

Impact of Teachers' Communication Skills on Academic Achievement of Students at Secondary School Level

Muhammad Tariq¹ Hakim Ullah²

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Corresponding Author: Muhammad Tariq. ✉ muhammadtariqnawab@gmail.com

Abstract: This study was carried out to find out the impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students at the secondary school level. The nature of the study was descriptive, and a Quantitative research design was adopted to investigate the problem. The target population of the study was all the Secondary School Teachers and students of class 10th in Government (boys) Schools in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), and the accessible population was all the 1315 SSTs and all the 18453 students of class 10th in the Government (boys) Schools in two districts of KP- Mardan and Nowshera. A self-developed closed-end questionnaire was used as an instrument for the collection of data from the respondents, teachers, and students. The average Reliability of the questionnaire was 0.98. The reliability coefficient confirmed that the instrument was highly reliable. The sample size (200 teachers and 400 students) was determined with the help of an online calculator. A simple random sampling technique was used for the selection of respondents from the accessible population. The data was quantified and tested using a regression test. Results of the regression test showed a positive but insignificant impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students at the secondary school level. The findings of the study were that teachers use speaking and writing skills better than listening and body language skills, and the impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students was positive but low and insignificant.

Keywords: Communication, Classroom Communication, Teachers' Communication Skills, Academic Achievement, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Introduction

According to Fanuel (2011), society transfers knowledge, values and skills from one generation to another through the process of education. Fabunmi (2004) is of the view that education helps individuals acquire appropriate skills, competencies, and abilities which are necessary for them to live decent lives and play their roles in the development of society. A skill is a learned ability to perform an action or to do something well (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 7th edition p. 1431). It is a type of ability a person has acquired.

¹ PhD Scholar, Department of Teacher Education, Qurtuba University, Peshawar Campus, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: muhammadtariqnawab@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, Qurtuba University, Peshawar Campus, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Email: hakimullahkhan14@gmail.com

Communication

According to Fashiku (2017), Communication is a process in which information is transmitted from a source to an audience. Communication will be effective when the audience understands the message in its intended form. The UNESCO report (2009) indicates that in communication varied languages are used to convey the message such as through speech, the written word, visual displays, electronic devices and body languages (for example, non-verbal forms, tone of voices, etc).

Characteristics of a Good Teacher

An effective teacher is one who is caring and, apart from having content knowledge, is adept in communication, management, and organizational skills. Who organizes instruction to enhance the learning of students, involves students in the teaching-learning process, conducts relevant assessments and fair evaluation and creates a warm classroom climate for promoting an interactive teacher-student relationship (Sherwyn p. Morreal et al., 2000).

A good teacher requires not only content knowledge but also the art of good behaviour, empathy towards students and good communication skills to establish an intimate interpersonal relationship in the classroom. This understanding leads to successful communication and quality interaction, which facilitates the teaching process (Bee, 2012).

Teachers' Communication Skills and Academic Achievement of Students

Communication is an indispensable skill for almost any profession, especially for teachers in teacher-student relationships (Center for Excellence in Teaching, 1999, p21). Polk (2006) states that classroom communication is the most important element for stimulating learning. It directs the teaching-learning process.

Bee (2012), in a study, concluded that good communication skills are vital not only for teachers but also for students for their academic success. Without these skills, quality and successful communication cannot be established between teacher and student. Communication skills include empathy, appreciation, listening, flexibility, inclusiveness, openness and sensitivity to mutual cooperation. According to McPheat (2010), Communication skills serve as tools for removing obstacles to effective communication. McCarthy & Carter (2001) consider communication skills very essential for teachers in delivering education to students.

Communication plays a pivotal role in the teaching-learning process. It is one of the relevant variables that influence the teaching-learning process. Teachers' communication skills are of prime importance in the transmission of knowledge to students (McCarthy and Carter, 2001). Teaching is a communicative activity which demands that an educator transmit meaningful information to learners. The educators' success in teaching is subject to their competency in communication skills (Prozetsky, 2000). A teacher needs good communication skills to transmit knowledge effectively to learners and enable them to improve academic performance (Loss, J. 2000).

According to Ehindero & Ajibade (2000), for effective teaching, the teacher must have good classroom communication and management skills, updated knowledge, and a maintained personality. In the absence of these basic skills, effective teaching-learning process is not possible.

The educational process will be successful if the message the teacher is sending is specific, clear, simple, and meaningful. A teacher's classroom communication skills play a crucial role in this regard, as a teacher with good communication skills makes it clear to a student what is right and what is wrong (Sherwyn p. Morreale et al., 2000). Seghedin, E. (2012) is of the view that communication -the most important of all professional competencies- is essential for a teacher. Communication abilities play a very important role in the cognitive and psycho-affective development of students.

Modes or Components of Teachers' Communication Skills.

According to Rosalyn Sword (2020), successful teaching requires knowledge and communication skills. The four modes of communication are very important. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. A teacher should excel in these modes of communication. The teacher has to comprehend and break down complex information and clearly present it to the students to attract their attention and resolve their problems. Strategies for effective communication are: creating a safe environment with supportive relationships, non-verbal positive body signals like making eye contact with students, active listening to what their students are saying, feedback (i.e., praise) making students confident that they can succeed, developing sense of humour, using up-to-date teaching aids and be clear and unambiguous.

Types of Communication on the Basis of Channel

Communication can be classified as; Verbal communication and Non-verbal communication on the basis of channel. In verbal communication spoken or written words are used and in non-verbal communication instead of spoken or written words, body language such as facial expression, body movement, and gestures are used to communicate (McConnell, 2003).

Verbal Communication

Verbal communication is a type of communication in which spoken or written words are used for the transmission of a message. Verbal communication is classified as spoken communication and written communication.

Oral/Spoken Communication: Oral communication is a form of verbal communication in which spoken words are used. It is the most important mode of communication. Spoken words are used in oral communication, which includes speech, face-to-face conversation, etc. (Wenbin Nah, 2008). In oral communication, speaking skills are used; communication is influenced by volume, pitch, speed, and clarity of speaking.

Written Communication: Written communication is a form of verbal communication in which written words or symbols are used to communicate. Writing skills are used in written communication. Writing skills such as the vocabulary, grammar used, writing style, precision, and clarity of the language influence written communication. It is also a very important mode of communication. While writing something, a

teacher should keep in mind the purpose of writing and the level of readers. The teacher should also have in mind the four elements of good writing known as the 3 Cs- 1 clear, two concise, and 3 Compelling (Kallan, R. 2015).

In verbal communication, teachers must have mastery of the following skills.

Mastery in the Language of Instruction: Wahyuni (2017), in his research, focused on the role of verbal and non-verbal communication in the transmission of information to learners. Regarding verbal communication, he concluded that educators having expertise in the use of written and spoken words are more effective in transferring knowledge and improving the performance of their students. Therefore, the success of an educator in communicating knowledge relies on communication skills. Is the educator able to impart information clearly and succinctly?

Clarity or Referential Skills: Loss (2000) recommended that teachers should communicate in a clear and understandable manner. According to Gholipour (2007), educators who express words clearly and eloquently, their students listen to them with dignity and willingness. They absorb the teacher's remarks without any tension or boredom. Teachers should not use biased phrases because they often cause a sense of humiliation and stubbornness among students, distract them from learning and leave irreparable psychological effects on them.

Aylor (2003) and Graham (2009) concur that teachers must have referential skills to convey information in a clear and concise manner and make it easy for students to understand what teachers are referring to. Bainbridge & Houser (2000) support the notion that effective communication is imperative for effective teaching. Teachers should have referential skills- the ability to explain concepts in a clear and concise manner so as to enable learners to achieve educational outcomes.

Positive Words: Teachers should use positive words while speaking to students. Positive words are those words that motivate, encourage, and energize students. Teachers should use words carefully as every spoken word carries an influence along and provokes a feeling in people (Glaze, 2014).

Non-Verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication refers to transmitting messages through body language, facial expressions, body movements, and gestures. Here, oral or written words are not used (McConnell, (2003).

Non-verbal communication skills are classified as follows:

Body Language/Movement and Gestures: Good speaking yields a proper impact on the audience when it is associated with non-verbal communication skills such as facial expressions, gestures, attitudes, and listening. Non-verbal communication can convey better meaning than words. Therefore, it is more effective than verbal communication. During communication, voice transmits a verbal message, but the motion of parts of the body, like the hand, legs, and other parts of the body, plays a significant role in the overall communication process. Bambaerooi & Shokrpour (2017) concur that non-verbal communication plays a significant role in communication. It is more refined, and its impact is very deep. In a classroom,

educators use gestures consciously or unconsciously. These gestures leave a very deep impact on students. According to Bennet (2007), non-verbal communication refers to the transmission of a message through unconscious body movement, gestures (Kinesics), facial expression, unconscious physical touching (haptic) and the unconscious use of personal space (proxemics).

Caliskan & Yasil (2005) state that teachers are required to make the students feel their position not only verbally but also non-verbally with their body language. They should use non-verbal skills like body language, facial expressions, and correct gestures to interact and communicate with the environment. Using these skills yields a positive effect on the academic performance and attitude of students. In order to have effective communication, teachers are required to perceive their own behaviour and rectify it to ensure positive relationships with students. They should remain patient, affectionate, reliable, and supportive, be in a smiling mood, and use correct gestures to open channels of communication with students. Hawking (2005) believes that it is the teacher who creates a conducive learning environment in the classroom where learners are allowed to express their views frankly and honestly.

Raman & Sharma (2007), while stressing the importance of non-verbal communication, agree on the point that the verbal component of communication conveys only about 35% of the message, whereas the non-verbal aspect of communication conveys approximately 65% of the message. Having proved the importance of the non-verbal aspect of communication, they concur that teachers should not underrate the role of non-verbal communication in the teaching-learning process, which can contribute to the learning experience positively or negatively.

Listening Skills: According to Cortright (2011), listening plays a crucial role in our emotional, social, and professional success. According to the Oxford Dictionary, listening is paying attention to something or someone that you can hear. Guffey and Loewy (2011) concur that listening is a very complex process. It requires the proper attention of both- the sender and the receiver. Educators must be cognizant of the problems the learners face during the process of transfer of knowledge. Educators with good listening skills can be apprised of these problems. Learners need to understand the message; therefore, they must also have good listening skills. Safir (2017) believes that listening is an essential part of effective communication. There are two types of listening: deep listening and strategic listening. In deep listening, the expectation is only to hear the concerns but not solve the problems, while strategic listening involves guiding questions and suggestions. Bender (2005) further elaborates on strategic listening and states that strategic listening is active listening and involves relevant questions by the listener to make oneself clear about the message.

Statement of the Problem

The academic performance of students in developing countries is alarming in comparison to developed countries (Kamal & Bener, 2009). Pakistan, being a developing country, is faced with the same problem of poor academic performance of students. According to Mustafa (2012), the deteriorated standard of education in Pakistan has caused students' low achievements in examinations. Many school-related and society-related factors are responsible for the dismal performance of students. One of the school-related factors is school climate in general and classroom environment in particular. The main actor in the

classroom is a teacher. The communication skills of a teacher are the prime skills in the process of teaching and learning. Teachers with effective communication skills can create a conducive learning environment for students, which is crucial for an effective teaching-learning process. Despite the fact that public (government) school teachers have abundant subjects-based knowledge, their students do not perform excellently academically due to teachers' defective communication skills.

Therefore, the focus of the current study was on teachers' communication skills in the public sector, and the aim of the current research was to find out the impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students at the secondary school level in KP.

Research Objective

- a. To find out the impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students at secondary school level.

Hypothesis

H₀1: There is no significant impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students at the secondary school level.

Research Design

Quantitative research design has been adopted for the current study. Creswell (2014) is of the view that quantitative research design is the one in which a social problem is investigated via statistical techniques and collected data is tabulated and analyzed by statistical tests.

In this study, the hypothesis was framed, and the problem was investigated via statistical techniques; data were tabulated and analyzed with the help of statistical techniques. Inferences were drawn from the findings, and recommendations were made.

Population of the Study

Table 1

showing the accessible population of SSTs and Class 10th students

District	Secondary School Teachers	10 th Enrollment
Mardan	840	12558
Nowshera	475	5895
Total	1315	18453

(Annual Statistical Report Govt. Schools KP 2020- 21).

The target population of the current study comprised all the secondary school teachers and students of the 10th class at the secondary school level in KP. The accessible population comprised all 1315 secondary school teachers and all 18453 students of the 10th class at the secondary school level in the two districts in KP, Mardan and Nowshera (EMIS 2020-21).

Sampling Technique and Sample Size

In the present study, online sample size calculator (Rao-soft calculator) was used to determine the sample size. The sample so determined consisted of 200 teachers and 400 students.

In the case of the 10th Class, the accessible population (N) was 18453. Two students were randomly selected for each teacher, and the sample size so determined was $400 n_i = (N_i / N) * n$

A simple random sampling technique was adopted in this research for the selection of respondents.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

Table 2

Reliability Test

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.988	48

Table 2 indicates result of reliability test. The average Reliability Coefficient was found 0.98 in the case of questionnaires for teachers and students which confirmed that the instrument was highly reliable. The validity of the instrument was checked by four experts having extraordinary experience in the relevant area. Some items were found weak and were deleted. Thus, the instrument was reshaped with their help.

Delimitation

The study was delimited to Government Boys secondary schools. Girls' secondary schools and Private schools were not under the purview of this study. Moreover, the academic achievement of students was delimited to their academic achievement in the three subjects of Biology, Physics and General Science in the SSC (A) Exam 2021. The academic achievement of the students of class 10th was determined from their percentage results in the said subjects.

Sources of Data

In the current study, as the number of respondents was large, a questionnaire was used to collect information from them. The questionnaire was delivered to secondary school teachers and students of class 10th to elicit their responses.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher personally visited the sample schools in the two districts, Mardan and Nowshera, and approached the respondents for data collection.

Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed through SPSS version 21. Regression test was used to explore the impact of teachers' communication skills on students' academic achievement. The hypothesis was subjected to the above-mentioned test.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 3

Teachers' communication skills (Sub Variables mean value) – Teachers' Perception

Teachers' Communication Skills	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking skills	200	3.33	5.00	4.4817	.34679
Writing skills	200	2.33	5.00	4.4900	.49892
Listening skills	200	1.00	5.00	4.3250	.67947
Body-language skills	200	1.00	5.00	4.1450	.75951
Valid N (listwise)	200				

Table 3 displays the mean values and standard deviations of facets of Teachers' communication skills. The writing skills of teachers achieved the mean value (M=4.4900) and standard deviation (SD=.49), which is near the strongly agreed scale and is the highest of all other facets. This shows that according to teachers' Perceptions, they have been using writing skills excellently. The mean value of speaking skills is (M= 4.4817), with a standard deviation (SD=.34), which is also nearly strongly agreed upon, showing that teachers have also been using speaking skills in an excellent way. The mean value of listening skills is (M=4.3250), with a Standard deviation (SD=.67). In the case of body-language skills, the mean is (M= 4.1450), with a standard deviation (SD=.75). This is evident from the mean values that teachers have been using speaking and writing skills better than listening and body language skills.

Table 4

Teachers' communication skills (Sub Variables mean value) - (Students' Perceptions)

Teachers' Communication skills	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking Skills	400	1.33	5.00	4.2447	.78368
Writing Skills	400	1.33	5.00	4.2447	.78368
Listening Skills	400	1.50	5.00	4.2179	.78149
Body language Skills	400	1.00	5.00	3.8595	.93709
Valid N (listwise)	400				

Table 4 displays students' perspectives on various facets of their teachers' communication skills. The descriptive statistics indicate that according to students' perception, the mean value of speaking and writing skills of teachers is (M= 4.2447), and the standard deviation is (SD=0.78368) in both cases. The value is near the agreed scale, which shows that according to students' perceptions, their teachers use speaking and writing skills excellently. The mean value of listening skills (M=4.2179) and standard deviation (SD=0.78149) which is near the agreed scale. The mean value of body-language skills (M=3.8595) and standard deviation (SD=.93709) is the least one as compared to values of other facets of teachers' classroom communication skills.

It is evident from student's perception that teachers have been using speaking, writing skills better than listening and body language skills.

Table 5

Regression Table Teachers' Classroom Communication Skills (mean value) Impact on Students Results - (Teachers' Perceptions)

Regression weight	Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P-value	Null Hypothesis
Teachers' communication skills (mean)- Result	.070	.005	.984	.323	Accepted

As indicated in Table 5, $P=.323>.05$, which means that there is a positive but insignificant impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable, showing that teachers' communication skills have a positive but insignificant impact on student's academic achievement. Therefore, the null Hypothesis H_01 , that there is no significant impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students at the secondary school level, is accepted.

Moreover, the R square value is 0.005 which means that the independent variable-teachers' classroom communication skills (mean value) have a 0.5% impact on the dependent variable- academic achievement of students. The Beta coefficient value is 0.070 which shows that an increase in independent variable teachers' communication skills (mean value) by 1 unit will cause a change in academic achievement of students by 0.070 units (7%).

Table 6

Regression Table Impact of Teachers' Communication Skills (mean value) on Students Results - (Students' Perceptions)

Regression weight	Beta coefficient	R ²	F	P-value	Null Hypothesis
Teachers' Communication Skills (Mean-Result)	-.051	.003	.525	.469	Accepted

As indicated in Table 6, $P\text{ value}=.469>.05$, which means that teachers' communication skills have a positive but insignificant impact on the student's academic achievement; therefore, the null Hypothesis H_01 that there is no significant impact of teachers' communication skills on academic achievement of students at secondary school level is accepted. Moreover, the R square value is 0.003, which means that the independent variable- teachers' communication skills (mean value) has a 0.3% impact on the dependent academic achievement of students. Moreover, the Beta co-efficient value is 0- 0.051, showing that an increase in independent variable teachers' communication skills by 1 unit will cause a change in the academic achievement of students by -0.051 unit (-5.1%).

Research Findings

Analysis of the teachers' Perceptions of their communication skills indicates that teachers use speaking and writing skills excellently, as well as body language and listening skills in a moderate way. Analysis of students' Perceptions of their teachers' communication skills also shows that the teachers use speaking and writing skills excellently while listening and body language skills in a moderate way. Therefore, the findings of the study are that teachers have been using speaking and writing skills better than their listening and body language skills.

Findings from the regression test revealed that teachers' communication skills have a positive but weak and insignificant impact on the academic achievement of students at the secondary school level.

Discussion

In 1972 Ginott presented a theory of effective communication which is based on the belief that good language and behaviour of the instructor sets the tone for learning in the classroom. In such an environment, students take an active part in classroom activities and learn a lot.

Findings of the current study were that majority of the teachers used their communication skills excellently with exceptions in some areas. However, result of the regression test revealed that There was also no significant impact of teachers' communication skills on academic achievement of students therefore, H_{01} hypothesis was accepted.

In the literature, there are many studies where teachers' effective communication skills have shown a significant impact on academic achievement of students. Alamgir Khan et al. (2017) wanted to assess the perceptions of students regarding the role of teachers' communication skills in their academic success. It was concluded that teachers' communication skills play a significant role in the academic success of students. These findings are not in agreement with the findings of the current study.

In another study, Obilor and Akpan (2020) investigated the influence of teacher's communication skills on academic performance of students in public senior schools in Rivers State. They concluded that attitude, listening, speaking, gestures, and facial expression, as components of teachers' communication skills greatly influence academic performance of students. These findings also do not conform to the findings of the study at hand.

Some studies also show that there was a positive but significantly low relationship between teachers' communication behaviours and students' results. Emmanuel NWUNE et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between students' Perceptions of teachers' communication behaviours and the academic performance of students. It was found that there existed a positive but significantly low relationship between students' perceptions of their teachers' communication behaviours and the performance of students. These findings are in line with the findings of the current study.

The current study revealed that there was no significant impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students. This insignificant impact may be attributed to some gray areas in teachers' communication skills and some other factors related to Covid-19 Education Policy.

The findings reveal that there were some grey areas in teachers' communication skills. Teachers use body language and listening skills in a moderate way. These grey areas in teachers' communication skills must have affected the academic achievement of students.

COVID-19 education policy could be another cause of the insignificant impact. In order to save students from this deadly virus and also keep the teaching-learning process, the government introduced the COVID-19 education policy. Salient points of the policy were: staggered classes, smart syllabus, the use of masks, maintaining distance, online homework, free promotion of students (session 2019-20) to the

next grade in the case of 9th and 11th-grade and in the case of students (session 2020-21) SSC annual exam (2021) grade 10th exam was only in elective subjects. All these things were new for teachers and students and affected the teaching-learning process.

Under the staggered classes policy, students were allowed to go to school in stages; half of the total number of students were called to the school on one day and the other half on the other day.

The online homework policy also could not be implemented in letters and spirit. Most Government school students have no online facility. Even schools had no such facility therefore, this policy also failed. The free promotion of grade 9th students to grade 10th detracted the students as they were not focused on the grade 10th exam and expected free promotion this time also which was not granted. Therefore, students could not show good results in the grade 10th exam (2021).

Other factors such as smart syllabi, exams only in elective subjects, no proper school-based preparation and psychological stress due to the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to the dismal academic achievement of the students.

Conclusion

The findings of the majority of studies indicate a significant impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students. The current study also investigated the impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students. Results of the study indicated a positive but low and insignificant impact of teachers' skills on the academic achievement of students. Analysis of teachers' and students' perceptions reveals that Teachers used speaking and writing skills better than listening and body language skills, which must have affected the academic achievement of the students.

Moreover, the Covid-19 Education policy also affected the teaching-learning process to an alarming extent specially the free promotion policy. It is concluded that due to the above-mentioned factors, students could not show the desired result and analysis of the result showed a positive but low and insignificant impact of teachers' communication skills on the academic achievement of students.

Thus, it is concluded there is room for improvement if teachers use all mediums of communication properly and the option of free promotion is neglected once for all, the teaching-learning process will improve and consequently students will show better results in the examination.

Recommendations

After a thorough study of the findings, the researcher recommends the following steps for the improvement of teachers' classroom communication skills.

1. It is recommended to provide proper training to teachers in the field of communication skills. Furthermore, the teachers should use all mediums of communication properly with special emphasis on listening and body language skills for creation of conducive learning environment in the class. It is therefore recommended to educate and train teachers in the proper use of listening and body language skills.

2. It is also recommended that in the future even in case of national calamity, the free promotion option should be discouraged as the Free Promotion Policy in 2020 in the covid-19 scenario played a negative role and detracted the students. The students had developed the mindset of free promotion which was not granted in 2021 therefore, they could not show good results in the SSC (A) exam 2021.
3. It is recommended that Online classes facility should be provided in schools. For that matter, students should also be provided with online facilities at home so that in the wake of a disaster the teaching-learning process may continue and on-line examination may be conducted.

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