

# Teachers Mental Health: Save the Foundation

Author: **Dr Ruby Tyagi**, Assistant Professor

## Abstract:

Healthy teachers are an investment for a healthy society as teachers are the ones laying foundation of society. Teachers' mental health is crucial for an effective Education system. The increasing and elevated demands of teaching profession today is leading to stress, burnout, depression, anxiety and poor mental health of teachers across the nation. It's high time we all from teaching fraternity shall consider this ill mental health a red flag for more complexities leading to numerous health issues and even a situation of quitting the profession. Teachers have a significant impact on children' intellectual and emotional growth, yet they frequently pay little attention to their own mental health. A crucial but frequently disregarded component of the educational system is the mental health of teachers. Teaching is an emotionally taxing job that calls for constant communication, tolerance, and accountability for students' intellectual and personal development.

## Introduction:

The foundation of any educational system is its teachers, who have a significant impact on students' academic performance, social growth, and emotional health. Teachers' mental health has received more attention in recent years as the field has grown more complicated and demanding. In addition to teaching curriculum content, teachers must oversee varied classrooms, attend to students' emotional needs, fulfil administrative requirements, and adjust to ongoing educational reforms.

Teachers are more likely to experience stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression if they are exposed to severe workloads, time restrictions, role conflict, and a lack of institutional support. Teachers' poor mental health affects more than just themselves; it has a big impact on retention, work happiness, instructional efficacy, and the general standard of education. Additionally, there is a strong correlation between students' learning outcomes and the classroom environment and teachers' mental health.

Teachers' mental health is still a neglected topic despite its significance, especially when it comes to school-level policy and support systems. In order to support teacher well-being, this study aims to investigate the mental health issues that teachers encounter, pinpoint important contributing elements, and emphasize the necessity of systemic interventions. Building inclusive, successful, and long-lasting educational institutions requires an understanding of and attention to teachers' mental health.

Teachers are an essential human resource in the educational system, and their mental health has a big impact on student outcomes, professional sustainability, and the quality of instruction. Increasing demands for accountability, curriculum changes, administrative duties, and elevated expectations from various stakeholders are characteristics of modern educational environments. Teachers are more susceptible to stress-related disorders such burnout, anxiety, and depression as a result of these elements' increased psychological demands.

Research shows that teachers with poor mental health have poorer job satisfaction, less effective education, and a higher risk of attrition and absenteeism. Additionally, studies indicate a high correlation between the psychological well-being of teachers and academic success, student involvement, and classroom atmosphere. Even with these proven connections, professional development frameworks and institutional policies still do not sufficiently incorporate mental health assistance for teachers, particularly in school-level practices.

Research on teachers' mental health has been dispersed in many educational settings, with little attention paid to contextual factors including workload, organisational support, and coping mechanisms. This disparity highlights the necessity of doing a thorough examination into the types, causes, and effects of mental health issues among educators.

By identifying major stressors, evaluating their effects on professional performance, and investigating methods for fostering psychological well-being inside educational institutions, the current work seeks to investigate teachers' mental health from a research standpoint. In order to boost teacher well-being and improve the overall efficacy of the educational system, evidence-based policies and practices must be informed by such an investigation.

### ➤ **Key Research Studies on Teachers' Mental Health**

#### 1. **Systematic Review of Mental Health Challenges Among Secondary Teachers:**

Stressors that contribute to burnout, anxiety, and depression include an overwhelming workload, emotional labour, job insecurity, and a lack of institutional support, according to a systematic review that focusses on secondary school teachers. Stigma and the necessity of organised support services and legislative changes are also covered.

#### 2. **Intervention Programs for Teacher Mental Health (Meta-Analysis)**

Targeted interventions can dramatically lower stress, anxiety, depression, and professional burnout while also improving overall well-being, according to a systematic review and meta-analysis of psychological and well-being programs for school teachers.

#### 3. **Mental Health of Teachers in Government Schools (UP, India)**

Using a standardised mental health checklist, this empirical study evaluated the mental health of teachers in Uttar Pradesh's government intercolleges. The results show that instructors' levels of stress and mental health fluctuate, which is helpful for quantitative comparisons.

#### 4. **Mental Health of College Teachers in Assam (India)**

An interesting finding about higher education contexts is that a large percentage of teachers report ordinary to poor mental health, according to a study done with 120 college instructors in Assam.

#### 5. **Causes of Anxiety and Stress Among Higher Secondary Teachers (Moradabad)**

With a focus on qualitative insights from surveys and interviews, this analytical study highlights the main causes of stress and anxiety among higher secondary school teachers, including workload, administrative pressure, and student conduct.

#### 6. **Digital Workload Fatigue and Teachers' Professional Commitment**

Technology-related demands are linked to emotional and mental strain, and research on hybrid education demonstrates how digital workload weariness affects teachers' mental health and professional dedication.

#### 7. **Teachers' Self-Efficacy and Mental Health in Digital Education**

Content analysis demonstrates the relationship between confidence, training, and mental health outcomes by linking teachers' self-efficacy in digital education to psychological stress and institutional support.

#### 8. **Socio- technical Support and Stress Among Low-Income School Teachers**

Qualitative data on emotional regulation and support systems is provided by research examining the effects of institutional and informal support infrastructures on teachers' stress and well-being in low-income schools during pandemic-induced hybrid teaching.

#### 9. **Collective Social Support Intervention (Saharaline)**

An intervention for collective social support among teachers in low-income settings is described in an exploratory article that demonstrates how peer- and expert-based digital support can help manage emotional difficulties and professional tensions.

### ➤ **Literature Review: Mental Health of School Teachers in the Indian Context**

#### **1. Mental Health Status of Primary School Teachers in India**

Primary school teachers are crucial in influencing children's social, emotional, and cognitive growth in the Indian educational system. However, studies show that elementary teachers are more susceptible to mental health issues because of the nature of their employment, which necessitates constant emotional connection, multitasking, and careful observation of young students. Studies conducted in India have shown that elementary teachers, particularly in government and assisted schools, experience moderate to high levels of stress, emotional weariness, and burnout. These results imply that primary teachers' mental health issues are common and enduring.

## **2. Occupational Stressors Specific to Primary Teachers**

Numerous context-specific stressors have been found to have an impact on teachers' mental health in Indian primary school settings. Workload and stress levels are greatly increased by large class numbers, multigrade teaching, insufficient teaching-learning resources, and excessive non-teaching responsibilities such as administrative work, election duty, and census-related jobs. Additionally, elementary teachers are frequently asked to fulfil a variety of responsibilities, which adds to role overload and emotional strain. These responsibilities include academic instruction, classroom management, student counselling, and parental contact.

Primary teachers' stress levels are further increased in rural and semi-urban schools due to inadequate infrastructure, a lack of professional assistance, and the difficult socioeconomic backgrounds of their children. Studies also show that psychological pressure is increased by regular curriculum changes and the need to satisfy learning objectives under national initiatives.

## **3. Impact of Mental Health on Teaching Effectiveness and Students**

Research indicates that poor mental health among elementary school instructors has a detrimental impact on classroom procedures and teaching quality. High levels of stress and burnout cause teachers to be less patient, less creative in their teaching, and less emotionally receptive to young students. Teachers' mental health is strongly associated with classroom atmosphere, student engagement, and fundamental learning outcomes like reading and numeracy because primary school pupils are developmentally sensitive (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Indian studies highlight how children's motivation, behaviour, and general primary school learning experience can be negatively impacted by teachers' emotional instability.

## **4. Post-Pandemic Challenges in Primary Education**

According to recent studies conducted in India, elementary teachers' mental health issues were greatly made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to low digital literacy, poor access to technology, and a lack of training, the abrupt switch to online and hybrid learning presented challenges. After school reopened, primary teachers reported feeling more anxious about sustaining student engagement, adjusting teaching strategies for younger students in virtual environments, and filling in learning gaps. Teachers' psychological health has been negatively impacted for a long time by these post-pandemic difficulties.

## **5. Coping Strategies and Institutional Support**

Instead of using formal institutional treatments, research on coping mechanisms among Indian primary teachers reveals a dependence on informal strategies like peer support, family support, and personal coping approaches. Although mindfulness exercises, stress-reduction courses, and encouraging school administrators have been shown to have beneficial effects in certain studies, these programs are still few and unevenly applied. Researchers contend that teacher-friendly policies, professional counselling services, and school-level mental health support systems are mainly lacking in Indian primary education settings.

## **6. Research Gaps in the Indian Primary Context**

Despite increased awareness, there are still a lot of unanswered questions in the literature on the mental health of Indian primary school teachers. Numerous studies concentrate on teacher stress in general without taking a comprehensive look at mental health. Furthermore, there is a dearth of empirical research that integrates organisational elements like coping mechanisms, leadership support, and workload distribution with psychological well-being. Additionally, there are few descriptive and exploratory studies that document teachers' perspectives and real-world experiences, especially at the elementary school level. These gaps highlight the necessity of doing methodical, situation-specific research to guide practice and policy.

### ➤ **Common Mental Health Challenges**

- **Stress and Burnout:** Chronic stress and emotional weariness can result from heavy tasks, administrative pressure, big class numbers, and ongoing evaluation.
- **Anxiety and Depression:** Anxiety and depressive symptoms are influenced by performance expectations, job instability (particularly for contractual instructors), and juggling personal and professional obligations.
- **Emotional Fatigue:** Compassion fatigue can arise from constant emotional interaction with students, parents, and coworkers.
- **Post-pandemic Impact:** Mental strain has increased due to adjusting to online/hybrid instruction, learning gaps, and students' emotional requirements.

### ➤ **Signs of Poor Mental Well-Being in Teachers**

- Chronic stress and fatigue
- Anxiety, irritability, or low mood
- Reduced motivation and enthusiasm
- Difficulty concentrating
- Burnout and emotional exhaustion

### ➤ **Strategies to Promote Teachers' Mental Well-Being**

#### **At Individual Level**

- Practising self-care (exercise, mindfulness, hobbies)
- Time management and realistic goal-setting
- Seeking professional help or counselling when needed

#### **At Institutional Level**

- Supportive school leadership
- Reasonable workload distribution
- Peer support and mentoring systems
- Professional development on stress management

#### **At Policy Level**

- Teacher-friendly education policies
- Access to mental health services
- Recognition of teachers' efforts and achievements

### ➤ **Causes and Contributing Factors**

- Excessive workload and time pressure
- Lack of institutional support and recognition
- Classroom management challenges
- Limited autonomy in teaching methods
- Inadequate resources and infrastructure
- Societal undervaluation of the teaching profession

➤ **Impact on Teaching and Learning**

- Reduced teaching effectiveness and motivation
- Increased absenteeism and attrition
- Strained teacher–student relationships
- Negative impact on students’ academic outcomes and well-being

➤ **Strategies to Support Teachers’ Mental Health**

- **Institutional Support:** school mental health policies, peer support groups, and counselling services.
- **Professional Development:** Instruction in work-life balance, emotional fortitude, and stress management.
- **Workload management:** Clear job expectations, reasonable scheduling, and fewer non-teaching responsibilities.
- **Positive Climate:** A positive school climate is characterized by teamwork, supportive leadership, and gratitude for the work of teachers.
- **Self- Care Practices:** Self-care techniques include hobbies, regular exercise, mindfulness, and establishing appropriate boundaries.

## Conclusion

A sound educational system must safeguard and support teachers' mental health. Teachers who are in good mental health are more engaged, productive, and able to create a supportive learning environment. In the end, investing in teachers' well-being is an investment in society and pupils. Teachers’ mental well-being is fundamental to a healthy education system. Supporting teachers psychologically not only improves their quality of life but also ensures effective teaching and holistic student development.

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