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## UNDERSTANDING THE BURNOUT AMONG INDIAN PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS AND STRATEGIZING POSSIBLE SOLUTION TOWARDS IT

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper talks about teacher burnout in Indian private schools and how deeply it affects the well-being and efficiency of the teachers. Teacher burnout is a well-known aspect of the education system and so it is very important to acknowledge, discuss and work upon, finding solutions for this problem; which is exactly what has been done with the help of this research paper. Burnout affects teacher's mental, emotional as well as physical well-being on a daily basis. It leaves them feeling exhausted, agitated and disinterested in teaching which greatly affects themselves as well as their family and students. Numerous interviews and focus group discussions were conducted across various stakeholders to get various perspectives over the matter at hand. Secondary data was combed through research papers from all over the world as well as India to better understand the situation of teachers across all over the world. Conclusions were drawn upon certain approaches that could help better the well-being and efficiency of teachers working in private schools in a dignified way all over India.

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## INTRODUCTION

As of 2021-22 there are approximately 1.5 million private schools in India. The number surely puts the country amongst the countries with the highest number of schools in the world. These include Government as well as private schools which are spread across 28 states and 8 union territories catering to primary, upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary education. Out of which touching 32% of the schools are private which is approximately 4.7 lakhs in numbers (Mehta A C. 2021). The country boasts of approximately 45 lakh teaching professionals. The figure surely puts the country in the elite list of countries with highest number of teaching professionals till higher secondary. But still the approximate student to teacher ratio in primary, upper primary, secondary, and higher secondary (Government and private) schools in the country is 1: 29.5. It states acute shortage of teachers in school education (Mehta A C. 2021). This results to an unjust complexity to the teaching profession which requires passion, care, emotional and social indulgence. The reality of the classroom is debilitating than what is perceived. Behind the patient smiles and meticulous lesson plans, lies a lot of emotional burden and unrealistic expectations that are asked off of teachers. They give their time and energy, often pushing their limits to meet the rising demands of the students and over-expectations of their parents and the institution and in this commitment towards their profession, they are often exhausted and fall prey to frustration and burnout.

In India, private schools are often considered as symbols of superior education and advancement. Parents invest substantially in private schools, with the expectation of providing their child with high academic standards, disciplined environments, and a variety of extracurricular opportunities. To uphold this reputation, teachers are expected to handle administrative work, do continuous assessments, parent interactions, and are burdened with additional obligations that spill beyond school hours and seep into their personal lives making it just as hectic and debilitating. They are coerced into dedicating their lives to this relentless cycle of burnout that leaves hardly any room for them to relax and replenish.

**Concept of Burnout:** Burnout is a well-known phenomenon in the education system. It is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by continuous exposure to stressors, which can have major impact on the quality of life and teaching capacity of teachers. Burnout is caused by multiple factors, including excessive workload, lack of support, inadequate compensation, and high expectations. Teachers are expected to work long hours, manage large class sizes with few resources, and regularly deal with administrative responsibilities that cut into their instructional time. In addition, many educators report feeling unsupported by school administration and peers, which can lead to feelings of isolation and exhaustion. Nonetheless, the nature of teaching necessitates that teachers form emotional bonds with their students, which can be emotionally draining. This emotional effort, when combined with other pressures,

can result in burnout (Bedir H 2023). While stress could lead to burnout, burnout does not necessarily lead to stress (Selye 1976). The two have a close relationship but are not identical. Nonetheless, stress cannot be said to be the direct cause of burnout. Chronic stress, and a person's inability to cope with it is what causes burnout. This kind of burnout pertains particularly in occupations wherein workers remain in helping roles consistently (Pandey S., Sayed S. 2024).

### How does burnout affect teachers?

**Emotional and Psychological Impact :** Burnout manifests in subtle emotional changes like feelings of exhaustion even after having more than enough rest, getting easily agitated in even the most basic situations and gradually losing interest in teaching altogether. Teachers start to detach from their students and teaching becomes an obligation rather than their passion. This is known as depersonalization, which is a coping mechanism used by teachers. It leads to emotional numbness which can cause anxiety, depression and chronic stress. Many times it results in loss of sincerity between the teacher and their students causing the very foundation of education to tremble (Pandey S., Sayed S. 2024).

**Physical Health Consequences:** The psychological burden of burnout often transforms into physical symptoms. Teachers struggling with the psychological pressures of burnout often report headaches, sleep disturbances, lowered immunity, disturbed metabolism and fatigue. Teachers spend most of their times planning curriculums and grading student's schoolwork which leaves no personal time for them to unwind and recharge their lost energy. This leads to a decline in physical health.

**Professional Performance Decline:** When burnout seeps deep into a teacher, it gnaws at their sense of professional accomplishment. Lesson plans become less interactive and creative, patience runs out, and classroom starts feeling cold and unwelcoming. Once motivated educators start questioning their worth, skills and impact while the classrooms that were once very interactive and full of energy, now start feeling disengaged and lead to not as expected academic results.

**Strained Personal Relationships:** The repercussions of burnout are not limited to school boundaries; they often stretch into teachers' personal lives. For many teachers, weekends and evenings—traditionally times of rest—are consumed by unfinished schoolwork, leaving little room for meaningful personal connections. The emotional exhaustion and irritability caused by the growing institutional pressures and burnout spill over into their personal relationships and social interactions which leads to a loss in social support. This imbalance isolates teachers further, reinforcing the cycle of stress and fatigue.

**Long-Term Career Impact:** If left unresolved, burnout can drive teachers to consider leaving the profession altogether. Teachers often end up feeling guilty and failed, when they decide to step away, especially when teaching is their passion and goal. Attrition among private school teachers is particularly concerning, as high turnover rates derange student learning continuity and force schools into pouring their valuable resources into a constant cycle of recruitment and training. In the long term, this takes a huge toll on the stability of such institutions. The escalating problem of teacher burnout in Indian private schools is an inevitable outcome of systemic neglect, unrealistic expectations and demands and lack of support. It cannot be dismissed as an individual shortcoming or a matter of personal strength. When teachers are undervalued and overworked, their passion for nurturing young minds leaves them in withdrawal and emotional exhaustion. The consequences of it being weak classroom dynamics and crumbling educational standards. Only by recognizing that burnout is a systemic failure and not a personal one, can the system safeguard both, the dignity of teachers and the quality of education for future generations. By bringing attention to this issue within Indian private schools, this research seeks to spark conversations, awareness, and action toward building healthier, more sustainable teaching environments.

### Statistics

- 55% of teachers in India struggle with the completion of regular tasks on account of work-related stress and tension, reveals a survey conducted by Zamit ([www.financialexpress.com](http://www.financialexpress.com)).
- A research study by Sharma P and Dutt S (2023), reported that more than 60% of teachers in urban schools showed a state of burnout. On the other hand, in a study conducted by Divya and Singh I (2025), it was reported that even the rural teachers were not lagging behind, with approximately 55% showing moderate to severe burnout (Pandey S., Sayed S. 2024).
- In the Emotional Exhaustion Dimension of burnout, Emotional Exhaustion is an important phenomenon in burnout. In this dimension, 56.56% of teachers is showing low burnout, 19.68% average burnout and 23.75% high burnout (Pandey S., Sayed S. 2024).
- In the Depersonalization Dimension, Depersonalized teachers withdraw themselves from school affairs and avoid mixing with students or colleagues. The scores of this dimension show that 20% teachers have high burnout, 16.56% average burnout and 63.43% low burnout (Pandey S., Sayed S. 2024).
- In the Lack of Personal Accomplishment Dimension, among the sample teachers, 28.43% are displaying high burnout, 13.43% average burnout and 58.12% low burnout. High burnout in the Lack of Personal Accomplishment dimension signifies that 28.43% of the sample teachers feel a sense of failure in their professional life (Shukla A., Trivedi T. 2008).
- According to a pre-COVID 19 pandemic survey, burnout affects 50%–70% of educators in Asian countries (like Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, etc.) as opposed to 10–40% in Western countries (Al Asadi et al., 2018). After the pandemic, Ozamiz- Etxebarria et al. (2023) performed a meta-analysis to identify sources of heterogeneity. They found that burnout was more prevalent in Asia and Africa (71%) mediocre in Europe (68%) than in America (32%).
- A 2008 study reported that approximately 44% of teachers in India suffered from burnout (Shukla & Trivedi, 2008) (Thomas J., Reyes M.E.S. 2024).

### Hypothesis

- a) There is a major lack of awareness about how serious struggles of a teacher are. Making more people aware, even the teachers' closed ones, is very essential and may make them feel way more supported.
- b) Teachers need to be made aware of their value and that they do not need sacrifice their dignity for their career.
- c) There is a major lack of empathy towards teachers' and their struggles whether it is from the authorities or even their closed ones. People need to realise that a teacher's struggles are just as valid and important as that of a corporate worker, doctor or any other dignified profession.

## METHODS

Data has been collected through primary and secondary methods to fulfil the requirement of the study. The study is descriptive in nature. Efforts are made towards both variable (qualitative) and attribute (quantitative) data. The following methods are adopted to formulate the data collection:

- a) **Group interview process.** It was done as a participatory approach with a sample size of 53 teachers across different cities in India.
- b) **Case studies and facts:** Study of the professional eco-system in various socio-cultural systems across different countries through secondary research.
- c) **Focus group discussion and brainstorming process:** It was first was conducted with the help of experts to assert the undesirable factors or drawbacks.

The same experts were again invited for the second time to produce ideas.

- d) **Substantiation and consolidation:** Validation of the group-interview process and focus group discussion and post it brain storming exercise was conducted with the help of experts.

**Group interview process as a participatory approach:** It was participatory (through direct communication) with 53 private convent school teachers teaching in primary to higher secondary sections i.e. class I to class XII. The teachers belong to different cities in India like Gurugram, Lucknow, Jaipur, Chennai, Kolkata and Bhopal. Many of them are highly reputed chain of schools. The highlights of the conversation were as follows:

**Major cause of burnout:** Administrative work, increased paper work, time bound work-load, last minute work allocation, student's display of disruptive behaviour, lack of trust in the working system, demanding student's parents which many a times lack empathy and lack of support and empathy in the work environment.

**Effect of burnout in the profession:** Teachers have to rush through the course last minute due to prior unnecessary engagements. They feel drained. At times their patience runs thin. Even if they wish to, but drained energy levels don't let them be creative with their students.

**Effect of burnout in personal or family life:** Frustration spill over into family time. Over-thinking about work at home. Unable to unwind lead to irritable behaviour at times.

**Any physical illnesses/ symptoms that are witnessed?**

- Headache, back pain, leg cramps, due to long standing hours, throat problems.
- Fatigue and stress leading to dark circles.
- Constant tiredness.

**Case studies and facts in few other countries**

**Teacher burnout in Japan :** It is observed by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2018) that teachers in Japan are engaged with long working hours in a week. Teachers spend an average of 53.9 hours on the job, far exceeding the OECD average of 38.3 hours. However a substantial approximately 36% teachers agree that their profession is valued in the society ([www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/programmes/edu/talis](http://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/about/programmes/edu/talis) 2018). It is observed that over 60% of teachers spend excessive time on paperwork, leaving them fatigued and lacking time to focus on subject groundwork or student engagement (Doi, M., & Okamoto, H. 2019). There is a major cultural reluctance towards admitting mental and emotional struggles. It prevents teachers from seeking help. Not many schools provided facilities to mental health counselling for teachers, despite rising rates of stress-related illnesses (Doi, M., & Okamoto, H. 2019). While Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) has introduced initiatives aimed at reducing teacher workloads— such as hiring support staff and promoting work-life balance, the implementation has been capricious. Lack of human resources compounding with financial resources further hampers progress (Kameda Q 2026).

**Teacher burnout in South Korea:** With reference to the 2018 Early Childhood Development Teaching and Learning International Survey (ECD TALIS), it is observed that the teachers in secondary schools in South Korea have low job satisfaction and self-efficacy compared to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (Sim, M. et al. 2019). South Korea ranked third in the proportion of teachers expressing regret about choosing teaching as a profession. Teachers are not happy with the profession (OECD, 2018) (Sim, M. et al. 2019).

In Korea, teachers place the causes of burnout into four categories which are as follows (Shim T., Jun M., Lee S.Y., 2024):

- a) Burnout due to dented self-esteem,
- b) Burnout due to organisational overlook/ disregard,
- c) Burnout due to excessive role demands,
- d) Burnout due to disrespectful behaviour.

**Teacher burnout in the United Kingdom:** Those in the private sector generally experience long hours. They have to suffice to co-curricular activities e.g., sports, music, art or social activities in addition to their classroom teaching hours. Teachers in England generally experience 53 working hours a week (Allen R et al., 2019). Department for Education reports that many academicians leave their job due to organisational overlook/ disregard over pupil misconduct towards the teachers. (Jerrim J & Sims S, 2020). However, increasing workloads propelled by parental pressure and organizational leadership towards human resource management are causes of concern for private school teachers (Valdebenito S et al., 2018).

**Teacher Burnout in Denmark :** In Denmark, pupil's aggressive behaviour towards teachers is slowly gaining attention. The frequency of pupil's aggressive behaviour reported by school teachers, involving violence as well as threats of violence, has increased from 13% to 16% in 2012 to approx. 20% in 2018 (Winding et al., 2022).

**Teacher Burnout in Australia:** Factors such as external demands e.g., excessive workload, time pressure, lack of resources, paperwork, student behaviour, organisational factors (e.g., level of leadership support, school climate), and scrutiny around teacher effectiveness enhance stress over teachers. Teachers were among six occupations found to report higher stress in a survey of individuals from 26 occupations (Carroll A., Forrest K., et al., 2022). It is evident from the facts from the aforementioned five countries that teacher burnout is not an isolated phenomenon. It has its existence and persistence in societies with different cultures and even with higher GDP. The emotional well-being of the teachers within a protective environment is definitely a matter of concern.

**Focus Group Discussions:** A focus group discussion was done with various stakeholders across different cities in India like Gurugram, Lucknow, Jaipur, Chennai, Kolkata and Bhopal. The group consist fourteen members. It included two Principals, one vice-principal, four class-teachers, three family members of teachers and four students aged 16-18 years (Classes 10 to 12). All the members belong to private convent schools across the cities mentioned above. The highlights of the conversation were as follows:

**Reason behind teacher's stress:** The policy of many schools across the country has adopted or are adopting is – “Doing more with less.” Naturally its financial implications are less. So, when the work is more there might be a tendency of unorganized pattern of work distribution. Adding to it is the interference of administrative work with teaching duties, student behaviour (which at times are bratty) as well as parental pressure which makes it the most stressful. It evolves an ecosystem where in stress is born.

**Balancing family responsibilities with the demands of the profession:** It's a tough balancing act. With the passage of time as the management believes in somewhat “lean management” principles, the profession will be tougher. The work definitely enters home. It's disturbing. It must not be forgotten that the social structure in urban India has changed. But the social thinking is yet to change.

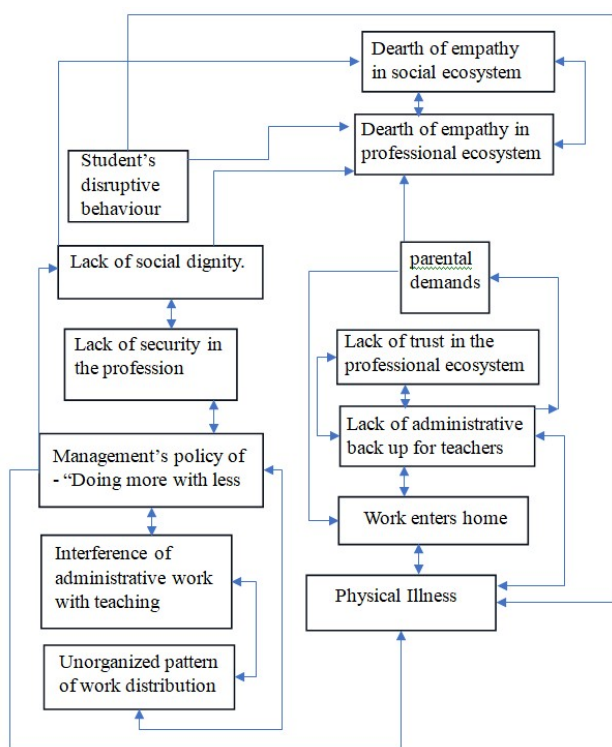
**Effect of stress in profession:** Tiredness and frustration lead to rush through the course, at times by being stricter. They can't focus on whether the students are able to absorb that or not. The attention on students is inconsistent. The class feels less engaging and it is harder for students to stay focused.

**Substantiation and consolidation of problems or drawbacks:** A number of problems or drawbacks or undesirable factors are being established. They are as follows:

- Lack of social dignity towards the profession.

- Lack of security in the profession as the human resource turn-over is big.
- Management’s policy of - “Doing more with less.”
- Work enters home.
- Dearth of empathy in professional ecosystem and in social ecosystem.
- Lack of administrative back up in the system to teachers.
- Interference of administrative work with teaching duties.
- Unorganized pattern of work distribution at school.
- Student’s display of disruptive behaviour.
- Student’s parents demand.
- Physical illness

The problems or drawbacks or undesirable factors don’t act in isolation. They are interrelated. Their interconnectedness is depicted in Table 1 below.



**Table 1. The interconnectedness of the problems or drawbacks or undesirable factors**

The problems in totality lead to affect self-motivation among teachers. Again, focus group discussion was called for. A brain storming exercise was also performed as an activity to identify feasible solution. The focus group discussion was done with 10 members including one psychologist, two principals, four teachers, one ex- CBSE official and one professor each from School of planning and architecture, Bhopal and National Institute of Fashion Technology Bhopal. The highlights of the conversation were as follows:

**Reason for teaching profession not widely aspired to by today’s youth:**

- Teaching used to be a form of art in context to communication design. Teachers used to be instinctive in reading students. But in modern private convent schools today, methods have been set in place. Teachers just follow. The process is mor standardized with the concept of ‘one size fits all.’ It lacks personalization.
- It’s more of a “job done” attitude that fails to inspire the youth. Teachers lack patience and passion and many a times they are not well trained to read the students. Under the circumstances their focus lies in completion of the course only.

- From primary to higher secondary education, teachers are treated with inequality and their emoluments vary greatly.
- In spite of being at the front-line teachers are excluded from decision-making policies.
- Low emoluments in the profession make it unambitious and unappealing.

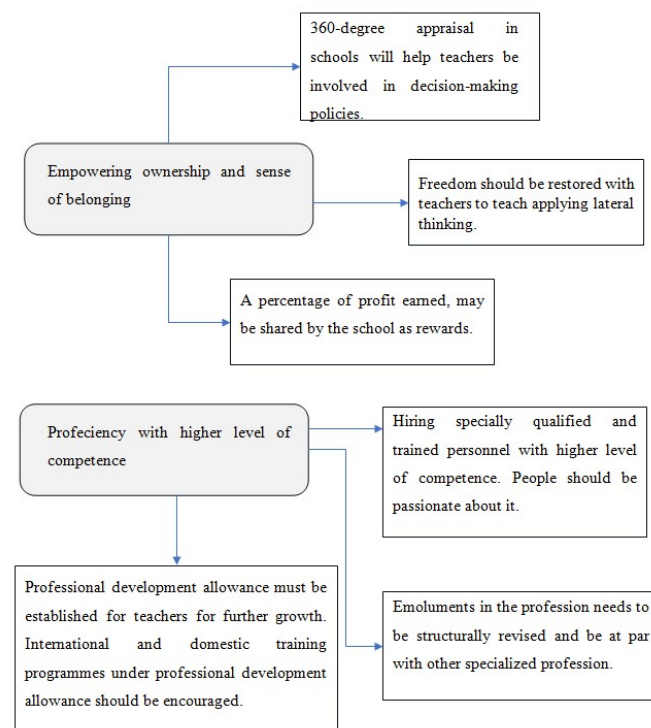
**How can a passion towards teaching at school be developed among the youth:**

- By restoring the dignity in the profession by hiring specially qualified and trained personnel with higher level of competence. People should be passionate about it.
- But qualified and trained personnel are aspirant. Hence the emoluments in the profession needs to be structurally revised and be at par with other specialized profession.
- Freedom should be restored with teachers to teach applying lateral thinking.
- 360-degree appraisal in schools will help teachers be involved in decision-making policies.
- Professional development allowance must be established for teachers for further growth. International and domestic training programmes under professional development allowance should be encouraged by school authorities as a part of mandate by the education board.
- A percentage of profit earned, may be shared by the school as rewards.

The aforementioned six factors can be broadly classified as two sets/ big factors under which the aforementioned factors may be positioned. The are as follows:

- Empowering ownership and sense of belonging
- Proficiency with higher level of competence

Below mentioned Table 2, depicts the classification or positioning of the aforementioned six factors.



**Table 2. Classification of the six factors**

**RESULTS**

After conducting group interviews through participatory approach and focus group discussions, it isconstrued that teaching is a passion-

driven profession. The only way to keep the passion alive is to manage the stress that comes along with the job. To sustain the passion within teachers, they need better motivation, stronger autonomy and a system that truly trusts them and their judgement. There are four major approaches that can help achieve these parameters:

- 360-degree appraisal system.
- Professional development allowance must be established.
- Adopting certain structural reforms inspired by government frameworks.
- Emoluments in the profession needs to be structurally revised.

**360-degree appraisal system:** 360-degree appraisal is a process through which feedback from an employee's colleagues and associates is gathered, in addition to a self-evaluation by the employee. 360-degree feedback can include input from external sources who interact with the employee, subordinates, peers, and supervisors (en.wikipedia.org). It will promote a fair distribution of power among teachers, staff and management, giving teachers more autonomy and a stronger voice in the system. They will feel trusted. This system will ensure everyone - from the support staff to the higher ups are held accountable for their actions. This will enforce a cordial working environment across all levels of the school management and will also provide a structure to the system.

**Professional development allowance must be established:** Teachers should always be encouraged to update and upgrade their skills and knowledge, which could be achieved through studies and undertaking research. International and domestic training programmes should be encouraged to keep abreast with new developments the world over, and associate with leading industries and academia.

**Adopting certain structural reforms inspired by government frameworks:** Certain structural reforms may be proposed e.g., government-regulated pay structure applicable to both government and private schools and certain promotional posts. This would ensure standardized salary slab, more career opportunities and the same level of respect across all levels of teachers. This would help create an environment where all teachers - whether a teacher teaches higher classes or younger students; science subjects or arts subjects - are equally valued and treated with equal respect.

**Emoluments in the profession needs to be structurally revised:** Teaching is a passion driven specialized profession requiring skills with qualification. Certain structural amendments are proposed. Teachers should be hired at pay level 10 as per Central Government. It is entry level of officers. It definitely indicates towards hiring specially qualified and trained personnel with higher level of competence. There should be a Govt. regulation towards the hiring of teachers in private schools i.e. student to teacher ratio, and their salaries.

## CONCLUSION

A research study by Sharma et al. (2019) reported that more than 60% of teachers in Indian urban schools showed a state of burnout. On the other hand, another observation is that even the rural teachers were not lagging behind, with approximately 55% showing moderate to severe burnout (Pandey S., Sayed S. 2024). The ability to regulate emotions was found to have a major association with perceived stress, and also to have a unique association with burnout above and beyond its effect on perceived stress. Emotion regulation seemed to also partially account for the protective relationship of well-being on stress. Hence the factors like ownership and sense of belonging plays a vital role in improving passion and thereby reducing stress (Carroll A., Forrest K., et al., 2022). This research aims to develop a sense of ownership and belonging amongst the private school teachers. By adopting certain systematic approaches like a 360-degree appraisal system. Indian private schools can share the sense of ownership with their teachers which will help them feel like they belong and are part

of a fair system which is important for their emotional wellbeing. Moreover, a dignified pay policy similar to that of the government (entry level) officers can also be adopted. It will help the teachers feel more dignified and it will motivate them into performing better and reaching their full potential. This research can prove to be very helpful in areas of psychology, workload management, organisational ergonomics and the entirety of the teaching system in private schools. It can help people understand how irregular workload affects someone on a daily basis and how it not only affects their professional lives, but their personal lives as well. It can help people better understand workplace dynamics and how certain processes can be included into the system to enhance employee well-being and efficiency. Moreover, this research towards strategic social system design can help government policy makers to secure job opportunities to the skilled by regulating the student to teacher ratio in private schools with real wages. It will appeal investors with a vision towards long term success as well as skilled, passionate employable professionals. It will also increase the consumption rate in the society and number of taxpayers in the country.

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