Social Competence and Personality Development of Prospective Teachers: A Study in the Context of Teacher Education

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Abstract

This study investigates the social competence and personality development of prospective teachers, focusing on differences based on their residential background (urban vs. rural). The main objectives were to compare social competence and personality development between urban and rural trainees and to explore the relationship between these two variables. Data were collected from 200 teacher trainees and analyzed using statistical methods to examine mean differences and correlations. Results indicate that urban prospective teachers exhibit significantly higher social competence and personality development compared to their rural counterparts. A strong positive correlation was found between social competence and personality development, suggesting these qualities are closely linked and mutually supportive. The findings highlight the need for targeted interventions in teacher education programs to enhance both personality traits and social skills, especially among rural trainees, to prepare competent and effective educators. The study represents the crucial role of environmental factors in shaping teacher competencies and offers implications for future research and practice in teacher development.

Keywords: *Social competence, Personality development, Prospective teachers, Urban-rural differences, Teacher Education, Correlation, Teacher training*

Introduction

The teaching profession demands more than subject knowledge and pedagogical expertise—it requires teachers to demonstrate strong social competence and well-developed personalities. Social competence, which encompasses skills such as empathy, assertiveness, adaptability, and conflict resolution, plays a vital role in fostering effective classroom environments and building meaningful relationships with students (Carstensen&Klusmann, 2021). Personality development, on the other hand, influences how a teacher manages stress, communicates, leads, and supports the socio-emotional growth of students. These two constructs are increasingly recognized as foundational pillars in teacher education programs globally.

In contemporary educational context, the quality of teacher-student interaction is shaped significantly by the teacher's personality traits, such as openness, emotional stability, and extraversion, which directly affect students' engagement and social-emotional learning outcomes (Villena-Martínez& Muñoz-García, 2025). Given the growing diversity in classrooms and the psychosocial challenges students face, it becomes essential for prospective teachers to be equipped not only with knowledge but also with interpersonal and intrapersonal skills that reflect both high social competence and mature personality traits.

As teacher education systems evolve under frameworks like the NEP 2020 in India, the focus on holistic teacher development—including emotional intelligence, personality enrichment, and social skill training—is becoming central (Chouhan& Gaur, 2016). Despite various training models, disparities in the development of these competencies between urban and rural trainee teachers raise significant concerns. Rural prospective teachers often face limited exposure to interactive, participative, and experiential training environments that foster social growth, unlike their urban counterparts who benefit from enriched cultural and academic ecosystems.

Thus, it is essential to conduct an empirical study of the social competence and personality growth of future teachers, especially those from rural and urban settings. This research will provide valuable insights for creating more equitable, inclusive, and skills-oriented teacher training programs that cater to the emotional and social development of every teacher trainee.

Review of Related Literature:

Villena-Martínez and Muñoz-García (2025) highlighted a strong empirical linkage between teacher personality and students' social competence, asserting that traits like agreeableness and conscientiousness foster student collaboration and emotional security. Similarly, Zwaans et al. (2006) emphasized that teachers who intentionally focus on social goals are more effective in promoting interpersonal development among students.

Carstensen and Klusmann (2021) explored the significance of assertiveness and emotional adaptability in trainee teachers, finding that these traits directly correlate with occupational well-being and long-term career sustainability. Gedvilienė (2015) conducted self-assessment studies showing that both students and teachers often rate themselves moderately in social competence, indicating room for structured development through training.

Blömeke and Kaiser (2017) argued that the development of teacher competencies is both a personal and socially constructed process, influenced by contextual, cultural, and experiential factors. In line with this, Sharma (2012) developed a social and emotional intelligence scale in the Indian context, which demonstrated the practical implications of such competencies in educational leadership.

Bansal (2018) found personality traits such as extraversion and emotional stability to be significantly associated with higher social competence among secondary school students, while Kuk et al. (2015) noted that participation in psychological workshops enhanced both emotional intelligence and social skills of future physical education teachers. Chadha et al. (2023) introduced the concept of culturally contingent competence, suggesting that what is considered "socially competent" varies based on societal expectations.

Magelinskaitė-Legkauskienė et al. (2018) revealed how teachers' perceptions of students' social competence influence school adjustment and academic performance. Lastly, Singer (1954) was among the earliest to connect social competence to teaching success, arguing that interpersonal skill sets are as critical as instructional abilities.

Research Gap:

While previous studies have extensively explored the role of social competence and personality in the teaching-learning process, there is a noticeable paucity of research focusing specifically on **prospective teachers**—those who are still in training and not yet professionally engaged. Very few research studies have looked at the differences between urban and rural prospective teachers regarding these psychosocial factors, despite clear differences in their training experiences, cultural contexts, and support from institutions. While individual elements such as emotional intelligence and assertiveness have been examined, there is a gap in comprehensive studies that connect social competence with personality growth in teacher education. The majority of the existing research tends to focus on practicing teachers or the viewpoints of students, neglecting the important formative stage of teacher training where interventions could be most impactful.

This study, therefore, aims to fill these research gaps by conducting a **comparative and correlational analysis** of social competence and personality development among rural and urban prospective teachers. It seeks to provide actionable insights that can guide curriculum reforms and teacher training methodologies to ensure holistic teacher preparation for 21st-century classrooms.

Objectives of the Study

1. To assess the level of social competence among prospective teachers.
2. To analyze the level of personality development among prospective teachers.
3. To compare the social competence of urban and rural prospective teachers.
4. To compare the personality development of urban and rural prospective teachers.
5. To study the relationship between social competence and personality development among prospective teachers.

Hypotheses of the Study

1. There is no significant difference in the social competence of urban and rural prospective teachers.
2. There is no significant difference in the personality development of urban and rural prospective teachers.
3. There is a significant positive correlation between social competence and personality development of prospective teachers.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive survey method** to investigate the relationship between social competence and personality development among prospective teachers.

Sample and Sampling Technique

A total of **200 B.Ed. students** from teacher training institutions were selected using **stratified random sampling**, ensuring an equal representation of **urban and rural** backgrounds.

Research Tools

- **Social Competence Scale**: A standardized tool bywas used to measure the social competence of the respondents across domains such as empathy, communication, cooperation, and emotional regulation.
- **Self-Structured Personality Development Inventory**: A researcher-developed tool validated through expert opinion and pilot testing

Data Collection Procedure

- Permissions were obtained from the respective institutions.
- Respondents were assured of confidentiality and the purpose of research was explained.
- Questionnaires were administered in person during scheduled classroom hours.
- Responses were collected, coded, and organized for statistical analysis.

Statistical Techniques Used

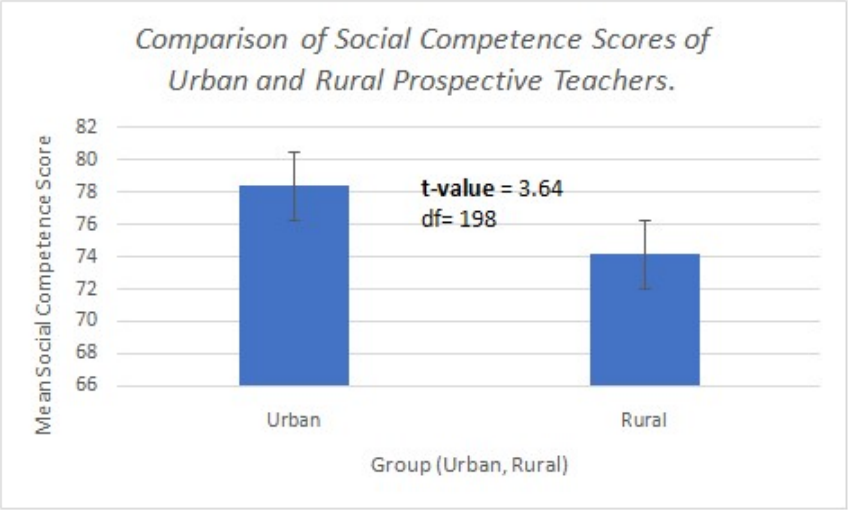
- Descriptive statistics (Mean, SD)
- Inferential statistics (t-test for comparing urban and rural groups)
- Pearson's correlation coefficient to study the relationship between social competence and personality development.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Hypothesis 1 – There is no significant difference in the social competence of urban and rural prospective teachers.

Table 1: Social Competence (Urban vs Rural)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value	Interpretation
Urban	100	78.42	7.91	3.64	198	0.0003	**Significant** difference; urban trainees exhibit higher social competence
Rural	100	74.16	8.34				

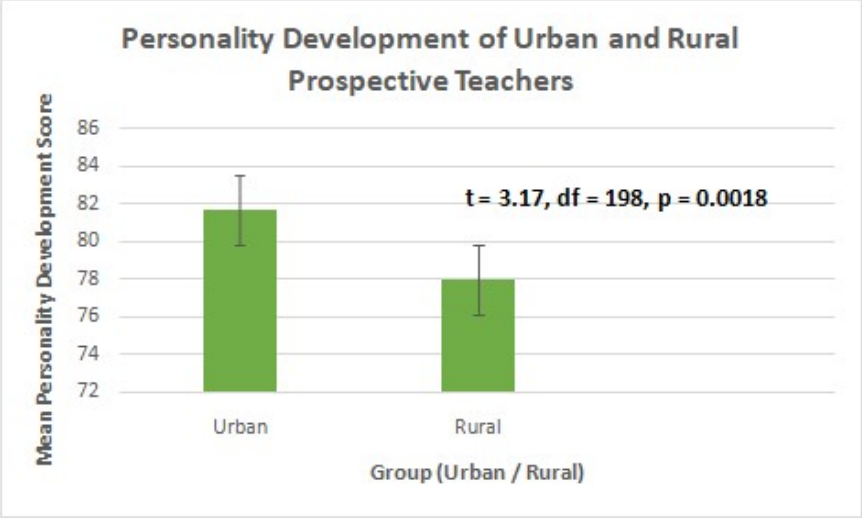


The table shows a significant difference in the social competence of urban and rural prospective teachers. The urban group had a mean score of 78.42 with a standard deviation of 7.91. The t-value of 3.64 and p-value of 0.0003 indicate that this difference is statistically significant. This means that urban prospective teachers have higher social competence compared to rural prospective teachers, possibly because of greater exposure to social environments and opportunities in urban areas.

Hypothesis 2 –There is no significant difference in the personality development of urban and rural prospective teachers.

Table 2– Personality Development (Urban vs Rural)

Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	df	p-value	Interpretation
Urban	100	81.65	6.78				**Significant** difference; urban trainees show higher personality development
Rural	100	77.94	7.22	3.17	198	0.0018	

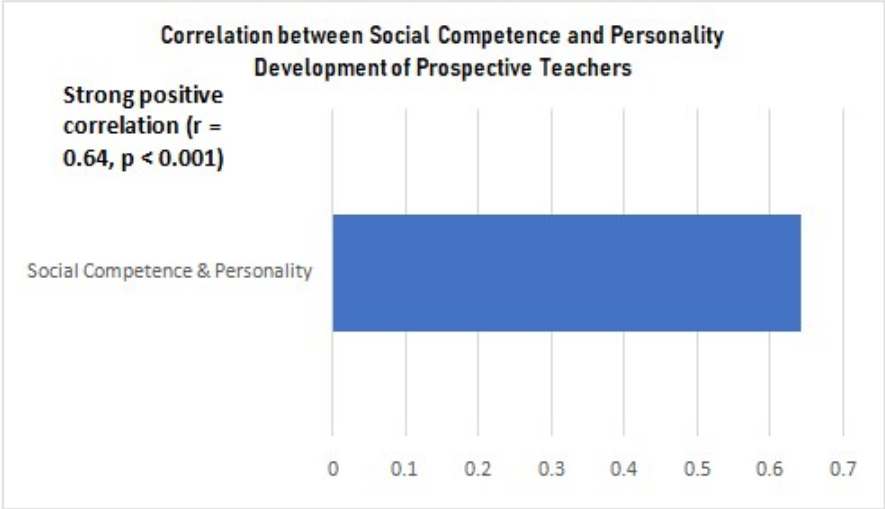


The table shows a significant difference in personality development between urban and rural prospective teachers. The urban group had a mean score of 81.65 with a standard deviation of 6.78. The t-value of 3.17 and p-value of 0.0018 indicate that this difference is statistically significant. This means that urban prospective teachers demonstrate higher levels of personality development compared to rural prospective teachers, possibly due to better access to resources and exposure in urban areas.

Hypothesis 3 – There is a significant positive correlation between social competence and personality development of prospective teachers.

Table 3: Correlation between Social Competence & Personality Development

Variables	N	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Social Competence & Personality	200	0.64	0.0000	**Strong positive correlation**, indicating higher personality aligns with better social competence



The table shows a strong positive correlation between social competence and personality among the 200 prospective teachers. The Pearson correlation coefficient (r) is 0.64, and the p-value is 0.0000, which is statistically significant. This indicates that as personality development increases, social competence also tends to increase, suggesting that these two variables are closely related and positively influence each other.

Findings

1. The analysis revealed a **significant difference** in social competence between urban and rural prospective teachers, with urban trainees showing higher social competence (Mean = 78.42) than rural trainees. The difference was statistically significant ($t = 3.64$, $p < 0.001$).
2. Similarly, urban prospective teachers exhibited **significantly higher personality development** (Mean = 81.65) compared to their rural counterparts ($t = 3.17$, $p = 0.0018$).
3. A **strong positive correlation** ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$) was found between social competence and personality development among prospective teachers, indicating that higher personality development is associated with better social competence.

Conclusion :

The research findings clearly indicate that the social skills and personality growth of future teachers vary significantly based on their living environments, with those from urban areas displaying considerably higher levels in both areas compared to those from rural settings. This difference highlights the role of various environmental and socio-cultural elements in shaping these essential professional traits. Along with it, the study reveals a strong positive relationship between personality growth and social skills, suggesting that these two aspects are intimately linked and enhance one another. This connection implies that targeted initiatives aimed at eveloping personality characteristics in future teachers can lead to notable advancements in their social abilities. Such growth is crucial not only for their individual development but also for their effectiveness as educators, ultimately resulting in better classroom dynamics, increased student

involvement, and overall teaching accomplishment. Therefore, focused strategies to foster both personality and social skills are essential in teacher training programs to cultivate well-rounded, effective, and socially skilled educators for the future.

Educational Implications

1. **Teacher Education Programs** should implement targeted training modules focusing on both personality development and social competence, especially for rural prospective teachers, to bridge the gap and foster holistic teacher growth.
2. Given the strong relationship between personality and social competence, educators and policymakers must emphasize the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills as part of teacher preparation curricula.
3. Workshops, seminars, and practical activities that encourage communication, assertiveness, empathy, and self-awareness should be regularly included to promote these vital qualities.
4. Educational institutions should create **inclusive learning environments** that support diverse backgrounds, providing additional support to rural prospective teachers to enhance their social and personality development.
5. Continuous assessment and feedback mechanisms should be employed to monitor and support the growth of these competencies throughout the teacher training process.

Future Implications

- Future research can track prospective teachers over time to observe changes in their social competence and personality development.
- Special training programs should be designed and tested to improve these skills, especially for rural trainees.
- Studies can explore how gender, socio-economic status, and culture affect social competence and personality.
- Research should examine how these traits influence teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.
- The role of technology in supporting social competence and personality development should be investigated.
- Cross-cultural comparisons can help understand how culture shapes these competencies in teacher education.

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