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EFFECTS OF GENDER ON OCCUPATIONAL STRESS OF POST GRADUATE-TEACHERS WORKING IN UPGRADED SCHOOLS IN BIHAR

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Abstract

This study examined the effect of gender on the occupational stress of Post-Graduate Teachers (PGTs) in government upgraded senior secondary (+2) schools of Bihar. Middle and secondary schools have been upgraded to +2 institutions under RMSA, Samagra Shiksha and NEP 2020. As a result, PGTs work under demanding conditions: inadequate laboratory and ICT infrastructure, shortages of subject teachers, large classes, changing cadre and service conditions, and the pressure of high-stakes BSEB Class 12 examinations.

The sample was 500 permanent PGTs (195 male, 305 female) from Madhepura, Saharsa and Supaul districts of the Kosi division. Occupational stress was measured with the Occupational Stress Index of Srivastava and Singh (1981), a 46-item, five-point scale with a split-half reliability of 0.935. Demographic data were collected through a Biographical Information Blank. Data were analysed in SPSS using descriptive statistics and the General Linear Model.

Female teachers reported significantly higher occupational stress (M = 180.45, SD = 33.09) than male teachers (M = 165.70, SD = 31.47), a difference of nearly 15 points. The null hypothesis of no gender effect was therefore rejected. The finding is interpreted in light of the dual burden of professional and domestic responsibilities, which still falls disproportionately on women in Indian society, including Bihar.

The study suggests that school policies that appear gender-neutral may have unequal effects in practice. These include policies on leave, duty allocation, transport, safety and extended working hours. It recommends periodic workload audits and gender-sensitive institutional support for female PGTs.

Keywords: Occupational stress; Gender differences; Post-Graduate Teachers (PGTs); Upgraded schools; Higher secondary education; Dual burden; Bihar

Introduction

Higher Secondary (+2) Education in Bihar

Classes 11 and 12 in Bihar, commonly known as "Intermediate," fall under the authority of the Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB), which was set up in 1952 and now operates under the Bihar Intermediate Education Council, overseeing affiliation, curriculum, and examinations across the Science, Commerce, and Arts streams (Careers360, 2021). The Class 12 board examination conducted by BSEB carries considerable weight beyond the classroom: it is the standard entry requirement for most undergraduate courses and is routinely used as a screening filter in both government and private recruitment (PW.live, n.d.). Admission into +2 schools and colleges is coordinated statewide through the Online Facilitation System for Students (OFSS), a single portal that processes applicants from BSEB, CBSE, and CISCE-affiliated schools alike (Careers360, 2021).

Contextual Framework of +2 Education in Bihar

The higher secondary (+2) educational structure in Bihar accommodates students during critical developmental and academic years (ages 16–18), covering Science, Arts, and Commerce streams. In the post-2000 era, Bihar experienced a

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push to expand secondary and higher secondary enrolment to meet national educational targets, such as those outlined in the *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (RMSA) and subsequently *Samagra Shiksha*.

However, this rapid physical expansion outpaced the state's permanent administrative and budgetary capacity, leading to structural shifts in teacher recruitment, service conditions, and cadre management.

The Cadre Dichotomy: From Permanent to Contractual (*Niyojit*)

To address severe teacher shortages in the mid-2000s, the Government of Bihar enacted the *Bihar Panchayat Primary/Secondary/Higher Secondary Teacher Employment Rules, 2006*. Under this policy, recruitment authority was decentralized to local administrative bodies (*Panchayati Raj Institutions* and urban local bodies).

Teachers appointed through this framework were designated as **Niyojit Shikshak** (contractual teachers). Unlike the legacy "regular" state cadre teachers appointed prior to 2006, *Niyojit* teachers were initially placed on fixed honorariums, lacked regular pay scales, lacked pension provisions, and were governed by distinct local body service conditions (Ahmad, 2020; Government of Bihar, 2006).

Over time, this produced a multi-tiered hierarchy within +2 schools:

1. **Regular Cadre Teachers (Pre-2006):** Holding state civil service status, higher pay scales, and traditional pension benefits.
2. **Niyojit Shikshak (+2 Cadre):** Appointed via local bodies with lower fixed salaries, gradual consolidated pay revisions, and limited promotional avenues.
3. **Guest / Ad-hoc Lecturers:** Deployed on temporary hourly or daily stipends to fill critical subject vacancies in rural districts.

The 2023 Policy Shift and the BPSC Cadre

A major structural shift occurred with the notification of the *Bihar State School Teachers (Appointment, Transfer, Disciplinary Action and Service Condition) Rules, 2023*. This framework effectively ended local body recruitment and re-centralized teacher selection under the **Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC)** (NewsClick, 2023).

Under these rules, new recruits are classified as formal **State School Teachers** (*Rajya Karmi* status) with standardized pay matrices, district-level state cadres, and formal government employee benefits. Concurrently, existing *Niyojit* teachers were offered a pathway to state cadre migration via state-level competency examinations known as the **Sakshamta Pariksha** (Bihar Sakshamta Pariksha, 2024; LawBeat, 2024).

Working Conditions of +2 School Teachers

Working conditions directly influence teacher efficiency, instructional quality, and mental health. In Bihar's +2 schools, physical infrastructure, classroom environment, and non-teaching duties vary between urban centres and rural areas.

Physical Infrastructure and Instructional Resources

While school infrastructure in Bihar has expanded—with thousands of middle schools upgraded to higher secondary (+2) schools across all 38 districts—resource distribution remains uneven.

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- **Laboratory and Practical Facilities:** Higher secondary subjects like Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Computer Science require specialized laboratory equipment. In many upgraded +2 schools, particularly in rural districts such as Madhubani, Purnea, and Saharsa, physical classrooms are frequently converted into makeshift laboratories lacking basic chemical reagents, specimens, or safety tools.
- **ICT and Digital Tools:** Digital infrastructure under the *ICT @ Schools* scheme has seen progress in district headquarters like Patna, Muzaffarpur, and Gaya. However, sub-divisional and rural schools frequently face intermittent electricity, lack of high-speed internet, and insufficient functional computers for large student batches.
- **Sanitation and Staff Spaces:** The availability of clean, functional, gender-segregated toilets and designated staff rooms remains a operational challenge, disproportionately affecting female +2 teachers (Pachaiyappan & Raj, 2014).

Teacher-Student Ratios and Subject-Wise Shortages

The ideal Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) for secondary and higher secondary education recommended by national guidelines is 30:1. In practice, higher secondary schools in Bihar often experience significantly higher class sizes, sometimes exceeding 70–100 students per classroom during peak attendance periods.

TABLE-1

Subject Area	Availability Status in Rural +2 Schools	Operational Impact
Humanities & Social Sciences	**Moderate to Adequate**	**Large batch sizes; high grading load**
Mathematics & Physical Sciences	**Acute Shortage**	**Unfilled sanctioned posts; high role overload**
Biological Sciences	**Moderate Shortage**	**Lab practical management challenges**
Languages (English, Maithili, Urdu)	**Variable / District-Dependent**	**Large class sizes, non-specialist teaching**

The shortage of specialized subject teachers in science and mathematics has meant that existing +2 educators often manage extra teaching loads outside their primary specialization, leading to role overload and role ambiguity (Ahmad, 2020).

Empirical Insights into Occupational Stress and Job Satisfaction

Empirical studies examining secondary and higher secondary school teachers in North Bihar (covering districts such as Darbhanga, Madhubani, and Samastipur) reveal moderate to high levels of occupational stress across both public and private institutions (Ahmad, 2020; European Economic Letters, 2025).

A study by Ahmad (2020) on +2 school teachers in North Bihar highlighted key stress predictors:

Key empirical findings include:

- **Moderate to High Overall Stress:** A substantial proportion of teachers report elevated occupational stress stemming from large student volumes, administrative tasks, and rigid performance metrics.
- **Negative Stress-Satisfaction Correlation:** Stress metrics demonstrate a strong inverse correlation ($r = -0.61, p < 0.01$) with job satisfaction, demonstrating that administrative pressure directly erodes instructional morale (European Economic Letters, 2025).
- **Institutional Differences:** Private +2 school educators report higher occupational stress and lower job security compared to government school counterparts, largely due to unregulated working hours and lower compensation structures (Ahmad, 2020; European Economic Letters, 2025).

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Review of Literature

Occupational Stress Among Post-Graduate Teachers (PGTs)

Post-Graduate Teachers hold advanced, discipline-specific degrees (such as Master of Science, Master of Arts, or Master of Education) and are tasked with delivering advanced academic instruction. International comparisons indicate that PGTs experience stress profiles distinct from primary or lower secondary educators:

- **Academic Accountability and Board Examinations:** PGT performance is heavily judged by student standardized examination scores, college entry qualification rates, and national league tables (PISA/TALIS metrics) (OECD, 2019).
- **Curriculum Complexity and Rapid Revisions:** Senior secondary curricula undergo frequent modernizations to align with global knowledge economies, requiring continuous professional re-skilling without adequate training release time.
- **Role Overload and Multi-Tiered Teaching:** In upgraded institutions, PGTs are frequently required to teach both upper-secondary specialized courses and lower-secondary general classes, creating severe context-switching fatigue and role overload.

"The teaching profession faces an intensification paradox: as academic standards and administrative reporting mandates escalate globally, teacher autonomy over classroom instruction and professional schedule allocation continues to contract."

— **Skaalvik & Skaalvik (2017)**

The Global Scale of Secondary Teacher Stress

Data from the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS, 2018; OECD, 2019) covering over 48 participating countries revealed that nearly **38% of secondary school educators report experiencing 'a lot' of work-related stress**. The primary drivers identified globally were:

1. Administrative workloads and compliance reporting (OECD, 2019).
2. Maintaining classroom discipline amidst changing student behavioural dynamics (OECD, 2019).
3. Keeping up with changing government/institutional requirements (OECD, 2019).

Demographic and Contextual Moderating Variables

The manifestation, intensity, and mitigation of occupational stress among PGTs are moderated by individual demographic factors and spatial configurations.

Age and Teaching Experience

International literature indicates a curvilinear or multi-phasic relationship between chronological age/teaching tenure and occupational stress (Klassen & Chiu, 2010):

- **Novice / Younger PGTs (<30 years):** Experience elevated stress stemming from pedagogical shock, classroom management challenges, role ambiguity, and reduced professional self-efficacy (Kyriacou, 2001). In upgraded schools, young PGTs often lack senior mentors, increasing vulnerability to early career burnout (Johnson et al., 2005).
- **Mid-Career PGTs (31–48 years):** Display elevated stress related to mid-career plateauing, career advancement pressures, and peak work-family domain conflict (Sarkar, 2023). Mid-career PGTs frequently bear the heaviest administrative burdens in expanding schools.
- **Senior / Older PGTs (>50 years):** Often demonstrate stronger emotional coping mechanisms and lower general stress due to extensive professional habituation. However, senior teachers report acute technological stress (*technostress*) when required to adopt digital learning management systems or updated curriculum frameworks without sufficient digital literacy training (Tsubono et al., 2024).

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Gender Dynamics and Role Expectations

Gender constitutes a central variable in international research on teacher well-being, though empirical findings present nuanced paradigms:

The Dual-Burden Perspective

A substantial body of international studies demonstrates that female secondary educators consistently report higher mean stress scores, emotional exhaustion, and physical strain compared to male peers (Tsubono et al., 2024). Scholars attribute this differential to the *second shift* or dual-burden phenomenon: female educators in many socio-cultural contexts fulfil demanding institutional teaching roles while carrying disproportionate responsibility for domestic labour, child-rearing, and eldercare (Sarkar, 2023).

Structural and Economic Stressors in Male Educators

Conversely, empirical research highlights specific domains where male secondary educators exhibit elevated stress. Male teachers frequently record higher stress related to financial dissatisfaction, perceived low societal status of teaching, administrative conflict, and societal pressures associated with primary breadwinning expectations (Sarkar, 2023).

Invariant Gender Stress Dynamics

A growing body of modern empirical research indicates non-significant overall gender differences in overall stress indices, arguing that high-pressure senior secondary environments—characterized by rigid accountability metrics and systemic resource deficits—exert an equally taxing effect on all educators regardless of gender (Bian, 2026; Nagra, 2013).

Marital Status and Social Support Mechanisms

The influence of marital status on occupational stress is primarily understood through the dual concepts of social support buffering and role proliferation:

Empirical evaluations show that spousal support serves as a significant protective factor against occupational burnout (Ahghar, 2008). However, when married PGTs face excessive after-hours school responsibilities such as weekend grading and board examination logistics the work domain heavily encroaches upon the family domain, precipitating work-family conflict (Sarkar, 2023).

School Locale: Rural vs. Urban Educational Contexts
Geographical context introduces structural variance that alters the operational baseline of senior secondary instruction:

Rural Upgraded Contexts

International research across developing and rural regions emphasizes that teachers in rural upgraded schools confront severe environmental stressors:

- Inadequate physical infrastructure, lack of specialized science/ICT laboratories, and limited learning materials.
- Geographical isolation, long daily commutes, and poor local transportation services.
- Lower student attendance rates, socio-economic challenges among student families, and lower parental engagement in academic processes.

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Urban Upgraded Contexts

Conversely, PGTs in urban educational environments navigate a distinct set of stressors:

- Large class sizes, high student-teacher ratios, and overcrowded physical classrooms.
- Intense academic competition, high parental performance demands, and reputational pressure on school rankings.
- Elevated ambient noise, urban commuting stress, higher living costs, and complex student behavioural management dynamics.

Synthesis and Rationale for the Study

The international body of literature confirms that occupational stress among senior secondary educators is a complex, multi-faceted construct governed by systemic job demands, institutional resources, and individual demographic characteristics. While theoretical frameworks such as the JD-R Model, JDC Model, ERI Model, and Transactional Model explain the general mechanics of workplace strain, their specific interaction within *upgraded school environments* requires deeper empirical investigation.

PGTs in upgraded schools occupy a unique occupational role. They must deliver advanced academic instruction under transitional institutional constraints, often without mature infrastructure or administrative support systems.

By synthesizing global findings across age, gender, marital status, and locale, this literature review demonstrates that stress is neither uniformly distributed nor influenced by isolated factors. Instead, it manifests at the intersection of structural workplace conditions and personal demographic reality.

This synthesis establishes the theoretical foundation, methodological context, and empirical rationale for investigating the occupational stress profiles of Post-Graduate Teachers in upgraded schools.

Research Methodology

Rationale of the Study

Globally, occupational stress among educators has emerged as a pervasive systemic issue with far-reaching psychological and organizational ramifications. Within the domain of educational psychology and administration, teaching is increasingly recognized as a high-strain profession characterized by intense interpersonal demands, heavy workloads, and continuous accountability (Kyriacou, 2001; OECD, 2019). Sustained exposure to occupational stressors without adequate structural or socio-emotional resources frequently leads to psychological distress, manifesting primarily as elevated anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and depressive symptoms (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

When left unaddressed, persistent occupational stress culminates in burnout—a state of physical, emotional, and mental depletion. Burnout adversely impacts teachers' job satisfaction, erodes their mental health, and severely compromises their Quality of Work Life (QWL) (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Beyond the individual teacher, compromised psychological well-being among educators leads to decreased instructional quality, classroom management friction, heightened absenteeism, and professional attrition, ultimately impacting student learning outcomes (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

In the context of Bihar, India, recent educational reforms aligned with the *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)* and the *National Education Policy (NEP) 2020* have prioritized expanding upper-secondary education access by upgrading basic secondary schools (Grades 6–10) into full senior secondary (+2) institutions. Post-Graduate Teachers (PGTs) appointed to these upgraded schools occupy a pivotal instructional role, bearing responsibility for advanced discipline-specific syllabi, specialized practical instruction, and student preparation for high-stakes Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB) Class 12 examinations.

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Objective of the Present Investigation

Objective: To examine the main and interactional effects of **GENDER** (Male vs. Female) on Occupational Stress among PGTs.

Null hypothesis (Ho#1): There is no effects of gender on occupational stress of PGTs.

Sample of the Study

The target population for this empirical investigation comprises permanent Post-Graduate Teachers (PGTs) employed in government upgraded senior secondary schools across the Kosi division of Bihar, India.

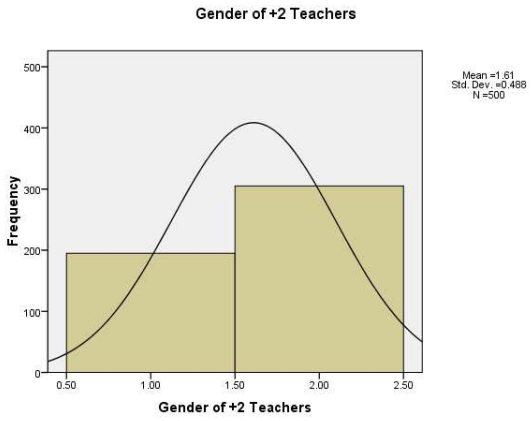
Sample Size and Geographical Coverage

The study will evaluate a total sample size of $N = 500$ Post-Graduate Teachers. Data collection will be carried out across three representative districts of the Kosi region in Bihar:

1. **Madhepura District**
2. **Saharsa District**
3. **Supaul District**

Collected sample has been presented in the following manner so that it can be observed at a glance:

GRAPH-1



Measurement Tools and Instrumentation

Occupational Stress Questionnaire

In the present study, the researcher used a standard test to measure the Occupational Stress Index, developed by Srivastava and Singh (1981). The scale consisted of forty six items, each to be rated on five point scale. Out of 46 items, 28 are true keyed and rests 18 are false keyed. Split half method was applied to establish the reliability of the scale which was found to be 0.935 by the authors. This tool has been used in some recent studies among school teachers (Lath, 2012, Singh, 2011, 2012; Latif & Sultana, 2009)

Biographical Information Blank (BIB)

A comprehensive Biographical Information Blank (BIB) has been designed by the research scholar in consultation with the research supervisor. The BIB collects primary demographic and occupational metrics, including age, gender, marital status, school locale (urban/rural), total teaching experience, educational qualifications, academic discipline, and specific school designation.

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Statistical Analyses

The quantitative data generated from the standardized psychometric instruments will be coded, tabulated, and analysed using modern statistical software (SPSS). Because the study examines both individual group differences and interactional dynamics across multiple continuous variables, both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques has been applied.

Results & Discussions

Effect of Gender on Occupational Stress
General Linear Model

TABLE-2

Between-Subjects Factors			
		Value Label	N
Gender of +2 Teachers	1	Male	195
	2	Female	305

The sample comprises 500 post-graduate (+2) Teachers, divided into 195 Male teachers (39.0%) and 305 Female teachers (61.0%). While not perfectly balanced, this is a considerably evener split than the four-way age classification examined under HO#1, which reduces (though does not eliminate) concerns about unequal-n distortions in the significance tests that follow.

TABLE-3

Descriptive Statistics				
	Gender of +2 Teachers	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Occupational Stress of +2 Teachers	Male	165.7026	31.46990	195
	Female	180.4525	33.08907	305
	Total	174.7000	33.22520	500

Comparing mean scores between the two gender groups:

Occupational Stress: Female teachers report notably higher stress (M = 180.45, SD = 33.09) than Male teachers (M = 165.70, SD = 31.47) — a difference of nearly 15 points.

This is a statistically significant effect, indicating that, considered Occupational Stress differ significantly between Male and Female teachers. Thus, the null hypothesis (HO#1) is rejected.

The test again yielded a statistically significant effect, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis.

At the univariate level, Gender was found to significantly influence Occupational Stress. Female teachers reported markedly higher levels of Occupational Stress than their Male counterparts, a difference that constituted the single largest and most robust univariate effect observed under this hypothesis.

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The finding points toward a gendered dimension of occupational strain among the teaching workforce studied, wherein Female teachers appear to shoulder a disproportionate share of stress, quite plausibly on account of the dual demands of professional duties and domestic or familial responsibilities that continue to fall unevenly across genders in much of Indian society, including in Bihar. That this heightened stress among Female teachers does not translate into a correspondingly large gap in Job Satisfaction is itself noteworthy and may indicate that many Female teachers derive satisfaction from their professional role even while experiencing it as more taxing than their Male colleagues do.

Implications of the Study

The findings summarised above carry several implications for educational policy and institutional practice in Bihar, particularly as they concern the cadre of Post-Graduate Teachers serving in upgraded +2 schools.

The pronounced gender difference in Occupational Stress, with Female teachers reporting substantially higher stress than their Male colleagues, suggests that institutional policies framed as gender-neutral may nonetheless have differential effects in practice. School managements might usefully examine whether existing arrangements, such as leave policies, transport and safety provisions, and the scheduling of extended school hours or extracurricular duties adequately account for the additional domestic responsibilities that continue to fall disproportionately on Female teachers in the Bihar context.

Recommendations

Based on the finding and its implication discussed above, the following recommendations are offered for the consideration of school administrators, the Bihar state education department, teacher-training institutions, and other stakeholders concerned with the professional well-being of Post-Graduate Teachers working in upgraded schools.

- Workload audits should be periodically conducted within upgraded schools to ensure that administrative, examination-related, and co-curricular responsibilities are not disproportionately concentrated among teachers in the mid-career age bracket, since this group was found to bear the heaviest burden of Occupational Stress.
- School managements should review scheduling, leave, and duty-allocation policies with explicit attention to their differential impact on Female teachers, given the substantially elevated stress levels reported by women in this study, to ensure that ostensibly uniform policies do not translate into unequal practical burdens.

Recommendations for Teachers Themselves

- Teachers approaching or currently within the mid-career age bracket identified in this study as a period of heightened stress and reduced quality of work life may benefit from proactively seeking out stress-management resources, peer support networks, and, where feasible, a deliberate reassessment of the balance between professional and personal commitments during this phase of their careers.
- Teachers, and particularly Female teachers who reported elevated stress levels in this study, are encouraged to make use of whatever institutional support mechanisms are available to them, and to communicate openly with school administration regarding workload concerns, rather than absorbing additional strain silently.

Delimitations of the Study

Every research investigation is necessarily conducted within a bounded scope, and the present study is no exception. The following delimitations define the boundaries within which its findings should be interpreted and beyond which they should not, without further empirical confirmation, be generalised.

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- The study was delimited to Post-Graduate Teachers working specifically in upgraded +2 schools of Bihar and did not include teachers working in schools that were established as senior-secondary institutions from inception, nor teachers working at the primary or upper-primary level.
- The study was confined geographically to the state of Bihar, and its findings cannot, without further investigation, be generalised to teaching populations in other Indian states or in other countries, where educational infrastructure, administrative arrangements and socio-cultural conditions may differ substantially.
- The sample of 500 teachers, while adequate for the multivariate statistical procedures employed, represents a subset of the total population of Post-Graduate Teachers in Bihar's upgraded schools, and the sample was not perfectly balanced across all demographic categories — most notably, the 42–46-year age bracket and the Unmarried marital-status category were comparatively under-represented relative to other categories within their respective factors.

Within these delimitations, the present study offers a statistically grounded and educationally relevant account of how Gender relates to the Occupational Stress of Post-Graduate Teachers working in Bihar's upgraded schools. It is hoped that the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations presented in this paper will prove of value to school administrators, policy-makers, teacher-training institutions and future researchers alike, and will contribute, in however modest a measure, to the continuing effort to improve the professional and psychological well-being of the teaching workforce upon whom the quality of secondary education in Bihar so substantially depends.

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