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Exploring Urban and Rural Differences in Emotional Intelligence Competencies and Teaching Effectiveness among Secondary School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how Punjabi secondary school teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) competencies differed between urban and rural areas and how this affected their ability to teach. A structured questionnaire measuring five EI dimensions—self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills—was used to gather data from 389 teachers (341 urban, 48 rural) using a quantitative survey design. Locality-wise differences were examined using independent samples t-tests. The findings suggested that teachers in rural and urban areas had similar emotional control and interpersonal skills, with no discernible differences in self-awareness, self-regulation, or social skills. However, there were notable differences in empathy ($p = 0.007$) and motivation ($p = 0.017$), with urban teachers exhibiting higher levels in both areas. These results demonstrate contextual differences in teachers' emotional competencies, which are impacted by institutional support and professional development opportunities. The study suggests that rural teachers receive EI-based training to increase their motivation and empathy, which will improve their overall effectiveness as teachers.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Motivation, Empathy, Teaching Effectiveness.

Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) has become one of the most important constructs of educational studies, as it is perceived that it affects the professional performance of teachers and student achievement. First popularized in psychology and organizational behavior, EI is the capacity to sense, comprehend, control and apply emotions well (Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, 2008). EI competencies of teachers in educational setting, which are often described as conceptualized self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, influence classroom climate, instruction decisions, teacher-student relationships, and finally teaching effectiveness (Goleman, 1998; Brackett, Rivers and Salovey, 2011). Modern research associates teacher EI with classroom management, the level of student engagement, and wellbeing, and emotive competent teachers are more likely to establish amicable learning conditions

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and react flexibly to various learner requirements (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Aldrup, 2024).

Teaching effectiveness is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that includes lesson planning, instructions delivery, classroom management, assessment practice, and the possibility to contribute to the engagement and learning of students (Danielson, 2007; Stronge, 2018). Empirical studies conducted recently show that teachers EI is positively correlated with a lot of them: higher EI is associated with better classroom management, more student-centred methods, positive feedback, and better socio-emotional results of the student (Su et al., 2022; Jamal, 2023). The mechanic perspective means EI allows teachers to monitor and manage their affective states, understand the cues of students and be able to maintain motivation when stressed, which can be translated into a stable pedagogical performance (Mayer et al., 2008; Aldrup, 2024).

Although there is strong support indicating the relationship between EI and teaching effectiveness, there has been less agreement on contextual moderators of the relationship. The socio-geographic background, specifically the urban and rural experiences, could influence the formation and manifestation of the EI skills in teachers. The urban schools tend to offer more opportunities in professional development, larger student populations, and institutional resources which may support motivational and empathic skills (Coute & Miners, 2006; Leech, 2023). On the other hand, rural educators often have to work with limited resources, lack professional communities and development, and this factor can dilute the possibilities to master some of the EI competencies like empathy or motivation (Iqbal & Qureshi, 2012; Leech, 2023). The empirical differences between urban and rural educators are still quite sparse, though, with studies giving neutral evidence of locality differences in core self-regulatory skills and having strong urban differences in motivation, empathy, or access to EI training (Burić & Macuka, 2018; Khan, Khan and Mahmood, 2019).

An extended literature on cross-national and national research focuses on how the teachers have their emotional competencies and motivation to work shaped by the institutional setting. Studies in Pakistan and similar settings suggest that affective orientations and commitment of teachers are distinguished by structural aspects namely: salary, workload, administrative support and availability of continuous professional development (Iqbal & Qureshi, 2012; Khan et al., 2019; Jamal, 2023). These contextual determinants are perhaps likely to affect the implementation of EI competencies in practice and their subsequent effect on the quality of teaching. As an example, self-awareness and self-regulation can be developed in everyday classroom practice and professional norms, which result in similar levels in all locales; motivation and empathy may be more responsive to external reward, exposure to diversity, and training, which they may typically concentrate in urban environments (Mayer et al., 2008; Goleman, 1998; Côté & Miners, 2006).

Recent innovations in the social-emotional learning and intervention research, prove that EI is not exactly a characteristic, but can be enhanced by the help of specific programs (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Aldrup, 2024). Randomized and quasi-experimental teacher appraisal results suggest that training teachers in EI and emotion-regulation leads to a better classroom environment, lower burnout, and

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improved behavioural and emotional performance of students (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Aldrup, 2024). These results support the possibility of system-level intervention; that is, professional growth courses, mentoring, school visit, and in-school support can mitigate urban-rural differences in EI competencies and result in more equitable outcomes of teaching effectiveness.

There are still significant gaps even with the emerging evidence. To begin with, there is a lack of comparative, locality-sensitive studies on particular dimensions of EI (self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, social skills), especially in South Asian cultures. In most studies, EI is either a unidimensional predictor or a collection of relationships with teacher performance, which does not emphasize finer details on the difference in EI facets depending on context and how they can be aligned to discrete teacher effectiveness measures (Su et al., 2022; Jamal, 2023). Second, in case of urban-rural comparison, generalizability is inhibited by sample imbalance and heterogeneity in measurement. Third, the correlation between contextual drivers such as training access, workload, institutional culture and when EI differences are observed is scarcely synthesized, and can hardly be used to create specific policy reactions (Leech, 2023; Khan et al., 2019).

Thus, the current study responds to an opportune and policy-to-the-point question: Do urban-rural differences in the competencies of emotional intelligence among teachers exist, and how such differences impact the perceived effectiveness in teaching? Disaggregating EI into five dimensions empirically validated and comparing perceptions across localities among secondary school teachers, the research will provide light on which competencies are universally supported and which change depending on the situation. This kind of disaggregation is essential since not all interventions can be effective as opposed to self-regulation or self-awareness (Brackett et al., 2011; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).

The study methodology is a cross-sectional, quantitative survey of secondary school teachers, and stratified sampling (to obtain urban and rural representation). Measures are based on the validated EI scales used with teachers and the existing indicators of teaching success (Mayer et al., 2008; Su et al., 2022). Locality differences between various EI dimensions are determined through statistical comparison of means and standard deviations and independent-samples t-tests, and tested through regression analysis of predictive relationships between EI facets and teaching effectiveness controlling demographic and institutional covariates. This methodology balances depth (breadth in sample size and representativeness) and specificity of analysis (dimension-level analysis) to provide practicable information in terms of policy and professional growth.

The contributions of the study are three folds. First, it offers empirical information concerning the differences in EI competencies between urban and rural teachers in a realistic system of education, which explains which competencies are universal and which ones depend on contextual influences. Second, it correlates the dimensions of EI with the fundamental aspects of teaching effectiveness, thereby advancing the theoretical knowledge regarding the processes of teaching and classroom performance involving the role of socio-emotional skills (Mayer et al., 2008; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Third, the results will be used to shape specific, evidence-based interventions, including workshops on EI in the rural setting, mentoring, and

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institutional resources, to help bridge the contextual discrepancy and enhance the quality of instruction in different localities (Côté & Miners, 2006; Aldrup, 2024).

Overall, by placing teacher EI into the context of urban-rural comparison, one finds a crucial amount of information to both educational policy and teacher professional growth. Whereas some EI capabilities (e.g., self-awareness, self-regulation, social skills) can be generalized to occur through the experience in the classroom setting and professional norms, some (motivation, empathy) seem to be more contingent on the institutional aids and the exposure to the situation. Knowing these trends allows policymakers and school heads to implement differentiated policies, which focus more on empathy and motivation boost in the under-resourced rural schools and centralize the reflective and regulation practices in all schools. Finally, there is a potential opportunity to enhance the emotional competency of teachers and, as a result, to increase its efficacy and fair achievement of students.

Literature review

Emotional Intelligence (EI) has become the focus of the modern research on the quality of teachers and classroom performance. The initial meta-analyses and program evaluations determined that social and emotional competencies do not only affect the socio-emotional growth of students but also the practice of teachers and the climate of the classroom (Durlak et al., 2011). That background study reflected that school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs when executed with fidelity yield dependable improvements in classroom operating and student school achievement. Notably, Durlak et al. have suggested that adult stakeholders (teachers, leaders) should be able to model and have social-emotional competencies to achieve gains at the schoolwide level, which connects teacher EI directly to teacher effectiveness and suggests that teacher-centered inquiry is necessary.

Scholars usually operationalize EI in multi-dimensional aspects (self-awareness, self-regulation (or emotion regulation), motivation, empathy (or social awareness), social skills (or relationship management): These aspects are correlated with discrete elements of pedagogical practice: self-awareness informs reflective planning and classroom adjustments; regulation informs classroom management and stressful coping; motivation also informs persistence and persistence in the instructional process; empathy also supports a sense of attunement with the needs of students; and social skills enable the ability to collaborate with fellow professionals and connect with families. Studies indicate that the effects of each EI dimension on teacher outcomes are dissimilar: regulation has been found to be associated with low burnout and improved classroom control, whereas empathy and social skills have been closely related to student-teacher rapport and classroom emotional climate (Fernández-Berrocal, 2017).

The concept of teaching effectiveness, in its turn, is multidimensional and includes the organization of a lesson, its delivery, classroom management, assessment, and the ability to draw learners into a lesson and motivate them. Empirical studies have now been able to tie certain EI competencies to these dimensions. Indicatively, instructors who have greater regulation and stress-managing abilities have been found to have more regular routines and authoritative classroom management- practices that are linked with increased student engagement (Oliveira et al., 2021). Equally, socially

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skilled teachers show increased cooperation with their colleagues, are better communicators with parents and make more use of formative assessment- practices that foster long-term quality of instruction.

Mechanisms and EI

The relationship between EI and teacher effectiveness experiences growing literature on intermediating variables of teacher well-being and emotional labor. Perceived EI is a psychological tool, which mediates job stress and enhances affective well-being, which subsequently facilitates pedagogical competence (Fernandez-Berrocal, 2017). The recent mediation model research shows that EI mediates a decrease in negative affect and an increase in positive affect among teachers and leads to clearer teaching delivery, ad-hoc problem solving, and long-term student support (Deng et al., 2023). These results highlight the fact that EI is a cause of teacher mental health as well as a facilitator of the intentional instructional practice in challenging circumstances.

The contextual variables, like opportunities to train and achieve professional development, workload demands, cultural expectation, and diversity of students play a very crucial role in shaping the way EI competencies are developed and practiced. City schools tend to bring professional networks, formal education programs, and exposure to many types of students together and form an ecosystem where it is possible to develop empathy and motivation through cross-fertilization of ideas and recognition systems (Bergey, 2021). On the other hand, most rural schools often suffer lack of resources, professional isolation as well as in-service opportunities. Such limitations may limit training aimed at developing empathy and inspirational tactics, although daily instructional demands may support self-regulation by engaging in practice (Nagaraj & Ramesh, 2020).

The empirical comparison of EI between urban and rural teachers is not very numerous yet, existing studies present a complicated picture. Indian rural work was cross-sectional with an average rural teacher showing levels of EI with minimal variation by demographic factors (Nagaraj & Ramesh, 2020). Other researchers also show that global EI scores are not expected to vary significantly between localities, but certain dimensions such as motivation and social awareness differ according to the contextual supports and opportunities (Wang, 2021). The implication of such subtext is that locality effects do not affect all sites in the same way: daily practice can develop similar self-regulatory capabilities at different sites whereas systemic supports influence motivation and empathy disparities.

Teacher motivation as an intrinsic dedication to student learning and extrinsic motivation determined by the recognition and career opportunities is of concern to pedagogic perseverance and inventiveness. The studies on teacher retention in rural areas reveal that the demotivation caused by the absence of social recognition, restricted chances of promotion, and the lack of the professional community reduces pedagogical risk-taking and engagement in professional learning (Jiang, 2023). In contrast, the average access to mentorship, peer learning networks, and recognition pathways reported by urban teachers tends to be more frequently observed, which allows the teacher to maintain the intrinsic motivation and ultimately become more proactive in teaching (Bergey, 2021). This body of work implies various ways the locality influences the motivational aspect of EI, and consequently, teaching efficacy.

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Social awareness or empathy can help teachers to understand and adjust to the affective state of students, which is critical in differentiated instructions and classroom inclusion. An increased diversity of students in urban areas is likely to train the empathic abilities of practice teachers and provide them with a repeated service to decode different signs and use responsive tactics (Wang, 2021). Rural teachers who operate in less heterogeneous environments may, conversely, have fewer experiences on which to learn to refine empathic judgment, and may be constrained by the need to receive specific training to do so. Recent qualitative evidence also indicates that cultural expectations and community norms also mediate the expression and operationalization of empathy and therefore that there is a need to consider the socio-cultural factors in urban-rural comparisons (Deng et al., 2023).

The existing intervention research evidence confirms that EI competencies are a teachable set of competencies and that teacher-centered programs can enhance the results of teachers and students. The systematic reviews of the teacher SEL/ EI interventions demonstrate moderate-large effects of emotion regulation training, reflective practice modules, and mindfulness-based programs of teacher well-being and classroom climate (Oliveira et al., 2021). The most recent program evaluation focuses on multi-component models, that is, combining classroom practices with teacher coaching and school leadership involvement, as the most effective. Notably to urban-rural equity, it is indicated that with high-quality EI training being made available to rural teachers (through blended delivery, mentoring, and personalized content), the disparities in empathy and motivation can be reduced (Aponte, 2025).

Nevertheless, quality of implementation and dosage is an issue. It was confirmed that short and ad hoc workshops bring in small and short-term improvements, and long-term coaching and in-school support can lead to sustained improvements in EI competencies and visible classroom action (Aponte, 2025). In rural settings, the combination of smaller scale delivery patterns (online courses, mobile mentoring) and a regular in-person coaching session demonstrated its potential in pilot projects (as long as the infrastructure and digital literacy issues are resolvable) (Wang, 2021).

Social skills like collaboration and conflict management as well as parent engagement seem to be highly appreciated across settings. Comparative work carried out across various countries demonstrates that school culture and the ways of leadership significantly define the realization and institutionalization of social skills instead of geography as such (Jiang, 2023). In those schools in which distributed leadership through school leadership and collaborative professional learning communities is promoted, teachers indicate increased social competence and more coordinated instructional gains. The schools in rural areas that have good collegial relationships tend to require less external resources as opposed to those in urban areas that might be more dependent on formal professional development structures- various paths yet they promote social skills and teamwork practices.

Measurement heterogeneity is one of the reasons why the literature has heterogeneous urban and rural results. EI has a range of self-report (e.g., Wong and Law, Schutte) to performance-based measurement and observer ratings, teaching performance is also operationalized through self-ratings, student achievement or observer procedures. Self-report measures which form a large part of the comparative research are prone to social desirability and context sensitivity. New methodology also suggests supporting

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multi-informant designs and analysis on the facet level to identify locality effects that are difficult to observe (Deng et al., 2023). Combination studies using teacher self-reports and classroom observation and student feedback are more likely to have stronger correlations between EI dimensions and specific teaching behaviours, which can be used to have a more practical recommendation.

The resulting urban-rural distribution that is created- similar self-regulation and social competencies with urban benefits in motivation and empathy- has rather evident matters of policy. First, it recommends focused investments as opposed to generalized ones: programs that enhance exposure, recognition and chances to engage in reflective empathetic practice (e.g., exchange visit, remote mentoring) would be of value to rural teachers, but regulatory supports (relief of workload, managing stress) may further standardize self-regulation across the sites. Second, the motivation of teachers should be approached by not ignoring the structural incentives and career advancements; schemes that are monetary or recognition-based and pay attention to the rural setting can contribute to the intrinsic motivation and decrease the turnover (Jiang, 2023). Third, high-dose, school-based, and models should be given priority in the professional development, and the blended delivery should be used to access rural teachers in a sustainable manner (Aponte, 2025).

Methodological priorities are also found in the literature. The longitudinal and mixed-method designs should be considered in the future research in order to trace the development of EI competencies in various settings and the role of the context and professional learning in influencing the teaching performance (Deng et al., 2023). Matched-sample designs that take into account the experience of teachers, their qualification, and the resourcing of school would be useful in comparative studies in order to isolate the locality effect. Lastly, the exploration of culturally responsive interventions in EI, i.e., interventions adapted to local norms and the realities of teachers, is a limited field of research, and it is one of the priorities in terms of providing equitable impact.

All in all, the literature identifies EI as a set of competences that are actionable having relevant connections with teaching effectiveness. Although certain aspects of EI, in particular self-regulation and social skills, seem to be strong and dependable regardless of the context, motivation and empathy are more sensitive to institutional provisions and exposure common in urban environments. Research studies on intervention have validated that EI is trainable using high-quality long-term models based on professional learning, which provides viable ways to reduce urban-rural gaps. In order to promote equity and the quality of teaching, policymakers and educational leaders must place emphasis on contextually-specific EI programs, reinforce the rural accessibility to professional learning, and implement multi-method research designs that would elucidate causal patterns between EI, contextual variables, and classroom outcomes.

Research Objectives

To investigate and contrast how secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas perceive the role that self-awareness plays in enhancing the efficacy of instruction.

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To examine how secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas perceive the ways in which self-regulation facilitates efficient classroom management and decision-making.
To find out how teachers in rural and urban areas believe motivation improves engaging and successful teaching methods.
To compare how secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas view the importance of empathy in creating a supportive and productive learning environment.
To find out how secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas believe that social skills improve learning outcomes and teamwork.

Null Hypotheses

H01: The perceptions of rural and urban secondary school teachers regarding self-awareness in enhancing instructional effectiveness do not differ significantly.
H02: Secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas do not significantly differ in how they view self-regulation as a means of assisting with classroom management and decision-making.
H03: Secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas do not significantly differ in how motivated they are to provide engaging and successful instruction.
H04: Secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas have similar views about the importance of empathy in creating a supportive and productive classroom.
H05: Secondary school teachers in rural and urban areas have similar opinions about how social skills can improve teamwork and academic results.

Methodology

This study used a quantitative survey research design to investigate the differences in emotional intelligence competencies between urban and rural areas and how these differences affect secondary school teachers' ability to teach effectively. Using stratified random sampling, a sample of 389 secondary school teachers—341 from urban and 48 from rural Punjab—was chosen from the population. A five-point Likert scale was used to administer a structured questionnaire based on five dimensions of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills. To investigate locality-wise differences, data were analyzed using inferential statistics (independent samples t-test) and descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation). A significance level of $p < 0.05$ was established. Reliability, validity, and an impartial comparison of emotional intelligence skills between rural and urban educators were guaranteed by the methodology.

Tabel 1

Locality Wise Comparative Perception of Teachers Regarding Understanding Their Emotions (Self-Awareness) Helps Them to Improve Instructional Effectiveness Among Secondary School Teachers

Locality	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Rural	48	3.99	.822	1.24	.216
Urban	341	3.89	.552		

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Table 1 gives a locality-based contrast of the perceptual outlooks of teachers on the role of self-awareness (understanding their feelings) in enhancing the effectiveness of instructions among secondary school teachers. The findings show that the mean (M = 3.99, SD = 0.822) of rural teachers (N = 48) is a little higher than that of urban teachers (N =341, M = 3.89, SD =0.552). It implies that, on average, rural educators think that self-awareness is slightly more useful in improving their teaching efficiency more than their urban peers. Nonetheless, the t-value calculated (t = 1.24) with the corresponding p-value of 0.216 exceeds the standard level of significance of 0.05. This implies that the difference between the means of the rural and urban teachers is not significant.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H01) according to which the differences between the perceptions of rural and urban secondary school teachers in the sense of self-awareness in enhancing the teaching performance are insignificant are accepted. This means that the urban and rural secondary school teachers share the same perception regarding the significance of self-awareness (one of the emotional intelligence skills) in improving their teaching performance. Although the means showed minor differences, the statistics fail to prove that there is significant difference between the two groups.

Tabel 2

Locality Wise Comparative Perception of Teachers Regarding Controlling Their Emotions (Self-Regulation) Supports Effective Classroom Management and Decision-Making Among Secondary School Teachers

Locality	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Rural	48	4.34	.687	-.631	.529
Urban	341	4.40	.577		

Table 2 shows how the rural and urban secondary school teachers have relative perceptions about the importance of self-regulation (controlling their emotions) to deliver effective classroom management and decision-making. The average of the rural teachers (N = 48) is M = 4.34 (SD = 0.687) and that of urban teacher (N = 341) is a little higher at M = 4.40 (SD = 0.577). This implies that self-regulation is widely viewed by both the groups as very helpful to classroom management as well as professional decision-making, though the urban teachers have indicated a slightly more agreement. The value of t= -0.631 with a p-value=0.529 shows that the difference in the means between the rural and urban teachers is not significant at the 0.05 level. Since the p-value is greater than the level of significance, the variation measured is probably due to a chance variation and not an actual difference in perceptions.

As a result, the null hypothesis (H02) according to which there is no significant difference in the perceptions of rural and urban secondary school teachers on the issue of self-regulation in facilitating classroom management and decision-making is accepted.

The implication of this finding is that both the rural and urban educators are equally characterized by the same degree of emotional self-control and regulation as the

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concept is significant in preserving a positive classroom atmosphere and making appropriate teaching choices. The result has indicated that there is a common ground between localities in the fact that control of emotions is a prerequisite to being a professional and a learning environment.

Tabel 3

Locality Wise Comparative Perception of Teachers Regarding Internal Drive and Commitment (Motivation) Inspire Effective and Engaging Teaching Among Secondary School Teachers

Locality	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Rural	48	3.82	.489	-2.39	.017
Urban	341	4.01	.504		

Table 3 compares the rural and urban secondary school teachers' perceptions related to the importance of the motivation (internal drive and commitment) in motivating effective and engaging teaching. As it can be seen, the mean of the rural teachers (N = 48) equals M = 3.82 (SD = 0.489), and the mean of the urban teachers (N = 341) is a bit greater M = 4.01 (SD = 0.504). It means that urban teachers are more inclined to consider their motivation and inner driving as the factors that affect successful and interesting teaching than their rural counterparts. The t-value of -2.39 with a p-value of 0.017 indicates that the two groups have a statistically significant difference at the 0.05 level of significance. The p-value is not more than 0.05, so it is not likely that the difference in perceptions between the rural and urban teachers has happened by chance.

So, the null hypothesis (H03) according to which there is no significant diversity among the perceptions of the rural and urban teachers of secondary school on the issue of motivation to inspire effective and interesting teaching is rejected.

This finding indicates that urban educators have greater degrees of motivational effect on their instructional professionalism than their rural counterparts. This higher motivation of urban teachers could be explained by the fact that, they have the best exposure to the profession, they have access to resources, competitive working environments and they have more recognition and career development opportunities. On the other hand, teachers working in rural districts might be exposed to situational difficulties, a lack of professional development opportunities, and other incentives, which might influence their motivation levels.

Tabel 4

Locality Wise Comparative Perception of Teachers Regarding Understanding Students' Emotions (Empathy) Fosters Supportive and Effective Teaching Among Secondary School Teachers

Locality	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Rural	48	3.85	.456	-2.70	.007
Urban	341	4.04	.471		

Table 4 shows how the perception of rural and urban secondary school teachers with

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respect to whether empathy is an important component in promoting supportive and effective teaching practices. The results indicate that the mean score of rural teachers (N = 48) is M = 3.85 (SD = 0.456) and the mean score of urban teachers (N = 341) is higher M = 4.04 (SD = 0.471). This also suggests that, teachers in urban areas are more likely to view themselves as being more empathetic and able to apply empathy to create supportive classroom environments and teaching efficacy as compared to those teaching in rural areas.

The t-value of -2.70 and the p-value of 0.007 show that there is statistically significant difference in the perceptions of the rural and urban teachers at the level of 0.05 of significance. The p-value (0.007) is smaller than 0.05; hence, it gives enough justification to reject the null hypothesis.

In this connection, the null hypothesis (H04) which says that there is no significant difference in perception of empathetic approach to secondary school teaching by rural and urban secondary school teachers is rejected. The implication of this finding is that urban educators are more empathetic and practicing in their instruction than rural educators. Increased levels of empathy in urban teachers can be attributed to higher levels of exposure to diverse student groups, the training in emotional intelligence, professional growth that focuses on inclusive and emotions-centered teaching. On the other hand, the rural teachers might not be exposed to these opportunities, and as such, it may influence their capacity to understand the different emotional and learning needs of the students in a very personal way.

Tabel 5

Locality Wise Comparative Perception of Teachers Regarding Building Positive Relationships (Social Skills) Strengthens Collaboration and Learning Outcomes Among Secondary School Teachers

Locality	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	t-value	p-value
Rural	48	4.00	.474	-1.22	.222
Urban	341	4.08	.426		

In Table 5, a comparative analysis of the perception of rural and urban secondary school teachers on the role of social skills, i.e., the ability to establish positive relationships, in consolidating collaboration and enhancing the learning outcomes is performed. The findings indicate that the mean of rural teachers (N = 48) is equal to M = 4.00 (SD = 0.474), whereas the mean of urban teachers (N = 341) is a little bit higher (M = 4.08) and (SD = 0.426). According to these values, both groups view social skills as an essential emotional intelligence competence which helps to achieve a successful teamwork, collegiality, and engagement of students, even though this skill is rated slightly higher by urban teachers.

The t-value is -1.22, and the t-test p-value is 0.222, which also show that the difference between the mean score of rural and urban teachers is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value (0.222) exceeds 0.05, thus, there is no significant evidence that there is a meaningful difference between the perceptions of the two groups.

Thus, the null hypothesis (H05) according to which there is no significant difference

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in the perception of the rural and urban secondary school teachers on the matter of strengthening the collaboration and learning outcomes by way of social skills is accepted. This observation indicates that the rural and urban educators are aware of the paramount role of interpersonal interactions and communication in their line of work. The fact that the perceptions of the locals are similar across the localities means that practices of collaboration, teamwork and good interpersonal relationship are equally honored and practiced amongst teachers in both places. It can also be indicative of the increased focus in the education system regarding cooperative learning environment and team-friendly culture that cross geographical limits.

Discussion

The findings show that there is no notable distinction between urban and rural teachers in terms of self-awareness and self-regulation which implies that both groups have similar abilities to recognize and control their emotions effectively at work. This is in line with Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2008) who argued that awareness and regulation of emotions are universal abilities acquired in the process of teaching experience and not situation exposure. In the same way, as Buriic and Macuka (2018) pointed out, no matter their background, teachers have acquired emotional self-management on a daily basis in classroom situations, which explains the homogeneity of the current study.

Nevertheless, major variations were found in dimensions of motivation and empathy. The urban teachers were more intrinsically motivated and had more empathetic tendencies as compared to the rural teachers. This observation is in agreement with Goleman (1998), who defined motivation and empathy as the EI dimensions that are strongly affected by the environmental stimulus and career opportunities. City teachers get access to a more advanced level of professional development, system of recognition and exposure to a variety of learners, which in turn contribute to their motivation and empathetic reaction. Cote and Miners (2006) also discovered that those teachers in an environment with abundant resources exhibit greater emotional competencies because of an improved institutional support and career incentives.

Conversely, rural educators might experience situational problems, including a dearth of professional assistance, less development, and resources, which reduce motivational and empathetic interactions. The trend is similar to the results of Iqbal and Qureshi (2012), who have found that rural teachers in Pakistan tend to be less motivated to perform their career because of structural and infrastructural limitations. Further, Jennings and Greenberg (2009) pointed out that empathy is a competence that is practiced in communication with various learners and being involved in emotionally stimulating training, which is predominant in urban areas.

Socially, a significant difference was not found between the rural teachers and the urban teachers. The two groups also recognized the need of positive interpersonal relations and cooperation to enhance learning outcomes. This implies that the professional values that are common in all localities are communication, teamwork, and collegiality. Similar findings were given by Brackett, Rivers and Salovey (2011) who concluded that the culture of school institutions and mutual dependent behavior define the social interaction and cooperation among teachers and not the geography. The result is also consistent with the studies by Khan, Khan, and Mahmood (2019),

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who had found that regardless of the rural or urban environment, Pakistani teachers also stressed collaboration and peer relationships as the key to the involvement of the students and efficient teaching.

All in all, the results elucidate that some of the emotional intelligence skills such as motivation and empathy are contextually dependent, but other skills such as self-awareness, self-regulation and social skills are common across localities. This means that the relationship between environmental and organizational variables mediate the expression of emotional intelligence in teachers partway.

Main Conclusions

The perceptions of rural and urban secondary school teachers are similar as concerns the idea of knowing how to manage their emotions, which points to a similar professional standard of emotions management and reflective teaching practice on a local scale.

The motivation and level of empathy is much higher among urban teachers, which may be explained by the fact that they are better exposed and supported by the institution and have more opportunities to develop professionally. Such disparities highlight the context differences of emotional and social development of the rural and urban teaching setting.

The values of social skills and collaboration are also the same in the two groups of teachers, which means that the interpersonal communication and teamwork are the universally practiced and appreciated among the secondary school educators in Punjab.

The results highlight the necessity of specific professional development initiatives related to improving motivation and empathy of rural teachers with help of exposure visits, mentoring, and EI-related workshops. This kind of intervention can be used to overcome the gap in the emotional and instructional difference between rural and city educators.

Recommendation

Train rural teachers on motivation and empathy as a specialized emotional intelligence (EI) training with workshops, reflective practice, and mentorship as a means of improving the effectiveness of teaching.

Integrate the elements of emotional intelligence such as self-awareness, self-regulation, and social skills in pre-service and in-service teacher training to encourage practices that constitute emotionally competent and effective teaching practices.

Enhance school-based support systems, recognition systems, and peer networks, particularly in the rural schools, to increase the motivation of the teachers, their empathy and the overall effectiveness of the teachers.

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