

A STUDY OF EMOTIONAL MATURITY AND PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATION AMONG RURAL AND URBAN SECONDARY-LEVEL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Teacher quality is critical to the success of education, especially so for adolescents who need to be engaged in higher levels of thinking at the secondary level and who are simultaneously undergoing socio-emotional development. Professional aspiration is for a teacher, motivation/impetus to advance in profession, which can be considered as an indicator for potential growth and long-term engagement in profession ; emotional maturity is defined as a teacher's emotional intelligence in terms of her/his ability to control emotions, stress and own positive attitudes. The present study is an attempt to analyze the emotional maturity and professional aspiration of holding secondary school teachers of rural and urban area of Meerut district (U.P.) of India. With a descriptive survey design, data were gathered from 200 (rural=100, urban =100) respondents by using stratified random sampling. Emotional maturity and professional aspiration were measured with standardized instruments. The data were analyzed by using descriptive and independent-samples t test. Result indicated significant difference in emotional maturity between rural and urban teacher, rural teacher having higher emotional maturity than urban teacher. Yet in terms of professional aspiration, no significant rural-urban difference was apparent. The findings reveal that emotional adaptation of teachers appears to be more susceptible to contextual characteristics, while motivation for work-related career is seemingly more stable by location. The implications for teacher well-being intervention and professional development policy are outlined.

Keywords: Emotional maturity; Professional aspiration; Secondary school teachers; Rural–urban comparison.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching at the secondary school level is widely recognized as a professionally demanding role that requires not only strong subject knowledge and pedagogical competence but also emotional stability and a well-developed sense of professional purpose. Secondary school teachers are expected to manage diverse academic responsibilities while simultaneously responding to classroom dynamics, student behavior, institutional regulations, administrative accountability, and evolving curriculum mandates. These multifaceted demands make teaching an emotionally intensive profession, where the ability to regulate emotions becomes essential for sustaining effectiveness and professional well-being.

Emotional regulation, often conceptualized as emotional maturity, refers to an individual's capacity to perceive, manage, and express emotions in a balanced and socially appropriate manner. In educational settings, emotionally mature teachers are better equipped to cope with occupational stress, maintain constructive relationships with students and colleagues, and adapt to changing professional expectations. Research has consistently linked emotional maturity with resilience, job satisfaction, classroom effectiveness, and long-term professional

engagement, highlighting its central role in teachers' professional functioning. Alongside emotional competence, professional aspiration represents another critical dimension of teachers' professional life. Professional aspiration encompasses teachers' motivation toward career advancement, commitment to continuous professional development, and orientation toward future growth within the profession. Teachers with strong professional aspirations are more likely to engage in reflective practice, pursue leadership opportunities, and sustain enthusiasm for teaching, thereby contributing positively to instructional quality and institutional development.

In the Indian educational context, pronounced disparities exist between rural and urban secondary schools with respect to infrastructure, institutional support, exposure to professional opportunities, and access to training and development resources. Such contextual variations may differentially influence teachers' emotional experiences and professional motivation. Rural teaching environments often offer greater social connectedness and community integration, whereas urban schools may be characterized by increased performance pressure, administrative workload, and competitive professional cultures. Understanding how these contextual differences shape teachers' emotional maturity and professional aspiration is essential for designing context-sensitive support mechanisms and ensuring equitable professional growth opportunities.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Emotional maturity has emerged as a crucial psychological attribute influencing teachers' professional functioning, classroom behavior, and long-term engagement with the teaching profession. In secondary education, where teachers interact with adolescents undergoing complex emotional and cognitive transitions, emotional maturity becomes particularly significant. Researchers have consistently emphasized that emotionally mature teachers demonstrate greater emotional regulation, resilience, and adaptability, enabling them to manage occupational stress and interpersonal challenges more effectively.

Recent empirical studies have highlighted the role of emotional maturity in enhancing teaching performance. Jain and Mehrotra (2024)^[1] found that teachers with higher emotional maturity displayed superior instructional effectiveness, better classroom management, and constructive professional behavior across school types. Their findings reinforce the argument that emotional stability and social adjustment are essential for sustained teaching quality. Similarly, Malik and Kapoor (2014)^[7] reported a significant positive relationship between emotional maturity and teaching effectiveness, indicating that emotionally mature teachers are more capable of maintaining productive learning environments.

Closely related to emotional maturity is the construct of emotional intelligence, which has been widely studied in educational settings. Raju and Ramesh (2024)^[2] examined emotional intelligence and professional commitment among secondary school teachers and observed that higher emotional intelligence significantly predicted stronger professional commitment. Since professional commitment and professional aspiration are conceptually interconnected, this relationship suggests that emotional maturity indirectly supports teachers' career-related motivation and long-term professional goals.

Verma and Sharma (2019)^[8] examined the relationship between emotional intelligence and professional aspiration among secondary school teachers. Their findings revealed that teachers with higher emotional intelligence demonstrated stronger professional aspirations, including career advancement, commitment to teaching, and willingness to engage in

professional development activities. The study highlights emotional competence as a significant psychological factor influencing teachers' long-term professional goals and motivation. It provides empirical support for integrating emotional development programs into teacher training to enhance professional growth and career orientation.

Kaur (2017)^[10] investigated the emotional maturity of secondary school teachers in relation to teaching effectiveness. The results indicated a positive and significant relationship between emotional maturity and effective teaching practices, such as classroom control, instructional clarity, and student engagement. The study emphasized that emotionally mature teachers are better equipped to manage stress, respond constructively to classroom challenges, and maintain professional stability. This research underscores emotional maturity as a crucial determinant of teaching quality and educational outcomes.

At the international level, meta-analytic evidence further supports the association between emotional competencies and work-related attitudes. Miao, Humphrey, and Qian (2017)^[3] demonstrated that emotional intelligence is positively associated with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and motivation, while being negatively related to turnover intentions. Extending this line of inquiry, Li, Liu, and Yang (2024)^[4] revealed that teachers' emotional intelligence contributes to organizational commitment through psychological well-being, with leadership style acting as a moderating factor. These findings underline the importance of emotional resources in sustaining professional aspiration within institutional contexts.

However, emotional maturity alone does not operate in isolation. Research indicates that environmental and organizational factors significantly shape how emotional competencies translate into professional outcomes. Collie, Shapka, and Perry (2011)^[5] emphasized that positive school climate and social-emotional learning support systems strengthen teachers' commitment and career orientation. Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011)^[6] found that job satisfaction and motivation to remain in the teaching profession are strongly influenced by school context, emotional exhaustion, and sense of belonging. These contextual influences are particularly relevant when comparing rural and urban teaching environments. Aldrup et al. (2020)^[9] focused on the measurement of teachers' social-emotional competence through the development and validation of a situational judgment test. Their research confirmed that social-emotional competence is a multidimensional construct closely associated with classroom management, teacher-student relationships, and occupational well-being. The study contributes methodologically by offering a reliable and valid assessment tool, strengthening empirical research on teachers' emotional functioning and its implications for instructional effectiveness and professional sustainability.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Emotional maturity significantly influences teachers' professional behavior and effectiveness, while professional aspiration reflects their drive for career growth and development. Although international studies link emotional maturity with career outcomes, Indian research largely focuses on job satisfaction, burnout, or teaching effectiveness, rather than directly examining professional aspiration. Moreover, comparative studies between rural and urban secondary school teachers are scarce, despite contextual differences in socio-economic conditions and access to professional development. There is also limited application of standardized tools like the Mahesh Bhargava Emotional Maturity Scale and Dr. Kaur Professional Aspiration Scale in the Indian secondary school context. Therefore, the relationship between emotional maturity and professional aspiration among rural and urban secondary teachers remains underexplored, highlighting a clear gap for investigation.

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

1. To compare Emotional Maturity between Rural and urban secondary level teachers.
2. To compare Professional Aspiration between Rural and urban secondary level teachers.

5. HYPOTHESIS

1. There is no significant difference in Emotional Maturity between Rural and urban secondary level teachers.
2. There is no significant difference in Professional Aspiration between Rural and urban secondary level teachers.

6. DELIMITATION

The present study being exploratory in nature has following delimitation.

1. The study was delimited to high school teachers in Meerut in U.P.
2. The study was delimited to 100 rural and 100 urban secondary level teachers only.
3. Secondary school teachers have been selected on Simple random sampling biases.

7. METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey design was adopted.

7.2 Sample

The sample comprised 200 secondary school teachers (100 rural, 100 urban) from Meerut district, selected through simple random sampling.

7.3 Tools

1. **Emotional Maturity Scale** (Singh & Bhargava).
2. **Professional Aspiration Scale** (Dr. Kaur).

7.4 Statistical Techniques

Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and independent-samples t tests.

8. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

8.1 Emotional Maturity

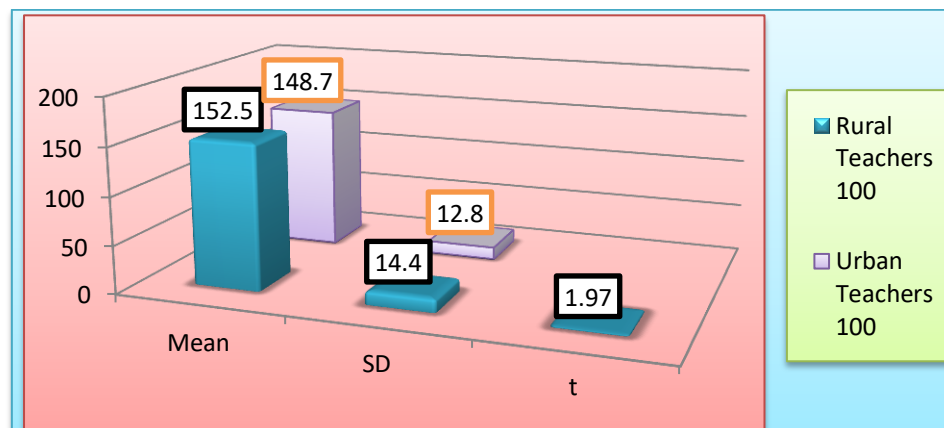
Presents the descriptive statistics and independent-samples t test results comparing emotional maturity scores of rural and urban secondary-level teachers.

Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in Emotional Maturity between Rural and urban secondary level teachers.

8.1.1 Table : Comparison of Emotional Maturity between Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Rural Teachers	100	152.5	14.4	1.97	198	< .05
Urban Teachers	100	148.7	12.8			

8.1.2 Graph : Showing the Comparison of Emotional Maturity between Rural and Urban Secondary School Teachers.



Interpretation and Discussion

The analysis indicates a statistically significant difference in emotional maturity between rural and urban secondary school teachers ($t = 1.97, p < .05$). Rural teachers demonstrated higher mean scores, suggesting greater emotional stability and adaptive regulation in professional contexts. From a theoretical perspective, this finding aligns with socio-contextual models which posit that close-knit community environments and sustained interpersonal engagement, often characteristic of rural settings, can foster emotional resilience. Conversely, urban teachers may experience heightened occupational stress due to increased administrative demands and competitive work environments, potentially impacting emotional regulation. The result supports prior empirical evidence emphasizing the role of contextual factors in shaping teachers' emotional competencies.

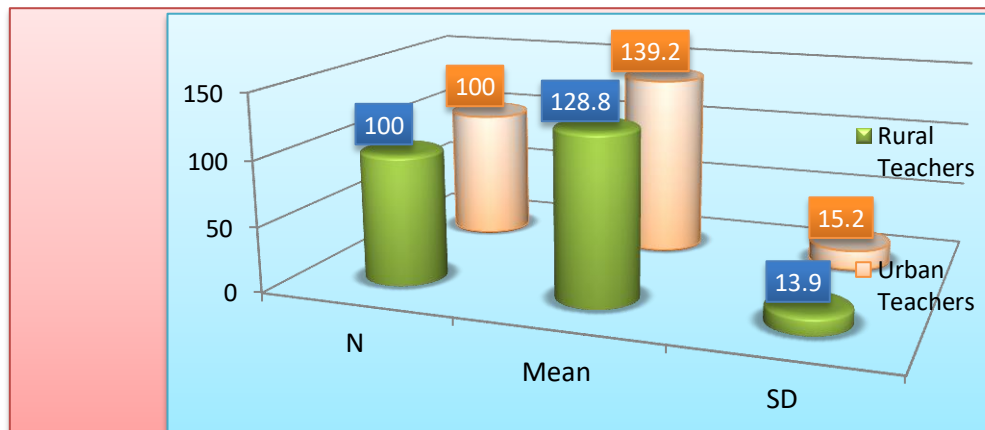
8.2 Professional Aspiration

Hypothesis : There is no significant difference in Professional Aspiration between Rural and urban secondary level teachers.

8.2.1 Table: Showing the Mean, SD, and T- value of 100 rural and 100 urban teachers on Teaching Commitment.

Group	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Rural Teachers	100	128.8	13.9	0.89	198	> .05
Urban Teachers	100	139.2	15.2			

8.2.2 Graph : Displays the comparative analysis of professional aspiration scores for rural and urban teachers.



Interpretation and Discussion

The results reveal no statistically significant difference in professional aspiration between rural and urban secondary school teachers ($t = 0.90$, $p > .05$). Although urban teachers obtained a marginally higher mean score, the difference was not sufficient to infer a locality-based effect. This suggests that professional aspiration is influenced more strongly by individual motivation, standardized career structures, and national-level education policies rather than by geographical context alone. The finding resonates with contemporary research indicating that teachers across diverse settings increasingly share similar career expectations due to uniform qualification frameworks, promotion criteria, and professional development mandates.

9. DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study reinforce existing evidence that emotional factors play a critical role in teachers' professional functioning. The statistically significant rural–urban difference in emotional maturity suggests that contextual conditions substantially shape teachers' emotional regulation and adjustment. Rural secondary school teachers exhibited higher emotional maturity, which may be attributed to stable social relations, closer community integration, and sustained interpersonal interactions. Similar patterns have been observed in earlier Indian studies emphasizing the protective role of supportive social environments in reducing occupational stress among teachers (Malik & Kapoor, 2014; Jain & Mehrotra, 2024). This result is consistent with Kaur (2017), who reported that emotionally mature teachers demonstrate greater instructional stability, effective classroom management, and resilience in professional settings. Higher emotional maturity among rural teachers, therefore, may enhance their capacity to cope with professional demands despite limited institutional resources. From a broader perspective, Aldrup et al. (2020) conceptualized social–emotional competence as a key determinant of teachers' emotional regulation and well-being, highlighting the role of context in strengthening emotional resources. In contrast, urban teaching environments, characterized by heightened performance pressure, administrative demands, and competitive institutional cultures, may intensify emotional strain and reduce emotional stability (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2011).

Regarding professional aspiration, the absence of a statistically significant rural–urban difference indicates a convergence of career motivation across geographical contexts. This finding aligns with Verma and Sharma (2019), who demonstrated that teachers' professional aspiration is more strongly influenced by emotional intelligence and intrinsic motivational

factors than by locality. The marginally higher aspiration levels observed among urban teachers may reflect greater exposure to leadership opportunities and professional visibility rather than fundamental motivational differences.

Taken together, the findings suggest that emotional maturity is sensitive to rural–urban contextual variations, whereas professional aspiration appears relatively uniform across settings. This distinction underscores the need for differentiated emotional support interventions tailored to specific school environments, alongside standardized professional development and career advancement frameworks. Strengthening teachers’ emotional well-being within diverse contexts is essential for sustaining professional commitment and enhancing overall educational quality.

10. CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

The present study investigated emotional maturity and professional aspiration among rural and urban secondary-level teachers and revealed distinct patterns across these dimensions. Statistical analysis indicated a significant rural–urban difference in emotional maturity, with rural teachers demonstrating comparatively higher levels of emotional stability and social adjustment. This finding suggests that geographical context plays a meaningful role in shaping teachers’ emotional regulation and adaptive capacity within their professional environment. In contrast, no significant difference was observed in the professional aspiration of rural and urban teachers. Teachers across both settings exhibited comparable levels of motivation toward career advancement, professional development, and long-term engagement in the teaching profession. This convergence implies that professional aspiration is increasingly influenced by individual motivation, institutional frameworks, and standardized professional policies rather than by geographical location. Overall, the study concludes that while emotional maturity is sensitive to contextual variations associated with rural and urban work environments, professional aspiration remains largely uniform across settings. These findings highlight the need for context-responsive emotional support strategies, particularly in environments characterized by higher occupational pressures, alongside equitable professional development opportunities to sustain teachers’ commitment and effectiveness.

11. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY :

The findings of the present study highlight the need for context-sensitive educational practices at the secondary school level. The significant rural–urban difference in emotional maturity suggests that schools, particularly in urban settings, should strengthen emotional support systems through stress-management programs, emotional regulation training, and access to counseling services. Integrating social–emotional learning components into pre-service and in-service teacher education can enhance teachers’ emotional resilience, classroom effectiveness, and overall well-being. The absence of a significant rural–urban difference in professional aspiration indicates that teachers across contexts share comparable motivation toward career advancement. This underscores the importance of ensuring equitable access to professional development opportunities, promotion pathways, and leadership training irrespective of school location. School leadership should foster supportive institutional climates that value collaboration, recognition, and teacher autonomy. Aligning emotional well-being initiatives with standardized professional growth frameworks can reduce burnout, strengthen professional commitment, and contribute to improved educational quality.

12. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH :

Future research should employ larger and more diverse samples, incorporate additional psychological and institutional variables, and utilize qualitative or mixed-method designs to capture contextual complexity. Comparative investigations involving private and public secondary school teachers are also recommended to enhance the robustness and generalizability of findings.

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