

# The Role of Job Satisfaction in Alleviating Occupational Stress

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## **Abstract**

This study explores how occupational stress influences teacher motivation in West Bengal and evaluates job satisfaction as a mediating factor. Drawing data from 812 teachers through standardized surveys, the study applies descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and mediation analyses. Results reveal that less experienced and male teachers report higher stress levels. A strong negative correlation exists between stress and motivation ( $r = -0.61$ ), with stress significantly predicting lower motivation ( $\beta = -0.48$ ). Mediation analysis identifies job satisfaction as a partial buffer, with a total effect of  $-0.70$  and an indirect effect of  $-0.21$ . The findings underscore the need for systemic reforms in teacher support and working conditions. Strengthening job satisfaction can mitigate the detrimental impact of stress, thereby fostering sustainable motivation and improving educational outcomes.

## **Key Words**

Occupational Stress, Teacher Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Mediation Analysis, Educational Reform

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## **1. Introduction**

The teaching profession in West Bengal, much like elsewhere, is acknowledged as both intellectually enriching and emotionally demanding. Educators across the state grapple with a multitude of challenges daily, including catering to a heterogeneous student population, aligning with a rigid and expansive curriculum, and addressing institutional and bureaucratic pressures. These persistent challenges frequently give rise to occupational stress—a condition known to detrimentally affect teachers' mental well-being, their performance in the classroom, and their overall drive to continue in the profession (Kyriacou, 2001). Globally, stress among educators is on the rise, and while much of the discourse centers on regions like the Middle East or the West, Indian states such as West Bengal are not immune to this trend.

In West Bengal, the rollout of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has initiated major educational shifts aimed at modernizing the learning ecosystem and aligning it with international benchmarks. These reforms, while well-intentioned, have added layers of complexity to the teacher's role. Educators are now expected to adopt innovative pedagogies, incorporate digital tools in the classroom, and elevate student performance standards—all this in a context where infrastructural and technological resources are often scarce. Similar to the challenges faced by teachers in Oman, these transitions can jeopardize professional satisfaction and erode occupational motivation if not adequately supported (Al Shuaili, 2024).

Empirical studies from across the globe have consistently shown that occupational stress severely hampers job satisfaction and motivation in various professions (Robbins & Judge, 2013). Research conducted in the United Kingdom by Klassen and Chiu (2010) highlighted how stress undermines teacher self-efficacy, directly impacting their enthusiasm and satisfaction. In the United States, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) found that chronic teacher stress often culminates in burnout, significantly diminishing commitment and intrinsic motivation. These findings underscore the global nature of the issue, but the extent and manifestation of stress are shaped by local dynamics—including policy frameworks, societal expectations, and institutional support mechanisms.

In the context of West Bengal, where centralised policymaking often restricts educator autonomy, teachers may find themselves constrained in how they implement curriculum or innovate in the classroom. This situation mirrors the experiences of educators in the GCC region, where rigid administrative structures and limited professional agency have been shown to elevate stress and lower job satisfaction (Al Shabibi & Silvennoinen, 2018). In contrast to Western countries where educators often have more freedom in curricular delivery, teachers in Bengal must frequently adhere to top-down directives, contributing to occupational strain.

This dynamic becomes even more critical when considering India's larger socio-economic vision of becoming a knowledge-driven economy—an ambition echoed in various state-level policies in West Bengal. Teachers are vital to this transformation, yet they face increasing workloads, insufficient training opportunities, and underdeveloped support systems. These factors compound their stress and have been linked to demotivation and potential attrition from the profession (Richardson et al., 2021).

Despite the growing relevance of these issues, there remains a gap in localized research exploring how occupational stress, job satisfaction, and motivation interrelate within the Bengali teaching landscape. While isolated studies might examine these elements independently, few have interrogated how they influence each other in a cohesive framework. Recognizing that stress and motivation are pivotal to teacher effectiveness, understanding the intermediary role of job satisfaction is crucial. Research shows that job satisfaction can serve as a buffer against stress, fostering resilience and sustaining motivation (Mondal, Shrestha, & Bhaila, 2011).

Job satisfaction, as defined by Locke (1976), is the pleasurable emotional state derived from positive job experiences. High satisfaction levels are generally associated with greater motivation, improved retention, and reduced stress (Judge et al., 2001). However, in high-pressure environments like teaching—especially in resource-constrained public schools in West Bengal—maintaining such satisfaction is challenging. Teachers often juggle classroom management, administrative duties, and community expectations, making it difficult to stay motivated (Kyriacou, 2001).

If West Bengal aims to improve the quality of education and teacher retention, it is essential to explore whether job satisfaction can mitigate the adverse effects of stress. This approach can lead to more informed policy decisions and the development of context-specific strategies for teacher support. Similar to the study conducted in Oman, a focused investigation into the Bengali context could generate actionable insights for educational policymakers, school leaders, and training institutes.

Such a study could aim to assess the current levels of occupational stress among teachers in West Bengal, examine how this stress affects their professional motivation, and determine whether job satisfaction acts as a mediating factor. The central research questions would include: What are the prevalent sources of stress for schoolteachers in West Bengal? How does this stress influence their motivation and classroom performance? And crucially, does job satisfaction play a role in moderating this relationship?

Based on global and regional literature, two key hypotheses emerge. First (H1): occupational stress negatively affects motivation among teachers, suggesting that high stress reduces their drive and enthusiasm. Second (H2): job satisfaction mediates the relationship between stress and motivation, implying that satisfied teachers may better withstand stress without a significant drop in motivation. Validating these hypotheses in the Bengali context could lead to significant improvements in teacher well-being, retention, and ultimately, educational outcomes.

### **1.1 Theoretical Framework**

The present study is anchored in prominent motivational and stress-related theories that examine how occupational stress, job satisfaction, and motivation interact, particularly within the educational sector. These theoretical perspectives form the backbone for understanding the mediating role of job satisfaction in the link between stress and teacher motivation. Specifically, the study integrates Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress (CATS), Self-Determination Theory (SDT), and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model.

### *Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation*

Herzberg (1959) proposed a dual-factor model for workplace motivation and satisfaction, distinguishing between motivators (intrinsic factors like recognition, achievement, and professional growth) and hygiene factors (extrinsic elements such as pay, working conditions, and administrative policies). In the context of West Bengal's educational institutions, inadequate hygiene factors—such as bureaucratic hurdles, lack of infrastructural support, and delayed salary disbursements—may contribute to heightened occupational stress and reduced job satisfaction among teachers (Gu & Day, 2007). Conversely, enhancing motivators, such as acknowledging teacher efforts and providing career advancement avenues, could counterbalance the effects of stress, thus positively impacting both satisfaction and motivation.

### *Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress (CATS)*

According to Ursin & Eriksen (2004), CATS posits that stress emerges from a discrepancy between perceived demands and an individual's ability to meet them. In West Bengal's schools, stressors often include overcrowded classrooms, frequent curriculum changes, and insufficient teaching resources. If these stressors are seen as unmanageable, teachers' coping capacities dwindle, leading to diminished job satisfaction and motivation. However, school-level interventions like stress management workshops or organizational reforms (e.g., reducing administrative workload) can help alleviate these stressors, fostering a more supportive environment for educators.

### *Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*

Deci & Ryan's (1985) Self-Determination Theory emphasizes the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as core psychological needs that fuel intrinsic motivation. In West Bengal, rigid bureaucratic control over teaching practices, lack of decision-making power, and limited access to skill-building opportunities undermine these needs. Teachers burdened by excessive administrative duties (undermining autonomy) or excluded from professional development (eroding competence) often report lower motivation. Yet, when job satisfaction is nurtured—through peer collaboration or recognition of teaching effectiveness—it helps restore feelings of competence and relatedness, even under stressful conditions (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

### *Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model*

Bakker & Demerouti's (2007) JD-R Model categorizes job elements into demands (aspects that strain teachers, like workload and time pressure) and resources (elements that aid in achieving goals, like leadership support and recognition). In West Bengal, the rising pressure of syllabus completion, student evaluations, and administrative compliance represents major job demands. At the same time, the lack of sufficient job resources—such as mentorship programs or leadership engagement—can amplify stress. Implementing systems that provide adequate training, encouragement, and professional support could mitigate burnout and enhance teacher satisfaction and motivation.

Together, these frameworks help elucidate how job satisfaction acts as a buffer between stress and motivation. While Herzberg emphasizes balancing intrinsic and extrinsic factors, CATS highlights the psychological perception of stress, SDT focuses on internal psychological needs, and JD-R provides a practical structure for analyzing stressors and support mechanisms in the workplace.

## Theoretical Frameworks for Teacher Motivation and Stress



## 1.2 Objectives

- i. To assess the current levels of occupational stress among schoolteachers in West Bengal
- ii. To examine the impact of occupational stress on teacher motivation
- iii. To evaluate the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable between occupational stress and motivation.
- iv. To identify the key sources and contextual factors contributing to occupational stress among teachers in West Bengal.

## 2. Literature Review

A study by Al Shuaili and Yussef (2024) involving 410 schoolteachers in Oman demonstrated that occupational stress significantly reduces both job satisfaction and motivation. These findings are highly relevant for West Bengal, where teachers in public schools often face similar systemic pressures. The study also emphasized that job satisfaction positively influences motivation, suggesting that structured support systems in West Bengal schools—like feedback mechanisms and professional networks—could mitigate stress.

Hans, Mubeen, and Al Ghabshi (2014) examined how internal locus of control among teachers in Omani private schools led to higher job satisfaction. In the West Bengal context, empowering teachers by involving them in school-level decision-making and curriculum planning could reinforce a sense of agency and control, boosting satisfaction levels.

Agha, Azmi, and Irfan (2017) revealed that work-life balance significantly impacts job satisfaction in higher education. Teachers in West Bengal's colleges often struggle with multiple responsibilities, including examination duties and administrative roles. Gender and institutional types further influence these experiences. Institutions that offer flexible schedules, gender-sensitive leave policies, and mental health support could improve satisfaction and retention.

Al Qalhati et al. (2020) found that salary, holidays, and allowances are pivotal to teacher satisfaction. This resonates strongly in West Bengal, where government schoolteachers often express dissatisfaction over delayed payments and limited benefits. Addressing these issues through timely financial incentives and improved working conditions is essential.

A recent Omani study involving 680 schoolteachers (2023–2024) confirmed a strong negative correlation between occupational stress and job satisfaction. Teachers in West Bengal, especially those in government or rural schools, echo similar sentiments, often citing overwhelming workloads and insufficient support as stressors that reduce job satisfaction. The findings underscore the urgent need for policy reforms, such as hiring support staff, simplifying bureaucratic tasks, and providing regular mental wellness checks.

Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2015) found that coping strategies and stress vary with age; in West Bengal, veteran teachers may exhibit better resilience than early-career educators.

Mo & Morris (2024) identified organizational reputation, salary, and career growth as crucial for international school teachers' motivation—applicable to elite private schools in Kolkata.

Tremblay et al. (2009) highlighted that job satisfaction and self-efficacy shape occupational identity—critical for retaining dedicated teachers in West Bengal's rural areas.

Klassen & Chiu (2010) showed that stress reduces teacher self-efficacy; experienced teachers cope better. This finding supports mentorship programs in West Bengal to assist novice teachers.

Bennell & Akyeampong (2007) observed that low pay and inadequate resources reduce motivation and increase absenteeism—a familiar issue in parts of West Bengal.

McCormick & Barnett (2011) emphasized that job satisfaction mediates stress and burnout. This validates the call for positive institutional environments in West Bengal schools.

Chan (2002) revealed administrative stress as a demotivator; thus, streamlining documentation in West Bengal can relieve this burden.

Gupta & Gehlawat (2013) found that while private school teachers in India face more stress, they report higher satisfaction due to better infrastructure and salaries—offering a comparison point for public-private dynamics in West Bengal.

Canrinus et al. (2012) and Ngidi & Sibaya (2002) both stressed the role of supportive environments in reducing stress and increasing satisfaction.

Mondal, Shrestha, and Bhaila (2011) found that workload and lack of appreciation drive dissatisfaction among German teachers—mirrored in Indian schools where undervaluing teachers is a common concern.

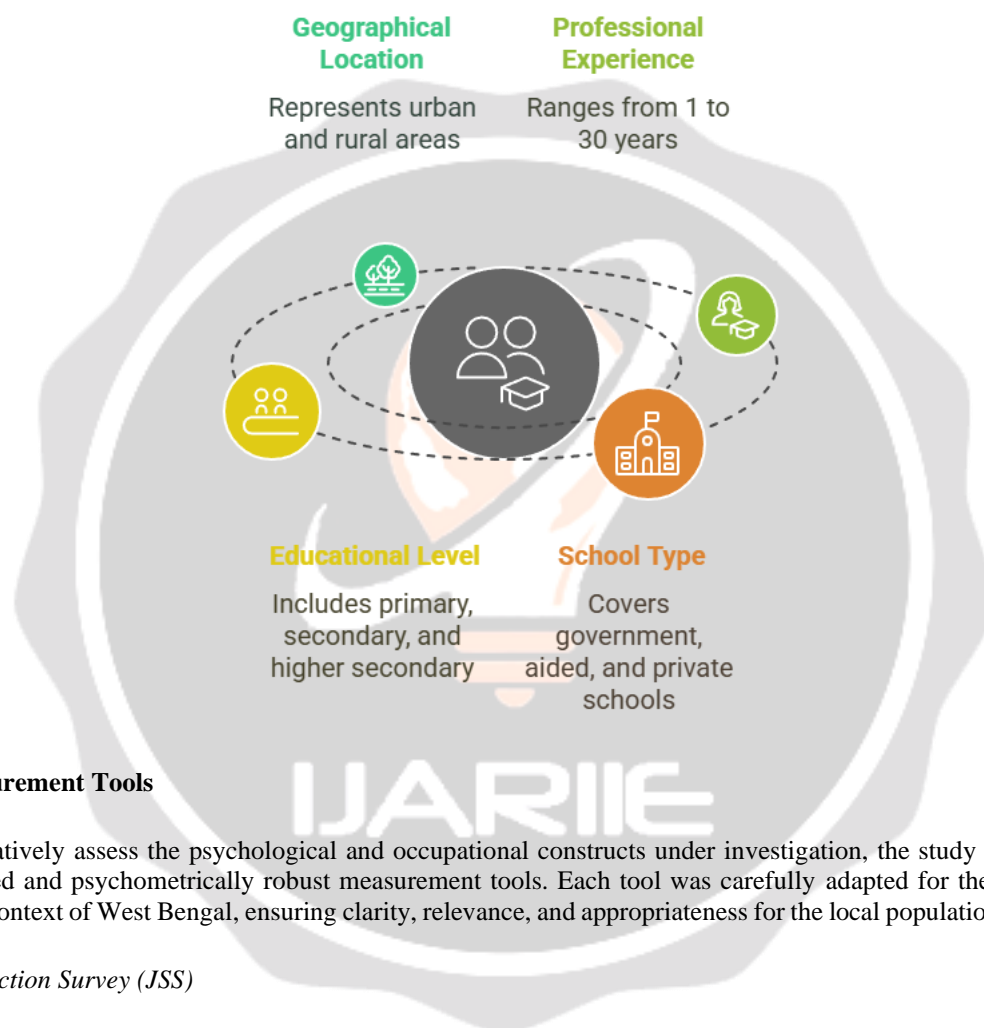
### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Sample**

The research study drew upon a diverse and representative sample of 812 school teachers across multiple districts of West Bengal, ensuring that voices from both urban and rural educational contexts were equally considered. To accurately reflect the demographic and professional landscape of the state's teaching community, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. This involved dividing the overall teacher population into distinct subgroups (strata) based on key characteristics—primarily geographical location (urban vs. rural)—and then randomly selecting participants from each subgroup in proportion to their actual prevalence in the population.

Teachers included in the study varied widely in terms of professional experience, ranging from new entrants with just 1 year of teaching to veterans with up to 30 years of service. This diverse range was critical to gaining a holistic understanding of occupational stress, job satisfaction, and motivation across different career stages. The sampling ensured inclusion from primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels of education, and encompassed teachers from government, government-aided, and private schools to reflect the varied institutional structures within the state.

### Comprehensive Teacher Sample Overview



### 3.2 Measurement Tools

To quantitatively assess the psychological and occupational constructs under investigation, the study utilized three standardized and psychometrically robust measurement tools. Each tool was carefully adapted for the cultural and linguistic context of West Bengal, ensuring clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for the local population of teachers.

#### *Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)*

Comprising 36 items, this tool assessed various dimensions of job satisfaction such as pay, promotion, supervision, fringe benefits, operating conditions, co-workers, nature of work, and communication. A 6-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" was used to capture nuanced attitudes and perceptions. The JSS was selected for its comprehensive coverage and ease of interpretation, making it suitable for the diverse educational workforce in West Bengal.

#### *Occupational Stress Index (OSI)*

This instrument contained 46 items that measured sources and symptoms of occupational stress including role overload, role ambiguity, under-participation, powerlessness, and job insecurity. A 5-point scale was used, with responses ranging from "Never" to "Always." The OSI demonstrated high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.91, indicating excellent reliability in capturing stress levels among the teachers.

*Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (WEIMS)*

Consisting of 18 items, this tool assessed various facets of motivation as per Self-Determination Theory (SDT), categorizing them into intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, introjected regulation, external regulation, and amotivation. Participants responded on a 7-point scale, from "Does not correspond at all" to "Corresponds exactly." The WEIMS displayed strong reliability in the local context with  $\alpha = 0.87$ , making it a valid measure for motivational orientation among teachers in the region.

**3.3 Pilot Testing**

Prior to the main study, a pilot test was conducted with 160 teachers, including 80 male and 80 female participants, to ensure the linguistic clarity, contextual relevance, and cultural appropriateness of all adapted instruments. This pilot group was drawn from schools across three representative districts (one urban, one semi-urban, and one rural) to capture a range of educational environments. The pilot study also served to confirm the reliability coefficients of the instruments within the local context, justifying their use in the larger study. The modifications ensured that participants could meaningfully engage with the survey tools, thus enhancing the validity of the research findings.

**4. Findings and Discussion**

*Occupational Stress Levels*

Group	Mean Stress	SD	Min	Max
Male (n = 402)	3.68	0.83	1.45	4.98
Female (n = 410)	3.59	0.86	1.32	5.00
Experience	Mean Stress	SD	Min	Max
< 5 years (n = 390)	3.74	0.85	1.40	5.00
> 5 years (n = 422)	3.56	0.87	1.30	4.94

Teachers with fewer than 5 years of experience experienced greater stress, possibly due to adaptation to new roles, NEP-related changes, and digital shifts.

*Relationship Between Stress and Motivation*

Variable	Mean	SD
Occupational Stress	3.63	0.85
Occupational Motivation	3.19	0.69
Correlation Coefficient	r	
Stress ↔ Motivation	-0.61	

Regression Equation:

$$\text{Motivation} = 4.38 - (0.48 \times \text{Stress})$$

This confirms a decline in motivation as stress increases. Teachers reporting stress above 4.5 typically scored below 2.5 on motivation.

*Mediation by Job Satisfaction*

Variable Pair	Correlation (r)			
Stress ↔ Job Satisfaction	-0.55			
Job Satisfaction ↔ Motivation	0.66			
Stress ↔ Motivation	-0.61			
Model	R <sup>2</sup>	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Total Effect

Stress → Satisfaction	0.28	—	—	—
Stress → Motivation	0.33	-0.48	—	—
Full Model	0.45	-0.32	-0.21	-0.70

Visual trends showed higher stress clustering with low job satisfaction and reduced motivation. Satisfaction mitigated part of the negative effect of stress.

## 5. Conclusion

The present study highlights the intricate and multifaceted relationship between occupational stress, job satisfaction, and motivation among school teachers in West Bengal. It confirms what global literature has long established: high levels of occupational stress significantly reduce teachers' motivation and job satisfaction. In the Bengali context, this dynamic is compounded by systemic challenges such as infrastructural inadequacies, rigid administrative frameworks, NEP-induced curricular reforms, and a lack of sufficient professional support.

Findings indicate that early-career teachers and female educators reported higher stress levels, possibly due to adjustment demands, workload imbalances, and limited coping mechanisms. The negative correlation between stress and motivation ( $r = -0.61$ ), along with the mediating role of job satisfaction, suggests that while stress directly diminishes motivation, job satisfaction can partially buffer this effect. The mediation analysis confirms that job satisfaction plays a crucial intermediary role, reducing the adverse impact of stress on motivational outcomes.

Grounded in theoretical models such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), Cognitive Activation Theory of Stress (CATS), and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model, the study underscores the need for structural and policy-level reforms. When psychological needs like autonomy, competence, and relatedness are undermined—as they often are in the public school systems of West Bengal—teachers are at risk of disengagement, burnout, and attrition.

In essence, enhancing teacher satisfaction is not merely a matter of increasing compensation or improving infrastructure. It involves restructuring the professional ecosystem to promote resilience, autonomy, recognition, and continuous professional development.

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