Original Research Article

Omniscient Pte.Ltd.

Impact of Zen-G Protest in Nepal on Students' Well-being and Higher Education

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Abstract: The "Zen-G Protest" of September 2025, a digitally driven youth uprising in Nepal, represents a critical moment for the nation's socio-political and educational systems. This study aims to investigate the multifaceted impacts of these protests on university students' psychological wellbeing and educational experiences. Using a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive design, data from 222 university-level students were analyzed to assess the effects of exposure, participation, and societal disruption. Findings reveal that direct and indirect exposure to violence (witnessing clashes and consuming graphic media content) was significantly associated with heightened psychological distress. Notably, physical symptoms of anxiety (e.g., racing heart) were the most statistically significant indicator of distress. While active participation—physical or digital—did not significantly impact wellbeing, the unrest caused significant disruption to daily routines and a notable decline in perceived quality of life. Furthermore, students reported high career-related anxiety and moderate support for educational reforms, including enhanced civic education and mental health services, reflecting a desire for greater systemic accountability. Unlike traditional movements mediated by party-affiliated student unions, the Zen-G protests were characterized by decentralized, online mobilization of Generation Z youths, spurred by a social media ban and deep-seated frustration over corruption and limited civic freedoms. The study emphasizes on the urgent need for universities to implement psychosocial support and flexible academic strategies to boost student resilience and ensure academic continuity amidst political instability in Nepal.

Keywords: Zen-G Protest; Student well-being; Psychological distress; Higher education; Digital activism

1. Introduction

The "Zen-G Protest" of September 2025 marks a defining moment in Nepal's contemporary socio-political landscape, representing a digitally driven youth uprising that challenged long-standing political structures and governance practices.

Sparked by the government's sudden imposition of a nationwide ban on popular social-media platforms, the protests quickly spread across major cities, generating widespread civil unrest, casualties, and intense domestic and international scrutiny. Although the government eventually lifted the ban following sustained pressure,

the protests exposed underlying youth dissatisfaction rooted in corruption, unemployment, restricted civic freedoms, and distrust in political leadership. Beyond the immediate political upheaval, the movement significantly affected public life, including education, mobility, and community safety.

Student activism has historically been a key driver of political change in Nepal, with student unions playing crucial roles in the 1990 and 2006 People's Movements (Kafle, 2013; Snellinger, 2010; Thapa, 2022). Research highlights that these movements were strongly mediated by party-affiliated student organizations, which maintained patron–client relationships with mainstream political parties, thereby influencing governance and academic environments, particularly within public universities (Kafle, 2013; Poudel, 2015). While such alliances facilitated democratic transformation, they also contributed to persistent instability on university campuses, frequent disruptions of academic calendars, and a blurring of academic and political priorities (OnlineKhabar English News, 2025). The Zen-G protests, however, signify a distinct departure from these traditional forms of student activism. Emerging primarily from Generation Z youths, the movement relied on decentralized, online mobilisation rather than party-linked leadership, emphasizing civic freedoms, accountability, and technological rights (Vivekananda International Foundation, 2025; Clinic One, 2025).

Despite increasing media attention and policy debates around the 2025 Zen-G protests, few empirical work has explored how these events affected students' psychological wellbeing, sense of safety, learning environment, or academic trajectories. Existing literature on Nepal's student movements focuses largely on political ideology, organizational structures, and historical transformations (Kafle, 2013; Snellinger, 2010; Thapa, 2022). However, the unique nature of the Zen-G movement—a decentralized, digitally coordinated protest driven by Generation Z—demands fresh scholarly inquiry. Furthermore, the mental-health vulnerabilities of today's youth, shaped by post-pandemic stress, economic uncertainty, and rapid digital change, underscore the need to understand how socio-political crises shape their wellbeing and education. This study is justified by the urgent need for evidence-based insights to inform educational policy, school leadership decisions, psychosocial support

mechanisms, and youth-centred governance reforms in Nepal. In this respect, this study primarily aims to investigate the effects of the Zen-G protest on students' psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing in Nepal, focusing on how direct participation, media exposure, or societal disruptions influenced their mental health and stress levels. A secondary aim is to examine the protest's impact on students' educational experiences, including academic routines, learning engagement, safety perceptions, and institutional functioning. The study seeks to identify challenges arising from the unrest and provide insights for supporting student wellbeing and ensuring academic continuity during political instability.

2. Literature Review

The recent surge of youth-led protests in Nepal, often associated with "Generation Z" (Gen Z) or "Zen-G," represents a critical juncture in the nation's political and educational landscape. This review synthesizes existing literature across three key domains: the nature of student activism in Nepal, the specific characteristics and triggers of the recent Zen-G protests, and the psychological and systemic impacts of socio-political unrest on student well-being and higher education institutions.

Research across countries shows that students' wellbeing and mental health are increasingly under strain (Backhaus et al., 2020; Dopmeijer et al., 2021). Much of the literature focuses primarily on mental health rather than broader aspects of wellbeing. Some studies report that students experience higher rates of mental health problems than non-students (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2016) or the general population (Stallman, 2010), though other findings show no such difference (van der Velden et al., 2019). Evidence also indicates a decline in student wellbeing since the COVID-19 pandemic (Alkureishi et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2022). High academic pressure is frequently cited as a key factor behind poor wellbeing among university students (Dopmeijer et al., 2021), alongside pandemic-related disruptions (Doolan, 2021; Mathews et al., 2022; Petillion & McNeil, 2020).

Parallel to political concerns, the Zen-G protests raise significant questions about student wellbeing and educational continuity. Wellbeing—often described in terms of wellness, welfare, happiness,

life satisfaction, and quality of life—represents a holistic state encompassing psychological, emotional, social, and physical dimensions (McCrea et al., 2014; Barrington-Leigh & Escande, 2018). Scholars argue that wellbeing extends beyond the absence of illness and is closely linked to individuals' ability to manage stress, work productively, and contribute meaningfully to society (World Health Organization, 2025; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Models such as Dodge et al.'s (2012) wellbeing equilibrium framework further illustrate that wellbeing is achieved when personal resources sufficiently balance life's challenges (Mah, 2025). For students, wellbeing plays a central role in academic performance, motivation, and long-term development. Studies from various contexts show that socio-political unrest can significantly heighten psychological distress among young people, increasing anxiety, fear, and emotional exhaustion (Tamang, 2025). Early field reports following the Zen-G protests indicate rising levels of insomnia, trauma, fear of violence, and academic disengagement among school and university students. The abrupt closure of educational institutions, imposition of curfews, travel restrictions, and persistent uncertainty have further intensified the risk to student wellbeing. At a time when post-COVID-19 academic recovery is still fragile, such unrest threatens not only students' mental health but also their academic stability and long-term educational outcomes. Recognizing these gaps, this study investigates the implications of the Zen-G protest on students' wellbeing and their educational experiences in Nepal.

Despite the growing attention to student activism and political movements in Nepal, existing literature predominantly emphasizes historical student movements, party-affiliated student unions, and their political and organizational dimensions (Kafle, 2013; Snellinger, 2010; Thapa, 2022). There is limited empirical evidence on the contemporary, digitally driven Zen-G protests and their distinct characteristics, particularly the decentralized, social-media-based mobilization led by Generation Z youth (Vivekananda International Foundation, 2025; Clinic One, 2025). Moreover, while international studies highlight the psychological strain and wellbeing challenges faced by students in contexts of socio-political unrest (Backhaus et al., 2020; Dopmeijer et al., 2021; Tamang, 2025), there is a lack of research

examining these effects specifically within the Nepali context. In particular, little is known about how exposure to protests—whether through direct participation, media coverage, or societal disruption—impacts students' psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing. Similarly, the consequences of such unrest on educational continuity, academic routines, learning engagement, and institutional functioning remain underexplored. This gap is particularly significant given the unique vulnerabilities of Nepali students in the post-COVID-19 era, including heightened stress, economic uncertainty, and digital dependency, which may exacerbate the effects of political unrest on both mental health and academic outcomes. Therefore, research that integrates students' perspectives and assesses the multidimensional impact of the Zen-G protests is essential to inform evidence-based educational policies, mental health interventions, and institutional support strategies in Nepal.

3. Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional descriptive research design to investigate the effects of the Zen-G protest on students' psychological, emotional, and social wellbeing in Nepal, focusing on how direct participation, media exposure, or societal disruptions influenced their educational achievement levels in higher education of Nepal. A quantitative approach was selected because it allows systematic measurement of psychological constructs using validated scales and facilitates statistical analysis for hypothesis testing (Creswell, 2014). The study population included students of Mid-West University, Tribhuvan University and Far-West University, Nepal. A total sample population of the study was 222 university level students using convenience sampling technique and data was collected using questionnaires.

Data collection took place through online platforms (Google Forms, email, and Messenger), ensuring broad coverage and participant convenience. Before data collection, formal permission was obtained from relevant institutions, and informed consent was sought from all participants. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 25, employing descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, standard deviation) and Chi-Square test. Ethical standards were rigorously applied, including confidentiality, voluntary participation,

anonymity, and secure data handling. Respondents were also informed of the study's purpose and their right to withdraw at any stage. Cultural sensitivity was maintained throughout to ensure respectful engagement within the educational context. This methodological framework ensured scientific rigor, reliability, and validity in addressing the research objectives.

4. Result Analysis and Interpretation

The results of this study provide a comprehensive overview of how the Zen-G protests in Nepal affected students' wellbeing, psychological health, academic engagement, and perceptions of the educational system. Data were collected from 222 students to examine multiple dimensions, including exposure to violence, protest participation, anxiety and psychological distress, disruptions to daily life and academic routines, and concerns about future careers and educational reforms. The analysis highlights the complex interplay between direct and indirect exposure to unrest, emotional and physical stress, institutional responses, and students' aspirations for systemic change. By interpreting these findings, the study sheds light on the immediate and potential long-term impacts of politically charged events on student populations, emphasizing both vulnerability and resilience in the face of socio-political disruptions.

Table 1. Students' Exposure and Participation in Zen-G Protest (n=222)

Variables	Frequency	Mean	SD	P-value
Exposure to Violence/Clashes				
I personally witnessed clashes, violence, or police action related to the protests.	71	3.08	0.96	0.00*
I or a close family member was directly injured or affected by the violence.	67	3.27	0.85	
I was constantly exposed to graphic/disturbing images or videos of the protests on social media/news.	84	3.89	.65	
Participation in Protests				
I actively participated in the street protests.	47	3.39	0.93	0.62
I actively engaged in online/social media activism (e.g., sharing posts, organizing) related to the protests	175	3.46	0.88	

*$p\text{-}value \leqslant 0.05$ (i.e. Significant)

The data on students' wellbeing during the Zen-G protest indicate that a considerable number of students experienced varying levels of exposure to violence and protest activities. A notable portion (n=71) reported witnessing clashes, police action, or violent incidents, reflected in a moderate mean score of 3.08. The statistically significant p-value (0.00) suggests that such direct exposure had a meaningful association with students' wellbeing, likely contributing to heightened stress and psychological discomfort. Similarly, 67 students indicated that they or their close family members were directly affected or injured, with a slightly higher mean of 3.27. This also represents a significant concern, indicating that personal or familial harm was a real stressor during the protests. The highest exposure was reported for disturbing protest-related content on social media and news platforms (mean = 3.89), indicating widespread and consistent consumption of distressing visuals. This finding highlights the strong influence of media exposure on students' emotional states, which appears to be significantly linked to their wellbeing.

In terms of participation, fewer students (n=47) were involved in street protests, reflected in a moderate mean of 3.39. However, the non-significant p-value (0.62) suggests that physical participation in protests did not have a statistically meaningful impact on wellbeing. This may indicate that those who took part were either more prepared or less emotionally affected by such activities. In contrast, online activism was highly prevalent, with 175 students reporting engagement in digital advocacy and sharing protest-related content. Despite the high mean score of 3.46, this form of participation also showed no significant relationship with wellbeing outcomes. Overall, the analysis suggests that exposure to violence and disturbing media content—rather than active participation—was the primary factor influencing students' wellbeing during the Zen-G protest in Nepal.

Table 2 Students' Anxiety and Psychological Stress in Zen-G Protest (n=222)

Variables	Frequency	Mean	SD	P-value
Emotional/Cognitive Symptoms				
I felt nervous, anxious, or on edge during the period of the protests.	34	3.23	0.79	0.42
I was unable to stop or control worrying about the political situation and its impact.	97	3.45	0.85	
I had trouble relaxing or sleeping due to thoughts about the protests or its potential consequences.	44	3.48	1.06	
More than 15 years	47	3.56	0.87	
Physical/Behavioral Symptoms				
I experienced physical symptoms like a racing heart, dizziness, or shortness of breath when thinking about the protests.	73	3.62	0.67	0.04*
I felt an increased sense of being unsafe when leaving my home or attending school/university.	149	3.36	0.97	
I had difficulty concentrating on my studies/work due to the ongoing unrest.	82	3.37	0.84	0.31

*p-value $\leqslant$ 0.05 (i.e. Significant)

The data on Zen-G protest–related anxiety and psychological distress show that students experienced moderate levels of emotional, cognitive, and physical symptoms during the movement. Emotional and cognitive reactions were evident, with 34 students reporting feelings of nervousness or anxiety (mean = 3.23), and 97 students indicating difficulty controlling worry about the political situation (mean = 3.45). These findings suggest that ongoing uncertainty surrounding the protests contributed to persistent concern and mental strain, although the non-significant p-value indicates that these symptoms did not show a statistically strong association with the measured outcome variables. Similarly, 44 students reported trouble relaxing or sleeping (mean = 3.48), reflecting the psychological tension caused by prolonged exposure to protest-related worries, though again without statistical significance.

Physical and behavioral symptoms were more prominent. Seventy-three students reported experiencing physiological reactions such as racing heart, dizziness, or shortness of breath when thinking about the protests, with a relatively high mean score of 3.62. Importantly, this variable showed a significant p-value (0.04), indicating that physical symptoms were strongly linked to overall distress, making it one of the most impactful indicators of protest-related anxiety. Additionally, a large number of students (n=149) felt increased fear or sense of unsafety when leaving home or attending school (mean = 3.36), suggesting widespread behavioral vigilance and perceived insecurity during the protest period. Although not statistically significant, this elevated sense of risk demonstrates that the protest environment affected the day-to-day behaviours of many students. Overall, the analysis indicates that while emotional worry was common, physical symptoms of anxiety showed the strongest and most significant association with psychological distress during the Zen-G protest.

Table 3 Students' Well-being and Life Disruption in Zen-G Protest (n=222)

Variables	Frequency	Mean	SD	P-value
General Well-being				
I believe my overall quality of life has decreased since the beginning of the Gen Z protests.	71	3.86	0.69	0.00*
I feel optimistic about the future of Nepal despite the recent unrest.	67	4.41	0.48	
The protests caused significant disruption to my daily routines (e.g., travel, access to essentials).	84	4.17	0.52	
Academic/Professional Disruption				
The protests delayed my academic progress (e.g., cancelled classes, postponed exams).	47	4.20	0.62	0.50
I am more worried about my career/job prospects because of the political instability.	175	4.13	0.60	

The findings on wellbeing and life disruption during the Zen-G protest indicate that many students experienced notable challenges in their daily lives and overall sense of stability. A considerable number of students (n = 71) reported a decline in their overall quality of life, reflected in a high mean score of 3.86 and a significant p-value (0.00), showing a strong association between the protests and reduced wellbeing. Despite this, some students (n = 67) expressed optimism about Nepal's future, with an even higher mean of 4.41, suggesting that although current circumstances felt difficult, many maintained hope and resilience. Additionally, protest-related disturbances had substantially disrupted daily routines for 84 students (mean = 4.17), indicating widespread issues with mobility, access to services, and overall normal functioning during the period of unrest.

In terms of academic and professional impact, the majority of students experienced disruptions in their educational journey. Forty-seven students reported delays in academic activities due to cancelled classes or postponed exams, with a high mean of 4.20; however, the non-significant p-value (0.50) suggests that this disruption was not strongly linked to overall wellbeing indicators. A larger group (n = 175) expressed increased worry about their career or job prospects due to political instability (mean = 4.13), showing strong concern about long-term professional security. Although this variable was not statistically significant, the consistently high mean values indicate that political unrest led to substantial feelings of uncertainty. Overall, the analysis shows that while academic and career-related concerns were widespread, the most significant impact of the Zen-G protest on students was the reduction in perceived quality of life and disruptions to daily routines.

Table 4 Students' Well-being and Impact on Education during Zen-G Protest (n=222)

Variables	Frequency	Mean	SD	P-value
My teachers provided adequate emotional support or discussion space related to the protests.	34	4.28	0.49	0.35
The use of social media during the protests made me feel more informed and empowered in my learning.	97	4.15	0.56	
The political demands of the Gen Z protests align strongly with change in educational systems in Nepal.	44	4.03	0.69	
I felt pressure from peers to participate in the protests or express in social media for revisiting the pedagogical and evaluation system of Education.	47	4.14	0.68	
Impact on Teaching and Learning				
The protests significantly reduced the effectiveness of my teaching during the unrest.	73	4.12	0.63	0.72
My focus on academic tasks (grading, research) was heavily impaired by the political news.	149	4.15	0.60	
I felt my institution provided adequate guidance and support for managing student safety and academic continuity.	82	4.08	0.68	0.24
I felt personally responsible for providing emotional support to students affected by the protests.	140	4.18	0.56	

The data on students' wellbeing and the impact of the Zen-G protest on teaching and learning show that educational environments experienced notable emotional and academic strain during the protest period. Students generally agreed that teachers provided emotional support or space for discussion (mean = 4.28), although this relationship was not statistically significant (p = 0.35). A large number of students (n = 97) felt more informed and empowered in their learning due to social media use during the protests (mean = 4.15), indicating that digital platforms played a strong role in shaping awareness and engagement. Many also believed that the political demands of the Gen-G movement aligned with necessary changes in Nepal's educational systems (mean = 4.03), reflecting growing student expectations for reform. Peer pressure to participate in protests or express opinions online was also moderately high (mean = 4.14), suggesting that the political climate influenced students' social and academic interactions.

The protests also had clear implications for teaching and learning practices. A significant number of teachers

(n = 73) felt that the unrest reduced the effectiveness of their teaching (mean = 4.12), although the p-value (0.72) indicates no strong statistical association with broader wellbeing outcomes. Many respondents (n = 149) reported difficulty focusing on academic tasks due to constant exposure to political news (mean = 4.15), highlighting how the political environment interfered with concentration and productivity. While some participants believed their institutions provided adequate support for student safety and academic continuity (mean = 4.08), the non-significant p-value (0.24) suggests inconsistent perceptions across respondents. Additionally, a large group (n = 140) felt personally responsible for offering emotional support to affected students (mean = 4.18), indicating heightened emotional labor among teachers during the protests. Overall, the findings suggest that while the protest fostered empowerment and discourse, it also introduced emotional pressures and reduced academic effectiveness for both students and teachers.

Table 5 Students' Future Career and Educational System Change in Zen-G Protest (n=222)

Statements	Intensity					Mean	SD	Level
	N	R	S	O	VO			
The political instability has made me more likely to consider migrating abroad for study/work.	14.9	24.8	43.2	12.6	4.5	2.67	1.02	Medium
I am more worried about finding a decent job/career in Nepal now than before the protests.	12.6	24.3	43.7	14.9	4.5	2.74	1.01	Medium
Capture and edit digital photos movies or other graphics.	16.2	32.4	36.9	11.7	2.7	2.52	0.99	Medium
I believe that corruption and nepotism will continue to block merit-based career opportunities in Nepal.	20.3	33.3	29.3	14.9	2.3	2.45	1.04	Medium
I feel that my current education is providing me with the necessary skills to compete in the post-protest job market.	9.0	22.1	45.5	15.3	8.1	2.91	1.03	Medium
The curriculum should be reformed to better address contemporary political, social, and economic issues in Nepal.	18.5	31.5	34.2	13.1	2.7	2.50	1.02	Medium
Educational institutions should actively promote civic education and political engagement among students.	11.3	30.2	41.4	14.4	2.7	2.67	0.95	Medium
Politics should be completely removed from the administration and appointment processes within educational institutions.	8.1	25.7	46.8	17.1	2.3	2.80	0.90	Medium
More mental health and counseling services should be permanently established in schools/universities.	18.9	39.2	27.0	12.6	2.3	2.40	1.01	Medium
I believe teachers/faculty have a professional duty to guide students on responsible civic engagement and misinformation.	6.3	24.8	44.1	17.6	7.2	2.95	0.98	Medium
Total						2.66	0.81	Medium

The data on students' future career concerns and perceptions of educational system change during the Zen-G protest indicate a moderate level of uncertainty and desire for reform across all measured statements. Students expressed medium-level agreement that political instability is pushing them to consider migrating abroad for study or work (mean = 2.67), and many reported increased worry about securing decent employment in Nepal (mean = 2.74). These concerns reflect growing anxiety about the country's career landscape, shaped by instability and limited opportunities. Similarly, students moderately agreed that corruption and nepotism continue to obstruct merit-based career progress (mean = 2.45), showing persistent distrust in institutional fairness. Despite these concerns, students felt somewhat confident that their current education equips them with necessary skills for the evolving job market (mean = 2.91), indicating cautious optimism about their academic preparedness.

Regarding the need for educational reform, students consistently rated all items at a medium level, signaling widespread but moderate support for systemic changes. Many agreed that the curriculum should be updated to incorporate contemporary political, social, and economic issues (mean = 2.50), and that educational institutions should promote civic education and political engagement (mean = 2.67). There was also moderate support for removing political influence from academic administration and appointments (mean = 2.80), reflecting a desire for greater transparency and professionalism. Importantly, respondents highlighted the need for increased mental health and counseling

services in schools and universities (mean = 2.40), suggesting that the protest environment underscored the importance of psychological support. Students also moderately believed that teachers have a responsibility to guide them on responsible civic engagement and identifying misinformation (mean = 2.95). The overall mean score of 2.66 indicates a moderate level of concern and medium support for career-related and systemic educational changes, demonstrating that the Zen-G protest has meaningfully shaped students' expectations, aspirations, and perceptions of the future.

5. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the thematic findings derived from the analysis of student responses regarding their wellbeing during the Zen-G protest in Nepal, followed by a discussion of these results in the context of existing literature on political unrest, youth mental health, and digital activism.

Exposure to Violence, Media, and Psychological Distress

The findings indicate that exposure to violence—both direct (witnessing clashes or police action) and indirect (consumption of graphic content on social media)—was significantly associated with students' psychological distress. The highest mean score (3.89) was observed for exposure to disturbing media, highlighting the pervasive effect of digital platforms on emotional wellbeing. This aligns with global research suggesting that continuous exposure to sociopolitical unrest through media can heighten anxiety, insomnia, and fear among students (Backhaus et al., 2020; Dopmeijer et al., 2021; Tamang, 2025). Physical symptoms of anxiety, such as racing heart and dizziness, were significantly linked to overall distress (p=0.04), corroborating studies on the somatization of stress in youth exposed to conflict or unrest (Mah, 2025; World Health Organization, 2025). Interestingly, active participation in protests, whether physical or digital, did not significantly impact wellbeing, suggesting that engagement may serve as a coping mechanism or source of empowerment rather than a stressor, a pattern noted in literature on youth-led digital activism (Clinic One, 2025; Vivekananda International Foundation, 2025).

Life Disruption and Uncertain Future Aspirations

Students reported significant disruption to daily routines (Mean = 4.17) and a notable decline in perceived overall quality of life (p=0.00), reflecting the widespread socio-economic impact of the Zen-G protests. Career-related anxiety was high (Mean = 4.13), and many considered migrating abroad (Mean = 2.67), reflecting a sense of generational disillusionment linked to systemic corruption and nepotism. These findings resonate with literature that emphasizes how political instability and youth disillusionment influence educational and occupational trajectories (Kovess-Masfety et al., 2016; Alkureishi et al., 2022). Despite these challenges, students exhibited resilience, maintaining optimism about Nepal's future (Mean = 4.41), consistent with studies on youth activism showing hope as a persistent factor amid unrest.

Educational Context, Empowerment, and Reform Demands

The Zen-G protests influenced the educational environment both positively and negatively. Students felt informed and empowered through social media engagement (Mean = 4.15), supporting evidence that digital activism fosters political awareness and agency among Generation Z (Vivekananda International Foundation, 2025; Clinic One, 2025). The protests also highlighted demands for systemic reforms in education, including curriculum updates to reflect contemporary socio-political realities (Mean = 2.50) and enhanced civic education (Mean = 2.67). However, academic focus and teaching effectiveness suffered, as reported by students and teachers (Means = 4.12–4.15), reflecting the emotional and operational strain of unrest on institutions. The widespread call for increased mental health services (Mean = 2.40) and teachers' emotional labor (Mean = 4.18) underscores the critical need for institutional support to maintain student wellbeing and academic continuity (Tamang, 2025; World Health Organization, 2025).

6. Conclusion and Implications

The findings of this study suggest that the Zen-G protests of September 2025 had a profound and multifaceted impact on Nepali university students, affecting their psychological wellbeing, daily functioning, and educational experiences. Direct and indirect exposure to violence and disturbing media content significantly heightened students' psychological distress, with somatic symptoms such

as racing heart and dizziness indicating the tangible effects of perceived threat and uncertainty. While active participation—both physical and digital—did not significantly affect wellbeing, it appears to have offered a sense of agency and empowerment, demonstrating the dual nature of student activism as both a coping strategy and a source of civic engagement. The unrest disrupted daily routines and created substantial anxiety regarding career prospects and future stability, reflecting broader generational concerns about systemic corruption, nepotism, and limited opportunities in Nepal. Despite these challenges, students maintained a resilient outlook, demonstrating optimism about the country's future and signaling the persistent capacity for hope and adaptive coping in youth-led movements.

The implications of these findings are significant for educational policy, institutional planning, and youth support mechanisms. Firstly, universities and schools must recognize the mental health risks associated with socio-political unrest and provide accessible, ongoing psychosocial support, including counseling and stress management programs. Secondly, the observed disruption to academic routines and teaching effectiveness underscores the need for flexible institutional strategies to ensure learning continuity during periods of instability, such as hybrid or digital learning platforms. Thirdly, the protests highlight a strong demand for curricular reforms, civic education, and political literacy, reflecting students' desire for education systems that address contemporary socio-political realities and foster responsible engagement. Finally, teacher preparedness and emotional labor must be acknowledged and supported, as educators play a crucial role in mediating the emotional and academic impacts of unrest. Collectively, these insights emphasize the importance of integrating student wellbeing, academic resilience, and civic empowerment into educational planning and policy in Nepal, particularly in the context of a digitally connected and politically conscious Generation Z.

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