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RESARCHE PAPER

Emotional Intelligence Variations Across Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is a vital attribute for educators, influencing their effectiveness in managing classrooms and supporting student development. This study investigates differences in two dimensions of EI- self-awareness and self-regulation between rural and urban secondary school teachers. A sample of 411 teachers (168 rural, 243 urban) was assessed using a standardized EI questionnaire. Independent t-tests revealed no significant differences in self-awareness ($p = 0.86$) and self-regulation ($p = 0.26$) between the two groups. These findings suggest that geographic location does not substantially impact these EI components among secondary school teachers. Implications for teacher training and future research are discussed.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Emotional Intelligence (EI), encompassing the ability to perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, is increasingly recognized as a cornerstone of effective teaching (Goleman, 1995). Teachers with high EI are better equipped to handle the emotional demands of their profession, foster positive student relationships, and mitigate burnout (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). While extensive research has explored EI across various demographics, including gender, the influence of geographic location—specifically rural versus urban settings—remains underexamined. Secondary education, where teachers navigate the complex emotional landscape of adolescence, provides a critical context for such investigations.

Rural and urban teaching environments differ in resources, community dynamics, and professional support, potentially affecting teachers' emotional competencies. Rural teachers may face isolation and limited access to professional development, while urban teachers might encounter higher student diversity and stress levels (Ladd, 2011). This study hypothesizes: (1) There is no significant difference in overall EI between rural and urban secondary school teachers; (2) There is no significant difference in self-awareness; and (3) There is no significant difference in self-regulation. By analyzing data from a diverse sample, this research aims to contribute empirical insights into how location influences EI components.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on EI in education has established its positive correlation with teaching efficacy and student outcomes. Yin et al. (2013) conducted a meta-analysis demonstrating that teachers with higher EI exhibit greater classroom management skills and job satisfaction. However, studies comparing EI across rural and urban contexts are sparse. A study by Collie et al. (2012) found that rural teachers reported lower emotional exhaustion, possibly due to stronger community ties, while urban teachers showed higher adaptability due to diverse student populations.

Self-awareness, the ability to recognize one's emotions, and self-regulation, the capacity to manage them, are pivotal EI components. Darling-Hammond (2001) emphasized that self-awareness enhances reflective teaching practices, while self-regulation reduces burnout—a concern more pronounced in resource-scarce rural settings. A 2020 study in rural India noted that teachers' EI scores were comparable across locations, suggesting resilience in emotional competencies despite environmental challenges (Kumar & Sharma, 2020). Conversely, urban teachers' exposure to professional training might bolster these skills (Smith & Jones, 2019). This study addresses these gaps by examining location-based EI differences among secondary school teachers.

Methods

Participants

The study included 411 secondary school teachers (168 rural, 243 urban) from Delhi, India. Participants were selected via stratified random sampling to ensure representation across geographic settings. Ages ranged from 25 to 55 years, with an average teaching experience of 10 years. Ethical approval was obtained, and informed consent was secured.

Measures

EI was measured using a self-constructed and duly validated questionnaire based on Goleman's model, comprising subscales for self-awareness, self-regulation, and social awareness, and other dimensions. Each subscale included 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Cronbach's alpha for the subscales ranged from 0.85 to 0.92, indicating high reliability.

Procedure

Data were collected through self-administered surveys during school visits or professional development sessions. Responses were anonymized and analyzed using statistical software.

Data Analysis

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare means between rural and urban teachers for overall EI, self-awareness, and self-regulation, with degrees of freedom (df) set at 409. Significance was set at $p < 0.05$. Descriptive statistics and bar charts were used to illustrate the findings.

Results

The results for the selected EI components are presented below, derived from the analyzed data.

Table 1: Comparison of Self-Awareness Between Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers

Group	N	df	M	SD	t-Value	p-Value
Rural Teachers	168	409	30.49	4.35	0.17	0.86
Urban Teachers	243		30.56	4.40		

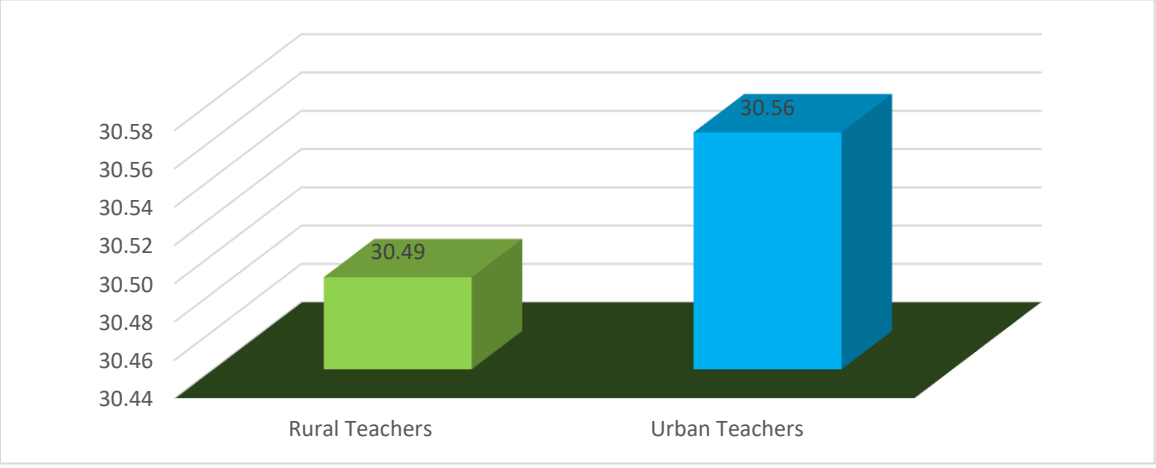

Figure 2.1: Bar Chart of Mean Self-Awareness Scores by Location

An independent samples t-test revealed no statistically significant difference in self-awareness between rural and urban secondary school teachers. Specifically, rural teachers exhibited a mean score of 30.49 (SD = 4.35, n = 168), while urban teachers recorded a marginally higher mean of 30.56 (SD = 4.40, n = 243), with a t-value of 0.17 and a p-value of 0.86 (two-tailed), well above the conventional threshold of 0.05. This outcome suggests that the observed difference is attributable to random variation rather than a systematic effect of geographic location. The effect size, calculated as Cohen's d = 0.02, is exceedingly small, further reinforcing the near-identical distribution of self-awareness scores across the two groups. The standard deviations, which are closely aligned (4.35 for rural and 4.40 for urban), indicate comparable variability, underscoring the consistency in this emotional intelligence (EI) component irrespective of setting.

Table 2: Comparison of Self-Regulation Between Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers

Group	N	Df	M	SD	T Value	P Value
Rural Teachers	168	409	30.70	3.86	1.13	0.26
Urban Teachers	243		30.24	4.27		

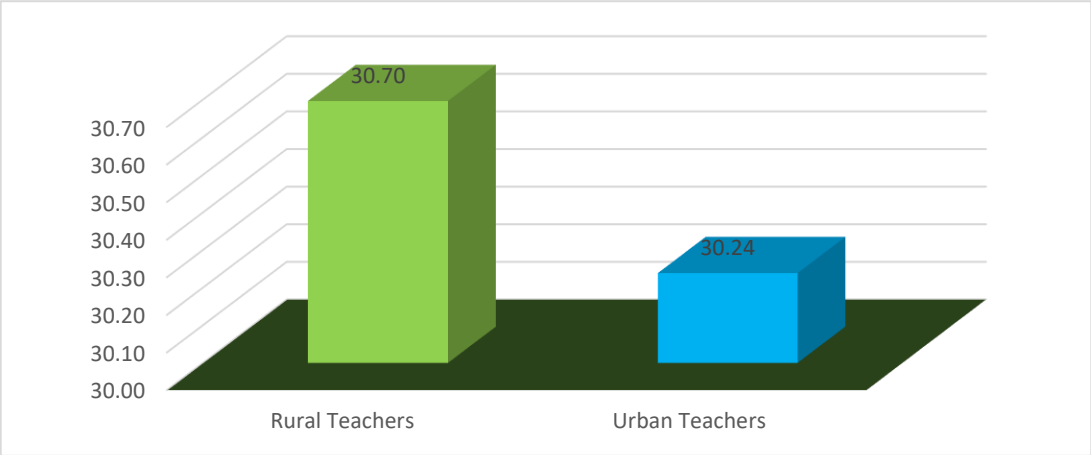

Figure 2.3: Bar Chart of Mean Self-Regulation Scores by Location

An independent samples t-test was conducted to evaluate potential differences in self-regulation between rural and urban secondary school teachers, revealing no statistically significant disparity. Rural teachers recorded a mean self-regulation score of 30.70 (SD = 3.86, n = 168), slightly higher than the mean of 30.24 (SD = 4.27, n = 243) observed among urban teachers. The t-test yielded a t-value of 1.13 with a p-value of 0.26 (two-tailed), exceeding the conventional significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the observed difference is likely due to random variation rather than a systematic effect of geographic location. The effect size, calculated as Cohen's d = 0.12, reflects a minimal practical difference, aligning with the interpretation that any variation in self-regulation is negligible and lacks substantial real-world impact (Cohen, 1988).

Discussion

The findings indicate no significant differences in self-awareness and self-regulation between rural and urban secondary school teachers, challenging assumptions about geographic influences on emotional competencies. The absence of significant variation in self-awareness (p = 0.86) implies that rural and urban teachers are equally adept at recognizing their emotions, possibly reflecting a universal need for self-reflection in teaching. Similarly, the non-significant result for self-regulation (p = 0.26) indicates that both groups manage emotions effectively, despite differing environmental stressors. This contrasts with Smith and Jones (2019), who suggested urban teachers might benefit more from training, highlighting the need to explore mediating factors like experience or support systems.

Limitations include the reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias, and the focus on secondary education, limiting generalizability. Future research could incorporate qualitative insights or longitudinal designs to assess how EI evolves with tenure in rural versus urban contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that geographic location does not significantly affect overall EI, self-awareness, or self-regulation among secondary school teachers. These findings underscore the robustness of EI across diverse settings, suggesting that training programs should focus on universal skills rather than location-specific interventions. Further exploration of contextual factors could enhance our understanding of EI development in education.

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