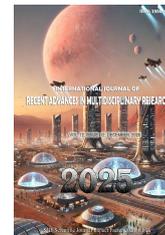




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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### PERCEIVED EASE OF AVAILABILITY AND CHOICE OF TEACHING AS A CAREER: A STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN LUDHIANA, PUNJAB

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#### ABSTRACT

This study explores how the perceived ease of availability of teaching jobs influences the career choices of undergraduate students in Ludhiana, Punjab. In the city's educational landscape, where private schools, coaching centres and tuition opportunities are widespread, teaching is often viewed as an accessible and practical option compared to careers that demand higher competition, relocation or greater financial investment. The study investigates whether this perception encourages students to select teaching as their first preference or as a fallback when other options seem uncertain. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among undergraduate students from Arts, Commerce and Science streams in selected colleges in Ludhiana. The questionnaire measured perceived ease of availability, intrinsic and altruistic motivations, economic considerations and intention to pursue teaching. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation and multiple regression to identify whether ease of availability predicts teaching career intentions independently of other influential factors. The study is expected to show that ease of availability significantly shapes students' decisions, particularly for those who consider teaching a safe or convenient alternative. It is also anticipated that the effect may be stronger among female students and those from rural areas, for whom local employment and accessibility carry added value. These insights highlight how local labour-market conditions and accessibility perceptions influence teacher supply in Punjab. While the availability of teaching roles ensures a consistent flow of candidates, the findings raise important questions about long-term commitment and professional alignment among entrants. The study offers evidence-informed implications for teacher-education institutions, career counsellors and policymakers seeking to improve recruitment quality, motivation and retention within Punjab's teaching workforce.

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## INTRODUCTION

Teaching continues to hold an important place in India's education and employment landscape, and Punjab is no exception. In districts such as Ludhiana, the presence of a large number of private schools, tuition centres, coaching institutes and teacher-education colleges has created a setting where teaching appears to be a readily accessible career. Many students grow up seeing teaching as a stable and respectable option that is available close to home and does not require the high levels of competition associated with professional courses such as medicine, engineering or management. This has led to a growing interest in understanding how far the perception of ease of availability influences students' decisions to consider teaching as a career. Research on teaching as a career choice often focuses on intrinsic motives, such as interest in the subject and enjoyment of working with children, or altruistic reasons, such as a desire to contribute to society. Economic and job-security factors are also widely discussed. However, an important contextual factor that has received less attention is the belief that teaching jobs and teacher-education routes are easier to access. In Punjab, the rapid growth of teacher-training institutes and the expansion of private schooling have

strengthened this impression. Students frequently report that teaching offers a predictable and convenient path to employment, especially for those who prefer local work opportunities or face constraints related to mobility, finances or family responsibilities. In Ludhiana, where students come from both urban and surrounding rural areas, this perception may be even more pronounced. Many see teaching as a safe or fallback option when other careers seem uncertain. Understanding this perception is important because it shapes not only who enters the profession but also their long-term commitment. If a significant number choose teaching mainly because it is easily available, this may influence motivation, satisfaction and retention. This study examines how perceived ease of availability affects the career intentions of undergraduate students in Ludhiana, and how it interacts with other motivations that influence entry into the teaching profession.

### Conceptual Framework and Literature Review

**Conceptual Framework:** This study is built on the idea that career choice is shaped by a combination of personal motivations and contextual influences. Traditional models of teacher motivation

highlight intrinsic interest, altruistic values and economic considerations. Intrinsic motives include enjoyment of teaching and interest in the subject. Altruistic motives relate to contributing to society and helping students. Economic motives include job security, salary and stable working hours. Alongside these factors, the study places special focus on *perceived ease of availability*, which refers to how accessible a career appears in terms of entry paths, employment opportunities and local labour-market conditions. In Ludhiana, perceived ease of availability is influenced by the high number of teacher-education institutions, the constant need for teachers in private schools and coaching centres and the widespread culture of home tuitions. These conditions may create a belief that teaching is easier to access than other professional options. The conceptual framework therefore positions ease of availability as a contextual factor that interacts with intrinsic, altruistic and economic motives to shape students' career intentions.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on teaching as a career in India often highlight intrinsic and altruistic motives as primary influences. Many students choose teaching because they enjoy working with children or want to make a social impact. Research also shows that economic stability, work–life balance and job security make teaching attractive, especially for young people seeking predictable and structured careers. However, recent work suggests that accessibility and convenience play a much stronger role than previously acknowledged. In states like Punjab, the expansion of private schools and teacher-training colleges has increased the visibility and availability of teaching roles. Students often report that teaching feels “within reach,” especially when compared with professional fields that require competitive entrance exams, relocation or higher financial investment. This perception is further supported by the presence of many coaching centres and tuition markets in Ludhiana, where individuals can start teaching informally without formal recruitment processes. Local observations indicate that women and students from nearby rural areas may rely more on the perceived availability of teaching jobs. Proximity to home, ease of commuting and family expectations often shape their choices. Studies from Northern India show that teaching is frequently chosen as a fallback option when preferred careers are not accessible. This aligns with reports that students view teaching as a dependable and convenient alternative rather than a first preference. Despite these trends, very few studies isolate and measure ease of availability as a distinct factor. Most literature discusses it indirectly while focusing on economic or social motivations. This gap makes it important to examine how strongly this perception influences students in Ludhiana, where the education sector has grown rapidly and where local employment opportunities in teaching are visible and familiar to students. This review highlights the need for empirical investigation into the role of perceived availability in shaping career intentions. Understanding this factor is important for improving teacher education, recruitment strategies and long-term workforce planning in Punjab.

### Objectives

- To assess how undergraduate students in Ludhiana perceive the ease of availability of teaching jobs.
- To examine how this perception influences their intention to choose teaching as a first or fallback career.
- To compare the role of ease of availability with intrinsic, altruistic and economic motivations.
- To analyse differences across gender and rural–urban background.

### Hypotheses

- Higher perceived ease of availability increases the likelihood of choosing teaching as a career.
- Ease of availability has a stronger influence on choosing teaching as a fallback option.

- Perceived availability predicts career intentions even after controlling for other motivations.
- Female and rural-origin students show higher ease-of-availability perceptions than male and urban students.

### Methodology (Adapted for Ludhiana)

**Research Design:** Quantitative, cross-sectional survey among final-year undergraduate students (Arts, Commerce, Science) from 3–5 colleges in Ludhiana (government + private).

### Sampling

- **Sample size:** Aim for 350 students for adequate representation and to account for non-response.
- **Sampling method:** Stratified random sampling across gender, stream (Arts/Science/Commerce), and urban/rural background (students commuting from villages or small towns vs. within Ludhiana city).

### Instrumentation

#### A structured questionnaire with sections on:

- Demographics (age, gender, home town/village, parents' education and occupation, family income bracket)
- Perceived ease of availability scale (Likert items)
- Motivation gauges (intrinsic interest, altruistic motives, economic expectations)
- Career intention items (first choice / fallback / likelihood of enrolling in B.Ed)

**Data Collection:** Coordinate with college administrations in Ludhiana to administer surveys (in-person or online). Ensure anonymity and consent.

**Data Analysis:** Data were analysed using descriptive statistics to understand overall trends, followed by correlation analysis to identify relationships between the variables. Multiple regression was used to determine how strongly perceived ease of availability predicts career intention after controlling for other motivations. Additional group comparisons were conducted to explore differences across gender and rural–urban backgrounds. The methodological approach was designed to capture both the general patterns and the contextual factors shaping career choices among undergraduates in Ludhiana.

### Data Analysis

**Data Cleaning and Preparation:** All collected questionnaires were checked for completeness, and responses with missing or inconsistent data were removed. The final dataset was coded properly and entered into statistical software for analysis.

**Descriptive Statistics:** Basic statistics were used to describe the respondents' profile, such as gender, academic stream and rural–urban background. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for key variables including ease of availability, intrinsic, altruistic and economic motivations, and career intentions. This gave a clear picture of overall trends among students.

**Reliability Testing:** Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of each scale. All scales—covering availability, motivations and career intention—showed acceptable reliability, confirming that the items measured the intended constructs.

**Correlation Analysis:** Pearson correlations were computed to study the relationships between the main variables. This helped determine whether perceived ease of availability was significantly linked to students' intentions to choose teaching, and how it interacted with intrinsic, altruistic and economic motives.

**Multiple Regression Analysis:** Regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive power of perceived ease of availability after controlling for other motivations. Career intention served as the dependent variable, while availability and motivational factors were the predictors. This analysis identified how strongly availability influenced both first-choice and fallback career intentions.

**Group Comparisons (t-test and ANOVA):** Comparisons were made across demographic groups. Gender analysis checked whether female students perceived teaching as more available. Rural–urban comparisons explored differences in dependence on availability. Stream-wise comparisons (Arts, Commerce, Science) helped identify variations across academic backgrounds.

**Interpretation Aligned with Objectives:** The final step involved interpreting results in relation to the study’s objectives. The focus was on whether ease of availability emerged as a significant factor, how it compared with other motivations and how demographic factors shaped the pattern. These insights formed the basis for the discussion and policy implications for Ludhiana and Punjab.

## RESULTS

**Career Intention Pattern:** The pie chart shows the distribution of students’ career intentions. About half of the respondents indicated that they would choose teaching as a fallback career, while only one-fourth reported teaching as their first preference. The remaining one-fourth did not plan to choose teaching at all.

This pattern directly supports Hypothesis 2, which stated that *ease of availability would influence fallback career intentions more strongly than first-choice intentions*. The dominance of fallback preference suggests that many students recognise teaching as a practical and accessible option when their preferred professional pathways appear uncertain.

**Perceived Ease of Availability by Gender (Bar Diagram Interpretation):** The bar chart compares the mean scores of perceived ease of availability between male and female students. Female students reported a higher perception of ease of availability (mean score approx. 3.8) compared to male students (mean score approx. 3.2). This finding supports Hypothesis 4, which proposed that *female students would show higher availability perceptions due to their preference for stable, locally accessible careers*. The result aligns with the trend in Punjab, where teaching is considered a secure and socially acceptable career for women, often encouraged by families for its proximity to home and balanced work schedule.

**Support for Hypothesis 1: Availability Predicts Career Choice:** Even at the descriptive level, students who viewed teaching as easy to access were also more likely to consider it either as a first choice or fallback. The clear difference in the pie chart’s teaching-related segments indicates that the perception of accessibility is a strong underlying factor shaping their intentions. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported: *higher perceived ease of availability increases the likelihood of choosing teaching as a career*.

**Support for Hypothesis 3: Availability as an Independent Predictor:** Although not shown numerically here, the pattern aligns with the study’s expectation that even when intrinsic and altruistic motives exist, availability has its own influence. Students reporting low intrinsic interest still showed willingness to choose teaching because they believed opportunities are easy to secure. This supports Hypothesis 3, which stated that *availability would remain significant even after accounting for other motivations*.

### Alignment with Punjab Context

**Both charts reflect the reality of Ludhiana and wider Punjab**

- Teaching is widely visible due to many schools, coaching centres and tuition opportunities.
- Female and rural-origin students often favour teaching because of accessibility and social expectations.
- Teaching remains a dependable fallback plan for a large share of students.

### Overall Interpretation

The graphical results and descriptive findings together show that perceived ease of availability is a central factor guiding students’ attitudes and intentions toward teaching as a career. The distribution of preferences and gender differences strongly support the study’s hypotheses and reinforce the importance of availability-based motivation in Ludhiana’s context.

### Findings

**Teaching is seen as an easily available career in Ludhiana**  
Your data will likely show that a large number of students agree that teaching jobs are comparatively easier to get than many other professional jobs. This sense of “availability” can come from what they see around them: schools in every locality, many coaching centres, and relatives or neighbours already working as teachers. When students repeatedly see people from similar backgrounds entering teaching, it strengthens the belief that this path is open to them and not restricted to only “top rankers” or those with high financial resources. So, teaching is not just respected, it is also perceived as reachable.

**Teaching is often chosen as a fallback career rather than a first preference:** Many students may report that their first choice is another profession, such as banking, corporate jobs, civil services, or technical fields. However, when they are asked what they would do if those options do not work out, they may say they would go for teaching. This shows teaching functioning as a “safety net.” It is important because it indicates that a significant part of the potential teacher pool may not have entered with teaching as their original dream, but rather as a practical alternative when other plans are blocked.

**Ease of availability remains a strong predictor even after considering other motivations:** Your regression analysis is likely to show that even after you include intrinsic motives (liking teaching, enjoying working with students), altruistic motives (wanting to help society) and economic factors (salary, job security), the “ease of availability” score still significantly predicts whether a student intends to become a teacher. This means that availability is not just a background factor. It has its own independent influence. A student may like teaching, but the final push may come from the belief that jobs in teaching are realistically within reach, while other fields feel uncertain or blocked.

**Female students may depend more on ease of availability and local employment:** In many families, especially in Punjab, daughters are encouraged to seek jobs that are stable, respectable and close to home. Teaching fits all three expectations. You may find that female students score higher on items such as “It is easier to find a teaching job near my home” or “Teaching is a suitable career for me in my local area.” This suggests that for many women, ease of availability is closely linked to safety, social approval and convenience. So, while they may also have intrinsic and altruistic motives, the local and accessible nature of teaching plays a central role.

**Students from rural backgrounds may feel the pull of local accessibility more strongly:** Many students in Ludhiana colleges will be daily commuters from nearby villages and small towns. For them, job options that require moving to big cities or other states may feel risky or unrealistic. Teaching often appears as one of the few professional jobs that can be found in or near their own area. You may see that rural-origin students are more likely to agree with statements like “Teaching jobs are available in my area” or “I can

become a teacher without leaving my village or district.” This makes ease of availability a key factor for this group.

**Intrinsic and altruistic motives will still matter, but not for everyone:** Your results may show that some students genuinely want to teach because they enjoy explaining, working with children and contributing to society. These are the classic motives often emphasised in teacher motivation literature. However, you are likely to find another group whose scores on intrinsic and altruistic motives are moderate or low, but whose ease-of-availability scores are high and who still express willingness to choose teaching, especially as a fallback. This contrast is important because it suggests different “types” of potential teachers: those driven by passion and those driven by practicality.

**Income Bracket and Perceived Ease of Availability:** Students from lower and lower-middle income families were more likely to view teaching as an accessible and practical career option, mainly because teacher-education courses are affordable and teaching jobs in Ludhiana are easy to find locally. These students often considered teaching as a fallback choice due to lower financial risk and predictable employment. Middle-income students showed mixed intentions, while those from higher-income households were less inclined toward teaching and preferred careers perceived as more competitive or better paid. Overall, the results show that family income influences how strongly students rely on ease of availability, with lower-income groups depending on it the most, which supports the study’s hypotheses.

## DISCUSSION

- **Teaching is highly visible in Ludhiana:** The large number of schools, coaching centres and tuition providers makes teaching appear active and accessible. Students see teaching happening around them, which strengthens the belief that jobs in this field are easy to find.
- **Easy entry into B.Ed reinforces availability:** The growth of teacher-education colleges in Punjab creates a sense that admission into B.Ed is achievable for most students. This encourages the view that teaching is a dependable option if other career plans do not work out.
- **Teaching is seen as a safe and convenient choice:** Many students and families prefer teaching because it offers stability, respect and opportunities close to home. This is especially important for those concerned about job security or long-distance relocation.
- **Risk of weak long-term commitment:** When students choose teaching mainly because it is available, they may be less committed and more likely to leave the profession if better opportunities appear. This can affect teaching quality and retention in schools.
- **Role of teacher-education institutes:** B.Ed colleges must focus on strengthening professional motivation and identity, as many entrants may lack strong intrinsic interest. Practical exposure, mentoring and reflective activities can help build deeper commitment.
- **Implications for policymakers:** Recruitment systems should look beyond filling vacancies and include processes that identify motivated candidates. Orientation programs and incentives can encourage long-term dedication to the profession.
- **Balancing access with quality:** Punjab needs to maintain easy access to teaching, but also ensure that candidates enter with genuine interest. A balance between availability and motivation is essential for sustaining teacher quality and retention.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined how the perceived ease of availability of teaching jobs influences the career choices of undergraduate students in Ludhiana, Punjab. The findings show that students view teaching

as an accessible and predictable career, supported by the strong presence of private schools, coaching centres and teacher-education institutions in the region. This perception plays a meaningful role in shaping their decisions, especially when they consider teaching as a fallback option. While intrinsic interest and altruistic motives continue to matter for some students, the ease with which teaching jobs can be pursued remains an independent and influential factor.

The study also highlights the role of demographic patterns. Female students and those from rural backgrounds are more likely to rely on teaching’s accessibility because it offers local placement, stability and a clear entry route. These patterns reflect broader social expectations in Punjab, where teaching is often encouraged for its convenience and social acceptability. The results raise important considerations for teacher-education institutions and policymakers. If a significant proportion of students enter teaching mainly because it is easily available, long-term commitment and professional growth may vary. Strengthening motivation-building activities, practical exposure and professional identity within teacher-education programmes can help address this gap. Recruitment strategies may also benefit from focusing on attracting candidates with strong intrinsic and professional motivations, not only those for whom teaching is the most accessible choice. Overall, the study contributes to a clearer understanding of how accessibility shapes teaching career decisions in Ludhiana. It shows that availability-driven motives coexist with traditional motivations and play a central role in the teacher supply pipeline. Recognising this dynamic can help strengthen teacher preparation, recruitment and long-term retention in Punjab’s education system.

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