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Teacher Immediacy and Students Classroom Participation: A relationship Study in Pakistan

Abstract

The study was designed to explore the relationship between teacher immediacy and their students classroom participation. 726 students, enrolled in teacher education departments at eight universities of Pakistan, participated in the present study. The adapted Teacher Immediacy (TI) and Student Classroom Participation (SCP) Questionnaires were used to collect data after ensuring the psychometric properties. Results indicated that there was no significant difference in private and public sector university students' perception regarding teacher immediacy and their own classroom participation. In addition, there was no significant difference in the male and female students perception regarding teacher immediacy and their own classroom participation. The results of correlational analysis demonstrated a strong relationship between teacher immediacy and student classroom participation ($r = 0.756$). Teacher training institutes should add content regarding teachers' immediacy and behaviourism in their curriculum that may help students to participate in classroom activities.

Keywords: Teacher Immediacy, Verbal Immediacy, Nonverbal Immediacy, Classroom Participation

1.1 Introduction

Research has shown numerous factors that impact on learning. Teacher immediacy also falls into this category. Social psychologist Albert Mehrabian (1969) introduced the concept, defining it in terms of "principle of immediacy". He suggested that people gravitate towards situations they perceive positively & vice-versa. In a classroom, immediacy of teachers is an important factor, as it influences learner behavior (Richmond, Lane, & Mc Croskey, 2006). For the past numerous years, researchers made an effort to find the traits of effective teachers (Brophy, 2004). Immediacy falls into this category because it promotes closer

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relationships among people, either physically or psychologically (Richmond & Mc Croskey, 2009). Immediacy can be broadly categorized as verbal immediacy and non-verbal immediacy (Christophel, 1990; Edwards & Edwards, 2001; Gorham, 1988; Mehrabian, 1981). Verbal immediacy includes the use of humour, sharing personal experiences, using the name of the person being addressed. On the other hand, nonverbal immediacy includes behaviours such as maintaining eye contact, smiling using gestures and positive body language (Kearney, Plax, & Wendt- Wasco, 1985). These interactions are considered as important component of effective classrooms (Wheless & Allen, 2006).

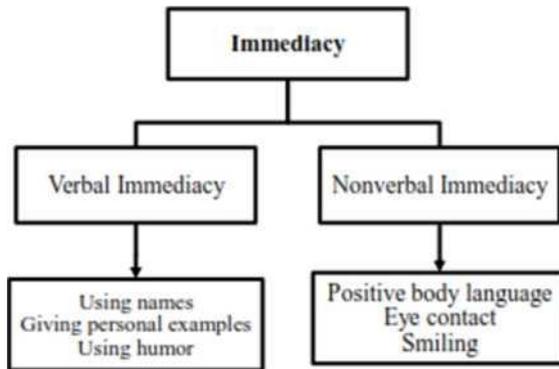


Fig. 1. Immediacy categories.

Classroom participation has no set definition in literature; many scholars offer their own definitions. However, Burchfield and Sappington (1999) view it as unsolicited responses volunteered by students. Similarly, Christensen (1995) describes it as “any verbal communication between the teacher and the students and between one or more students regarding topics of the course”. While, Fassinger (1995) calls it learners’ reaction toward what they have learned from the teacher in the classroom. Classroom participation is indicated by a number of factors e.g., Asking questions, taking part in classroom discussions, offering ideas etc. (Rocca, 2008). Class participation makes it possible for all students to share their ideas, and it motivates them to attend classes regularly. This, ultimately, makes their learning effective (Fassinger, 1995).

Immediacy, specifically teacher immediacy, plays an important role in the classroom. Research has shown that immediacy behaviors are closely linked to students’ classroom participation. It has been suggested by Berdine (1986) that the teachers who appear to be boring, close-minded, and unfriendly or use condescending language, sarcasm, verbal abuse etc. are likely to face students unwilling to participate in class. On the other hand, friendly demeanour, encouraging gestures, and appreciative language promote student involvement in the classroom.

Effective communication promotes effective teaching and learning inside the classroom. Therefore, teachers should think about the development of such culture in their class by adopting different ways that contribute to effective communication and in turn, better learning. Andersen (1979) and Liando (2010)

cited immediacy as one of the most important factors in teacher-student communication relationship. It is especially appreciated in cultures where distance is seen in both educational and domestic environments. Students stay away from their teachers because they feel hesitation, they cannot ask questions freely.

Similarly, a strict home environment is given to the kids where fathers deal with their children authoritatively. This power hierarchy moves downward from the eldest child to the youngest one (Khanum, Iqbal, & Khan, 2012).

According to Edwards and Edwards (2001), verbal immediacy behavior has been shown to be significantly correlated with nonverbal immediacy behaviors and that has been related to effective teaching as well as students' motivation and classroom participation. Christensen, Curley, Marquez, and Menzel (1995) stated in their studies that immediacy increased learner's willingness for participation in addition to being a part of classroom activities and discussions.

Keeping in view the above discussion, the researchers in the present study attempted to examine the relationship of instructors' immediacy behavior with student classroom participation in the context of Pakistani students.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Teaching activities are generally directed to produce an intentional learning response from the students. Teacher immediacy is a dynamic feature of classroom management and classroom communication. It has a significant effect on students' participation in classroom. It is the need of the hour to have a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting classroom participation, teacher immediacy being one of them. Since there is a lack of understanding of these constructs in the context of Pakistan, the present research is aimed to find out the relationship of teachers' immediacy with students' classroom participation.

1.3 Objectives of Research

Research objectives were to:

- (1) Compare the difference in perception of students about their teacher immediacy and their own classroom participation based on gender and sector.
- (2) Explore the relationship between teacher immediacy and students' classroom participation.

1.4 Hypotheses

H01: There is statistically no significant difference in private and public sector university students' perceptions about teacher immediacy and their own classroom participation.

H02: There is statistically no significant difference between male and female students' perceptions about teacher immediacy and their own classroom participation.

H05: There is statistically no significant relationship between teachers immediacy and students' classroom participation.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Teacher immediacy is an important variable that influences on teacher-student relationship (Witt, Wheelless, & Allen, 2004). This study may be helpful for teachers to use effective verbal immediacy behaviors and nonverbal immediacy behaviors in class for student classroom participation. The findings of the study may be helpful to minimize physical and mental distance among instructors and pupils. This research may prove beneficial for teachers of higher education institutions for adopting suitable behaviors in the class. The contributory worth of research is that it might establish a different perception of students about gender and sector. Teachers can also use this study for enhancement of their immediacy behaviors as well as closeness with pupils that may increase their class participation level. This research may also be helpful for teachers to develop a positive student-teacher relationship and improve classroom management so shy learners may also feel comfortable taking part in teaching-learning activities. This research will also be beneficial for educational administrators, policymakers, and teacher training institutes to know whether any relationship exists among these variables of interest. The current study may provide important pieces of evidence to education departments in general, and instructors in particular. Pieces of evidence might help for the advancement of the teaching and learning process. It may also provide a foundation for further research that may advise teachers' many techniques for changing verbal and nonverbal behavior in classrooms.

1.6 Methodology

The correlational research design was adopted to explore relationships in teacher immediacy and students' classroom participation. All the university students enrolled in 2-year M.A Education programs and 4-year BS Education programs at public and private universities of district Lahore were included as the population of the study. Multi-stage stratified random sampling along with convenient sampling technique was used to select participants. The population was already divided into two strata (i.e. public and private universities). Firstly, researchers selected four universities from each stratum by using cluster non-proportional stratified random sampling technique. At the second stage, ten classes (Morning and Self-Supporting) of master's and honour's degree programs were selected randomly from each selected university. At last stage, 20 students were selected through convenient sampling technique from each selected class.

1.7 Instrumentation

The instruments i.e. Gorham's (1998) Verbal Immediacy Behaviours (VIB) and Mc Croskey, Sallinen, Fayer, Richmond, and Barraclough's (1996) Revised Nonverbal Immediacy Measures (RNIM) were adapted to gather data about teacher immediacy. Additionally, Students' Classroom Participation (SCP) developed by Fassinger (2000) was also adapted to collect data about classroom participation. Initially, validity of the instruments was ensured by consulting with four educationalists and assessment experts. Afterward, both instruments were administered on 150 students to ensure the psychometrics properties (validity and reliability) of instruments through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) by using SmartPLS-3.0 trial version. Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency) and composite reliability (construct reliability) values shows the good reliability of instruments as $\alpha = 0.895$ to 0.929 . However, Average Variance Extracted value was also higher than 0.5 of all the scales to demonstrate the presence of

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convergent validity. To improve the reliability, seven items were deleted from both instruments because the λ of these items were less than 0.5. The revised instruments were comprised of 24 items (15 items of teacher immediacy while nine items of classroom participation). The values of *Cronbach's Alpha*, *rho A*, *Composite Reliability*, *Average Variance Extracted (AVE)* of both Instruments demonstrated in figure 1 to 4.

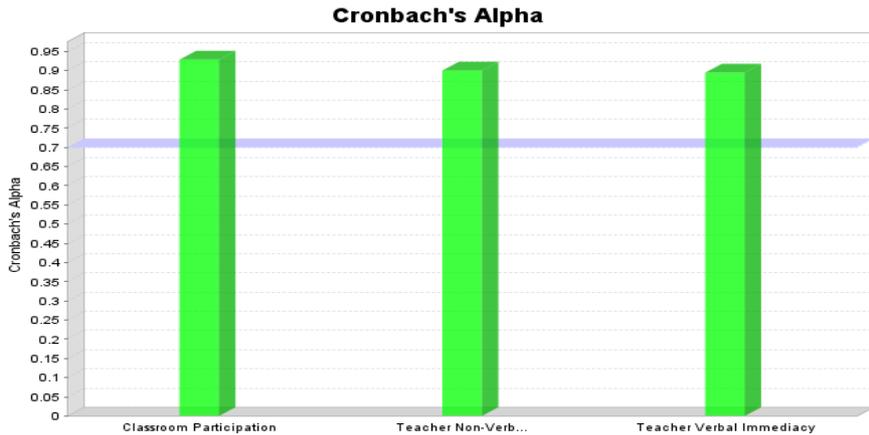


Figure 2. Cronbach's Alpha reliability of teacher verbal immediacy, teacher non-verbal immediacy and student classroom participation

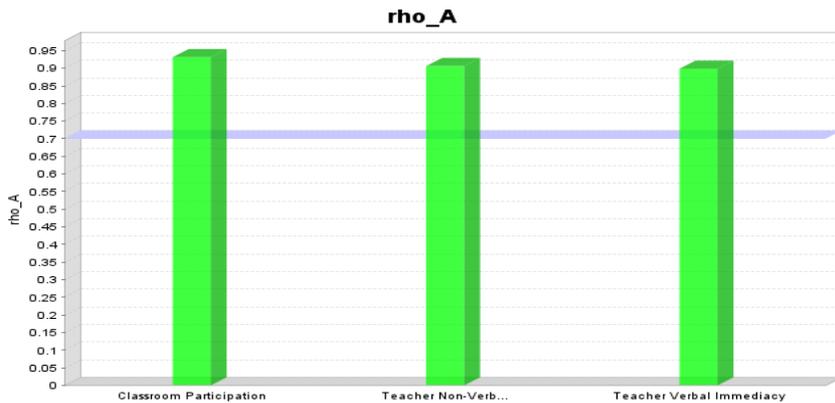


Figure 3. rho_A of teacher verbal immediacy, teacher non-verbal immediacy and student classroom participation.

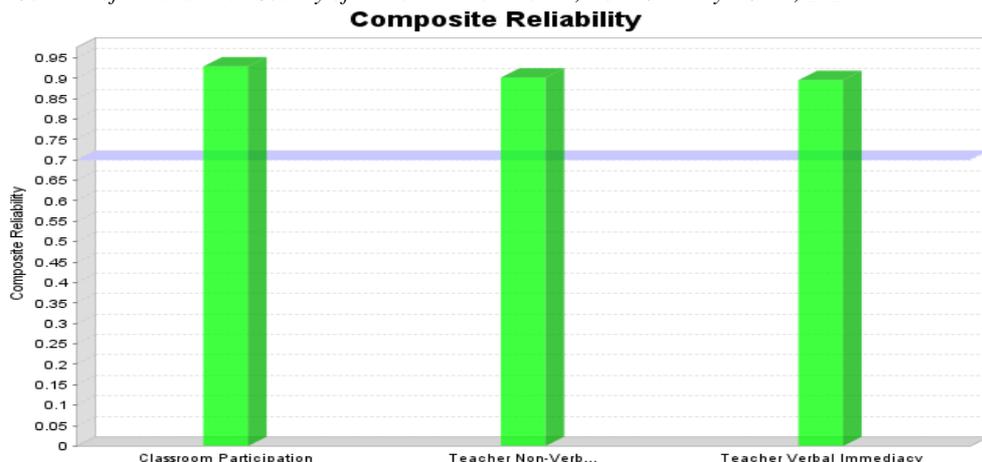


Figure 4. Composite reliability of teacher verbal immediacy, teacher non-verbal immediacy and student classroom participation.

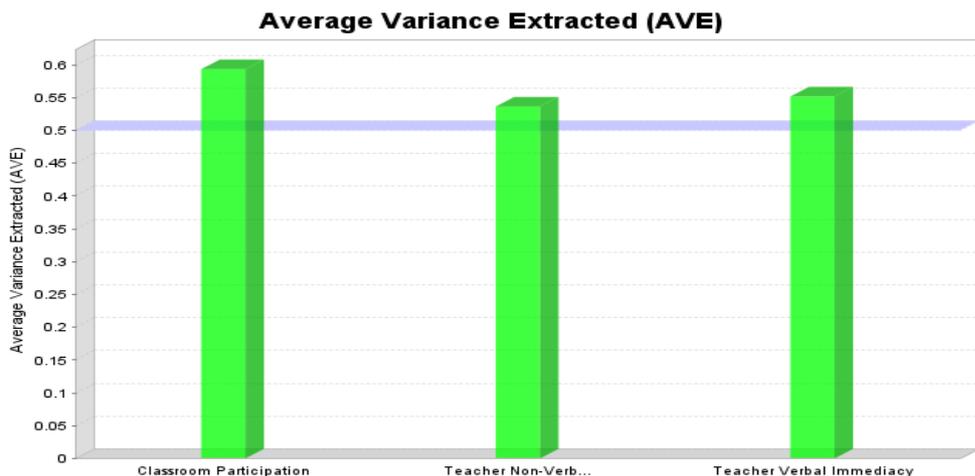


Figure 5. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of teacher verbal immediacy, teacher non-verbal immediacy and student classroom participation.

1.8 Data Collection and Analyses

Before administering the questionnaire on 800 students, the researchers took formal permission from authorities through consent form. However, 726 questionnaires were completed thus response rate was 90.75%. The independent sample t-test and Pearson r tests were applied to analyze the data.

1.9 Results

Table 1. Comparison of Public and Private Sector Students Perceived Teachers Immediacy and their own Classroom Participation.

Indicators	University	N	M	SD	t	p	d
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Teacher Immediacy	Public	397	97.96	16.735	-	.634	0.061
	Private	329	99.11	16.636		.922	
Student Classroom Participation	Public	397	34.31	6.533	.047	.371	0.003
	Private	329	34.37	6.673			

Note: N= 726; d= Cohen’s d; and * = $p < 0.05$.

Table 1 depicts that no statistically significant difference was found in private and public sector university students perception about teacher immediacy and their own classroom participation as $t(724) = -.922, p = .634$, and $t(724) = .047, p = .371$, respectively. The mean score of private sector respondents ($M = 99.11, SD = 16.636$ and

$M = 34.37, SD = 6.673$, respectively) was slightly higher than the mean score of public sector respondents ($M = 97.96, SD = 16.735$ and $M = 34.31, SD = 6.533$, respectively). Additionally, the values of Cohen’s d shows that sector have no effect on students’ perception about teacher immediacy and their own classroom participation as $d=0.061$ and 0.003 respectively.

Table 2. Comparison of Male and Female Students Perceived Teachers Immediacy and their own Classroom Participation

Indicators	Gender	N	M	SD	T	p	d
Teacher Immediacy	Male	262	100.09	16.113	1.593	.549	0.15
	Female	464	97.57	16.955			
Student Classroom Participation	Male	262	34.39	6.739	.018	.935	0.001

Note: N= 726; d= Cohen’s d; and * = $p < 0.05$.

Table 2 shows that no statistically significant difference was found in male and female university students perception about teacher immediacy and their own classroom participation as $t(724) = 1.593, p = .549$, and $t(724) = .018, p = .935$, respectively. The mean score of male respondents ($M = 100.09, SD = 16.113$ and $M = 34.39, SD = 6.739$, respectively) was slightly higher than the mean score of female respondents ($M = 97.57, SD = 16.955$ and $M = 34.38, SD = 6.860$, respectively). Additionally, the values of Cohen’s shows that gender have small effect on students’ perception about teacher immediacy while no effect on students classroom participation as $d= 0.151$ and 0.001 respectively.

1.10 Discussion

The key purpose of this research was to investigate whether or not instructors show verbal and non-verbal immediacy behavior, as apperceived by students, and to explore their relationship with learners’ classroom participation. The research was quantitative and used the correlation design. The survey method was used to

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collect the data. Students rated their perception of teachers' immediacy and their own classroom participation.

Although the research was conducted in a university setting; the investigators must point out that regardless of age, gender, religion, socioeconomic class, or instructional setting, teachers need to use verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors in the classroom. These include eye contact with learners, positive comments on assignments, smiling, gesturing while talking, answering students' questions, sharing personal examples and experiences in class, and any other action that may reduce the physical and psychological distance between teachers and students.

Teachers are required to use more verbal and non-verbal immediacy behaviors in their communication as it helps learners to participate and communicate in the teaching- learning process. When the teacher uses these behaviors, students like to continue interacting with them. Classes, where instructors use more immediacy behaviors, have better performing learners (Baringer & Mc Croskey, 2000). Instructors who enquire interesting questions and respond positively toward learners' responses establish respectable relationships, communication, as well as confidence with their learners (Walberg, 1984). Verbal immediacy is vastly correlated with non-verbal immediacy (Edward & Edwards, 2001). Current investigation can support teachers to become effective and efficient by using appropriate verbal and nonverbal communication behaviors, specifically, verbal communication. The use of interesting questions, for example, provides an opportunity for answering questions and dialogues that will, in turn, form a positive relationship among instructors and students.

The current study shows that the level of teachers' immediacy in universities of Lahore is moderately high which shows that teachers of universities in district Lahore use immediacy behaviors, which motivates students to participate in classroom discussions and other activities. It also develops a positive relationship between teachers and students. The result shows that students become more active and participate in the class of immediate teachers as compared to non-immediate teachers. It has been observed that there is a strong relationship between teachers' immediacy and students' classroom participation.

According to the research of Chese bro and Mc Croskey (2001), teacher immediacy behaviors have a strong relationship with classroom participation. The current study also parallels those findings. In his study, Rocca (2004) found out that there is a strong relationship between teachers' immediacy and students' classroom participation. Moreover, this study determined that there is no significant difference in the mean score of perception of male and female students about teachers' immediacy and students' classroom participation. Both public and private university students, male and female, agreed that their teachers show immediacy in the classroom due to which their classroom participation has increased.

Verbal and non-verbal Immediacy could be a valued instrument for encouraging class participation as well as, active participation in the learning process (Menzel & Carrell, 1999; Rocca, 2008). Earlier investigations propose that these actions work as they make a friendly atmosphere where learners feel easy contributing (Mehrabian, 1972, 2007). Moreover, findings of this study propose that asking for

learners' feedback and showing warmth (i.e., eye contact, use of personal examples, humor, and relaxed body position) might be fundamental for positive participation in the university classroom. Integrating all these verbal and nonverbal immediacy behaviors might be a valuable instructional approach for promoting student achievement across educational disciplines and across cultures.

1.11 Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, no significant difference found in the perception of male and female students about teachers immediacy and students' classroom participation. Though there was no significant difference found, the mean score of the males was slightly high than the female about teachers' immediacy. There was no significant difference found in the perception of public and private university students' about teachers' immediacy and students' classroom participation.

Although there was no significant difference between public and private university students' perceptions, but there was a slight difference existed in the mean score. Private university students' score about teacher immediacy was more than public university students. They agreed that their teacher occasionally shows immediacy behavior, they participate in the classroom when their teacher shows verbal and nonverbal immediacy in the classroom. The significant relationship found between teacher immediacy and student classroom participation.

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that there is a significant relationship between teachers' immediacy and students' classroom participation. Teacher immediacy behaviors matter. Students always like immediacy behaviors in their instructor. According to this study, learners claimed that they become more motivated for participation in classroom discussions and other activities when their teacher displays immediacy behaviors in the classroom.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward for use of immediacy behaviors in the classroom for the effective teaching-learning process and future studies. Concepts that should be addressed by future researchers about teacher immediacy and participation in the classrooms are highlighted below:

- (1) To enhance teacher immediacy, it is recommended that seminars and workshops may be organized regularly in the educational institutes.
- (2) Teachers should use immediacy behavior to improve classroom environment and student-teacher relationship so shy learners may also take part in teaching-learning activities.
- (3) Teacher training institutes should add immediacy behaviors as a part of their teachers' training. It will help to train teachers about the use of immediacy behaviours to develop a relationship with students so they become motivated and participate in classroom discussions for better learning.
- (4) The relation of teacher immediacy with other classroom variables like effective and cognitive learning etc. should be investigated.

(5) Studies should be conducted by collecting data through teachers' self-perception about their use of immediacy in the classroom.

The present study employed the use of self-report questionnaires. This method is at the risk of reporting-bias. Therefore, other data collection methods should also be used to develop a more objective understanding.

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