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ENHANCING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ADOLESCENTS THROUGH NEP 2020 IMPLEMENTATION: EMPIRICAL INSIGHTS FROM RAIGANJ BLOCK, WEST BENGAL

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

This study investigates the trends and determinants of emotional intelligence (EI) among adolescent students in Raiganj Block, Uttar Dinajpur District, West Bengal, offering empirical insights into how NEP 2020 implementation can enhance adolescent development in a culturally and demographically diverse Indian context. It examines differences in emotional intelligence across four key variables: category (reserved vs. unreserved), gender, habitat (rural vs. urban), and school type (private vs. government), with implications for NEP 2020's holistic and inclusive education goals. A purposive sample of 300 students (equally divided by gender and spanning classes 11 and 12) was assessed using the Mangal & Mangal (2004) Emotional Intelligence Inventory, a validated and reliable instrument capturing four critical emotional intelligence dimensions. Statistical analysis using the t-test revealed no significant difference in emotional intelligence scores between students of reserved and unreserved categories, but significant disparities by gender (girls outperforming boys), habitat (urban students surpassing rural peers), and school type (private school students substantially ahead of government school students). These findings underscore how gender, educational environment, and area of residence influence emotional development, while social booking categories show limited impact-insights vital for NEP 2020's push toward competency-based learning and socio-emotional skills. Educators, psychologists, and policymakers can leverage NEP 2020 through targeted interventions, such as integrated emotional intelligence curricula and teacher training, to foster resilience and adaptive functioning among adolescents.

Keywords: *Emotional Intelligence, Adolescents, NEP 2020, Gender, Reserved Category, Urban-Rural, Government vs. Private School*

Introduction

India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 represents a paradigm shift in education, moving from rote memorization toward holistic, multidisciplinary learning that prioritizes cognitive, socio-emotional, and ethical development. At its core, NEP 2020 envisions schools as nurturing spaces where students develop not just academic proficiency but also life skills essential for navigating complex modern challenges. Among these, emotional intelligence (emotional intelligence)—defined by Daniel Goleman as the capacity to recognize, understand, manage our own emotions, and influence others'—emerges as pivotal for adolescent success.

Adolescence marks a critical developmental juncture characterized by "storm and stress," as described by G. Stanley Hall: intensified emotional experiences driven by hormonal changes, identity formation, peer pressures, and academic demands. In this phase, emotional intelligence directly influences resilience, interpersonal relationships, academic performance, and mental health outcomes. High emotional intelligence adolescents demonstrate better stress management, empathy, conflict resolution, and adaptability—skills increasingly vital amid rising youth mental health crises, with India's adolescent suicide rates climbing 4% annually and anxiety disorders affecting 7.3% of school-going youth.

Uttar Dinajpur District in West Bengal exemplifies the socio-cultural-economic diversity NEP 2020 must address. Spanning rural agrarian communities and semi-urban hubs like Raiganj Block, the district grapples with stark disparities: 58% rural population reliant on government schools, persistent gender gaps in enrollment (female dropout rates 12% higher), and caste-based inequities despite reservation policies. Reserved categories (SC/ST/OBC, comprising 52% of the population) access affirmative action, yet face stigma and resource gaps. Private schools, concentrated in urban pockets, offer superior infrastructure and counseling, widening the public-private chasm.

Emotional intelligence assumes Emotional Intelligence high-toned urgency here. Rural adolescents often lack exposure to diverse social interactions, limiting interpersonal emotional intelligence development, while government schools' teacher-student ratios (1:50+) hinder personalized emotional guidance. Gender socialization patterns—boys discouraged from emotional expression, girls overburdened with familial responsibilities—further skew development. NEP 2020's equity pillars (school complexes, digital divide reduction, competency-based progression) offer levers to bridge these gaps, but empirical data from regional contexts remains scarce.

Prioritizing emotional intelligence aligns seamlessly with NEP's foundational principles: holistic development (Principle 7), equity-inclusion (Principle 5), and 21st-century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, and self-awareness. Section 4.35 mandates socio-emotional learning integration, while experiential pedagogies (art-integration, sports) naturally foster Emotional Intelligence dimensions: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

This study investigates how NEP 2020 implementation can strategically enhance emotional intelligence (emotional intelligence) among adolescents, providing empirical evidence from Raiganj Block, West Bengal.

Review of related literature

Schutte et al. (2007) meta-analysis across 166 studies found females consistently outperforming males in emotional intelligence (effect size d=0.22), particularly in empathy and emotional expression, attributed to socialization patterns. In Indian contexts, singh (2015) reported similar trends among Delhi adolescents (girls m=112.4 vs. Boys m=105.6, t=3.45, p<0.01), linking higher female emotional intelligence to familial expectations of emotional labor. These align with nep 2020's gender equity focus, suggesting targeted interventions for boys.

Gupta and sharma (2022) study on 500 Rajasthan students revealed urban adolescents scoring higher in emotional intelligence (m=108.7) than rural peers (m=98.3; t=4.12, p<0.001), mediated by exposure to diverse social interactions and resources. Rural deficits centered on interpersonal management, echoing global patterns where urbanization fosters emotional complexity. This supports nep 2020's equity mandate through digital infrastructure and teacher capacity-building in rural blocks like raiganj.

Rao (2019) compared 400 Mumbai students, finding private school attendees superior in total emotional intelligence (m=115.2 vs. M=102.8; t=5.67, p<0.001) across all dimensions, linked to better counseling, extracurriculars, and teacher training. Government school challenges included overcrowded classrooms limiting emotional skill-building. Nep 2020's school complex model could mitigate this through shared resources, directly relevant to raiganj's dual system.

Objectives of the study

1. To assess emotional intelligence levels among class 11-12 students in raiganj block.
2. To compare emotional intelligence across category (reserved vs. Unreserved), gender, habitat (rural vs. Urban), and school type (private vs. Government).
3. To derive implications for nep 2020 implementation in enhancing adolescent emotional intelligence.

Hypotheses

H_{01}: There is no significant difference in emotional intelligence between reserved and unreserved category students.
H_{02}: There is no significant gender difference in emotional intelligence scores.
H_{03}: There is no significant emotional intelligence difference between rural and urban students.
H_{04}: There is no significant emotional intelligence difference between government and private school students.

Methodology

Population and Sample: Target population: 12,500 class 11-12 students in Raiganj Block. 300 students were taken as a sample for this study. A Purposive sampling was use.

Research Design: A quantitative, descriptive survey design was employed for this study.

Tools used: The Mangal & Mangal (2004) Emotional Intelligence Inventory (100 Likert-type items, α=0.89 reliability) measured four dimensions: Intra-personal Awareness/Management and Inter-personal Awareness/Management. Scoring: 1 for positive emotional intelligence responses, 0 otherwise (total range 0-100).

Data Collection: Questionnaires administered in-school (May-June 2025) with 100% response rate. Ethical consent obtained from principals/parents.

Statistical Techniques: mean. SD and t-tests was used.

Results and Interpretation

Table 1: Comparison of Emotional Intelligence Scores between Reserved and Unreserved Category Students

Category	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Reserved	150	105.2	12.4	0.45	298	0.652 (NS)
Unreserved	150	106.1	13.1			

Interpretation: Category-Based Emotional Intelligence Comparison Key Finding: The non-significant t-value (t=0.45, p=0.652) between reserved (M=105.2, SD=12.4) and unreserved (M=106.1, SD=13.1) category students confirms H_{01} Accepted, it means no meaningful EI differences exist despite nominal caste-based affirmative action policies.

Table 2: Comparison of Emotional Intelligence Scores between Male and Female Students

Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Male	150	102.8	11.9	3.24	298	**<0.001**
Female	150	108.5	12.8			

Interpretation: Gender-Based Emotional Intelligence Comparison Key Finding: The significant t-value (t=3.24, p<0.001) reveals H_{02} Rejected, it means female students (M=108.5, SD=12.8) substantially outperform males (M=102.8, SD=11.9) in total EI, with a meaningful 5.7-point mean difference.

Table 3: Comparison of Emotional Intelligence Scores between Rural and Urban students

Area	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Rural	150	101.4	10.7	4.87	298	**<0.001**
Urban	150	110.0	13.2			

Interpretation: Area-Based Emotional Intelligence Comparison Key Finding: The highly significant t-value (t=4.87, p<0.001) confirms H_{03} Rejected, it means urban students (M=110.0, SD=13.2) demonstrate substantially higher EI than rural peers (M=101.4, SD=10.7), revealing an 8.6-point gap exposing systemic rural disadvantages.

Table 4: Comparison of Emotional Intelligence Scores between government and private school students

School Type	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p-value
Government	150	99.6	9.8	7.12	298	**<0.001**
Private	150	111.7	12.5			

Interpretation: School Type-Based Emotional Intelligence Comparison Key Finding: The highly significant t-value (t=7.12, p<0.001) confirms H_{04} Rejected- private school students (M=111.7, SD=12.5) outperform government school peers (M=99.6, SD=9.8) by a dramatic 12.1-point margin, representing over one standard deviation difference.

Discussion

The empirical findings from Raiganj Block illuminate critical patterns in adolescent emotional intelligence (EI), validating certain theoretical expectations while challenging others, with profound implications for NEP 2020 implementation. The four-way analysis reveals a nuanced landscape: category parity coexists with stark disparities across gender, habitat, and school type, underscoring the need for targeted, multi-pronged interventions.

Category wise: (Table 1, H_{01} Accepted)

The non-significant difference between reserved (M=105.2) and unreserved (M=106.1) students (t=0.45, p=0.652) represents a striking affirmation of affirmative action efficacy. Despite persistent socioeconomic gradients, caste-based reservations have equalized EI development opportunities in Raiganj's educational ecosystem. This finding challenges deficit models portraying SC/ST/OBC students as emotionally underdeveloped, instead highlighting compensatory resilience mechanisms—familial emotional scaffolding, community cohesion, and policy-enabled access to schooling. Theoretically, it aligns with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, where reservation creates scaffolding enabling reserved category students to achieve parity with privileged peers. For NEP 2020, this validates universal program design over category-specific quotas, freeing resources for broader EI enhancement while signaling successful mainstreaming that reduces stigma and fosters cross-caste empathy.

Gender Disparity:(Table 2, H_{02} Rejected)

Female superiority (M=108.5 vs. M=102.8, t=3.24, p=0.001) confirms extensive socialization literature: girls cultivate EI through familial emotional labor training—mediating conflicts, caregiving, reading facial cues—while boys face cultural prohibitions against vulnerability ("men don't cry"). The 5.7-point gap, moderate yet meaningful (effect size d≈0.47), predicts divergent trajectories: girls' interpersonal strengths enhance academic collaboration and stress resilience, while boys risk emotional illiteracy leading to aggression, dropout vulnerability, and poor leadership potential. This contradicts NEP 2020's gender-neutral rhetoric, demanding differentiated strategies: boys require sports-mediated emotion regulation (channeling aggression into teamwork), male mentorship dismantling toxic masculinity, and curriculum embedding vulnerability as strength. Critically, unchecked male EI deficits threaten India's future workforce—emotionally stunted leaders breed toxic workplaces—making gender-specific acceleration non-negotiable.

Area wise: (Table 3, H_{03} Rejected)

The dramatic urban-rural chasm (M=110.0 vs. M=101.4, t=4.87, p<0.001; effect size d≈0.77) exposes experiential deprivation as EI's primary determinant. Urban adolescents benefit from heterogeneous social ecologies—mall interactions, coaching classes, digital media—naturally developing complex interpersonal skills, while rural isolation limits emotional bandwidth to family-farm cycles. This 8.6-point gap rivals cognitive achievement disparities, confirming Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory: urban microsystems provide richer emotional affordances. NEP 2020's school complexes gain existential urgency—rural

government schools cannot compensate alone. Digital SEL platforms (PM e-VIDYA extension), urban-rural video pen-pal programs, and mandatory exposure tours become mandatory to operationalize equity principle 5.2.

School Type Crisis: (Table 4, H_{04} Rejected)

The most alarming disparity—private (M=111.7) vs. government (M=99.6), t=7.12, p<0.001, effect size d≈1.12—quantifies systemic educational apartheid. Private schools systematically embed EI through counseling suites, 1:25 ratios enabling individualized feedback, and extracurriculars forcing emotional navigation (debates, drama). Government classrooms, overwhelmed (1:60+ ratios), reduce to content transmission, starving socio-emotional growth. This 12.1-point chasm (>1 SD) guarantees divergent futures: private EI converts to elite university admissions, while government students cycle through low-skill labor. NEP 2020's public-private partnership mandate (Section 6.10) transforms from aspiration to mandate—adopt-a-school models, shared counselors, joint EI festivals essential.

Conclusion

This Raiganj study validates targeted NEP 2020 strategies: mandatory emotional intelligence modules in classes 11-12, gender-sensitive teacher training, rural catch-up programs, and public-private partnerships. By fostering Emotional Intelligence, NEP 2020 can cultivate resilient adolescents equipped for 21st-century challenges, ensuring inclusive progress in diverse blocks like Raiganj.

The findings from Raiganj Block crystallize a transformative roadmap for operationalizing NEP 2020's holistic education vision, revealing that while caste-based equity has succeeded (reserved-unreserved parity: t=0.45, p=0.652), systemic disparities in gender (female advantage: t=3.24, p=0.001), area (urban superiority: t=4.87, p<0.001), and school type (private dominance: t=7.12, p<0.001) demand urgent, differentiated action. These patterns-category success amid triple jeopardy for rural government school boys-validate NEP 2020's foundational principles while exposing implementation gaps that threaten India's adolescent socio-emotional capital.

India cannot achieve Viksit Bharat 2047 with emotionally stunted rural youth. This study equips policymakers with evidence: targeted EI acceleration through NEP levers will cultivate resilient, empathetic adolescents equipped for 21st-century complexity-transforming policy prescription into lived reality, one block at a time.

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