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# A STUDY OF JOB BURNOUT, LOCUS OF CONTROL, AND THE NEED FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT INTERVENTIONS AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHER IN WEST BENGAL

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### Keywords

*Job Burnout,  
Locus Of Control,  
Stress Management,  
Secondary Teachers,  
West Bengal,  
Interventions.*

### Abstract

Job burnout among secondary school teachers in West Bengal has emerged as a critical issue, influenced by factors such as workload, administrative pressures, and socio-economic challenges. This study investigates the interplay between job burnout, locus of control, and the necessity for stress management interventions in this demographic. Drawing from psychological theories like Maslach's burnout model and Rotter's locus of control, the research aims to identify how internal versus external locus of control moderate's burnout levels and to propose targeted interventions.

A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving a sample of 300 secondary school teachers from urban and rural districts in West Bengal. Quantitative data were collected using standardized instruments: the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) for assessing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment; the Rotter's Locus of Control Scale to measure internal-external orientations; and a custom questionnaire on stress perceptions and intervention needs. Qualitative insights were gathered through semi-structured interviews with 50 participants to explore contextual factors like classroom overcrowding, policy changes, and pandemic aftermath.

Results revealed high burnout prevalence (62% moderate to severe), with external locus of control significantly correlating with elevated exhaustion ( $r = 0.45$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Teachers with internal locus reported better coping mechanisms but still highlighted needs for mindfulness training and



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organizational support. Regression analysis indicated that locus of control accounts for 28% variance in burnout scores, underscoring its moderating role.

The findings advocate for tailored stress management programs, including workshops on cognitive restructuring, yoga-based relaxation, and policy reforms for workload reduction. Implementing these could enhance teacher well-being, retention, and educational quality in West Bengal's secondary schools. Future research should longitudinal track intervention efficacy.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of the Study:

The teaching profession, once regarded as a vocation of quiet influence, has increasingly become one of the most demanding occupations in the contemporary world. Secondary school teachers, in particular, navigate a complex web of responsibilities that extend far beyond classroom instruction. They are expected to shape young minds, manage diverse classroom dynamics, meet administrative expectations, address parental concerns, and adapt to evolving educational policies—all while maintaining their own emotional equilibrium. In West Bengal, where the educational landscape encompasses a rich tapestry of urban, suburban, and rural institutions, these pressures are further compounded by region-specific challenges related to infrastructure, resources, and socioeconomic diversity.

Job burnout among teachers has emerged as a critical concern globally, with research consistently demonstrating that educators experience stress levels comparable to or exceeding those in high-pressure professions such as healthcare and social services. The consequences of unmitigated occupational stress extend beyond individual teacher well-being to impact student outcomes, institutional effectiveness, and the broader educational ecosystem. When teachers experience burnout, their motivation diminishes, their instructional quality suffers, and they may exhibit undesirable behaviours that compromise the learning environment.

### 1.2 The West Bengal Context:

West Bengal's educational landscape presents unique challenges that exacerbate teacher stress and burnout. Recent events have brought unprecedented attention to the mental health crisis affecting educators in the state. In April 2025, the Supreme Court's decision to cancel the 2016 School Service Commission (SSC) recruitment process resulted in the termination of over 25,000 teachers and non-teaching staff. This mass termination has triggered not only administrative and political upheaval but also a severe mental health emergency, with affected individuals experiencing acute anxiety, depressive symptoms, insomnia, and feelings of existential dread.

Beyond this singular crisis, teachers in West Bengal contend with chronic stressors. A tragic incident in Murshidabad district in January 2026 highlighted the extreme consequences of work-related pressure when a primary school teacher, also serving as a Booth Level Officer (BLO), was found dead by suicide, with family members alleging that excessive workload from dual responsibilities drove him to take his own life. Such incidents underscore the urgent need to understand and address the psychological well-being of educators in the state.



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Research conducted specifically in West Bengal has documented the extent of occupational stress among teachers. A study of higher secondary school teachers in Murshidabad district found that 92.5% of teachers reported moderate to average levels of occupational stress, while 81.66% demonstrated ambivalent levels of job satisfaction. The study also revealed a weakly negative but significant correlation between occupational stress and job satisfaction, indicating that as stress increases, satisfaction tends to diminish. Age emerged as a significant factor associated with occupational stress, suggesting that different career stages present varying challenges.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem:**

Secondary school teachers in West Bengal operate within a complex ecosystem of demands: rigorous curriculum requirements, examination pressures, administrative responsibilities, parental expectations, and increasingly, non-teaching duties such as election-related work. The recent recruitment cancellation crisis has added another layer of existential threat to job security and professional identity. These cumulative pressures create conditions conducive to job burnout, yet not all teachers experiencing similar work conditions develop burnout to the same degree. This variability suggests that individual psychological factors, including locus of control, may moderate the relationship between work stressors and burnout outcomes.

The problem addressed by this study is twofold: first, to understand the current state of job burnout among secondary school teachers in West Bengal, including its manifestation across the three dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment; second, to examine how teachers' locus of control orientation relates to their experience of burnout. Understanding this relationship is essential for the third component of the problem: identifying what types of stress management interventions would be most appropriate and effective for this population.

### **1.4 Research Questions:**

This study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence and nature of job burnout among secondary school teachers in West Bengal across its three dimensions (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment)?
2. What is the distribution of locus of control orientations (internal versus external) among secondary school teachers in West Bengal?
3. Is there a significant relationship between teachers' locus of control and their experience of job burnout?
4. How do demographic and professional factors (age, gender, teaching experience, school type, and location) relate to both locus of control and burnout among West Bengal secondary school teachers?
5. What types of stress management interventions are perceived as most needed and acceptable by teachers, based on their burnout experiences and locus of control orientations?



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### **1.5 Understanding Job Burnout:**

Job burnout is conceptualised as a psychological syndrome arising from prolonged exposure to occupational stressors. The most widely accepted framework, developed through extensive research, identifies three core dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion represents the fundamental individual stress component of burnout, characterised by feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted of one's emotional resources. Depersonalisation refers to the development of negative, callous, or excessively detached responses toward various aspects of one's job, particularly toward students in the educational context. Reduced personal accomplishment encompasses declines in feelings of competence and successful achievement in one's work with people.

In the context of secondary school teachers, these dimensions manifest in tangible ways. Emotionally exhausted teachers may arrive at school feeling unable to give more of themselves to students. Those experiencing depersonalisation might develop cynical attitudes toward their students' needs or view them as deserving of their difficulties. Teachers with diminished personal accomplishment may feel they are no longer making a meaningful difference in their students' lives, despite evidence to the contrary. Recent research in West Bengal's Purulia district has revealed that personal accomplishment shows a strong positive correlation with teacher effectiveness, highlighting the critical importance of addressing burnout factors to maintain optimal performance.

### **1.6 Locus of Control:**

**A Psychological Perspective:** The concept of locus of control, originating from social learning theory, refers to an individual's generalised expectancy regarding the sources of reinforcement in their life. Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that outcomes result primarily from their own behaviours and efforts, while those with an external locus of control attribute outcomes to external forces such as luck, fate, or powerful others. This psychological orientation has profound implications for how teachers experience and respond to occupational stress.

Teachers who possess an internal locus of control are more likely to engage proactively with workplace challenges, viewing difficulties as opportunities for problem-solving rather than insurmountable obstacles. They tend to implement more effective classroom management strategies and demonstrate greater resilience in the face of adversity. Conversely, teachers with an external locus of control may feel powerless in challenging situations, perceiving themselves as victims of circumstances beyond their influence. This sense of powerlessness can exacerbate stress responses and accelerate the progression toward burnout.

The relationship between locus of control and burnout is particularly relevant in educational settings, where teachers must contend with numerous factors beyond their direct control—student backgrounds, administrative decisions, policy changes, and resource limitations. Understanding how teachers' attributional styles moderate their stress experiences can inform more targeted and effective interventions.



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### 1.7 The Landscape of Teacher Stress in West Bengal:

Research conducted across various districts of West Bengal has documented concerning patterns of occupational stress among school teachers. A study in Murshidabad found that an overwhelming majority—92.5 per cent—of higher secondary school teachers experienced moderate to average levels of occupational stress. This finding aligns with broader Indian research suggesting that teaching has become one of the most stressful professions in the country. The same study revealed that 81.66 per cent of teachers reported ambivalent levels of job satisfaction, with only 15.83 per cent expressing genuine satisfaction with their work.

Age emerged as a significant factor associated with occupational stress, with chi-square tests indicating a meaningful relationship between teachers' age and their stress levels. This finding resonates with earlier research in West Bengal that identified teachers in the 50–60 years age group as experiencing particularly high levels of stress. The cumulative effect of decades of emotional labour, combined with evolving educational demands and perhaps diminishing physical resilience, may render older teachers especially vulnerable to burnout.

Geographic location also appears to influence stress patterns. Research comparing urban, suburban, and rural schools in West Bengal found that teachers in urban institutions, particularly those in private schools, reported higher stress levels. This urban-rural dimension adds complexity to understanding teacher burnout in the state, suggesting that interventions must be sensitive to the specific challenges characterising different educational contexts.

### 1.8 The Imperative for Stress Management Interventions:

The documented prevalence of occupational stress among West Bengal's teachers, coupled with its negative correlation with job satisfaction and effectiveness, underscores the urgent need for systematic stress management interventions. Yet, the question of what form such interventions should take remains insufficiently addressed in the existing literature. Effective intervention design requires nuanced understanding of the specific stressors teachers face, the psychological resources they bring to coping with these stressors, and the contextual factors that either buffer or amplify occupational strain.

Promising models are emerging from within West Bengal itself. The TeaLeaf (Teachers Leading the Frontlines) initiative in the Darjeeling Himalayas has demonstrated the potential of teacher-focused mental health training to improve educators' capacity to address both their own well-being and their students' needs. This task-shifting approach, which trains teachers to deliver evidence-based mental health support, has been well-received by participating educators, with many reporting that the training changed their beliefs and created positive behavioural changes in their classrooms. While initially focused on student mental health, such initiatives implicitly address teacher well-being by enhancing their sense of competence and control—key factors in preventing burnout.

### 1.9 Rationale and Significance of the Study:





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Despite growing recognition of teacher stress as a significant concern in West Bengal, research examining the intersection of job burnout, locus of control, and intervention needs remains limited. Existing studies have documented the prevalence of occupational stress and explored its relationship with teacher effectiveness, but few have explicitly investigated how teachers' control orientations influence their burnout experiences or their receptiveness to various intervention approaches.

This study addresses this gap by adopting an integrated perspective that considers both the manifestation of burnout among secondary school teachers and the psychological resources—particularly locus of control—that may moderate their stress responses. Furthermore, by explicitly examining teachers' perspectives on needed interventions, the study moves beyond problem documentation toward solution development, generating insights that can inform evidence-based programme design.

The significance of this research extends across multiple domains. For educational policymakers, it provides region-specific evidence to guide resource allocation and policy development. For school administrators, it offers insights into creating supportive work environments that mitigate burnout risk. For teacher educators, it highlights the importance of preparing prospective teachers not only with pedagogical skills but also with psychological resources for professional resilience. Most importantly, for the teachers themselves, this research affirms the legitimacy of their occupational challenges while working toward practical solutions that honour their indispensable contributions to society.

### 1.10 Research Questions:

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence and pattern of job burnout among secondary school teachers in West Bengal across its three dimensions—emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment?
2. How do secondary school teachers in West Bengal differ in their locus of control orientations, and what demographic and professional factors are associated with these differences?
3. What relationships exist between teachers' locus of control orientations and their experiences of job burnout?
4. What types of stress management interventions do secondary school teachers perceive as most needed and potentially effective, and how do these perceptions vary with burnout levels and control orientations?

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The specific objectives formulated to address these research questions are:

1. To assess the level of job burnout among secondary school teachers in West Bengal, examining variations across demographic characteristics including age, gender, teaching



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experience, geographic location (urban, suburban, rural), and type of school (government, government-aided, private).

2. To measure the locus of control orientations of secondary school teachers and identify significant differences based on relevant demographic and professional variables.
3. To analyse the correlation between teachers' locus of control and their experiences of job burnout, investigating whether internal control orientation serves as a protective factor against burnout.
4. To explore teachers' perceptions regarding the need for stress management interventions, including their preferences for intervention types, formats, and content.
5. To develop evidence-based recommendations for stress management programmes tailored to the specific needs and characteristics of secondary school teachers in West Bengal.

### 3. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

This study will employ a mixed-methods research design combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative phase will utilize a descriptive survey method to assess job burnout, locus of control, and stress management needs among secondary school teachers. The qualitative phase will employ semi-structured interviews to gain deeper insights into teachers' experiences with burnout and their perceptions regarding stress management interventions.

### 4. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

This study is grounded in an integrated conceptual framework that synthesises three theoretical perspectives. First, the Maslach Burnout Framework provides the dimensional understanding of burnout as comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment. Second, Rotter's Social Learning Theory contributes the concept of locus of control as a generalised expectancy that shapes how individuals appraise and respond to stressful situations. Third, the Job Demands-Resources Model, which has been effectively applied in previous research on West Bengal teachers, offers a framework for understanding how job demands (such as workload, role conflict, and student behavioural challenges) interact with personal resources (including control orientation) to produce either engagement or burnout.

Within this framework, teacher burnout is conceptualised as an outcome of prolonged imbalance between job demands and available resources. Locus of control operates as a personal resource that influences both the appraisal of demands and the selection of coping strategies. Teachers with internal control orientations are hypothesised to perceive demands as more manageable and to engage in more active, problem-focused coping, thereby reducing burnout risk. Conversely, teachers with external orientations may experience greater helplessness in the face of demands, increasing vulnerability to burnout. Stress management interventions, in turn, are conceptualised as mechanisms for enhancing resources—both personal (through skill-building and cognitive restructuring) and organisational (through policy changes and administrative support)—to restore balance and promote teacher well-being.



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## **5. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS:**

For the purposes of this study, key terms are operationally defined as follows: Job Burnout: A psychological syndrome characterised by emotional exhaustion (feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted), depersonalisation (negative, callous, or detached responses toward students and work), and reduced personal accomplishment (declining feelings of competence and achievement), as measured by standardised burnout assessment tools.

Locus of Control: An individual's generalised expectancy regarding the sources of reinforcement in their life, ranging along a continuum from internal (belief that outcomes result primarily from one's own behaviours and efforts) to external (belief that outcomes result from external forces such as luck, fate, or powerful others), as measured by established locus of control scales.

Secondary School Teacher: An educator employed to teach students in classes IX through XII in recognised secondary or higher secondary schools in West Bengal.

Stress Management Intervention: Any systematic programme, policy, or practice designed to prevent, reduce, or mitigate occupational stress and its negative consequences, encompassing both individual-focused approaches (such as training, counselling, and skill development) and organisational-focused approaches (such as workload modification, administrative support, and policy changes).

## **6. ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY**

This dissertation is organised into six chapters. Chapter one has provided the introduction, background, rationale, research questions, objectives, conceptual framework, and operational definitions. Chapter Two will present a comprehensive review of literature related to teacher burnout, locus of control, and stress management interventions, with particular attention to studies conducted in India and West Bengal. Chapter Three will describe the research methodology, including the design, sample, instruments, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four will present the analysis and interpretation of data, addressing each research objective systematically. Chapter Five will discuss the findings in relation to existing literature and theoretical frameworks. Chapter Six will summarise the study, draw conclusions, acknowledge limitations, and offer recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

## **7. AUTHOR(S) CONTRIBUTION**

The writers affirm that they have no connections to, or engagement with, any group or body that provides financial or non-financial assistance for the topics or resources covered in this manuscript.

## **8. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.





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## **9. PLAGIARISM POLICY**

All authors declare that any kind of violation of plagiarism, copyright and ethical matters will take care by all authors. Journal and editors are not liable for aforesaid matters.

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