



THE EMOTIONAL COST OF TEACHING: A REVIEW OF TEACHERS' MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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Abstract

Teaching is a complex profession where educators act as "architects of the future," yet their psychological state is often overlooked. This review highlights the significant "emotional cost" of teaching, noting that while mental health is linked to teaching efficacy, studies show between 15% and 80% of Indian teachers suffer from poor mental health. Key stressors include managing student behavior, an "always-on" culture, and lack of institutional support.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these issues, introducing "technostress" through rapid shifts to remote learning. Furthermore, while Artificial Intelligence offers administrative benefits, it introduces new anxieties regarding data ethics and social isolation. To combat burnout, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 advocates for supportive work environments and reduced administrative burdens. Ultimately, the school environment shapes teacher belonging and burnout, directly impacting career longevity and student well-being.

Keywords: Teacher Mental Health and well-being, NEP 2020,

Introduction

Teachers 'the Architects of the Future' are far more than a spreader of information. They are ideally considered as friend, philosopher and guide. Their role is most complex and impactful in shaping individual minds. In our education system, the students, their academic achievements, well-being and future is considered as the core. But, the psychological state of teachers who silently standing behind this whole enterprise is often overlooked. There are numerous psychological perils in teaching profession. The "always-on" culture puts extra burden on teachers affecting their mental health and well-being.

Review -

A study done by A.Kundu (2024) and T.Bej tries to understand complex psychological mechanisms of school teachers' mental health and teaching efficacy. Their finding says that mental health was positively associated with teaching efficacy, specifically and with emotional intelligence. They also pointed out concern by highlighting fact that 15 percent of Indian school teachers are suffering from mental issues. Similarly study done by Kaur et al. (2023) in the Indian state of Rajasthan finds that 80 percent of teachers are



victims of poor mental health, which is a global concern now. To identify the mental health of teachers, Kaur, S., & Kaur, H(2018) to study on Burnout among Secondary School Teachers, both in government and private school teachers, in Relation to their Emotional Intelligence. They found that there exists a significant difference in emotional intelligence among secondary school teachers, but there exists no significant difference in burnout among secondary school teachers. There exists a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout among secondary school teachers working in secondary schools.

To support the discourse, the survey report on “Teachers’ Mental Well-Being Survey 2024” highlights that managing student behaviour is a primary driver of poor teacher mental health, demanding targeted training. While inclusive classroom management is less challenging (aligning with NEP 2020), female teachers face greater difficulty in providing emotional support, suggesting a need to address affective concerns in CPD to mitigate burnout. Challenges in both behaviour management and emotional support increase in higher classes (Middle/Secondary). This survey also highlighted that technology-related hurdles are slightly more prevalent at the Foundational stage.

To cross-examine in the other domain of teaching, like sports teachers or physical education teachers, who hold the idea that teachers in this field experience a good mental health status

Manoj, J. K. L. T. (2017)in his study on ‘Burnout: the magnitude and gender differences among physical education teachers in upper primary’ tries to examine the magnitude of burnout prevalent among physical education He found that the majority of physical education teachers in Kerala state have low levels of burnout in selected personal, work-related and student’s student-related dimensions. The result also shows that burnout dimension scores were higher for males than for females. This study was also examin by Saiiari, A., Moslehi, M., &Valizadeh, R.(2011) to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and burnout syndrome in sport teachers of secondary schools. This study found a strong, significant relationship $P < 0.01$, between emotional intelligence and burnout Syndrome($r = -0.627$).

A survey done by Steiner, E. D., et al.l on State of the American Teacher and State of the American Principal, indicates that teachers and principals experience significantly poorer well-being compared to other working adults. This survey also highlights that adverse working conditions and diminished well-being have been linked to increased intentions among educators to leave their positions.

All these studies identify that burnout, emotional exhaustion due to overload of work, role conflict, lack of support, control over the situation or recognition from the institution, pressure from seniors, lack of respect from juniors, which demands special concerns, skill



development, among teachers despite of any subject-specific, age, gender or years of experience.

Article on “ Contemporary trends in educational policy: UNESCO higher education roadmap written by Ebzeeva Y.N. & Smirnova Y.B. highlights that this article presents a compelling case for the critical importance of education—particularly higher education—in realising the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), asserting that education impacts all aspects of human life: economic, political, environmental, and social also highlighted the role of teachers in societal strength.

The study to understand the association between teacher and student mental health and wellbeing was done by Harding,S.,et.all in the year 2019. Further study sought to identify possible explanations by examining whether the strength of any association is weakened once the quality of teacher-student relationships, teacher presenteeism and absence were considered. Teachers themselves are consistently reported to be at increased risk of common mental health disorders compared to those in other occupations (Stansfeld et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2005; Kidger et al., 2016a). Poor teacher wellbeing may be problematic not only for teachers’ longer-term mental health (Melchior et al., 2007) but also for that of their students as well.

Kovess-MasfÉty et all, study in the year 2000, surveyed 3,586 French public school teachers aged 20–60 to determine the prevalence and occupational risk factors for psychiatric disorders and psychological distress. Higher risk was found in certain teaching levels depending on the teacher's gender. The primary occupational risk factors identified were lack of colleague support, with others including fear of abuse and reasons for choosing the profession.

Focusing on the well-being of 2,569 Norwegian elementary and middle school teachers, study done by Skaalvik, E. M.,et all (2011) identified that the school context—specifically factors like value consonance, social relations, time pressure, and discipline problems—significantly influences job satisfaction and the motivation to leave the profession. Using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), the researchers determined that these external factors primarily exert their influence indirectly, with teachers' feeling of belonging and levels of emotional exhaustion acting as key internal mediators. In essence, the quality of the school environment shapes a teacher's sense of connection and burnout, which then determines their job satisfaction and career longevity.

Ruiz-Alfonso et al. (2021) identify that teaching for relevance, acknowledging negative feelings, encouraging participation, using non-controlling language, providing optimal challenge, focusing on the process, structuring the class, offering positive feedback, and showing care are some of the teaching qualities that support students in learning.



Among all these studies, a huge change took place in human mankind, known as the COVID-19 pandemic. Review is also much needed to look shift from before COVID-19, during COVID-19 and after COVID-19

Teachers' mental health significantly deteriorated following the COVID-19 pandemic, with numerous studies indicating a sharp increase in self-reported stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms above pre-pandemic levels, leading to high rates of burnout and a greater intention to leave the profession (Kotowski et al., 2022; Huseth-Zosel et al., 2024). The rapid and prolonged shift to remote, hybrid, and back to in-person instruction, often without adequate training or resources, imposed unprecedented workload and role ambiguity, intensifying the chronic occupational stressors already inherent in teaching, which continues to challenge educators' well-being in the post-pandemic context (The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Mental Health of Teachers and Its Possible Risk Factors: A Systematic Review, 2023). Furthermore, the long-term mental health impact appears to be disproportionate, with female teachers more likely to report higher levels of stress and depression compared to their male counterparts (Huseth-Zosel et al., 2024)

This large-scale study (N=134,693) done by Kush, J. M. et al. (2022) compared the mental health outcomes of pre-K-12 teachers to professionals in other occupations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings indicate that teachers reported a greater prevalence of anxiety symptoms compared to non-teachers. Furthermore, among teachers, those working remotely reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress than did those teaching in-person, highlighting differential impacts based on instructional setting.

Similarly in Indian setting Walter & Dutt (2024) examined the differential impact of Covid-19 on the mental and physical health of teachers in Delhi schools. A sample of 100 COVID-negative and COVID -positive teachers were taken. The findings of the study reveal significant disparities in various mental health parameters between Covid-negative and Covid-positive. There were a noticeable difference in depression, anxiety, stress levels, somatic symptoms, anxiety-induced insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression.

Kaur, Cheema, Cheema, Kaur, & Singla, (2022) conducted a study with an objective to assess the core symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress in students and teachers during COVID pandemic second wave. They found that COVID was significantly linked with negative emotions arising out of depression, anxiety and stress. Sleep pattern was reported to be disturbed in 246 (54.6%) students and 57.6% teachers.

A longitudinal qualitative study was conducted by Dayal, N. (2023) exploring the mental well-being patterns of teachers in Jharkhand post-COVID-19, focusing on the influence of job demands and resources (like technical assistance, workload, and social support). In a similar context Chaudhary, S. And Chhaer, R. In the year 2023 research done on state of



Rajasthan to identify psychological well-being of school teachers in the post pandemic era where they try to identify factors that can enhance teachers' psychological well-being. The result supported by investing in managing (energy management skills like Thriving and stress reduction techniques) school teachers' energy level

Verma, V., & Singh, P. (2023) Examines how Indian teachers adapted to online teaching, reporting that a vast majority (92%) experienced mental issues like stress, anxiety, and loneliness, and 82% reported physical issues like eye-strain and back pain due to increased screen time.

By introducing new term in new area, Technostress, 'stress caused by adapting to new technology' is a major contributor to teacher burnout. It stems from factors like techno-overload (pressure to work faster), techno-invasion (blurred work-life boundaries), and techno-complexity (difficulty using digital tools). Teachers often face increased workloads, extended hours, and heavy reliance on personal devices, which erodes their personal time and relationships. Many feel overwhelmed and undertrained in managing tech demands, leading to anxiety and mental fatigue. Online teaching has also been linked to physical issues like eyestrain and back pain, and emotional challenges such as stress, loneliness, and depression. In countries like India, unequal access to internet and devices further intensifies these struggles, making effective teaching across diverse settings even more difficult.

A mixed-methods study conducted by Varanasi, R. A., Vashistha, A., & Whalen, T. (2021) analysed the impact of personal smartphone use on work and the role of technostress as a major explanation for burnout among teachers in low-income Indian schools. In the same case of technostress and burnout a study done by Li, L., & Wang, Y. (2020) Examines technostress and its relationship with job burnout among teachers, suggesting that burnout mediates the negative impact of technostress.

Online teaching and mental stress was connected in a research done by Suthar, S. A. (2025). Explores the psychological implications of the digital classroom, examining the strain on educators and advocating for holistic support systems. Trust, T., & Whalen, T. (2020) also Highlights that teachers felt overwhelmed and unprepared for the abrupt transition to online teaching, leading to high levels of stress and anxiety.

On the Impact of Digitalisation on Health , An Indian case study discussed by VSingh, A., & Gupta, A. (2023) showing a high percentage of respondents reporting physical and mental issues (stress, anxiety, loneliness) due to long working hours and the transition to online teaching during the pandemic. A literature review by Fernández-Batanero et al, confirming that teachers exhibit high levels of stress and anxiety from the use of educational technology, emphasizing the need for professional development strategies to prevent these symptoms.



As the time is changing drastically after the boom of technology the role of Artificial Intelligence in education have shown its major focus on enhancing learning and streamlining administrative tasks. All of them in connection to teachers' mental health offering substantial benefits and presenting new challenges as well. Likewise a study done by Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019; Ahmad et al., 2021 shows in his research that AI-powered adaptive learning platforms and intelligent tutoring systems assess students' performance and progress in real-time. They then customize content, feedback, and learning pathways to meet individual needs and learning styles. Makhambetova et al., 2021 in his study says that This individualized focus is shown to reduce student frustration and improve academic outcomes

Despite the benefits, AI integration introduces new forms of stress and anxiety for educators' a study done by Delello et al.(2025) identifies that AI is being used by educators to enhance teaching efficiency and streamline administrative task AI-mediated learning environments may reduce teacher-student interaction. Delello et al. noted that educators felt disconnected from students when AI tools dominated classroom interactions. Educators saw AI's potential to reduce stress through automation, but others raised concerns about increased anxiety and social isolation from reduced interpersonal interactions. Researchers highlight a gap where there is a need for effects of AI on educational outcomes and mental health, and underscore the importance of incorporating student perspectives for a thorough understanding of AI's role in education. National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2024) highlighted that the rapid adoption of AI tools without adequate training contributes to mental fatigue and stress among educators. Teachers feel compelled to constantly update their tech skills to stay relevant. This ongoing pressure can lead to chronic stress and imposter syndrome. A recent article on 'Artificial Intelligence and its impact on emotional wellness in school (2025) shows concern for teachers that they are often unsure how to manage student data ethically when using AI platforms, which creates moral stress and fear of legal repercussions. The ProFuturo Observatory emphasised that AI's data-driven nature raises ethical concerns, adding emotional pressure on teachers to safeguard student privacy.

One of the leading Viksit Bharat features of India, Education is central to this mission, serving as the foundation for economic growth, social equity, and global leadership. With 48.43% of India's population falling within the 3–29 age group, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 seeks to harness this demographic dividend by promoting holistic and inclusive education. This policy (NEP 2020) highlighted the significance of teachers' mental health and well-being. The policy aims to create a democratic and supportive work environment for teachers. NEP 2020 says that '*..teachers will not be engaged any longer in work that is not directly related to teaching..*' (NEP, 2020 Para 5.12), '*Teachers will be given continuous opportunities for self-improvement..*' ((NEP, 2020 Para 5.15).



The NEP, 2020 put emphasis on the necessity of continuous professional development along with reduced administrative burdens, and to provide ample support to enrich teachers' mental health. NEP 2020 also seeks to empower educators for achieving their full potential by promoting a culture of respect and gratitude for teachers. '*The teacher must be at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system. The new education policy must help re-establish teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society, because they truly shape our next generation of citizens.*' (NEP2020, Introduction).

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