

## **Teachers' Politeness as a Predictor of Students' Self-esteem and Academic Performance**

Muhammad Uzair-ul-Hassan<sup>\*</sup>, Muhammad Shahid Farooq<sup>\*\*</sup>,  
Muhammad Pervez Akhtar<sup>\*\*\*</sup> and Iram Parveen<sup>\*\*\*</sup>

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### **Abstract**

Time and again different attractive and appealing slogans were introduced by School Education Department, Government of Punjab, Pakistan emphasizing on love and kindness towards students rather than corporal punishment and resultantly, corporal punishment was prohibited in schools. Teachers were expected to deal students with politeness and not to make them scared of corporal punishment. It was considered as a tool to improve their academic performance and self-confidence. Based on the rationale provided, this study hypothesized that the students with whom teachers are polite show significant improvement in academic performance and self-esteem. The study used teachers' politeness as a predictor to determine students' academic performance and self-esteem in elementary grades. The population of this study was all the students of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades enrolled in public and private schools in a district of Punjab province of Pakistan. Two hundred students were taken as sample through stratified random sampling from schools of two selected tehsils of a district. Regression and correlation analyses indicated that teachers' politeness has significant impact on students' academic performance and self-esteem that is also indicating teachers' politeness as a good predictor of students' academic performance and self-esteem. Teachers may use politeness as a strategy to improve academic performance and self-esteem of students

**Keywords:** Elementary school teachers, politeness, elementary school students, self-esteem, academic performance, self confidence, corporal punishment.

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\* University of Sargodha, Sargodha-Pakistan. Email: uhassan74@gmail.com

\*\* Assistant Professor, Institute of Education and Research, University of the Punjab, Lahore-Pakistan. Email: shahid.ier@pu.edu.pk

\*\*\* University of Sargodha, Sargodha-Pakistan.

## Introduction

Every nation wants to educate its young ones by providing them cordial learning environment at school as well as in other in-formal and non-formal learning spaces. Today where innovative technological gadgets are used in teaching learning there are also many psychological measures introduced time and again to make learning effective and long lasting. These measures are taken not only by individual institutions but also by the governing authorities. Govt. of Punjab, Pakistan (1998) recommended that the teachers should bring changes in the education system and can improve the quality of education. The teachers can highlight those barriers that can hinder the qualitative change in education. Thus, the teachers can raise the standard of education which guarantees the prosperity, growth and achievement of the people in society. The School Education Department, Government of Punjab raised and introduced a slogan in 2003 "*Mar nahi Payar*" in schools (National Educational Policy 2003-2008). In consequence, punishment is prohibited in schools and teachers are asked strictly to deal students softly and do not make them afraid of corporal punishment and teach them with politeness. Meaning of politeness is the use of proper word or phrase in the suitable context which is determined by the rules that are established in society. Those words should be avoided that are not supported by the established polite culture of the society. Some words are very appreciable in some cultures but are not considered as pleasant and acceptable in some other cultures. In social interaction, to burgeon politeness is to preserve pleasant and soft social interaction and potentially face threatening use of speech acts should be avoided. In this connection, politeness intimacy, nearness and close relationships and the social distance between the speaker and listener should be maintained. Politeness contains no pride on the part of speaker and speaker should provide comfort and give sense of friendly relation to listener (Jumanto, 2008).

In the light of social agency theory, it can be concluded that the teachers' politeness has a great impact on the students' achievement. The students, who learn from polite teachers, get value able scores in the test. The students that learn from strict teachers, the performance of those students will be not high. The influence of this politeness will be greater on the weak students. The intelligent students can get knowledge more easily from polite teacher and can think in deeper by relating the new knowledge with previous knowledge. However, the impact of politeness will be strongest on the poor knowledge seekers. They need encouragement and cooperation that may be available by the polite teacher. The academic achievement of the student is affected by many factors. These factors push the students to poor academic attainments. Due to these factors, a student cannot get value able scores in the examination. Research proved that these factors affect the performance (Atkinson, Mayer, & Merrill, 2005).

Showing good manners towards others is politeness. Theories of politeness describe the rules, factors, scales and principles of politeness that contribute to politeness. Layoff (1990), Leech (1992), and Brown and Lavinson (1987) describe the politeness in social aspect. Fraser and Nolan (1981); Scollon, R., and Scollon, S. (2001) tried to discuss the politeness in social belief. Ellen (2001) and Watts (2003) suggested that politeness is affected by culture. Layoff (1990) described the rules of politeness and explained that the politeness is an important factor of communication that affects the communication between speaker and listener. As people interact with each other on some rules, there may be methods to deal with face threatening acts from two perspectives (*i.e.*) negative and positive. Negative face desires to convey ideas without effort while positive face deals with the desire to have ones help (Brown & Lavinson, 2011).

Politeness gives birth to healthy relationship between the speaker and the listener. No one can deny the importance and significance of retaining such feelings and cooperation. According to Leech (2011), four main situations call for different politeness *i.e.* positive or negative politeness. In the competitive situation, politeness is being considered as negative. For example, when a speaker gives an order to the audience, the audiences perceive it negative. In the convivial situation, politeness is being perceived as positive. Fraser (1990); Fraser and Nolen (1981) define the politeness as a communicational agreement and Kumiarahman (2001) considers politeness in the sense of respect. Graetz (1995) explained that success of student depends on social status of parents that leads to status of student's self esteem.

Self-esteem is the understanding that a person thinks about self. A person with positive expectations about self is considered to have high self-esteem. Self-esteem/self-concept is highly correlated with academic achievement (Cvencak, Fryberg, Covarrubias & Meltzoff, 2017). The self-esteem/self-concept of students takes them to high performance. Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs (2003) explained that developing self-concept of students' increase their academic performance. The self-esteem is affected by different factors such as negative emotional responses. The criticism, penalty, joking and violence affect the self-esteem. The economically poor status and failure in school affect the self-worth of someone. Even, race, religion, culture and sex affect students' feelings. These all factors influence students' self-conscious and self- esteem. When negative emotions develop early in life, students develop feelings patterns that make their habits of thinking. For example, students think negatively about themselves from childhood and then these thoughts become powerful. Consequently, students feel dissatisfied about themselves. They feel unimportant and their self-esteem becomes low.

It has been observed that school type influence students' performance. Students studying in demanding schools achieve high scores in tests. Birch and Miller (2007) have predicted that attendance affects performance. Similarly, the home environment of the student influences the students' performance in school. Educated parents provide good learning environment for their children. Marzano, Marzano & Pickering (2003) explained that school authorities provide guidance and counseling to parents to provide good home environment which ultimately improve students' work.

Studies on impact of socio-economic status, parents' education, family background, home environment, student enrollment, study hours, school environment and previous achievement on student performance have been found in Pakistan. But no such study was found on the impact of teachers' politeness on student performance and self-esteem. Teachers' politeness as new variable has been introduced. It is assumed/hypothesized that teachers' politeness has great impact on students' better academic performance and self-esteem. Based on this assumption, the study derived its purpose to investigate teachers' politeness as a predictor towards students' academic performance and self-esteem. Further, the study was conducted in both public and private schools.

### **Objective of the study**

The main objective of the study was to explore teachers' politeness as predictor of students' academic performance and self-esteem.

### **Hypothesis**

The study tried to test the following hypothesis:

- H<sub>0</sub>:1 There is no statistically significant relationship between teachers' politeness and students' self-esteem?
- H<sub>0</sub>:2 There is no statistically significant relationship of teachers' politeness and students' academic performance?
- H<sub>0</sub>:3 There is no statistically significant relationship of students' self esteem and students' academic performance?
- H<sub>0</sub>:4 There is no statistically significant difference in students' opinion regarding their teachers' politeness in the classroom on the basis of students' gender, school location, school type, teachers' qualifications, age, monthly family income?

## **Method and Procedure**

The relationships of different factors were explored in this study, so the study was correlational in its nature. The data were collected through a self report survey. Regression and correlation were deemed suitable to analyze the data. The regression predicted the effect of teacher's politeness on self-esteem and performance while correlation highlighted the relationship of politeness with self-esteem and performance. After taking appointment, researchers visited the schools and collected data from the sample students. Data regarding academic performance of students, the academic scores of each sample student was collected from the respective school's record. Students filled out the questionnaire in the presence of researchers and the queries arisen during data collection process were addressed accordingly.

## **Sampling and Instrumentation**

All the students of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades (age ranges from 12-14 years) enrolled in public and private schools of Sargodha district were the population of study. The study employed mixed method sampling for selecting sample from the population. Tashacorri and Teddlie (2003) are of the view that mixed method sampling has key importance in contemporary social sciences research as mixed method sampling can greatly strengthen the research design in social and behavioural sciences. Sampling of the study had been done in three steps. First of all, from Sargodha district, out of five tehsils, two tehsils, Kotmomin and Bhalwal were selected through simple random sampling using balloting. Japheth (2014) suggested balloting as a technique used in simple random sampling. Secondly, the population was divided into two major strata of public and private schools. According to Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun (2011), stratified sampling can be employed when there is a presence of big strata in the population. In the third step, within each stratum of public and private schools, students from grades 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> were purposively selected owing to fact that elementary school students have better understanding of their classroom and school environment. Purposively sampling, according to Creswell and Plano (2011), is selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomena of interest. So, the data had been collected from two hundred students, ensuring that 100 students from each tehsil were selected for equal representation of the sample from both tehsils.

To survey the politeness of teachers' in the opinion of students an instrument was developed and piloted. The questionnaire on self-esteem was available in the form of Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale. For academic performance, achievement scores of those students who have filled the questionnaire on teachers' politeness and self-esteem were collected from schools' record. Questionnaires used for teachers' politeness and self-esteem were translated in Urdu language. Professional experts' opinion was sought on the questionnaire to ensure content and construct validity of the instrument. The instruments were validated through opinion of five experts of the field. After receiving recommendations of experts, some items were revised. The questionnaire was piloted for the sample of 40 students of public and private schools. The reliability of the politeness questionnaire was 0.740 and the reliability of self-esteem Urdu translated questionnaire was 0.803. After getting validity and reliability, the questionnaires were finalized and used for data collection.

## Results

Data for teachers' politeness and self-esteem were collected on the questionnaire from students of 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades from public and private schools. Data were tabulated and then analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistical measures.

**Table 1**

*Relationship of teachers' politeness and students' self-esteem*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	151.573	1	151.573	27.727	.000
Residual	1082.382	198	5.467		

( $P \leq .05$  level of significance)

The regression Table 1 indicates that there is a statically significant relationship between teachers' politeness and their students' self esteem ( $F=27.727$ ,  $Sig.=.000$ ). It can be concluded that teachers' politeness has a significant impact on the students' self esteem.

**Table 2***Relationship of teacher's politeness, students' self-esteem and academic performance*

Variable	Pearson Correlation	Self-esteem	Academic performance
Politeness	R	.350	.343
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.030
	N	200	40

(P ≤ .05 level of significance)

There is a statistically significant relationship of teachers' politeness with students' self esteem ( $r=.350$ ,  $\text{Sig}=.000$ ) and academic performance ( $r=.343$ ,  $\text{Sig}=.030$ ) (Table 2). Furthermore it can be concluded that the teachers' politeness has positive relationship with students' self esteem and academic performance.

**Table 3***Impact of teachers' politeness on students' performance*

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	13.603	1	13.603	11.210	.000
Residual	240.272	198	1.213		

(P ≤ .05 level of significance)

The regression Table 3 reflects that there is a significant impact of teachers' politeness on the students' performance ( $F=11.210$ ,  $\text{Sig}=.000$ ). It can be concluded from here that the teachers' level of politeness has a strong impact on the students' performance.

**Table 4***Relationship of teacher's politeness and students' performance*

	Pearson correlation	Politeness	Performance
Politeness	r	1	.731
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	200	200

(P ≤ .05 level of significance)

Table 4 indicates that teachers' politeness has a strong positive correlation with the students' academic performance ( $r=.731$ ,  $\text{Sig}=.001$ ) at 0.5 level of significance. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between teachers' politeness and students' performance. The increase in teachers' politeness will result in improvement in students' performance.

**Table 5**

*Comparison of teachers' politeness with students in regard to students' gender, domicile and school type*

Variables	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender					
Male	100	33.2100	2.94150	3.744	0.000
Female	100	31.5400	3.35273		
Region					
Rural	107	31.9626	3.15010	-1.935	0.050
Urban	93	32.8495	3.32627		
School type					
Public	100	31.5700	4.11515	-3.601	0.000
Private	100	33.1800	1.74877		

( $P \leq .05$  level of significance)

Table 5 shows that there is statistically significant difference in the opinion of male and female, urban and rural, public and private school students regarding the politeness of their teachers. The t- value is significant at  $P \leq .05$  level of significance. It means that they have different opinion about the politeness of their teachers with students. The male students' teachers are more polite than the female students ( $t=3.744$ , Mean=33.21). The urban students' teachers are more polite than the rural students' teachers ( $t=-1.935$ , Mean=32.8495). The values ( $t=-3.601$ , Mean=33.1800) indicate that the teachers of students, studying in private sector schools are more polite than the students in public sector schools. It can be concluded from the above description that the male teachers, teachers of urban schools and the teachers working in private sector elementary schools are more polite with their students than their counterparts.

**Table 6**

*Comparison of teachers' politeness in classroom on the basis of teachers' level of education*

Education Levels	N	df	F	Sig.
Higher Secondary	30	3	6.742	.000
Bachelor	88	196		
Masters	65	199		
Above Masters	17			

( $P \leq .05$  level of significance)

The ANOVA Table 6 indicates that there is statistically significant difference in the opinion of students about the politeness of their teachers in connection with the teacher's level of education ( $F= 6.742$ ,  $P\leq .05$ ). It means that the nature of politeness changes with the change in level of education of the teachers.

**Table 7**

*Multiple comparisons of teachers' politeness with respect to their level of education*

Sr.	(I) Teacher's Education	(J) Teacher's Education	Mean Difference (I-J)
1	FA/FSc	BA/BSc	0.20606(*)
		MA/MSc	0.81026(*)
		Above Masters	1.34510(*)
2	BA/BSc	MA/MSc	0.60420(*)
		Above Masters	1.13904(*)
3	MA/MSc	Above Masters	0.53484(*)

(\* $P\leq .05$  level of significance)

Table 7 Post Hoc multiple comparisons indicate that there is a statistical significant difference in teachers' politeness with respect to their level of education. Teachers with higher secondary (FA/F. Sc.) level of education perform significantly better in terms of politeness with students than the teachers with graduation (BA/B. Sc.) (Mean difference= 0.20606, Sig= .000), masters levels of education (Mean difference= 0.81026, Sig= .000) and above masters level of education (Mean difference= 1.34510, Sig= .000). Similarly, teachers with BA/BSc level of education have better performance on politeness than teachers with MA/MSc (Mean difference= .81026, Sig= .000) and above master (Mean difference= 1.13904, Sig= .000). Teachers with masters level of education have significantly better performance on politeness with students than teachers with above masters level of education (Mean difference= 1.34510, Sig= .000). It can be concluded here that the teachers with lower level of education behaves more politely with students than the teachers with some higher level of education.

**Table 8***Comparison of teachers' politeness with regard to their age*

Teacher age	N	df	F	Sig.
Above 20 years	60	3	1.810	.147
Above 30 years	57	196		
Above 40 years	53	199		
Above 50 years	30			

(\* $P \leq .05$  level of significance)

There is no statistically significant difference in the opinion of students regarding the level of politeness of teachers with regard to the age level of teachers. It can be concluded that the politeness does not depend upon the age of teachers (Table 8).

**Table 9***Comparison of students' opinion about their teacher' politeness in classroom on the basis of monthly income of student's family*

Monthly Income	N	df	F	Sig.
Above 5 thousand	10	4	3.944	.004
Above 10 thousand	115	195		
Above 20 thousand	61	199		
Above 30 thousand	9			
Above 40 thousand	5			

(\* $P \leq .05$  level of significance)

Table 9 indicates that there is statistically significant difference in the opinion of elementary school students belonging to families with different levels of income about the politeness of their teachers ( $F=3.148$ ) at  $P \leq .05$  level of significance. It means that the students belonging to different income groups have different opinion about their teachers' politeness in the classroom.

**Table 10***Multiple comparisons of teachers' politeness with respect to students' family income*

Sr.	(I)	(J)	(I-J) Mean Difference	Sig.
1	Above 5000	Above 10000	.26522	.726
		Above 20000	-0.56885	.467
		Above 30000	-2.25556*	.033
		Above 40000	-1.70000	.117
2	Above 10000	Above 20000	-0.83407*	.022
		Above 30000	-2.52077*	.002
		Above 40000	-1.96522	.062
3	Above 20000	Above 30000	-1.68670*	.040
		Above 40000	-1.13115	.289
5	Above 30000	Above 40000	0.55556	.664

(\*P $\leq$  .05 level of significance)

Post Hoc multiple comparison indicates that there is significant difference in teachers' politeness with respect to student's family income. Students with monthly family income of Rs. 5000 have statistically significant difference in teachers' politeness to those students with family income above Rs. 30000 (Mean difference= -2.25556, sig= .033). Students with family income with Rs. 10000 have statistically significant difference in teachers' politeness to those students with family income above Rs. 20000 (Mean Difference=-.83407, Sig. =.022) and Rs. 30000 (Mean difference= -2.52077, Sig= .002). Students with family income above Rs. 20000 have significant difference in teachers' politeness to those students having family income above Rs. 30000 (Mean difference=-1.68670\*, Sig= .040). Students with other levels of monthly family income do not show any difference in their opinions about teachers' politeness. It can also be concluded that students with higher income level have different opinion than their peers with lower income levels (Table 10).

**Table 11***Comparison of students' opinion regarding their teacher' politeness in classroom on the basis of students' performance*

Performance	N	df	F	Sig.
Above 40%	5	5	3.962	.002
Above 50%	23	194		
Above 60%	55	199		
Above 70%	64			
Above 80%	45			
Above 90%	8			

(P $\leq$  .05 level of significance)

There is statistically significant difference in the opinion of students belonging to difference performance groups regarding the politeness of their teachers in classroom ( $F=3.96$ ,  $\text{Sign.}=.002$ ) (Table 11). It means that students with different performance level have different opinions.

**Table 12***Comparison of opinion of students' regarding their self esteem*

	N	Mean	SD	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender of teacher					
Male	100	23.4100	1.86458	.994	.322
Female	100	23.0600	2.98758		
Domicile					
Rural	107	23.0561	2.47185	-1.090	.277
Urban	93	23.4409	2.50852		
Type of school					
Public	100	21.9500	2.39264	-8.506	.000
Private	100	24.5200	1.84489		

( $P \leq .05$  level of significance)

There is no statistical significant difference in the opinion of boys and girls; and students from urban and rural schools regarding their self esteem. This is also evident that opinion of students from public and private sector schools is statistically different about their self esteem ( $t=-8.506$ ,  $\text{Sig.} = .000$ ). Further it can be concluded that the students from private schools have better self esteem than the students from public sector schools ( $t=-8.506$ ,  $\text{Mean}=24.5200$ ) (Table 12).

## Conclusion and Discussion

The study concludes teachers' politeness affect students' performance and self-esteem positively. Students get excelled in academics in environment where teachers show polite behavior with students. The strong correlation between teachers' politeness and students' performance and self-esteem indicates that teachers can use politeness as a strategy to improve academic performance and self-esteem of students in schools. In teacher-education programs, there must be emphasis on "teachers' politeness" to make stakeholders particularly teachers aware of the importance and significance in making students' performance and self-esteem better in schools. When teachers interact with students within students' friendly culture, students learn more tenderly because politeness is a great aspect of communication. Likewise, Layoff (1990) predicted that politeness is an important aspect of communication. Politeness theory of Layoff concludes that communication is based on certain rules'

applications. Many studies like Layoff cited above show that politeness is an essential factor for communication. Through politeness, a speaker avoids from criticizing, ordering, advising, threatening, warning, complaining, disagreeing the audience. In this study, teachers' politeness also proved to be an important factor and strong predictor in academic performance as well as in self-esteem of students. Brown and Levinson (2011) explained that through politeness, a speaker develops accepting an offer, accepting thanks, promising unwillingly, apologizing, accepting compliments and confessing. This is what was tried to establish and determine role of teachers' politeness that undoubtedly seemed as a strong predictor of students' performance and self-esteem in schools to improve students' sounding development and learning. The slogan of the government that "*Mar nahi Payar*" seems effective towards the students' performance and enhancing their self esteem.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study provide useful indications and suggestions about teachers' politeness practices in Pakistani context for people who are involved in various areas of education sectors and working as teachers, administrators and policy makers. The study also facilitates those who have an interest in establishing role of teachers' politeness in classrooms. School authorities need to strictly implement the politeness policy "*Mar nahi Payar*". Teachers' competencies regarding politeness should be enhanced through in-service training workshops and pre service teacher training programs. The traditional schools should be transformed into student friendly schools where the students' self esteem and academic progress are always valued by the teachers. Teachers' with higher level of education should be trained properly and given them confidence so that they may behave politely with the students. The role of teachers in developing self esteem among students should be highlighted to the teachers through training as well as motivation. Teachers are expected to use the care and kindness as strategy for academic improvement and self uplift of the learners.

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