

# A Cross-Cultural Study on Occupational Stress and Depression among School Teachers of Sikkim

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**Abstract:** *The study aims to investigate the occupational stress and depression among teachers in Sikkim as teaching job has been one of the most accepted stressful occupation all over the globe. Available literatures also support that teachers have showed excessive stress which have significantly related to depression. 300 teachers (150 male and 150 female) and 100 samples each from the three cultures - Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha served as samples. The Occupational Stress Index and Beck Depression Inventory-II were employed. Results portrayed gender and cultural differences on Occupational stress and depression which invites the need of psychological diagnosis and intervention for making appropriate suggestion to gender and culture.*

**Keywords:** Depression, Occupational stress, Community and Gender.

## 1. Introduction

Proper education and its management has become a one of the highest priority in today's world. We can say that it is the mirror that reflect the values of society. Its shows light to the humanity to pursue the correct decision. The role and the functions of education has developed over the ages in the changing needs of the society/general public. There had been time when education was all about religion, conflict, and art to the present era of super- specialization. It has gone over numerous techniques to take its present structure. The purpose of education is just not only to literate students but to add his/her rationale thinking, self- sufficiency and knowledge ability. It goes for all round improvement of the person. Education is one of the significant elements that empowering human advancement. It helps people in accomplishing financial flourishing. It also contributes to gaining more fulfilment and satisfaction from their life. It also teaches everyone to be good human as well advance morally and materialistically. It has become a fundamental part of development and improvement of societies around the worldwide. While education has consistently been a significant social marker and instrumental in monetary and social improvement of nations everywhere throughout the world.

### Teacher stress

We can see that today life is full of challenges with several ups and down to our daily life. Traditionally teaching profession has been known as a low stress occupation, but during the past two decades the situation has gone worse and has been changed. Teaching is consider one of the most challenging and stressful profession globally. It is questionable how the job of teachers shifted from low stress to the high stress? Different reasons have been talked about to address the question why educators are becoming more stressful. A few answers have additionally been provide that teachers has to face different demands from school management, guardians, students handling methods and social expectations. In the meantime, they are also required to fulfil many new skills to cope of effectively in a fast changing society. They have to prepare themselves in terms

of creativity, innovations and the critical thinking too. Teachers are blindly criticized if they fail to provide knowledge and services to society according to expectations. The issue of stress among teachers is becoming as one of the serious problem where ample of attention is needed. Undergoing high level of stress could lead to various negative consequences such as poor performance, lack of commitment, lack of motivation and poor quality of classroom teaching [37].

Increase in competition throughout the world is one of the factor in work pressure in all the professions. Stress on teachers is the harmful physical and emotional responses that happen when the condition of the job do not match the capabilities, resources or need of worker. It is a prolonged disease caused by circumstances in workplace that harmfully affects an individual's performance and over-all well-being of his/her body and mind. These effects include irritability, anger, fatigue, anxiety, depression, headaches, loss of concentration, sleep disturbances, persistent negative thoughts, low appetite, gastrointestinal problems, musculoskeletal problems, blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, cancer, suicide, etc. to highlight a few from the exhaustive list [32].

Apart from tutor work educators are expected to perform various duties of an administrator, resource person, innovator, counsellor, facilitator and manager of knowledge which leads to high level of stress. A growing body of evidence links job-related stress to mental ill health. Its symptoms contribute to absenteeism, lost productivity, and physical ill health, including particularly coronary disease [36]. Though Kasl (1984) in the research found that teachers and professors had significantly lower rates of arteriosclerotic heart disease than physicians, lawyers, pharmacists, and insurance agents, recent studies suggest that teachers face high and perhaps growing levels of occupational stress.

A number of survey has done for to find the stressful nature of teaching. According to the survey done by health and safety executive report (2002), which say that the

occupational stress among various occupational groups, exposes that teaching profession, was considered one of the top stress prone occupation. In UK 41.5% of teacher has found to be 'highly stressed'. Another survey which was conducted in North Carolina shows that nearly 28% of teachers has resigned their job because it was badly affected to their health. Another survey by teacher assurance which showed that 76% of teachers believe that their work overload is making them illness, and 56% used to believed that if there will be less stress they might be perform well in their job. Also 40% believed that they argument more with their partners as well as friends is one of the reason they faces lots of stress and pressure and 83% says that they feel more fatigued because of continually working. As per the report by Pratt (1976) reveals that 60% of teacher has experiences some or severe nervous stress at the work. As per the study done by T. Cox, Mackay, Watts and Brockley (1978) revealed that 78% of teachers used to consider their work as the main source of the stress in their lives. Kyriakon (1980) also reported that when the teacher have a higher level of stress as compare to the other profession. The reasons for higher level of stress in workplace is negative workload, loneliness, extensive hours work, lack of autonomy, difficult in relationships among co-worker and management, management bullying, lack of opportunity or motivation [14]. A 2011 survey of 7,853 teachers found that the Malaysian teachers worked between 40-80 hours per week, with an average of 57 hours. Another study done among 580 secondary school teachers in Kota Bharu found that 34% of stress occur to teachers.

Factors like age and the duration of time they work play a vital role in having a stress in general [35]. A study done in India during 2002, to know the gender differences in occupational stress of professional and non- professionals revealed that women professionals experience significantly higher occupational stress than men [43]. A study done in India during 2002, to see the difference in occupational stress experienced by professionals of different gender shown that women professionals experienced higher occupational stress than men.

#### Gender differences in occupational stress

Nagra & Arora examined the level of occupational stress and its relationship to health among teachers in relation to their gender and marital status. Descriptive analysis showed that female teachers scored higher in occupational stress [33]. Also, married teachers were found to have greater stress compared to unmarried teachers. Another study by Chaturvedi (2011) had found a significant difference in occupational stress according to gender. This study was conducted among 180 academic staffs in India and findings indicated that women, either working in the public or private sector, were found to have higher stress than men. A study done in India during 2002, to know the gender differences in occupational stress of professional and non- professionals revealed that women professionals experience significantly higher occupational stress than men [48]. Sing & Katoch conducted study on occupational stress of secondary school teachers of Himachal Pradesh. A 200 secondary school teacher was taken from government schools. The occupational stress index scale was used. They find that there is significant difference on occupational stress among male

and female secondary school teachers male have more occupational stress then female [45].

#### Gender difference in depression

A study done at Varanasi, India aiming middle aged female teachers during 2006 which showed that 54% of teachers experienced moderate to high levels of stress, 32% reported moderate anxiety, 44% shown somatic symptoms and low level of depression was present in 92% of subjects [25]. Wahl et.al in their studies found that girls had higher effect of depression than boys. Most of the review of literature revealed that girls showed more level of depression as compared to boys. But some study showed boys scoring higher than girls on depression. Some studies showed that boy and girl adolescents did not differ on depression [49]. Another study conducted by Sharma found that there is significant gender difference in depression which shows that female have more depression then male [40]. Shen et.al conducted study to investigate the association between occupational stress and depressive symptoms in a group of university teachers. A cross-sectional study was done among 1500 university teachers. The result revealed that positive correlation between occupation stress and depression [42]. Nobile and McCormick investigated biographical differences in relation to several aspects of occupational stress among 356 staff members of Catholic primary schools in New South Wales, Australia. They reported males to have greater occupational stress generally than their female and female have higher level of depression then male [33].

#### Objectives of the Study

The following objectives have been framed to conduct the study:

- 1) To examine any significant differences between male and female teachers on occupational stress and depression among the school teachers.
- 2) To identify any significant difference in occupational stress and depression among the selected three communities (Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha).

#### Hypothesis of the Study

The following hypotheses have been set up for the study.

- 1) There will be significant differences between male and female teachers on occupational stress and depression among the school teachers.
- 2) There will be a significant difference on occupational stress and depression among communities (Nepali, Bhutia and Lepcha).

## 2. Methodology

**Sample:** The 300 participants (150 male and 150 female) and three communities (Nepali, Bhutia, and Lepchas with 100 samples from each community) between 24-65 years of age were selected based on multi-stage sampling procedure. All the selected participant were from government schools of Sikkim.

**Design of the study:** In view of the target problems of the study, the participant were selected based on 'Sex' (male and female) and 'Community' (Nepali, Bhutia, and Lepchas). Thus, the study portrays 2 x 3 (2 sex x 3 community) factorial design to be imposed on the measures of academic

stress, depression and psychological wellbeing. As was planned, the background demographic information was incorporated to match or equate the participants to maintain homogeneity. The sample characteristics table for 2 x 3 factorial design of the study.

### 3. Research Tools

**Occupational Stress Index (OSI):** Occupational Stress Index is a structured questionnaire having a high level of reliability and validity was developed and standardized by Dr. A.K. Srivastava and Dr. A. P. Singh in 1984. The index assesses the perceived stress of the employees arising from twelve dimensions of their job life. The scale consists of 46 items and has 12 subscales which are *role overload, role ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressures, responsibility for persons, under participation, powerlessness, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, low status, strenuous working conditions and unprofitability*. The reliability index ascertained by split half (odd-even) method and Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for the scale as a whole was found to be .935 and .90 respectively. The levels of occupational stress were categorized on the basis of percentile values as Low (P-25 and below with the scores between 46 -127), Moderate (P-26 to P-75 with the scores between 128 -150) and High (P-76 and above) with the score of 151 to 230.

**The Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Steer & Brown, 1996):** The Beck Depression Inventory is a widely utilized 21-item self-report scale in both clinical and research Studies. The Beck Depression Inventory-II is a depression

rating scale that can be used in individuals that are ages 13 years and older, and rates symptoms of depression in terms of severity on a scale from 0 to 3 based on the 21 specific items. The test-retest reliability for BDI-II was 0.93. Each item in a list of four statements arranged in increasing severity about particular symptoms of depression. People who fall under: 0-13: minimal depression, 14-19: mild depression, 20- 28: moderate depression, 29-63: severe depression [5].

**Procedure of the data collection:** Initially the permission letter was taken from the Human Resource Development Department (HRDD) for collecting data. So, while visiting different school the permission letter was shown to the head of the concerned schools and permission was taken for collecting the data. After that the teachers were chosen randomly in a group of 20 and they were assembled in a classroom for filling up the questionnaire. Before filling up the questionnaire the participants were briefed regarding the research study and were told that the study was conducted for academic research purpose and later instructions were given for filling up the questionnaires. They were also assured that their responses would be kept confidential and were told that the result would be analyzed in a group not individually. So, after providing the information regarding the study the questionnaires were distributed to all the participants. After finishing filling up the questionnaires while returning each and every participant questionnaire were checked so that they have filled up all the items in the provided questionnaire. Lastly, each and every participant was thanked for their co-operation.

### 4. Results and Discussion

**Table 1:** Showing the Reliability (Alpha), Homogeneity (Levene test), and Normal probability (Kurtosis and Skewness) for the test scale/subscales.

Statistics		Dependent Variables								
		Depression	Role Overload	Role ambiguity	Role conflict	Group and Political Pressure	Under participation	Powerlessness	Poor peer relation	Impoverishment
Reliability	Alpha	.70	.69	.68	.68	.75	.70	.64	.64	.84
Homogeneity	Levene	.34	.14	.25	.06	.25	.06	.10	.08	.45
NPC	Kurtosis	-0.64	-0.19	-0.73	-0.83	-0.69	-0.67	-0.68	-0.59	-0.71
	Skewness	0.10	0.01	-0.02	0.06	-0.05	0.02	-0.02	-0.16	0.02

Table – 1 shows the Cronbach's Alpha of the scales and sub-scales on selected variables such as depression ( $\alpha = .70$ ), role overload ( $\alpha = .69$ ), role ambiguity ( $\alpha = .68$ ), role conflict ( $\alpha = .68$ ), group and political pressure ( $\alpha = .75$ ), under participation ( $\alpha = .70$ ), powerlessness ( $\alpha = .64$ ), poor-peer relations ( $\alpha = .64$ ) and impoverishment ( $\alpha = .84$ ). Results

confirms the BDI-II, GHQ-12 and OSI sub scales are reliable for collection of data from the selected population under study. The skewness value of depression, psychological wellbeing, and in sub scales of occupational stress are between -1 and +1 point value.

**Table 2:** Showing the Descriptive statistics- Mean and SD for the gender comparison groups on dependent variables.

Independent Variables (Gender)	Statistics	Dependent Variables								
		Depression	Role Over load	Role ambiguity	Role conflict	Group and political Pressure	Under participation	Powerlessness	Poor peer relation	Impoverishment
Total male	Mean	11.82	18.47	14.11	14.81	12.43	10.89	8.09	8.11	11.55
	SD	7.77	3.56	2.16	2.25	2.53	2.29	1.24	1.17	1.51
Total female	Mean	12.62	18.66	14.09	14.58	12.91	10.28	8.07	8.07	11.27
	SD	9.15	3.62	2.17	2.24	2.72	2.19	1.07	1.14	1.33

Table- 2 reflects the descriptive analysis of the BDI-II, and subscales of OSI of male and female school teachers. Female scored slightly higher on depression (M=12.62; 11.82), role

overload (M=18.66; 18.47), and group and political pressure (M=12.91; 12.43) than male. Whereas male scores slightly higher role ambiguity (M=14.11; 14.09), role conflict

(M=14.81; 14.58), under participation (M=10.89; 10.28), powerlessness (M=8.09; 10.07), poor-peer relation (M=8.11; 8.07) and impoverishment (M=11.55; 11.27) than female.

As it was hypothesized that there will be significant difference between male and female teachers on Occupational Stress and Depression among schools teachers of Sikkim is accepted. Analysis of data clearly indicates that, there is a significant gender difference on depression, and the sub scales of occupational stress where we can see that both male and female were facing stressful situation in the workplace. With respect to the sub scales female score higher on role overload and group and political pressure, whereas male score higher on role ambiguity, role conflict, under participation, powerlessness, peer-poor relations male score slightly higher and in impoverishment too. Research study revealed that the majority of employees experienced high level of occupational stress [2, 15, 30, and 51]. The finding of the current study revealed that both male and female have occupational stress but male have more than the female. In sub scales of occupational stress index we can see that male have score higher in role ambiguity, role conflict, under participation, powerlessness, impoverishment and poor- peer relation it is highly due to the fact that male teachers have to compete with the female teachers to prove their ability. They have to work more to prove their talent and sometimes they have to sacrifice their professional ambition for their family. Indeed, even they need to share their time satisfying their obligations both at work place and with the obligations and duties towards their family.

On the dimension of role conflict, the responded reported that their head regularly communicate to them regarding their work. Heads used to interfere in their work and also they are not providing with sufficient facilities. It gets hard for them to execute the new technique and system in the work place for those who are in the learning phase. The findings are reliable with different research findings of other scholars [11, 27]. Regarding under participation dimension of occupational

stress revealed that most of their suggestions they gave to the authority were not observed and executed. Their co-operation was not sought for the solution of administrative problems at higher level. Their thoughts were not considered in formulating education policies as well as in changing or modifying the working system and conditions (Sharpley, Reynolds, & Acosta, 1997). While female have score higher in role overload and group and political pressure. Schools teachers are unable to perform their duties well due to the extreme work load. In the dimension of group and political pressure, they responded that sometimes it becomes difficult to follow formal rules due to political interference and group pressure [29].

Gender plays an important role depression. Previous research findings also support this idea, researchers found that female has higher on depression [34]. The results showed that female are more depressed and have lower psychological wellbeing. Female seem to have lower level of health in epidemiological examinations directed from a pathogenic point of view [10]. In addition, as we in the society women are more prone to experience a sense of lack of control over negative life events. Negative events like bad climatic changes are sometimes the factor that cause higher depression on female. Another possibility might be that female have various reactions to being feeling discouraged than do male, and these various responses that lead to differences in the severity and duration of the depression among female and the male. On the other hand male, use to distract themselves spending most of the time on activity like games, swimming and so on. While it is not that women are not indulge in activity they do but still they have higher rate of depression then the male. Females are more prone to adopt their problem. The negative emotion such as depression, stress and anxiety female adopt quickly and leads to the poor psychological Well-being. Some of the researchers recommend that gender differences are encouraged by societal expectation and beliefs regarding sex roles and stereotypes [39].

**Table 3:** Showing the Descriptive statistics- Mean and SD for the culture/Community comparison groups on dependent variables.

Independent Variables (Community)	Statistics	Dependent Variables								
		Depression	Role Over load	Role ambiguity	Role conflict	Group and political Pressure	Under participation	Powerlessness	Poor peer relation	Impoverishment
Total Nepali	Mean	13.33	19.17	14.20	14.81	12.82	10.98	8.17	8.21	11.44
	SD	9.61	3.41	2.28	2.31	2.48	2.47	1.21	1.07	1.28
Total Bhutia	Mean	12.36	18.52	14.18	14.74	12.81	10.47	8.07	8.12	11.60
	SD	7.81	3.58	2.09	2.17	2.67	2.12	1.12	1.17	1.21
Total Lepcha	Mean	10.97	18.01	13.93	14.53	12.38	10.30	8.00	7.94	11.18
	SD	7.83	3.70	2.12	2.25	2.75	2.12	1.13	1.23	1.71

Based on inferential statistical analysis with respect to BDI-II and subscales of OSI, the table-3 clearly indicates that Nepali score higher on depression followed by Bhutia and Lepcha. Likewise Nepali score slightly higher on sub-scales of occupation scale followed by Bhutia and the Lepcha.

The second hypothesized was that there will be a significant difference on Occupational Stress, Depression and Psychological Wellbeing among the three community of schools teachers of Sikkim is accepted. Analysis of data clearly indicates that there is a significant difference on

occupational stress, depression and psychological wellbeing among the community. As from table-3, we can see that it clearly indicate that Nepali community have more depression followed by Bhutia and Lepcha. In psychological wellbeing, Lepcha has scored higher on PWB and in subscales of OSI Nepali score higher followed by Bhutia and Lepcha.

As we can clearly see that Nepali people have found to be depressed and have more occupational stress as compare to Bhutia and the Lepcha. The region behind might be the workload which might be one of the roots that cause stress

among teachers. The major factor for the workload is role overload which takes place where teachers have to cope with a number of challenging issues within their job. Another important source of stress among teachers includes the changes in the moods, and sometimes it depends on the moods of the head of the school. Aside from these, the causes of teacher stress include people misbehavior, student absenteeism, negative student attitude towards learning, poor working conditions, time pressure, large classes too much correction work, lack of encouragement, feeling of failure, non-cooperative parents, job insecurity, lack of public esteem, poor colleagues relationships, criticism by colleagues, lack of control over the job, delayed salaries, duties other than teaching, political interference, negative community attitude towards teaching [19] cited in Holeyannavar [23]. Studies also indicate that stress have a negative effects on their psychological, physical and behavioural responses [4, 6, 8, 16, 20, 22, 23, 31, 38, 47, 50] cited in Bahari [3] The negative effect including irritability, anger, fatigue, anxiety, depression, headache, loss of concentration, difficulties in sleep, persistent negative thought, low appetite, stomach problems, musculoskeletal problems, blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, cancer, suicide, etc. Teacher stress not only affects his/her own health but also negatively affects the student's carrier too [7, 17] and even the organization [21]. Frequently experience of stress situations would develop in teacher's low self-esteem. Loss of confident, unable to face the audience, laziness, motivation level will be low, unwillingness to cooperate in any situation, frequent irrational conflicts at the place of work, withdrawal from supportive relationships, dealing ineffectively with students, eventually lowering the overall performance level. In Sikkim recently some changes have made education system i.e. computer-based teaching, also Sikkim government has declared holiday on Saturday now. Due to all this factors teachers seems to face many coping difficulties. This changes could be the reasons for the increased on depression and occupational stress among the sample.

As we can see in the context of Sikkim, within the Nepali community they have to face lots of competition. Nepali is the dominant community which constitute 70% of the population of Sikkim. The Nepali community is composed of different sub-cultural and shares their different culture and customs. Each tribe is sub-divided into many classes. The most important of these tribes are Sharma (Bawan's), Chettri, Rai, Limbu, Gurung, Manger, Tamang, Sherpa, Bhujel, Mewar, Thami, Damais, and Kamis etc. While Bhutia constituting 16% of the total population and followed by Lepcha which constitutes of 14% of a total population of Sikkim.

## 5. Conclusion

The prevalence of depression and occupational stress were high among schools teachers. Appropriate steps should be taken to improve the mental health of teachers, thereby ensuring good quality education. Stress management including spiritual coping strategy could be incorporated into their teaching module during their training course. Additionally, there were no awareness training programs organized by any local or government bodies, which would

help them to deal with their occupational stress and depression. Spiritual upliftment and mental positivity exercises has been important culture in workplaces of western countries. Personalities like Simon Sinek and Sadhguru has been playing important role for imparting lectures and trainings on motivations, self-happiness and awareness. Teachings and programs like theirs must be incorporated in Human resource development department to effectively make teachers manage their life and work, enjoy both in life.

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