

Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Regulation and Psychological Well-Being among Special Educators: A Systematic Review

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Abstract

Special education is a deeply relational form of teaching. In addition to their teaching duties, special educators frequently have to manage behavioural crises, family problems, difficulties in communication, the special needs of disabled pupils, and the slow progress of students who require a great deal of support. While this continuous emotional engagement may improve teaching, it can also result in compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, and a decline in mental health. The present systematic review examines research that was published between 2015 and 2025 and which focuses on compassion fatigue, emotional regulation, and the mental health of educators, with particular attention to special education settings. Searches were carried out in Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar using keywords relating to compassion fatigue, secondary traumatic stress, burnout, emotional regulation, teacher well-being, and special education. The review comprised peer-reviewed English-language studies that looked at teachers or education professionals together with at least one of the areas in question. Approximately fifty studies satisfied the criteria and were analysed thematically. The evidence indicates that compassion fatigue among special educators is caused by prolonged empathic engagement, exposure to student trauma, job overload, the absence of institutional support, and a lack of opportunities for emotional recovery. It was found that emotional regulation acts as the main protective factor; teachers who employed positive strategies such as cognitive reappraisal, mindful awareness, reflective coping, and self-compassion experienced less emotional exhaustion and had better well-being. On the other hand, suppression, avoidance, and unprocessed emotional strain were linked to greater compassion fatigue and worse job performance. The review proposes a framework in which emotional regulation plays a key role in the relationship between compassion fatigue and mental well-being. The results show that teacher well-being should be considered a matter for schools and policy, not merely something that falls within the personal responsibility of individual educators. As a result, the review recommends structured emotional regulation training, peer support, trauma-informed supervision, and school-level well-being programmes, particularly for special educators in demanding circumstances.

Keywords: Compassion fatigue; emotional regulation; psychological well-being; special educators; teacher stress; burnout; secondary traumatic stress; resilience; systematic review

How to cite this article: Yooshing NR, Aqil Z., Compassion Fatigue, Emotional Regulation and Psychological Well-Being among Special Educators: A Systematic Review. *Int J Drug Deliv Technol.* 2026;16(84s): 659-668; DOI: 10.25258/ijddt.16.84s.72

1. Introduction

Teaching is often seen as a caring profession. However, this label can sometimes be dismissed too quickly and does not always reflect the reality of care as experienced by teachers. These professionals perform listening, manage conflicts, address concerns, reassure parents, analyze behaviors, and provide comfort and support in the classroom.

These aspects are even more complicated for special education, as this type of student may have various disabilities, disorders, behavioral problems, history of trauma, or require care and support from adults. Therefore, special education teachers must perform multiple roles as teachers, advocates, administrators, psychologists, and coordinators.

At the same time, the connection with students that is so important for special education can be overwhelming and crush the educator. The key concept that applies to this phenomenon is compassion fatigue. This term generally

refers to a state of emotional impairment resulting from prolonged exposure to the suffering of others. This condition overlaps with compassion, job-related stress, and secondary traumatic stress, but each concept is distinct and should be carefully considered.

Generally, compassion fatigue is a response to the continuous involvement in the troubles and dramas of the students, whereas burnout typically results from job-related stress and organizational causes. Although burnout can overlap with compassion fatigue, both conditions differ from simple work-related stress, which can also affect teachers' emotional regulation processes. Contemporary studies on the topic of teacher well-being have gone beyond the traditional scope of stress, burnout, or emotional exhaustion and investigated the aspects of psychological functioning that are essential for maintaining good relationships with students.

Emotional regulation plays a crucial role in educators' work as they constantly address issues related to human emotions, conflicts, and individual behavior. More specifically, emotional regulation refers to the processes by which individuals monitor and alter their emotions and reactions to events in order to adapt their responses. Emotion regulation is essential for teachers because it directly affects their interactions with students, as well as their general classroom performance and quality of education provided.

As for the concept of well-being, this term is generally understood as a sense of coherence, self-fulfillment, achievement, and satisfaction and is related to an individual's overall psychological functionality. Researchers in the area of special education have devoted much attention to each of the aspects listed above.

Studies on compassion fatigue are more related to human services and often examine health care professionals who provide extensive psychological support to patients. Researchers acknowledge the phenomenon as a unique condition but often overlap it with such terms as compassion, job-related stress, and burnout.

Emotional regulation is frequently examined in the context of classroom instruction or the learning environment. Studies on psychological well-being can focus on multiple factors related to education, including stress, emotional regulation, or the impact of school climate on teachers' performance. Even though well-being is essential for educators, most of the research into the topic does not consider the role of compassion fatigue or the impact of emotional regulation in education settings.

Therefore, the present study provides a conceptual analysis of three interrelated phenomena that are often overlooked in the field of special education. The study aims to investigate the influence of compassion fatigue and emotional regulation on teachers' psychological well-being

Objectives of the Review

The review focused on six related objectives. First of all, the research aimed to identify the published articles on compassion fatigue in the target population of special education teachers, published between 2015 and 2025. Second, the study attempted to determine the role of emotional regulation in terms of stress, performance, and classroom practices of these professionals. Thirdly, the research was intended to review the understanding of teachers' well-being in stressful contexts. Furthermore, the study tried to find out the connection between compassion fatigue, emotional regulation, and well-being. In addition, the research was supposed to develop a model that could help explain the emotional mechanisms of special educators. Finally, the research aimed to reveal gaps in the existing literature which might be an essential basis for further studies, interventions, and policy-making initiatives.

Method

A systematic review design was adopted to locate, organize and synthesize empirical literature relevant to the three target constructs. The review followed the

broad logic of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), including database searching, duplicate checking, title and abstract screening, full-text assessment and thematic synthesis. Figure 1 presents a PRISMA-style summary of the study selection process. Because the original manuscript saved the final included corpus but not the exact number at each step of the way, the diagram below represents the documented procedure and specifies the points where numbers were not explicitly reported.

The search was conducted in Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, PsycINFO, and Google Scholar.

The combination of search terms included "compassion fatigue" AND teachers, "secondary traumatic stress" AND educators, "special education teachers" AND burnout, "emotional regulation" AND teachers, "teacher emotional regulation", "psychological well-being" AND teachers, "teacher well-being" AND stress terms, and similar combinations with the Boolean operator "AND".

In addition, the reference lists of the papers retrieved were surveyed in order to identify additional reports.

Amongst inclusion criteria were the dates of database coverage (2015 – 2025), the language of publication (English), the target population of the study (teachers, special education teachers, or educational professionals), and the topics of discussion (compassion fatigue, emotional regulation, psychological wellness, and related terms).

Furthermore, the papers selected had to present a mix of empirical, review, and theoretical evidence.

The exclusion criteria, on the other hand, comprised healthcare professionals as the target population, lack of methodological details, duplication in the reports included in the specified databases, appearing as an editorial or opinion piece, and being unrelated to the topic.

The included literature was thematically categorized for the purpose of this study.

For each paper, details noted comprised the authors and the year of publication, country or setting if specified, the sample size and design of the study, the variables under evaluation, and the results.

Finally, three themes were determined based on the content of the selected readings: compassion fatigue, emotional regulation, and psychological wellness in educators. A fourth theme that united the three emerged from the mediating and protective role of emotional regulation in each of the three areas.

Study Selection and Quality Appraisal

The review process was designed to privilege studies that had clear populations, defined constructs and interpretable findings. Titles and abstracts were examined first to remove papers that did not address educational settings. Full texts were then read to confirm whether the paper examined teachers, special educators, emotional functioning, compassion fatigue, stress, burnout, secondary traumatic stress or psychological well-being. Review articles and meta-analytic papers were used to support synthesis where they clarified broader patterns in teacher mental health.

Quality appraisal considered the clarity of research questions, appropriateness of design, description of sample, validity of measures, transparency of analysis and relevance to the review questions. Quantitative studies were examined for sampling procedures, measurement tools and statistical interpretation. Qualitative studies were considered in relation to participant description, credibility of analysis and

richness of teacher experience. Mixed-method studies were assessed for integration between numerical and narrative findings. The review did not conduct a meta-analysis because the studies differed in populations, settings, instruments and outcome definitions. A thematic synthesis was therefore more suitable for identifying patterns across the literature.

PRISMA-style Flow Diagram of Study Selection

Editable version based on the review process described in the article

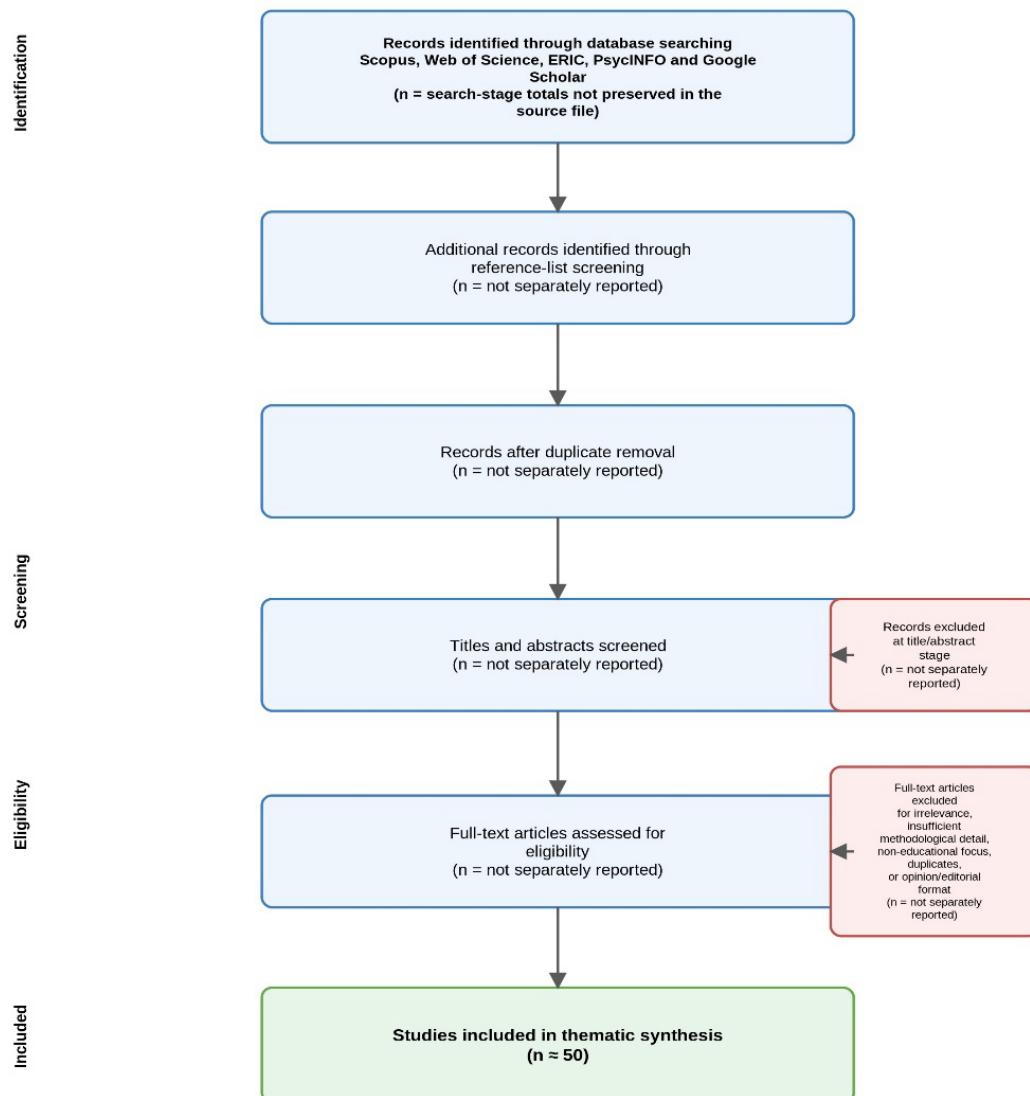


Figure 1. PRISMA-style flow diagram of study selection

Note. The original manuscript reported the final included corpus as approximately fifty studies but did not preserve exact numerical counts for each intermediate screening step. Accordingly, this PRISMA-style figure summarizes the documented workflow and explicitly marks intermediate counts as not separately reported.

Table 1 Thematic synthesis of reviewed studies

Theme	Evidence pattern	Implication for special education
Compassion fatigue	Sustained emotional labour, exposure to student trauma, role overload, challenging behaviour, low administrative support.	Higher emotional exhaustion, reduced empathy, irritability, lower job satisfaction and attrition risk.
Emotional regulation	Cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness, self-compassion, emotional awareness and reflective coping repeatedly appeared as adaptive strategies.	Lower burnout and compassion fatigue; stronger classroom relationships, resilience and professional satisfaction.
Psychological well-being	Supported by autonomy, leadership support, collegial recognition, professional identity, resilience and manageable workload.	Improved classroom climate, sustained motivation, better teacher-student interaction and lower intention to leave.
Integrated pattern	Emotional regulation mediates the effect of compassion fatigue on well-being and is strengthened by institutional support.	Teacher mental health should be addressed through training and school systems, not only individual coping.

Table 2 Representative study streams informing the synthesis

Study / stream	Focus	Contribution to present review
Jennings (2015)	Teacher stress, mindfulness and self-compassion	Teachers with weaker coping resources showed greater emotional strain, supporting the need for emotional skill development.
Hydon et al. (2015)	Secondary traumatic stress in educators	Exposure to student trauma was linked with emotional numbness, irritability and reduced professional efficacy.
Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2017)	Emotional demands and teacher burnout	Low support and high emotional demand predicted exhaustion and intention to leave teaching.
Bettini et al. (2019)	Working conditions of special educators	Role overload and inadequate administrative support increased emotional exhaustion among special educators.
Christian-Brandt et al. (2020)	Trauma-informed education settings	Special education teachers working with emotional and behavioural disorders showed high compassion fatigue risk.
Taxer & Gross (2018)	Emotion regulation strategies	Cognitive reappraisal reduced exhaustion, whereas suppression intensified stress and lowered well-being.
Wang, Hall & Rahimi (2020)	Emotion regulation, burnout and life satisfaction	Adaptive regulation mediated the link between work stress and psychological well-being.
Braun et al. (2022)	Mindfulness-based teacher training	Structured emotional regulation practices improved awareness and reduced stress.

Harding et al. (2019)	Teacher mental health and student outcomes	Teacher well-being was associated with student well-being, behaviour and school engagement.
Hascher & Waber (2021)	Teacher well-being review	Well-being was shown to be multidimensional and dependent on emotional, cognitive and social factors.
Nnubia et al. (2023)	Special educators in Nigeria	Higher compassion fatigue was negatively related to life satisfaction and emotional stability.
Ghaffar & Amjad (2025)	Special educators and therapists	Adaptive coping and emotional regulation reduced compassion fatigue in professionals working with children with special needs.

Table 3 Integrated conceptual framework

Work demands in special education	Compassion fatigue	Psychological well-being
Student trauma, behavioural needs, role overload, documentation, limited resources	Emotional exhaustion, reduced empathy, secondary traumatic stress, professional strain	Life satisfaction, emotional balance, commitment, classroom effectiveness
Institutional support and training	Adaptive emotional regulation: reappraisal, mindfulness, reflective coping	Resilience and sustained professional engagement

Note. The framework summarizes the direction of evidence identified across the reviewed literature. Emotional regulation is positioned as the main mediating and buffering mechanism

Profile of Included Evidence

The included studies represented a range of educational contexts and teacher populations. While some studies evaluated interventions targeted at special educators, others explored the experiences of general teachers, novice instructors, and educators working with traumatized students or in inclusive settings. In particular, the phenomenon of compassion fatigue was directly addressed in several studies. In other cases, compassion fatigue was conceptualized in terms of similar constructs such as secondary traumatic stress, emotional exhaustion, empathy fatigue, burnout, and occupational stress. In turn, the appraisal of emotions was operationalized by such variables as cognitive reappraisal, suppression, self-compassion, mindfulness, emotional competence, and social-emotional skills. Finally, psychological well-being was measured by life satisfaction, professional fulfillment, resilience, engagement, stress recovery, and the intent to stay in the teaching profession.

Conceptual differences found in the reviewed articles are an advantage in terms of diversity but complicate the quantitative analysis of the prevalence of compassion fatigue and its relationship to psychological wellbeing. In particular, in several studies, compassion fatigue was considered a distinct construct, while in others, it was equated with burnout, secondary traumatic stress, or other similar phenomena. Therefore, the synthesis focuses on the common conceptual ground underlying research articles.

Results: Thematic Synthesis

The reviewed literature presents a consistent picture: the emotional demands of teaching are not incidental to the profession; they are built into it. Special educators appear to be especially vulnerable because they work at the intersection of academic instruction, disability support, behavioural management and emotional caregiving. Across studies, compassion fatigue was linked with repeated exposure to student distress, high workload, role ambiguity, low administrative support and limited spaces for professional reflection.

The evidence also shows that emotional regulation shapes how teachers experience these demands. Teachers who reappraise difficult situations, remain emotionally aware and use reflective coping are more likely to sustain empathy without becoming overwhelmed. Those who rely on suppression or avoidance may appear professionally composed in the short term, but such strategies often intensify internal strain over time. Emotional regulation therefore functions as a bridge between external demand and internal well-being.

Psychological well-being emerged as both an outcome and a resource. Teachers with stronger well-being reported greater job satisfaction, professional commitment, classroom patience, instructional confidence and relational warmth. Poor well-being, in contrast, was associated with emotional exhaustion, reduced motivation, withdrawal from students and stronger intention to leave the profession. The literature repeatedly shows that the well-being of educators is also related to student experience: emotionally healthy teachers are better able to maintain supportive classroom climates.

Theme 1: Compassion Fatigue among Educators

Research published in the last decade has increasingly recognized compassion fatigue as a relevant risk for educators. Studies such as Hydon et al. (2015) and Herman et al. (2018) show that teachers working with trauma-exposed students may internalize student distress and experience emotional numbness, irritability, fatigue and a decline in professional efficacy. These findings are especially relevant to special education, where teachers often provide long-term support to students with complex behavioural or emotional needs.

Bettini et al. (2019) and Christian-Brandt et al. (2020) highlight the role of working conditions. Special educators are frequently expected to design individualized instruction, manage challenging behaviour, collaborate with families, complete documentation and coordinate with other professionals. When these responsibilities are paired with limited administrative support, compassion fatigue becomes more likely. Ziaian-Ghafari and Berg (2019) further suggest that high empathy, when unsupported by institutional resources, can increase emotional exhaustion.

More recent studies reinforce these patterns across national contexts. Research after the COVID-19 pandemic, including work by Tatum (2023), describes heightened emotional demands as teachers responded to disrupted learning and increased student mental health needs. Studies from Nigeria, Australia, Sweden and South Asia point to the same broad conclusion: compassion fatigue is not limited to one school system, but its severity is shaped by resources, leadership, recognition and access to psychological support.

Theme 2: Emotional Regulation in Teaching

Emotional regulation has become a central construct in teacher well-being research because teaching requires constant emotional adjustment. A classroom is a place where things can turn from calm instruction to conflicts, frustrations, disruptions, and even parent concerns in an instant. In special education contexts, such instances appear to be more common, and the stakes are often higher. Gross (2015) defines emotional regulation as a process, during which individuals evaluate their emotional responses and modify them in order to manage behaviour. As applied to instruction, it means recognizing one's emotions, becoming aware of their relevance, choosing an effective response, and then returning to homeostasis after the triggering event has passed.

Taxer and Gross (2018) offer insightful clarification on the difference between adaptive and maladaptive regulation tactics. Cognitive reappraisal, deep acting, problem-focused coping, mindfulness, and self-compassion are all associated with lower levels of exhaustion and improved job satisfaction. In contrast, suppression and avoidance lead to higher stress levels and reduced wellbeing. Sutton and Harper (2019), as well as Chang (2020), highlight research proving that teachers who successfully regulate their frustration and anxiety tend to have more positive relationships with students and foster receptive learning environments.

Finally, a review of the readings suggests that emotional regulation is a learnable domain. In particular, mindfulness- and socio-emotional learning-based approaches have been proven effective in helping educators manage their emotions and reduce stress, according to Braun et al. (2022) and several other papers mentioned in the module. Therefore, when designing policies and practices aimed at improving emotional regulation among teachers, it is essential to remember that they are more likely to develop sustainable tactics when supported by supervisors, peers, reflective practices, and access to emotional regulation resources at school. Thus, mere encouragement to engage in self-regulation will be ineffective if teachers have to navigate these challenges on their own.

Theme 3: Psychological Well-Being among Educators

Psychological well-being among educators includes emotional stability, life satisfaction, professional meaning, self-efficacy, resilience and the ability to function effectively in stressful settings. Studies by Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2015), Acton and Glasgow (2015), Wang et al. (2015) and others show that teacher well-being is strongly influenced by workload, autonomy, leadership support, role clarity and professional identity. Special educators often face additional pressure because of individualized planning, behavioural intervention and the emotional intensity of their relationships with students and families.

Research by Gray et al. (2017), Renshaw and Long (2018), Harding et al. (2019) and Hascher and Waber (2021) shows that teacher well-being is not merely a personal benefit. It has wider educational consequences. Teachers with stronger well-being tend to report greater patience, empathy, instructional effectiveness and engagement. They are also more likely to remain in the profession. When well-being declines, teachers may become emotionally distant, less responsive and more vulnerable to burnout or attrition.

The post-pandemic literature adds another layer. Carroll et al. (2022) and related studies describe how uncertainty, increased workload, digital transition and intensified student support needs affected teacher mental health. At the same time, peer support, institutional recognition and adaptive coping were repeatedly identified as protective. These findings strengthen the argument that teacher well-being must be supported at organizational and policy levels rather than left to individual resilience alone.

Integrated Relationship among the Three Constructs

The central synthesis of this review is that compassion fatigue, emotional regulation and psychological well-being form a connected psychological system. Compassion fatigue in educators is triggered by the frequent exposure to student suffering, which is further moderated by the ability to regulate emotions. The two factors, in turn, are positively related to psychological wellbeing. The level of psychological wellbeing determines the extent to which student suffering turns into educator's fatigue. Therefore, positive psychological wellbeing mediates the relationships between emotion regulation and educator's wellbeing.

It is possible to illustrate the mediation and moderation using an example of a special needs educator who is frequently exposed to student suffering, poor results, parent complaints, administrative pressure, and the feeling of having to take care of their students on a personal level. In such a scenario, compassion fatigue is likely to develop if negative emotions related to education are poorly regulated. In other words, positive regulation would prevent such an educator from developing severe levels of compassion fatigue. As can be seen from this example, emotion regulation fully mediates educator's wellbeing, whereas wellbeing, in turn, moderates compassion fatigue by determining the extent of emotional regulation.

The ability to regulate emotions can also be moderated from the outside, which defines the influence of schools on the wellbeing of teachers. Therefore, leadership, administrative supervision, consultation, services, and work organization are organizational factors that determine teachers' abilities to regulate emotions. At the same time, the absence of relevant services, consultation opportunities, and high levels of responsibility without enough resources constitute the main challenges to emotional regulation for educators.

The analysis presented above was conducted to support the conclusion that the study of educators' compassion fatigue and wellbeing is pertinent to both Indian and global contexts. The rationale behind this assumption is based on the fact that compassion fatigue is increasingly recognized as a global workplace concern. The presence of the phenomenon across settings can be suggested by the fact that consultation practices and services designed to address it are available to students and educators in developed countries. While India appears to lag behind in terms of consultation and service provision, the concept of wellbeing is actively advanced in the country.

It is reasonable to build upon the global assumptions when discussing teacher wellbeing in India, where special needs educators are highly likely to experience compassion fatigue. At the same time, there are a number of factors related to education and its unique context in India that require separate consideration. For example, education, in general, and special needs education, in particular, are viewed in India as a selfless sacrifice involving devotion to students regardless of personal costs. This belief is supported by the lack of resources, consultation opportunities, and psychological services available to educators. In other words, the global context fully applies to special needs educators in India who have to deal with even more challenges than their international colleagues. However, cultural beliefs do not appear to help in terms of regulating emotions and managing fatigue. The factors specific to India include limited resources and high societal expectations.

Discussion

The reviewed papers offer three main arguments. The first point is that compassion fatigue requires a particular consideration in education, especially in special education, as it is manifested through more complicated mechanisms than overwork or poor work-life balance. This is explained by the fact that working with the

feeling of being responsible for too many individuals' emotions leads to dysfunctional behavioral patterns on both professional and classroom levels. The second point is that most of the reviewed papers highlight emotional regulation as the core mechanism which plays the central role in the process of developing compassion fatigue. The most effective coping strategies are those which help educators recontextualize triggering situations or effectively regulate their emotions. Nonetheless, the researchers note that emotional regulation, as a concept, is not enough to address compassion fatigue, but should be complemented with other factors on institutional, methodological, and individual levels.

The third point is that teacher well-being emerges as a central theme throughout the reviewed papers, reports, and articles. It is noted that it affects all domains of education, ranging from retention to classroom management and student achievement. That is why it should be prioritized in any agenda, as a critical success factor in special education. Even though the reviewed articles contain substantial evidence on the importance of teacher well-being for students, there is still a need for more investigations in this field. The main limitation of the reviewed papers is that most of the researchers employed cross-sectional designs, and there are not enough studies on the etiology of compassion fatigue among special educators. More empirical studies on the development and progression of symptoms of compassion fatigue throughout the career are needed to be undertaken. It is suggested that future research should prioritize the investigation of coping strategies which can be employed by the special educators to prevent further manifestations of compassion fatigue. Such studies can employ randomized controlled trials, which were not included in any of the reviewed papers. Future research should prioritize the consideration of moderators and mechanisms which can affect the development of compassion fatigue and employ mixed-methodology designs. Moreover, additional qualitative studies are needed to explore the attitudes of special educators towards compassion fatigue, emotional labor, and coping strategies. The reviewed papers offer statistical data and theoretical assumptions but lack individual perspectives on the issue. The future studies should also include the exploration of the backgrounds of the educators who can be subject to compassion fatigue. The majority of the reviewed articles focus on theoretical aspects of compassion fatigue without taking into account the vast range of factors which can affect special educators in different ways.

Conceptual Framework

Based on the synthesis, the review suggests a simple working model. Emotional sources of distress in special education include trauma, behavioral issues, role overload, and insufficient institutional support leading to compassion fatigue. Subsequently, reduced psychological functioning emerges as a result of emotional fatigue, depersonalization, professional dissatisfaction, and withdrawal. The key psychological mechanism involved in the process is emotional regulation, which when effective, can interrupt the development of compassion

fatigue. The key psychological mechanisms that interrupt the process include cognitive reappraisal, mindfulness, emotional awareness, and reflective coping. The process can be promoted by institutional support via creating an environment that supports regulation and recovery.

Implications for Practice and Policy

The results of the study have multiple implications for the educational context, the teacher's professional development, and policy interventions. First of all, it is critical to equip both prospective and current teachers with emotional regulation skills as a vital part of their professional practice. The course should include developing a positive outlook and locus of control, along with specific strategies to prevent, pause, reframe, regulate, and seek help in response to stressful triggers. Second, reflective supervision and peer consultation should be organized for teachers to openly discuss difficult cases and receive the necessary support. Third, when developing special education policy, it is critical to take into account the additional costs imposed on teachers in terms of higher caseloads, paperwork, behavior management, parent involvement, and other factors. Appropriate interventions may include revisions of workload, access to peer support, crisis management, administrative guidance, and other services. Lastly, school culture should be trauma-informed and responsive to the needs of both students and staff. A traumatized child should not be left alone with all the challenges he/she faces at school. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an appropriate collective response to such cases rather than relying on one individual, namely, the teacher.

Limitations of the Review

The present review is limited by the scope and the variability of the included studies as well as the availability of research on special educators. First, the majority of the reviewed articles describe the phenomenon of stress and teacher burnout, which encompasses compassion fatigue. Second, the review is based on the articles published in English language only, which may limit the representativeness of the findings by excluding studies conducted in other languages. The review's methodology is also a limitation because it was not possible to archive the records with exact numbers of included/sampled studies at different stages of the screening process. Although the number of included articles (around fifty) is presented in the PRISMA flowchart, there are no numbers for other stages. The distribution of the reviewed studies was most probably skewed towards the Western education system, which limits the applicability of the findings in other regions, such as India and the Global South. Nevertheless, the overall trends identified in the scoping review can be used as a basis for future studies aimed at reducing compassion fatigue in special educators.

Conclusion

The present systematic review aimed to establish links between compassion fatigue, regulation and teachers' wellbeing. The study contributes to the body of knowledge by demonstrating the prevalence of emotion-

related difficulties experienced by teachers working in special needs education as part of their professional activity. These challenges cut across all career levels, with little regard for their socio-demographic characteristics. Teachers who are unable to regulate such emotions stand to develop secondary traumatic stress and a decreased level of empathy and psychological wellbeing in their personal and professional life. The present study serves as a reminder of the importance of emotion regulation for teachers' wellbeing at work. Schools, teaching institutions, and policy makers at the national level must endeavour to create conditions that allow educators to build resilience to stress, manage emotions and cope with related difficulties. This will require investing more effort in teachers' continuous professional development, as well as providing sufficient pedagogical, methodological, and material support to help them reflect on and address their needs. In addition, authorities should consider the role of mentorship, supervision, working conditions, load, time management, and other factors in teachers' emotional regulation, compassion fatigue, and overall wellbeing. Lastly, the present review highlights the need for future high-quality, mixed-methods and longitudinal studies on compassion fatigue and teachers' wellbeing. Such research could build on the findings of this study by addressing a range of topics, including the significance of context, culture-specific aspects of the phenomenon, and potential interventions to alleviate the symptoms of compassion fatigue and ineffective emotion regulation.

Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge the academic support of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Integral University, Lucknow. No conflict of interest is declared.

Manuscript Communication number : IU/R&D/2026-MCN0004960

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