



## Bridging Communication Gaps: Enhancing Student-Teacher Interaction for Academic Success

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### ABSTRACT

Effective communication is a fundamental determinant of academic success, serving as the cornerstone of the teaching-learning process, which is inherently interactive and dependent on the exchange of content and information. Communication gaps between teachers, students, and peers can significantly disrupt this process, impeding comprehension, engagement, and overall learning outcomes. Inadequate communication between teachers and students often correlates with diminished academic performance, underscoring the necessity of identifying and addressing the factors contributing to these gaps. The primary objective of this study was to investigate and analyze the underlying causes of communication gaps concerning students' academic performance and to propose strategies for minimizing these barriers. A convenience sampling method was employed to select participating schools, while a simple random sampling technique was utilized to draw a sample of 160 students. Data were collected using a self-structured questionnaire based on a five-point Likert scale, designed to assess various dimensions of communication effectiveness. Descriptive statistical analysis was applied to interpret the collected data. The findings revealed that communication gaps exert a significant negative impact on students' academic performance. Key contributing factors identified include lack of instructional clarity, teacher behavior issues, strained student-teacher relationships, psychological barriers, and emotional obstacles. Based on these findings, the study recommends targeted interventions to address these communication challenges. Implementing these strategies could enhance the quality of teacher-student interactions, thereby fostering a more conducive learning environment and promoting improved academic outcomes.

## Introduction

Education, fundamentally, is the interactive process of teaching and learning, grounded in the dynamic exchange of communication and content. For students to effectively comprehend and

conceptualize the world around them, clear and enhanced communication is indispensable. It not only serves as the foundation of understanding but also plays a pivotal role in shaping cognitive, social, and emotional development. Success across all domains of life is intrinsically linked to the ability to communicate effectively. Edgar Dale aptly defines communication as the exchange of thoughts and emotions within a mutually beneficial environment. The term itself derives from the Latin *communis*, meaning to share, mingle, or join—highlighting its inherent purpose of fostering shared understanding and experiences among individuals (Modrea, 2012; Hoque, 2015; Mangal & Mangal, 2017). In the educational context, the interaction between instructors, students, and content forms the core of effective learning, where a supportive classroom climate encourages cooperation, teamwork, and meaningful interactions essential for authentic learning experiences.

Communication within the teaching and learning context diverges significantly from everyday interactions due to the structured nature of the teacher-student relationship. This formal relationship requires adherence to educational standards and professional principles that govern classroom engagement. The instructional process comprises a continuous exchange of messages and counter-messages, including initiation, reception, and response—each contributing to an ongoing feedback loop that shapes the learning experience (Jose, 2016). The teacher's central objective is to ensure that students recognize, comprehend, and apply the knowledge imparted, whether through verbal instruction, written materials, or interactive activities. However, genuine learning occurs only when classroom communication transcends basic exchanges, enhancing students' ability to think critically, articulate ideas, and engage meaningfully with the content. This highlights the reciprocal nature of communication, necessitating active participation from both teachers and students (Neil, 2017).

The essence of classroom learning is communication—without it, educational engagement cannot occur. It manifests through three primary modes: verbal, nonverbal, and written communication. Verbal communication includes spoken words and oral interactions between teachers and students, facilitating immediate feedback and clarification. Nonverbal communication encompasses body language, gestures, facial expressions, and other visual cues that enrich spoken messages by adding emotional and contextual depth. Written communication, encompassing assignments, notes, and feedback, provides a permanent medium for conveying structured information (Kramer, 1947). Among these, verbal communication is often regarded as the most effective for fostering comprehension and facilitating real-time dialogue in educational settings.

Language serves as the principal medium through which teachers convey knowledge and engage with students. According to Bickel (1985), a communication gap arises when the intended message is not accurately received or understood by the listener. Effective communication occurs when the message is delivered clearly, without distortion, and achieves its intended objective. Conversely, gaps emerge when barriers—whether linguistic, psychological, physical, or semantic—interfere with the transmission of information, leading to misunderstandings that can hinder academic progress.

The need to address these barriers is critical for improving educational outcomes, as various obstacles can hinder communication between teachers and students at different stages of the learning process. Lunenburg (2010) categorized these barriers into process obstacles, semantic hurdles, psychological barriers, physical obstacles, and the impact of inattentive listening. Expanding on this, Collins (1997) explored psychological, practical, social, and emotional elements that contribute to communication difficulties in educational environments. His findings emphasized that effective classroom activities, coupled with open teacher-student discussions, empower learners and enhance communication effectiveness.

Recognizing and addressing these barriers is essential for fostering a conducive learning environment (Bailey et al., 2021). Clear communication enables the effective explanation of complex concepts, facilitating better comprehension among students. Moreover, it encourages active participation, allowing students to engage in discussions, ask questions, and deepen their understanding (Lunenborg, 2010). A strong communication framework cultivates a supportive environment where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and concerns, fostering positive teacher-student relationships. Additionally, effective communication is instrumental in delivering constructive feedback, enabling students to improve their academic performance and build confidence. In this regard, communication plays a central role in shaping an inclusive and productive classroom experience, particularly at the secondary education level (Olcer & Kocer, 2015). However, the presence of communication barriers—whether linguistic, psychological, or emotional—can significantly disrupt the teaching-learning process and diminish educational outcomes (Sisman & Turan, 2004).

Given the significance of communication in educational success, this study was undertaken to address a pressing need to investigate the factors contributing to communication gaps in the classroom. The primary objectives of the research were threefold: first, to identify the causes of communication gaps that negatively affect students' academic performance; second, to analyze the extent to which these gaps influence academic outcomes; and third, to propose practical strategies aimed at minimizing communication barriers among secondary-level students. These objectives serve to highlight the urgency of understanding how ineffective communication hinders learning and how educational practices can be improved to foster better teacher-student interactions.

In pursuing these objectives, the study sought to answer two critical research questions. The first question aimed to explore the specific causes of communication gaps in relation to students' academic performance, considering factors such as instructional clarity, teacher behavior, student-teacher relationships, and psychological and emotional barriers. The second question focused on identifying effective methods to bridge these communication gaps and enhance student learning outcomes. Addressing these questions is vital for developing comprehensive strategies that can improve communication practices within secondary education settings and contribute to better academic achievements for students.

## **Literature Review**

According to Eresimadu (2003), No activity may occur in the absence of communication. The meaning of classroom communication is associated with the messages and counter messages that make up the teaching-learning process, which includes initiating, receiving, and responding in order to provide feedback (Jose, 2010). Since communication is the foundation of contact, school activities cannot occur without it. It enables cumulative knowledge to be transmitted. It encourages the sharing of knowledge, concepts, and ideas.

According to Karasek (1990), teacher-student contact can enhance the educational process and foster a supportive classroom environment. However, both parties must put forth effort in the partnership. Teachers' communication issues, which resulted in a communication gap in the classroom today, include poor listening and communication skills, technology jargon, psychological variations, cultural disparities, etc. Misunderstandings of the information and ignorance are further issues.

For both teachers and students to succeed, effective communication is crucial. Teachers and students play a crucial role in the exchange of information in the educational system; in other words, two people may say the exact same thing to the same audience even the same words

but they will ultimately convey two different messages (Osakwe, 2009). Fenn (2014) asserts that for the teaching-learning process to be effective, both the teacher and the student must have a common understanding of the communication process.

Communication is the act of transmitting, particularly current events, or the science and art of conveying information. These definitions make the connection between communication and instruction very evident. Hurt and Beeb (2012), emphasized the importance of interpersonal interaction in the teaching-learning process, stating that it is the crucial link between a skilled instructor and learning student. Without communication, instruction and learning cannot take place.

### **Barriers to Classroom Communication**

In the classroom, a favorable atmosphere is created by the caliber of communication. When the goal of the communication is accomplished, learning is facilitated and expedited, opportunities arise, teachers and pupils are connected, and favorable attitudes are evident, the communication is considered effective.

According to Mangal and Mangal (2017), effective communication adheres to certain standards, including clarity, integrity, attentiveness, consistency, adequacy, timeliness, feedback, and appropriate network. Teachers must be able to recognize the elements that are causing barriers or impediments in the process. At any point during the communication process, these obstacles skew the message. To overcome them, the proper steps should be taken after the identification. In the classroom, there are a number of obstacles to communication.

Communication barriers between teachers and students at the secondary school level can greatly impact the quality of education. These obstacles can impede the effective exchange of knowledge and reduce student engagement during the teaching-learning process (Pangket, 2019).

### **Language barriers**

According to Bailey et al. (2008), language is so essential in a classroom context that it becomes transparent, much like water is to fish. In the classroom, language serves as a medium for interaction and communication. These include teachers' excessive verbalism, language, unresolved signs or images, and improper body language, as well as the language of pupils' inadequacy poor accepting capacity, inadequate listening abilities, lack of comprehension, and wide language gaps.

It is believed that language is the most efficient way to communicate with other people. The comprehension of the material that a person is willing to convey or communicate with others is provided by the language. Surprising facts were found in Kocaman's (2016) study, which investigated communication factors in the process of acquiring a foreign language. Language difficulties were highly appreciated when combined with elements like the learners' negative language and vocabulary. Similar conclusions, mostly related to language problems, were found in the studies of

### **Psychological barriers**

The obstacles that people's brains erect to keep others from communicating are known as psychological or mental barriers. Additionally, a psychological condition influences it

(Brainerd, 2020). The mental disorder that affects communication causes anxiety. Because each person's mind is different and unique, behavioral obstacles are also known as mind-associated difficulties. Individuals communicate based on their own mental states. Communication was hampered by their feelings and dread. Communication challenges may arise from psychological disorders. The focus of Sreenath (2009), is on mindsets and beliefs that influence people's mental states and erect psychological obstacles to communication. Our sensory system aids in perception, which serves as a tool for education. Communication is useless when perception skills are lacking.

### **Emotional Barriers**

One of the most serious issues that among emotional barriers is the incapacity to communicate in an effective manner (What are Emotional Barriers? 2005). Emotional barriers are referred to as the walls that obstruct the communication. When the individuals are overwhelmed by emotional barriers, they are either unwilling or experience problems in communicating with others. The emotional barriers are the factors that impede a speaker's ability to deliver a clear message or receivers' ability to hear a message effectively. Common emotions such as anger, love, joy, frustration, stress, depression, anxiety, pride, disappointment and sadness can all create emotional barriers that negatively affect communication. At times it happens that people do not develop interest in communicating with their fellow due to the feeling of fear, mistrust, anger that may arise within their minds and these are stated to be emotional barriers (Zaineb, 2010).

### **Research Methodology**

The current study is descriptive in nature. The population consists of grade 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> students from public and private schools in Haveli Kahuta AJ&K. A sample of one hundred and sixty (160) students from eight (8) secondary schools was selected using random sampling. A quantitative approach was used, with data collected through a self-structured questionnaire utilizing a five-point Likert scale. Questionnaire was comprised of both close-ended (25) and open-ended (02) questions. Inform consent was taken from the study participants. Every participant was ensured of their data confidentiality The reliability of the tool, measured by Cronbach's Alpha (0.69), was deemed acceptable. The research tools were validated by experts, and pilot testing was conducted with 20 students. The reliability of the tool, measured by Cronbach's Alpha (0.69), was deemed acceptable. Descriptive statistics were used for data analysis.

### **Results & Data Analysis**

Five indicators (instructional clarity, teachers' behavior, student-teacher relationship and psychological barriers and emotional barriers) consisting of each five items were gone through descriptive analysis in which frequency and percentages were calculated. In addition, two items were open ended in which causes of communication gap were explored and suggestions were incorporated to fill communication gap in order to improve academic performance of students.

**Table 1: Responses received on closed ended indicators**

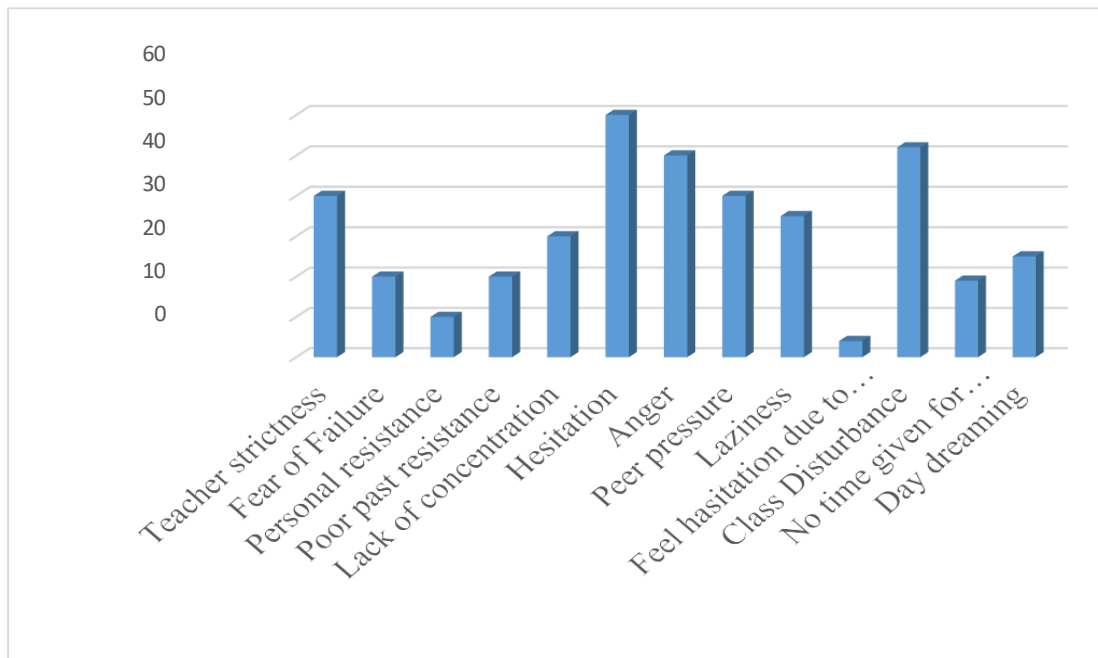
<b>Sr.</b>	<b>Indicators</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>DA</b>	<b>SDA</b>
01.	Lack of Instructional clarity	65 (46%)	51(39%)	1(0.7%)	13(9.2%)	6(4.2%)
02.	Teachers' behavior Issues	83 (59%)	50 (35%)	0 (0%)	4 (2.8%)	3(2.1%)
03.	Negative Student-Teacher relationship	79(56%)	55(39%)	5(3.5%)	6(4.2%)	16(11.4%)
04.	Psychological barriers	17(12%)	57(40%)	4(2.8%)	21(15%)	42(28%)
05.	Emotional barriers	46(32%)	64(45%)	4(2.8%)	16(11%)	18(12%)

Above table reflects that instructional clarity plays significant role in understanding the content in the class and ultimately results in better academic performance. Likewise, adequate teacher's behaviour in class also enhances academic performance. Moreover, student-teacher relationship also contributes in a positive way in learning outcomes. Furthermore, psychological barriers cause trouble in learning process in class. In addition, emotional barriers also affect negatively teaching learning process.

**Table 2: Communication barriers highlighted by students in the class**

S. No.	Barriers	Responses received
1	Teacher strictness	40
2	Fear of failure	20
3	Personal resistance	10
4	Poor past experience	20
5	Lack of concentration	30
6	Hesitation	60
7	Anger	50
8	Peer pressure	40
9	Laziness	35
10	Feel hesitation due to co-education	04
11	Class disturbance	52
12	No time given for asking questions in class.	19
13	Day dreaming	25

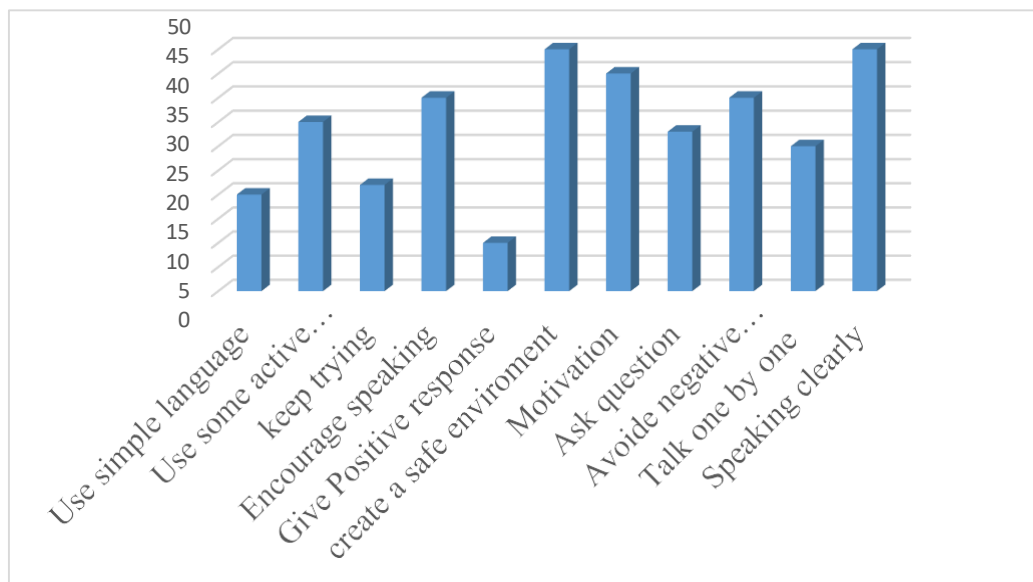
**Figure 1: Communication barriers faced by students**



**Table 2: Suggestions to overcome barriers of communication in class**

S.no	Suggestions	Responses received
1	Use simple language	20
2	Use some active listening exercises	35
3	Keep trying	22
4	Encourage speaking	40
5	Give positive response	10
6	Create a safe environment	50
7	Motivation	45
8	Ask questions	33
9	Avoid negative emotions	40
10	Talk one by one	30
11	Speaking clearly	50

**Figure 2: Suggestions to overcome barriers of communication in class**



## Findings and Conclusions

The findings of this study reveal significant insights into the dynamics of classroom communication and the factors that impede effective teacher-student interactions. The first indicator, highlighting that 85% of respondents (combining “Strongly Agree” and “Agree”) perceive a lack of instructional clarity as a barrier, underscores the foundational role that clear instruction plays in facilitating effective communication. From a theoretical standpoint, this aligns with Vygotsky’s Sociocultural Theory, which emphasizes the importance of clear guidance within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), where learners require structured support to bridge the gap between their current capabilities and potential learning outcomes. When instructional clarity is compromised, students are left without the necessary scaffolding to engage meaningfully with the content, leading to confusion and disengagement.

In practical terms, unclear instructions can result in students misinterpreting tasks, losing

motivation, and ultimately falling behind academically. Teachers who fail to articulate learning objectives, clarify content, or offer step-by-step guidance inadvertently create barriers that obstruct student comprehension. This deficiency disrupts the feedback loop essential for learning, where student responses inform teachers about the effectiveness of their instruction. Ground application of these findings suggests that educators must prioritize clarity through structured lesson planning, use of visual aids, simplified language, and regular feedback checks to ensure students grasp the intended messages.

The second indicator, where 94% of students reported that teacher behavior issues pose a significant hurdle, points to the critical influence of teachers' interpersonal skills on the learning environment. Theoretically, this finding resonates with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which posits that learners observe and imitate behaviors within their environment. A teacher's negative demeanor—such as impatience, favoritism, or dismissiveness—can discourage student participation, lower self-efficacy, and foster a fear-based classroom atmosphere. Such behaviors can create a psychological barrier where students feel intimidated and are less likely to engage openly with their teachers.

In practical classroom settings, the implications of teacher behavior are profound. For instance, harsh or indifferent behavior may lead to anxiety, reducing students' willingness to ask questions or clarify doubts. On the other hand, empathetic and supportive teacher behavior can cultivate a nurturing environment that promotes open communication and academic engagement. This underlines the importance of teacher training programs focused on emotional intelligence, active listening, and classroom management strategies aimed at fostering positive student-teacher interactions.

The third indicator revealed that 95% of respondents acknowledged negative student-teacher relationships as a key factor contributing to poor academic performance. This finding aligns with Attachment Theory, particularly the concept of secure attachment, which suggests that students who feel emotionally supported by their teachers are more likely to engage academically and exhibit higher levels of motivation. A strained student-teacher relationship disrupts this emotional bond, leading to feelings of alienation, diminished academic confidence, and decreased classroom participation.

Grounded in practical applications, this highlights the need for educational institutions to foster stronger relational ties between teachers and students. Initiatives such as mentorship programs, open-door policies, and regular one-on-one feedback sessions can enhance the sense of connection, making students feel valued and supported. Strengthening this relational bond is essential for creating a positive learning atmosphere where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, asking questions, and actively participating in classroom discussions.

The fourth indicator showed that 62% of participants agreed that psychological barriers hinder the teaching-learning process. This reflects key principles from Cognitive Load Theory, which suggests that excessive cognitive burdens—such as anxiety, stress, or fear of failure—can overwhelm a learner's working memory, reducing their capacity to process new information effectively. Psychological barriers such as fear of making mistakes, low self-esteem, or negative past academic experiences can create mental blocks that prevent students from fully engaging with learning materials.

From a practical perspective, addressing psychological barriers requires an understanding of individual student needs and providing targeted emotional support. Teachers can integrate stress-reducing activities, mindfulness exercises, and individualized learning strategies to help

students manage anxiety and enhance their learning capacity. Moreover, creating a classroom environment that normalizes mistakes as part of the learning process can alleviate fears and encourage active participation.

The fifth indicator revealed that 77% of respondents believed emotional barriers negatively impact students' academic outcomes. This aligns with the Emotional Intelligence Theory proposed by Daniel Goleman, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing and managing emotions in fostering personal and academic success. Emotions such as anger, frustration, sadness, and anxiety can hinder cognitive functioning, focus, and motivation, leading to decreased academic performance.

The practical application of this insight necessitates creating emotionally supportive classrooms where students feel safe and valued. Teachers can incorporate socio-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks into their teaching practices, encouraging students to develop emotional regulation skills and resilience. Recognizing emotional distress and offering support through counseling services or peer mentoring can also help mitigate these barriers and enhance academic outcomes.

The data from Table 2 further illustrate the nuanced challenges faced by students, highlighting specific barriers such as teacher strictness, fear of failure, personal resistance, poor past experiences, lack of concentration, hesitation, anger, peer pressure, laziness, and feelings of discomfort due to co-education. These factors reflect a complex interplay of emotional, psychological, and environmental factors that collectively contribute to communication breakdowns. For instance, teacher strictness and peer pressure can foster a sense of intimidation, while past failures and personal resistance can diminish students' willingness to participate actively in classroom discussions.

Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach. Strategies such as promoting an inclusive classroom culture, encouraging peer collaboration, offering regular emotional support, and providing opportunities for student autonomy can help mitigate these barriers. Teachers must be trained to recognize early signs of disengagement and implement proactive measures that encourage active participation and foster a supportive learning environment.

Table 3 offers valuable insights into potential solutions to overcome communication barriers. Recommendations such as using simple language, engaging in active listening exercises, encouraging speaking, providing positive responses, and creating a safe environment highlight the need for both structural and emotional adjustments within the classroom. These strategies align with the Constructivist Learning Theory, which posits that learners construct knowledge through meaningful interactions and active engagement with their environment. Encouraging open communication, offering positive reinforcement, and creating psychologically safe spaces can significantly enhance student engagement and academic success.

## **Conclusions with Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The study's findings underscore the multifaceted nature of communication gaps within the classroom and their direct impact on student learning outcomes. A lack of instructional clarity not only diminishes understanding but also disrupts the scaffolding process essential for knowledge acquisition, as emphasized by Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory. Teachers' negative behaviors, highlighted by Bandura's Social Learning Theory, can discourage participation and lower self-efficacy, creating an environment of fear and disengagement.

Moreover, strained student-teacher relationships undermine the emotional support framework

crucial for academic motivation, consistent with Attachment Theory. Psychological barriers, as explained by Cognitive Load Theory, limit students' capacity for effective learning, while emotional barriers, highlighted by Goleman's Emotional Intelligence framework, impair focus and engagement.

Addressing these barriers demands both theoretical understanding and practical application. Teachers should be equipped with strategies that promote clear communication, foster positive relationships, and create an emotionally supportive environment. Interventions must also focus on reducing psychological stressors through mindfulness practices, socio-emotional learning, and individualized feedback systems.

Ultimately, bridging communication gaps requires a comprehensive approach that integrates clear instructional practices, supportive teacher-student relationships, and an emotionally safe learning environment. By addressing the underlying causes of communication barriers, educators can foster a more inclusive, engaging, and effective learning experience, leading to improved academic performance and holistic student development.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to identify and analyze the causes of communication gaps with regard to students' academic performance at secondary level in District Haveli Kahuta AJ&K. Causes of communication gaps were identified. Five indicators of communication gaps were selected. Lack of instructional clarity affect students' learning process. Until or unless students do not receive clear instruction that includes clarity in language, effective teaching methodology, understanding the content etc. they will not be able to perform better in class. Students learning may be enhanced in a productive learning environment by filling these gaps in class. Moreover, teacher's behaviour also plays great role in students' academic achievement. Positive Student-teacher relationship also contributes significantly in enhancing academic performance of students (Pangket, 2019). Current findings highlighted that Emotional and Psychological barriers effect the communication (Pal et al. (2016). Kapur (2018) also supported the current study results. Communication gaps had greater role on the students overall academic performance so there is a need to overcome the causes of communication gaps to make the students better in their academic record. These findings were in line with the study conducted by Bratchuk & Smith, (2023) that reflects that, presence of communication barriers makes students less motivated and hinders their personality. It was suggested to provide better communication facilities to the students for improved academic performance.

## **Recommendations**

1. Welcoming and supportive environment may be created in class for comfortable communication process.
2. Instructor must have clarity in imparting knowledge in class in every aspect e.g language, content mastery, methodology etc.
3. Conducive learning environment may lead to develop healthy student-teacher relationship.
4. Training sessions may be conducted for teachers to minimize the communication gap in class.
5. Regular constructive feedback is necessary for improvement in students' academic performance.
6. Studies may be conducted gender-wise on higher level for deeper understanding of communication gaps.

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