



New Trends  
in Psychology

## Understanding School Transition Stress in Children Aged 8–9: Observations from a School Counselor in Nepal

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**Abstract: Objectives:** This study examines the emotional and behavioral challenges faced by children aged 8–9 during school transitions in a private school in Kathmandu, Nepal. **Prior Work:** While international research has highlighted school transition as a critical developmental challenge, Nepalese literature has given little attention to the psychological experiences of children at this stage. **Approach:** A qualitative, observational method was employed over two academic years, focusing on Grade 3 students. Data sources included counseling session notes, classroom observations, and informal conversations. **Results:** Findings reveal prominent emotional and behavioral responses, including anxiety, aggression, withdrawal, and somatic complaints, particularly within the first weeks of transition. Teacher-student interactions, family dynamics, and peer relationships strongly influenced adjustment. **Implications:** The study emphasizes the need for teacher training, early emotional screening, and accessible counseling support to reduce transition stress and foster resilience in children. **Value:** This research provides one of the first in-depth explorations of school transition stress in Nepal, offering context-specific insights that may guide policy, intervention, and further research.

**Keywords:** school transition; child psychology; behavioral adjustment; peer relationships; counseling support

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## 1. Introduction

While school transitions are often viewed as routine, they can be significant emotional events for children, especially in middle childhood, where social identities and emotional regulation are still developing. In the context of Nepal, where school systems are rapidly evolving yet emotional well-being remains under-addressed, the psychological challenges that accompany academic transitions are frequently overlooked. These transitional phases are pivotal moments in a child's academic journey, where the foundation for future social, academic, and emotional resilience is often laid.

Grade 3 (ages 8–9) represents a particularly sensitive phase in child development. At this stage, students begin to navigate more complex social dynamics, develop greater independence, and face increasing academic expectations. Cognitive abilities are expanding, but emotional regulation is still in its early stages of development. Drawing from Erikson's psychosocial theory and Freud's latency stage, this period is marked by the formation of peer groups, internalization of norms, and a strong desire for acceptance. The anxiety and stress experienced during school transitions can be exacerbated by the complexities of this developmental stage, where children may experience identity confusion, peer rejection, or challenges in self-regulation.

Transitions, if poorly managed or unaddressed, can have profound effects on children's emotional well-being. When the systems that children depend on such as family, school, and peers, fail to offer adequate support, children can exhibit heightened anxiety, behavioral regression, and withdrawal. These stressors can not only affect their academic performance but also their ability to form meaningful relationships and develop healthy coping mechanisms.

Despite growing awareness of child mental health, few empirical studies in Nepal address the emotional experiences of children during transitions, especially from the perspective of in-school psychologists who are privy to the daily challenges students face. This paper seeks to fill this gap by offering observations gathered across two academic years in a private IPC-based school in Kathmandu. Focusing on Grade 3 students, the study explores behavioral and emotional adjustment patterns and aims to highlight the systemic and relational factors that contribute to or buffer transition stress.

Furthermore, the study acknowledges the broader cultural and socio-economic contexts of Nepal that may affect children's experiences during this crucial phase.

The rapid modernization and urbanization of Nepal's education system often overshadow the importance of emotional well-being. In particular, the disconnect between academic pressures and emotional support systems within schools presents a growing challenge for educators and mental health professionals alike.

By drawing on Erikson's psychosocial stages and Freud's theory of latency, this paper will explore how children's emotional responses to transitions are shaped by various interconnected factors. These include their family environment, peer relationships, teacher-student dynamics, and the school culture itself. This holistic approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the emotional experiences of children not only through isolated observations but also within the broader relational and systemic contexts that affect their development.

The paper aims to provide meaningful insights into the emotional and behavioral challenges faced by Grade 3 students, illustrating how transitions are not just academic milestones but deeply psychological events that require careful attention. It underscores the critical need for schools to establish early psychological support systems, particularly through emotionally attuned teachers, structured peer integration, and accessible counseling services. Such systems are essential not only for mitigating stress but also for fostering resilience, social integration, and academic success during these formative years.

In doing so, this paper highlights the importance of creating supportive environments where students can successfully navigate school transitions, ensuring that their emotional and psychological needs are addressed in a timely and effective manner. The findings from this study aim to contribute to the growing body of research on child mental health in Nepal, providing a foundation for future interventions and policy recommendations that prioritize the emotional well-being of students, particularly during pivotal transitional moments in their academic journeys.

- Resource Allocation
- Parental Engagement
- Teacher Training
- Early Emotional Screening

This study aims to explore the emotional and behavioral challenges faced by students during school transitions in a private IPC-based school in Kathmandu, Nepal. It examines how family dynamics, peer relationships, and teacher-student interactions shape students' adjustment processes. The research also investigates the coping

mechanisms children use and how these influence their emotional well-being and behavior. Additionally, it assesses the effectiveness of counseling interventions, with a focus on emotional regulation and social integration. Ultimately, the study highlights the need for a structured, school-based psychological support system to reduce transition-related stress through teacher training, peer engagement, and accessible counseling services.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Despite increasing awareness of child mental health, early school transitions in Nepal are often approached as administrative or logistical matters, with limited psychological support provided. The lack of culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate interventions contributes to distress among students aged 8–9. This research aims to uncover the emotional and behavioral challenges during transition and emphasize the urgent need for school-based support systems tailored to this critical stage.

## **3. Concept and Terms**

- **School Transition Stress:** The emotional and behavioral challenges children experience when adapting to new educational settings.
- **Middle Childhood:** Developmental stage (ages 8–9) characterized by identity formation, emotional regulation, and peer bonding.
- **IPC-Based School:** Schools that follow the International Primary Curriculum, often with progressive, student-centered approaches.
- **Coping Mechanisms:** Strategies, both healthy and maladaptive, that children use to manage emotional stress.
- **Latency Stage (Freud):** A psychoanalytic theory phase where children internalize norms and social roles, typically corresponding to middle childhood.

## **4. Related Work**

School transition is a life-changing event for children, rarely matched in intensity by other early-life experiences. These transitions involve profound personal and social

changes that significantly influence the immediate and long-term wellbeing of children, their peer groups, teachers, and schools. According to Symonds (2015) in addition to the general stress related to transitioning to a new academic environment, some children experience heightened anxiety due to challenges in making new friends, meeting academic expectations, and navigating more complex school rules.

A successful transition from primary to secondary school is crucial for psychosocial wellbeing. Children with special educational needs (SEN) face added complexity during this phase. However, the psychological impact of this transition on children's adjustment has not been widely studied. Hughes, Banks and Terras (2013) conducted a systematic review of existing literature comparing children with SEN to their typically developing peers. Their findings showed that children with specific learning difficulties perceived lower levels of social support and experienced more peer victimization following transition. Yet, they noted that methodological limitations and the small number of studies restricted the strength of their conclusions (Hughes et al., 2013).

Pianta and Walsh (1996) conceptualize the transition to school as an ecological event involving dynamic interactions among children, parents, teachers, and institutions. According to their model, "readiness" is not an inherent trait of children but a result of the transition ecology—a system of relationships between settings like home, school, and childcare that collectively influence development (Pianta & Walsh, 1996). This perspective emphasizes the broader environment's role in shaping children's ability to adapt to school life.

Social skills are another critical factor in determining how well children adjust to new school environments. Children with poor social skills or difficulties in forming friendships may feel isolated or rejected during this period, which intensifies stress. Furthermore, the transition from early childhood education to primary school introduces higher academic expectations. The requirement for greater autonomy, including completing homework and adhering to stricter rules, can be overwhelming and contribute to stress and anxiety, particularly if children begin to feel incompetent or unsuccessful.

#### **4.1. School Transition Stress in Children in Nepal**

Although much of the research on school transition stress is rooted in Western contexts, little attention has been given to countries like Nepal. The socio-cultural

and educational environments in Nepal differ significantly, making context-specific insights critical. Academic performance is highly emphasized in Nepalese society, and educational success is often seen as a pathway to upward mobility. This creates pressure on children during transitions to new school settings, particularly those from under-resourced or rural schools who may face significant adaptation challenges.

Moreover, Nepalese cultural norms, which stress obedience and respect for authority, can lead to heightened anxiety during transitions. Children may feel inhibited in expressing their struggles or asking for help, fearing they might appear disrespectful. This cultural dimension can exacerbate the stress experienced during transition periods.

#### **4.2. The Role of School Counselors in Mitigating Transition Stress**

School counselors are key figures in supporting students through school transitions. According to Gysbers and Henderson (2012), counselors help students manage anxiety, develop social skills, and build resilience. They also engage parents and teachers to create a supportive network around the child during this vulnerable period. These services are even more critical in Nepal, where access to mental health support is limited outside of schools.

Interventions such as cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), mindfulness training, and social-emotional learning (SEL) are frequently used by school counselors to help students navigate transition stress (Gysbers & Henderson, 2012). However, the role of school counselors in Nepal remains underdeveloped, especially in rural regions where trained professionals are scarce. As a result, many children may not receive the psychological and emotional support they need during these critical phases.

#### **4.3. Gaps in the Literature**

Despite the body of literature on school transitions in Western countries, several key gaps remain regarding Nepal:

- **Lack of Context-Specific Research:** Most current research focuses on high-income countries. Nepal's unique cultural and socio-economic conditions are not adequately represented.

- **Underexplored Role of School Counselors:** While school counselors are considered essential in theory, there is a lack of empirical research on their role in Nepalese schools.
- **Cultural and Socio-Economic Influences:** The effects of traditional norms, family dynamics, and socio-economic disparities on transition stress in Nepal are under-researched.
- **Long-Term Outcomes:** There is limited exploration of the long-term effects of transition stress on academic and psychological outcomes in the Nepalese context.

## 5. Future Work

This study aims to address these gaps by examining the experiences of Nepalese children aged 8–9 as they transition between schools. Through the lens of a school counselor, it investigates how cultural expectations, socio-economic status, and the presence or absence of counseling services influence the levels of stress children face. This research will contribute to a more nuanced understanding of school transitions in Nepal and guide the development of effective support strategies for students and schools alike.

## 6. Solution Approach

This study employs a qualitative, observational methodology to capture the nuanced emotional and behavioral responses of children during school transitions. The approach is grounded in the day-to-day experiences of a school counselor working within an IPC-based private school in Kathmandu, Nepal. The study aims to explore the adjustment challenges faced by students, during the transition into the academic year. Participants were selected based on regular access to counseling services or observable difficulties related to their adjustment to the school environment.

Observations were conducted over the course of two academic years, spanning from the start of one academic session to the beginning of the next. This longitudinal approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of students' emotional and behavioral adjustments over time, with follow-up observations and insights emerging at the onset of the third academic year. Data were gathered from multiple sources to capture a holistic view of the students' experiences. These sources

included narrative field notes from counseling sessions, informal conversations with students, and behavioral observations during classroom activities, recess, and transitions between school events.

Ethical consent for all interactions was obtained through the school's standard counseling intake process, ensuring that parents and guardians were informed of the study's goals and that students' participation was voluntary. As part of ethical practice, the study maintained strict confidentiality, and all identifying information was anonymized to protect student privacy.

The data were reviewed using a qualitative approach, identifying recurring patterns and trends across individual students and overtime. Particular attention was paid to how students' emotional and behavioral responses evolved during the first few weeks of the academic year. By following these changes, the study was able to document the intensity and duration of transition stress, as well as identify factors that either exacerbated or mitigated the stress responses.

Through this observational methodology, the study offers a rich, context-specific understanding of how school transitions affect Grade 3 students. The findings provide valuable insights for school counselors, teachers, and administrators seeking to support students through transitional challenges.

## **7. Analysis of the Result**

### **7.1. Emotional Responses during Transition**

- **Initial Reactions to Transition**

Children's emotional responses to school transitions varied considerably. While some students were excited and enthusiastic about the new academic year, others experienced significant distress, particularly those transitioning to a new school environment. Emotional distress manifested in forms such as crying, anxiety, and difficulty adjusting to the new environment. Teachers and peers played an instrumental role in supporting these students through their emotional challenges, providing reassurance and guidance to ease the transition.

- **Separation Anxiety**

A considerable number of students displayed separation anxiety during the initial phase of the school year, especially in cases where children were transitioning into



school for the first time or moving to a new educational setting. This anxiety was manifested through crying, tantrums, and a strong reluctance to part from their parents. The anxiety often impeded the adjustment process, making it difficult for the students to settle into the school environment. Support from teachers and counselors, along with gradual exposure to the school setting, helped alleviate this distress.

- **Difficulty in Adjustment**

While most students adjusted to the school environment within the first two weeks, a few continued to struggle with the transition. These students exhibited behaviors such as avoidance of academic tasks, emotional regression, and reluctance to participate in school activities. In extreme cases, these students were unable to adjust and had to transfer to different schools. Early identification of students requiring additional emotional and behavioral support was critical to address these challenges in a timely manner.

## **7.2. Behavioral Changes**

- **Aggression and Mood Swings**

Aggression and mood swings were frequently observed among Grade 3 students, which were often linked to emotional dysregulation. These emotional challenges were compounded by underlying trust issues, making it difficult for some students to open up during counseling sessions. Students exhibited signs of irritability, frustration, and outbursts, which were often indicators of deeper emotional struggles. Behavioral interventions focused on managing these emotions and providing coping mechanisms to help these students regain emotional stability.

- **Peer and Teacher Dynamics**

The emotional responses of students were greatly influenced by their interactions with peers and teachers. Some students exhibited a dual personality, displaying different behaviors when with peers versus when in counseling sessions. This duality revealed the significant role that peer influence and teacher expectations played in shaping student behavior. Positive, supportive peer interactions and constructive teacher involvement were key factors in improving emotional adjustment and enabling students to better cope with their transition.

- Peer Relationships

As students settled into their new school environment, the majority began to form stronger bonds with both their peers and teachers. However, some students still faced challenges in building and maintaining peer relationships, which sometimes led to social withdrawal and emotional isolation. These students required ongoing support to build their social skills and foster connections with their classmates, which were essential for their overall emotional and social development.

### **7.3. Peer Relationships**

- Peer Comparison and Teasing

Peer comparison, teasing, and name-calling emerged as significant sources of stress for many students, particularly for those new to the school or those struggling with academic and emotional adjustment. The pressure of peer comparison often exacerbated feelings of insecurity, leading to emotional distress. In cases of bullying or harassment, the school's zero-tolerance policy was strictly enforced, with actions such as in-school suspension, isolation, or community service to address and rectify harmful peer behavior.

- Seeking Validation

Many students sought validation from their peers as a means of emotional reassurance. When these students did not receive the expected social approval, they often experienced feelings of abandonment, sadness, and social isolation. These emotional withdrawals were particularly evident in students who had difficulty establishing secure peer relationships. The lack of emotional validation from peers reinforced feelings of loneliness, which hindered their emotional development and social integration.

- Teacher-Student Dynamics

The interactions between students and teachers were crucial in shaping emotional responses. Positive and supportive teacher-student relationships helped students build confidence and emotional stability, whereas negative interactions, such as teasing or inconsistent behavior, often led to emotional distress and trust issues. The emotional tone set by teachers influenced how students coped with challenges in the school environment, reinforcing the importance of fostering positive teacher-student rapport to facilitate emotional well-being.

#### **7.4. Teacher-Student Dynamics**

- **Adjusting to Teaching Styles**

Students exhibited varying levels of comfort in adjusting to different teaching styles and classroom expectations. For instance, students whose teachers were overly friendly or informal often struggled to stay focused and engaged in lessons. This difficulty in balancing emotional warmth and academic structure sometimes resulted in a disruptive classroom atmosphere, where students were unable to maintain the necessary focus for learning. These students required additional support to adapt to different classroom dynamics.

- **Negative Teacher-Student Interactions**

In some cases, students faced emotional challenges due to negative interactions with teachers. For example, teachers occasionally engaged in teasing, using nicknames or jokes that peers then picked up on, which led to harmful teasing and alienation. This created an emotionally unsafe environment for the students affected, undermining their trust in their teachers and causing emotional distress. Such incidents underscore the need for careful attention to the way teachers interact with their students to ensure a supportive and respectful classroom environment.

- **Confidence and Trust Issues**

The ability of students to trust and engage with their teachers was essential for their emotional development and academic success. Positive teacher-student relationships fostered self-confidence and encouraged academic participation. However, for some students, past negative interactions with teachers created a barrier to trusting authority figures. This mistrust affected their emotional well-being, as well as their academic and social engagement. Efforts to build trust and consistency in teacher behavior were key to supporting these students.

#### **7.5. Family Dynamics and Influence**

- **Impact of Family Issues**

Children from divorced or separated families showed elevated levels of anxiety, stress, and lower self-confidence. These children often appeared emotionally disoriented, struggling to express their feelings in the classroom. The emotional burden stemming from family issues created a significant challenge regarding

academic engagement and social participation. Addressing the emotional needs of students from such backgrounds became a priority, as their family dynamics profoundly influenced their school experience.

- **Withdrawal and Emotional Overload**

Children from homes affected by parental conflict or dysfunction often exhibited signs of social withdrawal and emotional overload. These students frequently appeared overwhelmed, disengaged, and reluctant to participate in classroom activities. The emotional strain from home negatively affected their academic performance and social interactions, highlighting the need for specialized support for children dealing with family-related stress.

- **Unspoken Family Issues**

Many students initially withheld information about their family situations, later revealing these challenges during counseling sessions. One such case involved a student who experienced panic attacks, only later disclosing that their emotional distress was tied to unresolved family issues. This finding emphasizes the importance of creating a safe space where students feel comfortable sharing personal struggles. School counselors must remain attuned to these unspoken family challenges in order to provide appropriate emotional support.

## **7.6. Coping Mechanisms**

- **Healthy Coping**

Several students developed healthy coping mechanisms to manage stress, including participation in extracurricular activities such as sports, art, or skill-building. These outlets provided students with constructive ways to channel their energy and process their emotions. Additionally, some students engaged in academic activities or hobbies as a means of emotional regulation. These strategies contributed positively to the students' emotional adjustment and overall well-being.

- **Unhealthy Coping**

On the other hand, some students resorted to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as internalizing their emotions or acting out in disruptive ways. These coping strategies often resulted in emotional withdrawal or heightened conflict with peers and teachers. Addressing these unhealthy coping methods required targeted interventions

aimed at helping students express their emotions more constructively and develop healthier emotional regulation techniques.

- **Interventions and Support**

A variety of counseling techniques, including art therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and talk therapy, were employed to help students manage emotional challenges. Techniques such as journaling, empty chair exercises, and letter writing provided students with safe and structured avenues to process their feelings. While regular counseling showed noticeable improvements in emotional well-being for many students, challenges arose when parents were in denial or resistant to acknowledging the emotional needs of their children.

### **7.7. Gender Differences**

- **Boys vs. Girls**

Gender differences were evident in the way emotional challenges manifested among students. Boys were generally more likely to express emotional distress through aggression or externalizing behaviors, such as verbal outbursts or physical aggression. In contrast, girls were more likely to internalize their emotions, exhibiting symptoms such as sadness, withdrawal, or anxiety. These differences align with traditional gender norms, where boys are more likely to externalize their emotions, while girls internalize them. However, these patterns were not universally fixed and were influenced by individual personality traits and situational factors. Gender-specific interventions may be beneficial in addressing these emotional and behavioral distinctions.

### **7.8. Interventions and Support**

- **Counseling Approaches**

Various counseling techniques were utilized to support students through their emotional and behavioral challenges. Among the most prominent methods were art therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and talk therapy. Art therapy provided a creative outlet for students to express their emotions nonverbally, which was particularly effective for those who found it difficult to articulate their feelings verbally. CBT was applied to help students recognize and alter negative thought

patterns that contributed to their emotional distress, particularly in relation to anxiety and mood swings. Talk therapy allowed for a more direct, interpersonal approach, providing students with the opportunity to discuss their challenges and explore potential solutions in a supportive environment. Techniques such as empty chair exercises, journaling, and letter writing were also employed, offering students structured ways to process their emotions and reflect on their experiences.

- **Effectiveness of Counseling**

The counseling interventions showed positive outcomes for many students, especially those who attended sessions regularly. Students who engaged consistently in counseling demonstrated noticeable improvements in emotional regulation, coping skills, and overall mental well-being. These students were better equipped to manage stress, anxiety, and other emotional challenges related to the school transition. However, the effectiveness of these interventions was sometimes hindered when parents were in denial or resistant to acknowledging their child's emotional needs. This resistance often limited the students' access to the necessary support at home, which could have further reinforced the progress made in counseling. Thus, the involvement of parents and guardians played a critical role in enhancing the efficacy of counseling interventions.

- **Parent Involvement and Support** Parental involvement was crucial to the success of the interventions. In cases where parents understood and supported the emotional needs of their children, students responded positively to counseling, showing significant improvements in their emotional and behavioral adjustment. On the other hand, resistance or lack of understanding from parents regarding their child's emotional challenges often created barriers to effective intervention. It became evident that for counseling interventions to be fully effective, there was a need for greater parental education and involvement. Engaging parents in the counseling process and providing them with tools to support their child's emotional development at home was vital for reinforcing the strategies learned in therapy.

## **8. Results**

Observations were collected from approximately ten students in Grade 3 (ages 8–9) who were either referred to the school counselor or regularly engaged in sessions due to difficulties experienced during school transitions. Data gathered over the span

of two academic years revealed consistent patterns of emotional and behavioral distress within the initial weeks of the school year.

The most prominent emotional symptoms were tearfulness, anxiety, and social withdrawal, especially noticeable during the first two weeks of school. Several children exhibited hesitation or reluctance to enter the classroom, often requiring emotional reassurance or extended support from parents and staff at the school gate. Additionally, psychosomatic complaints, such as headaches or stomachaches without identifiable medical causes, were frequently reported during this period.

Behaviorally, children demonstrated a range of reactions including clinginess towards teachers, avoidance of academic tasks, and restlessness, particularly during transitional periods like recess or changes between subjects. In a few instances, irritability and mild aggression toward peers were observed, particularly among students who were struggling to adjust to new classroom routines or peer dynamics.

By the fourth to sixth weeks, most students exhibited noticeable improvements in emotional regulation and classroom adjustment. Those who received consistent support from the school counselor or empathetic engagement from classroom teachers showed faster adaptation. Positive coping behaviors were observed, including the verbalization of emotions, use of calming strategies, and proactive help-seeking.

However, students with pre-existing emotional sensitivity or limited prior experience in structured educational environments required extended periods of adjustment and continued psychological support. These students often presented prolonged emotional vulnerability, necessitating individualized intervention plans.

The data suggest that while transition-related stress in children aged 8 to 9 is typically acute and short-term, it can be intense and disruptive during the first month of the academic year. With timely and consistent intervention, most children gradually return to emotional and behavioral equilibrium. Nevertheless, early identification and tailored support remain crucial for a subset of children requiring longer-term emotional scaffolding.

## **9. Discussion and Conclusion**

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the emotional and behavioral challenges encountered by Grade 3 students (ages 8–9) during school transitions

within a private, IPC-based educational setting in Kathmandu, Nepal. The findings underscore that while transition-related stress is a normative aspect of middle childhood development, its intensity and persistence can be significantly influenced by familial dynamics, teacher-student relationships, and peer interactions.

The initial weeks of a new academic year often precipitate heightened emotional responses among children, manifesting as anxiety, tearfulness, and social withdrawal. These reactions align with Erikson's psychosocial theory, particularly the "Industry vs. Inferiority" stage, where children strive for competence and social acceptance (Erikson, 1963). The observed behaviors, such as reluctance to enter classrooms and psychosomatic complaints, suggest that transitions disrupt children's sense of stability and predictability, leading to emotional dysregulation.

In the Nepalese context, Sharma et al. (2013) found that children from broken families exhibited higher stress levels, indicating that family structure plays a critical role in children's emotional well-being during school transitions. Similarly, Subedi Chowi et al. (2023) reported that 8.5% of adolescents in Pokhara exhibited emotional problems, emphasizing the prevalence of such issues in Nepalese schools.

Family environment significantly impacts children's ability to adapt to school transitions. Children exposed to parental conflict, divorce, or emotional neglect often carry pre-existing anxiety into the school setting, which can be exacerbated by new academic and social demands. The lack of secure attachments at home may lead to increased dependency on external validation and support within the school environment.

It is also seen that adolescents from less educated families and those without parental presence were more vulnerable to behavioral problems. This underscores the necessity for schools to recognize and address the compounded challenges faced by students from disadvantaged family backgrounds.

Teachers serve as pivotal figures in either mitigating or exacerbating transition-related stress. Positive teacher-student relationships, characterized by warmth, consistency, and emotional attunement, provide a secure base for students navigating new academic and social landscapes. Conversely, emotionally unavailable or inconsistent teaching approaches can heighten students' distress.

Rawal (2022) emphasized that supportive teacher-student relationships in Nepalese schools significantly enhance student motivation and academic engagement. Similarly, Bhattarai and Wagle (2022) found that positive interactions with teachers



fostered students' curiosity and passion for learning, while negative experiences led to diminished academic performance.

Peer relationships undergo significant transformation during middle childhood, with children forming more complex social identities and seeking acceptance within peer groups. The formation of same-gender groups and adherence to emerging social norms can lead to exclusionary behaviors, such as bullying, which adversely affect children's emotional well-being.

Chowi et al. (2023) reported that peer relationship problems were common among girls, while hyperactivity and conduct problems were prevalent among boys in Pokhara schools. These findings suggest the need for gender-sensitive interventions that address the distinct social challenges faced by boys and girls during school transitions.

The provision of counseling services plays a crucial role in supporting students during school transitions. Interventions such as art therapy and cognitive-behavioral techniques can equip students with coping strategies to manage stress. However, the implementation of such services in Nepalese schools remains limited due to resource constraints and cultural stigmas associated with mental health.

Baraily (2021) identified several barriers to effective school transitions for children with disabilities in Kathmandu, including lack of awareness, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient policy implementation. These challenges highlight the broader systemic issues that impede the delivery of comprehensive psychological support within Nepalese educational institutions.

The case of "S.," a Grade 3 student exhibiting tearfulness, clinginess, and somatic complaints during the initial weeks of school, exemplifies the intersection of familial stressors and school-related challenges. Her discomfort with classroom noise and feelings of exclusion were compounded by her parents' separation and her mother's increased work commitments. Through consistent emotional support, teacher involvement, and structured peer engagement activities, S. demonstrated significant improvement by the sixth week of school, illustrating the efficacy of coordinated interventions.

The findings of this study underscore the imperative for Nepalese schools to adopt a holistic approach to student well-being during school transitions. Key recommendations include:

- **Early Emotional Screening:** Implementing assessments to identify students at risk of emotional and behavioral difficulties during transitions.
- **Teacher Training:** Providing educators with training in child psychology and trauma-informed practices to better support students.
- **Parental Engagement:** Encouraging active collaboration between schools and families to address home-related stressors affecting students.
- **Resource Allocation:** Investing in counseling services and creating safe spaces within schools for emotional regulation.
- By addressing these areas, schools can foster environments that support students' emotional resilience and academic success during critical transitional periods.

This study presents a school psychologist's perspective on the emotional and behavioral challenges experienced by Grade 3 students during school transitions within a private International Primary Curriculum (IPC)-based institution in Nepal. The findings illuminate the multifaceted nature of school transition stress, revealing that students' ability to adjust is deeply intertwined with their family environments, teacher-student relationships, and peer dynamics. Emotional responses such as anxiety, withdrawal, and somatic complaints were particularly pronounced during the initial weeks of the academic year, especially among children experiencing familial disruptions or lacking prior exposure to structured school settings.

While most students demonstrated gradual emotional and behavioral adaptation within four to six weeks, the transition process was notably prolonged and distressing for those with heightened emotional sensitivity or adverse home circumstances. These findings underscore the urgent need for timely, school-based emotional support interventions that address transition stress before it escalates into more entrenched psychological difficulties.

In the context of Nepal's evolving educational and psychological infrastructure, this research adds valuable insight into an underexplored demographic, middle childhood learners navigating early-grade transitions. The study emphasizes the importance of early emotional screening, school environments conducive to psychological safety, and regular professional development for teachers in child-centered communication and classroom management strategies. Furthermore, collaboration between educators, parents, and mental health professionals is essential to creating an

ecosystem where children's emotional well-being is not just acknowledged but proactively supported.

Future research should consider longitudinal approaches to examine the long-term effects of transition stress and the efficacy of structured school-based interventions. In addition, there is a pressing need to explore culturally informed, trauma-sensitive practices that can be standardized across Nepalese schools, thereby embedding mental health support within the fabric of educational practice. As Nepal continues to integrate psychological services within its educational systems, prioritizing early interventions during school transitions can significantly enhance students' developmental trajectories, academic engagement, and overall mental well-being.

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