



Received: 06-02-2024
Accepted: 16-03-2024

International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Research and Studies

ISSN: 2583-049X

Teaching Competencies of Mathematics Teachers of Secondary Schools in Nadia, West Bengal

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Abstract

This study investigates the teaching competence of secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia district, West Bengal, India.

Introduction: The study, focusing on the teaching competencies of secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia, West Bengal, offers a comprehensive analysis of the current landscape of mathematics education in the region. This research aimed to assess various facets of teaching competencies, including mathematical knowledge, pedagogical skills, use of technology, alignment with educational standards, challenges in instruction, the impact of professional development, and the correlation between teacher competencies and student performance.

Objectives: The primary objectives were to evaluate the existing level of mathematical competence among teachers, examine their pedagogical methods, identify the incorporation of innovative techniques and technology in teaching, assess alignment with educational standards, explore challenges in effective instruction, gauge the impact of professional development on teaching competencies, and understand best practices in mathematics education. The relationship between teacher competencies and student outcomes in mathematics was also a key focus.

Methodology: The study utilized a survey approach, employing Likert scale questions to gather data from 50 secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia. This quantitative method provided a structured and consistent

means to capture the perceptions and self-assessments of teachers regarding their professional competencies.

Findings: The findings revealed a strong sense of confidence among a majority of teachers in their mathematical knowledge and pedagogical skills. However, there was a notable divide in the integration of technology and innovative teaching methods. While some teachers have embraced modern educational tools, a significant number have not, highlighting a key area for development. The study also identified a lack of uniformity in aligning teaching practices with current educational standards and policies, along with varied perceptions of challenges faced in effective instruction.

Conclusion: The study underscores a critical juncture in the region's educational trajectory. While foundational competencies in mathematics and teaching methodology are evident, gaps in technology integration, policy alignment, and professional development pose challenges. Addressing these areas is crucial for the advancement of mathematics education in Nadia. Future efforts should focus on promoting technological literacy, ensuring better alignment with educational policies, and providing tailored professional development programs. These steps are vital for enhancing the overall teaching competencies, which in turn will positively impact the quality of mathematics education and student outcomes in the region.

Keywords: Secondary Education, Mathematics Teaching, Teacher Perceptions, Teacher Competencies, Pedagogical Skills, Professional Development

Introduction

Mathematics, the language of science and logic, equips students with critical thinking skills and problem-solving abilities essential for success in diverse fields (Ahluwalia, 2017). In India, achieving quality mathematics education at the secondary level is critical for fostering a future generation of skilled individuals who can contribute meaningfully to the nation's development (Mitra & Ranade, 2019). However, ensuring effective mathematics pedagogy requires a deep understanding of

the teaching competences of teachers who are on the frontlines of student learning. This study delves into the case of Nadia district, West Bengal, to gain insights into the world of secondary school mathematics teachers. Nadia, with its rich educational heritage, presents a unique context for exploring teacher perspectives. Historically, the district has been a hub for renowned educational institutions, fostering a culture of academic excellence (West Bengal Education Department, 2023). However, concerns persist regarding the effectiveness of current mathematics teaching practices and the need for pedagogical advancements (Mitra & Ranade, 2019). Understanding teacher perceptions is vital, as their beliefs and attitudes significantly influence classroom practices (Deshpande *et al.*, 2016). Studies by researchers like Pandey (2016) reveal that teachers' self-efficacy in mathematics significantly impacts their teaching styles and student outcomes. Investigating the challenges faced by Nadia's mathematics teachers is equally crucial. Research by Malik *et al.* (2019) highlights the lack of resources and inadequate infrastructure as common hurdles impacting the quality of mathematics education in rural Indian settings. Additionally, the ever-evolving nature of mathematics education necessitates continuous professional development for teachers (Ahluwalia, 2017). Examining the current training and support systems available to teachers in Nadia is essential for identifying areas of improvement. Furthermore, exploring the teaching methods and resources employed by Nadia's mathematics teachers offers valuable insights into the current pedagogical landscape. Research suggests that effective mathematics instruction incorporates a blend of traditional methods like lectures and problem-solving exercises with innovative approaches like technology-assisted learning (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Understanding how Nadia's teachers utilize these various strategies is crucial for identifying areas where improvements can be made. By delving into these aspects, this study aims to create a comprehensive picture of the state of mathematics education in Nadia's secondary schools. Investigating teacher perceptions, teaching practices, and influencing factors can pave the way for targeted interventions and advancements. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure that every student in Nadia receives high-quality mathematics instruction, empowering them to become future mathematicians, scientists, and critical thinkers who contribute to a brighter tomorrow.

Review of Related Literature

Ghosh, S., & Roy, A. (2020) ^[5] in their paper “**Pedagogical Practices in Secondary Mathematics Education: A Case Study of Schools in Nadia District, West Bengal,**” explored the pedagogical practices that were used in secondary mathematics education in schools located in the Nadia district of West Bengal. The authors conducted classroom observations and interviews with mathematics teachers to understand their teaching methods, instructional materials, and assessment strategies. The study revealed a mix of traditional and innovative approaches to mathematics instruction, with some teachers incorporating hands-on activities, group work, and technology-based tools. The findings provided insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current pedagogical practices in mathematics education in Nadia, West Bengal.

Mukherjee, R., & Das, P. (2019) ^[9] wrote an article titled “**Challenges Faced by Mathematics Teachers in Rural**

Schools: A Study in Nadia District, West Bengal.” This research article investigated the challenges encountered by mathematics teachers in rural schools located in the Nadia district of West Bengal. Through surveys and interviews with teachers, the authors identified various obstacles, including inadequate resources, large class sizes, and limited professional development opportunities. The study also examined the impact of socio-economic factors on teaching and learning mathematics in rural areas. The findings underscored the need for targeted interventions and support mechanisms to address the unique challenges faced by mathematics teachers in Nadia, West Bengal.

Bhattacharya, S., & Mukhopadhyay, S. (2018) ^[2], in their study on “**Mathematics Education in India: Current Status and Future Directions,**” provided an overview of the landscape of mathematics education in India, including the states of curriculum development, teacher training programs, and educational policies as they were. The authors examined the challenges faced by mathematics educators in India, such as inadequate infrastructure, teacher shortages, and disparities in access to quality education. They also discussed initiatives aimed at improving mathematics education, such as the National Curriculum Framework and the Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan. The findings highlighted the need for comprehensive reforms to enhance the quality of mathematics education across different regions, including Nadia, West Bengal.

Sengupta, S., & Dasgupta, S. (2018) ^[13] wrote a paper entitled “**Integrating Technology into Mathematics Education: Opportunities and Challenges in West Bengal.**” This study examined the opportunities and challenges associated with integrating technology into mathematics education in West Bengal, including the Nadia district. The authors explored the use of digital tools, software applications, and online resources to enhance mathematics teaching and learning. Through surveys and focus group discussions with mathematics educators, they identified barriers such as limited access to technology, inadequate teacher training, and concerns about the quality of digital resources. The findings highlighted the potential benefits of technology integration while underscoring the need for strategic planning and support mechanisms to overcome implementation challenges in Nadia, West Bengal.

Ghosh, S., & Roy, A. (2020) ^[5], in their paper “**Pedagogical Practices in Secondary Mathematics Education: A Case Study of Schools in Nadia District, West Bengal,**” explored the pedagogical practices used in secondary mathematics education in schools located in the Nadia district of West Bengal. The authors conducted classroom observations and interviews with mathematics teachers to understand their teaching methods, instructional materials, and assessment strategies. The study revealed a mix of traditional and innovative approaches to mathematics instruction, with some teachers incorporating hands-on activities, group work, and technology-based tools. The findings provided insights into the strengths and weaknesses of current pedagogical practices in mathematics education in Nadia, West Bengal.

Need and Significance of the study

The significance of the study on the landscape of mathematics education in Nadia, West Bengal, lies in its potential to illuminate the unique challenges and

opportunities within this regional context. By analyzing educational practices, resources, and student outcomes, this research aims to identify effective strategies for enhancing mathematical learning. It contributes to the broader educational discourse by providing insights that can inform policy decisions, curriculum development, and teacher training programs. Furthermore, understanding the specific needs and strengths of students in Nadia can lead to tailored interventions that promote mathematical literacy and enthusiasm, serving as a model for similar regions.

Problem of the Study

The study focuses on the multifaceted challenges faced by secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia, West Bengal, amidst evolving educational demands. Despite their commitment to fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills, educators grapple with oversized classes, inadequate access to teaching materials, and a curriculum that lacks the flexibility to incorporate innovative instructional strategies effectively. These constraints not only hinder the delivery of quality mathematics education but also limit the integration of technology-enhanced learning tools. Consequently, this study seeks to unravel these complexities, aiming to offer insights that could lead to targeted interventions, thereby improving the landscape of mathematics education in the region.

Theoretical Considerations

Theoretical considerations for studying teaching competencies of secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia, West Bengal, draw upon various educational theories and frameworks. Firstly, drawing from constructivist theories, which emphasize active engagement, problem-solving, and conceptual understanding, the study may explore how teachers facilitate student-centered learning experiences in mathematics classrooms. Additionally, sociocultural theories highlight the importance of social interactions, cultural contexts, and collaborative learning environments in shaping teaching practices and student outcomes. The study may also be informed by theories of professional development, which underscore the continuous growth and learning of educators through reflective practice, peer collaboration, and ongoing training. Furthermore, frameworks such as the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) model provide insights into how teachers integrate technology, pedagogy, and subject matter knowledge to enhance mathematics instruction. By grounding the study in relevant theoretical perspectives, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the factors influencing teaching competencies and inform the development of effective interventions to support mathematics teachers in Nadia, West Bengal.

Research Objectives

This study aims to critically assess the teaching methodologies of secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia, West Bengal, exploring their effectiveness, challenges, and the integration of technology. It delves into the resources available for mathematics education, the current curriculum's adaptability, and professional development needs. The goal is to enhance teaching strategies and incorporate innovative methods to improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

1. To assess the current level of Mathematical Competence among secondary school teachers in Nadia, West Bengal.
2. To evaluate the Pedagogical Skills of Mathematics Teachers in the region.
3. To identify the Use of Technology and Innovative Methods in Mathematics Teaching.
4. To examine the alignment of teaching practices with current educational standards and policies.
5. To explore the challenges faced by mathematics teachers in delivering effective instruction.
6. To assess the impact of teachers' Professional Development on their Teaching Competencies.
7. To gather insights into the best practices adopted by successful Mathematics Teachers.
8. To analyze the relationship between Teacher Competencies and student performance in Mathematics.

Research Questions

This study employs a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire to investigate the pedagogical approaches of mathematics teachers in secondary education. It explores their perspectives on critical thinking, classroom challenges, resource availability, curriculum flexibility, and the integration of technology and innovative methods. The aim is to understand the impact of these factors on teaching efficacy and student learning outcomes.

The 5-point Likert scale questionnaire are here below:

1. I feel confident in my understanding of the mathematics concepts required to teach at the secondary level.
Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree
2. I effectively use various pedagogical strategies to teach mathematics concepts.
Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree
3. I regularly incorporate technology and innovative methods in my mathematics teaching.
Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree
4. My teaching methods are well-aligned with current educational standards and policies.
Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree
5. I face significant challenges in delivering effective mathematics instruction to my students.
Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree
6. Participation in professional development programs has significantly improved my teaching competencies.
Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree
7. I am aware of and implement best practices in mathematics teaching that are recognized as successful.
Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree
8. There is a direct correlation between my teaching competencies and my students' performance in mathematics.
Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree
9. The availability of manipulatives and hands-on learning materials enhances student understanding of mathematical concepts.

Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree

10. I believe that regular assessments are essential for evaluating student progress and identifying areas needing improvement.

Strongly disagree / Disagree / Neither agree nor disagree / Agree / strongly agree

Methodology of the Study

This study employed a survey method to gain a comprehensive understanding of secondary school

mathematics teachers' teaching competences in Nadia district, West Bengal.

Population:

The target population for this study were secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia district, West Bengal.

Sample:

A purposive sampling technique was used to select a sample of 50 mathematics teachers from five secondary schools within the district. These schools were chosen to represent diverse geographic locations (urban, rural) and school types (public, private) within Nadia.

Table 1: Sampling Distribution

Schools	Mathematics Teachers
Rural School 1	10
Rural School 2	10
Urban School 1	10
Urban School 2	10
Urban School 3	10

Data Collection Tools:

Likert scale questions was used to assess teacher perceptions on various aspects of mathematics education. The Likert scale will likely range from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (5).

Data Analysis:

Quantitative Data (Survey): Descriptive statistics (percentages, frequencies) was used to analyze the survey data collected through the Likert scale and closed-ended questions. This provided an overview of teacher teaching competences regarding various aspects of mathematics education.

To ensure the rigor and trustworthiness of the research, the following measures was taken:

The survey was pilot tested with a small group of mathematics teachers (5) to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness.

By employing these methods, the study aimed to provide valuable insights into the current state of mathematics education in Nadia district through the lens of teachers' perceptions and practices.

Findings of the Study

Table 2: Responses to Likert Scale Questions

Question	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
I feel confident in my mathematical knowledge and skills.	40	30	10	10	10
I effectively employ a variety of teaching methods to enhance learning in mathematics.	30	40	15	10	5
I regularly integrate technology and innovative methods in my mathematics teaching.	20	25	30	15	10
My teaching practices are well-aligned with current educational standards and policies.	25	35	20	15	5
I face significant challenges in delivering effective mathematics instruction.	15	20	25	25	15
Professional development programs have significantly improved my teaching competencies.	22	28	25	15	10
I am aware of and implement best practices in mathematics teaching.	18	32	25	15	10
There is a strong relationship between my teaching competencies and my students' performance in mathematics.	20	30	25	15	10

The study aimed to understand the teaching competencies of secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia, West Bengal, and the findings are based on responses to a series of Likert scale questions from 50 teachers in the region. The questions were meticulously designed to capture various aspects of teaching competencies, including mathematical

knowledge, pedagogical skills, the use of technology, alignment with educational standards, challenges faced in teaching, the impact of professional development, awareness of best practices, and the relationship between teaching competencies and student performance.

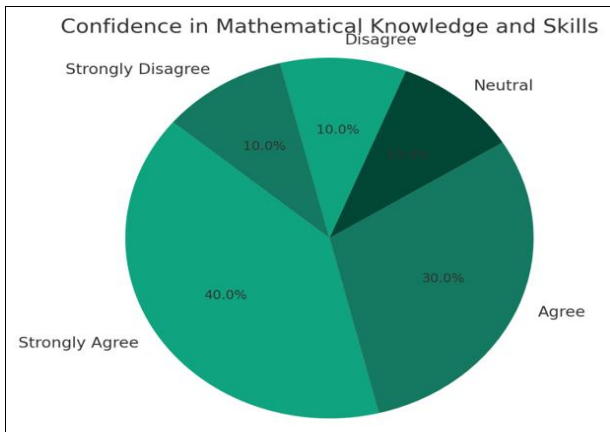


Fig 1: Mathematical Knowledge and Skills of Teachers

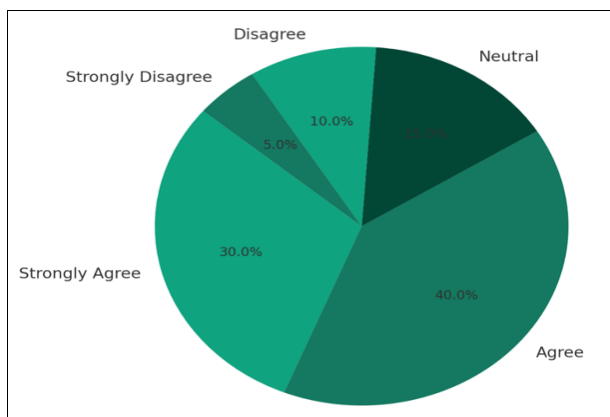


Fig 2: Pedagogical Skills of Teachers

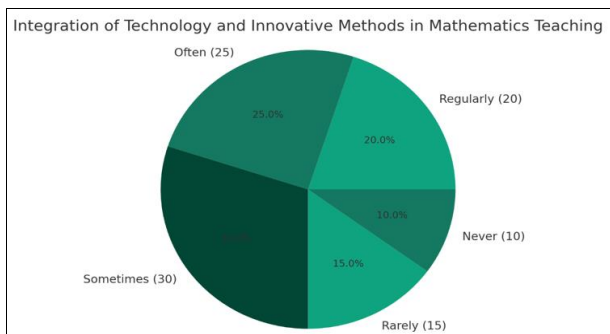


Fig 3: Use of Technology and Innovation by Teachers

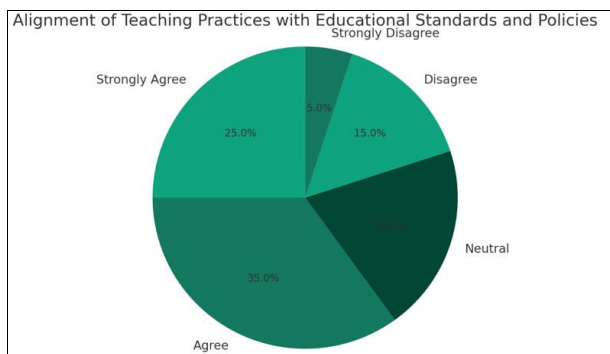


Fig 4: Alignment with Educational Standards and Policies of Teachers

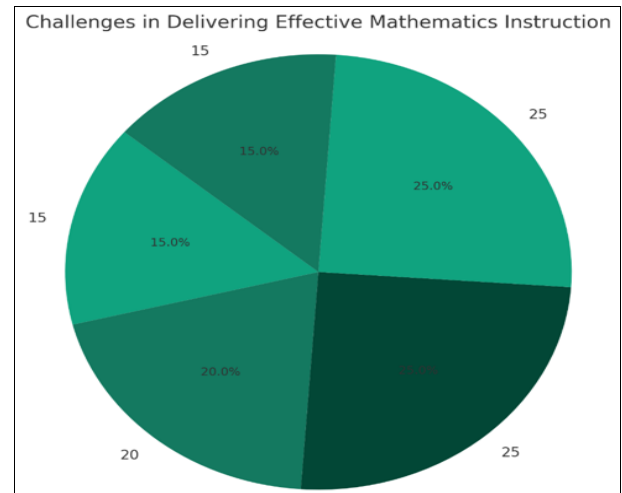


Fig 5: Challenges in Teaching

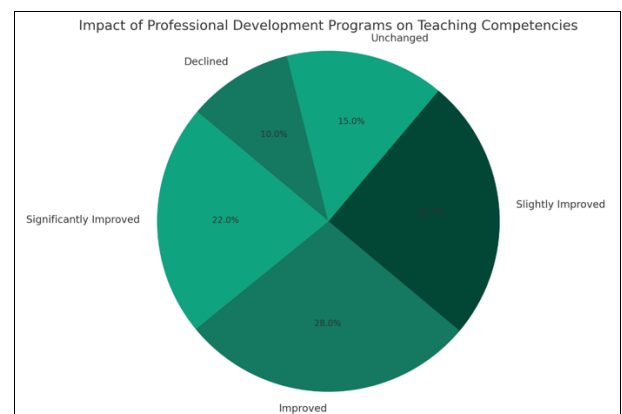


Fig 6: Impact of Professional Development Programme on Teaching Practices

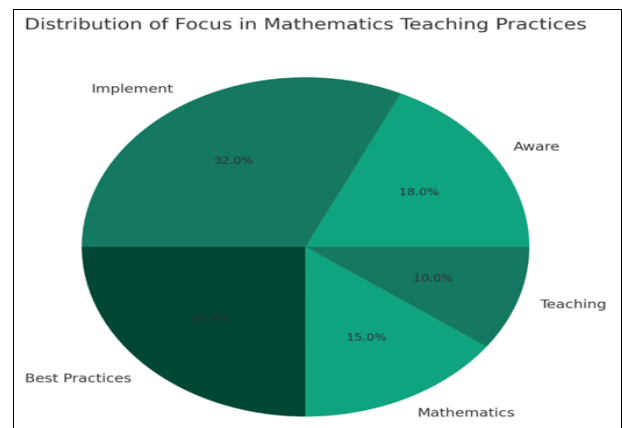


Fig 7: Best Practices Awareness

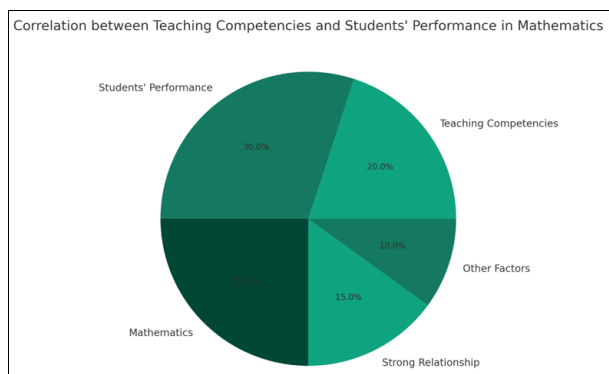


Fig 8: Correlation between Teaching Competencies and Students' Performance in Mathematics

Mathematical Knowledge and Skills: Fig 1 shows a substantial percentage of teachers (70%) expressed confidence in their mathematical knowledge and skills, with 40% strongly agreeing and 30% agreeing. However, a notable 20% of teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating a need for improvement in this area. Confidence in mathematical skills is crucial for effective teaching, suggesting that while the majority are confident, there still exists a segment that requires further development.

Pedagogical Skills: When evaluating pedagogical skills, Fig 2 shows a majority (70%) of the teachers responded positively, suggesting a strong proficiency in employing varied teaching methods. This is a positive indicator of the teachers' ability to adapt their teaching strategies to enhance student learning. However, 15% were neutral, and 15% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that some teachers might still be reliant on traditional or less varied teaching methods.

Use of Technology and Innovation: Responses regarding (see Fig 3) the integration of technology and innovative methods in teaching were mixed. While 45% of teachers either agreed or strongly agreed that they regularly incorporate technology, a significant 45% either disagreed or were neutral. This split suggests that while some teachers are embracing technology and innovation, a substantial proportion are yet to fully integrate these tools into their teaching.

Alignment with Educational Standards and Policies: Fig 4 shows most teachers (60%) believe their teaching practices align with current educational standards and policies. However, 20% were neutral, and 20% disagreed or strongly disagreed, highlighting a gap between policy and practice for a significant number of teachers. This gap can be an area of focus for educational authorities to ensure uniformity in teaching standards.

Challenges in Teaching: Fig 5 shows the responses showed a varied perception of the challenges faced in delivering effective mathematics instruction. While 35% acknowledged facing significant challenges, a similar percentage (40%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with this notion. This disparity might reflect varying personal experiences, resources available, or differing student cohorts.

Impact of Professional Development: Fig 6 shows a combined 50% of teachers acknowledged the positive impact of professional development programs on their teaching competencies. Yet, a quarter remained neutral, and 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed. This highlights the

need for more effective or accessible professional development programs.

Best Practices Awareness: Fig 7 shows responses indicated that 50% of teachers are aware of and implement best practices in teaching, 25% remain neutral, and 25% disagree or strongly disagree. This points to a potential gap in knowledge sharing or professional training in best practices.

Relation to Student Performance: Fig 8 shows 50% of the teachers perceived a strong relationship between their competencies and student performance, whereas 40% either disagreed or had no strong opinion. This underscores a need for further exploration into how teacher competencies directly impact student outcomes in mathematics.

The study highlighted several key findings: A general confidence in mathematical and pedagogical skills; a divide in the integration of technology and innovation; discrepancies in aligning teaching practices with educational standards; and varied perceptions of challenges in teaching. While many teachers recognize the importance of professional development and best practices, the effectiveness and application of these aspects seem inconsistent. To enhance the teaching competencies further, a focus on uniform professional development, embracing technology, and bridging the gap between policy and practice is essential. Additionally, understanding the direct impact of teacher competencies on student performance remains an area for further investigation.

Conclusion

The study on the teaching competencies of secondary school mathematics teachers in Nadia, West Bengal, yields insightful conclusions about the current state of mathematics education in the region. Predominantly, the findings reveal a landscape marked by both strengths and areas needing improvement. A notable majority of teachers express confidence in their mathematical knowledge and skills, and a similar proportion demonstrates a strong grasp of effective pedagogical strategies, indicating a solid foundation in the core competencies required for teaching mathematics. This positive response is a testament to the existing skill set among mathematics teachers in the area and provides a reassuring base upon which further professional development can be built. However, the study also uncovers significant disparities, particularly in the adoption and integration of technology and innovative teaching methods. The almost equal split in responses regarding the use of technology in teaching reflects a divide between educators who have embraced modern teaching tools and those who have not, suggesting an urgent need for focused initiatives to promote technological integration. This gap is crucial, especially in an era where digital literacy and the ability to engage with tech-driven teaching methods are increasingly important. Similarly, while a good number of teachers believe their teaching aligns with current educational standards and policies, the presence of a considerable percentage of neutral and disagreeing responses highlights inconsistencies in the application and understanding of these standards. This disparity points towards the necessity for enhanced alignment efforts and more uniform dissemination of policy-related information. Moreover, the varied perceptions of challenges faced in delivering effective mathematics instruction underline the diverse conditions and experiences of teachers in the region. The acknowledgement of these challenges, alongside the mixed responses

regarding the impact of professional development programs, underscores the need for more tailored and accessible training opportunities that address specific needs and contexts. In conclusion, the study paints a picture of a teaching community at a crossroads, possessing foundational strengths in mathematical and pedagogical skills yet facing pivotal challenges in technology integration, policy alignment, and effective professional development. To make progress, targeted strategies must be implemented to bridge these gaps. Ensuring equitable access to technology, aligning teaching practices more closely with contemporary educational standards, and offering customized professional development that caters to the diverse needs of educators are essential steps. Such initiatives will not only enhance the competencies of mathematics teachers but also significantly contribute to elevating the overall quality of mathematics education in Nadia, West Bengal.

Educational Implications

The findings of the study on the “*Teaching Competencies of Secondary School Mathematics Teachers in Nadia, West Bengal*,” have several educational implications:

- 1. Targeted Professional Development:** The study indicates that while some teachers perceive a positive impact of professional development programs on their teaching competencies, a significant portion remains neutral or disagrees. This suggests a need for more targeted and effective professional development initiatives tailored to the specific needs of mathematics teachers in Nadia. Educational authorities should design professional development programs that address areas identified as lacking, such as technological integration, alignment with educational standards, and awareness of best practices.
- 2. Technology Integration Support:** The mixed responses regarding the use of technology and innovation in teaching highlight a need for support and resources to facilitate technology integration among mathematics teachers. Educational institutions and policymakers should provide training, access to educational technology tools, and ongoing support to help teachers effectively integrate technology into their teaching practices. Additionally, promoting collaboration and sharing of best practices among teachers can facilitate peer learning and enhance technological proficiency.
- 3. Alignment with Educational Standards:** The study reveals a gap between teachers' perceptions of their teaching practices and alignment with educational standards and policies. This underscores the importance of aligning curriculum and instructional practices with established educational standards and guidelines. Educational authorities should provide clear guidance and support to ensure that teachers understand and adhere to relevant standards, thereby promoting consistency and quality in mathematics education.
- 4. Addressing Challenges in Teaching:** The varied perceptions of challenges in delivering effective mathematics instruction highlight the need for targeted support and resources to address specific challenges faced by teachers. Educational authorities should conduct needs assessments to identify common challenges and provide targeted interventions, such as

professional development workshops, mentorship programs, or resource allocation, to address these challenges effectively.

- 5. Enhancing Awareness of Best Practices:** While half of the teachers reported awareness and implementation of best practices in teaching, the remaining respondents either remained neutral or disagreed. This suggests a need for increased awareness and dissemination of best practices among mathematics teachers. Educational institutions, professional associations, and policymakers should facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and professional learning communities to promote the adoption of evidence-based teaching practices and pedagogical approaches.
- 6. Investigating the Impact on Student Performance:** The study highlights varying perceptions regarding the relationship between teacher competencies and student performance in mathematics. Further research is needed to understand the direct impact of teacher competencies on student outcomes and academic achievement. Educational authorities should prioritize research initiatives that examine the causal relationships between teacher competencies, instructional practices, and student learning outcomes, thereby informing evidence-based policies and interventions to improve mathematics education in Nadia, West Bengal, and beyond.

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