ended on July 21, 2020, leading to the recurring lockdown across the countries last two and half years. In Nepal, government responded second wave of the pandemic with yet another round of country wide lockdowns. It began from April 2021 and lasted till August of the year and due to this schools remained closed for much longer, which brought uncertainty among teachers and students (Online Khabar, 2021). Due to heaviilly spreading COVID-19, teachers fron Nepal and their teaching and learning process was affected badly. A few weeks after the opening of schools, got a small amount of relief, but that stayed until January 25, 2022, due to the emergence of the third wave of the pandemic.

The unprecedented pandemic affected the teaching-learning process and cast a darker situation in the academic fraternity for a few months. In contrast, the countrywide teaching process faced a transitioning mode of teaching. Due to the massively increasing pandemic, schools had to move from physical teaching to online using a various mode of online platforms (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020), which was only the medium to be connected with other people. However, teaching and learning continued, but problems emerged for both the teachers and the students. The unexpected adjustments like teaching through technology required (Gautam, 2020) by the teachers was expected without prior training or knowledge

which they were not used to before. Students certainly would have strained their wellbeing in terms of online teaching and learning process. For teachers, the stress due to excessive use of device was doubled as teachers had to rely on their screens and digital media (Dastagir, 2021) not just for doing their job, but also for entertainment, communication (professional and personal), and socialization. Digital teaching mode resulted in widespread of severe zoom fatigue among teachers (Burleigh, 2021).

In Nepal, teachers from community schools were deprived from getting online platform of learning so that they could continue their teaching (Gautam, 2020). Due to a lack of prior training and planning of online platforms, teachers remained idle for longer, so, they could not continue their teaching. Hence, personal life that harmed their personal and professional wellbeing that brough a sort of anxiety (Dawadi et al., 2020) and anxiety emerged as mental health issues of the teachers. Many of them reported back and neck pain and eye problems (dryness and itching) due to extended and uncomfortable sitting positions during online teaching. Teachers had neither enough time nor resources to install comfortable working stations at home. Teachers were struggling to manage with whatever resources were available at home so that they can deliver classes effectively. Some of the negative aspects of online teaching faced by teachers were internet issues, high cost, less student participation, insufficient media instructions, and lack of teachers preparation.

Al Samiri (2021) reported that the challenges faced by teachers were lack of students motivation, constraints time in online, extra workload for online lesson plan, lack of learning environment due to poor Internet network and isolation in home. So, the challenges really brought a sort of dissatisfaction among teachers which demotivated them to continue their online journey. Teachers experienced a sense of overlooked or ignored as well during the pandemic and found their profession worthless (Gautam, 2020). For the teachers of private schools, they were transitioned to online teaching abruptly without prior training and familiarity of online teaching pedagogy, adequate teaching preparations and techno savvy (Lee & Ogawa, 2021). Nevertheless, they ensured the continuity of teaching learning amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic. Running classes through online without prior knowledge of digital class was not as easy as expected (Gautam, 2020). Teachers faced multifacted challenges from students' sides as well in conducting regular classes in the situation adopting to unexpected disruption for both teachers and students with adjusting vulnerable circumstances (Al Samiri, 2021). Many students lacked the necessary digital devices such as laptops and mobile phones with internet access, so it was difficult to engage them in online learning (Lee & Ogawa, 2021).

Therefore, this paper explores the effect of the pandemic specially on teachers'

personal and professional wellbeing and identifying how this unprecedented situation turned into a professional transformation as adopted by teachers, how did this pave a way towards their career opportunities? So, this paper has gathered the literature which reveals the experience of pedagogical crisis and how teachers and their job suffered due to the pandemic. In the following, how this sudden change in pedagogy through remote teaching caused various issues. The country like Nepal also struggled to reconfigure its teaching methods to ensure the continuity of learninng remotely in the pandemic.

**Remote Teaching and Its Impact on Teachers' Wellbeing**

Teaching in remote and hybrid environments due to crisis of the pandemicbrought numerous challenges, including technology adaptation, increased workload, and the emotional strain of exploring an unfamiliar skills in teaching and learning process to almost all teachers from local to  glocal than physical teaching (Schwartz, 2020). The challenges of adopting to virtual education, Internet issues and lack of human ineraction caused anxiety and stress even in students during the pandemic. Due to massively using online platforms for every little need of humans whether that is their everyday stuff or to maintain their job issues brought a huge stress and disturbed their wellbeing. In the study by Porter (2020) also revealed that the pandemic brought unpredictable situation due to lack of in- person interaction, feeligs of isolation and increased stress due to classroom disruption and yet the teachers were forced to adopt a rapid transition from in-person to remote learning without any prior training and knowledge.

Mnay literatures reported that teaching and learning in the pandemic emerged with lots of challenges like emotional investment in students' wellbeing and academic success which increased extra stress (Toraby &Modarressi, 2018).  The  transition significantly impacted teachers' wellbeing where school management played a vital role in bringing challenges in terms of pedagogical transformation form face-to face- to online (Ikebuchi, 2023). Main problem was that the teachers were not informed before with the technology to run virtualclasses, the virtual setting required additional effort and creativity for almost all the teachers wether they are private schools' teachers or community teachers. For the virtual classes, Internet was only the prominent mode of online teaching but the access to the Internet where digital devices  remained very low at 66% among Nepali citizens (NTC Report, 2021). And only a few private schools and colleges could provide online learning during the closures. This very act of online access brought a deep and wide digital divide between private and public schools and their students.

The uncertainity surrounded allover due to online teaching and teacher students'

wellbeing in a remote teaching contributed to increase anxiety in the workplace (Schwartz, 2020). This very act of transformation brought physical and mental stress on teachers which impacted also in students' learning outcomes (MacInemey, 2018). The pandemic certainly brought an adverse impact on teaching-learning process and also on teachers' mental health which hightended the stress. In the study by Dastagir (2021) reported that stress is not just harm to the mental health of the teachers rather it creates a chaos in the whole body which impacts on their job performance. So, the rapid transformation of teaching pedagogy and necessary shift from physical to online during pandemic, imposed both physical and mental stress on educators (Schwartz, 2020), subsequently influencing students' learning outcomes as well. Whether it is mental issue or the stress and anxiety during the pandemic both were sweeping the world due to the wordly detachment even from human and non-human isolation. As per the survey by Schwartz (2020), 80% of U.S adults say the coronavirus pandemic was an exceptionally a major source of stress in teachers' life. It was not only the case of Asia, in pandemic crisis that of 60% population of Americans faced with common issues in the pandemic which completely overwhelmed their personal and professional life. In teaching, there were the isuues like lack of Internet, network problem, less participation in digital classes, insufficient digital training for teachers and students and unprepapredness of the context (Ferdous & Shifat, 2020). Such challenges brought mental and physical issues that hampered their personal and professional wellbeing in many ways such as;

From the first side, teachers were forced to teach online without any prior information and without direct human interaction. Direct interaction is one of the essential social ingredients for better social health in all, which was lacking during the mediated learning (Gautam, 2020) in the pandemic. The second was the deprivation of emotional needs of teachers and students that may not fulfill by merely teaching from home continuosly (through online platform) and without a single physical classes which also brought a virtual fatigue (Porter, 2020). Teachers were compelled to address almost all academic activities through online screens to continue their job, other information, communication, and entertainment that deteriorated not just teacher's mental but physical health as well.

Thirdly, millions of teachers worldwide were losing or on the verge of losing their job, and most significantly, the pandemic could hit a teacher's family anytime (Babic et al., 2022). In our country, with little vaccine access, teachers were already the most vulnerable group in society after medical professionals during the pandemic. However, they were not receiving the vaccine on time. All these factors make teachers' job even more challenging and bring a feeling of disrespect, ignored, and neglected by society and the government. They could neither deliver what they have been doing for years fully and intend to do for the rest of their lives nor receive extra support and benefits for all the extra effort they invested

in switching their mind and skills from physical to online mode. The study by Rabaglietti (2021) found that the distance learning lowered the teachers' self-efficacy during the pandemic (Safari, 2021), where teachers' perseverance and a positive mindset were only the key instruments to bring the conducive environment to reduce teachers' mental stress (Arslan et al., 2021). So, in this case, teachers' self-efficacy (Rabaglietti, 2021) seemed to be more crucial for teachers to manage chaotic situations as germinated by COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the abruptly changed teaching modality became a considerable challenge to almost all teachers, which was negatively impacting their performance (MacInemey, 2018) not just in teachers but also in students' performance.

Both the experienced and the novice teachers faced difficulties using online platform while continuing their teaching leanring process. The study by Gordon (2020) found that early career teachers experienced their teaching job with full of contengencies during the pandemic crisis due to lack of knowledge in using various mode of online teaching. Despite the difficulties teachers faced, they found this period a productive one in terms of their professional growth with the things they were not used to before (Ray, 2020).The skills like pedagogical teaching online skills for the betterment of their career growth and helped to be familiar with technology in teching. Continuous online teachers' training and training for technological skills, acknowledgment of job performance (Gautam, 2020) and relentless hardwork helped many teachers to succeed even in the crisis which supported in students' learning outcomes.

## Pandemic as a Catalyst For Change in Pedagogy

Since, the global pandemic has introduced a transformative shift in education which compelled teachers to integrate technology in their teaching pedagogy (Dastagir, 2022). Initially, the pandemic was taken as a disruptive driving force because of the disruption in traditional teaching schedule. The disruption in regular patterned life of teacher brought a transformation of learning new skills in their teaching and learning process (Gautam, 2020). Initially, the pandemic disrupted classes and as a result the exams were on hold which certainly brought a sort of disappointment in teaching and learning system (Kaper & Bhandari, 2020). On one hand, due to lack of computer knowledge, teachers needed support and one to one training to operate the system. The unavailability of internet access also created sense of failure and peers' judgment on using devices, and online fatigue which led towards digital burnout (Pan & Liu, 2022). On the other hand, digital use of teaching helped teachers to become techno savvy so that they could facilitate remote teaching and learning (Passey, 2021). This enabled them to get connected with students despite physical distance.

There was not other option, teachers had to adopt online teaching approaches to

deliver their classes and accommodate the unique needs of each student in online platform (Soykan et al., 2019). A new lesson learned helped them to navigate uncertainty in the job, cope challenges and achieve innovative solution to sustain even in the crisis (Kapar & Bhandari, 2020). Positive mindset and their self -reflection (Mezirow, 2003) on previous knowledge helped them even more commited to achieving better learning even in the crisis. Teachers developed their mindfulness nature (Pan & Liu, 2022), which maintained their professional wellbeing. Questioning and introspecting as a self- assessment or refeelection tool also guided to add on the best practice in their existing teaching experience (Pan and Liu, 2022). A good networking with peers also helped to improve better wellbeing in the working place (Kapar & Bhandari, 2020) because positive relationship in the workplace rises the teachers' better job performance.

The pandemic really helped teachers to be familiar with new knowledge to sustain in their career (Gautam, 2020) and applied different coping strategies which increased their resilience in work as of now. So, teachers' coping strategies also helped to enhance students' learning as teachers could involve themselves into various online teacher development program (TPD) so that they could take online classes even more effectively (Awan, 2022). The emerging modes of digital platform during the pandemic helped teachers to become familiar with various technology and even more talented in their profession (Gautam, 2020). So, the crisis did not only bring a challenge but also a new sort of skills emerged to enhance teachers' continuous prfoesional development (Kapar & Bhandari, 2020). Many researches revealed that the teachers' active participation during the pandemic for online teaching training, assessment, and evaluation was remarkable which shows their commitment towards job (Babic et al., 2022; Awan, 2022; Pan & Liu, 2022). It was certainly a pride for them to learn new lesson learned in many ways through online (K. C, 2022). The transition of teaching from physical to online was an unprecedented but teachers' rigorous engagement, and teachers' learning aptitude enhanced their own professional skills (Gautam, 2020).

Previously in Nepal, schools were only familiar with physical exams and class tests for the assessment before pandemic. The study reported that various online teacher training and conferences provided an insight of using new technology in education which also helped teachers to conduct students' evaluation (Gautam, 2020). Initially, students might have experienced problems of hampering their education due to lack of online evaluation knowledge because initially, teachers were not habituated to adapt their assessment strategies through online. It has also been reported in the national daily that the school administration forces teachers to increase their grades artificially. Teachers used to take physical exams and class tests to evaluate students' academic performance in Nepal. Teachers needed help to distinguish performance through online mode and also reduces the satisfaction for teachers

of evaluating students as per their learning achievements. Moreover, this situation can lead teachers to feel undervalued and less respected.

Abruptly, the teachers from across the country, had to move physical to online mode of teaching  and relied on the "open book exams" kind of assessment through online platform. It was not that easy for all to be familiar in such a way so, it took a bit time to be habituatedfor both teachers and students. The turns and twist of their job due to crisis of pandemic emphasizes on a transforamtion  to explore new pathway of knowledge in a transformed way of learning accumulation (Mezirow, 1996). Eventually, teachers seemed to be happy even in the crisis and improved their personal wellbeing (Arslan et al., 2021). Here, they stopped being underrated and disrespected by any others profession (Pan & Liu, 2022). The experience of overcoming adversity and adopting new awakening knowledge and brilliant performance in such a crisis has undoubtedly transformed teachers' perception in their profession and also in their skills that improved their professional wellbeing.  So, this connection between teacher's better wellbeing and also their job satisfaction enhanced student learning (Alder, 2016; Cann, 2019) which undescores the significance of cultivating and supporting a positive environment in their workplace.

**Acknowledging Teachers' Wellbeing for Student's Better Learning Outcomes**

Mnay researches reported that recognizing and prioritizing teachers' wellbeing is truly integral to achieving better outcomes from students (Ryff, 2014; Alder, 2016; Cann, 2019), It is not only essential at home but also in their workplace so that teachers wellbeing can be assured in a proper way. Since teachers wellbeing is explicitly or implicitly connected with students' better learning outcomes (Ryff, 2014) and yet it is found ignored and neglected in various educational institutions. When teachers are supported and their wellbeing is acknowledged, they perform better job and also run  effective learning environments (Alder, 2016). A positive and healthy teacher mindset can contribute to increase job satisfaction and resilience in the  workplace, because workplace satisfaction always raises teachers' self-efficacy (Cann, 2019) which directly enhance their ability to inspire and guide students. Hence, the time has come for wellbeing to be well understood and much discussed regarding teacher welfare.

Since, the wellbeing is interconnected with job admiration and its satisfaction (Cann, 2019) it should be well understood and the workplace plays a prominent role where one can bring job satisfaction (Mclnerney, 2018). It does not matter who the person is but admiration from peers or from school management (positive feedback) can play a vital role in bringing change to improve teacher better wellbeing. Moreover, when teachers feel valued and supported, they are more likely to foster positive relationships with students and peers,

increase trust, collaboration and achieve academic success (Toraby &Modarressi, 2018). Therefore, investing in teachers' wellbeing not just benefits educators personally but also creates a positive outcomes for student learning and academic performance.

Teaching online in the pandemic, certainly has contributed in understanding teachers' better wellbeing in both personal and professional. Even in the high level of stress, they were seriously concerned about students' learning and their outcome. Teachers were found anxious due to lengthy screen time and lack of social interactions during online teaching. Nepalese national daily newspapers and online news sites widely reported that private school teachers demanded regular and full salaries during the lockdown (Online Khabar, September 2020). Moreover, the teachers were worried about if online teaching could meet the learning outcomes and provide the required quality education to the students.

## Discussion

Teaching online was a tough job that to be performed in most under-resourced contexts, where the accessibility of internet, availability of resources, and use of technology in education, were not widespread (Khan et al., 2021). Teaching remotely from home had been challenging for almost all teachers wether they were from public or private schools.

**Figure 1**

*Challenges of teachers during remote teaching and learning in COVID-19.*
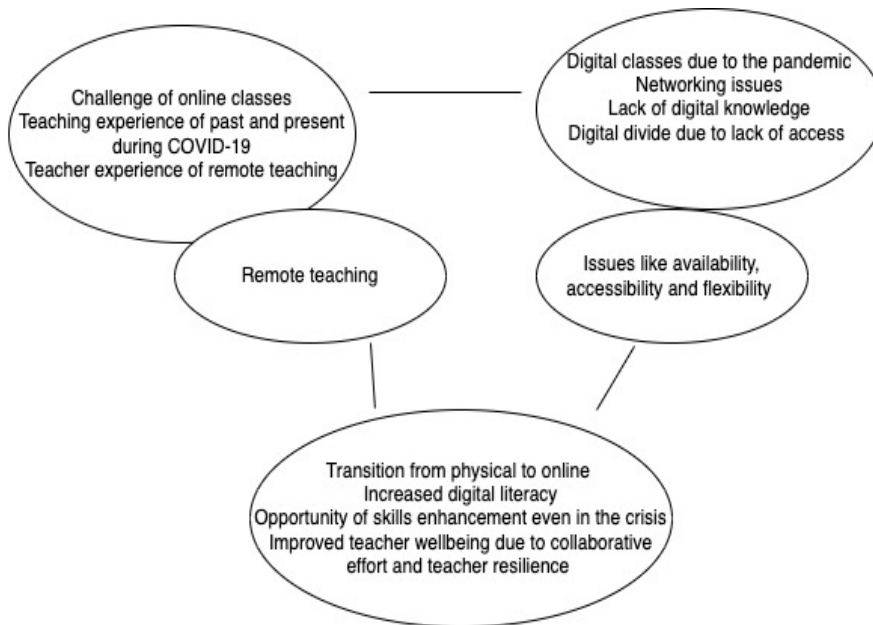
While talking about the challenges due to online mode, the global pandemic induced a quick implementation of technology for distance learning so that learnig should not to be stopped. As classes migrated to virtual settings and teachers were asked to navigate digital platforms, adopting lesson plans for online delivery. Firtsly, it brought a huge technological challenge to many teachers and students (Rabaglietti, 2021) as they were not techno shavvy and not familiar with this sort of pedagogy before.

While using this online mode, only a few teachers were trained and experienced with digital literacy. So, despite a little or no training in digital training, teachers accepted the challenge that was posed by country wide lockdown and quickly adapted to the new normal practice of online teaching (Sornapudi & Devi, 2021). The significant challenge of being familiar with the things which they were not used to before was also accepted by teachers. The challenges such as poor networks, lack of digital skills, lack of technological support from institutions, and more costly than others (Shrestha et al., 2021) were all dealt one after the another (Schwartz, 2020). Based on the empirical studies of remote teaching during the pandemic, teachers encountered the challenges which were interconnected to each other such as networking, availability, flexibility and accessibility. Networking played a vital role in remote teaching as it helped to facilitate collaboration resource-sharing and support each other. However, challenges in networking impacted directly to availability. Limited opportunituies, different time zone and schedule for day to day communication may hinder educatotrs' ability to connect effectively with peers and students. So, the lack of availability for networking exacerbates feelings of isolation and limited opportunities was impacting the quality of remote teaching.

Flexibility is essential for adopting the dynamic nature of remote teaching which allows educators to accommodate diverse student needs, and navigate technological challenges. Lack of accessebilty of network and resources teachers may struggle to adopt online teaching pedagogy effectively, leading to frustration and reduced efficacy in remote teaching. Therefore, educators from across the country Nepal faced theses challenges holistically in remote teaching. The study also found the difficulties facing by teachers in students' evaluation during pandemic not just in our country but also found across the world during the pandemic. When learning continued through digital platforms as teachers were also forced to provide inflated grades for the students. In developing countries like Nepal, it was even complicated to understand the real context of the students during the pandemic.

## Conclusion

Teachers' wellbeing is being affected by several factors, including the pressure to move towards distance learning in a rush, high workload, declining student engagement, and

a wide range of other effects the pandemic had on the livelihood and impacted day-to-day activities of the teaching profession. It is found that in the developed countries, stress level was something different which generally emerged not just of adopting transition quickly from face-to-face to online mode but to mange the whole education system. On the other side, the developing countries, like Nepal, stress got exponentially bigger that hit directly to the financial status of the teachers. The lack of digital tools and Internet for conducting remote classes worsened life of almost all teachers, which badly affected their personal and professional wellbeing undoubltedly.

The study revealed that many teachers created new teaching platforms through sufficient training in distance and digital teaching and learning ( Gautam, 2020) even in the crisis which is one of the examples of new lesson learned. Initially, teachers were not informed about the sudden change in their classroom pedagogy which made them very nervous and lacked their confidence as well. When schools were implementing emergency education strategies during the pandemic, teachers' opinions must be incorporated so that the whole process would be not just for the school management but also for the sake of teachers and the students betterment as well. Many researches reported that teachers suffered mentally and physically both during the crisis of the pandemic so mental and physical health management skills are the major intervention that should beimplemented to enhance positive state of mind in the workplace which enhances teachers' wellbeing at the end.

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalysts which really brought a transformation for the teachers which helped educators to fostering a deepen understanding of new skills and adopting evolving approach in education. The transitional period of the pandemic certainly brought an adverse effect, however, the crisis has become a transformative journey for many teachers as studies reported that journey helped teachers to thrive in their profession. For future studies, teachers' wellbeing in the crisis like COVID-19 pandemic, needs to be studied with a particular emphasis on digital wellbeing to continue distance learning. Further, their job security for private schools teachers needs to be strengthened in crisis like the pandemic and forever. Hence, the literatures reported that teachers' wellbeing should be separated into two types, digital and non-digital related wellbeing, so that we can also differentiate the impact on teachers' personal and professional wellbeing during and the post pandemic either. Investing on teachers' workload management, professional development program, supportive leadership and school culture, health and wellness program, financial and resource support program, job appreciation, workplace safety and respect, resrach and performance evaluation are some interventions that can be tailored to implement in the educational conatext to support teacher wellbeing. By addressing these areas through policy development and implementation in the educational

system can create a secured working environments where teachers feel valued, supported and empowered to make their performance the most of it.

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