



Social Intelligence of Rural and Urban Higher Secondary School Students: A Comparative Study

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Abstract

Social intelligence is an essential aspect of personality that enables individuals to understand others, establish positive interpersonal relationships, communicate effectively, and adapt successfully to various social situations. During adolescence, particularly at the higher secondary level, students experience significant social, emotional, and cognitive development, making social intelligence a critical determinant of academic success, leadership, cooperation, and emotional well-being. The present study aimed to compare the social intelligence of rural and urban higher secondary school students. A descriptive survey method with a quantitative research design was adopted for the study. The sample comprised 100 higher secondary school students, including 50 rural and 50 urban students, selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using a standardized Social Intelligence Scale. The collected data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation, and independent sample t-test. The findings revealed that urban students demonstrated comparatively higher social intelligence than rural students. Significant differences were observed in communication skills, social awareness, interpersonal relationships, and adaptability. The study highlights the influence of educational environment, social interaction, family support, and extracurricular participation on the development of social intelligence. The findings suggest that schools should strengthen life skills education, collaborative learning, guidance and counselling services, and social development programmes to enhance students' social intelligence. The study provides valuable insights for teachers, school administrators, counsellors, and policymakers in promoting holistic development among higher secondary school students.

Keywords: Social Intelligence, Rural Students, Urban Students, Higher Secondary Education, Comparative Study, Adolescents.

1. Introduction

Education aims not only to develop students' academic competence but also to promote their social, emotional, moral, and intellectual growth. In the twenty-first century, success depends largely on an individual's ability to communicate effectively, cooperate with others, solve interpersonal problems, and adapt to changing social environments. These competencies are collectively reflected in social intelligence, which has become an important component of holistic education.

The concept of social intelligence was introduced by Edward L. Thorndike in 1920, who defined it as the ability to understand and manage people wisely in human relationships. Later researchers expanded the concept by emphasizing empathy, interpersonal sensitivity, social awareness, communication skills, cooperation, and behavioural adaptability. Social

intelligence enables individuals to establish healthy relationships, work effectively in groups, resolve conflicts peacefully, and make socially responsible decisions.

Higher secondary education is a crucial stage in adolescent development. Students at this level experience rapid physical, emotional, psychological, and social changes while preparing for higher education and future careers. Their ability to interact positively with peers, teachers, parents, and society significantly influences their academic achievement, leadership qualities, self-confidence, and emotional well-being. Therefore, the development of social intelligence has become one of the important objectives of school education.

The educational experiences of rural and urban students differ considerably. Urban students generally have greater access to educational facilities, digital technologies, extracurricular activities, communication opportunities, and diverse social environments. Rural students often experience stronger community relationships and close family interactions but may have comparatively fewer opportunities for wider social exposure. These differences may influence the development of students' social intelligence.

2. Concept of Social Intelligence

Social intelligence refers to an individual's ability to understand the feelings, thoughts, intentions, and behaviours of others and to respond appropriately in different social situations. It enables individuals to establish healthy interpersonal relationships, communicate effectively, cooperate with others, resolve conflicts, and adapt successfully to changing social environments.

Edward L. Thorndike (1920) described social intelligence as the ability to understand and manage men and women and to act wisely in human relations. Later psychologists expanded the concept by including social awareness, empathy, emotional understanding, communication skills, leadership, cooperation, adaptability, and interpersonal effectiveness.

In the educational context, social intelligence helps students develop positive relationships with teachers and classmates, participate actively in collaborative learning, demonstrate leadership qualities, and maintain emotional balance. Socially intelligent students generally exhibit better communication, teamwork, decision-making, conflict resolution, and social responsibility.

Social intelligence is considered an essential life skill that contributes significantly to students' academic achievement, personality development, emotional well-being, and successful adjustment in society.

3. Need of the Study

Modern society demands individuals who possess not only academic competence but also strong interpersonal and social skills. Social intelligence enables students to communicate effectively, work collaboratively, demonstrate empathy, and adapt to diverse social situations. These competencies have become increasingly important in the context of globalization, technological advancement, and competency-based education.

The educational environments of rural and urban students differ in terms of infrastructure, technology, social exposure, extracurricular opportunities, and communication experiences. These environmental differences may influence students' social intelligence and overall personality development. Therefore, it is important to examine whether significant differences

exist between rural and urban higher secondary school students with respect to social intelligence.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes holistic education, life skills, socio-emotional learning, communication skills, and collaborative learning. These educational reforms highlight the need to strengthen students' social competencies through appropriate school programmes.

The findings of the present study will help teachers, school administrators, counsellors, parents, and policymakers understand the existing level of social intelligence among students and design suitable educational interventions for promoting social and emotional development.

4. Review of Literature

Thorndike (1920) introduced the concept of social intelligence and described it as the ability to understand and manage people effectively in social relationships. His work laid the foundation for subsequent research on interpersonal competence.

Vernon (1933) emphasized that social intelligence involves the ability to interact effectively with others, understand social behaviour, and establish positive interpersonal relationships. He considered social intelligence an important dimension of personality development.

Guilford (1967) proposed that social intelligence consists of multiple intellectual abilities associated with understanding human behaviour, interpreting social information, and making appropriate social judgments.

Goleman (2006) explained that social intelligence combines social awareness and relationship management. According to him, socially intelligent individuals exhibit empathy, cooperation, communication skills, emotional regulation, and leadership qualities that contribute to personal and professional success.

Sharma and Singh (2018) found that higher secondary students with greater participation in co-curricular activities demonstrated significantly higher levels of social intelligence than those with limited participation.

Patil (2021) reported that urban students generally possessed higher social intelligence than rural students due to greater social interaction, communication opportunities, and exposure to diverse educational environments.

The review of literature indicates that social intelligence plays an important role in students' academic achievement, emotional adjustment, leadership, communication, and personality development. However, comparatively few studies have specifically compared the social intelligence of rural and urban higher secondary school students. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this research gap through a descriptive survey approach.

5. Objectives of the Study

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To study the level of social intelligence among rural higher secondary school students.
2. To study the level of social intelligence among urban higher secondary school students.
3. To compare the social intelligence of rural and urban higher secondary school students.
4. To identify the dimensions of social intelligence in which rural and urban higher secondary school students differ.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses were formulated for the study:

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

H_{01} : There is no significant difference between rural and urban higher secondary school students with respect to their social intelligence.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

H_{11} : There is a significant difference between rural and urban higher secondary school students with respect to their social intelligence.

7. Significance of the Study

The present study is significant because social intelligence has become an essential competency for adolescents in the twenty-first century. It enables students to develop effective communication, interpersonal relationships, empathy, cooperation, leadership, and problem-solving abilities, all of which contribute to their academic success and overall personality development.

The findings of the study will help teachers understand the social competencies of higher secondary school students and adopt appropriate learner-centered teaching strategies that encourage cooperation, teamwork, communication, and leadership. The study will also assist school administrators in planning co-curricular activities, life skills programmes, and guidance services that enhance students' social intelligence.

The results are expected to benefit counsellors by identifying students who require additional support in developing interpersonal skills and social adjustment. Parents may also gain a better understanding of the importance of creating supportive family environments that encourage healthy social interaction and emotional development.

Furthermore, the findings will assist curriculum planners and educational policymakers in implementing the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 related to holistic education, socio-emotional learning, life skills, and competency-based education. The study also contributes to educational research by providing empirical evidence on the comparative social intelligence of rural and urban higher secondary school students and serves as a valuable reference for future researchers.

8. Research Methodology

Research methodology provides a systematic framework for conducting scientific investigation and obtaining reliable findings. The present study adopted a quantitative approach to compare the social intelligence of rural and urban higher secondary school students. Data were collected through a standardized Social Intelligence Scale and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques to identify differences between the two groups.

Particular	Description
Research Method	The study employed the Descriptive Survey Method, which is appropriate for collecting factual information regarding the existing level of social intelligence among higher secondary school students. This method enabled the researcher to compare rural and urban students without manipulating any variables.

Research Design	The present investigation followed a Quantitative Research Design. Quantitative data collected through a standardized Social Intelligence Scale were statistically analyzed to obtain objective findings and compare the social intelligence of rural and urban higher secondary school students.
Population	The population of the study consisted of all higher secondary school students studying in recognized higher secondary schools located in the selected rural and urban areas.
Sample	A sample of 100 higher secondary school students was selected for the study, comprising 50 rural students and 50 urban students. Equal representation of both groups ensured meaningful comparison of social intelligence.
Sampling Technique	The Simple Random Sampling Technique was employed to select the respondents from rural and urban higher secondary schools. Every student had an equal opportunity to participate in the study, thereby minimizing sampling bias.
Research Tool	Data were collected using a Standardized Social Intelligence Scale. The scale measured dimensions such as social awareness, empathy, communication skills, interpersonal relationships, cooperation, leadership, social adaptability, and problem-solving ability.
Statistical Techniques	The collected data were analyzed using Frequency, Percentage, Mean Score, Standard Deviation, and Independent Sample t-test. These statistical techniques were used to summarize the data, compare the two groups, and determine the significance of differences in social intelligence.

9. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data collected from 100 higher secondary school students through the standardized Social Intelligence Scale were systematically classified, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical techniques. Frequency, percentage, mean score, standard deviation, and independent sample t-test were employed to compare the social intelligence of rural and urban students. The statistical analysis was undertaken to identify the level of social intelligence, examine differences between the two groups, and test the research hypothesis. The findings are presented in the following tables along with appropriate interpretations for a comprehensive understanding of the comparative social intelligence of rural and urban higher secondary school students.

Table 1: Level of Social Intelligence among Rural Higher Secondary School Students (N = 50)

Level of Social Intelligence	Frequency	Percentage
High	12	24%
Moderate	28	56%
Low	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation

The table indicates that the majority (56%) of rural higher secondary school students possess a moderate level of social intelligence. About 24% exhibit a high level, while 20% demonstrate a low level. This suggests that most rural students possess satisfactory interpersonal and social adjustment skills, although further developmental programmes are needed.

Table 2: Level of Social Intelligence among Urban Higher Secondary School Students (N = 50)

Level of Social Intelligence	Frequency	Percentage
High	20	40%
Moderate	24	48%
Low	6	12%
Total	50	100%

Interpretation

The table reveals that nearly half (48%) of the urban higher secondary school students possess a moderate level of social intelligence, while 40% demonstrate a high level. Only 12% fall under the low category, indicating comparatively stronger social intelligence among urban students.

Table 3: Dimension-wise Comparison of Social Intelligence

Dimension	Rural Mean	Urban Mean
Social Awareness	14.28	15.86
Empathy	14.10	15.62
Communication Skills	14.62	16.35
Interpersonal Relationships	15.08	16.18
Social Adaptability	14.38	15.72

Interpretation

The table shows that urban students obtained higher mean scores across all dimensions of social intelligence. The greatest difference is observed in communication skills and social awareness, indicating that urban students have comparatively better interpersonal competencies and adaptability.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Social Intelligence

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Family Support	82	82%
School Environment	88	88%
Peer Interaction	84	84%
Co-curricular Activities	79	79%
Digital Exposure	76	76%

Interpretation

The findings indicate that school environment (88%) is the most influential factor in the development of social intelligence, followed by peer interaction (84%) and family support (82%). These results emphasize the importance of supportive educational and social environments.

Table 5: Comparison of Mean Scores of Social Intelligence

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Rural Students	50	72.46	8.14
Urban Students	50	78.82	7.21

Interpretation

The table indicates that urban higher secondary school students obtained a higher mean social intelligence score (78.82) than rural students (72.46). This suggests that urban students possess comparatively better social intelligence and interpersonal competence.

Table 6: Independent Sample t-Test for Social Intelligence

Variable	Rural Mean	Urban Mean	t-value	Level of Significance
Social Intelligence	72.46	78.82	4.12	Significant at 0.05 level

Interpretation

The calculated t-value (4.12) is significant at the 0.05 level, indicating a statistically significant difference between rural and urban higher secondary school students with respect to social intelligence.

11. Hypothesis Testing

Null Hypothesis (H₀)

There is no significant difference between rural and urban higher secondary school students with respect to their social intelligence.

Decision

Since the calculated t-value (4.12) is significant at the 0.05 level, the null hypothesis is **rejected**, and the alternative hypothesis is **accepted**.

Hypothesis Analysis

The statistical analysis confirms a significant difference between rural and urban higher secondary school students regarding social intelligence. Urban students obtained significantly higher mean scores than rural students, indicating that locality and educational environment influence the development of social intelligence.

Figure 1: Comparison of Mean Social Intelligence Scores



12. Results and Discussion

The findings indicate that both rural and urban higher secondary school students possess satisfactory levels of social intelligence. However, urban students demonstrated significantly higher social intelligence than rural students across all measured dimensions. The independent sample t-test confirmed that the difference between the two groups is statistically significant. Urban students performed better in communication skills, social awareness, empathy, interpersonal relationships, and social adaptability. This may be attributed to greater exposure to diverse social environments, educational resources, extracurricular activities, technology, and collaborative learning opportunities. Rural students also demonstrated satisfactory social

intelligence, particularly in interpersonal relationships and cooperation, reflecting the influence of close family and community interactions.

The findings further reveal that school environment, peer interaction, family support, and participation in co-curricular activities play a significant role in developing students' social intelligence. These results support the objectives of the National Education Policy (2020), which emphasizes holistic education, life skills, socio-emotional learning, and competency development.

13. Major Findings

1. Most rural higher secondary school students possess a moderate level of social intelligence.
2. Urban higher secondary school students demonstrate comparatively higher social intelligence than rural students.
3. Urban students obtained higher mean scores across all dimensions of social intelligence.
4. School environment, peer interaction, and family support are the major factors influencing social intelligence.
5. The mean social intelligence score of urban students is significantly higher than that of rural students.
6. A statistically significant difference exists between rural and urban higher secondary school students regarding social intelligence.
7. The study confirms that educational environment and social exposure contribute significantly to the development of social intelligence.

14. Educational Implications

1. Schools should integrate life skills education into the curriculum to enhance students' social intelligence.
2. Teachers should adopt collaborative learning, group discussions, and project-based learning to strengthen interpersonal skills.
3. Rural schools should organize communication skills workshops, leadership programmes, and co-curricular activities.
4. Guidance and counselling services should be strengthened to promote students' social and emotional development.
5. Parents should encourage positive communication and healthy social interaction at home.
6. Educational institutions should provide equal opportunities for leadership, teamwork, and community participation.
7. Schools should implement the learner-centered recommendations of the National Education Policy (2020) to promote holistic development.

15. Conclusion

The study concludes that social intelligence is an essential component of students' holistic development and significantly influences academic success, interpersonal relationships, leadership, and emotional well-being. Although both rural and urban higher secondary school students possess satisfactory levels of social intelligence, urban students demonstrate comparatively higher levels across most dimensions. The statistically significant difference identified in the study highlights the influence of educational opportunities, school



environment, family support, and social exposure on students' social intelligence. Schools should therefore strengthen life skills education, collaborative learning, counselling services, and co-curricular programmes to promote balanced social development among all students. Such initiatives will contribute to achieving the objectives of competency-based and holistic education envisioned in the National Education Policy 2020.

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