# Occupational Stress and Coping Strategies Among Teachers in Nepal

**Purna Bahadur Lamichhane, PhD[1]**

## Abstract

This article explores the multifaceted issue of occupational stress among teachers in Nepal, focusing on systemic stressors and integrated management strategies. It is guided by two primary objectives: to identify the systemic factors causing occupational stress among teachers, and to explore integrated strategies for enhancing teacher well-being and professional sustainability. Employing a qualitative research design within an interpretivist paradigm, the study has utilized purposive sampling to select secondary school teachers from Kathmandu district. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings reveals five interconnected themes: overwhelming professional demands characterized by excessive workloads, large class sizes, and administrative burdens; erosion of professional self-worth stemming from lack of recognition and support; embodied physical and psychological consequences including chronic fatigue and emotional exhaustion; fragmented institutional support systems with limited formal mechanisms; and individual coping strategies operating within structural constraints. The study concludes that while teachers demonstrate resilience through personal coping mechanisms, sustainable stress management requires a holistic approach integrating organizational interventions—such as fair workload distribution, supportive leadership, and structured well-being programs—with institutional support systems. These findings underscore the necessity for systemic reforms in Nepalese educational institutions to address the structural sources of stress and promote teacher well-being, thereby enhancing educational quality and professional sustainability.

*Keywords*:  Institutional support, occupational stress, stress management strategies, professional well-being, teacher stress

# Introduction

Teacher stress in Nepal is increasingly recognized as a multifaceted issue shaped by systemic demands and insufficient institutional support. Recent studies indicate that teachers face excessive workloads, administrative pressures, and policy shifts that contribute to chronic stress, emotional exhaustion, and declining professional confidence (Joshi & Bajracharya, 2021). This not only affects their well-being but also compromises educational quality and student learning outcomes. Despite growing awareness, however, teacher stress is often approached as an individual challenge rather than a structural one, and little research has focused on how systemic and institutional factors interact to shape stress experiences in the Nepalese context. A deeper exploration of these dynamics is necessary to inform holistic, context-relevant interventions.

Occupational stress is defined as a harmful physical and emotional response occurring when job requirements do not align with a worker's capabilities, resources, or needs. In the context of education, stress often arises from work demands, poor communication, job uncertainty, and interpersonal conflicts.

Teachers face multiple, interrelated occupational stressors that adversely affect their professional effectiveness and well-being. Key stressors include role ambiguity and role conflict, where unclear or competing expectations hinder performance and decision-making, and work intensification, characterized by heavy teaching loads and insufficient breaks that contribute to chronic overwork. Additionally, teaching increasingly occurs within a low-trust professional environment, where heightened monitoring and limited autonomy elevate pressure and reduce morale. An effort–reward imbalance further exacerbates stress when sustained professional commitment and emotional labor are not matched by adequate salary, recognition, or career advancement opportunities. Together, these stressors create persistent occupational strain that undermines teachers' motivation, health, and professional sustainability.

In the context of educational environments, researchers distinguish between external structural environments and internal psychological states to understand the roots of occupational pressure. Sauter and Murphy (2004) define this stress as the harmful physical and emotional response that occurs when job requirements do not align with the teacher's capabilities, resources, or needs. Mosadeghrad (2014) observed that certain job factors or aspects of the professional workplace more firmly predict work-related stress than individual variables like personality traits. While organisational factors are stressors invoked by the institution's policies, workload, and

culture, individual factors remain unique to the person's personality, life circumstances, and perceptions.

Organisational triggers are generally categorized into work content and work context, often serving as the primary predictors of mental well-being. Kahn et al. (1964) identified role-related stress as a major factor, which includes role ambiguity (lack of clear information about duties), role conflict (competing demands), and role overload (excessive tasks with limited resources). Jacobs and Winslow (2004) further highlighted the impact of work intensification, noting that high demands and unrealistic deadlines are primary stressors for overworked faculty.

Institutional culture also plays a vital role in these triggers. Michie (2002) argued that leadership style significantly affects stress, where rigid company policies and a lack of support from managers or team members worsen the experience. Additionally, the Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) model, as explained by Derycke et al. (2013) and Siegrist (2017), suggests that teachers experience significant stress when their high professional investments are not met with appropriate rewards, such as salary, career prospects, or social recognition.

Individual factors influence a teacher's susceptibility to stress and their ability to recover from its effects. Watson and Pennebaker (1989) discussed the role of negative affectivity, a general predisposition toward aversive moods like nervousness or depression, which determines how an individual perceives potential threats. Self-esteem is also a critical internal tool; Rosse et al. (1991) suggested that individuals with lower self-esteem may feel less competent in their relationships and lack the psychological energy to handle daily challenges.

Life circumstances and demographics further contribute to an individual's stress profile. Gede Riana et al. (2018) identified work-life conflict—particularly the struggle to balance professional roles with family responsibilities like parenting—as a highly stressful trigger. Seaward (2017) noted that personal financial problems and significant life transitions reduce the psychological resources a teacher can dedicate to handling professional incidents. While demographic variables such as age and gender are often explored, Resmi (2018) and Rathore (2018) noted that these sometimes show no significant difference in stress levels compared to the impact of the specific job position or role overload.

To address this gap, this study aims to achieve two research objectives: first, to investigate the systemic factors causing occupational stress among teachers in Nepal, and second, to explore integrated stress management strategies for enhancing teacher

well-being and professional sustainability. By examining both structural sources of stress and the interplay between individual and organizational support mechanisms, this research seeks to contribute actionable insights for education policymakers, school leaders, and teacher support programs in Nepal and similar contexts.

## Statement of the Research Problem

The contemporary professional environment has become increasingly demanding, and the teaching profession in Nepal is no exception. Rapid educational reforms, expanding curricular responsibilities, growing class sizes, increased administrative workload, and the integration of digital technologies into teaching have significantly intensified occupational pressure on teachers. While a moderate level of stress may enhance motivation and performance, teachers in Nepal are increasingly experiencing chronic and dysfunctional stress resulting from excessive workload, time constraints, limited resources, and blurred boundaries between professional and personal life.

In many educational institutions across Nepal, teachers are required to perform multiple roles beyond classroom instruction, including administrative duties, examination management, continuous assessment reporting, and participation in training and institutional programs. These responsibilities are often accompanied by limited institutional support, inadequate professional recognition, and constrained career progression opportunities, which further exacerbate stress levels. Additionally, the growing expectation for teachers to remain constantly available through digital platforms has reduced opportunities for rest and recovery, adversely affecting work–life balance.

Prolonged exposure to such stressors has serious implications for teachers' physical, psychological, and professional well-being. Chronic occupational stress contributes to fatigue, sleep disturbances, anxiety, reduced job satisfaction, and burnout, which ultimately undermine teaching effectiveness and student learning outcomes. Moreover, persistent stress negatively influences teachers' self-esteem and professional identity, leading to diminished confidence, emotional exhaustion, and disengagement from the profession.

Despite the critical role teachers play in national development, empirical research examining lived experiences of teachers on stress and their coping strategies within the Nepalese educational context remains limited. Understanding the nature, sources, and consequences of stress, as well as the effectiveness of individual and organizational stress management practices, is essential for developing supportive

institutional policies and interventions. Therefore, this study seeks to explore teachers' experiences of stress management and coping strategies in Nepal, with the aim of promoting teacher well-being, reducing absenteeism, and enhancing the overall quality of education.

## Objectives of the Study

This research has guided by the following objectives.

1. To identify the systemic factors causing occupational stress among teachers.

2. To explore integrated stress management strategies for teacher well-being and professional sustainability

## Significance of the Study

This study is significant for the Nepalese education sector, where teachers increasingly experience occupational stress due to expanding workloads, administrative responsibilities, limited resources, and changing pedagogical expectations. By exploring teachers' experiences of stress and their coping strategies, the study provides context-specific evidence that addresses a notable gap in Nepal-based educational research.

The findings will benefit teachers by enhancing awareness of common stressors and effective coping mechanisms, thereby supporting their psychological well-being, self-esteem, and professional satisfaction. The study also offers practical insights for school administrators and institutional leaders to develop supportive workplace environments, improve leadership practices, and implement structured stress management initiatives.

Furthermore, the study holds policy relevance by informing educational planners and policymakers about the need for teacher-friendly policies related to workload management, professional development, and well-being. From an academic perspective, the research contributes to the literature on occupational stress by foregrounding teachers' lived experiences in a developing-country context. Ultimately, promoting teacher well-being through evidence-based interventions can enhance instructional effectiveness and contribute to improved educational quality in Nepal.

## Literature Review

The definition of stress has evolved from a physical science concept into a complex psychological and physiological framework. It is currently understood as

a multifaceted response to pressure, occurring when perceived demands exceed an individual's ability to cope.

## Etymology and Historical Evolution

The term "stress" is derived from the Latin words strictus, meaning "tight" or "narrow," and stringere, which means "to tighten". As Seaward (2017) explained, while the concept was originally rooted in physics to describe the intrinsic resistance an object develops against an external force, it has since become a central term in management, psychiatry, and health sciences. Bernik (1998) noted that in early medical and psychological integration, the term began to designate the aggression itself or the resulting discomfort felt by the organism when responding to a challenge.

Before it was adopted into human psychology, the term was utilised in a physical context. Seaward (2017) explained that the ancient Romans originally used the concept to understand the mechanical forces acting upon an object, where it described intrinsic resistance to external pressure. It was not until the early nineteenth century that scientists began connecting these physical principles to physiology and medicine. Robinson (2018) further detailed how the term was eventually integrated as a formal concept in psychology, reflecting the growing complexity of how researchers viewed the human response to internal and external demands.

Scholars, including Dewe et al. (2010), broadly classify stress definitions into three historical and scientific perspectives: the stimulus-based view, which defines stress as an external environmental demand or event acting upon the individual; the response-based view, notably advanced by Selye (1956) and his General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS), which frames stress as the internal physiological or psychological reaction to pressure; and the transactional view, championed by Lazarus (1966), which interprets stress as the dynamic interplay or mismatch between environmental demands and an individual's perceived capacities to meet them.

In the contemporary academic and professional landscape, the definition provided by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is widely adopted. The HSE (2010) defines stress as an adverse reaction to excessive pressure or specific types of demands, which occurs specifically when individuals perceive a lack of the resources or skills necessary to handle them. Lazarus (1966) further refined this psychologically, stating that stress occurs when a person judges a situation as straining or surpassing their resources and compromising their well-being. In the specific context of work, Sauter and Murphy (2004) define occupational stress as the harmful physical and

emotional responses that arise when job requirements do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the employee.

## Concept of Stress

The concept of stress has transitioned through various scientific disciplines, evolving from a mechanical term into a central pillar of modern psychology and medicine.

With growing ages, increasing work pressure, financial responsibilities to uphold desired lifestyle, and unhealthy routines, there is a severe impact on both the personal and professional aspects of lives, generating immense stress on one's body and mind (Aydin, 2022; Robinson, 2018). Though the term 'stress' is commonly used to describe a negative impact on lifestyle, scientific research has also identified a positive response to stress, which was coined as eustress or 'positive stress' (Kupriyanov & Zhdanov, 2014).

Indeed, Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014) argued that eustress contributes to health and longevity by enhancing an organism's adaptive capabilities. This positive response fosters resilience against adversity, enabling survival in extreme conditions. Illustrating this balance, Vijayashree and Mund (2011) compared stress to a musical instrument, noting that just as strings require the correct tension to produce a clear tune, humans require optimum stress to function effectively. Conversely, as Seaward (2017) observed, either loose or overly taut wires fail to create music, highlighting the necessity of distinguishing between productive and dysfunctional stress. As organisations become increasingly complex due to industrialisation and urbanisation, identifying the origins of these various stressors and implementing effective coping mechanisms is vital for societal well-being.

## Psychological and Biological Definitions

Today, stress is broadly understood as a multi-dimensional response involving physical, psychological, and emotional reactions to specific events or demands. This modern conception has been shaped by several key theorists, including Lazarus (1966), whose transactional view defines stress as a dynamic process that occurs when an individual perceives external demands as surpassing their perceived coping resources. Complementing this, Bernik et al. (1998) emphasize the biological dimension, framing stress as the organism's innate response to perceived challenge or aggression—a reaction that inherently leads to discomfort or a cascade of physiological and psychological consequences, irrespective of the accuracy of the initial perception.

**The Dual Nature of Stress**

Stress is an inherent and paradoxical aspect of human life, capable of acting as both a driving force for growth and a potential source of harm. Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014) highlighted that while negative stress can lead to ill health, eustress (positive stress) can actually improve adaptive capabilities and longevity. Therefore, modern definitions often view stress as an "optimum" requirement—much like the tension on a musical instrument string—needed to produce a "good tune" or peak performance.

Stress is a multi-dimensional phenomenon primarily manifesting in physical and psychological forms that significantly impact both the human body and mind.

Physical stress typically affects individuals in labour-intensive sectors such as healthcare, sales, and social services where long-duration physical activity is a requirement. Aydin (2022) and Frenk et al. (2010) highlight that medical professionals are particularly vulnerable to this form of stress due to prolonged standing, the heavy lifting of patients, and severe sleep deprivation caused by abrupt or extended work schedules. Morse et al. (2008) further emphasize that these physical demands, particularly "heavy lifting," are central stressors for healthcare workers.

Psychological stress directly impacts an individual's mental health and is generally categorized into four variations: eustress, distress, hyper-stress, and hypo-stress.

Eustress and Distress: Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014) define eustress as "good" or positive stress that provides the motivation and energy necessary to excite an individual toward their work. The presence of eustress is generally linked to increased work satisfaction, creativity, and physical activity. Conversely, distress is the negative counterpart where the individual is adversely affected, leading to a significant decline in performance. As noted by Haque et al. (2016), if distress becomes prolonged, it can eventually transition into debilitating chronic stress.

Hyper-stress and Hypo-stress: Hyper-stress describes a state that remains within manageable limits, allowing an individual to continue operating efficiently for a duration. However, Faizan and Hague (2019) observe that excessive workloads are a primary trigger for hyper-stress, which eventually causes individuals to lose their routine working capability. Finally, hypo-stress results from permanent, low-arousal stressors that induce boredom and fatigue. In this state, individuals lose their

professional inspiration and motivation, leading to outcomes that are often chronic and unmanageable.

## Causes of occupational stress

Occupational stress, or job stress, is defined as the persistent and evolving strain experienced by employees due to their roles, work conditions, environmental factors, and related workplace pressures. The causes of such stress, termed stressors, can originate externally, within the organization, or from the individual employee. These sources are broadly categorized into extra-organizational stressors, which encompass external influences such as climate, socio-cultural dynamics (including the impact of digital life), economic pressures, legal issues, and daily hassles such as commuting; inter-organizational stressors, which arise from within the workplace and include excessive workload, negative leadership, rigid policies, poor working conditions, after-hours communication demands, and interpersonal conflicts; and individual stressors, which are specific to the employee and involve personal traits such as perception, self-esteem, and behavioral patterns, alongside situational factors like work-home conflict.

## Types and Categories of Stress

Contrary to the common perception that all stress is detrimental, Selye (1980) famously asserted that a total absence of stress equates to being "lifeless". The academic literature identifies several distinct categories of stress based on their outcomes and duration. Seaward (2017) distinguishes between eustress, which refers to positive stress that motivates individuals toward peak performance, and distress, which is negative stress that impairs functioning and leads to ill health. Additionally, neustress is defined as sensory information or stimulation that an individual perceives as inconsequential. Regarding temporal scales, acute stress is characterised as being intense but short-lived, while chronic stress is persistent and frequently associated with long-term disease due to continuous physiological arousal. The relationship between arousal and performance is further clarified by the Yerkes-Dodson Law, which illustrates that while performance increases with emotional arousal to an optimal point, exceeding this threshold causes performance to deteriorate.

Stressors, defined as conditions or events that threaten an individual's physical or psychological wellbeing, have been classified by Girdano (2009) into three broad categories: Bioecological Factors, which include disruptions to biological rhythms caused by environmental elements such as sunlight or gravity; Psycho-intrapersonal Factors, which encompass an individual's internalised beliefs, values, and behaviours; and Social/Environmental Factors, involving external pressures like financial instability,

urban crowding, or significant life changes. To quantify the cumulative impact of such life events, Holmes and Rahe (1967) developed the Social Readjustment Rating Scale, assigning numerical values to experiences such as divorce or the death of a spouse to predict susceptibility to stress-related illness.

## Consequences and Economic Costs

Occupational stress imposes a massive economic burden on global societies. In Australia, data from Safe Work Australia (2010) reveals that claims for "mental stress" have surged, often costing more than twice as much as physical injury claims. These costs are exacerbated by absenteeism and presenteeism—the latter being a phenomenon where staff are physically present but not fully functional due to emotional exhaustion or illness. Beyond financial metrics, chronic stress has severe physical health implications; Stansfeld and Marmot (2002) theoretically link it to coronary heart disease, while other research identifies associations with gastric ulcers, asthma, and obesity.

## Individual versus Organisational Factors

Early research in the field, such as that conducted by Ganster and Schaubroeck (1991), focused primarily on individual factors, particularly personality traits like negative affectivity, which is a tendency toward adverse moods like anger or depression. These studies suggested that personal resources, such as high self-esteem, act as a critical buffer against work pressure. However, Sauter and Murphy (2004) argue that organisational factors are stronger predictors of stress than individual personality traits. Key institutional stressors include heavy workloads, a lack of job control, role ambiguity, and unsupportive leadership styles.

Prominent theoretical models offer distinct perspectives on the interaction between the work environment and occupational stress. Karasek's (1979) Demand-Control-Support Model posits that strain, particularly cardiovascular risk, results from high psychological demands coupled with low decision-making autonomy (control). In parallel, Siegrist's (2017) Effort-Reward Imbalance (ERI) Theory suggests stress occurs when an individual's high levels of effort are inadequately rewarded in terms of salary, status, or job security. Complementing these, Costa and Moss (2018) conceptualize Emotional Exhaustion as a fundamental dimension of burnout, characterized by the persistent depletion of an individual's emotional and physical resources.

# Research Methodology

This study has employed a qualitative research design grounded in an interpretivist paradigm to deeply explore teachers' lived experiences of occupational stress and stress management strategies in Nepal. A purposive sampling strategy was used to select teachers from secondary schools from district, ensuring participants had sufficient experience and willingness to contribute, with data saturation determining the final sample size. Data were collected primarily through semi-structured in-depth interviews, supplemented by focus group discussions where possible, using an interview guide developed from the literature and research questions. The sessions were conducted in Nepali or English, audio-recorded with consent, and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was applied to systematically code, categorize, and develop themes from the data, with credibility strengthened through member checking, peer debriefing, and prolonged engagement.

# Findings and Discussions

This section presents the findings from the study, followed by an integrated discussion that contextualizes them within the broader literature on teacher stress and occupational well-being. Through thematic analysis, five interconnected themes emerged, collectively illustrating the complex nature of stress experienced by teachers in Nepalese schools. These themes include the overwhelming nature of professional demands, the erosion of professional self-worth, the embodied and emotional consequences of stress, the fragmented nature of institutional support systems, and the limited scope of individual coping within structural constraints. The subsequent discussion interprets these findings to highlight their implications for policy, institutional practice, and teacher support in Nepal.

### Overwhelming Professional Demands as Primary Stressors

Teachers consistently described their professional lives as characterized by excessive and multifaceted workload demands.

*Teaching is not limited to teaching only. We have administrative work, exams, reports, meetings—everything falls on teachers.* (T3)

*Large class size and continuous assessment system make it very stressful. There is always pressure to finish the syllabus on time.* (T7)

Several teachers also highlighted stress arising from frequent policy changes and limited resources.

*Policies keep changing, but we are not properly trained. We are expected to manage everything on our own.* (T1)

Participants highlighted heavy teaching loads, large class sizes, administrative tasks, continuous assessment requirements, and involvement in non-instructional duties as major sources of stress. The expectation to adapt to frequent curricular and policy changes, often without sufficient training or resources, intensified feelings of pressure. Teachers perceived a persistent imbalance between professional expectations and available institutional support, which contributed to chronic stress and emotional fatigue.

## Erosion of Professional Self-Worth

A recurrent theme across narratives was the gradual decline in self-esteem resulting from sustained occupational stress. Teachers reported experiencing self-doubt and a diminished sense of professional competence, particularly when their efforts were not acknowledged by school leadership. The absence of recognition and constructive feedback led many participants to feel undervalued and professionally invisible. This erosion of self-worth often resulted in reduced motivation, emotional withdrawal, and questioning of their professional identity.

*Sometimes I feel no matter how hard I work; it is never enough. There is no appreciation, and that lowers my confidence.* (T5)

*When management ignores our efforts, it makes me question my own ability as a teacher.* (T9)

Such experiences contributed to emotional withdrawal and reduced motivation. Prolonged stress negatively influenced teachers' self-esteem and professional confidence. Many participants reported feeling undervalued despite their dedication.

## Embodied and Emotional Consequences of Stress

Teachers' accounts revealed that occupational stress was experienced both physically and psychologically. Physical manifestations included chronic fatigue, headaches, sleep disturbances, and musculoskeletal discomfort. Psychologically, participants reported anxiety, irritability, emotional exhaustion, and symptoms consistent with burnout. Many teachers described difficulty maintaining emotional regulation and concentration, indicating that stress extended beyond the workplace and affected personal and family life. Teachers described stress as a lived, embodied experience affecting both physical and psychological health.

Teachers described significant physical and psychological manifestations of occupational stress. Physically, participants reported persistent exhaustion, sleep disruption, and headaches. As one teacher explained, *I feel tired all the time. Even after sleeping, my body does not feel fresh* (T4), while another added, *because of stress, I get headaches and cannot sleep properly at night* (T6). Psychologically, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and heightened irritability were commonly reported, with a teacher stating, *sometimes I feel emotionally drained and irritated even with small things* (T2). These accounts illustrate how stress is experienced as a deeply embodied and pervasive condition, affecting both physical well-being and emotional regulation.

## Fragmented Institutional Support Systems

Analysis indicated that institutional mechanisms for managing teacher stress were limited, informal, and inconsistently implemented. While some participants acknowledged supportive colleagues and empathetic school leaders, most reported the absence of structured support systems such as counseling services, workload adjustment policies, or well-being programs. Teachers emphasized that leadership attitudes and collegial relationships played a crucial mediating role in shaping their stress experiences, often compensating for the lack of formal institutional provisions.

Teachers reported that institutional support for managing stress was largely inadequate or inconsistent, with many noting the absence of formal mechanisms such as counseling or structured stress management programs. As one participant stated, *there is no formal system for counseling or stress management in our school* (T8). Support was often described as being dependent on the quality of leadership, with another teacher explaining, s*upport depends on the head teacher. If the leadership is good, stress is manageable; otherwise, it becomes very difficult* (T11). In the absence of formal structures, collegial relationships emerged as a vital, although informal, source of emotional and practical support, with one teacher noting, *talking with colleagues helps, because they understand what we are going through* (T10).

## Individual Coping within Structural Constraints

Teachers predominantly relied on personal coping strategies to manage stress, including seeking social support, engaging in religious or mindfulness practices, taking short breaks, and practicing self-regulation techniques. Although these strategies provided temporary relief, participants widely agreed that individual efforts were insufficient in the absence of organizational change. Teachers expressed a strong need for systemic interventions, such as fair workload distribution, recognition, and supportive leadership, to enable sustainable stress management.

Teachers primarily relied on personal coping strategies to manage stress, though these were recognized as temporary solutions. Participants reported engaging in activities such as spending time with family and meditation, as noted by one teacher, *I try to manage stress by spending time with my family and doing meditation* (T12). Others described taking short breaks or seeking informal collegial support but acknowledged that *taking short breaks or sharing problems with colleagues helps, but stress comes back again (T6)*. Overall, teachers strongly emphasized that individual efforts were insufficient without organizational-level interventions. As one participant stated, p*ersonal coping is not enough. Until workload and management issues are addressed, stress will remain (T3*), highlighting the clear demand for structural support and systemic changes to meaningfully reduce occupational stress.

Taken together, the findings suggest that teachers' experiences of stress are shaped by the dynamic interaction between individual coping practices and organizational structures. While teachers demonstrate resilience through personal strategies, the persistence of structural stressors and limited institutional support constrains their effectiveness. These findings underscore the necessity of holistic stress management approaches that integrate both individual and organizational dimensions within Nepalese educational institutions.

## Conclusion

This study has explored teachers' experiences of occupational stress and stress management in Nepalese schools. Findings indicate that stress largely stems from heavy workloads, large class sizes, administrative duties, and frequent policy changes without adequate training, creating a persistent imbalance between expectations and support. Chronic stress erodes teachers' professional self-worth, reducing motivation and emotional engagement, while also affecting physical and psychological health through fatigue, sleep disturbances, and anxiety. Institutional support for stress management is limited and informal; collegial relationships and empathetic leadership offer some relief, but structured mechanisms like counseling, workload regulation, and well-being programs are largely absent. Consequently, teachers rely on individual coping strategies, which provide only temporary relief. The study concludes that effective stress management requires a systemic approach combining personal strategies with formal institutional support, including fair workloads, recognition, supportive leadership, and formal well-being initiatives to enhance teacher well-being and educational quality in Nepal.

Effective stress management requires a comprehensive approach that addresses organizational structures, institutional support systems, and individual coping

capacities. Organizational stress management strategies, such as workplace flexibility, job redesign and enrichment, supportive leadership, clear policy communication, and improvements in the physical work environment, play a critical role in reducing systemic stressors and enhancing employee well-being. Complementing these structural measures, institutional support programs—including employee assistance services, engagement activities, and mechanisms for regular feedback and recognition—help mitigate existing stress and foster a sense of belonging and professional value. At the individual level, personal coping strategies such as mindfulness practices, psychological interventions, physical wellness activities, social support, and effective time management contribute to resilience and emotional recovery. However, while individual efforts are beneficial, the findings suggest that sustainable stress reduction is only achievable when personal coping strategies are supported by strong organizational commitment and institutional frameworks. A holistic integration of these strategies is therefore essential to promote well-being, improve performance, and ensure long-term professional sustainability.

Stress management strategies reported by teachers can be broadly classified into organizational interventions and individual measures, addressing institutional stressors and enhancing personal resilience.

Teachers emphasized the importance of systemic support to reduce occupational stress. Supportive leadership and collegial relationships were frequently cited: "Support depends on the head teacher. If the leadership is good, stress is manageable; otherwise, it becomes very difficult" (T11). Structural strategies include: workplace flexibility, fair workload distribution, policy clarity, and improvements in the physical environment, such as adequate lighting and reduced noise. Institutional support programs, such as counseling services (Employee Assistance Programmes), engagement activities, and formal recognition systems, were also identified as potential mechanisms to improve morale and mitigate effort-reward imbalance: "There is no formal system for counseling or stress management in our school" (T8).

These teacher-reported strategies align closely with organizational stress management principles discussed in the literature. As noted by Jaggaiah and Balaji (2021), effective strategies include implementing clear policies and HR practices such as job rotation and enrichment, which align tasks with employee skills and prevent the boredom associated with hypo-stress. Furthermore, Satpathy and Mitra (2015) and Sahni (2016) emphasise that institutions should offer workplace flexibility, including work-from-home or hybrid models, and provide superior leader support to foster a high-trust environment. Institutional support programs like Employee Assistance

Programmes (EAPs), counselling sessions, and regularly scheduled employee engagement activities also play a vital role in boosting self-esteem and addressing professional or personal issues. Finally, addressing environmental factors such as air quality, noise reduction, and adequate lighting is essential for enhancing employee concentration and overall mood.

Teachers predominantly relied on personal strategies to manage stress, including mindfulness practices, short breaks, social support, and family time: "I try to manage stress by spending time with my family and doing meditation" (T12). Additional strategies encompass physical wellness (exercise, diet, sleep), hobbies, cognitive interventions such as mindfulness training, and effective time management. While these strategies provide temporary relief, participants agreed that sustainable stress reduction requires integration with organizational-level support: "Personal coping is not enough. Until workload and management issues are addressed, stress will remain" (T3).

Individual stress management focuses on proactive personal measures intended to build psychological resilience and maintain physical health against the demands of the workplace. Research by Kupriyanov and Zhdanov (2014) and Hülsheger (2013) suggests that psychological interventions, such as mindfulness training, meditation, and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), help individuals re-evaluate negative thoughts and separate aversive emotions from their professional performance. Personal wellness is further bolstered by maintaining a healthy lifestyle that includes fitness activities, a balanced diet, and sufficient sleep to prevent the physical exhaustion common in high-pressure sectors like IT or healthcare. Moreover, Seaward (2017) and Vijayashree and Mund (2011) highlight the importance of emotional recovery through social support, such as spending time with family and friends or talking to colleagues, combined with effective time management and regular work breaks to ensure long-term longevity and adaptive capabilities. (This research was conducted with the support of the University Grants Commission (UGC), Nepal)

## References

Aydin, I. (2022). Effects of work-related stressors and work engagement on work stress: Healthcare managers' perspective. *Central European Business Review, 18*.

Bernik, M. A., Gorenstein, C., & Vieira Filho, A. H. (1998). Stressful reactions and panic attacks induced by flumazenil in chronic benzodiazepine users. *Journal of Psychopharmacology, 12*(2), 146–150.

Costa, D. K., & Moss, M. (2018). The cost of caring: Emotion, burnout, and psychological distress in critical care clinicians. *Annals of the American*

*Thoracic Society, 15*(7), 787–790.

Cox, T., Griffiths, A., & Rial-González, E. (2000). *Research on work-related stress*. Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

Derycke, H., Vlerick, P., Van de Ven, B., Rots, I., & Clays, E. (2013). The impact of effort–reward imbalance and learning motivation on teachers' sickness absence. *Stress and Health, 29*(1), 14-21.

Dewe, P. J., O'Driscoll, M. P., & Cooper, C. (2010). *Coping with work stress: A review and critique*. John Wiley & Sons.

Faizan, R., & Hague, A. (2019). Working efficiency of contrasting genders under eustress, distress, hyper-stress, and hypo-stress. *Prabandhan Indian Journal of Management, 12*(11), 32–46.

Frenk, J., Chen, L., Bhutta, Z. A., Cohen, J., Crisp, N., Evans, T., Fineberg, H., Garcia, P., Ke, Y., Kelley, P., & Kistnasamy, B. (2010). Health professionals for a new century: Transforming education to strengthen health systems in an interdependent world. *The Lancet, 376*(9756), 1923-1958.

Ganster, D. C., & Schaubroeck, J. (1991). Work stress and employee health. *Journal of Management, 17*(2), 235–271.

Gede Riana, I., Luh, N., Wiagustini, P., Dwijayanti, K. I., & Rihayana, G. (2018). Managing work family conflict and work stress through job satisfaction and its impact on employee performance. *Journal Teknik Industri, 20*(2), 127–134.

Girdano, D. A. (2009). *Controlling stress and tension*. Pearson Education India.

Haque, A. U., Aston, J., & Kozlovski, E. (2016). Do causes and consequences of stress affect genders differently at operational level? Comparison of the IT sectors in the UK and Pakistan. *International Journal of Applied Business, 1*(1), 1–7.

Holmes, T. H., & Rahe, R. H. (1967). The social readjustment rating scale. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 11*(2), 213–218.

HSE. (2010). *Self-reported work-related illness and workplace injury for permanent and temporary employees*.

Jacobs, J. A., & Winslow, S. E. (2004). Overworked faculty: Job stresses and family demands. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 596*(1), 104–129.

Joshi, P., & Bajracharya, R. (2021). Teacher stress and well-being in Nepal: A review of literature. *Journal of Education and Research, 11*(1), 45-62.

Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. John Wiley.

Karasek, R. A. (1979). Job demands, job decision latitude, and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly, 24*(2), 285–308.

Kupriyanov, R., & Zhdanov, R. (2014). The eustress concept: Problems and outlooks. *World Journal of Medical Science, 11*(2), 179–185.

Lazarus, R. S. (1966). *Psychological stress and the coping process*. McGraw-Hill.

McCormick, J. (1997). Occupational stress of teachers: Biographical differences in a large school system. *Journal of Educational Administration, 35*(1), 18–38.

Michie, S. (2002). Causes and management of stress at work. *Occupational and Environmental Medicine, 59*(1), 67–72.

Morse, T., Fekieta, R., Rubenstein, H., Warren, N., Alexander, D., & Wawzyniecki, P. (2008). Doing the heavy lifting: Health care workers take back their backs. *NEW SOLUTIONS: A Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health Policy, 18*(2), 207-219.

Mosadeghrad, A. M. (2014). Occupational stress and its consequences: Implications for health policy and management. *Leadership in Health Services, 27*(3), 224–239.

Robinson, A. M. (2018). Let's talk about stress: History of stress research. *Review of General Psychology, 22*(3), 334–342.

Rosse, J. G., Boss, R. W., Johnson, A. E., & Crown, D. F. (1991). Conceptualizing the role of self-esteem in the burnout process. *Group & Organization Studies, 16*(4), 428–451.

Safe Work Australia. (2010). *Comparison of workers compensation arrangements in Australia and New Zealand*.

Sauter, S. L., & Murphy, L. R. (2004). The changing face of work and stress. *Organizational Risk Factors for Job Stress*, 1–6.

Seaward, B. L. (2017). *Managing stress*. Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Selye, H. (1980). Stress and holistic medicine. *Family & Community Health, 3*(2), 85–88.

Siegrist, J. (2017). *Applying occupational health theories to educational stress and health: Evidence from the effort-reward imbalance model*. PsycNET.

Stansfeld, S. A., & Marmot, M. G. (Eds.). (2002). *Stress and the heart: Psychosocial pathways to coronary heart disease*. BMJ Books.

Troman, G. (2000). Teacher stress in the low-trust society. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 21*(3), 331–353.

Vijayashree, L., & Mund, P. (2011). Role stress and coping: A case in ITES company. *Mustang Journal of Business & Ethics, 2*, 107–119.

Watson, D., & Pennebaker, J. W. (1989). Health complaints, stress, and distress: Exploring the central role of negative affectivity. *Psychological Review, 96*(2), 234–254.