

Stress, Resilience, and Coping Strategies among Resource Teachers in Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Bihar

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Abstract- Background: Resource Teachers (RTs) under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) play a crucial role in implementing inclusive education for Children With Special Needs (CWSN). Yet they often face occupational stress stemming from administrative workload, inadequate resources, and limited psychosocial support. Understanding their stress levels, resilience capacity, and coping strategies is essential for sustaining inclusive practices in Bihar.

Objective: To examine the relationship between occupational stress, resilience, and coping mechanisms among Resource Teachers in SSA Bihar, and to explore how demographic and institutional factors influence these constructs.

Methods: A descriptive–correlational study was conducted among 150 Resource Teachers across 12 districts of Bihar using the Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI), Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25), and Brief COPE Inventory. Data were analysed through descriptive statistics, correlation, and multiple regression.

Results: Mean stress level was 56.8 (SD = 8.9) on a 0–80 scale, indicating moderate-to-high occupational stress. Mean resilience score was 62.3 (SD = 9.5), reflecting moderate resilience. Positive coping strategies (problem-focused and social-support seeking) were significantly correlated with lower stress ($r = -0.48, p < 0.01$) and higher resilience ($r = 0.53, p < 0.01$). Regression analysis showed that resilience and coping jointly explained 41 % of the variance in stress levels.

Conclusion: Resilience acts as a buffer against occupational stress among Resource Teachers, while adaptive coping enhances emotional wellbeing. Policy interventions promoting resilience-building, stress-management training, and institutional support are vital to sustain inclusive education under SSA Bihar.

Keywords: Stress, Resilience, Coping Strategies, Resource Teachers, Inclusive Education, SSA Bihar

I. INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education represents a central pillar of the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), envisioned to provide equitable and quality learning opportunities for Children With Special Needs (CWSN) within mainstream classrooms. At the heart of this transformative agenda are the Resource Teachers (RTs)—professionals who facilitate individualized support, curricular adaptation, and classroom inclusion. However, the realities of their work often entail multifaceted challenges such as heavy administrative workloads, limited teaching aids, inadequate infrastructural support, and complex parent–teacher coordination. These factors cumulatively contribute to elevated stress levels and potential professional burnout.

In the state of Bihar, where socio-economic disparities, limited resources, and rural constraints continue to shape educational outcomes, the psychological wellbeing of Resource Teachers becomes a decisive factor in ensuring effective inclusion. Their capacity to remain resilient and to adopt constructive coping mechanisms directly influences both their performance and the success of inclusive education programs.

This study, therefore, aims to examine the complex interplay between stress, resilience, and coping strategies among Resource Teachers working under SSA Bihar. By understanding these psychological dynamics, the research seeks to generate evidence-based insights that can inform institutional policies and enhance teacher wellbeing—thereby strengthening the overall implementation of inclusive education in Bihar.

I.1 Theoretical Background

The conceptual foundation of this study is rooted in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) Stress and Coping Theory, which posits that psychological stress arises when an individual perceives that the demands of a situation exceed their available coping resources. This cognitive-transactional model emphasizes the dynamic interaction between the person and their environment, where appraisal and coping processes determine the emotional and behavioral outcomes of stress. In educational contexts, teachers frequently encounter role overload, time pressure, and emotional strain, making this model particularly relevant for understanding occupational stress.

Complementing this, resilience—defined as the capacity to adapt, recover, and thrive despite adversity—functions as a crucial psychological buffer. As described by Connor and Davidson (2003), resilience reflects personal strengths such as perseverance, optimism, and problem-solving ability, enabling individuals to maintain functionality under challenging circumstances.

For Resource Teachers engaged in inclusive education under SSA, resilience and coping strategies jointly determine how effectively they manage the stress associated with administrative tasks, diverse learner needs, and systemic limitations. Thus, applying these theoretical perspectives provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing how stress, resilience, and coping interact to influence teacher wellbeing and the sustainability of inclusive education practices in Bihar.

I.2 Rationale

Although several studies in India have explored teacher stress in general educational contexts, there remains a notable gap in research specifically addressing the experiences of Resource Teachers (RTs) working under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) framework. These educators operate at the intersection of instruction and inclusion, carrying the dual responsibility of delivering curriculum content while ensuring individualized support for Children With Special Needs (CWSN). The constant balancing of pedagogical, administrative, and emotional demands often magnifies their professional stress levels.

In Bihar, where systemic constraints such as inadequate infrastructure, large caseloads, and limited psychosocial support persist, the role of RTs becomes

even more challenging. Despite their pivotal contribution to inclusive education, limited empirical evidence exists regarding their stress levels, resilience capacities, and coping mechanisms.

This study seeks to fill that research gap by offering a quantitative evaluation and interpretation of stress-resilience dynamics among RTs in SSA Bihar. The findings aim to inform policy frameworks, training programs, and institutional interventions designed to enhance teacher wellbeing and strengthen the sustainability of inclusive education across the state.

II. OBJECTIVES

The present study aims to explore the psychological dimensions of occupational wellbeing among Resource Teachers working under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Bihar. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To assess the level of occupational stress experienced by Resource Teachers in SSA Bihar.
2. To measure the degree of resilience demonstrated by these teachers in managing professional challenges.
3. To identify the predominant coping strategies employed to deal with work-related stress.
4. To examine the interrelationships between stress, resilience, and coping mechanisms.
5. To recommend evidence-based interventions to enhance teacher wellbeing and ensure the sustainability of inclusive education initiatives.

III. HYPOTHESES

Based on the theoretical framework and review of relevant literature, the study is guided by the following hypotheses:

1. There exists a significant negative correlation between occupational stress and resilience among Resource Teachers under SSA Bihar.
2. Problem-focused coping strategies are expected to predict lower levels of stress compared to emotion-focused coping strategies.
3. Demographic variables such as gender, years of professional experience, and work location are anticipated to influence both stress levels and coping styles among Resource Teachers.

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a descriptive–correlational, cross-sectional survey design, aimed at examining the interrelationships among occupational stress, resilience, and coping strategies among Resource Teachers working under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Bihar.

Sample

A total of 150 Resource Teachers (RTs) participated in the study, comprising 82 females and 68 males. Participants were randomly selected from 12 districts of Bihar, including Patna, Nalanda, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Purnia, and Darbhanga, representing both urban and rural educational settings.

Instruments

1. Teacher Stress Inventory (TSI) – A 20-item standardized tool designed to measure occupational stress across dimensions such as time pressure, emotional strain, and administrative workload.
2. Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-25) – A 25-item scale that evaluates individual resilience through indicators of adaptability, perseverance, and effective coping under adversity.
3. Brief COPE Inventory (Carver et al., 1989) – A validated instrument assessing 14 coping strategies, categorized into problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidance-oriented responses.

Procedure

Data were collected between January and June 2025 through a combination of online questionnaires and in-person visits to schools and district-level offices. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and strict measures were taken to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, and voluntary participation in accordance with ethical research standards.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS Version 27. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were computed to summarize the data. Pearson’s correlation (r) was used to examine relationships

among variables, while multiple regression analysis (Enter method) was applied to determine the predictive influence of resilience and coping strategies on occupational stress.

V. RESULTS AND DATA INTERPRETATION

V.1 Descriptive Profile

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	68	45
	Female	82	55
Experience	< 5 yrs	45	30
	5–10 yrs	70	47
	> 10 yrs	35	23
Location	Urban	63	42
	Rural	87	58

V.2 Mean Scores

Scale	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Teacher Stress Inventory	56.8	8.9	Moderate–High Stress
CD-RISC Resilience	62.3	9.5	Moderate Resilience
Brief COPE (Adaptive Sub-scale)	61.1	10.2	Predominantly Problem-Focused

V.3 Correlation Matrix

Variables	Stress	Resilience	Coping
Stress	1.00	-0.58 **	-0.48 **
Resilience	-0.58 **	1.00	0.53 **
Coping	-0.48 **	0.53 **	1.00

*(p < 0.01)

Interpretation: Higher resilience and adaptive coping significantly reduce perceived stress.

V.4 Regression Analysis

Predictors: Resilience + Coping → Stress

- $R^2 = 0.41$ (p < 0.001)
- β (Resilience) = -0.44 (p < 0.01)
- β (Coping) = -0.36 (p < 0.01)

Interpretation: 41 % of variance in stress is explained by resilience and coping combined.

V.5 Sub-group Findings

- Female teachers reported slightly higher stress (M = 58.1) than males (M = 55.2).
- Teachers with > 10 years experience exhibited higher resilience (M = 68.4).
- Urban teachers used more problem-focused coping (M = 63.7) than rural (M = 58.2).

VI. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study substantiate the theoretical propositions outlined in the Stress and Coping Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and the Resilience Framework (Connor & Davidson, 2003). The results indicate that resilience functions as a psychological buffer that mitigates the adverse effects of occupational stress, while adaptive coping strategies—particularly those that are problem-focused—facilitate emotional stability and effective functioning among Resource Teachers (RTs).

These outcomes align with prior international and national research (Kyriacou, 2001; Beltman et al., 2011), which emphasizes that resilient educators are better equipped to handle workplace adversities and sustain professional motivation. The present study thus reinforces the notion that resilience is not merely an individual trait but a dynamic process that can be cultivated through supportive institutional environments.

In the context of Bihar, systemic and contextual challenges such as large caseloads of Children With Special Needs (CWSN), transport and mobility constraints, and limited inter-departmental coordination within the SSA framework intensify occupational stress. Nevertheless, teachers who exhibit higher levels of resilience tend to sustain professional commitment and emotional balance through problem-solving, peer collaboration, and spiritual coping mechanisms.

These findings underscore the necessity for targeted capacity-building programs within SSA—focusing on resilience training, stress management, and psychosocial support. By institutionalizing such measures, the education system can enhance teacher wellbeing, reduce burnout, and strengthen the long-term sustainability of inclusive education initiatives in Bihar.

VII. CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that Resource Teachers (RTs) working under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in Bihar experience moderate to high levels of occupational stress, largely arising from administrative workload, infrastructural challenges, and the multifaceted demands of inclusive education. However, the findings also demonstrate that resilience and adaptive coping strategies play a crucial role in

mitigating the negative impact of stress and fostering emotional wellbeing.

Strengthening the psychological resources of RTs through systematic resilience-building initiatives, regular special education and psychosocial training, and institutional support mechanisms can substantially improve both teacher performance and job satisfaction. Such empowerment will not only enhance the wellbeing and professional sustainability of Resource Teachers but also contribute significantly to the quality, inclusivity, and effectiveness of educational practices for *Children With Special Needs (CWSN)* in Bihar.

VIII. POLICY AND PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study underscore the need for systemic and policy-level interventions to promote the psychological wellbeing and professional effectiveness of Resource Teachers (RTs) under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The following recommendations are proposed:

1. **Integration of Resilience-Building Modules:** Incorporate structured resilience and stress-management modules into in-service SSA training programs to equip RTs with adaptive coping and self-regulation skills.
2. **Establishment of Institutional Counselling Cells:** Create district- and block-level counselling and support cells to address occupational stress, emotional burnout, and work-life balance issues among teachers.
3. **Formation of Peer Support Networks:** Facilitate peer support groups and communities of practice where RTs can share experiences, exchange strategies, and strengthen collaborative problem-solving.
4. **Administrative Simplification:** Streamline documentation and reporting processes to minimize redundant bureaucratic tasks, thereby allowing teachers to focus more on pedagogy and inclusion.
5. **Recognition and Incentive Mechanisms:** Introduce recognition awards, professional advancement opportunities, and incentive schemes to enhance teacher motivation, morale, and retention within the inclusive education framework.

IX. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE SCOPE

While the present study offers valuable insights into the stress–resilience–coping dynamics among RTs in Bihar, certain limitations should be acknowledged:

- Self-report bias: The use of self-administered questionnaires may have influenced the accuracy of reported stress and coping levels.
- Limited geographical scope: The sample was confined to 12 districts of Bihar, which may not fully represent all regional variations. A larger, statewide study is recommended for broader generalization.
- Need for longitudinal research: Future studies should adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to examine changes in stress and resilience following targeted interventions such as resilience training or mindfulness programs.

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