

## Locus of Control and Job Burnout of Secondary School Teachers

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### Abstract

The purpose of the present research was to investigate the relationship between job burnout and locus of control. In this study, job burnout was considered as dependent variable and locus of control as independent variables. The Maslach Burnout Inventory which was used to measure dimensions of teachers' burnout consisted of three subscales: emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment and depersonalisation. The Rotter Internal-External Locus of Control Scale was used to measure the extent to which teachers had an internal or external locus of control. A total of 300 school teachers responded to the survey. The findings showed that all burnout dimensions were either positively or negatively related to independent variables locus of control. Emotional Exhaustion and depersonalization show significant positive relationship with external locus of control.

**KEYWORDS:** Job burnout, internal locus of control, External locus of control, Secondary school teacher

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### Introduction:

Locus of control is a construct that was developed by Rotter (1966) to measure the locus (Location) of control. According to him, it is a generalized expectancy about the degree to which individuals control their outcomes. Thus, Rotter used the terms internal and external to indicate where people expect sources of control in their lives. By this he means that locus of control influences the way one views himself and opportunities. Locus of control has to do with the extent to which individuals believe that they can control events that affect them. Thus, Locus of control is a personality variable that concerns people's generalized expectancies that they can or cannot control reinforcements in their lives (Janssen & Carton, 1999). People who hold expectancies that they control reinforcements are considered to be internals, and people who hold expectancies that outside forces or luck control reinforcements are considered to be externals. Individuals who have internal orientations are those that believe that events result primarily from their own actions and behaviours. Those that have external orientations believe that some sort of powerful forces such as fate, others or chance primarily determine events. Hence, when people expect that outcomes result from unpredictable or chance causes such as luck, fate or as a result of the control of powerful other people social constraints and the complexity, it represents a belief in an external locus of control. The above scenario exemplifies how locus of control can influence the various choices, decisions, actions we make in our life.

On the other hand job burnout is the focus of study on occupation health psychology. It is defined as a negative psychological experience that is the reactions to job-related stress. As a general term, burnout refers to a cluster of physical, emotional, and interactional symptoms including emotional exhaustion sense of lacking personal accomplishment, and depersonalisation of clients (Maslach, 1982). Burnout is a specific type of stress-induced condition that affects individuals engaged in "people" work (Davis, 1983). Papalia and Olds (1995) define the term

burnout as, a reaction to work-related stress; it involves emotional exhaustion, a feeling of being unable to accomplish anything on the job, and a sense of helplessness and loss of control. It pertains to feelings experienced by people whose jobs require repeated exposure to emotionally charged social situations. Thus, the term takes particular significance for those individuals working within the field of the helping professions, which include teachers, psychologists, social workers, mental health clinicians, and police. As the helping professions it is common among teachers– who feel frustrated by their inability to help people as much as they would like to. Thus it is an occupational hazard to which all members of helping professions are exposed, including teachers. Maslach (1982) defined burnout as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment” that can occur among individuals. This approach defines burnout as a loss of idealism and enthusiasm for work that is manifested by exhaustion, depersonalisation, depression, low morale and emotional withdrawal (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). In this sense, emotional exhaustion is characterised by a lack of energy and a feeling that one’s emotional resources have been used up (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Depersonalisation is the development of negative and cynical attitudes and feeling toward others (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, 1993). On the other hand, reduced personal accomplishment can be described as a person’s negative self-evaluation in relation to his or her job performance (Leiter, 1992; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

#### **Literature Review:**

In recent years, educators have become increasingly interested in the problems of teachers’ stress and burnout (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Dworkin, 1987; Gold & Roth, 1993; Abel & Sewell, 1999; Dworkin, Saha & Hill, 2003). Research on burnout syndrome has generally come from a psychological orientation, which views burnout as a failure to cope with job stress. Davis and Wilson (2000), in a review of teachers’ burnout and satisfaction, described the importance of quality of work life programs as a means for reducing or eliminating teachers’ burnout. Lewin's (1951) theory provides an important basis for studying teachers' job behaviours and attitudes. It assumes that a person's behaviour is determined by the interaction between his or her personal characteristics and environmental factors which can influence teachers' satisfaction, thus leading to burnout. Cummins (1988), and Kobasa and Puccetti (1983) supported the hypothesis that the relationship between stress and strain is moderated by locus of control personality. Some literature (Smith, 1997; Adams, 1999) indicates that locus of control is a critical psychological attribute affecting teachers’ perceptions of their environment and job attitudes (Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2000). For example, Volansky and Habinski (1998) found that internal-external locus of control is an important personal attribute related to an individual's organizational commitment. Even though some studies have explored the relationship between locus of control, burnout, and job satisfaction, they are lacking in how locus of control is related to different aspects of job attitudes for teachers in particular (Anderson et al. 1999; Marso & Pigge, 1997). Mcshane and Von Glinow (2000) conceived locus of control as a generalized belief about the amount of control people have over their own lives. Cummins (1988), and Kobasa and Puccetti (1983) supported the hypothesis that the relationship between stress and strain is moderated by locus of control personality.

### **Significance of the Study:**

Teacher burnout is an ongoing problem in school systems throughout the world. Teaching profession is one which is under the largest occupational pressure and prone to job burnout. Teachers, in general, are motivated strongly to strive and achieve a sense of competence and psychological success in their work, but their efforts may become frustrated by work settings characterised by unpredictability and lack of personal control. When teachers feel ineffective, unsuccessful and powerless, the result may be helplessness. The reality of burnout among teachers is a very important problem which needs to be recognized and treated. If these issues are not addressed, eventually, the individual loses desire and motivation, and is unable to fight or flee what is perceived to be an impossible situation. When teachers experience burnout, they become less effective and often leave the profession (Bevis, 2008). According to Truch (1980), 90 percent of all teachers had experienced some level of burnout. Similar studies by Dworkin (1987) and Schlenker (1987) showed that more than 25 per cent of teachers were experiencing severe levels of burnout in their jobs. The unwillingness of students to work toward learning is a major cause of teacher despair and dissatisfaction.

The Teacher burnout can lead to serious consequences in the individual, the school, and students. Teacher burnout tends to be contagious. When dissatisfied and depressed teachers are present in a school, others can very easily become lethargic, cynical, and discontented and it makes the entire organization a dispirited place. Thus, teachers play an important role in establishing the overall tone of a school. According to Purkey (1970), teachers need to feel successful and good about themselves and their abilities before they can empower their students to feel the same. If, however, teachers are experiencing feelings of failure and/or lacking in personal satisfaction, their relationship with students and the overall school will ultimately suffer. Thus the negative symptoms of job burnout among teachers are harmful to both students and teachers themselves. The effect of this factors make teacher facing unprecedented challenges of a career crisis and survival.

The researcher in this study investigated how high school teachers' burnout is related to different aspects of locus of control. The findings would be helpful for other researcher in policy discussions and efforts to improve teachers' quality of work life and performance. The results of this research are important in terms of its contribution to decrease the burnout. Therefore, the present study finds its need and relevance.

### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this research is to study the relationship between burnout and locus of control of secondary school teachers. The results of this research are important in terms of its contribution to decrease the burnout and to increase job satisfactions of teachers. In order to study the relationship between locus of control burnout levels, the following question was posed in the study:

Is there a significant relationship between locus of control and their burnout levels?

The study sought to improve the understanding of teacher burnout and its prevention and the role of intervention practices .The findings provide insights that may be relevant to similar studies elsewhere.

### **Objectives:**

The objectives of the present study are-

- To determine the level of burnout of the secondary school teachers in relation to their locus of control
- To determine if locus of control is a predictive factor of burnout among teachers of the secondary school teachers
- To examine the nature of relationship between locus of control and job burnout dimensions of teachers

### **Hypotheses:**

In order to achieve the above objectives of the study, the following hypotheses were formulated –

- Locus of control is a predictive factor of burnout among teachers of the secondary school
- There does not exist significant difference in different dimensions of burnout syndromes of secondary school teachers on the basis of their locus of control
- There exist no significant relationship between burnout and different dimensions of job satisfaction

### **Methodology:**

Keeping in mind the nature of the present problem, the researcher used descriptive survey method in the study to investigate about the burnout syndromes among the secondary school teachers of Kamrup district in relation to their locus of control.

#### **Population and sampling:**

The population of this study consisted of all the teachers working in Secondary schools of Kamrup districts, Assam. Thus, participants in this study were 300 secondary school teachers who were selected on the basis of stratified random sampling procedure from 30 high schools of Kamrup district. The school under study includes both rural and urban school spread across various locations in Kamrup district. From very school 10 teachers were selected – among them five male and five female. Thus total group is consisted of 150 male teachers and 150 female teachers.

#### **The Research Instruments:**

Following instruments were used for the study –

**1. the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale**, which was developed by Rotter (1966), was used to measure the extent to which teachers had an internal or external locus of control. It consists of 29 forced-choice items of which 23 are keyed and six are fillers. Respondents chose one statement out of each pair of 29 statements. It is scored in the direction of externality such that a higher score indicates external orientation. A total score of 12 or less out of 23 assesses an individual as internally controlled and a score of 13 or more assesses one as externally controlled (high score = high external locus of control). Test-retest reliability estimates reported by Rotter (1966) range from .70 to .80. Internal consistency of the scale ranged from .65 to .79 (Rotter, 1966).

**2. The Maslach Burnout Inventory** is commonly used to measure professional burnout. The Maslach Burnout Inventory [MBI- Educator] which was developed by Maslach and Jackson, (1981) was used to measure the dimensions of teachers' burnout. A second version was later developed for use among workers in educational institutions. It has been tested, validated, and normed for educators. For example, Cronbach alpha coefficients ranging from 0.71 to 0.90 have been reported for three sub-scales (Maslach, Jackson and Leiter, 1996). It consists of 22 items forming three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion, Personal Accomplishment, and Depersonalization.

The frequency scale ranges from 0 (very mild, barely noticeable) to 6 (major, very strong). It has following sub scales-

- **The Emotional Exhaustion subscale** consists of nine items which describe feelings of being emotionally over-extended and exhausted by one's work. It means energy discharge and consumption of emotional resources. This dimension can be considered as the cornerstone of job burnout.
- **Depersonalization Subscale** has five items. It describes unfeeling and impersonal responses to co-workers or recipients of services. Depersonalization causes pessimism to colleagues, customers and organization. This dimension of the job burnout is prevalent among those staffs who regularly communicate to other persons (such as teachers, students, customers, patients).
- **The Personal Accomplishment subscale** consists of eight items describing feeling of competence and success about one's achievements. Diminished personal accomplishment by which the person comes to a negative self assessment (Maslach and Leiter, 2005; Maslach and Jackson, 1981; Pines and Maslach, 1981).

The Inventory yields three separate scores for each sub-dimension. The higher mean scores of 'Emotional Exhaustion' and 'Depersonalization' subscales correspond to greater degrees of experienced burnout, whereas lower scores on 'Personal Accomplishment' correspond to greater degrees of burnout..

#### **Data Collection:**

Data were collected from the teachers included in the sample. Before actual administration of the tools the purpose of the research was told to the teachers and their co-operation was solicited. The procedure of responses was also explained to them. Test material was administered on individual basis. The questionnaires were scored using standardized scoring procedure prescribed for each of the two tools.

#### **Statistical Technique Used:**

Two statistical techniques were used in the study: Pearson 'r' and 't' test. In order to find out the significant differences in mean scores in different dimensions of burnout of teachers with internal and external locus of control 't' test was performed. With the help of 'r' simple relationship of dependent variables different dimensions of burnout of school teachers with independent variable locus of control was ascertained.

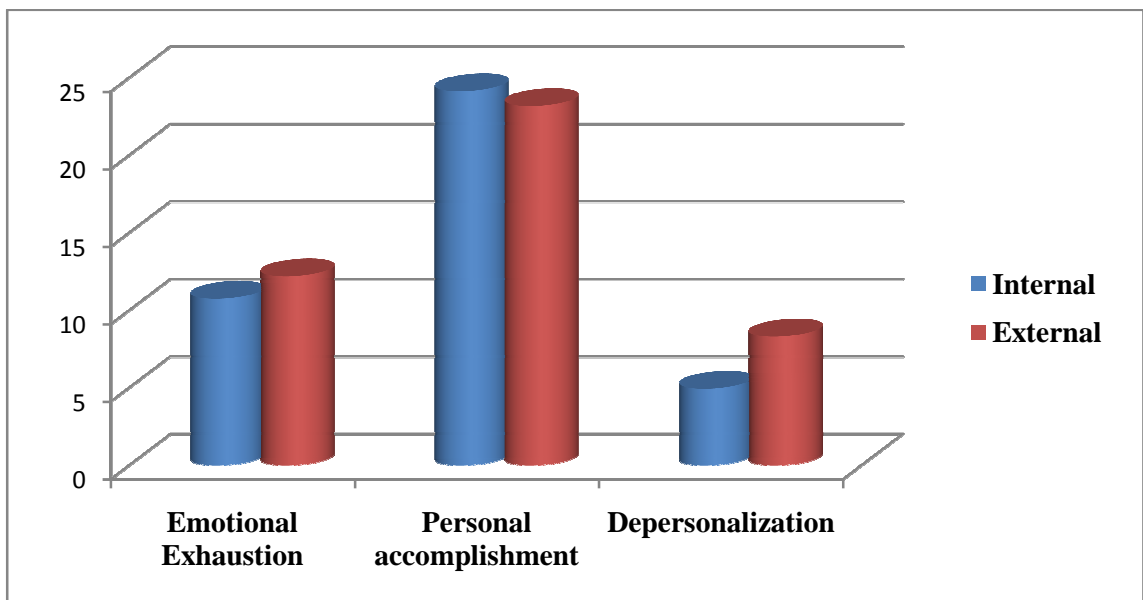
#### **Analysis of Data and findings:**

The data collected for the study has been carefully analysed in the light of the objectives set forth for the investigation in the following ways – For the analysis, the data were entered into computer and then, the data were analysed using the Statistics Package for Social Scientists Program [SPSS 10.0]. On the basis of the scores obtained by 'Internal-External Locus of Control Scale', the sampled teachers were categorized as external and internal. As per instruction, those having total score of 12 or less out of 23 are considered as internally controlled and a score of 13 or more as externally controlled. Then dimension wise mean burnout scores of both groups were calculated. These are presented in the following table and with the help of the bar diagram.

**Table -1**  
**Locus of control and Dimension wise Mean Burnout Score of Secondary School Teachers**

<b>Burnout Dimensions</b>	<b>Internal locus of control (N= 176)</b>	<b>External locus of control(N=124)</b>
Emotional Exhaustion	10.75	12.193
Personal accomplishment	24.130	23.172
Depersonalization	4.940	8.305

**Bar Diagram Showing Dimension wise Mean Burnout Score of Secondary School Teachers**



From the above table it is seen that the teachers having external locus of control have high burnout in all dimensions. In order to study the significance of these differences in the burnout syndrome of secondary school teachers for each dimension of burnout t-values have been worked out based on these Mean and S.D .Results are shown in table: 2

**Table: 2**  
**T-test: Significance of Mean Difference between Internal and External Locus of control in different Burnout dimensions of School Teachers**

<b>Teachers Burnout Dimensions</b>	<b>Internal Locus of control</b>			<b>External Locus of control</b>			<b>t.Value</b>	<b>Sig</b>
	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>S.D</b>		
Emotional Exhaustion	176	10.75	5.559	124	12.193	4.800	2.41	.05
Personal accomplishment		24.130	3.337		23.172	3.469	2.40	.05

Depersonalization		4.940	2. 336		8.305	4.294	7.90	.01
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From the above table:2 , it is seen that burnout syndrome of teacher in all the dimensions of job burnout differ significantly in relation to the independent variable locus of control . The Table shows that in case of Depersonalization this difference is significant at .01 level and in case of Emotional Exhaustion and Personal accomplishment it is significant at .05 level.

Hence, teachers with external locus of control have more emotional exhaustion than teachers with internal locus of control. They develop more negative and cynical attitudes and feeling toward others .On the other hand, reduced personal accomplishment of externally locus of control can be described as a person's negative self-evaluation in relation to his or her job.

**2. Relationship between locus of control and different dimensions of burnout:** 'Pearson Product Moment Correlation' helps to describe the linear relationships between two variables. To determine the nature relationship between locus of control and different dimensions of burnout, coefficient of correlation of locus of control scores of the teachers and burnout score for each dimension have been calculated .Results are shown in table: 3.

**Table: 3**  
**Correlation Relationships between Burnout and Locus of Control of High School Teachers**

Teachers Dimensions	Burnout	Coefficient Correlation	of	Sig.
Emotional Exhaustion		0.379		P <0.01
Depersonalization		0.299		P <0.01
Personal accomplishment		0.030		N.S

From this table it is observed that all burnout dimensions were positively or negatively related to the independent variable locus of control. Emotional Exhaustion that is, being emotionally over-extended and exhausted by one's work and depersonalizations which indicate pessimism to colleagues, students and organization have significant positive correlation with locus of control of teacher. In case of personal accomplishment i.e. diminished personal accomplishment, as lower scores correspond to greater degrees of burnout, this relationship is actually negative. Thus, it indicates that externally controlled teachers have lower personal accomplishment i.e. more burnout. But this relationship is not significant.

#### **Findings:**

The primary aim of this study was to determine the relationship between locus of control and burnout syndrome of teachers of secondary schools. The present research findings indicate that Emotional Exhaustion and depersonalization show significant relationship with external locus of control. In other words, high school teachers who have an external locus of control perceive more burnout in emotional and depersonalization dimensions than the teachers with internal locus of control. Thus,

independent variable of the present study is found to be positive and significant predictor of Emotional Exhaustion and depersonalization dimensions of burnout.

The findings of this study indicated an association between external locus of control and emotional exhaustion. This study provides support to the findings of Sari, (2000) that emotional exhaustion related to locus of control, which is one of the important factors in burnout. These results agree with previous studies of Leung et al. (2000.). The internally controlled teachers are more likely to perceive themselves in a more positive manner; that is, they see and feel themselves as being trustworthy and responsible. As mentioned by Swearingen (1990), emotional exhaustion involves feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. This study also found correlations between emotional stress and locus of control as indicated in Brouwers and Tomic (2000). In short internals may be more satisfied, and perceived as having less emotional exhaustion because it is assumed that they have some control over their environmental supports. It may be possible that job stress and emotional exhaustion are not a major problem for internalizers. The results of this study raised the issues that the teachers in do not see themselves as being comfortable because of having high level emotional exhaustion. According to Smith (1997) also, depersonalization showed a significant relationship with external locus of control.

Externality is negatively related to Personal Accomplishment as indicated by Lauenburg and Cadavid (1992). This study also shows identical result. Teachers, in general, may be strongly motivated to strive and achieve a sense of competence and psychological success in their work. Further, external teachers have personal accomplishment and psychological burnout as much as internal ones. However, their efforts may become frustrated in a work setting characterized by unpredictability and lack of personal control. The results of this study supported Capels' (1992) study which described individuals with an external locus of control may have few coping strategies or high burnout. These individuals may be experiencing burnout and not properly making appropriate adjustments to their situational problems. They may perceive these events as being outside their control (external control).

### **Conclusion:**

The researcher in this study investigated how high school teachers' burnout is related to different aspects of locus of control. As mentioned before, the results of this study indicate that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment of burnout dimensions are either positively or negatively related to independent variables, which are found to be negative or positive predictors of dimensions of burnout. The results of this research have some implications for teachers in high schools. Job burnout encompasses a wide scope including productivity mitigation, organizational commitment decrease, turnover and absenteeism, morale reduction and job satisfaction mitigation. Obviously, the negative consequences of job burnout are too costly for organizations. Therefore, to devise proper plans to decrease its consequences, it is necessary to control this phenomenon in organizations following practices should be taken into account:

1. It is possible to decrease job burnout through making proper decisions and implementing scientific and effective interventions. Intervention programs can be prepared in co-operation with administrators and counsellors to prevent teachers' stress and burnout, as indicated in Sari (2002). Individual interventions include improvement of job competencies and individual skills, social support or relaxation exercises.



2. There are diverse organizational interventions such as reorganization, increasing the control on job and involving personnel in decision makings. Establishing job advisory plans in organizations is among the most productive approaches to decrease job burnout. Intervention programs can be prepared in co-operation with administrators and counsellors to prevent teachers' stress and burnout, as indicated in Sari (2002),
3. Educational journals and books which could be provided for the teachers which may widen their knowledge about burnout and increase their self-confidence to cope with burnout.
4. Teachers' job burnout can adversely affect their personal well-being Teachers should endeavour to attend stress-management interventions.,

### **Suggestions for Future Research:**

Future research can expand the findings of this research, which may determine the associations of burnout with other variables such as stress ,career intentions, self efficacy etc. Expansion of the present study may include a larger sample size, both public and private educational institutes, and a more geographically diverse sample.

The researcher hoped that the findings of this study would contribute to an understanding of the role of burnout, locus of control. Also, the findings would be helpful for other researcher in policy discussions and efforts to improve teachers' quality of work life.

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