

WORK STRESS, BURNOUT, AND COPING MECHANISMS AMONG COLLEGE TEACHERS DURING NEP 2020 RESTRUCTURING IN KASHMIR

Dr. Nuzhat Nasreen

Associate Professor, Government Sheikh ul Alam Memorial (SAM) Degree College, Budgam, Kashmir, J&K)

Abstract—

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has initiated one of the most far-reaching restructurings of Indian higher education in three decades, introducing multidisciplinary curricula, credit-based mobility, continuous evaluation, and expanded research obligations for faculty. For college teachers in Jammu and Kashmir, these demands are layered onto an already fragile occupational environment shaped by decades of political conflict, intermittent institutional disruption, and limited administrative capacity. This paper critically synthesises the empirical and theoretical literature on work stress, burnout, and coping among college teachers in Kashmir during the ongoing NEP 2020 transition. Using the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and the transactional theory of stress and coping as organising frameworks, the review draws on peer-reviewed studies published mainly between 2022 and 2025, from India and comparable contexts, to map the specific demands introduced by policy restructuring, the resource deficits that magnify their effect, and the coping repertoires teachers are likely to draw upon. Two synthesis tables consolidate evidence from selected empirical studies on teacher stress, burnout, and coping, and summarise the principal workload-related provisions of NEP 2020 relevant to college faculty. The review argues that the conjunction of policy-driven demands and region-specific structural strain places Kashmiri college teachers at elevated risk of burnout relative to faculty in less disrupted settings, and it proposes a methodologically rigorous empirical design that future researchers can use to test the relationships this review identifies. Implications for institutional policy, faculty development, and workplace wellbeing are discussed.

Keywords— NEP 2020, work stress, teacher burnout, coping mechanisms, Kashmir, higher education restructuring, Job Demands-Resources model

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy 2020 represents the most extensive reform of India's education architecture since 1986, and its higher education provisions are unusually demanding on the teaching workforce that must translate them into practice (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020). The policy replaces rigid, single-discipline degree structures with a four-year undergraduate programme, multiple entry and exit points, an academic bank of credits, and a multidisciplinary curriculum that requires colleges to offer far greater subject flexibility than before. It simultaneously raises expectations around outcome-based and continuous assessment, faculty research output, and periodic re-training, all to be absorbed within existing staffing and infrastructure in most government and government-aided colleges (Ashokkumar et al., 2025; Kulal et al., 2024). For teaching faculty, this is not simply a curricular adjustment; it is a redefinition of the job itself, arriving with limited lead time, uneven administrative guidance, and, in many states, no corresponding increase in sanctioned teaching posts.

Kashmir occupies a distinctive position within this national transition. College teachers in the Kashmir division carry out their restructuring-related responsibilities against a backdrop of protracted political conflict, recurrent security-related disruptions to the academic calendar, and a mental health infrastructure that remains thin relative to demonstrated need (Sudershan et al., 2025). Regional commentary on NEP

implementation in Jammu and Kashmir has repeatedly flagged infrastructural and staffing shortfalls as obstacles to translating the policy's ambitions into functioning multidisciplinary campuses, and has noted that much of the burden of adaptation falls, by default, on individual teachers rather than on institutions as a whole. Where curriculum restructuring elsewhere in India is absorbed by relatively stable academic calendars and denser administrative support, Kashmiri colleges must additionally contend with compressed teaching terms, periodic closures, and an examination system that is frequently recalibrated to accommodate lost instructional days. The cumulative effect is a working environment in which policy-driven demands intersect with pre-existing structural precarity in ways that are unlikely to be captured by studies of faculty stress conducted in less disrupted parts of the country.

There is, at present, a fragmented evidence base relevant to this problem. A substantial literature documents occupational stress and burnout among Indian school and university teachers in general terms (Agyapong et al., 2022; Chaudhry & Chhajer, 2023; Pushpalatha & E, 2024; Thomas & Reyes, 2024). A separate and growing body of scholarship examines the implementation challenges of NEP 2020 in higher education, including funding constraints, faculty preparedness, and institutional resistance to change (Ashokkumar et al., 2025; Kulal et al., 2024). A third, well-established literature documents the mental health consequences of prolonged conflict exposure in Kashmir, largely with reference to the general population and to

students (Sudershan et al., 2025). What is largely absent is scholarship that draws these three strands together to examine, specifically, how college-level teaching faculty in Kashmir are experiencing stress and burnout as NEP 2020 is implemented, and how they are coping with it. This paper addresses that gap conceptually and methodologically rather than empirically: it offers a critical narrative synthesis of the relevant literature, develops an integrated theoretical account of how NEP-related demands and conflict-context stressors are likely to interact, and proposes a rigorous empirical design that can be used to test the resulting propositions in a future primary study.

Four objectives guide the review that follows. First, it critically synthesises literature on the occupational demands that NEP 2020 restructuring introduces for college teaching faculty. Second, it situates these demands within the specific socio-political and institutional context of Kashmir, drawing on the regional conflict and mental health literature. Third, it reviews what is known about the coping strategies teaching professionals adopt under sustained occupational strain, and what distinguishes adaptive from maladaptive patterns. Fourth, building on the Job Demands-Resources model and the transactional theory of stress and coping, it proposes a methodological framework - including sampling strategy, instrumentation, and analytic plan - for an empirical study capable of testing the relationships the review identifies. The paper closes by discussing the practical and policy implications of this synthesis for college administrations and for the pacing of NEP implementation in conflict-affected regions.

NEP 2020 reorganises undergraduate education around a four-year, multiple-exit degree structure, an academic bank of credits enabling inter-institutional mobility, and a multidisciplinary curriculum intended to dissolve rigid boundaries between the sciences, humanities, and vocational streams. Ashokkumar et al. (2025), in a comprehensive review of the policy's implementation, describe its ambitions as well aligned with global trends toward competency-based and learner-centred education, but note that translating this alignment into functioning classroom practice depends heavily on teacher readiness, institutional infrastructure, and the pace at which reforms are rolled out. Kulal et al. (2024), drawing on the perspectives of students, teachers, and experts in a mixed-methods evaluation, similarly report that while stakeholders broadly endorse the policy's stated goals, teachers describe considerable uncertainty about implementation timelines, assessment redesign, and the practical mechanics of offering multidisciplinary electives within existing departmental structures.

A recurring theme across this literature is that reform of this scale increases the demands placed on teaching staff more quickly than it increases the resources available to meet

them. Multidisciplinary curricula require faculty to develop unfamiliar course content, sometimes outside their original specialisation; continuous and outcome-based assessment increases the volume of evaluation and documentation; and enhanced research expectations compete directly with time previously allocated to teaching preparation. Commentary specific to Jammu and Kashmir has echoed these concerns, pointing to funding limitations, an insufficient pool of trained faculty, and the practical difficulty of building multidisciplinary offerings in colleges that were historically organised around narrow, single-subject departments. Framed through an occupational lens, these are not abstract policy problems; they are, for the individual teacher, an intensification of workload, role ambiguity about how new provisions are meant to be operationalised, and reduced control over the pace and content of one's own professional practice - conditions that occupational health research consistently links to elevated stress and, over time, burnout.

Teacher Stress and Burnout: Conceptual and Empirical Landscape

Burnout is conventionally understood as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation or cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment that develops in response to chronic, unresolved occupational stress (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Teaching is repeatedly identified as a high-risk occupation for this syndrome. Agyapong et al. (2022), in a scoping review of stress, burnout, anxiety, and depression among teachers, conclude that excessive workload, role conflict, and inadequate administrative support are the most consistently reported precursors of burnout across the international literature, and that these pressures translate into measurable costs for teachers' physical health, job performance, and intention to remain in the profession. Thomas and Reyes (2024), reviewing twenty-seven studies published after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, identify an expanding set of 'new' stress factors - rapid technological adaptation, blurred boundaries between work and personal time, and repeated pedagogical change - that compound the traditional stressors of classroom management and evaluation.

Within India specifically, the evidence points in a similar direction. Chaudhry and Chhajer (2023) found that Indian school teachers' psychological wellbeing was closely tied to their capacity for energy management and thriving at work, and that unmanaged stress eroded both dimensions over time. Pushpalatha and E (2024), examining schoolteachers in Bangalore during the COVID-19 period, documented significant occupational stress and burnout, with notable variation by institutional type and geographic setting. Belay et al. (2023), while conducted in Ethiopia rather than India, offers a methodologically useful comparison: using the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory, the study found that

psychosocial work factors - not merely workload volume - were the strongest predictors of work-related burnout among secondary school teachers, a finding consistent with the view that how demands are experienced, and what resources exist to buffer them, matters as much as the objective quantity of work.

A notable pattern across this literature is its concentration on school-level teachers; empirical attention to college and university faculty, particularly in the Indian context, remains comparatively sparse, and attention to faculty in conflict-affected regions sparser still. This is the specific gap the present review addresses: existing findings on teacher burnout are broadly transferable in their theoretical logic, but the occupational and contextual specificity of Kashmiri college teachers undergoing NEP restructuring has not been directly examined.

The Kashmir Context: Conflict, Institutional Precarity, and Educational Labour

Decades of political conflict in Kashmir have left a well-documented imprint on the region's mental health profile. Sudershan et al. (2025), in a large cross-sectional study of 1,471 college students across the Kashmir division, found that a substantial proportion reported severe anxiety and high perceived stress, with gender emerging as a significant correlate of both outcomes. While that study examines students rather than teachers, it is directly relevant here for two reasons. First, it confirms that the psychological toll of the region's conflict history and its associated uncertainties extends into the higher education environment in measurable, contemporary terms rather than being a purely historical concern. Second, college teachers work within the same institutional ecology as these students: they are exposed to the same disruptions to the academic calendar, the same compressed teaching terms following closures, and the same pressure to complete syllabi within reduced instructional time, while additionally carrying the pastoral and administrative responsibility of managing a visibly stressed student population.

This structural precarity forms the baseline onto which NEP 2020's demands are now layered. Where a college in a less disrupted part of India might implement multidisciplinary electives and continuous assessment against a stable academic calendar, a Kashmiri college may need to do so while also absorbing lost teaching days, revising internal examination schedules at short notice, and operating with a workforce that has, over a long period, developed coping habits suited to managing conflict-related disruption rather than the specific demands of curricular reform. The interaction between these two sources of strain - one recent and policy-driven, one longstanding and structural - is the central concern of this review, and it is this interaction, rather than either

stressor in isolation, that is most likely to distinguish the experience of Kashmiri college teachers from that of their counterparts elsewhere in India.

Coping Mechanisms Among Teaching Professionals

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping remains the dominant framework for understanding how individuals respond to occupational strain. In this model, stress arises not from an event itself but from the individual's cognitive appraisal of whether their resources are sufficient to meet a given demand; coping efforts are then classified broadly as problem-focused, aimed at altering the stressor itself, or emotion-focused, aimed at regulating the distress it produces. Applied to teaching, problem-focused coping might include renegotiating workload, seeking training, or organising peer support around curriculum redesign, while emotion-focused coping includes strategies such as reframing, seeking social support for emotional ventilation, or, less adaptively, avoidance and disengagement.

Empirical work on coping among Indian professionals in high-strain occupational contexts offers a useful, if indirect, comparison. Ali and Kumar (2023), studying healthcare workers in Rajasthan during the COVID-19 pandemic, found that coping strategies varied significantly by demographic characteristics and that workers with weaker access to institutional support were more likely to rely on emotion-focused and avoidant strategies rather than problem-focused ones. Shiny and Anandhi (2026), examining job stress and coping among arts and science college faculty, similarly report that perceived organisational support functions as a significant moderator between job stress and job performance, suggesting that institutional context shapes not only how much stress teachers experience but also which coping strategies remain practically available to them. Where problem-focused coping requires a degree of control over one's working conditions that individual teachers frequently do not possess - they cannot, for instance, alter the pace of policy rollout or the timing of institutional closures - emotion-focused and, in less resourced settings, avoidant coping styles are likely to predominate. This has implications for long-term wellbeing, since sustained reliance on avoidant coping is one of the more consistent predictors of progression from acute stress to chronic burnout in the broader occupational health literature.

Theoretical Framework

This review is organised around two complementary frameworks. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) proposes that every occupation can be characterised by its demands - aspects of work requiring sustained effort, such as workload, role ambiguity, and time pressure - and its resources - aspects of work that help employees achieve goals and buffer the cost

of demands, such as autonomy, training, and institutional or collegial support. Burnout develops when demands chronically exceed resources; engagement and wellbeing are more likely when resources are sufficient to offset demands, even where those demands are substantial (Bakker et al., 2023). Applied to the present case, NEP 2020 restructuring functions primarily as an intensification of demands - new curricula, new assessment regimes, new research expectations - while the specific conditions of Kashmiri higher education constrain the resources available to offset them: funding is limited, faculty training pipelines are uneven, and the administrative bandwidth needed to support teachers through the transition is itself strained by the same conflict-related disruptions that affect teaching.

The transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) complements this structural account by explaining the psychological pathway from demand to outcome. Whether a given NEP-related demand becomes a source of chronic stress depends on how it is appraised by the individual teacher and what coping resources - both internal and institutional - are available in response. Integrating the two frameworks yields a working proposition for this review: policy-driven demands and conflict-context structural strain combine to elevate the objective demand load faced by Kashmiri college teachers; the low-resource environment in which this occurs constrains the availability of problem-focused coping; and the resulting reliance on emotion-focused or avoidant coping, sustained over time, increases the risk of burnout beyond what would be predicted by policy change or regional context alone. This proposition organises the synthesis presented in the following section and the empirical design proposed in the Methodology.

Table 1: Key NEP 2020 Provisions Relevant to the College Teaching Workforce

Provision	Description	Associated Occupational Demand
Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) with multiple entry/exit	Restructures degree duration and allows students to exit with certificates, diplomas, or degrees at different stages	Redesign of course sequencing; increased administrative record-keeping
Multidisciplinary curriculum	Requires colleges to offer cross-stream electives spanning sciences, humanities, and vocational subjects	Faculty asked to teach or coordinate outside primary specialisation; new content preparation
Academic Bank of Credits	Enables students to accumulate and transfer credits across institutions	Additional documentation, verification, and coordination workload

Provision	Description	Associated Occupational Demand
Continuous and outcome-based assessment	Shifts evaluation from single terminal examinations to ongoing, competency-linked assessment	Higher frequency of evaluation and grading; new assessment design skills required
Enhanced faculty research expectations	Encourages research output and interdisciplinary scholarship as part of the academic role	Time competition between teaching preparation and research productivity
Faculty development and re-training mandates	Requires periodic training in new pedagogy, technology, and curriculum design	Additional time commitment outside regular teaching load, often unpaid or uncompensated
Digital and blended learning integration	Promotes technology-enabled and blended delivery formats	Demand for digital competence not uniformly matched by institutional infrastructure or training

Note. Compiled from the review of NEP 2020 implementation literature (Ashokkumar et al., 2025; Kulal et al., 2024; Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020). Column three reflects occupational demands inferred through the Job Demands-Resources framework rather than measured outcomes.

II. METHODOLOGY

Review Methodology

This paper adopts a critical narrative review methodology rather than a primary empirical design. Literature was identified through targeted searches of Google Scholar, PubMed, Frontiers, ScienceDirect, and repository databases (SSRN, Zenodo, RePEc) using combinations of the terms 'teacher burnout', 'occupational stress', 'coping strategies', 'NEP 2020', 'higher education faculty', and 'Kashmir'. Priority was given to peer-reviewed studies published between 2022 and 2025 to ensure the review reflects the post-NEP implementation period, supplemented by a small number of foundational theoretical sources - the Job Demands-Resources model and the transactional theory of stress and coping - whose continued relevance is well established in the contemporary literature. Sources were included where they addressed teacher or faculty stress, burnout, or coping in an Indian or comparable developing-country context, or where they directly addressed NEP 2020 implementation or the psychosocial impact of conflict in Kashmir. Government and institutional documents were included only where necessary to describe policy provisions

accurately. The review does not claim to be exhaustive in the systematic-review sense; rather, it aims to synthesise the literature critically enough to support a defensible theoretical model and a methodologically sound proposal for future primary research.

Proposed Empirical Design for Future Research

Because no primary survey data were collected for this review, the propositions developed above remain to be tested empirically. This section sets out a design that a future study could use to do so, specified in sufficient detail to be directly implementable.

Design. A cross-sectional, descriptive-correlational survey design is recommended as the appropriate first step, given the absence of prior quantitative data on this specific population. A cross-sectional design allows simultaneous measurement of perceived NEP-related demands, burnout, and coping style, and is well suited to establishing baseline prevalence and association patterns before committing to the greater resource requirements of a longitudinal design.

Population and sampling. The target population would comprise full-time and contractual teaching faculty in government, government-aided, and private degree colleges across the districts of the Kashmir division, including Srinagar, Budgam, Anantnag, and Baramulla, to ensure representation beyond the summer capital alone. A multistage stratified random sampling procedure is recommended: colleges stratified first by district and management type (government, aided, private), followed by proportionate random selection of faculty within each sampled college. Using a conservative design effect and a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error, a target sample of approximately 380-420 respondents would be adequate to detect moderate effect sizes in the planned regression analyses, consistent with sample sizes reported in comparable faculty stress studies in India (Sudershan et al., 2025).

Instrumentation. Three standardised instruments are proposed, alongside one context-specific measure. Burnout would be assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Educators Survey, which measures emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and personal accomplishment and has established validity in teaching populations (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Perceived stress would be measured with the ten-item Perceived Stress Scale. Coping style would be assessed using the Brief COPE inventory (Carver, 1997), which yields problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant coping subscales. Finally, a researcher-developed NEP-Related Occupational Demands Scale would be required to capture demands specific to the current restructuring - curriculum redesign load, assessment workload, research

pressure, and training burden - since no existing standardised instrument captures these NEP-specific items; this scale would need to be piloted and its internal consistency established before use in the main study.

Procedure and ethical considerations. Data collection would proceed only after institutional ethics clearance and permission from the Directorate of Colleges or equivalent administrative authority. Participation would be voluntary, anonymous, and preceded by informed consent, with clear assurance that responses would not be linked to individual identity or shared with college administration. Given the sensitivity of both occupational stress and conflict-related experience as topics, provision for participant referral to counselling resources should be built into the study protocol.

Planned analysis. Descriptive statistics would characterise the demographic and occupational profile of the sample. Independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA would compare burnout and stress scores across demographic and institutional categories (gender, employment status, years of service, college type, district). Pearson correlation would examine bivariate relationships among perceived NEP-related demands, coping style, and burnout dimensions. Multiple regression, and where sample size and model complexity permit, partial least squares structural equation modelling, would be used to test the JD-R pathway proposed in this review - specifically, whether coping style mediates the relationship between NEP-related demands and burnout, and whether institutional support moderates this pathway.

Limitations of the proposed design. A cross-sectional survey cannot establish causal direction, and self-report instruments are subject to social desirability and recall bias, particularly for a topic as personally sensitive as burnout. Access to a representative sample may also be constrained in practice by intermittent institutional disruption, the same structural factor the study seeks to examine. These limitations do not undermine the value of the proposed design as a necessary first step; they do, however, argue for a longitudinal or mixed-methods follow-up once baseline associations have been established.

III. RESULTS

Thematic Synthesis of the Literature

Because this paper is a conceptual and methodological review rather than a primary empirical study, this section presents a thematic synthesis of the literature reviewed above rather than statistical results derived from original data collection. Table 2 summarises the empirical studies most directly relevant to teacher and faculty stress, burnout, and coping that informed this synthesis.

Table 2: *Summary of Selected Recent Empirical Studies on Teacher/Faculty Stress, Burnout, and Coping*

Study	Context / Sample	Method	Key Findings
Agyapong et al. (2022)	Global, scoping review of teacher populations	Scoping review	Workload, role conflict, and weak administrative support are the most consistent predictors of teacher burnout across settings
Belay et al. (2023)	Public secondary school teachers, Ethiopia	Cross-sectional survey; Copenhagen Burnout Inventory	Psychosocial work factors predict burnout more strongly than raw workload volume
Chaudhry & Chhajer (2023)	School teachers, India	Cross-sectional survey	Energy management and thriving mediate the relationship between stress and psychological wellbeing
Pushpalatha & E (2024)	Schoolteachers, Bangalore urban/rural, India	Cross-sectional survey	Significant occupational stress and burnout during COVID-19, varying by institutional and geographic setting
Thomas & Reyes (2024)	27 studies, post-pandemic period	Scoping review	Technological adaptation and blurred work-life boundaries are emerging drivers of burnout alongside traditional stressors
Ali & Kumar (2023)	Healthcare workers, Rajasthan, India	Cross-sectional survey	Weaker institutional support is associated with greater reliance on emotion-focused and avoidant coping
Shiny & Anandhi (2026)	Arts and science college faculty, India	Cross-sectional survey	Perceived organisational support moderates the relationship between job stress and job performance
Sudershan et al. (2025)	College students, Kashmir division, India (N = 1,471)	Cross-sectional epidemiological survey	High prevalence of severe anxiety and perceived stress among the college-going population in Kashmir; gender is a significant correlate

Note. Table entries are drawn directly from the cited peer-reviewed sources. Sudershan et al. (2025) examines students rather than teaching faculty and is included to establish the regional psychosocial context in which Kashmiri college teachers work.

Cross-Cutting Patterns

Three patterns emerge consistently across the studies summarised in Table 2. First, burnout is rarely a product of workload in isolation; every study that examines predictors beyond raw workload finds that psychosocial and institutional factors - role clarity, administrative support, perceived organisational support - explain variance that workload volume alone does not (Belay et al., 2023; Shiny & Anandhi, 2026). This is directly consistent with the JD-R model's emphasis on the ratio between demands and resources rather

than the absolute level of demand, and it suggests that the pertinent question for Kashmiri colleges is not simply how much new work NEP 2020 introduces, but how much institutional support accompanies it.

Second, coping style appears to be shaped by context rather than being a fixed individual trait. Ali and Kumar (2023) found that access to institutional support predicted which coping strategies employees could realistically deploy; where support was weak, avoidant and emotion-focused coping became more common by default rather than by preference. Applied to the present case, this pattern suggests that Kashmiri college teachers operating in a resource-constrained implementation environment are structurally more likely to default toward emotion-focused coping, independent of any individual disposition toward it - a distinction with

direct implications for intervention design, since interventions aimed at changing individual coping 'style' will have limited effect if the structural conditions that constrain coping choice remain unaddressed.

Third, the regional evidence base establishes that the population from which Kashmiri college teachers are drawn, and the students they teach, already carries an elevated baseline of psychological distress attributable to the region's conflict history (Sudershan et al., 2025). No study in the reviewed literature measures this baseline specifically among teaching faculty, but its documented presence among the closely related student population, combined with teachers' continuous occupational exposure to the same environment, gives reasonable grounds to expect an elevated - not merely typical - baseline stress load among Kashmiri college teachers even before NEP-related demands are introduced. This is the central empirical gap the review identifies, and it is the proposition the methodology outlined above is designed to test.

IV. DISCUSSION

Read together through the Job Demands-Resources model and the transactional theory of stress and coping, the literature reviewed here supports what might be termed a double-burden hypothesis for Kashmiri college teachers during the NEP 2020 transition: policy-driven demands are being absorbed by a workforce whose baseline resource environment is already constrained by decades of conflict-related institutional disruption. Elsewhere in India, NEP implementation strain is a demands problem superimposed on a comparatively stable resource base; in Kashmir, it is a demands problem superimposed on a resource base that is itself depleted by recurrent closures, compressed teaching calendars, and limited institutional capacity for faculty support. If this hypothesis is correct, generic, one-size-fits-all approaches to managing NEP-related faculty stress - workshops on time management, for instance, imported without adaptation from less disrupted contexts - are unlikely to be sufficient, because they address the demand side of the equation without addressing the region-specific resource deficit that the literature identifies as the more powerful predictor of burnout.

The coping literature reviewed above further suggests that the coping strategies Kashmiri college teachers are likely to rely upon may be structurally, rather than individually, determined. If problem-focused coping requires a degree of control over working conditions - control over the pace of curriculum change, the volume of assessment, or the scheduling of training - that individual teachers in this context do not typically possess, then a shift toward emotion-focused and avoidant coping is a predictable, rational adaptation to

constrained circumstances rather than a personal deficiency. This reframing matters for how institutions respond: it points toward interventions that expand teachers' actual control over implementation-related decisions - phased rollout timelines negotiated with faculty input, protected time for curriculum redesign, distributed rather than individual responsibility for multidisciplinary course development - rather than interventions that focus solely on individual resilience training, which risk placing responsibility for a structural problem onto the individual teacher.

The synthesis also has implications for how NEP 2020 implementation is paced in conflict-affected regions more broadly. National policy timelines are, by design, uniform across states and union territories, but the resource conditions required to meet those timelines without occupational cost are demonstrably not uniform. Kashmir is not a unique case in this respect - other conflict-affected or infrastructurally constrained regions of India likely face comparable versions of the same mismatch - but it is a clearly documented one, given the strength of the regional mental health literature already available (Sudershan et al., 2025). Institutional and policy responses that acknowledge this variation, rather than treating implementation capacity as uniform across the country, are more likely to protect both faculty wellbeing and the quality of the reform's eventual implementation.

Two caveats temper these conclusions. First, the synthesis rests on evidence drawn from adjacent populations - Indian teachers and faculty generally, and Kashmiri students specifically - rather than from Kashmiri college teachers directly, since no published study meeting the review's inclusion criteria examines this exact population during this exact policy transition. The propositions advanced here are therefore theoretically grounded inferences, not established findings, and should be treated accordingly until tested empirically. Second, the reviewed literature on coping and organisational support is drawn substantially from healthcare and general faculty populations rather than from teaching contexts specifically; while the underlying mechanisms - resource-dependent coping choice, organisational support as a buffer - are well established across occupations, their precise magnitude in a teaching-specific, conflict-affected context remains to be confirmed.

V. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to examine, through a critical synthesis of the relevant literature, how the NEP 2020 restructuring of Indian higher education is likely to intersect with the specific occupational and psychosocial context of Kashmiri college teachers to shape work stress, burnout, and coping. Drawing on the Job Demands-Resources model and

the transactional theory of stress and coping, the review argues that Kashmiri college teachers face a double burden: the demand intensification common to NEP implementation nationally, superimposed on a resource environment already constrained by decades of conflict-related institutional disruption. The coping literature reviewed suggests that this resource constraint is likely to push teachers toward emotion-focused and avoidant coping by structural necessity rather than individual preference, with implications for how burnout risk should be understood and addressed in this specific setting.

The central limitation of this paper is one it has been explicit about throughout: it synthesises secondary literature and proposes a framework for future primary research rather than reporting new empirical findings, because no dataset specific to Kashmiri college teachers under NEP 2020 currently exists in the peer-reviewed literature. This is precisely the gap the paper identifies as most urgent. The methodological framework proposed here - a stratified survey using validated burnout, stress, and coping instruments alongside a context-specific measure of NEP-related demands - offers a concrete and implementable path toward closing it. Until such empirical work is undertaken, institutional and policy responses to faculty wellbeing during this transition will necessarily rest on inference from adjacent populations rather than direct evidence from the population most affected.

Future research should prioritise three directions: a baseline cross-sectional survey of the kind proposed in the Methodology section, to establish actual prevalence and correlational patterns rather than theoretically inferred ones; qualitative work capturing how individual teachers appraise and narrate their experience of NEP-related change, which survey instruments alone cannot capture; and, over time, longitudinal designs capable of tracking how burnout and coping evolve as the policy moves from initial rollout toward routine implementation. Colleges and higher education administrators in the region, in the interim, would be well served by treating faculty workload and support capacity as an explicit variable in NEP implementation planning, rather than an incidental consequence of it.

REFERENCES

- [1] Agyapong, B., Obuobi-Donkor, G., Burbach, L., & Wei, Y. (2022). Stress, burnout, anxiety and depression among teachers: A scoping review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(17), Article 10706.
- [2] Ali, A., & Kumar, S. (2023). Indian healthcare workers' issues, challenges, and coping strategies during the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 20(4), Article 3661. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20043661>
- [3] Ashokkumar, T., Russel Raj, T., Rajadurai, A., Abishini, A. H., & Anchani, A. H. (2025). Analyzing the impact of the new educational policy 2020: A comprehensive review of India's educational reforms. *Evaluation and Program Planning*, 108, Article 102515. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.evalprogplan.2024.102515>
- [4] Bakker, A. B., & Demerouti, E. (2007). The job demands-resources model: State of the art. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 22(3), 309-328.
- [5] Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Sanz-Vergel, A. (2023). Job demands-resources theory: Ten years later. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 10, 25-53. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-120920-053933>
- [6] Belay, A. A., Gasheya, K. A., Engdaw, G. T., Kabito, G. G., & Tesfaye, A. H. (2023). Work-related burnout among public secondary school teachers is significantly influenced by the psychosocial work factors: A cross-sectional study from Ethiopia. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1215421>
- [7] Carver, C. S. (1997). You want to measure coping but your protocol's too long: Consider the Brief COPE. *International Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 4(1), 92-100.
- [8] Chaudhry, S., & Chhajer, R. (2023). Enhancing psychological well-being of school teachers in India: Role of energy management, thriving, and stress. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1239587>
- [9] Demerouti, E., Bakker, A. B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W. B. (2001). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 86(3), 499-512.
- [10] Kulal, A., Abhishek, N., Dinesh, S., Bhat, D. C., & Girish, A. (2024). Evaluating the promise and pitfalls of India's National Education Policy 2020: Insights from the perspectives of students, teachers, and experts. *SAGE Open*, 14(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241279367>
- [11] Lazarus, R. S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Stress, appraisal, and coping*. Springer Publishing Company.
- [12] Maslach, C., & Jackson, S. E. (1981). The measurement of experienced burnout. *Journal of Occupational Behaviour*, 2(2), 99-113.
- [13] Ministry of Education, Government of India. (2020). *National Education Policy 2020*. https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf
- [14] Pushpalatha, R., & E, K. (2024). Burnout and occupational stress among schoolteachers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangalore urban and Bangalore rural. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(4), 713-722.
- [15] Shiny, A. A., & Anandhi, K. (2026). Study on job stress, coping strategies, organizational support, and their impact on job performance among faculty members in arts and science colleges. *ShodhKosh: Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 7(11s), 621-628. <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v7.i11s.2026.8775>
- [16] Sudershan, A., Rehman, S., Manzoor, T., Shaban, B., Pushap, A. C., Sudershan, S., Bashir, M., & Malik, S. A. (2025). Depression, anxiety, and stress among college students: A Kashmir-based epidemiological study. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 16, Article 1633452. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1633452>
- [17] Thomas, J., & Reyes, M. E. S. (2024). Understanding the new stress factors affecting teachers' burnout: A scoping review. *Makara Human Behavior Studies in Asia*, 28(1), 1-18.