

A Study on Digital Competency and Teaching Efficacy of Rehbar-e-Taleem (ReT) Teachers of Poonch District in Jammu and Kashmir

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Abstract:

The efficacy of teaching is crucial in ensuring that students have a meaningful, strong, and productive learning experience. It is important for teachers to have a strong foundation in Indian knowledge, morals, languages, attitude, and custom, but also updated and proficient in the latest advancements in education and pedagogy (NEP 2020, p. 40). The educators of the 21st century need to possess not only pedagogical skills but also research and technology skills. It is crucial for them to continuously learn and enhance their professional abilities so that they can connect theory with practice and create a conducive learning environment in the classroom. Developed nations rely on competent, knowledgeable, and technologically-savvy teachers to build their foundation. In this study, the researcher aims to investigate the teaching efficacy and digital competency of Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir UT, with a focus on their gender. The sample for this study comprises 200 teachers. Simple random sampling technique was used. Self-developed scales were employed for the collection of data. The findings revealed that no significant difference was found in teaching efficacy of both male and female teachers, but in digital competency male teachers were significantly better in digital competency than female teachers.

Keywords: - Teaching Efficacy, Digital Competency, Rehbar-e-Taleem Teachers.

Introduction

The beginning of the education and knowledge by proficiencies method is the outcome of the societal vicissitudes in which we are living from the decades. Globalization is not only escalating from the last few years that we are experiencing today. In fact, it is the result of constant revitalization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), growing creation of digital resources and uses of digital media and its unprecedented applicability in educational field, the petition for educational environment that allow from traditional face -to- face learning to recently online teaching during the Covid-19 health calamity, are some of the vibrant examples of this present digital revolution in the world. (Basilotta-Gomez-Pablos, et.al 2022). Presently, teaching job is not as easy, it brings so many challenges because it not only requires high level of intellect due to incredible digitalization. However, there is also a growing need for increased technological proficiency and emotional resilience to effectively support students in making the best choices for their skills through a combination of traditional and online learning methods.

Currently, the position of a teacher is extremely demanding because it requires not only a considerable level of intelligence due to the overwhelming amount of information available, but also a greater proficiency in technology and emotional resilience. This is necessary in order to effectively guide students in selecting the most suitable methods of learning, such as blended learning, e-learning, and personalized skill-based learning (Jain & Shetty 2022, pp. 1083- 1084).

Rehbar-e-Taleem Teachers (ReT) Scheme

In the year 2000, a program called the Rehbar-e-Taleem scheme was launched in Jammu and Kashmir with the aim of addressing the lack of teachers in primary and middle schools, especially in remote and rural areas where teachers from outside are reluctant to work. The main objective of this initiative was to overcome the shortage of educators and ensure quality education for all students. Teachers were appointed on merit based and due preference was given to the high qualified person in that particular region under this scheme. The mission of this scheme is to educate children of far-flung areas where the pupil teacher ratio is low and to boost the quality of elementary education in rural area within the state. (<https://www.ndtv.com/education/ret-scheme-frozen-to-facilitate-regularisation-of-teachers-in-jammu-and-kashmir-1947980>)

Teaching Efficacy

Teaching efficacy can be defined as the student teacher's relationship, teaching approaches, classroom interaction, management of the classroom, consumption of educational resources and degree of assistance in teaching learning. Teacher's efficacy is also defined in terms of how well teachers influence students' comprehension of a certain value, where the value is represented by educational objectives that are determined by the behaviour, skills, or characteristics of the students. It is the relationship between an instructor's qualities, their actions in the classroom, and the effects those actions have on students' learning outcomes (Flanders & Simon, 1969). It also refers to the teacher's capacity to carry out socially conscious objectives that have been agreed upon; this includes, but is not limited to, their work with students' empowerment to learn (Gupta & Verma, 2021, p.172).

Digital Competency

Digital competence refers to the knowledge, skills, and confidence required to use digital technologies effectively in various areas of life, including everyday work, education, and other general activities. It encompasses the ability to think creatively while using digital tools, evaluate and apply digital information, and actively engage in the contemporary digital era. In the field of education, teachers' digital competence involves a range of technical skills, digital literacy, and the ability to integrate technology effectively for pedagogical purposes.

Digital competency is not only the ability to use software and or to run digital devices but it embroils variety of difficult skills like cognitive skills, psychomotor, emotional as well as societal that the teachers must have to operate digital resources effectively in the classroom. The knowledge, abilities, and mind-set needed to use digital tools for problem-solving, communication, content creation and sharing, information management, collaboration, and knowledge building that is appropriate, effective, efficient, reflective, critical, and ethical for work, play, learning, socialising, consuming, and empowerment is known as digital competence (Sharma & Kaur, 2022, p.75). Owing to the recent surge in pandemics and

epidemics, the National Education Policy 2020 acknowledges the significance of utilising technology to its fullest. In all educational settings, from elementary schools to post-secondary institutions, this strategy advocates the proactive use of technology in the teaching and learning process.

Literature Review

Tzafilou et al. (2023) conducted a study on digital competency on male and female teachers on a sample of 843 primary and secondary teachers in Greece, and the results revealed female teachers reported considerably lower scores than their male counterparts in the areas of innovative teaching and school development, which are the components of digital competency. Compared to elementary school instructors, secondary school teachers perform higher on digital competency tests. **Radhamani and Kalaivani (2023)** exhibited that there is a substantial variation in the digital competence of secondary teachers based on demographic factors such as age, gender, completion of a computer course, and major topic studied. **Ramkrishna and Phogat (2023)** carried a correlative study self-esteem and digital competence in relation to their teacher efficacy of school teachers and the results showed a favourable correlation between secondary school teacher's digital proficiency and efficacy. **Sachan and Dwived (2023)** revealed that the efficacy of teaching and digital proficiency of instructors in Greater Noida and Ghaziabad are equal. Moreover, no statistically significant variations were seen in the digital competency abilities regarding their gender, locale, specialisation, and prior teaching experience in the both districts of Uttar Pradesh.

Jain and Shetty (2022) the results of the study shows that male and female instructors are similar in digital proficiency. **Babu and Suneela (2023)** carried out research on the relationships between organisational commitment, teacher efficiency, and digital skill development in secondary school teachers. The results shows that digital competency and organisational commitment, as well as teacher efficacy, were significantly positively correlated. This suggests how important digital skills are for developing effective teaching methods and strong institutional commitment. **Maksimovic and Dimic (2016)** in their study about the opinions of teachers on the value of ICT use in the everyday process of teaching and learning, which used a sample of 100 instructors with varying levels of experience, revealed no difference between teachers in terms of gender, years of service, or educational background when it came to using digital capabilities in the classroom. **Reyes (2025)** found a positive and significant correlation between digital competency of teachers and academic performance of the students indicating that teachers' digital skills positively influence students' learning outcomes and academic success. The findings also recommended strengthening teachers' digital competence through continuous professional development focused on meaningful technology integration and adaptable instructional strategies.

Significance of the Study

A different set of competencies and skills are vital for the teaching profession now as opposed to the past. The educational system has changed as a result of the tremendous usefulness of digital devices and their applications, which also need that instructor improve their digital competency. Since elementary school is the time when children are most grown, they have no trouble understanding anything. Since the future will undoubtedly be more digitally oriented, students need to prepare for life in this technologically advanced digital environment. It is the duty of educators to get their pupils ready for the digital age (Sachan & Dwivedi 2023, p.263). Hence, in order to use digital skills and successful teaching methods in their classrooms, Rehbre-e- Taleem teachers need to be aware of both. The goal of the present study is to study

the differences among male and female Rehbre-e- Taleem teachers on digital competency and efficacy in teaching and to provide knowledge of the dynamics that exist in primary and rural school's environment by providing insightful information that will be useful to researchers, educators, administrators, and policymakers at district as well as state level. Further no single study of this nature is conducted on Rehbar-e- Taleem teachers in district Poonch. The findings of this study can guide methods for maximising the use of digital technologies for improved student learning outcomes as technology continues to change the educational landscape. The results of this study can help shape policies in education that support the use of digital technology at elementary level also.

Statement of the Problem

“A study on digital competency and teaching efficacy of Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers of Poonch district in Jammu and Kashmir”.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the significant difference in the digital competency of male and female Rehbar- e-Taleem teachers of district Poonch.
2. To study the significant difference in the teaching efficacy of male and female Rehbar- e-Taleem teachers of district Poonch.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the digital competency of male and female Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers of District Poonch.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the teaching efficacy of male and female Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers of District Poonch.

Sample of the Study

The spirit of research is sampling. Sampling is the process of selecting a suitable sample, which represents a specific portion of a population, with the aim of determining the characteristics or parameters of the entire population (Pamela, 2022, p.46). All the Rehbre-e- Taleem teachers of district Poonch constitute the population. The researchers utilized a descriptive research methodology for the current study. A sample of 200 teachers was chosen from 50 primary and middle schools in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir UT through random sampling. Of the selected teachers, 120 were female and 80 were male.

Tools and Techniques

In this particular study, the researcher employed a rating scale which was prepared by the investigator herself to assess digital competency and teaching efficacy of Rehbar- e- Taleem teachers. The scale is divided into two parts one for digital competency and other part for teaching efficacy contained 25 items for each part. Validity as well as reliability of the scale is also established, the reliability of the scale came out to 0.78 through split -half method of reliability. Critical ratio was used for the analysis and interpretation of data.

Analysis and Interpretation

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the digital competency of male and female Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers of District Poonch.

Table 1- Mean, SD and Critical Ratio on Digital Competency of Male and Female Teachers

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S.D.	SEM	C.R.	Remarks
Digital Competency	Male	80	74.91	11.27	1.260	5.45	Significant at .01 level of significance
	Female	120	66.84	8.46	.77		

Interpretation

The study aimed to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in the digital competency between male and female school teachers. For this Independent samples t-test was conducted. The results revealed that male school teachers have a mean score of 74.91, with a S.D of 11.27, while female school teachers have a mean score of, 66.84 with a S.D. of 8.46. The C.R value is 5.45, which is significant at 0.01 level. From the above table it is evident that those male teachers are better in digital competency as compared to female teachers. Thus, the result shows that there is a significant difference in digital competency of male and female Rehbre-e-Taleem teachers and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This finding is supported by the same kind of results by Laxmi & Jabin (2022) that male teachers are better in digital competence skills.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the teaching efficacy of male and female Rehbar-e-Taleem teachers of District Poonch.

Table 2- Mean, S.D and Critical Ratio of Male and Female Teachers on Teaching Efficacy

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	S. D.	SEM	C.R.	Remarks
Teaching Efficacy	Male	80	74.91	11.27	1.261	1.81	Not significant
	Female	120	72.05	10.37	.947		

Interpretation

The study aimed to test the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in teaching efficacy between male and female school teachers. For this Independent samples t-test was conducted. The results revealed that male school teachers have a mean score of 74.91, with a S.D. of 11.27, while female school teachers have a mean score of 72.05, with a S.D. of 10.37. The calculated C. R. value was 1.81, which is not significant at 0.05 level. Therefore, the findings suggest that there is no significant difference in teaching efficacy between male and female educators, leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis. These results are consistent with the study conducted by Sachan & Dwivedi (2023).

Discussion of Results and Recommendations

The success of a school mainly relies on its teachers particularly at primary level. The character of a teacher demands more responsibility at this stage as it is the blooming stage of children. The success of an institution is measured by the efficacy of the teachers. For the younger generation, teachers are the ideal role models. Teachers of today need to be more authentic and effective. These days, information is shared via digital media and technology in the globally interconnected modern world. As a result, digital competency is becoming a necessary survival skill for effectively passing on knowledge to pupils. Teachers must be proficient in digital competences since students are studying through internet-based technology and smart classrooms (Dar & Ponraj, 2022, p.363).

Because of this, teachers' efficacy plays a crucial part in serving as agents of meaningful information transfer, which in turn depends on their digital competency and efficacy as teachers. The primary intent of the present study is to find out the significant difference among Rehbre Taleem teachers of district poonch in teaching efficacy and teaching competency.

Analysis of the data shows that male and female Rehbre-e- Taleem teachers of district poonch are similar in teaching efficacy. No significant difference was found. But in digital competency male teachers were significantly better than their female counterparts.

Following the Covid epidemic, students are now be obliged to use a variety of digital technologies for studying and presenting their work. This is because the majority of educational materials are readily available online. By means of appropriate digital seminars and digital libraries, the government authorities are able to enhance the digital competency of teachers particularly among female teachers. Opportunity should be provided for female teachers of rural areas. Workshops and orientation programme should be organised from time to time for Rehbre-e-Taleem teachers for enhancing their digital skills for educational as well as management purposes.

Conclusion

In the context of the modern digital era, teachers' digital competency and efficacy as educators are crucial because modern education is fully built on a digital foundation that makes maximum use of technology to promote lifelong learning and make the teaching and learning process engaging and successful. These days, teachers are being trained in digital competency so they can employ contemporary technology in teaching and learning procedures. The key protagonists in the evolution of education are technology and teachers. Digital education makes the teaching learning process more successful and interesting.

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