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## Occupational Health Problems of School Teachers in the Context of Kailali, Nepal

Prayag Joshi

Lecturer, Department of Health Education, Kailali Multiple Campus, Dhangadhi, Nepal

### **Abstract:**

*This study attempts to find out the occupational health problems of the school teachers and to determine the causes of those problems of primary level schoolteachers. This paper is based on the descriptive research design. Survey method has used for collecting the necessary information from the schoolteachers. In teaching profession, teachers are feeling physical, mental, psychological pressure in the workplace. Due to lack of healthcare, awareness and facility, modernization and technological development occupational health problems of college teachers is increasing. The teachers are mainly suffering from physical and mental health problems, which are caused due to physical, biological, mechanical, chemical and psychological hazard.*

**Keywords:** Occupational health, hazard, teacher, profession

### **1. Introduction**

People have to work hard to meet their needs all round the world. Sometimes the circumstances are such that affect individual's physical and mental condition which in turn leads to the reduction of individual's life qualities. Research shows that good health is good for business and better workplace have better financial results. Every year over 170 million days are lost to sickness absence. Research shows that the longer people are off sick, the less likely they are to make a successful return to work, and there is only a 50% chance of someone making a successful return. Among these professions, teaching is also a kind of profession. Teaching is the specialized application of knowledge, skills and attributes designed to provide unique service to meet the educational needs of the individual and society. The choice of learning activities whereby the goals of education are realized in the school is the responsibilities of the teaching profession. Teaching in various levels, primary level is considered as the most difficult job in the field of teaching. To be a successful primary school teacher we need a passion to inspire young minds and a commitment to ensuring that every child achieves their potential. As a primary school teacher, we will develop schemes of work and lesson plans in line with curriculum objectives. We need to facilitate learning by establishing a relationship with pupils and by our organizations of learning resources and the classroom learning environment. The role of teacher is to develop and foster the appropriate skills and social abilities to enable the optimum development of children, according to age, ability and aptitude.

The duties of teachers are not limited to only teaching in classes. In addition, they have to prepare for lessons, assess students' exercise, and carry out guidance work, perform nonteaching clerical duties, prepare for external school reviews, participate in continuing professional development, satisfy requests from management etc. As a result, teachers may suffer mental and physical health problems due to the variety of job functions and frequent overtime work. Many overseas studies showed that teachers were subjected to heavy occupational stress that could adversely affect their mental health status. In addition to occupational stress, teachers, in the course of their careers, faced physical health problems that were caused or worsened by their jobs as well as past work. Occupational health is a specialist branch of medicine that focuses on the physical and mental well-being of employees in the work place. It is a multifaceted activity concerned with the prevention of ill health and in employed populations. This involves a consideration of the two-way relationship between work and health. It is as much as related to the effects of the working environment on the health of workers as to the influence of the worker's state of health on their ability to perform the tasks for which they were employed. The aim of occupational health is to prevent work-related illnesses and injury by:

- encouraging safe working practices;
- Ergonomics (studying how you work and how could work better);
- monitoring the health of the workforce;
- supporting the management of sickness absence.

Occupational health hazards are common in many occupation and occupational sectors and affect large numbers of workers. Among them teaching occupation has also got some occupational hazards. WHO (1994) writes " In the most favorable circumstances work provides the income and quality outcome and also have a positive impact on social, psychological and physical health and well-being. In spite of these conditions at work and work environment in many countries still involve distinct and even severe hazards to health that reduces the well-being, working capacity and even the life span of working individuals"

([http://www.who.int/occupational\\_health/publications/globstrategy/en/print.html](http://www.who.int/occupational_health/publications/globstrategy/en/print.html))

Prevalence of job stress among primary school teachers in Kailali determined the job stress among primary school teachers. It has also found the symptoms of job ill health that teachers have developed after they became teachers. Relationship between quality of life and occupational, stress among teachers explored major changes in education system and limited resources supplied by the government of Nepalese teaches. They have been suffering from greater occupational stress in recent years. In Nepal teachers have a lower health status than general population. The quality of life of female teachers is worse than of male teachers and deteriorates with age. Occupational strains induce worsening physical and mental conditions for teachers. This study suggested that having adequate coping resources, especially social support in workplaces may be an important factor for improving teacher's quality of life.

According to studies, majority of the teachers usually need to identify the symptoms of job ill health that teachers have developed after they became teachers. The role of occupational health engaged as two important work-related self- regulatory dimensions and teachers' instructional performance in the class room. Particularly primary school teachers are at risk as they have little opportunity for rest during the working day.

Occupational health is the promotion and maintenance of the highest degree of physical, mental and social well-being of workers in all occupations by prevailing departures from health, controlling risks and the adaptation of work to people, and people to their jobs. (ILO/WHO 1950)

According to WHO and ILO, occupational health means the science and art of providing employees with the highest rate of health, maintaining this quality and enhancing the health of work force. While maintaining this capital by providing a safe work place, choice of appropriate workers for different positions, matching work condition, accident prevention and occupational disease, training personal hygiene and work related issues precocious diagnosis and treatment of disease, paying attention to employees problems and issues and their relatives to help every individual worker to benefit from utmost health.

## 2. Objectives

This paper aims to present occupational health problems of school teachers at Dhangadhi, Kailali

## 3. Methodology

This research was based on the descriptive research design. The researcher had used survey method for collecting the necessary information from the respondents. Similarly, the research work was designed with descriptive and explorative in nature primarily based on qualitative as well as quantitative of description, interpretation and analysis. Total population of the study was the school teachers, teaching in schools that are recently involved in primary schools. Teachers of one government and one boarding school were the population of the study. The total population of the study was 100, which was considered as study population. First of all, the researcher visited the study area and purposively selected 40 informants out of 100 ones as a sample of the study. Sampled population was taken from one government school and one boarding school. The teachers were also purposively selected from each school and using stratified proportional sampling on the basis of their designation and sex. In order to collect the primary data, the following research tools were used in the study:

## 4. Questionnaire

A set of questionnaire was used to collect the primary data from the teachers of the selected schools.

## 5. Results and Discussion:

This research is mainly related to the occupational health problems of the primary school teachers at Dhangadhi Kailali, Nepal.

		Coughing			Total	
		Dust and Poor sanitation in class room	Coldness of Classroom	No provision of first aid in school		
Gender	Male	Count	13	2	17	
		% of Total	32.5%	5.0%	5.0%	42.5%
	Female	Count	15	5	3	23
		% of Total	37.5%	12.5%	7.5%	57.5%
Total		Count	28	7	5	40
		% of Total	70.0%	17.5%	12.5%	100.0%

Table 1: Gender \* Causes of Coughing Cross tabulation

Out of 40 respondents, there were 17 male and 23 female. 70% (32.5% male and 37.5% female) respondents reported that main cause of coughing among primary level teachers is dust and poor sanitation in classroom. Similarly, 17.5% reported coldness of classroom and 12.5% reported lack of first aid in school. Physical infrastructures are still not fulfilled in the schools. The government has to focus on development of basic physical facilities. Therefore, those teachers can perform well in teaching and learning activities.

			Leg pain			Total
			Prolonged standing in classroom	Use of lecture method	No lecture desk in classroom	
Gender	Male	Count	15	1	1	17
		% within Gender	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%	100.0%
	Female	Count	19	3	1	23
		% within Gender	82.6%	13.0%	4.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	34	4	2	40
		% within Gender	85.0%	10.0%	5.0%	100.0%

Table 2: Gender \* Leg pain Cross tabulation

Table 2 shows the results related to teachers' leg-pain problem. It shows the different causative factors of leg-pain of teachers from the study area. Out of 40 respondents, 34 (15 male and 19 female, i.e. 85%) respondents reported that the main cause of leg-pain among teachers is prolonged standing in the classroom. Similarly, 4 (10%) respondents reported that cause of leg-pain is use of lecture method, and only 2 (5%) respondents reported lack of lecture desks in classrooms. It seems that the teachers have to change traditional teaching method, i.e. whole time standing in front of the classroom and using broadcasting method in teaching. It has mainly two demerits: first teachers become too much tired and second students become very passive. Thus, teachers have to follow interactive way of teaching.

			Throat problem			Total
			Prolonged speaking in crowded class	Use of chalk	Noisy classroom	
Gender	Male	Count	15	1	1	17
		% within Gender	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%	100.0%
	Female	Count	18	4	1	23
		% within Gender	78.3%	17.4%	4.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	33	5	2	40
		% within Gender	82.5%	12.5%	5.0%	100.0%

Table 3: Gender \* Throat problem Cross tabulation

The results given in Table 3 show causes of throat-problem reported by 40 respondents from the study area. Among the respondents, 33 (15 male and 18 female, i.e. 82.5% in total) reported that main cause of throat-problem is prolonged speaking in crowded class. 5 (1 male and 4 female, in total 12.5%) respondents reported use of chalk as cause of throat-problem to primary teachers. Only 1 male and 1 female in total 5% respondents reported that cause of throat-problem among primary teachers is noisy classrooms. It seems that most of the teachers are using lecture method. This is outdated method, which cannot be applied all the time. Thus, teachers have to change the lecture method into play-way method in which students are more engaged in learning activities.

			Stomach problem			Total
			Lack of pure drinking water and no fixed schedule of launch	Mental tension	No provision of hygienic meal in canteen	
Gender	Male	Count	15	1	1	17
		% within Gender	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%	100.0%
	Female	Count	20	1	2	23
		% within Gender	87.0%	4.3%	8.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	35	2	3	40
		% within Gender	87.5%	5.0%	7.5%	100.0%

Table 4: Gender \* Stomach problem Cross tabulation

Teachers are facing different health problems in Nepal. Table 4 shows causes of stomach-problem among primary level teachers from the study area. Out of 40 respondents, 35 (15 male and 20 female, i.e. 87.5% in total) reported that cause of stomach-problem is lack of pure drinking water in the school and lack of fixed schedule of meals. Among the respondents, 1 male and 1 female reported that cause of stomach-problem among primary level teachers is mental tension. On the other hand, 1 male and 3 female i.e. 7.5% in total respondents said that cause of stomach-problem is unhygienic meal in the school canteen. It seems that the schools have to launch the school health program immediately, for this; the government should take initiation to address this problem.

		<b>Skin-problem</b>				<b>Total</b>
			Use of chalk and no healthful hand washing facilities in school	Use of chemical in science lab	No teacher friendly staffroom	
Gender	Male	Count	15	1	1	17
		% within Gender	88.2%	5.9%	5.9%	100.0%
	Female	Count	20	1	2	23
		% within Gender	87.0%	4.3%	8.7%	100.0%
Total		Count	35	2	3	40
		% within Gender	87.5%	5.0%	7.5%	100.0%

Table 5: Gender \* Skin-problem Cross tabulation

Table 5 shows the causes of skin-problem among primary level teachers from the study area. Out of 40 respondents, 35 (15 male and 20 female i.e. 87.5% in total) reported that the main causes of skin-problem are use of dust chalk and board marker, and lack of hand washing facilities in school. 1 male and 1 female i.e. 5% in total, responded that use of chemical in science lab is cause of skin-problem. On the other hand, 1 male and 2 female teacher responded that lack of teacher friendly staffroom is cause of skin-problem among primary level teachers. It seems that most of the respondents are facing the skin problems in school. To minimize this problem, the school has to change the chalk and black board into white-board which may help to teach freely. In addition, the teacher should play as a sanitation agent in school.

		<b>stress</b>				<b>Total</b>
			No freedom in school and overload	Opportunity lacking in career	Stress by administration	
Gender	Male	Count	13	0	4	17
		% within Gender	76.5%	.0%	23.5%	100.0%
	Female	Count	9	3	11	23
		% within Gender	39.1%	13.0%	47.8%	100.0%
Total		Count	22	3	15	40
		% within Gender	55.0%	7.5%	37.5%	100.0%

Table 6: Gender \* stress Cross tabulation

Table 6 shows the different causes of stress among primary level teachers from the study area. Out of 40 respondents, 22 (13 male and 9 female, i.e. 55% in total) reported that lack of freedom and overload in school cause stress. 3 female respondents reported opportunity lacking in career as the cause of stress. On the other hand, 15 (4 male and 11 female, i.e. 37.5% in total) respondents reported stress by administration is the cause of stress. From the above data, we can say that more than half of the respondents have no freedom and over load in school so they are facing stress problem. To overcome this problem, the school administration should try to maintain healthful (physical and mental) school environment, especially, teacher-teacher, teacher - student, teacher - guardian through friendly relationship.

		<b>Back-pain</b>				<b>Total</b>
			No teacher desks in class and incorrect working postures	Over -crowded classes	Over teaching load	
Gender	Male	Count	13	2	2	17
		% within Gender	76.5%	11.8%	11.8%	100.0%
	Female	Count	15	5	3	23
		% within Gender	65.2%	21.7%	13.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	28	7	5	40
		% within Gender	70.0%	17.5%	12.5%	100.0%

Table 7: Gender \* Back-pain Cross tabulation

The data given in Table 7 show the different causes of back-pain among primary level teachers from the study area. Among the respondents, 28 (13 male and 15 female, i.e. 70% in total) reported that lack of teacher desks in classroom and incorrect working

posture are causes of back-pain. Likewise, 2 male and 5 female (17.5% in total) reported that over-crowded classes is cause of back-pain. Furthermore, 2 male and 3 female teachers reported that over teaching load is the cause of back-pain. This is the common problem in school; almost school teachers have been bearing this problem due to insufficient infrastructure and staffs. Most of the teachers use only lecture method to control the class with no instructional materials, which may be the main cause of back pain. To address this problem, the teachers have to use modern approaches in classes and school administration should also try to manage the infrastructure.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper was focused on the occupational health problems of primary level school teachers and also to determine the causes of those problems. The conclusion was derived from the above findings to give answers of the research questions of the study area as follows.

The coughing, leg pain, throat problem, stomach discomfort, dermatitis etc. are the major health problems of teachers where dust, poor air conditioning, poor relationship with staffs, work stress, incorrect working postures, chalk dust, overcrowded classes are the major causes of physical occupational health problems of the school teachers.

The work stress was the major psychological occupational health problems of the teachers where career development problems, improper work load, frustration, lack of proper academic environment, no government recognition, poor inter relationship at job related problems, no job guarantee esp. in boarding school teachers are the causes of occupational stress among school teachers.

The teachers of Nepal are using usual teaching method like: lecture method and they do not use an instructional materials, which creates many physical problems like, throat problem, back pain, leg pain etc. Teacher is taken as a role model, changing agent of society but he is not satisfied in his job and secured himself. So we can expect return from him at this stage.

Finally, it is concluded that the primary school teachers face one or many forms of physical as well as psychological occupational health hazards in their job. The various causes of those hazards may lower their efficiency due to degradation of health. So it should be timely addressed by the government.

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