Exploring the Influence of Teachers' Soft Skills on Students' Learning Outcomes at the University Level

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This study explores the influence of university teachers' soft skills on students' learning outcomes in Karachi Pakistan's public sector universities. The primary objective is to understand the perceptions of teachers regarding their use of soft skills such as communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence within the classroom. A qualitative phenomenological methodology was employed, using semi-structured interviews with 08 university teachers from Karachi. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, and the data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that effective communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence significantly enhance student engagement, motivation, and academic success. However, challenges such as time constraints and varying student awareness of soft skills were identified. Despite these challenges, the study highlights opportunities for integrating soft skills training into university curricula, offering recommendations for teachers to incorporate collaborative activities and communication-focused tasks into their teaching strategies. The study emphasizes the growing importance of soft skills in preparing students for professional success and suggests further emphasis on these skills in teacher development programs.

1. Introduction

Since effective work requires the use of soft skills, there is a growing trend of employers employing both hard talents and soft skills in the workplace. It was investigated the role of emotional intelligence in terms of students learning and the significance of the capacity of teachers to control their emotions and the emotional status of students. Their research indicated that high emotionally intelligent teachers more successfully provided learning conditions, which promoted student engagement and performance academically. The qualifications of the graduates themselves in the aspect of both hard and soft skills definitely help them in seeking a job. It is true that in some occupations, hard skills are required, but soft talents are capable of assisting employees to operate more effectively (Jerome & Antony, 2018; Ma et al., 2025).

Besides the education capability teachers are usually in need of other skills to facilitate their duties. There are certain skills that are learnt through practice. Teacher helpers are novice educators with the sole previous work experience in education institutions. They discovered that educators using effective and understanding communication did not only become more disciplined in the classroom but also boosted both the level of academic performance and general wellness of students (Zhukova, 2018; Sigalla, & Kimario, 2025).

They found that the teachers with good interpersonal skills are more effective in their work with students, making them collaborate and develop inclusive learning environments. The article highlights the increasing importance of soft skills in relation to improving teacher-student interaction and relationships (TOUATI, 2023). Soft skills in turn signify the potential of excellence in all people. Teaching is explained as an act of deliberately providing a specific learner with a situation whereby he or she may behave in a given manner in order to undergo a set of specific intended goals or targets. Competent definition encompasses being appropriate, adequate or as legally competent, admissible or capable of doing the job in question. The competencies of teachers are checked. The teachers who were better at managing classroom problems and adapting their teaching approaches to the needs of both students were those who had a greater intellectual capacity to manage their feelings and emotional states (Sigalla, & Kimario, 2025).

The study has emphasized the role of emotional intelligence in achieving positive student achievement and building positive teacher- student relationships Ma et al. (2025), soft skill was early education and business development In addition, and numerous countries adjacent to soft skills as they are the powerful and effective tools or instruments of cooperation and collaboration. Soft skills are hard to explain; soft skills come in handy with issues such as career development and workplace ethics. The soft talents are taking initiatives, integrity, logical thinking, being open to learning, intention, driven by success and enthused, effective communication abilities, convincing and ten) creative as initiating, paying attention to detail, being cautious, and working as a team. The specialist highlights the importance of the fact that soft communication skills are required in the employment that implies administration (Cimatti, 2016; Singh, 2022).

The capacity of an educator to teach is a manner of thinking, feeling, performing, or speaking which helps the teacher to accomplish his or her role or job. The teaching competences are most effective in the selection of candidates who are already good fit to the

position but they can also be applied in evaluation and development. Soft skills are capable of enhancing the professional maturity and mobility of a person and increasing his/her probability of securing the desired job (Nitonde, & Nandapurkar, 2014; Aponte et al., 2025). They play a fundamental role in the professional development of teachers so as to equip them with different situations in the workplace. Individual teachers interested in achieving success in both academic and professional life should have soft skills. The aim of the present research is to have a clearer insight on the relationship between soft skills of teachers and their capacity to teach as well as their career maturity. Thus, this research aims at investigating the perceptions of teachers at universities regarding their soft skills that they are employing in their classroom.

2. Literature Review

The ability to work well with others is a foundational skill that supports collective problem-solving and creativity found that fostering collaborative environments in education leads to greater empathy, improved communication and enhanced problem-solving skills. The transition to online learning in 2020 necessitated the development of virtual teamwork skills, making collaboration a key area of focus in modern education (Singh, 2022; Adnan et al., 2012).

Teachers can help students understand current events by relating their lesson plans to them, or they can make their teachings more accessible by adapting them to different grade levels and learning styles. "In today's education environment, teachers must go beyond subject-matter expertise and cultivate strong interpersonal competencies. For example, a 2021 study of pre-service teachers found that communication; problem-solving and teamwork were key dimensions of soft skills and varied significantly by major and seniority (Ismail et al., 2020; Ahmad, Rashid, & Ali, 2023).

Soft skills can be broadly defined as non-technical skills related to how individuals work and interact with others. For teachers, these skills include Collaboration and teamwork is critical soft skills that contribute to a positive and productive school culture (Haider, Ahmad, & Ali, 2024). Teachers frequently work with colleagues, parents and other stakeholders to improve student outcomes. Additionally, collaborative teaching strategies, such as co-teaching or team-based learning, have been shown to enhance student engagement and academic achievement. According to Murray (2024), fostering collaboration skills among teachers not only benefits educators' professional development but also helps students develop similar skills. Research by Aponte et al. (2025), emphasizes that emotionally intelligent teachers can better navigate difficult situations, build stronger relationships with students, and improve overall classroom behavior.

2.1 Collaboration and Team Work

A lot of management literature theories and prescriptions do not capture the more challenging elements of effective teams reaching their high performance. There are prominent examples in the collective work where a combination of talents in a group performs way better than its individual contribution. This is in different fields; business,

symphonies, ballet, theater, athletics, and other performing arts. Although this phenomenon can be easily detected, it can hardly be located. It is a complicated and even enigmatic process. Nevertheless, this is hardly done by working, training, and collaboration (Vangrieken, & Kyndt, 2020; Jabeen et al., 2023). The authors found the factors that are essential to the effectiveness of groups both in structural and human resource aspects. Specified deadlines and objectives helped groups to work much more effectively than those that lacked sharpness. One of the most frequent failure cases was that the teams were assigned to goals with no specifics, unclear timeframes, and no description of success, being informed that they needed to work out the details (Hafeez et al., 2021). In these situations, teams were doomed initially, and it is usually because of failure to acquire resources or the lack of important knowledge and paramount organizational contacts. In certain instances, however, the group had weak power and its mandate (Akram et al., 2024; Oad et al., 2024).

All of this good effort still leaves out crucial aspects of teamwork. Power and conflict issues, which frequently prevent groups from working at their best, receive very little attention. Furthermore, it seldom ever discusses the symbolic components of flow, spirit, and enchantment that are the basis of remarkable performance (Imran & Akhtar, 2023). The political and symbolic issues are the ones that most frequently get in the way of managers' attempts to improve team performance (García et al., 2016; Naeem et al., 2022). According to our own research, managers in both the public and commercial sectors frequently depend too much on the structural and human resource viewpoints while underutilizing the political and symbolic lenses.

2.2 Communication Skill

With effective communication skills, you can easily relate to people all around you and life will be easily handled. On the contrary, ineptitude in communication skills may destroy interpersonal as well as professional relationships and turn life into a complicated affair. There are individuals who appear to be able to recognize communication without trying hard. They are able to communicate quickly and succinctly in one way and adapt their words, tones and messages depending on their audience (Laker & Powell, 2011; Phulpoto et al., 2024). Communication ability is, perhaps, the most important skill in life. It helps us to communicate with individuals and understand what they are telling us. All one has to do is simply listen to a child who is listening to its mother and attempts to imitate her voice to understand the simplicity of the need to communicate. The simplest form of communication is transfer of information between one place to another. It may be delivered in a spoken or written form (through books, magazines, websites, or emails), through image (with the use of logos, maps, charts, or graphs), or by nonverbal means (through body language, gestures, tone and pitch of voice). The truth is that it may take a lifetime to perfect a blend of these communication skills, as anyone can ever claim to have done so. However, a great number of comparatively easy actions can be carried out to improve your communication skills and ensure that you are able to provide and obtain information effectively. One recent research by Pehlivan (2023) on perception of self-communication skills by preservice teachers showed remarkable grade-based differences and high self-rate differences.

The ability to deliver information in a clear and accurate and intended way is one of the life skills that cannot be underestimated. You can always improve at communicating and you may find it improves your life overall. In your career, you are nearly bound to provide demonstration of your ability to communicate productively when seeking a job or attempting to progress with the one that you currently have (Bhatnagar, 2011). Effective communication needs to be used in speaking to various people. A lot of them are essential skills which most employers are after. Communication between the individual giving and the recipient of the information verbally and nonverbally is usually termed as communication. The most frequently used form of communication is verbal communication. It is a two-way process which involves commenting on the received message. Communication is a process of exchange of information, thoughts, and opinions with a certain goal in mind. Besides oral communication, it is possible to communicate using symbols and signs as well. The need of 21st-century university instructors in Islamabad, Pakistan: communication skills in the group of prospective educators (Masood & Hina, 2024).

Pehlivan (2023), carried out a research study on the perceptions of preservice teachers about their individual communication skills and found that there were significant differences by grade level and by high self-ratings. Communication is also essential in the bigger family context be it during a trip or even in the well-being and happiness of your teenage children. Good communication skills may also help you in dealing with contacts with companies and groups. In your life, you are likely to encounter a number of institutions and organizations, including stores, businesses, government agencies, and schools. Effective communication skills can simplify these talks as they will ensure that you are able to express yourself in a calm and clear manner besides being able to receive the responses.

3. Methodology

The approach in this research used a qualitative phenomenology research methodology to examine the soft skills of university teachers in Karachi Pakistan with reference to their perceptions and interpretation of the soft skills. The samples were gathered based on semi-structured individual interviews of ten participants which comprised of 5 male teachers and 5 female teachers in 2 universities in Karachi. Sampling was done by the convenience sampling technique which led to selection of participants who were available and could offer useful information on the topic. Ten (eight in the main and two in the pilot study) respondents were selected purposely so that they could be relevant to the research question. The major method of data collection in qualitative research is semi structured interviews, which are efficient due to their flexibility and the ability to allow the interviewees share their opinions in details (Creswell et al., 2011; Walsham, 1995). The interviews were conducted form 25-30 minutes using open-ended questions to stimulate a detailed answer. The questions allowed probing and prompting to continue elaborating on the answers of the participants, getting to know more about their thought. The researcher transcribed the answers after each of the interviews and gave the transcripts to the participants so that they could check and rectify the inconsistencies. The thematic analysis was used to analyze the data in order to extract common patterns and themes in the responses. The research was conducted in line with the guidelines used in conducting qualitative research and hence the

research methodology was sound and the results would provide significant information on the soft skills of university teachers in Pakistan.

4. Data Analysis and Results

The findings of the study have been described based on themes which were emerged in interviews:

4.1 Soft Skills Awareness

University teachers need soft skills because they largely influence the learning outcomes of students. These are communication, emotional intelligence and adaptability skills as well as problem-solving skills which contribute to a good and involving learning environment. In case teachers have good soft skills, they will be able to get in touch with students, comprehend their needs as well as develop collaborative classroom dynamics. This results in better student involvement, enthusiasm and academic performance. Soft skills also equip students with real world challenges, which will increase their team work skills, effective communication, and critical thinking skills that are crucial to achieving academic success and succeeding in the profession. According to the Respondent 2, the perceptions are as follows:

"In my opinion, communication, teamwork, and emotional intelligence are very vital. Development of skills in communication serves to solve complex issues and group learning activities can be carried out through teamwork. The direct benefit of emotional intelligence is that we are able to comprehend the needs of students and can react to them accordingly in order to motivate and assist them".

Participant 5 explained in the following way:

"In my case, communication skills, active listening and conflict resolution are very important. These competencies assist in solving the student-related issues and providing a healthy classroom atmosphere in which students feel listened to and respected which leads to their subsequent academic achievements".

4.2 Collaboration and Teamwork

Teamwork and collaboration are critical in teaching in universities because they contribute to an active learning process where students are able to share ideas, solve problems together, and learn through the different perspectives. These are the skills that promote peer-to-peer learning, and better communication and critical thinking. When the collaboration activities are introduced in the lessons by teachers, students acquire the necessary interpersonal skills which are crucial to their academic and professional experiences. Teamwork also encourages responsibility, accountability and collaboration among students in preparation to future profession which mostly involves working in teams. In general, teamwork and cooperation enhance the learning process and make people very balanced.

In the next words, participant 4 explained:

"These are group work and collaborative problem-solving activities. I believe that teamwork also enables students to grow interpersonally, conflict management and leadership abilities and that are vital to the student in academic and professional achievement".

Participant no 7replied:

"I can suggest the students to engage in teamwork exercises, e.g. a debate or a group project since it not only helps them gain new knowledge, but also teaches them how to work as a team, solve problems, and communicate".

4.3 Communication Skills

University teachers need to possess good communication skills, which have a direct impact on the level of knowledge and interaction of students with the material presented in the course. Effective communication helps the teachers to explain complicated concepts in a manner that the students understand easily to avoid confusion and achieve higher academic results. Communication is very important both verbal and non-verbal, teachers who are able to clearly express themselves, use body language to emphasize what they are saying, and to listen to what students are asking will generate an interactive classroom atmosphere. This makes students participative and engaged, prompting them to ask questions, give their opinions and engage in discussions. Besides, excellent communications allow building rapport with the students, make them feel important and listened to which contributes to motivation and confidence. Effective communicative teachers also have a significant effect on offering constructive feedback, helping the students to overcome the problem, and establishing a helpful learning environment that leads to better learning results and student satisfaction.

Participant 1 stated this to be as follows:

"Communication is crucial in the manner of clarity and understanding. I also make sure that I communicate effectively and give examples when lecturing. I would also encourage students to ask questions and this will help in clarifying doubts and also involves active participation in the classroom".

Participant 3 emphasized in the following manner:

"When communicating with students, I am aware of verbal and non-verbal communication. In my opinion, good communication is during which students feel free and not afraid of asking questions and sharing their ideas, which will enable them to learn more effectively".

4.4 Challenges and Opportunities

Difficulties and possibilities of learning soft skills are noteworthy to both students and teachers. There is insufficient time and resources to pay attention to the development of soft skills in an already busy curriculum, which is one of the main challenges. There are numerous teaching professionals who are restricted by a tight program and have little time to undertake those activities, Also, there are students who might be opposed to the idea of having a soft skills training and could consider this as secondary to the academic content. Nevertheless, they are difficult challenges that create opportunities. In the case of teachers, it

is possible to involve soft skills in the classroom by being creative in the form of group discussions, role plays, and group projects, which will enhance student engagement and learning. Besides, soft skills are becoming a commonly regarded career success tool, which leaves an opportunity to teach students soft skills in their future careers. With these difficulties solved, teachers will be able to make the students well-rounded and adaptable, ready to face the real-world challenges.

Participant 6 is in the following:

"The difficulty that I experience is that of dealing with a large and heterogeneous class. In order to address this, I change my teaching strategies to meet the needs of the various needs and employ individual and group-based tasks so that all students are benefited".

The respondent no 8 talked about the following:

"Among the troubles is the different perception of soft skills with students. In order to eliminate this, I attempt to give clear definitions and real-life examples to enable the students relate the importance of these skills to their overall academic and professional success".

4.5 Discussion

Various studies highlight the significance of soft skills to university teachers as vital in improving the level of student engagement and performance. Based on the research findings, soft skills, including communication, teamwork, and challenges, is important in the establishment of a favorable classroom setting (Ahmad et al., 2024). A teacher of high soft skills will be able to get along with the students better, not only in academic but also in emotional needs which will create a more supportive learning environment. This is consistent with the opinions of some of the participants in the study, where Teacher 2 observed that emotional intelligence is essential when it comes to student motivation, as well as their success. On the same note, Teacher 5 emphasized on the need to listen and resolve conflicts that would help have a healthy classroom atmosphere and eventually improves academic performance. These observations are in line with the previous research, including those made by Hargie, (2021), who also highlight the importance of interpersonal skills in promoting teaching performance. Nevertheless, difficulties with such skills incorporation into formal teaching methods, as pointed out by Teacher 6, signify the necessity of further organized methods of soft skills training in universities (Imran, Sultana, & Ahmed, 2023).

Teamwork and collaboration were also revealed as central soft skills that have a beneficial influence on learning and professional growth of students. The introduction of collaborative assignments in the form of group discussions and group projects during lessons by teachers helps students to acquire the necessary interpersonal and problem-solving skills. This is in line with the findings of Jackson, Sibson, and Riebe, (2014), which refer to the creative power of teamwork and the solution of problems based on it. The views of teacher 4 regarding the application of group work and collaborative problem-solving activities are consistent with this literature because they propose that the group work and collaborative problem solving activities can not only advance the academic performance of the students, but also equip them to professional settings where teamwork is essential (Akram, Fatima, &

Ahmad, 2024). Additionally, the sense of Teacher 7 towards team-based activities such as debates resembles the earlier studies of Murray (2024), who concluded that collaborative instructional methods improve student engagement and academic success.

Communication experience has always been identified as one of the most important soft skills in teachers. Communication helps convey more complicated information and make students comprehend what is given and be active in the educational process. Verbal and non-verbal messages are essential as stressed by Teacher 1 who focuses on making lectures clear and promoting the engagement of students. This observation is consistent with the research conducted by Pehlivan (2023) and Bambaeeroo and Shokrpour, (2017), who observe that not only do teachers possessing good communication abilities increase the level of understanding in learners but they also create rapport and a participatory learning atmosphere. Also, the theme of Teacher 3 on the importance of non-verbal cues confirms the results of Phutela, (2015), who note the significance of the body language and the tone in communication. In spite of these benefits, the problem is to maintain the effective and repeated communication within large and diverse classroom environments, which is observed by many participants. Feedback and constant practice as a solution suggested by Chen, (2011) can assist teachers in improving their communication strategies and making them more effective through curriculum (Dilshad et al., 2023).

The inadequacy of time and resources to work on the development of soft skills besides the academic curriculum is one of the primary issues raised by the participants. The situation of teacher 6 dealing with big mixed classes is indicative of a pressing issue in the field of education in which teachers are not given the time to integrate the teaching of soft skills. Nevertheless, such a challenge also opens a possibility to be creative in teaching, including incorporating soft skills in group discussions and group projects. The necessity of the organized training of soft skills is reflected in the literature, especially Hargie, (2021) state that in addition to the human resource approach, the symbolic approach to the development of teams should also be used in this digital era (Muznah et al., 2025). The fact that Teacher 8 had different experiences with understanding soft skills by students also underscores the need to define the skills well and provide real-life examples to help students become more familiar with these skills. Due to employers giving more emphasis on soft skills in their recruitment exercise, teachers now have a chance to provide students with the right tools to perform better at their workplaces in future. It is in line with the results of the Bloomberg report that highlight the increase in the demand towards soft skills in the workforce (Ahmad et al., 2023; Kolachi et al., 2024).

5. Conclusion

This study examined how the soft skills of university teachers affect the learning achievement of the students in the framework of the Pakistani universities. It was established that soft skills especially communication, collaboration and teamwork is very important in improving teaching effectiveness as well as engagement of the students. Using high level of soft skills, teachers could establish inclusive learning environments and therefore enhance academic success and personal growth among students. Teamwork and collaboration were emphasized as the key points of peer-to-peer learning, and communication skills were

defined as the main aspects of guaranteeing clarity and active participation among students. Although some of the challenges involved include time constraint and differences in perceptions of the students on the value of soft skills, the study also found that the challenges present an opportunity to educators to implement soft skills training in their pedagogical practice. By modifying their practices, teachers are able to develop these critical competencies, and hence prepare students to succeed in their academic life and their future career. This study emphasizes the need to acquire soft skills in higher education as a method of improving the results of teaching but also equipping students to meet the demands of the professional world.

5.1 Recommendations

On the basis of findings of the research following recommendations are made:

➢ Universities are supposed to incorporate soft skills training, like communication, teamwork and collaboration, in the curriculum. This will make sure that students acquire these critical competencies in addition to academic expertise that will make them both academically and professionally successful.

➢ Professional development programs that aim at improving the soft skills of the teachers like teamwork, communication, and problem solving should be provided. This will assist them in modelling such skills in the classroom.

➢ The instructional methods of team learning, including group projects and team work activities, should be used more often by teachers. Such activities assist the students to acquire problem solving skills and also improve communication.

➢ The use of role-playing activities and real-life situations in teaching can be used by teachers to give the students practical experience of using soft skills in real life. This will improve their knowledge and usage of these skills in various situations.

➢ Since students have different styles of learning, the teacher must apply flexible methods of instructions, like combining both individual and group-based educational methods to allow all students to gain advantages of the soft skills construction, particularly in large classes.

➢ Teachers are supposed to stress emotional intelligence in teaching and learning. The teachers who are aware of their emotions and control their emotions, as well as being sensitive to the students, establish an atmosphere of support, which increases the student engagement and student achievement.

➢ Universities must make resources and time available to the teachers to concentrate on the development of soft skills. Designing special areas where training can be done, and provision of the tools and time to enable teachers to incorporate these skills in their classes will lead to improved educational achievements with students.

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