An investigation of the relationship between teaching competency and classroom performance among university teachers: Communication Skills as a Mediator

Amna Saleem (Corresponding author)
Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Teacher Education, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan
amna.phdedu159@iiu.edu.pk

Zarina Akhtar
Assistant Professor, Department of Teacher Education, International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan
zarina.akhtar@iiu.edu.pk

Abstract

This study analyses the multifaceted relationship between teaching competency, classroom performance, and the mediating influence of communication skills among university teachers. Recognizing the pivotal role of effective teaching in higher education, this research explores how teaching competency impacts classroom performance and how communication skills mediate in this relationship. This study was quantitative and followed the positivist research paradigm. The researchers selected the study sample using stratified sampling. Two questionnaires and an observation sheet were used in this study. Researchers collected data from 152 public-sector university teachers in southern Punjab. Statistical packages for social science and PROCESS macro were used to analyze the data. The data was analyzed using mediation analysis. The primary conclusion of this study was that all the variables (teaching competencies, communication skills, and classroom performance) had a significant relationship and communication skills also mediated between teaching competencies and classroom performance of university teachers. The study recommends that university teachers develop and enhance their communication competencies through training, feedback, and reflection on their teaching practices.

Keywords: Communication Skills, Teaching Competencies, Classroom Performance

Introduction and background of the study

Teaching competencies refer to the knowledge and skills that enable teachers to perform well in the classroom (Albrahim, 2020). Teachers must possess Communication and interpersonal skills, including traits such as being role models for their students, possessing clear verbal communication skills, and taking responsibility. Teachers must be involved in teaching-learning (Tondeur et al., 2018). According to Pit-ten Cate et al. (2018), effective teachers present, implement, and evaluate classroom instruction based on the set objectives. The effectiveness of

classroom instruction is highly dependent on the teacher's competency (Van Waeyenberg et al., 2022).

Meanwhile, teacher performance reflects their competency (Rossini et al., 2022). It is evident from the existing literature that studies on the classroom performance of teachers are primarily concerned with variables that relate to specific teacher competencies. To be successful in the classroom, one must possess teaching competencies. Performing well in a teaching or learning activity requires competence. According to Supriyanto et al. (2019), several factors influence people's behaviour and ultimately affect their performance regarding teaching competence.

Mawoli Babanyako (2011) found competence to affect individual behavior, thereby affecting performance. Competence is one of the most potent variables contributing to improved performance (Sulaiman et al., 2013). The findings confirm that teacher competence influences teacher performance within an educational institution. Experience and ability are significant determinants of a teacher's performance (König et al., 2020). Research has shown that teachers' teaching competencies positively affect their classroom performance. However, teachers' teaching competencies and classroom performance are influenced by several factors. Communication skills are among the most critical factors (Tehseen & Hadi, 2015). It has been shown in several previous studies that communication skills enhance the performance of teachers in the classroom.

The teaching profession requires communication skills. Despite this, assessing how far communication skills have been integrated into the teaching profession (Heckman &Kautz, 2012) is essential. Most teachers lack communication skills, which causes students to dislike them (Hendarman & Contner, 2018). It is important to note that communication skills and teaching competencies are closely related. Numerous studies have been conducted on these variables.

Therefore, teaching is more effective when there is good Communication between the teacher and the student. To gain knowledge, the learner must pay attention to their teacher during the lecture. According to Komba (2015), teachers should communicate clearly and understandably. Accordingly, a study by Rao (2019) determined that teachers must possess good communication skills, classroom management skills, a healthy personality, and up-to-date knowledge for effective teaching. These basic teaching skills are necessary for anyone to teach effectively.

In the same way, Communication skills are essential for teachers to facilitate learning for students and achieve good professional outcomes. Teaching effectiveness is not determined by technicalities but by the teacher's instruction method. Educators must communicate clearly with their students to understand their lectures and avoid problems arising while they learn. In addition, teachers should first understand themselves before teaching students (Khan et al., 2017). Teachers' effectiveness in the classroom depends entirely on their ability to communicate effectively. It is easy to convey a message or lecture if the teacher has good communication skills (Chasanah& Usodo, 2020).

The literature, however, needs to emphasise the importance of communication skills in the correlation between a teacher's competence and their performance in the classroom. Previous research showed that multiple studies were conducted on these three variables. However, no research was found in which communication skills mediate between teaching competencies and classroom performance variables. Moreover, there is also a need for this kind of research in the Pakistani scenario. Thus, this study aims to determine whether communication skills are prevalent

among teachers in Pakistan's universities and whether communication skills mediate the relationship between teaching competencies and classroom performance.

Literature review

Communication Skills
A communication skill is the ability to transmit a message involving a shared understanding between the contexts within which the message is being transmitted (Okoli, 2017). In addition, communication skills are essential for teachers when delivering instruction to students (Rao, 2019). Communication skills include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. All these skills are essential for an effective teacher. It is always more accessible and more understandable for students to learn from a teacher with good communication skills (Hussain Al-Qahtani, 2019).
However, practical communication skills are essential for a teacher to effectively transmit information, manage the classroom, and interact with students. The teacher must teach the students from a variety of perspectives. The teacher should adopt communication skills that motivate the students towards their learning process to teach according to their abilities and capabilities (Muste, 2016). Therefore, teachers must have excellent communication skills to ensure their students' academic and professional success. In the classroom, the teacher communicates more instructions orally to the students. Teachers may only promote student learning and academic achievement with practical communication skills. Students must understand right and wrong, which is entirely determined by teachers' communication skills, which they adopt in class (Chasanah & Duodo, 2020).

However, Communication is a dynamic process that requires an open mind and courage to convey a message effectively. Delivering the message clearly and understandably is vital to ensure a successful communication process. Effective Communication must require the recipient to convey and accept his or her message regardless of the situation or circumstance. As teaching requires a wide variety of skills, good Communication is considered an essential tool for success (Rao, 2019). Students' academic levels can be quickly promoted if teachers adopt a positive attitude towards their academics and social achievements. For students to be able to handle all types of situations, teachers must teach and prepare them practically. Teachers are also expected to act as role models for their students. When one communicates with others, one adopts a process to convey their views. Teachers must communicate effectively with students to ensure success (Huamán et al., 2022).

Teaching competencies
Teachers must possess a wide variety of skills to meet the complex challenges of the modern world (Abraham, 2020). A teacher's competence is an integral component of an effective training process that aims to contribute to the well-being of a nation or the entire globe. (Mukhamadovna et al., 2020). Teacher competencies include classroom management, facilitation, assessment, organization, and planning. Starkey (2020) notes that teacher competence includes beliefs, motivations, self-management, and knowledge and skills. According to Aspelin Jonsson (2019), teaching competence incorporates knowledge and skills and the ability to apply them in various stressful or unpredictable situations and conditions. According to Tejedor et al. (2019), teaching competencies include participating in team decision-making, contributing to team decisions,

demonstrating accountability for those decisions, and demonstrating a commitment to each student and their unique classroom requirements. The teacher's abilities are crucial to the "well-being" of the students and the provision of a quality education (Lucas et al., 2021). Teachers with teaching competencies can enhance their teaching methods and help their students perform better in school. Teachers must possess the following competencies to be effective: pedagogic competence, personality competence, professional competence, and social competence (Christie & Lingard, 2020).

According to Hartiwi et al. (2020), for teachers to be effective in the classroom, they must possess pedagogical and professional competencies. Van Werven et al. (2023) outline two different types of teacher competencies. The first competency is pedagogical, and the second is professional. The pedagogical competence of a teacher can be summed up as follows, according to Murkatik et al. (2020): gaining student insight and understanding; developing curriculums and syllabi; fostering educational and logical learning; evaluating learning outcomes; and developing students into productive citizens. A crucial component of professional competence is a broad and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. The student must master the content and structure of school subjects (Mukhamadovna et al., 2020). A teacher's professional competence consists of his or her skills, knowledge, beliefs, and motivations, demonstrating how well he or she can perform the task (Sang et al., 2019).

Aspelin and Jonsson (2019) classify a teacher's professional competence into three categories: pedagogical, personal, and social. As part of pedagogical competence, a person must possess intellectual abilities such as knowledge of subjects, teaching, learning, behavior, and counselling; administrative classes; experience assessing learning outcomes; community knowledge; and another general knowledge. Personal competency in instructors is the capacity and willingness to solve problems that arise in their profession or job. To determine social competence, a person must demonstrate various skills and actions, such as teaching, guiding, assessing, using teaching aids, communicating with and interacting with students, making students feel like they are learning, preparing and planning classes, leading administrative classes, etc.

Classroom performance

A teacher's effectiveness is determined by the extent to which predetermined classroom objectives are met. Regarding classroom performance, a rigorous definition that could be used to characterize its scope needs to be improved. (Purwanto et al.,2020). A teacher's performance in the classroom is his or her execution of duties and responsibilities as a teacher and educator within the school (Khan et al., 2016). Purwanto et al. (2020) illustrate that a teacher's classroom performance consists of everything the teacher does, such as fulfilling educational duties and responsibilities. According to Wu et al. (2019), teacher performance in the classroom is a status that characterizes a teacher's ability to perform his job and his actions in the classroom. According to Mahaputra and Saputra (2021), a teacher's performance in the classroom is defined as his or her capacity to fulfil duties and responsibilities within the classroom. According to Son et al. (2013), a teacher's classroom performance is determined by their ability to perform tasks according to a set of expectations.

According to Abu Nasra and Arar (2020), a teacher's classroom performance consists of behaviors exhibited towards students. According to Mulang (2021), a teacher's performance in the classroom is determined by his capacity to carry out his duties and responsibilities. Asim et al. (2023) investigated the relationship between a teacher's classroom performance and what the instructor accomplishes during the learning process. This encompasses the planning, execution, and evaluation of learning activities. According to Sudarjat et al. (2015), a teacher's performance in the classroom is based on the work and activities he or she has completed to meet the job requirements in a predetermined amount of time and on how well they complete the job's requirements or competencies in a predetermined amount of time (Galton & Simon, 1980). Wahyudi (2022) argues that a teacher's classroom performance is a function they conduct to fulfil their duties and responsibilities. Teachers' aptitude and skill in the classroom significantly impact their performance.

Conceptual Framework
In this study, teaching competencies are considered independent variables, classroom performance is considered dependent, and communication skills are considered a mediating variable. This framework illustrates the direct impact of teaching competencies on classroom performance and the indirect impact of teaching and communication skills. I used regression analysis to test the hypothesis.

Figure no 01
Hypothesized Model
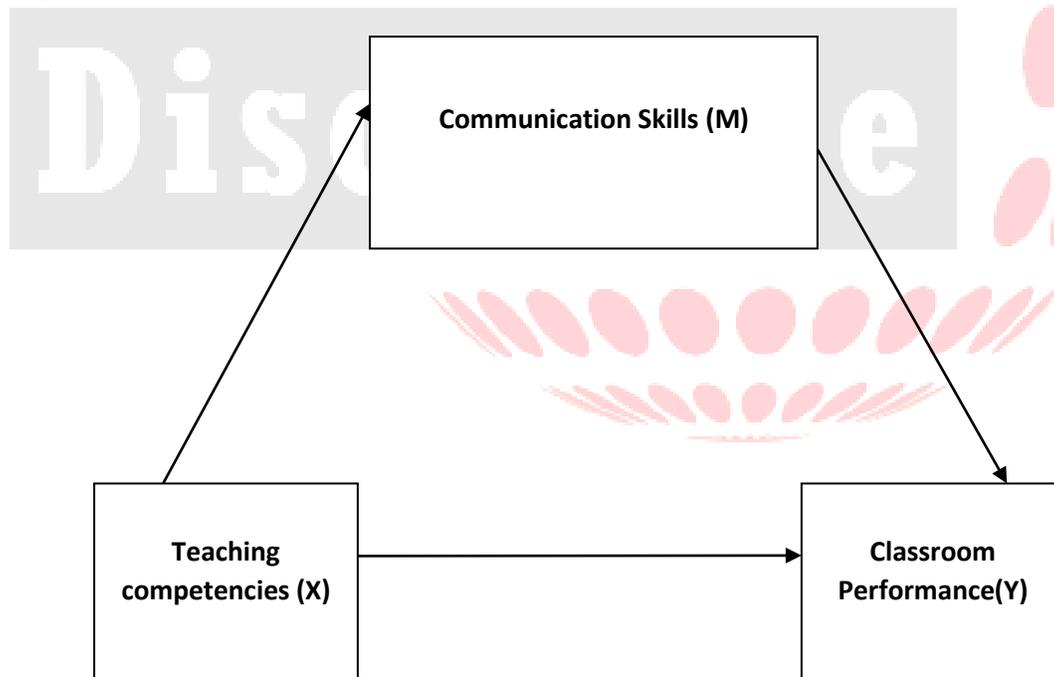
H₁: Teaching competencies have a positive and significant relationship with the classroom performance of university teachers.

H₂: Teaching competencies have a positive and significant relationship with the communication skills of university teachers.

H₃: Communication skills have a positive and significant relationship with the classroom performance of university teachers.

H₄: Communication skills mediate the relationship between teaching competencies and classroom performance for university teachers.

Materials and Methods

The study was quantitative and conducted following the positivist paradigm of research. It has been decided to test the hypotheses using a descriptive and cross-sectional research design. This study investigated three primary research questions: (1) what is the direct impact of teaching competencies on communication skills and classroom performance? (2) The direct effects of communication skills on university teachers' classroom performance; and (3) how communication skills mediate the relationship between the teaching competencies of university teachers and their classroom performance.

Measures

The researchers used three research instruments: two questionnaires regarding teaching competencies and one questionnaire regarding communication skills. Researchers selected an observation sheet to evaluate the classroom performance of teachers. The research considered six dimensions of teaching competencies: subject mastery, learner psychology, assessment technique, classroom administration, effective Communication, and instructional planning. These dimensions were selected under the 2009 National Professional Standards for Teachers.

Researchers selected an observation sheet to evaluate the classroom performance of teachers. Both teaching competencies and communication skills were scored on a five-point Likert scale. This study's dependent variable is the classroom performance of university instructors, which was measured using a 45-item, three-point observational scale. Expert validation was utilised for instrument validation, and Cronbach's alpha was used to determine the reliability of the questionnaire (teaching competencies and communication skills); their respective values were 0.87 and 0.93, respectively, whereas inter-rater reliability was used to determine the reliability of the observation sheet. According to the kappa value of 0.76, the observation sheet was reliable.

Population and Sampling

The study's target population included all university teachers working in the public sector in Punjab. The researchers picked a sample from the study using stratified sampling. The Departments of Education, English, Mathematics, Computer Science, and Management Science were located at the following three major public sector universities in southern Punjab: Bahauddin Zakariya University in Multan, Islamia University in Bahawalpur, and Ghazi University in Dera Ghazi Khan. The researchers chose a representative sample of teachers from various universities and departments. A total of 152 university teachers participated in the study.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

A survey method was adopted to acquire data from suitable respondents. The researchers collected data through personal visits to educational institutes to obtain more precise results and successfully preserved 152 responses (questionnaire and observation). The researchers analyzed the data from the current study using SPSS and Process Macros. Linear regressions were utilized to examine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and test for the presence of a mediator.

Results of study

Hypothesis (H₁): Teaching competencies have a significant relationship with the classroom performance of university teachers.

Table 1 *Linear regression between teaching competencies and classroom performance*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate	ANOVA Sig.
1	.370ᵃ	.193	.170		.98024	.000

Predictors: (Constant), teaching competencies

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.744	.281		7.769	.000
teaching competencies	.652	.068	.370	7.946	.000

Dependent Variable: Classroom performance

Table 01 indicates a linear relationship between teaching competencies and classroom performance. The ANOVA results are significant, which indicates a good fit for the model. According to the R-square method, there is a 19.3% variance in classroom performance based on teaching competencies (R-square = t is significant), which indicates a good fit for the model. According to the R-square method, there is a 19.3% variance in classroom performance based on teaching competencies (R-square =.193), and the unstandardized coefficient value is statistically significant (B =.652, 0.001). In other words, if all other variables remain constant, a one-unit increase in teaching competencies results in a 652-unit increase in classroom performance. This proves a significant positive relationship between the teaching competencies of university teachers and their classroom performance. As a result, H1 is accepted.

Hypothesis (H₂): Teaching competencies have a positive and significant relationship with the communication skills of university teachers.

Table 02: *Linear regression between Teaching Competencies and Communication skills*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	ANOVA Sig.
1	.367[a]	.153	.132	1.04963	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teaching competencies

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.007	.231		8.683	.000
Teaching competencies	.654	.073	.367	7.632	.000

Dependent Variable: Communication skills

Table 02 shows a linear relationship between teaching competencies and communication skills. ANOVA is significant, which indicates that the model is well-fitted. As a result of teaching competencies, we find a 15.3% variance in communication skills (R-square =.153) and a significant value for the unstandardized coefficient (B =.654, 0.001). In other words, if other variables remain constant, a change in communication skills will increase by 654 units for every unit increase in teaching competency. Thus, teaching competencies and communication skills have a significant positive relationship. As a result, H2 is accepted.

Hypothesis (H₃): Communication skills have a positive and significant relationship with the classroom performance of university teachers.

Table 03:Linear regression between Communication skills and classroom performance

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	ANOVA Sig.
1	.859[a]	.187	.736	.49985	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Communication skills

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Standard error	Beta		
(Constant)	.493	.089		5.539	.000
Communication skills	.472	.023	.859	32.385	.000

Dependent Variable: Classroom performance

Table 03 shows a linear relationship between communication skills and classroom performance among university teachers. The ANOVA is significant, indicating a well-fitted model. It is evident from the data that there is an 18.7% variance in classroom performance by soft skill (R-square =.187), and the unstandardized coefficient values are both significant and positive (B

=.472, 0.001). The result is that by maintaining other variables constant, there will be a change of 0.472 units in classroom performance for every change in communication skills. This indicates a significant positive correlation between communication skills and classroom performance. As a result, H3 is accepted.

Hypothesis (H₄): Communication skills mediate the relationship between teaching competencies and classroom performance. University teachers

Table 04: *Mediation analysis*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sign.
		B	Standard error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.474	.218		6.969	.000
	Teaching Competencies	.562	.068	.470	6.649	.000
	Dependent Variable: Classroom performance					
2	(Constant)	2.007	.231		7.638	.000
	Teaching Competencies	.545	.073	.567	6.623	.000
	Dependent Variable: Communication skills					
3	(Constant)	.089	.118		.892	.408
	Teaching Competencies	.073	.036	.061	1.959	.047
	communication skills	.820	.024	.886	33.942	.000
	Dependent Variable: Classroom performance					

In Table 04, three models test the mediating role of communication skills in the relationship between teaching competencies and classroom performance. Model 1 illustrates the direct relationship between teaching competencies and classroom performance. In model 1, the standardized coefficient is positive (Beta = 0.470) and significant (0.001). According to Model 2, the relationship between teaching competencies and communication skills is significant and positive (beta = 0.567, 0.001). Based on Model 3, the standardized coefficient between teaching competencies and classroom performance has been reduced from 0.370 (direct effect) to 0.061 (indirect effect), roughly equal to zero. As a result, communication skills serve as an almost perfect intermediary between teaching competencies and classroom performance. It mediates the effect by 0.325 (0.367 * 0.886 = 0.325). Evidence shows that communication skills mediate the relationship between teaching competencies and classroom performance. Therefore, H4 is accepted.

Conclusion

The primary goal of this paper was to examine the significant relationship between teacher competency and classroom performance as well as the mediating role of communication skills in this relationship. According to the results above, there is a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables discussed in this research paper. This study developed four hypotheses to test and obtain findings. These hypotheses were developed based on literature, with H_1 focusing on the relationship between university teachers' teaching competencies and classroom performance. H_2 tested the relationship between university teachers' teaching competencies and communication skills. H_3 tested the relationship between communication skills and the classroom performance of university teachers. The H_4 hypothesis was tested for the role of communication skills in mediating the relationship between teaching competencies and the classroom performance of university teachers. The results of the linear regression analysis revealed a significant relationship between teaching competencies, communication skills, and university teachers' classroom performance. Based on the results, it was concluded that H1, H2, H3, and H4 were accepted. It was found that communication skills mediate the relationship between teaching competencies and classroom performance.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this study that future researchers should consider. Several studies have demonstrated that questionnaires are practical and efficient tools for collecting data; however, questionnaires may be subject to certain limitations, including biases in the questions. It is possible that respondents answered the questionnaire based on their beliefs rather than actual conditions, or they answered according to what they considered ideal conditions rather than actual conditions. In some instances, these factors may lead to inaccurate measurements and a lack of representation of variables. Due to the limited analytical resources, the small sample size limits the ability to discover additional findings. The results of this study are limited to university teachers in the public sector in southern Punjab.

Recommendations

A limitation of the study is that it needs to examine how competence influences teacher performance through mediating communication skills. Consequently, it is recommended that the proposed study include characteristics that may influence teacher performance in the classroom, such as job satisfaction, work discipline, compensation, motivation, etc. Future research is expected to focus on educational institutions such as public and private schools. To obtain more representative results, the objectives should be broadened.

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