

Exploring Teachers' Self-Perceptions and Expectations: A Mixed-Methods Study of Higher Secondary School Teachers

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Abstract

Aim

To examine higher secondary educators' self-perceptions and expectations for learners, and to explore the relationship between psychological self-views—particularly narcissistic traits and occupational entitlement—and instructional expectations within the Indian higher secondary education context.

Methods

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed. Data was collected from 172 higher secondary educators in India using raw survey responses compiled in an Excel dataset. Quantitative data was gathered through a standardised survey instrument, while qualitative insights were obtained through thematic analysis. Statistical procedures included descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and multivariate regression analysis to examine relationships among self-perceptions, narcissistic traits, entitlement, and learner expectations.

Results

Educators generally reported high expectations for learners across academic, behavioural, socio-affective, and fairness-related dimensions. A subset of participants demonstrated elevated narcissistic traits and occupational entitlement. Multivariate regression analysis revealed weak and statistically insignificant negative associations between narcissistic traits and learner expectations, along with a slight positive relationship with entitlement. Chi-square analyses showed no significant differences in perceptions of superiority or entitlement based on gender or years of service.

Conclusions

The findings highlight the importance of reflective professional development to support balanced educator self-perceptions and foster a collaborative professional culture.

Strengthening educators' self-awareness may contribute to healthier instructional expectations and professional interactions. Further research with larger and more diverse samples is recommended to validate and extend these findings.

Keywords

Educator self-perception; educator expectations; narcissism; entitlement; mixed-methods inquiry; higher secondary education.

Introduction

Educators' beliefs and perceptions form the foundation of instructional practices, classroom environments, and student outcomes. In India's higher secondary stage of education—comprising Grades XI and XII (typically involving students aged 16–18 years)—teachers play a particularly significant role because these years strongly influence students' entry into higher education and their future career pathways. Consequently, teachers' expectations and perceptions can substantially shape students' academic trajectories and opportunities.

Teacher self-perception refers to educators' beliefs about their professional competence, instructional effectiveness, and ability to influence student learning. Closely related to this concept is teacher self-efficacy, which is defined as an individual's belief in their capability to organise and execute the actions required to support student learning and development (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Research consistently demonstrates that teachers with strong self-efficacy are more likely to adopt student-centred pedagogical approaches, maintain high expectations for learners, and create supportive classroom environments that foster academic and personal growth.

However, self-perception does not always reflect balanced or realistic professional self-assessment. In certain circumstances, educators may develop exaggerated or distorted self-perceptions that influence their professional behaviour and expectations. Psychological traits such as narcissistic tendencies and occupational entitlement may shape how teachers view themselves, their authority, and their relationships with students. Narcissistic tendencies may involve an inflated sense of self-importance, a strong desire for recognition, or heightened sensitivity to criticism, while occupational entitlement may manifest as expectations of special privileges, recognition, or status within professional contexts.

Despite the growing body of literature on teacher beliefs and self-efficacy, relatively limited research has examined how such psychological traits interact with teachers' expectations of students, particularly in the context of Indian higher secondary education. Given the pivotal role of teachers during this stage of schooling, understanding how teachers' self-perceptions relate to their expectations for learners is essential for improving educational practice and teacher development.

This study addresses this gap by examining the relationship between teachers' self-perceptions—specifically narcissistic tendencies and occupational entitlement—and their expectations of students in higher secondary schools in India. By combining global scholarship with empirical data from Indian educators, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how psychological self-views may influence teachers' expectations and instructional attitudes. For transparency and replicability, the study also incorporates analysis of raw survey responses collected through the dataset *Teacher Self-Perception and Behaviour (Responses).xlsx*, which informed the sample size and statistical analysis used in this research.

Literature Review

Teacher Self-Perception and Expectations: An Overview

Teachers' self-perceptions and expectations of students significantly influence teaching practices and educational outcomes. Previous research demonstrates that teachers' confidence in their professional abilities affects instructional strategies, classroom interactions, and students' academic performance (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). At the same time, teachers' expectations of students play a critical role in shaping learners' motivation, engagement, and self-concept (Rubie-Davies & Peterson, 2016).

Studies conducted across various international contexts—including Germany, Hong Kong, India, South Africa, Australia, Nigeria, Canada, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Turkey, and Colombia—have consistently shown that teachers' beliefs about their professional competence and their expectations of students are closely interconnected. These beliefs influence not only instructional practices but also the broader learning environment within classrooms.

Influence of Teacher Self-Perception on Teaching Practices

Teachers' perceptions of their professional competence—such as subject knowledge, pedagogical skills, and classroom management abilities—play an essential role in shaping instructional effectiveness. For example, research conducted in Colombia found that despite women possessing strong scientific training, female educators often rated their own scientific competence lower than their male counterparts, which affected their participation in research activities (Garcés-Gómez et al., 2024).

Similarly, research conducted in Turkey demonstrated that teachers who possessed stronger self-leadership and professional confidence perceived themselves as more capable educators, which contributed to improved instructional practices and enhanced student outcomes (Kılınç et al., 2021). In Russia, broader educational reforms have influenced teachers' professional identities and reshaped how educators perceive their roles and responsibilities within the educational system (Zajda, 2003).

Teacher self-perception also influences the instructional strategies that educators employ. Longitudinal research in Germany showed that teachers with higher levels of self-efficacy were more likely to adopt student-centred instructional methods and flexible teaching strategies suited to dynamic classroom environments (Holzberger et al., 2013). In contrast, teachers with lower levels of professional confidence tended to rely more heavily on rigid, teacher-centred instructional approaches that may limit student engagement.

In technologically evolving educational contexts, teacher self-perception also shapes the adoption of innovative teaching tools. Research conducted in South Korea indicated that teachers who perceived themselves as technologically competent were more willing to integrate artificial intelligence tools into their teaching practices, whereas those who lacked confidence in their technological abilities were more resistant to such innovations (Chen & Fu, 2022).

Teacher self-perception is also closely linked to teachers' emotional well-being and professional satisfaction. Studies conducted in Canada have shown that teachers who possess strong professional identities and positive self-perceptions experience lower levels of burnout and higher levels of job satisfaction, which contributes to more effective classroom management and stronger teacher–student relationships (Zhang et al., 2024). Similarly, research in Australia has demonstrated that teachers' perceptions of their professional competence are associated with supportive classroom environments, high expectations for students, and the adoption of innovative teaching practices (Aldridge & Fraser, 2016).

Contextual factors also influence teacher self-perception. Professional development opportunities, institutional support, and collaborative learning environments can strengthen teachers' confidence and encourage reflective professional practice. For example, faculty development programmes in India have been shown to enhance teachers' confidence and willingness to adopt innovative pedagogical methods (Kulal et al., 2024). Likewise, mentoring programmes promoting inclusive education in South Africa have improved teachers' perceptions of their professional competence and encouraged more equitable classroom practices (Hooijer et al., 2021).

Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement

Teachers' expectations have long been recognised as a key factor influencing student achievement, motivation, and engagement. High expectations from teachers can positively influence students' academic performance by encouraging greater effort, persistence, and confidence in their abilities.

Research conducted in Hong Kong has demonstrated that teachers who maintain consistently high expectations for their students often observe improved academic outcomes (Wang et al., 2021). Similarly, studies conducted in Nigeria and Canada indicate that positive teacher expectations contribute to higher levels of student achievement, as students internalise teachers' beliefs about their capabilities (Flanagan, 2018; Olawoyin & Isuku, 2019).

In Australia, optimistic teacher expectations have been linked to greater student participation, improved academic performance, and stronger critical thinking skills (Johnston et al., 2021). Research in Germany also found that teachers' high expectations contributed to stronger academic self-concept among students and reduced levels of mathematics anxiety (Nagy et al., 2010).

The way teachers communicate their expectations also plays a critical role in shaping student engagement. When teachers clearly express high standards and provide constructive feedback, students are more likely to demonstrate increased motivation and persistence, particularly in subjects such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) (Chen & Fu, 2022). Research conducted in Turkey has also shown that teachers who view themselves as educational leaders tend to establish more ambitious academic goals for their students, which in turn promotes greater student autonomy and responsibility for learning (Akman, 2021).

Teacher expectations can also influence students' long-term educational aspirations and career pathways. For example, studies conducted in Japan have shown that students who experience high expectations from teachers are more likely to pursue higher education and develop stronger academic identities (Yoshimoto et al., 2023).

Linking Teacher Self-Perception and Expectations

Teacher self-perception—particularly in the form of self-efficacy—plays an important role in shaping teachers' expectations of students. Self-efficacy refers to teachers' belief in their ability to influence student learning and manage classroom challenges effectively (Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2001). Teachers with strong self-efficacy are generally more confident in supporting diverse learners and are more likely to establish ambitious but attainable expectations for students.

Research by Rubie-Davies and Peterson (2016) found that teachers with stronger professional self-perceptions tend to maintain higher expectations for students and create learning environments that promote achievement. These teachers often communicate clear academic goals, provide consistent support, and encourage student autonomy.

Brophy (2006) proposed that teacher self-perception and expectations operate in a reciprocal cycle. Teachers with strong professional confidence are more likely to set high standards for students, which encourages greater student engagement and achievement. Positive student outcomes, in turn, reinforce teachers' confidence in their professional capabilities.

Similarly, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2010) observed that strong teacher self-efficacy helps sustain high expectations and reduces the likelihood of professional burnout. Conversely, when teachers experience exhaustion or diminished confidence, their expectations for students may decline.

Teacher motivation also plays a significant role in shaping expectations. Watt and Richardson (2007) highlighted that motivated teachers are more likely to set ambitious yet realistic goals for their students and maintain a commitment to supporting student success. Overall, existing research indicates that teachers' psychological beliefs about their professional competence are closely connected to the expectations they hold for learners and the instructional practices they adopt in the classroom.

Methodology

Research Design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was employed in this study (Creswell, 2014). This design enabled the simultaneous collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, followed by an integrated interpretation of the findings. The mixed-methods approach was selected in order to obtain both statistical insights and contextual understanding of teachers' self-perceptions and expectations.

In the quantitative component of the study, survey responses collected through an Excel dataset containing 172 entries were analysed using statistical techniques. The qualitative component involved the examination of open-ended responses and interpretative insights derived from the survey data. Combining these two approaches allowed for a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between teachers' psychological self-perceptions and their expectations of students.

Sample

The sample consisted of **172 higher secondary school teachers** from a variety of educational institutions across India. Participants represented diverse levels of teaching experience and included both male and female teachers. The sample was selected to provide insight into the perceptions and expectations of educators working at the higher secondary level, where teachers play a critical role in shaping students' academic preparation for higher education.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
GENDER	Female	94	54.7
	Male	78	45.3
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	< 5 years	60	34.9
	5–20 years	69	40.1
	> 20 years	43	25.0

Source: Own research

These demographic characteristics provided a basis for examining potential differences in teachers' self-perceptions and expectations across gender and professional experience.

Instruments

Data was collected using a **five-point Likert-type survey instrument** developed by the researchers. The instrument was designed to measure teachers' self-perceptions and expectations in relation to several psychological and professional constructs.

The questionnaire included items assessing:

- narcissistic tendencies,
- occupational entitlement, and
- teacher expectations across academic, behavioural, socio-emotional, and fairness-related domains.

Participants responded to each item using a five-point scale ranging from **1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)**. Higher scores indicated stronger agreement with the statements reflecting the respective constructs.

The survey instrument was structured to capture both teachers' perceptions of their professional identity and their expectations regarding students' academic performance, behaviour, emotional development, and equitable treatment within the classroom environment.

Procedure and Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis was conducted using statistical techniques to examine patterns and relationships among the measured variables. The dataset was compiled and processed using **Python-based statistical tools**, including the *pandas*, *scipy*, and *statsmodels* libraries.

The quantitative analysis involved several stages:

1. **Descriptive statistics** were calculated to summarise the central tendencies and variability of the measured constructs.
2. **Chi-square tests** were used to examine potential associations between categorical variables, such as gender or teaching experience, and indicators of narcissistic tendencies or entitlement.
3. **Multiple regression analysis** was conducted to investigate whether narcissistic tendencies, entitlement, gender, and teaching experience predicted teachers' expectations of students.

The qualitative component of the study involved the thematic interpretation of responses related to teachers' self-perceptions and professional expectations. These qualitative insights provided contextual explanations for the quantitative findings and helped identify recurring themes in teachers' perspectives regarding their professional roles and responsibilities.

The integration of quantitative statistical analysis with qualitative thematic interpretation enabled a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers' psychological self-perceptions may influence their expectations of students within the higher secondary education context.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Educator Self-Perceptions and Expectations

Construct	M	SD	% Agree/Strongly Agree
Narcissistic tendencies	2.97	0.78	16
Entitlement	2.86	0.82	12
Academic expectations	4.20	0.65	76
Behavioural expectations	4.47	0.47	88
Social-emotional expectations	3.97	0.52	72
Overall expectations	4.04	0.62	68

Source: Own research

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 2 summarise the levels of teachers' self-perceptions and expectations across several constructs measured in the study.

Overall, the results indicate that teachers reported high expectations for students across multiple domains. Among the expectation-related constructs, behavioural expectations recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.47$, $SD = 0.47$), suggesting that teachers strongly emphasise appropriate conduct and discipline in the classroom environment. Academic expectations also demonstrated a relatively high mean score ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.65$), indicating that teachers generally maintain strong expectations regarding students' academic performance and learning outcomes.

Similarly, social-emotional expectations ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.52$) reflect teachers' recognition of the importance of students' emotional well-being and interpersonal development. The overall expectations construct yielded a mean score of 4.04 ($SD = 0.62$), further indicating that teachers tend to maintain positive and supportive expectations toward their students.

In contrast, the constructs related to teachers' psychological self-perceptions—narcissistic tendencies and occupational entitlement—recorded comparatively lower mean scores. Narcissistic tendencies had a mean score of 2.97 ($SD = 0.78$), while entitlement recorded a mean score of 2.86 ($SD = 0.82$). The percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with statements reflecting these traits was relatively small, with 16% for narcissistic tendencies and 12% for entitlement.

These results suggest that while teachers in the sample generally demonstrate strong expectations for students' academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional development, only a limited proportion of respondents exhibit elevated levels of narcissistic tendencies or occupational entitlement. The descriptive findings therefore indicate a broadly positive professional orientation among the participating educators.

Gender Differences

Table 3

Gender Differences in Narcissistic Tendencies

Gender	% Reporting Superiority	χ^2	p
Male	40	11.97	.287
Female	18		

Source: Own research

The chi-square analysis examined whether perceptions of superiority, as an indicator of narcissistic tendencies, differed by gender. The results indicate that male teachers reported a higher proportion of perceived superiority (40%) compared with female teachers (18%). However, the chi-square test showed that this difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 11.97$, $p = .287$).

These findings suggest that although descriptive differences appear between male and female teachers, gender does not significantly influence the presence of narcissistic tendencies within the sample.

Experience Differences

Table 4

Differences in Occupational Entitlement by Teaching Experience

Experience Level	% Expecting Privileges	χ^2	p
< 5 years	33	0.00	1.000
> 20 years	0		

Source: Own research

A chi-square test was conducted to examine whether teachers' expectations of professional privileges—an indicator of occupational entitlement—differed according to teaching experience.

The results indicate that 33% of teachers with less than five years of experience reported expectations of professional privileges, whereas none of the teachers with more than twenty years of experience reported such expectations. Despite this descriptive difference, the chi-square test revealed no statistically significant relationship between teaching experience and entitlement perceptions ($\chi^2 = 0.00$, $p = 1.000$).

These results suggest that teaching experience does not significantly influence teachers' perceptions of professional entitlement in this sample.

Multiple Regression Predicting Student Expectations

Table 5

Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Student Expectations

Predictor	β	SE	t	p
Constant	4.348	0.704	6.176	.000
Narcissistic tendencies	-0.056	0.238	-0.237	.818
Entitlement	0.149	0.369	0.403	.696
Gender (Male)	0.122	0.476	0.256	.804
Teaching experience	—	—	—	> .05

Source: Own research

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether narcissistic tendencies, occupational entitlement, gender, and teaching experience predicted teachers' expectations of students.

The results show that narcissistic tendencies were negatively associated with student expectations ($\beta = -0.056$); however, this relationship was very weak and statistically non-significant ($p = .818$). This suggests that higher levels of narcissistic tendencies among teachers were not meaningfully related to lower expectations for students.

Similarly, occupational entitlement demonstrated a small positive association with student expectations ($\beta = 0.149$), but this relationship was also not statistically significant ($p = .696$). Gender and teaching experience likewise did not significantly predict teachers' expectations.

Overall, the regression model indicates that the examined predictors explain only a limited proportion of the variance in student expectations, suggesting that other factors—such as institutional context, professional culture, or pedagogical beliefs—may play a more substantial role in shaping teachers' expectations toward students.

Discussion

This study provides important insights into the relationship between teachers' self-perceptions and their expectations of students among higher secondary school educators in India. Drawing on survey responses from 172 teachers, the findings indicate that educators generally maintain high expectations for students across academic, behavioural, socio-emotional, and fairness-related domains. The descriptive results showed relatively high mean scores for these expectation variables, suggesting that teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to supporting students' holistic development.

These findings are consistent with previous research emphasising the central role of teacher expectations in shaping student outcomes. Prior studies have shown that teachers who maintain positive expectations for students tend to create supportive classroom environments that encourage academic achievement and student engagement (Flanagan, 2018; Johnston et al., 2021). The results of the present study therefore reinforce existing evidence suggesting that teachers' expectations can serve as an important driver of student development and learning.

In contrast to the high expectations observed for students, the levels of narcissistic tendencies and occupational entitlement among teachers were relatively low. Only a small proportion of respondents expressed agreement with statements reflecting these traits. This suggests that most teachers in the sample maintain a balanced perception of their professional roles and responsibilities. Such findings are encouraging, as excessive narcissistic tendencies or entitlement may potentially hinder collaboration, professional reflection, and equitable treatment of students.

The analysis also explored whether demographic factors such as gender and teaching experience were associated with differences in narcissistic tendencies or entitlement. Although descriptive patterns suggested that male teachers reported slightly higher perceptions of superiority and that less experienced teachers reported somewhat greater expectations of professional privileges, these differences were not statistically significant. These results suggest that such psychological tendencies may not be strongly influenced by demographic characteristics within this sample.

The regression analysis further examined whether narcissistic tendencies, entitlement, gender, and teaching experience predicted teachers' expectations of students. The results revealed weak and statistically non-significant relationships between narcissistic tendencies and teacher expectations, as well as a small positive but non-significant association between entitlement and expectations. These findings suggest that while such psychological traits may exist among

some teachers, they do not appear to exert a strong influence on teachers' expectations of students within the context of this study.

The qualitative insights obtained from the data provide additional context for understanding these results. Teachers frequently emphasised the importance of institutional culture, professional recognition, and societal respect for the teaching profession. Some respondents indicated that insufficient recognition of teachers' contributions may contribute to feelings of frustration or perceived entitlement. These observations suggest that certain psychological responses may be influenced by broader systemic factors rather than solely by individual personality traits.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of examining teacher self-perceptions within the broader institutional and professional context in which teachers operate. Understanding these dynamics can contribute to the development of teacher education and professional development programmes that promote reflective practice, balanced professional identities, and constructive expectations toward students.

Implications

The findings of this study have several implications for teacher education, professional development, school leadership, and educational policy.

First, teacher education programmes should move beyond focusing exclusively on instructional techniques and subject knowledge to incorporate opportunities for professional reflection and self-awareness. Encouraging prospective teachers to critically examine their beliefs about authority, professional identity, and student expectations can help foster balanced and reflective professional attitudes. Reflective practices such as journaling, mentoring, and peer feedback can support the development of professional humility and a learner-centred approach to teaching.

Second, ongoing professional development programmes should address issues related to professional identity, collaboration, and equitable classroom practices. Training sessions that encourage reflective dialogue and shared professional learning can help teachers recognise potential biases in their expectations and strengthen their commitment to supporting diverse learners. Such initiatives may also help prevent the development of attitudes associated with professional entitlement.

Third, school leadership and institutional culture play a crucial role in shaping teachers' professional perceptions. School administrators can foster positive professional environments by promoting fair recognition systems, encouraging collaboration among teachers, and supporting open communication. Establishing professional learning communities and collaborative decision-making structures can help reinforce collective responsibility for student success rather than individual competition or status.

Fourth, at the policy level, educational authorities should consider initiatives that enhance the professional status and societal recognition of teachers. Providing adequate institutional support, fair evaluation systems, and meaningful opportunities for career advancement can contribute to higher professional satisfaction and reduce feelings of frustration or entitlement. Strengthening the professional environment in which teachers work may ultimately help reinforce constructive expectations for students and improve overall educational outcomes.

Conclusion

This mixed-methods study contributes to the growing body of research on teacher beliefs by examining the relationship between teachers' self-perceptions and their expectations of students among higher secondary educators in India. The findings indicate that teachers in the sample generally maintain high expectations for students across academic, behavioural, and socio-emotional domains, reflecting a strong commitment to supporting student development.

At the same time, the results show relatively low levels of narcissistic tendencies and occupational entitlement among participating teachers. Statistical analyses did not reveal significant differences based on gender or teaching experience, and the regression analysis indicated that these psychological traits did not significantly predict teachers' expectations of students.

These findings suggest that although psychological self-perceptions may influence teachers' professional attitudes, their impact on expectations toward students appears to be limited within the context of this study. Instead, broader institutional and professional factors may play a more important role in shaping teachers' expectations and classroom practices.

By integrating quantitative survey analysis with qualitative insights, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of how teachers' psychological self-perceptions relate to their professional roles and expectations. The findings underscore the importance of promoting reflective professional development, supportive institutional environments, and balanced professional identities among educators.

Future research should extend this line of inquiry by examining these relationships across larger and more diverse samples, different educational contexts, and longitudinal research designs. Such investigations may provide deeper insights into how teachers' self-perceptions evolve over time and how they influence teaching practices and student outcomes in different educational environments.

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