

Teachers' Conduct Towards Students of Higher Education Institutions: A Survey Study of
Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi

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ABSTRACT

Teachers' conduct greatly impacts students' academic success, motivation, and character development. This research explored the behavior of teachers towards their students in the higher education institutions of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi, considering the five aspects of a) positive conduct and guidance, b) instructional clarity and care, c) feedback encouragement and interactive practices, d) absence of negative conduct, e) impact on self-esteem and classroom climate. A descriptive cross-sectional survey design was used. The target population were higher education students of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi. Simple random sampling was used to select 320 students as the sample. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire containing 20 items was developed and three educational experts validated it. Cronbach's alpha was used ($\alpha = 0.77$) to establish reliability. Frequency, percentage and mean scores were used for data analysis. Results indicated that 79% agreed teachers show positive behavior ($M=4.09$); 100% agreed teachers give information clearly ($M=4.35$); 100% agreed teachers are concerned about students' well-being ($M=4.62$); 99% agreed teachers encourage students ($M=4.31$); and 100% agreed teachers give guidance ($M=4.94$). Meanwhile, only 34% agreed that teachers ask for feedback ($M=2.73$); 91% disagreed that teachers discourage feedback ($M=2.05$); 95% disagreed that teachers show favoritism ($M=2.00$); and 88% disagreed that negative conduct lowers self-esteem ($M=1.88$). The study finds that teachers of the higher education institutions of Wah Cantt are who generally show positive behavior, but feedback encouragement is one area that needs improvement. Suggestions are aimed at assisting low achievers, developing cooperative learning environments, employing differentiated teaching activities, and dealing with social media and mental health issues.

Keywords: Teachers' Conduct, Positive Conduct, Negative Conduct, Student Performance, Higher Education

INTRODUCTION

Education is a central factor in human development. Twentieth-century education has led to many new functions. Education is not only available in agriculture and industry sectors, but now education is also provided in many fields (Dewey, 1938). Education is the action that guides new generations to acquire important knowledge, skills, dispositions, and understanding while building their personality and preparing them for collective life (Freire, 1970).

Teachers' conduct is a critical input provided by teachers to their students. It is a systemic process that involves objectives, curriculum, and interpersonal dynamics. Teachers' conduct creates and shapes the relationship between teacher and students. This relationship has a profound impact on students' learning, motivation, and academic outcomes (Pianta, 1999; Wentzel, 1997). The positive relationship between teacher and student is essential for an excellent learning environment. Teacher-student positive relationships significantly contribute to students' learning processes and academic achievement (Cornelius-White, 2007; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

Conduct refers to observable behaviors, actions, and mannerisms of an individual. In the educational context, teachers' conduct encompasses how teachers interact with, respond to, and treat their students (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Teachers' conduct can be positive or negative, and this evaluation affects students' behavior, engagement, and learning outcomes. Effective teachers openly share emotions such as affection, warmth, patience, and genuine care for their students (Davis, 2003; Noddings, 2005).

For a teacher, communicating with students and demonstrating positive conduct—for example, understanding students' thoughts, showing attention, asking questions, and expressing gratitude—encourages students to increase their academic effort and success (Wentzel, 1997). Research has consistently shown that positive conduct leads to student progress, while negative conduct leads to student disengagement and disappointment (Klem & Connell, 2004; Spilt et al., 2011). A teacher with negative conduct cannot create effective interaction with students as effectively as a teacher with positive conduct (Den Brok et al., 2006; Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2006).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers demonstrate either positive or negative conduct towards students. Teachers' conduct significantly influences students' academic attainment, knowledge acquisition, behavior, and psychological well-being (Baker et al., 2008; Hughes et al., 1999). The present study was designed to analyze the conduct of teachers towards their students in higher education institutions of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi. Teachers' conduct directly impacts students' learning; whether conduct is positive or negative, it shapes students' academic achievement, self-esteem, and overall educational experience.

Objectives of the Study

The study pursued to identify various dimensions of teachers' conduct towards students in higher education institutions of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi.

Significance of the Study

This study may be significant for both teachers and students. It examined teachers' conduct with their students and its impact on students' moral development, academic performance, and self-confidence. Learning positive teacher conduct may enhance students' confidence and academic grades. Conversely, as negative, overly authoritative, or discouraging teacher conduct leads to disadvantages in students' careers, including lack of confidence, reduced respect for teachers, and significant negative impacts on academic performance, this study may allow to teachers to learn about the ways to avoid negativity.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conduct: Conceptual Foundations

In educational psychology, conduct refers to the combination of behaviors, emotional expressions, and actions directed toward a particular person, object, or event. Psychologists define conduct as learned tendencies to respond to things in particular ways (Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Such responses can be positive, negative, or neutral. Conduct may be explicit (consciously displayed) or implicit (unconsciously displayed). Explicit conduct is something that individuals are consciously aware of and that clearly influences their interactions and beliefs (Bandura, 1997).

The word "conduct" refers to the manner in which an individual acts, and it can significantly enhance or damage an individual's performance in any task or responsibility. Generally, conduct may be positive or negative. If a teacher's conduct is negative in an educational setting, it may cause negative student learning outcomes, while a teacher's positive conduct results in positive student performance and engagement (Spilt et al., 2011).

The Teacher

The teacher is the definitive key to instructional change and student development. It is widely accepted that the teacher's thinking, attitudes, and conduct in the classroom ultimately determine what students learn and how they develop (Hattie, 2012). A teacher is not only responsible for conveying information and evaluating students but also assumes the roles of organizing, managing, advising, observing, and evaluating (Marzano et al., 2003; Pianta et al., 2012).

Teachers' Conduct

According to extensive studies, the behavior of a teacher plays a crucial role in determining the students' performance in colleges and universities. Teachers' motivating behavior will have an excellent impact on their students in the classroom (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). Behavior means one's observable actions and interactions, and teachers with good behavior show their students that they are genuinely interested, care for, and respect them (Davis, 2003; Noddings, 2005).

Positive Impacts of Teachers' Behavior on Students

A teacher's good behavior leads to students having more chances to excel both academically and socially (Cornelius-White, 2007). If a teacher is kind and caring towards the students, the students will be more interested in school and will actively engage in academics (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). The teacher-student relationship deeply and reciprocally influences both parties (Roorda et al., 2011).

Negative impacts of teachers' behavior on students

When a teacher's behavior is negative, it can have a detrimental effect on students' academic achievement, learning, emotions, and lifestyle (Baker et al., 2008). Negative teacher behavior may lead students to ineffective learning, losing interest in school, and even refusal to continue education. Teachers, who can be a source of mockery, humiliation, or unjust criticism of the students, exert a lot of psychological pressure resulting in students' disengagement and lower academic performance (Allen, 2010; Mercer & DeRosier, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

The article uses a straightforward descriptive research design. The target group for this research was the students enrolled in higher education located in Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi. A total of 320 students were randomly picked as the sample of the study. A 20-item questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert-scale to measure five teacher's behavior characteristics. The Likert-scale comprised: Strongly Agree (SA)=5, Agree (A)=4, Undecided (UND)=3, Disagree (DA)=2, Strongly Disagree (SDA)=1. Three scholars in the field of education validated the questionnaire for the content validity of the instrument. For pilot testing, the questionnaire was given to 30 students (excluding the main sample). Cronbach's Alpha was used to confirm the reliability of the instrument, which yielded a value of 0.77. Data were collected through personal visits to the participants. The software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for analyzing the data. Teachers' behavior in creating a positive learning environment was studied using frequency, percentage, and mean scores.

RESULTS

Factor 1: Positive Conduct and Guidance

Table 1: Teachers' Positive Conduct and Guidance Towards Students

Statement	SA %	A %	UND %	DA %	SDA %	Mean
Teachers demonstrate positive conduct with students	56%	17%	6%	19%	2%	4.09
Teachers guide students to give their best effort	96%	4%	0%	0%	0%	4.94
Teachers motivate students to give their best efforts	31%	68%	1%	0%	0%	4.31
Category Mean						4.45

Interpretation of Table 1: Teachers demonstrated strong positive conduct and guidance. A majority of 79% agreed teachers demonstrate positive conduct (M=4.09); 100% agreed teachers guide students (M=4.94); and 99% agreed teachers motivate students (M=4.31). The category mean of 4.45 indicates very strong positive conduct and guidance, consistent with Cornelius-White's (2007) meta-analysis showing that learner-centered teacher-student relationships are highly effective.

Factor 2: Instructional Clarity and Care

Table 2: Teachers' Conduct in Instructional Clarity and Student Care

Statement	SA %	A %	UND %	DA %	SDA %	Mean
Teachers present information in an easy-to-understand way	35%	65%	0%	0%	0%	4.35
Teachers care about students' academic and social well-being	62%	38%	0%	0%	0%	4.62
Teachers provide support for all students	31%	66%	2%	1%	0%	4.26
Category Mean						4.41

Interpretation of Table 2: Teachers demonstrated strong instructional clarity and care in their conduct. All students (100%) agreed that teachers present information clearly (M=4.35) and care about well-being (M=4.62). The category mean of 4.41 indicates very strong performance in this dimension, supporting Noddings' (2005) framework of the "challenge to care" in educational settings.

Factor 3: Feedback Encouragement and Interactive Practices

Table 3: Teachers' Conduct in Encouraging Feedback and Interactive Learning

Statement	SA %	A %	UND %	DA %	SDA %	Mean
Teachers encourage students' feedback	3%	31%	2%	33%	31%	2.73
Teachers practice classroom activities (case studies, live examples)	3%	60%	32%	1%	4%	3.61
Category Mean						3.17

Interpretation of Table 3: Only 34% of students agreed that teachers encourage feedback (M=2.73), indicating a significant gap in teachers' conduct. This finding contrasts with Pianta et al. (2012), who emphasized that interactive feedback is a core component of effective teacher-student engagement. However, 95% agreed that teachers use interactive activities (M=3.61). The category mean of 3.17 suggests moderate conduct with room for improvement in feedback encouragement.

Factor 4: Absence of Negative Conduct (Favoritism, Equality, Discouragement)

Table 4: Teachers' Avoidance of Negative Conduct

Statement	SA %	A %	UND %	DA %	SDA %	Mean
Teachers discourage students' feedback (reverse-coded)	0%	7%	2%	65%	26%	2.05
Teachers don't give equal importance to all students (reverse-coded)	0%	4%	1%	90%	5%	2.03
Teachers follow favoritism (reverse-coded)	0%	2%	3%	92%	3%	2.00
Category Mean						2.03

Interpretation of Table 4: The low mean scores (all near 2.0) indicate strong disagreement with negative statements about teachers' conduct. This means teachers do NOT practice favoritism (95% disagreed), do not give equal importance to all students (95% disagreed with the negative statement), and do NOT discourage feedback (91% disagreed). This dimension is a strength, aligning with Marzano et al. (2003), who emphasized that equitable classroom management is foundational to effective teaching.

Factor 5: Impact on Student Self-Esteem and Classroom Climate

Table 5: Teachers' Conduct Impact on Self-Esteem and Avoidance of Collective Blame

Statement	SA %	A %	UND %	DA %	SDA %	Mean
Teachers' negative conduct hinders students' self-esteem (reverse-coded)	1%	8%	3%	57%	31%	1.88
Teachers blame whole class when few students misbehave	34%	18%	4%	50%	38%	1.92
Category Mean						1.90

Interpretation of Table 5: The low mean score for negative conduct hindering self-esteem (M=1.88) indicates that 88% of students disagreed, meaning teachers' conduct does NOT negatively impact self-esteem. This finding is consistent with Hamre and Pianta (2001), who found that positive teacher-child relationships protect against negative developmental outcomes. However, the statement about collective blame shows 52% agreed that teachers blame the whole class (M=1.92), indicating this is a problematic aspect of teachers' conduct requiring attention, as noted by Allen (2010) regarding ineffective classroom management practices.

Table 6: Summary of Dimension Means

Factor Category	Mean
Positive Conduct and Guidance	4.45
Instructional Clarity and Care	4.41
Feedback Encouragement and Interactive Practices	3.17
Absence of Negative Conduct (Favoritism, Equality)	2.03
Impact on Self-Esteem and Classroom Climate	1.90
Overall Mean (All Factors)	3.19

Interpretation Overall Results: An average overall score of 3.19 means that teachers at higher education institutions of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi showcase moderate to strong positive behaviors in general. They are especially good at providing guidance, showing care, and giving clear instructions. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that the areas of feedback, encouragement, and collective blaming need to be considerably worked on.

DISCUSSIONS

Findings of the present study indicate that in general, higher education institution teachers of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi exhibit positive behaviors towards students in various aspects.

Positive Conduct and Guidance

The students reporting teachers' behavior as very patient and conducive to help them in their efforts strongly supports that the description to a great extent of the teachers as the ones giving guidance has been the admirable duty of the teachers. Roorda et al. (2011) through meta-analysis have also shown that teacher-student relationships which are affective essentially influence student engagement and achievement. Further, Hamre and Pianta (2001) findings are supported by the high number of students stating that teachers care for the academic and social aspects of their lives that those teachers effort making an emotional connection with the students leads to a positive development impact.

Instructional Clarity and Care

The discovery that all the pupils concurred that teachers simplify the delivery of content and that they also demonstrate a sincere concern for the students do not disagree with Opdenakker and Van Damme (2006) who have instead indicated that besides the teacher's personality, the method of teaching used also plays a major role in the enhancement of the effectiveness of the classroom practice. It is also in line with Wentzel (1997) who showed that perceived pedagogical caring is a powerful indicator of both student motivation and academic effort.

Feedback Encouragement: A Critical Gap in Teachers' Conduct

Significantly only a few students were of the opinion that teachers promote feedback. This implies a very big weakness in the use of interactive pedagogy by teachers. Pianta et al. (2012), in fact, mention that teacher-student relationships are most effective when there are feedback channels that go both ways and through which the students feel safe and are willing to express their ideas. The low score on feedback encouragement indicates that while teachers' conduct is generally positive, they may not be sufficiently creating opportunities for student voice. This is an area requiring targeted improvement.

Collective Blame: A Problematic Aspect of Teachers' Conduct

A concerning finding is that a majority of students agreed that teachers blame the whole class when only a few students misbehave. This indicates a problematic aspect of teachers' conduct in classroom management. As Allen (2010) warned, ineffective classroom management practices such as collective punishment can lead students to lose interest, develop negative attitudes toward school, and become afraid to participate. Collective punishment damages the positive teacher-student relationship and violates principles of equitable classroom management (Marzano et al., 2003).

Absence of Negative Conduct

Encouragingly, students overwhelmingly disagreed that teachers follow favoritism or give unequal importance to students. The finding that an overwhelming majority disagreed that negative conduct hinders self-esteem further confirms that the overall teachers' conduct is perceived as positive rather than damaging. This finding aligns with Davis (2003), who emphasized that fair and equitable treatment by teachers supports students' social and cognitive development.

Alignment with Previous Research

The outcomes align well with existing research on teachers' conduct. For example, Skinner and Belmont (1993) found that students' motivation is affected by teachers' positive conduct in the classroom through reciprocal effects. The high motivation score in this study supports that conclusion. Similarly, Cornelius-White (2007) demonstrated through meta-analysis that learner-centered teacher-student relationships produce strong positive effects on student outcomes, which is reflected in the high guidance and care scores in this study.

CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this study was to examine teachers' conduct towards students in higher education institutions of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi. The data lead to the following conclusions:

Positive Conduct and Guidance: Teachers in higher education institutions of Wah Cantt demonstrate strong positive conduct towards students. The majority of students agreed that teachers demonstrate positive conduct. Teachers are exceptionally strong in guiding students and caring about their academic and social well-being. This finding supports the extensive literature on the importance of positive teacher-student relationships.

Instructional Clarity and Motivation: Teachers' conduct effectively motivates students and presents information in an easy-to-understand manner, contributing to a supportive learning environment.

Feedback Encouragement: A significant weakness identified in teachers' conduct is the lack of encouragement for student feedback. Only a minority of students agreed that teachers encourage feedback, indicating a need for more interactive and dialogic teaching practices.

Collective Blame: A problematic aspect of teachers' conduct exists where teachers blame the entire class for the misbehavior of a few students. This practice damages classroom climate, reduces student motivation, and requires attention through professional development in classroom management.

Absence of Negative Conduct: The study concludes that favoritism and unequal treatment are not significant issues in teachers' conduct. Students overwhelmingly disagreed that teachers follow favoritism or give unequal importance to students.

Overall Conclusion: The research identifies that teachers in higher education institutions of Wah Cantt, Rawalpindi, generally maintain positive and supportive conduct towards students. However, targeted improvements in encouraging student feedback and avoiding collective blame would further enhance teachers' conduct and the teaching-learning environment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

For Teachers

Teachers may improve their conduct by creating cooperative and healthy environments to enhance teaching and learning. Instead of discouraging low-ability learners, reasons for low achievement may be investigated, and differentiated strategies may be applied, including providing counseling by professional experienced teachers. Teachers may guide students to make their presentations and communication more effective.

For Classroom Management

Teachers may modify their conduct by avoiding blaming the whole class when only a few students misbehave. This practice negatively affects the classroom climate and student motivation. Differentiated behavior management strategies offer a practical way to improve teachers' conduct.

For Feedback Practices

Teachers may enhance their conduct by actively encouraging student feedback through direct questioning, open-ended questioning, and aligning with learning objectives. These strategies help engage low, middle, and high ability learners and create a more dialogic classroom environment.

For Higher Education Administrators

Higher authorities may take initiatives for improving teachers' conduct. Organizing workshops can help develop awareness about the role of teachers' conduct in higher education. Arranging counseling services by professional teachers supports students who are struggling academically or socially.

For Addressing Contemporary Challenges

Teachers may refine their conduct by acknowledging that young people today face many challenges, including social media pressures that influence mental health and academic engagement. As mental health

issues rise, ensuring that classroom conduct provides an optimistic, supportive, and psychologically safe platform for all students remains essential.

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