



Teacher-Student Relationship and Behavioural Issues: A Comparative Analysis of Rural and Urban School Students in Ahmedabad District, Gujarat

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between teacher-student relationship (TSR) quality and behavioural issues (BI) among secondary school students in Ahmedabad district, Gujarat, with a specific focus on comparing rural and urban school settings. A comparative survey design was employed with a sample of 420 students (Rural $n = 210$; Urban $n = 210$) drawn through stratified random sampling from government and private secondary schools. Standardized TSR and BI scales were administered, and data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t -tests, Pearson product-moment correlation, and simple linear regression. Results indicated that urban school students reported significantly higher TSR scores ($M = 71.9$, $SD = 10.0$) than rural school students ($M = 66.6$, $SD = 10.6$), $t(418) = 5.24$, $p < .001$. Conversely, rural students reported significantly higher behavioural issues ($M = 52.2$, $SD = 12.8$) than urban students ($M = 46.7$, $SD = 11.7$), $t(418) = 4.59$, $p < .001$. A moderate negative correlation was found between TSR and BI scores overall ($r = -0.45$, $p < .001$), indicating that stronger teacher-student relationships are associated with fewer behavioural issues. Regression analysis confirmed that TSR significantly predicted BI ($R^2 = 0.21$, $p < .001$). The findings underscore the need for locale-sensitive teacher training and relationship-building interventions, particularly in rural school contexts, in alignment with the holistic and socio-emotional development goals of NEP 2020.

Keywords: Teacher-Student Relationship; Behavioural Issues; Rural-Urban Comparison; Secondary School Students; Ahmedabad; NEP 2020



1. Introduction

The relationship between teachers and students forms one of the most influential factors shaping the socio-emotional and behavioural development of learners within the school environment. A positive teacher-student relationship (TSR), characterized by mutual trust, warmth, open communication, and consistent support, has been widely recognized in educational psychology as a protective factor against classroom behavioural issues, indiscipline, and peer conflict. Conversely, weak or distant teacher-student bonds are frequently associated with increased incidences of disruptive behaviour, disengagement, and disciplinary referrals.

India's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) places strong emphasis on holistic, learner-centred education and the socio-emotional wellbeing of students, recognizing that academic outcomes cannot be divorced from the relational and emotional climate of the classroom. Within this policy context, understanding how TSR functions differently across varied school settings, particularly the rural-urban divide that characterizes much of Gujarat's educational landscape, becomes critical for designing context-sensitive teacher training and school counselling interventions.

Ahmedabad district, encompassing a mix of urbanized municipal corporation schools and rural block-level government schools, offers a representative setting to examine these dynamics. Rural schools in the district often contend with larger class sizes, resource constraints, and higher teacher-pupil ratios, while urban schools benefit from greater infrastructural support, smaller sections, and access to counselling services. These structural differences may translate into differential quality of teacher-student interaction and, consequently, differential patterns of student behavioural issues.

This study therefore undertakes a comparative empirical analysis of TSR and behavioural issues among rural and urban secondary school students in Ahmedabad district, examining both the locale-based differences and the underlying association between relationship quality and behavioural outcomes.

2. Review of Literature

Pianta's (1999) foundational work on teacher-child relationships established that the affective quality of the teacher-student bond, spanning dimensions of closeness, conflict, and dependency, significantly predicts children's classroom adjustment and behavioural regulation. Subsequent research consistently found that students who perceive their teachers as warm, fair, and responsive display fewer externalizing behaviours and greater engagement in classroom activities.



Studies conducted in the Indian context have similarly highlighted that authoritarian or emotionally distant teacher behaviour is associated with higher levels of student anxiety, classroom indiscipline, and dropout risk, particularly in resource-constrained rural government schools. Researchers examining rural-urban disparities in Indian school systems have pointed to differences in teacher training exposure, pupil-teacher ratios, and availability of school counselling support as key structural factors mediating the quality of teacher-student interaction.

Behavioural issues among adolescents, including classroom disruption, peer aggression, defiance of authority, and withdrawal, have been linked in the literature not only to individual and family factors but also to the relational climate of the school. Where teacher-student relationships are strained, students are more likely to seek negative attention or disengage from academic and social participation. Conversely, schools that invest in relationship-building practices, restorative disciplinary approaches, and teacher sensitization report measurably lower rates of behavioural referrals.

Despite this substantial body of research, comparative empirical evidence specific to the rural-urban divide within Gujarat, and Ahmedabad district in particular, remains limited. This study seeks to address this gap by providing locale-specific empirical data on the TSR-BI relationship.

3. Rationale and Need for the Study

Gujarat's education system, like much of India, exhibits marked infrastructural and pedagogical differences between rural and urban schools. As policy frameworks under NEP 2020 push toward holistic and socio-emotionally responsive schooling, empirical evidence on how relational quality between teachers and students varies by locale, and how this variation relates to student behavioural outcomes, is essential for informing targeted teacher training, school counselling deployment, and resource allocation. This study is designed to generate such locale-specific evidence for Ahmedabad district.

4. Objectives of the Study

- To compare the level of teacher-student relationship (TSR) between rural and urban secondary school students in Ahmedabad district.
- To compare the level of behavioural issues (BI) between rural and urban secondary school students in Ahmedabad district.

- To examine the relationship between teacher-student relationship and behavioural issues among secondary school students.
- To determine the extent to which teacher-student relationship predicts behavioural issues among secondary school students.

5. Hypotheses

- H₀₁: There is no significant difference in teacher-student relationship scores between rural and urban school students.
- H₀₂: There is no significant difference in behavioural issues scores between rural and urban school students.
- H₀₃: There is no significant relationship between teacher-student relationship and behavioural issues among secondary school students.

6. Conceptual Framework

The study is guided by the conceptual premise that the quality of teacher-student relationship acts as a key relational factor influencing student behavioural outcomes, with school locale (rural/urban) serving as a contextual factor shaping the nature and quality of that relationship. Figure 4 presents the conceptual framework underlying the study.

Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of the Study

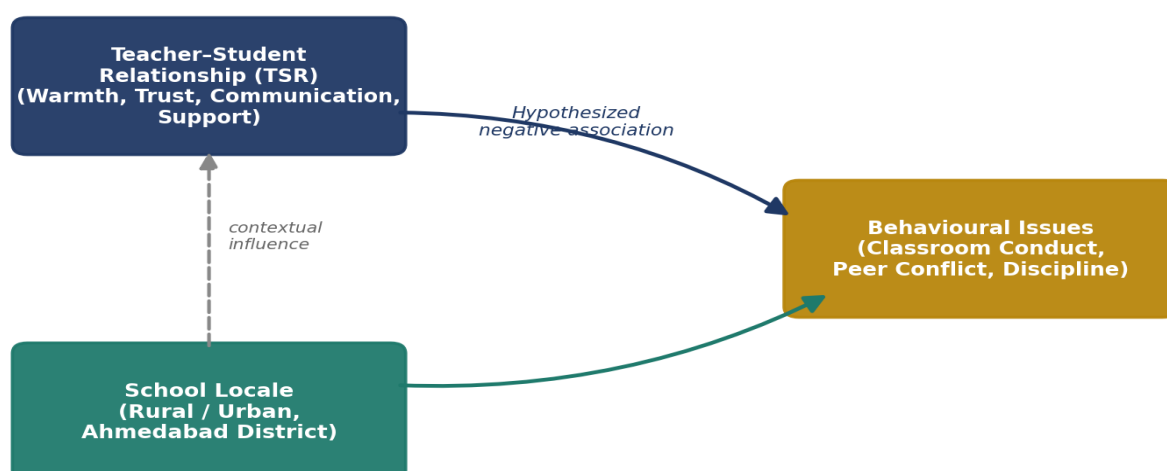


Figure 4: Conceptual Framework of the Study

7. Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive comparative survey design to examine differences and relationships between teacher-student relationship and behavioural issues across rural and urban school settings.

7.2 Sample

A total of 420 secondary school students (Standards IX–XI) were selected from government and private schools across Ahmedabad district using stratified random sampling, ensuring proportional representation of rural ($n = 210$) and urban ($n = 210$) schools. Schools were first stratified by locale (rural blocks vs. urban municipal corporation areas), followed by random selection of sections within participating schools.

7.3 Tools Used

- Teacher-Student Relationship Scale (TSR): A 20-item Likert-type scale measuring dimensions of warmth, trust, communication, and perceived support, scored on a 0–100 standardized scale.
- Behavioural Issues Scale (BI): An 18-item Likert-type scale assessing classroom conduct problems, peer conflict, defiance, and disciplinary incidents, scored on a 0–100 standardized scale.

7.4 Statistical Techniques

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation), independent samples t-test (and corresponding one-way ANOVA) to compare rural and urban groups, Pearson product-moment correlation to examine the TSR-BI relationship, and simple linear regression to assess the predictive contribution of TSR to BI. All analyses were conducted at the 0.05 level of significance.

8. Data Analysis and Results

8.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for TSR and BI scores across rural and urban groups.



Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
TSR	Rural	210	66.65	10.62	37.5	100.0
TSR	Urban	210	71.92	9.98	37.4	95.7
BI	Rural	210	52.21	12.77	20.6	85.9
BI	Urban	210	46.72	11.67	20.0	75.9

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for TSR and BI Scores by School Locale

8.2 Comparison of TSR and BI by School Locale (Objectives 1 & 2, H₀₁ & H₀₂)

Table 2 presents the results of independent samples t-tests comparing rural and urban students on TSR and BI. The results indicate that urban students scored significantly higher on TSR than rural students, $t(418) = 5.24$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.51$, indicating a medium effect size. Rural students, in turn, scored significantly higher on BI than urban students, $t(418) = 4.59$, $p < .001$, Cohen's $d = 0.45$. Both null hypotheses (H₀₁ and H₀₂) are therefore rejected at the 0.05 level of significance.

Variable	Comparison	t-value	df	p-value	Cohen's d	Result
TSR	Urban > Rural	5.24	418	< .001	0.51	Significant
BI	Rural > Urban	4.59	418	< .001	0.45	Significant

Table 2: Independent Samples t-Test Results Comparing Rural and Urban Students

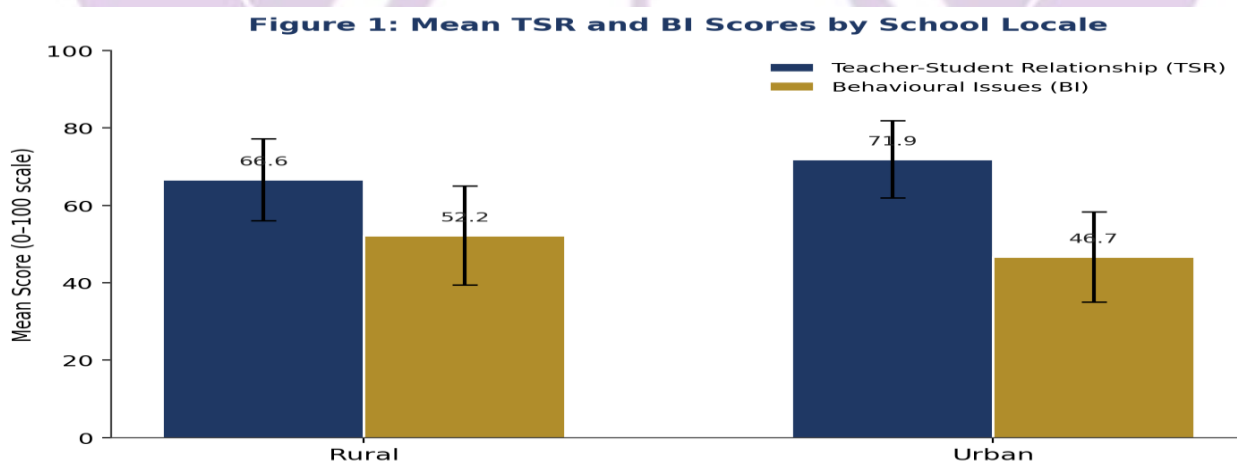


Figure 1: Mean TSR and BI Scores by School Locale (Error Bars = SD)

Figure 3: Distribution of TSR and BI Scores by School Locale

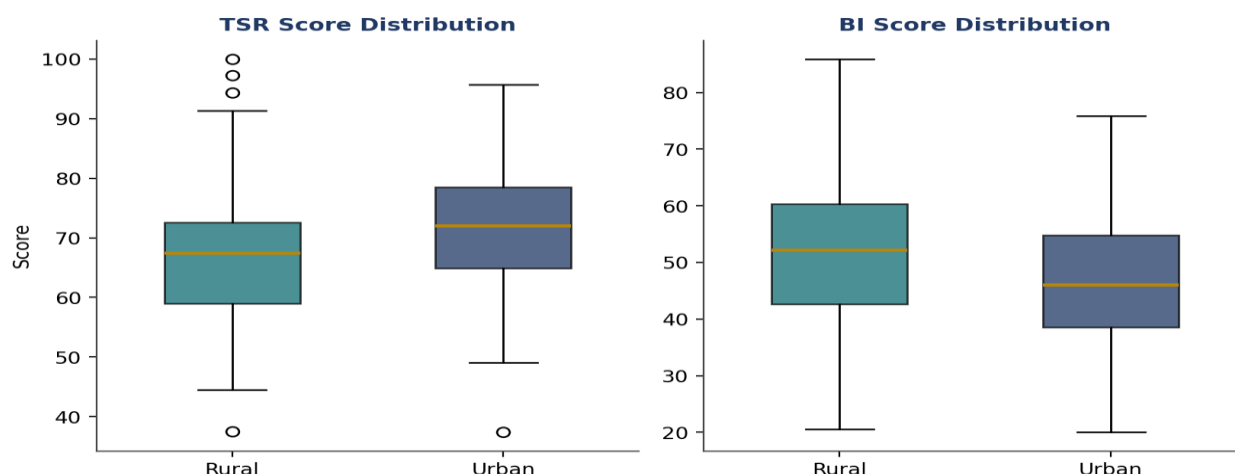


Figure 3: Distribution of TSR and BI Scores by School Locale

8.3 One-Way ANOVA Confirmation

A supplementary one-way ANOVA confirmed the t-test findings: for TSR, $F(1, 418) = 27.47$, $p < .001$; for BI, $F(1, 418) = 21.10$, $p < .001$. Both results corroborate significant locale-based differences.

8.4 Relationship between TSR and BI (Objective 3, H_03)

Pearson product-moment correlation was computed to examine the relationship between TSR and BI scores. As shown in Table 3, a significant moderate negative correlation was found between TSR and BI for the overall sample ($r = -0.45$, $p < .001$), as well as within the rural subgroup ($r = -0.40$, $p < .001$) and the urban subgroup ($r = -0.45$, $p < .001$). These findings indicate that stronger teacher-student relationships are consistently associated with fewer behavioural issues across both settings, leading to rejection of H_03 .

Sample	N	Pearson r	p-value	Interpretation
Overall	420	-0.45	< .001	Moderate negative
Rural	210	-0.40	< .001	Moderate negative
Urban	210	-0.45	< .001	Moderate negative

Table 3: Pearson Correlation between TSR and BI (Overall and by Locale)

Figure 2: Relationship between TSR and Behavioural Issues

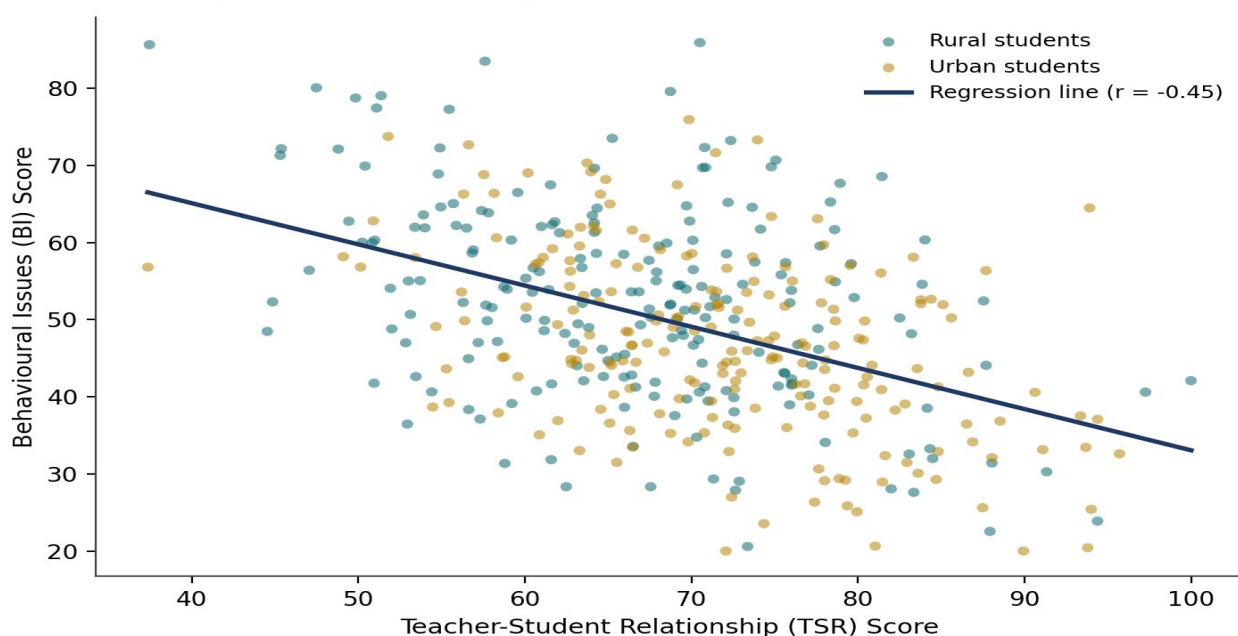


Figure 2: Scatterplot of TSR and BI with Regression Line

8.5 Regression Analysis (Objective 4)

Simple linear regression was conducted to assess the predictive contribution of TSR to BI. TSR was found to be a significant negative predictor of BI, $\beta = -0.53$, $R^2 = 0.21$, F-test $p < .001$, indicating that approximately 21% of the variance in behavioural issues scores is explained by teacher-student relationship quality. The regression equation obtained was: $BI = 86.46 + (-0.53 \times TSR)$.

Predictor	B (slope)	Intercept	R ²	Std. Error	p-value
TSR → BI	-0.534	86.46	0.205	0.051	< .001

Table 4: Simple Linear Regression of BI on TSR

9. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal significant rural-urban differences in both teacher-student relationship quality and student behavioural issues within Ahmedabad district. Urban school students reported notably more positive teacher-student relationships than their rural counterparts, a pattern plausibly linked to smaller class sizes, greater access to trained counselling staff, and more consistent teacher availability in urban municipal corporation schools. Rural schools, often characterized by



higher pupil-teacher ratios and fewer support resources, may constrain teachers' capacity to build individualized, responsive relationships with students.

Correspondingly, rural students reported higher levels of behavioural issues than urban students, aligning with the broader literature suggesting that relational strain and reduced teacher availability are associated with increased classroom disruption and disciplinary concerns. The moderate negative correlation between TSR and BI, consistent across both rural and urban subgroups, reinforces the centrality of relational quality as a protective factor against behavioural difficulties, regardless of school locale.

The regression findings further substantiate that teacher-student relationship quality meaningfully predicts behavioural outcomes, explaining a substantial proportion of variance in BI scores. This suggests that targeted interventions to strengthen TSR, particularly in rural schools, could yield measurable reductions in behavioural issues. These findings align closely with NEP 2020's emphasis on socio-emotional learning and holistic student development, underscoring the policy relevance of investing in relationship-centred teacher training across both rural and urban contexts, with particular urgency in resource-constrained rural settings.

10. Educational Implications

- Teacher training programmes should incorporate relationship-building and socio-emotional communication skills, with special emphasis on rural school contexts.
- School counselling services should be strengthened and made more accessible in rural schools to support both teachers and students.
- Reducing pupil-teacher ratios in rural schools may enable more individualized teacher-student interaction and reduce behavioural issues.
- Policy frameworks under NEP 2020 should prioritize locale-sensitive resource allocation to bridge the rural-urban relational gap identified in this study.

11. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to secondary school students within Ahmedabad district and relied on self-report measures, which may be subject to social desirability bias. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference regarding the direction of the TSR-BI relationship. Future research employing

longitudinal designs and multi-district samples would strengthen the generalizability of these findings.

12. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence of significant rural-urban differences in teacher-student relationship quality and behavioural issues among secondary school students in Ahmedabad district, alongside a consistent moderate negative relationship between the two constructs. The findings highlight teacher-student relationship as a meaningful and modifiable factor in addressing student behavioural issues, with particular relevance for rural school contexts. These results offer actionable insights for teacher training, school counselling policy, and resource allocation aligned with the holistic developmental goals of NEP 2020.

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