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Teaching Competencies of Secondary School Teachers - A Study

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Abstract

This study investigates the teaching competencies of secondary school teachers with a focus on five critical domains: pedagogical competencies, communication and student engagement, classroom assessment, problem-solving and critical thinking, and independent learning and research skills. Utilizing a survey method, data were collected from a stratified random sample of 750 secondary school teachers across 48 schools in the Krishna, Guntur, and Prakasam districts of Andhra Pradesh. Standardized tools were developed and validated for the study, with high reliability confirmed through Cronbach's Alpha (0.91) and split-half reliability (0.85).

The study aimed to examine differences in teaching competence based on gender, locality (urban/rural), and type of school management (government, private, residential). Statistical analyses including Mean, Standard Deviation, t-tests, and ANOVA were employed to test hypotheses. The findings revealed statistically significant differences in teaching competence across all three variables: female, urban, and government school teachers demonstrated higher levels of teaching competence compared to their counterparts.

These results underscore the impact of demographic and institutional contexts on teaching performance and highlight the need for targeted, inclusive, and equity-driven professional development initiatives. The study provides valuable implications for educational policymakers, school administrators, and teacher education programs aiming to strengthen teacher effectiveness and enhance student learning outcomes in secondary education.

Keywords: Teaching competence, secondary school teachers, pedagogical competencies, communication skills, classroom assessment, critical thinking, independent learning, gender differences, urban-rural divide, school management type.

I. Introduction

The teaching profession occupies a pivotal role in shaping the intellectual, social, and moral fabric of any society. At the secondary school level, teachers serve not only as disseminators of subject knowledge but also as mentors, role models, and facilitators of adolescent development. This stage of education is crucial, as it bridges the gap between foundational learning and higher education or professional pursuits. Consequently, the quality of teaching at the secondary level significantly influences students' academic achievement, career orientation, and overall personality development.

Secondary school teachers are tasked with a wide range of responsibilities beyond the delivery of curriculum. They are expected to adapt instructional strategies to diverse learner needs, assess students' progress, manage classroom dynamics, foster critical thinking, and promote values such as discipline, empathy, and citizenship. The complexity of these roles demands high levels of professional competence, pedagogical knowledge, subject mastery, and interpersonal skills.

In recent years, growing attention has been paid to the professional standards and competencies required for effective teaching in secondary schools. The shift towards learner-centered education, integration of technology, inclusive practices, and emphasis on 21st-century skills has redefined what it means to be an effective teacher. As a result, evaluating and enhancing teaching competency has become a central concern for educators, policymakers, and teacher training institutions.

Given the diversity of learners and the evolving educational landscape, it is imperative to continuously examine the competencies of secondary school teachers in relation to various influencing factors such as gender, experience, aptitude, school type, and socio-cultural context. Strengthening the teaching profession at the secondary level is not merely an educational objective—it is a national imperative for building a knowledgeable, skilled, and values-driven society.

II. Teaching Competence

Teaching competence refers to the integrated set of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional behaviors that enable a teacher to perform their instructional and educational roles effectively and efficiently. It encompasses both the content knowledge and pedagogical expertise necessary for creating meaningful learning experiences, along with the ability to manage classroom interactions, assess student performance, and foster a positive learning environment.

According to Medley (1977), teaching competence is the extent to which a teacher possesses the ability to bring about desired learning outcomes in students. It is often distinguished from *teacher performance* (what the teacher does in the classroom) and *teacher effectiveness* (the impact on student learning outcomes), yet it is closely related to both.

Passi and Lalitha (1976), in their widely used *General Teaching Competency Scale (GTCS)*, conceptualized teaching competence as a combination of instructional, planning, and interpersonal skills. Their framework focuses on key components such as lesson planning, presentation, use of teaching aids, questioning skills, reinforcement, classroom management, and evaluation strategies. These dimensions provide a structured way to assess and develop teaching competence in a standardized manner.

Modern perspectives further expand the definition to include technological proficiency, collaborative practices, and student-centered approaches. For instance, Shulman (1987) introduced the concept of *Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK)*—the unique blend of subject expertise and pedagogy—as an essential component of teaching competence.

More recently, Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) emphasized that competent teachers are those who engage in continuous professional development, adapt to the diverse needs of learners, and align their instructional practices with curriculum goals and assessments. Teaching competence thus also includes reflective practice, cultural sensitivity, and ethical professionalism.

Research has also shown that teaching competence is influenced by a variety of factors such as teaching experience (Jishtu & Devi, 2023), thinking styles and soft skills (Amala Jansi & Raju, 2023), gender (Fatima & Mattoo, 2024), and teaching aptitude (Krishan & Fernandes, 2023). These findings suggest that competence is not static but can be developed through targeted interventions and contextual understanding.

III. Teaching Competence of Secondary School Teachers

Teaching competence in secondary schools is a multifaceted construct that includes a wide array of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors. Effective secondary school teachers must go beyond content delivery—they must engage students actively, assess learning meaningfully, foster higher-order thinking, and promote lifelong learning. The following five domains collectively define the core areas of teaching competence:

1. Pedagogical Competencies

Pedagogical competence refers to the ability of teachers to plan, design, and deliver instruction effectively. It includes understanding learning theories, instructional strategies, curriculum planning, and classroom management techniques.

Secondary school teachers with strong pedagogical skills:

- Set clear instructional goals aligned with curriculum objectives.
- Use differentiated instruction to meet diverse student needs.
- Incorporate active learning strategies such as group work, discussion, and projects.
- Manage time and resources efficiently.
- Integrate technology and teaching aids meaningfully.

Passi and Lalitha (1976) emphasized that pedagogical competence is foundational for all other teaching behaviors, forming the core of instructional practice.

2. Communication and Student Engagement Competence

This domain involves both **verbal and non-verbal communication** skills that foster a positive and inclusive classroom environment. It also includes a teacher's ability to build rapport, motivate students, and maintain discipline while encouraging active participation.

Key aspects include:

- Clear and confident expression of ideas.
- Active listening to student responses and feedback.
- Encouraging questions and discussions.
- Using body language, tone, and eye contact effectively.
- Creating a safe space for student voices and diverse perspectives.

According to *Darling-Hammond et al. (2017)*, effective communication is crucial for building trust and enhancing engagement, especially during adolescence when students are developing social and emotional skills.

3. Classroom Assessment Competence

This area reflects the teacher's ability to design, administer, and interpret both formative and summative assessments to improve teaching and learning.

Key components include:

- Designing assessments aligned with learning objectives.
- Using a variety of assessment tools: quizzes, assignments, peer assessments, and portfolios.
- Providing timely and constructive feedback.
- Using assessment data to inform instructional decisions.
- Encouraging self-assessment and reflection among students.

Black and Wiliam (1998) noted that classroom assessment, when used formatively, significantly enhances student learning outcomes by helping teachers adjust their teaching and students improve their understanding.

4. Competence in Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking

This domain focuses on the teacher's ability to model and nurture critical thinking, reasoning, and problem-solving in students.

Teachers with strong competencies in this area:

- Present real-world problems and encourage analytical discussions.
- Use inquiry-based and problem-based learning approaches.
- Foster logical reasoning, questioning, and evidence-based argumentation.
- Encourage students to evaluate multiple perspectives.
- Help students develop metacognitive skills to analyze their own thinking.

Shulman (1987) emphasized the need for teachers to engage learners in cognitive tasks that require analysis, synthesis, and evaluation—central skills in the secondary education phase.

5. Independent Learning and Research Competencies

In this domain, teachers act as facilitators who promote students' autonomy, curiosity, and research orientation—essential traits for lifelong learning.

Effective practices include:

- Encouraging self-directed learning and goal-setting.
- Guiding students in using digital and print resources for research.
- Teaching academic honesty, referencing, and information literacy.
- Supporting project-based learning and exploratory activities.
- Helping students reflect on their learning strategies and outcomes.

According to *Trilling and Fadel (2009)*, preparing students for the 21st century means cultivating independence and research skills that extend beyond the classroom.

The teaching competence of secondary school teachers encompasses not only the ability to teach content effectively but also the capacity to foster independent thinkers, assess learning meaningfully, engage students actively, and create a stimulating environment for cognitive and social growth. By strengthening these five domains—pedagogy, communication, assessment, critical thinking, and independent learning—teachers can significantly enhance educational outcomes and better prepare students for academic and real-life challenges.

IV. Need and Significance of the Study

Secondary education serves as a pivotal stage in the academic and personal development of learners, influencing their higher education choices, career pathways, and life skills. Teachers at this level not only impart subject knowledge but also facilitate critical thinking, independent learning, and social-emotional development. Therefore, the competencies of secondary school teachers, particularly in teaching and learning, are crucial to ensuring quality education and holistic development of students (UNESCO, 2015).

In the context of 21st-century education, the role of teachers has evolved from being mere knowledge transmitters to becoming facilitators, mentors, and learning designers. This shift necessitates competencies in differentiated pedagogy, learner engagement, formative assessment, integration of ICT, and promotion of independent learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 also emphasizes the development of teacher competencies across cognitive, affective, and

psychomotor domains to promote student-centered learning and improve learning outcomes (Ministry of Education, 2020).

However, several studies have indicated competency gaps among secondary school teachers, particularly in areas such as communication, classroom assessment, critical thinking facilitation, and promotion of research-based learning (Jansi & Raju, 2023; Krishan & Fernandes, 2023). Moreover, teacher competencies are often influenced by factors such as gender, school location, teaching experience, and institutional support (Fatima & Mattoo, 2024; Quadri & Mahmood, 2024), leading to variability in teaching quality and student performance.

Given these realities, the present study is significant for the following reasons:

- It examines the current status of teaching and learning competencies among secondary school teachers, providing a multidimensional analysis across pedagogical, communicative, cognitive, and reflective domains.
- It addresses a crucial need for empirical data to guide the design of in-service teacher training programs, competency enhancement workshops, and professional development frameworks.
- It contributes to the growing body of literature on teacher effectiveness, with practical implications for school leadership, teacher education institutions, and policymakers.
- The study supports the realization of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education), which underscores the importance of competent teachers for ensuring inclusive and equitable learning for all (UN, 2016).

In essence, this study offers timely insights into the professional capabilities of secondary school teachers and provides actionable recommendations for improving educational quality through teacher competency development.

V. Review of Related Literature

Recent studies have extensively explored teaching competency among secondary school teachers, examining its associations with demographic variables, cognitive attributes, and institutional contexts.

Quadri and Mahmood (2024) conducted a study in Cuttack, Odisha, to assess teaching competency in relation to gender and area. Using the General Teaching Competency Scale by Passi and Lalitha, they found that 59.14% of teachers were categorized as having "Extremely Low" teaching competency, with male and urban teachers outperforming their female and rural counterparts.

Fatima and Mattoo (2024) investigated gender-based differences in teaching competency among 300 high school teachers using a standardized scale developed by Vidushy and Kishore. Their results, analyzed using non-parametric tests, showed that male teachers exhibited significantly higher teaching competency than female teachers.

Laitha, Vanlaltanpuii, and Zoramsanga (2024) examined the influence of school management type and educational qualification on teaching competency among 116 teachers in Siaha Town, Mizoram. The study revealed no significant differences in teaching competency based on these variables, suggesting institutional and academic background may not be influential factors in this context.

Amala Jansi and Govinda Raju (2023) conducted a large-scale study involving 1000 teachers across Tamil Nadu to explore the relationship between teaching competency, thinking styles, and vital soft skills. They found significant gender and district-level differences, as well as strong correlations between teaching competency and cognitive traits like critical thinking and decision-making, as well as soft skills such as time management, leadership, and communication.

In another study, Jishtu and Devi (2023) assessed teaching competency and job satisfaction among tribal women teachers in Kinnaur. Results indicated that teaching experience significantly influenced competency, while the type of institution did not. A positive correlation between job satisfaction and teaching competency was also reported.

Kaur (2023) examined the relationship between teaching competency and attitudes toward creative teaching among teachers in Moga district. No significant differences were found based on school type or gender, and locale did not influence self-regulated learning among students.

Krishan and Fernandes (2023) explored the link between teaching competency and teaching aptitude in Haryana. They observed that urban and government school teachers had higher competency and found a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.73$) between teaching aptitude and teaching competency, highlighting the role of innate teaching dispositions in professional success.

Yadav and Lakshmi (2023) focused on mathematical competency in relation to teaching experience among 60 teachers in Telangana. Their findings, based on ANOVA, revealed that experience significantly impacted mathematical competency.

Shobha (2022) evaluated both teaching effectiveness and competency among secondary teachers in Mysore. Among the 80 participants, a positive correlation was found between effectiveness and competency. However, gender and institutional type did not yield significant differences.

Finally, Chinliansiama and Fanai (2022) studied pre-service teachers at DIET Lunglei, Mizoram, in relation to educational background and locality. The results showed no significant differences in teaching competency, indicating uniformity across backgrounds.

This body of literature suggests that teaching competency is influenced by a range of factors including gender, experience, aptitude, and interpersonal and cognitive skills. However, academic qualifications and type of institution often do not yield significant differences. These findings point to the need for targeted training and capacity building to enhance teaching effectiveness in diverse educational contexts.

VI. Method of the Study

The present investigation employed the survey method to examine the *Teaching Competence of Secondary School Teachers*. This methodological approach was deemed appropriate for collecting comprehensive and standardized data across a large and diverse population.

To ensure adequate representation from various subgroups within the target population, the investigator adopted a stratified random sampling technique. The sample consisted of 750 secondary school teachers drawn from 48 government and private secondary schools, with 16 schools each selected from the districts of Krishna, Guntur, and Prakasam in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

For the purpose of data collection, the investigator adopted and developed standardized research instruments tailored to assess teaching competencies across multiple domains. The instruments focused on the following five key areas of teaching competence:

1. Pedagogical Competencies
2. Communication and Student Engagement Competence
3. Classroom Assessment Competence
4. Competence in Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking
5. Independent Learning and Research Competencies

To ensure the reliability and validity of the tools used, both Cronbach's Alpha and the Split-Half Reliability Method were applied. The internal consistency of the instruments was found to be high, with a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.91 and a split-half reliability coefficient of 0.85, indicating strong reliability and stability.

The tools were designed to be inclusive, accounting for the varied demographic profile of the respondents, including teachers aged 23 to 55 years and ensuring accessibility across diverse educational settings.

This methodological framework provided a robust basis for exploring the teaching competencies of secondary school teachers across different regions and demographic profiles.

VII. Objective

1. To find out the influence of the following variables on the Teaching Competence of Secondary School Teachers i.e.

- Gender : Male/ Female
- Locality : Rural / Urban
- Type of management : Government or Aided / Private/ Residential

VIII. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data, appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical techniques were employed. Specifically, the Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) were calculated to describe the central tendency and variability of scores. Further, t-tests and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were conducted to determine the significance of differences across groups based on demographic and contextual variables.

Hypothesis

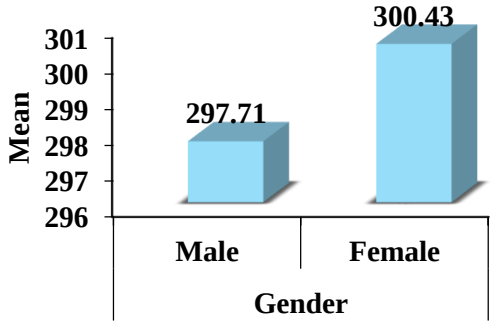
1. There would be no significant difference between Male and Female Secondary School Teachers in their Teaching Competence.

To evaluate this hypothesis, the mean, standard deviation (SD), and independent sample *t*-test values for male and female teachers were computed. The detailed results are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Teaching Competence- Gender – MEAN - SD – 't-Value-p-value.

Gender	N	Mean	SD	SED	't'	p-value
Male	398	297.71	4.13	0.6113	4.456*	0.00
Female	352	300.43	11.37			

Note: *Significant at 0.05 level



Graph 1. Mean Differences in Teaching Competence Based on Gender

Interpretation

Table 1 presents the results of an independent samples *t*-test conducted to examine the difference in teaching competence between male and female secondary school teachers. The findings reveal that female teachers (M = 300.43, SD = 11.37) scored significantly higher in teaching competence than their male counterparts (M = 297.71, SD = 4.13). The calculated *t*-value was 4.456 with a *p*-value of 0.00, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

These results indicate a significant gender-based difference in teaching competence, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between male and female teachers in their teaching competence. The outcome suggests that female teachers in the sample may exhibit relatively stronger teaching competencies compared to male teachers.

Finding

Female secondary school teachers demonstrated significantly higher teaching competence than their male counterparts ($t = 4.456$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The results of the independent samples *t*-test indicate a statistically significant difference in teaching competence between male and female secondary school teachers, with female teachers scoring higher on average. This suggests that gender may play a role in shaping or influencing teaching practices and effectiveness in the classroom. The higher mean score among female teachers could be attributed to various factors, such as greater engagement with students, stronger communication skills, or more frequent participation in professional development activities. It also reflects potential differences in attitude, motivation, or teaching style that favor female educators in this context.

These findings align with previous research that has occasionally reported stronger teaching efficacy or classroom management skills among female teachers. However, it is important to interpret these results with caution. While statistically significant, differences in competence may also be influenced by contextual variables such as teaching experience, school environment, or subject specialization. Therefore, further qualitative and quantitative studies are needed to explore the underlying causes of gender-based differences in teaching competence and to develop targeted interventions that support all teachers in enhancing their professional skills. This finding contrasts with the results of **Gulnar Quadri and Siddiqui Mohd Mahmood (2024),** who reported that male teachers exhibited higher levels of teaching competency compared to female teachers. Similarly, **Fatima and Mattoo (2024)** also found that male teachers demonstrated significantly greater teaching competence than their female counterparts. These discrepancies highlight the influence of contextual, institutional, and demographic factors that may affect gender-based teaching performance across different educational settings.

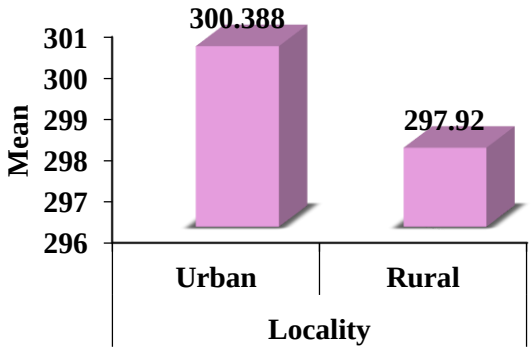
Hypothesis-2: There would be no significant difference between Urban and Rural Secondary School Teachers in their Teaching Competence.

To evaluate this hypothesis, the mean, standard deviation (SD), and independent sample *t*-test values for urban and rural teachers were computed. The detailed results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Teaching Competence- Area – MEAN - SD – 't-Value-p-value.

Locality	N	Mean	SD	SED	't'	p-value
Urban	324	300.388	11.85	0.617	3.983*	0.00
Rural	426	297.92	4.079			

Note: *Significant at 0.05 level



Graph 2. Mean Differences in Teaching Competence Based on Locality

Interpretation

An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to determine whether a significant difference exists in teaching competence between urban and rural secondary school teachers. As shown in Table 2, the results indicate that urban teachers (M = 300.39, SD = 11.85) had significantly higher teaching competence scores compared to their rural counterparts (M = 297.92, SD = 4.08). The calculated *t*-value was 3.983 with a *p*-value of 0.00, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

These findings lead to the rejection of the null hypothesis, confirming that a significant difference does exist between urban and rural teachers in their teaching competence. This suggests that locality may influence access to resources, training opportunities, or school infrastructure, all of which can impact teaching performance and professional competence.

Finding

Urban secondary school teachers demonstrated significantly higher teaching competence than their rural counterparts ($t = 3.983$, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The results of the analysis reveal a statistically significant difference in teaching competence between urban and rural secondary school teachers, with urban teachers exhibiting higher competence levels. This may be attributed to better access to educational resources, infrastructure, and professional development opportunities commonly available in urban settings. Urban teachers are more likely to benefit from exposure to innovative teaching methods, continuous in-service training, and collaborative learning environments, which may contribute to their enhanced teaching competence.

On the other hand, rural teachers may face challenges such as limited access to updated teaching materials, insufficient training opportunities, and infrastructural constraints, which could hinder their professional growth and effectiveness. These findings underscore the importance of addressing the urban-rural divide in educational support systems. Policy initiatives aimed at improving teacher training, mentoring, and resource availability in rural areas are essential to bridge this gap and ensure equitable teaching standards across different localities. This finding is consistent with the study by **Gulnar Quadri and Siddiqui Mohd Mahmood (2024),** who reported that urban teachers outperformed their rural counterparts in teaching competency. Similarly, **Jai Krishan and Rosy S. Fernandes (2023)** found that urban teachers exhibited higher levels of teaching competence compared to rural teachers. These results suggest that factors such as access to resources, professional development opportunities, and exposure to diverse educational practices may contribute to enhanced teaching competence in urban settings.

Hypothesis- 3: There would be no significant difference among Secondary School Teachers in their Teaching Competence based on School management type.

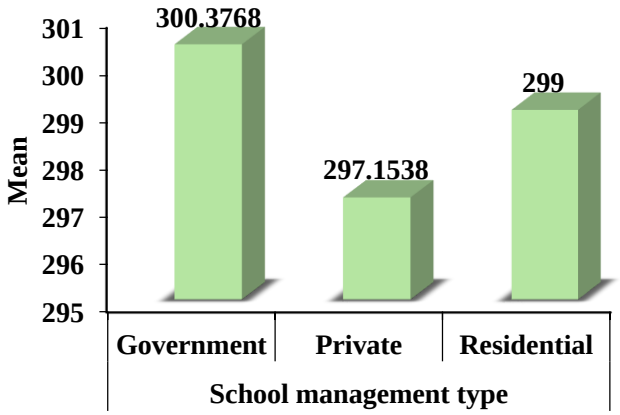
To test this hypothesis, the mean, standard deviation (SD), and one-way ANOVA were computed for secondary school teachers working in Government, Aided, and Private schools. The detailed results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Teaching Competence among Secondary School Teachers Based on School Management Type

School type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Government	414	300.3768	10.49123
Private	312	297.1538	4.50031
Residential	24	299.0000	.00000
Total	750	298.9920	8.45975

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA Summary for Teaching Competence among Secondary School Teachers Based on School Management Type

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1848.119	2	924.060	13.337	.000
Within Groups	51755.833	747	69.285		
Total	53603.952	749			



Graph 3. Mean Differences in Teaching Competence Based on School management type

Interpretation

Descriptive statistics (Table 4.7) showed that Government school teachers (M = 300.38, SD = 10.49) had the highest mean score, followed by Residential school teachers (M = 299.00, SD = 0.00), and Private school teachers (M = 297.15, SD = 4.50).

The ANOVA results (Table 4.8) revealed a statistically significant difference in teaching competence based on school management type, $F(2, 747) = 13.34$, $p < .001$.

Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that there would be no significant difference in teaching competence among secondary school teachers based on school management type is **rejected**. This indicates that the type of school management has a significant effect on the teaching competence of secondary school teachers. Post hoc comparisons are recommended to determine which specific groups differ significantly from each other.

Finding

A significant difference was found in teaching competence among secondary school teachers based on school management type.

Discussion

The findings of the study indicate a statistically significant difference in teaching competence among secondary school teachers based on the type of school management. Government school teachers exhibited higher levels of teaching competence compared to their counterparts in Private and Residential schools. This may be attributed to factors such as better access to professional development programs, more experience, and the implementation of standardized recruitment and training procedures in government institutions. The variation in mean scores suggests that systemic and structural differences across management types could influence teachers' pedagogical effectiveness.

These results align with previous research emphasizing the role of institutional support, job security, and opportunities for continuous professional growth in enhancing teaching competence. Private school teachers, who showed comparatively lower teaching competence, may face challenges such as higher workloads, lower job stability, and limited access to in-service training. The findings highlight the need for policymakers and school administrators to provide equitable support and capacity-building opportunities across all types of school management to ensure quality education for all students. This finding contradicts the results of **Laitha, C., Vanlaltanpuii, and Zoramsanga (2024)**, who reported no significant difference in the level of teaching competency among secondary school teachers with respect to the type of school management. Similarly, **Prabha Jishtu and Raj Devi (2023)** found that teaching competency did not significantly vary based on the type of institution. These contrasting results may be attributed to variations in institutional policies, resource availability, and teacher support systems across different study contexts.

IX. Educational Implications

The findings of the present study carry significant educational implications for teacher development, policy formulation, institutional planning, and classroom practice. Given the demonstrated influence of **gender**, **locality**, and **school management type** on teaching competence, the following implications are noteworthy:

1. **Promote Gender-Sensitive Teacher Development**

   The study revealed higher teaching competence among female teachers, highlighting the need for gender-sensitive training programs that leverage gender-specific strengths and encourage reflective practices and student-centered pedagogy among male teachers.

2. **Bridge the Urban-Rural Competency Gap**

   Urban teachers outperformed their rural counterparts, indicating the need for improved infrastructure, digital access, and frequent in-service training to enhance teaching competence in rural areas.

3. **Enhance Professional Support Across School Management Types**

   Government school teachers showed higher teaching competence than private and residential teachers. Equitable access to training, standardized teaching benchmarks, and curriculum support should be provided across all school types.

4. **Adopt a Multi-Dimensional Teacher Training Framework**

   Training programs must cover key domains—pedagogy, engagement, assessment, critical thinking, and research skills—through pre-service curriculum reforms, simulations, and competency-based performance assessments.

5. **Utilize Evidence for Policy and Planning**

   The study's statistical findings support the use of data-driven tools to assess teacher performance, identify gaps, and implement targeted interventions, especially in underperforming regions.

6. **Ensure Equity in Capacity Building**

   Context-sensitive interventions should address disparities across gender, locality, and institution type, ensuring that all teachers receive the support needed for continuous professional growth.

7. **Encourage Mentoring and Collaborative Learning**

   Professional learning communities, peer mentoring, and action research should be promoted to facilitate reflective teaching and lifelong learning among teachers from varied backgrounds.

8. **Support Policy Alignment with NEP 2020 and SDG 4**

   The findings reinforce the goals of NEP 2020 and Sustainable Development Goal 4 by advocating for inclusive, equitable, and high-quality teacher education that enhances student learning outcomes.

X. Conclusion

The present study aimed to assess the teaching competencies of secondary school teachers across key domains—pedagogical skills, communication and student engagement, classroom assessment, problem-solving and critical thinking, and independent learning and research skills. The study further sought to investigate the influence of gender, locality, and school management type on teaching competence.

The findings revealed statistically significant differences in teaching competence based on all three variables under study. Specifically, female teachers demonstrated higher teaching competence than male teachers, urban teachers outperformed rural teachers, and government school teachers scored higher than those in private and residential institutions. These variations suggest that contextual factors such as access to resources, institutional support, professional development opportunities, and working conditions play a substantial role in shaping teachers' competencies.

Additionally, the study established that teaching competence is a multi-dimensional construct, requiring continuous investment in teacher training and support. The findings underscore the importance of targeted and differentiated professional development initiatives, especially for teachers in rural areas and under-resourced schools. Furthermore, the study highlights the need for gender-sensitive, equitable, and context-specific policies that enhance teaching performance across diverse educational settings.

This research contributes valuable empirical evidence to the discourse on teacher quality and effectiveness in secondary education. It advocates for a competency-based teacher development framework aligned with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) and Sustainable Development Goal 4, which emphasize inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all. Ultimately, strengthening the teaching competencies of secondary school teachers is essential for fostering student achievement, reducing educational disparities, and improving the overall effectiveness of the school system.

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