

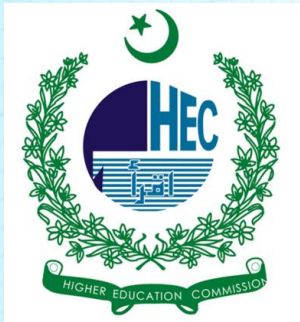
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**Voicing Identity: An Exploration of Gendered Communication  
in Academic Context (Peshawar)**



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**Abstract**

This study explores gender-specific communication patterns among undergraduate students at Islamia College Peshawar. It examines how male and female students differ in communication styles during academic interactions and how they perceive the effectiveness of these styles in achieving academic and social goals. The research is based on Genderlect Theory. A quantitative approach was used. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire with 20 Likert-scale items. A total of 100 students participated, including 58 females and 42 males. Independent Samples t-tests were conducted to compare gender-based responses. The findings show that female students use politer, and more indirect language. They also report listening more, prioritizing harmony, and building rapport before tasks. Male students were slightly more direct, but this was not statistically significant. No gender difference appeared in confidence, use of body language, or initiating conversations. Regarding perceived effectiveness, female students believed their communication style helped them more in building peer relationships, resolving misunderstandings, and performing academically. Both genders felt equally confident in expressing ideas and achieving group goals. These findings suggest a shift towards gender inclusivity, with some traditional patterns still present. The study highlights the need to understand gendered communication in local academic contexts. It provides insights for educators to create balanced and inclusive learning environments. Recommendations for future research include expanding the sample, exploring diverse gender identities, and linking communication to academic outcomes. This research contributes to gender studies and educational development in Pakistan.

**Keywords:** Gender, communication, academic, Genderlect theory, identity

**Introduction**

Communication is a key skill for success in both academic and social life. It helps students express ideas, build relationships, and participate effectively in group tasks (Charlebois, 2016). However, communication styles can vary based on culture, gender, and social background. Gender especially plays an important role in how people communicate. Men and women often use different strategies. This includes speaking,

listening, or expressing disagreement (Bakhtiyarovna, 2024). These differences can lead to misunderstanding. They can also affect how messages are received. This is especially true in academic settings. In recent years, gender and communication patterns gained more attention. Researchers now explore how male and female students interact. They study classrooms, group projects, and campus activities (Azmi et al., 2023).

Gendered communication in Pakistan's universities reflects cultural norms. It also reflects existing power structures. Female students often use indirect and polite speech. They do this to avoid confrontation and preserve harmony (Jumani et al., 2025). This communication pattern is shaped by traditional expectations. These shape how women should behave in public. Teachers may unconsciously give more voice to male students (Shaukat et al., 2014). Male dominance in classroom talk is still visible today. Girls may hold back even with strong opinions. This creates uneven ground for learning and sharing ideas. Classroom interactions often reflect broader social inequalities outside campus.

Male students tend to speak more and dominate debates. Their assertiveness is accepted and often encouraged by faculty (Farooq et al., 2023). In contrast, female students excel in small group settings. They are more likely to build trust before speaking up. Many adapt by combining direct and indirect speech. This helps them balance confidence with social expectations (Delavande & Zafar, 2019). Still, some feel unsure in public settings like presentations. Their style is often misread as lack of skill or confidence. These gaps reduce fairness in academic spaces. Institutions must address this for true inclusion. Islamia College Peshawar, like many universities, has a diverse student body. Gender dynamics play a strong role in learning and social experiences there. Yet, little is known about how students themselves view these gender-based communication differences. Local research on this topic is limited, and there is a need to fill this gap.

There is a clear lack of local research on how male and female students in Pakistan communicate differently in academic settings. Most existing studies are either based in Western contexts or focus on formal media communication, not student interactions (Faiz et al., 2021). They also rarely explore how students perceive the effectiveness of their own communication styles. Universities like Islamia College

Peshawar provide a unique cultural space where gender norms affect learning. However, these dynamics remain under-researched (Kanwal et al., 2017). This study aims to fill that gap by exploring student perceptions of how gendered communication helps or hinders academic and social outcomes. The study aims at investigating gender-specific communication styles among undergraduate students at Islamia College Peshawar and assess how these styles influence perceived effectiveness in achieving academic and social objectives.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the key differences in male and female students' communication styles during academic interactions at Islamia College Peshawar, as perceived by the students themselves?
2. What are the perceptions of male and female students regarding the effectiveness of their communication styles in achieving academic and social objectives at Islamia College Peshawar?

### **Literature Review**

Communication has important function in social interactions such as relationships and learning (Ray & Pani, 2019). Communication styles would differ based on the gender, men being direct and women prioritizing relationship (Garini & Mualimin, 2021). Genderlect Theory provides the explanation of these differences in various settings (Hughes, 2020). This chapter examines gender differences in communication and the effects on academic and social interactions. It examines Genderlect Theory in order to offer a theoretical understanding of male and female communication styles. It discusses the way these patterns form interactions particularly in educational settings and also their consequences for facilitating communication.

### **Theoretical Foundation: Genderlect Theory**

Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory (1990) indicates that men and women speak different languages as a result of social and cultural conditioning. According to the theory, men use 'report talk' to convey information and assertiveness, while women use 'rapport talk' to build relationships (Ray & Pani, 2019). Such difference influences interpersonal interaction at an educational and professional setting. One key construct of the theory is Status vs. Connection. In conversations, men aim to make themselves dominant to establish status and women want to be understood and feel connected

(Natano et al., 2024). In academic discussions, men interrupt, challenge other people's ideas, while women support and affirm other people's statements (Garini & Mualimin, 2021).

Report Talk vs. Rapport Talk highlight that men speak directly and using facts, while women opt for relationship and emotions (Benfilali et al., 2021). This pattern is visible in workplace meetings where men talk about tasks, and women discuss inclusively (Hughes, 2020). Public vs. Private Speaking proposes that men prefer to speak in public, and women are more at ease in private conversations. Galano et al. (2021) studies show that men are more active in the classroom debates, and women like small group discussions.

In Direct vs. Indirect Communication, men tend to use assertive, straightforward speech, whereas women are more indirect and polite (Hargrave, 2023). We can see this in professional emails, where women use more mitigating language to keep the peace (Albeshar, 2022). Conflict vs. Compromise shows that men tend to see disagreements as a breach and want to fight, whereas women try to solve disagreements through mediation and compromise (Egamberdiyeva, 2024). This changes leadership styles, as male leaders assert authority while female leaders promote collaboration (Al-Shibel, 2021).

### **Gender-Specific Communication Styles in Academic Settings**

Communication has an important role in educational institutions as it can affect the student participation and their learning experience (Ariyani & Hadiani, 2019). The communication styles of male and female students impact the way they interact in the classroom and the academic discourse (Lee & McCabe, 2021).

In the debates and formal discussions, male students often employ assertive, competitive, and fact driven speech. Obidovna (2022) discovered that men tend to interrupt and challenge ideas and therefore dominate through direct communication. Furthermore, they like public speaking and structured debate as these formats provide them the opportunity to demonstrate knowledge and leadership skills (Renigunta et al., 2022).

Female students, however, use more relational, supportive language that emphasizes inclusivity, cooperation and working together. As observed by Ariyani and Hadiani (2019), women prioritize more value to small group or one to one discussions,

which allow women to engage in facilitative speech and enable peer contributions. Unlike men, women use mitigating expressions to avoid conflict and to maintain harmony in conversations (Hargrave, 2023).

According to Sdeeq et al. (2021), men dominate classroom discussions, but women use facilitative speech to support and affirm other people's viewpoints. Gender based communication differences emphasize the importance of giving space for academically inclusive environments in support of balanced participation (Dash et al., 2021).

### **Perceived Effectiveness of Gendered Communication**

Communication styles impact students' effectiveness in academic environments, particularly in debates and group work. In their study, Lee and McCabe (2021) discovered that male student's direct and assertive communication is useful for competitive academic discussions but may hinder collaboration. Structured debates suit their preference for establishing authority, but can prevent more cooperative learning environments (O'Connor et al., 2015). On the other hand, female students are good at collaborative learning because their rapport building and indirect communication style. According to Blake et al. (2024), women make inclusive discussions that lead to teamwork and mutual understanding. However, in the competitive settings where assertiveness is emphasized, the relationship oriented emphasis of their communication may be neglected (Arriyani, 2017).

Female students have a stronger emphasis on relationships in social interactions, which helps them expand their networking skills. Ratanaphithayaporn and Rodrigo (2020) discovered that women tend to engage in supportive and collaborative dialogue that allows for long term academic and professional connections. O'Connor et al. (2015) suggest that their indirect communication style promotes conflict resolution and group cohesion and makes them strong mediators in academic settings. On the contrary, men's desire for autonomy may prevent them from forming collaborative connections. According to Soumia and Chaima (2024), male students have a tendency to prefer independence rather than participate in discussions based on group orientation. While on the one side, this approach results in higher self-sufficiency, on the other side it decreases networking opportunities on academic and professional settings (Fontanini et al., 2020).

### **Contextualizing Genderlect Theory in Islamia College Peshawar**

Gender based differences in communication are greatly influenced by the cultural and educational settings. How men and women should interact in academic environments and how they should communicate with each other is regulated by societal norms (Ashraf et al., 2021). Nowadays in Pakistan gender roles are so deeply embedded in student's speech patterns; men are encouraged to be assertive and dominant, women are expected to be polite and cooperative (Bano & Ahmad, 2018). At Islamia College Peshawar, gender-specific communication styles are shaped by cultural expectations. Ahmad (2023) found that male students often take over the discussion by adopting report talk to express opinions. In contrast, female students focus on rapport talk, having supportive and cooperative discussions to keep the peace (Fakhr & Messenger, 2020). The broader socio cultural influences on classroom communication also vary. Imran et al. (2020) research indicates that women's voices are often devalued in academic settings and perpetuates traditional gender hierarchies. It is important to understand these genderlect differences at ICP to promote inclusive academic discourse.

Existing studies on Genderlect Theory focus on Western academic settings, with limited research on South Asian institutions, particularly Pakistan. Indeed, there are no empirical studies of the gender specific communication styles in higher education within Islamia College Peshawar. Knowing these patterns can improve academic and social discourse inclusivity.

This review identifies major gender distinctions in communication styles, which include that men communicate directly and assertively, and women employ relational and cooperative communication. Genderlect theory provides a framework for understanding these variations in the context of academic and social interactions. However, few studies are undertaken on South Asian academic institutions, specifically in Pakistan. This study on gendered communication styles at Islamia College Peshawar is significant as it addresses an academically specific context that makes academic discourse more inclusive and balanced in education.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design and Strategy**

This study used a quantitative survey research design. A quantitative design was

chosen because it allows researchers to measure differences between variables in a structured and numerical way (Malik et al., 2022). The descriptive-comparative aspect helped to explore how male and female students at Islamia College Peshawar differ in their communication styles. A cross-sectional approach was used because it captures data from participants at a single point in time. This design is efficient for comparing groups without requiring long-term observation (Stafford, 2015). It also works well with survey data collected through structured questionnaires. Using this design, the study focused on identifying statistically significant differences between genders. This was done by analyzing standardized responses using SPSS. The analysis involved applying independent t-tests. This statistical test is ideal for comparing two independent groups. It helps when the goal is to find out if their average responses are different (Yuliana & Sahayu, 2024). The chosen design offered both clarity and simplicity. It allowed the researcher to examine communication patterns. This was done in an academic setting through a gender lens.

### **Participants**

This study targeted undergraduate students enrolled at Islamia College Peshawar. They were chosen due to their direct involvement in academic and peer interactions. This made them ideal for studying gendered communication patterns. A total of 100 students participated—58 females and 42 males—ensuring gender diversity in the sample. The sample consisted of a total of 100 undergraduate students from Islamia College Peshawar. Out of these, 58 participants were female, while 42 were male. This means female students made up the majority, accounting for 58% of the total, while males represented 42%. The age range was limited to 18–24 years. Participants were grouped into four age categories. The largest group was aged 22–23, which included 41 students, making up 41% of the total sample. This was followed by 31 students aged 24, who made up 31% of the respondents. 17 students were between 20 and 21 years old, and only 11 students fell in the 18–19 age range. This age group represents the core undergraduate population.

A purposive sampling method was applied to intentionally select participants. They were selected based on gender and age suitability (Ahamad, 2015). This method enabled the researcher to recruit students who best fit the research focus. It avoided selecting participants randomly. Purposive sampling is commonly used when the aim



is to draw comparisons. It is especially useful between specific sub-groups—in this case, male and female students (Balogun & Olanrewaju, 2016). This sampling strategy ensured a balanced representation of views across gender. It also remained practical for online distribution and data collection. The participants were readily accessible through institutional platforms. WhatsApp class groups made recruitment efficient. This approach suited the study's goal of comparing gender-based communication differences in academic environments.

### **Instrument**

The study used a structured online questionnaire to collect data from undergraduate students. This method allowed participants to complete the survey at their convenience. It promoted higher response rates and honest answers (Mondal, 2022). Questionnaires are also useful for collecting data on perceptions. They help measure attitudes in a standardized way. The questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale. It ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This format is widely used in social science research. It helps measure degrees of agreement or disagreement with specific statements (Ouahidi, 2020). It provides simple, measurable responses. These are suitable for statistical analysis. The tool consisted of two main parts. Section A (Q1–Q10) focused on students' communication styles. These included directness, politeness, listening habits, and task orientation. Section B (Q11–Q20) measured students' perceived communication effectiveness. It looked at academic and social contexts. All questions were short, clear, and aligned with the study's objectives. The online format ensured easy distribution and data compilation.

### **Data Collection Method**

The study collected data using an online survey form created with Google Forms. This method offered flexibility and ease for both the researcher and participants. It allowed students to access the questionnaire at their own pace. They could complete it at their convenience (Muhammad & Nagaletchimee, 2023). The questionnaire link was shared directly with participants via WhatsApp. This is a commonly used communication tool among university students in Pakistan (Holly et al., 2023). Before starting the survey, participants were shown an introduction. They also received an informed consent statement. This explained the purpose of the study and confirmed anonymity. It highlighted that participation was entirely voluntary. Anonymity and

confidentiality were respected throughout the process. This helped ensure trust and honest responses. No names or personal data were collected. The online format had clear advantages. It allowed for wider reach and easy access. It was completely contactless, which is especially useful for busy or remote students. Overall, this method provided a reliable and ethical way. It helped gather meaningful data from a targeted population.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

This study used descriptive statistics and the independent samples t-test to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics helped summarize key features of the responses. These included gender and age distribution of the students (Balogun & Olanrewaju, 2016). Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated. This was done for all 20 questionnaire items.

The main statistical test used to compare responses across gender was the independent samples t-test. It allowed the researcher to determine whether male and female students had significantly different mean scores. These scores were based on Q1–Q10 (communication behaviors) and Q11–Q20 (perceived effectiveness) (Nyarko-Sampson et al., 2021). All statistical tests were performed using SPSS software. These methods were suitable because they compare two independent groups (male and female). This matched the structure of the study (Handayuni et al., 2020). This statistical approach provided clear insights into communication differences. It did so by gender in a valid, reliable, and structured way.

### **Ethical Considerations in Research**

All participants gave digital informed consent before completing the questionnaire. They were told the purpose and details of the research to ensure transparency and choice. Participation was completely voluntary, and no student was pressured or rewarded. The survey ensured anonymity and confidentiality, as no personal data was collected. Ethical approval was obtained from relevant departments at Islamia College Peshawar. All data was stored securely and used only for academic purposes. This process protected participant rights and upheld academic standards throughout the study.

### **Findings**

#### **Communication Styles During Academic Interactions**

To compare the communication styles of male and female undergraduate students at Islamia College Peshawar, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted. This test was chosen to examine whether the mean scores for each group (male and female) were significantly different across ten Likert-scale items related to academic communication.

The results showed no significant gender difference in direct and assertive communication (Q1), with males scoring slightly higher ( $M = 3.69$ ) than females ( $M = 3.36$ ), but the difference was not statistically meaningful ( $p = .116$ ). However, a significant difference was found in the use of polite or indirect language (Q2), where females ( $M = 3.47$ ) scored higher than males ( $M = 2.90$ ), indicating that female students were more likely to use indirect expressions in academic settings ( $p = .026$ ). When asked about initiating academic conversations (Q3), both males and females reported similar comfort levels ( $p = .514$ ), suggesting no notable gender gap in this area. A strong difference appeared in listening behavior (Q4); females ( $M = 3.90$ ) reported listening more than speaking, significantly more than males ( $M = 3.00$ ), with  $p = .000$ . Similarly, in building rapport before academic tasks (Q6), females ( $M = 3.83$ ) scored significantly higher than males ( $M = 2.79$ ), indicating a clear gendered preference for relationship-building before task engagement ( $p = .000$ ).

The use of body language (Q5) showed no meaningful difference ( $p = .152$ ), suggesting both genders used gestures and eye contact similarly. In contrast, females were found to be more task-oriented during academic group work (Q7), with a significantly higher mean score ( $M = 3.81$ ) than males ( $M = 3.07$ ),  $p = .001$ . On prioritizing harmony over winning arguments (Q8), a significant difference was again observed; females ( $M = 3.93$ ) prioritized harmony more than males ( $M = 2.79$ ),  $p = .000$ .

No significant difference was found in confidence when expressing challenging opinions (Q9), with males ( $M = 3.62$ ) and females ( $M = 3.40$ ) showing similar results ( $p = .360$ ). However, in adapting communication style based on the peer's gender (Q10), females ( $M = 3.72$ ) reported doing so more often than males ( $M = 3.19$ ), and this difference was statistically significant ( $p = .028$ ).

Six out of ten items showed significant gender-based differences in communication style. Female students were more likely to communicate in ways that maintained harmony, built rapport, and adapted to social context. Male and female students, however, showed similar levels of directness, confidence, and non-verbal expression

**Table 3: Independent Samples t-test Results – Communication Styles (Q1–Q10)**

No	Statement	t-test for Equality of Means (df = 98)					95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference			Lower	Upper
Q1	I prefer direct and assertive communication when engaging in academic discussions.	1.566	0.116	0.328			-0.083	0.739
Q2	I often use polite or indirect language to express disagreement in classroom settings.	-2.267	0.026	-0.561			-1.052	-0.07
Q3	I feel comfortable initiating academic conversations with teachers or classmates.	0.654	0.514	0.164			-0.344	0.662
Q4	I tend to listen more than speak during academic group discussions.	-4.189	<.001	-0.897			-1.321	-0.472
Q5	I use body language (e.g., gestures, eye contact) to emphasize my points in class.	-1.445	0.152	-0.328			-0.778	0.122
Q6	I focus on building rapport before getting to the academic task.	-4.96	<.001	-1.042			-1.459	-0.625
Q7	I usually communicate in a task-oriented way during	-3.545	<.001	-0.739			-1.153	-0.325

academic group work.

Q8	I often prioritize maintaining harmony over winning an argument in academic conversations.	-	5.316	<.001	-1.145	-1.573	-0.718
Q9	I express my opinions confidently, even if they challenge the instructor or peers.		0.919	0.36	0.222	0.258	0.703
Q10	I adapt my communication style depending on whether I'm interacting with male or female peers.	-	2.235	0.028	-0.534	-1.007	-0.06

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### **Perceived Effectiveness of Gendered Communication**

To examine whether male and female students differ in how they perceive the effectiveness of their communication styles in academic and social success, an Independent Samples t-test was conducted. This test compares the mean scores of both groups for each of the 10 questions related to communication effectiveness.

The first item, "*My communication style helps me express my academic ideas effectively*" (Q11), showed no significant difference between males and females, with a p-value of .099. This suggests that both genders felt equally confident in expressing academic ideas.

In contrast, significant differences were found in Q12 and Q13. For Q12, "*My way of communicating helps me build good relationships with classmates*", females reported higher agreement (mean difference = -0.534,  $p = .019$ ), suggesting that female students found their communication style more helpful in forming peer relationships. Similarly, for Q13, "*My communication approach contributes positively to my academic performance*", the difference was significant (mean difference = -0.567,  $p = .005$ ), again showing females perceived their communication as more academically beneficial.

Question 14, about resolving misunderstandings through usual communication style, also showed a significant difference ( $p = .004$ , mean difference = -0.659). This

implies females believed more strongly that their communication helps resolve misunderstandings.

Q15, regarding whether one's communication is understood and accepted by peers, showed no significant difference ( $p = .097$ ). Likewise, Q16 asked if gender influences how others respond. The result was not significant ( $p = .236$ ), indicating that both males and females felt similarly about gender-based responses in class.

Confidence in achieving group project goals (Q17) did not show a significant gender difference ( $p = .271$ ). However, Q18, "*My communication helps me create a positive social presence on campus*", showed a small but significant difference ( $p = .038$ ), with females again scoring higher (mean difference = -0.415).

No significant gender differences were found in Q19 or Q20. Students from both groups felt similarly about being heard in academic settings ( $p = .729$ ) and communication contributing to personal growth ( $p = .311$ ).

**Table 4: Independent Samples t-test Results – Perceived Communication Effectiveness (Q11–Q20)**

Independent Samples Test (df = 98)						
			t-test for Equality of Means			
			95% Confidence Interval of the			
			Mean Difference			
No	Statement	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Mean Difference	Lower	Upper
Q11	My communication style helps me express my academic ideas effectively.	-1.665	0.099	-0.341	-0.747	0.065
Q12	I feel that my way of communicating helps me build good relationships with classmates.	-2.380	0.019	-0.534	-0.979	-0.089
Q13	My communication approach contributes positively to my academic performance.	-2.848	0.005	-0.567	-0.963	-0.172

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	I can resolve						
Q14	misunderstandings easily using my usual communication style.	-2.961	0.004	-0.659	-1.100	-0.217	
	My communication style is						
Q15	well understood and accepted by my peers.	-1.674	0.097	-0.349	-0.763	0.065	
	I feel that my gender influences						
Q16	how others respond to my communication in class.	-1.193	0.236	-0.219	-0.584	0.145	
	I am confident that my						
Q17	communication helps me achieve group project goals.	-1.106	0.271	-0.226	-0.631	0.179	
	I believe my communication						
Q18	style helps me create a positive social presence on campus.	-2.098	0.038	-0.415	-0.807	-0.022	
	I feel included and heard in						
Q19	academic and social settings because of how I communicate.	-0.348	0.729	-0.068	-0.457	0.321	
	My communication style						
Q20	contributes to my personal growth and confidence in college.	-1.017	0.311	-0.193	-0.569	0.183	

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## Discussion

### Communication Styles During Academic Interactions

The study revealed mixed results in gender-based communication styles. No significant difference was found in Q1 regarding direct and assertive communication. Males scored slightly higher, but not meaningfully so. This contradicts Genderlect Theory, which claims men tend to be more direct and assertive (Tannen, 1990; Natano et al., 2024). A possible reason could be the evolving classroom culture. Modern academic environments encourage assertiveness in all students, regardless of gender (Schleef, 2008). For Q2, females used polite and indirect expressions significantly more than males. This aligns with previous findings that show women prefer rapport

talk and indirect styles to maintain harmony (Abdulrahman, 2018). Women often use mitigation to avoid confrontational speech (Azmi et al., 2023). In many cultures, including Pakistani society, indirect speech is a gendered expectation. Female students might follow this to conform to social norms. The findings here support traditional theory and confirm that cultural values continue to shape classroom communication, even in higher education.

When asked about initiating academic conversations (Q3), both genders reported similar comfort levels. This result contrasts with earlier claims that men are more confident speakers in public discussions (Hudson, 1992). Equal confidence among males and females may reflect improved inclusivity in academic spaces. It suggests students now receive more equal encouragement to participate. For Q4, females reported listening more than males. This supports earlier research that shows women are more attentive and use active listening as a communication tool (Park et al., 2013). Listening is a core aspect of rapport talk. It builds trust, cooperation, and inclusivity. This is especially important in group discussions. It makes female students key supporters in collaborative learning environments (Ali et al., 2019). Q5, on body language, showed no significant gender difference. This finding does not support prior studies which found females more expressive with gestures (Radwan, 2011). The reason could be local context. In Pakistani classrooms, visible gestures—especially among women—may be restrained due to cultural expectations. This neutralises potential gender variation in non-verbal communication.

In Q6, females reported significantly higher use of rapport-building before academic tasks. This is consistent with Genderlect Theory. Women tend to prioritise emotional connection before performing tasks (Tannen, 1990; Natano et al., 2024). These habits support smoother teamwork and cooperation. Studies show that women in educational settings often form peer alliances through emotional intelligence and inclusive speech (Bakhtiyarovna, 2024).

Interestingly, Q7 showed that females were more task-oriented than males. This contrasts with older stereotypes suggesting males are more goal-driven. The result may reflect academic responsibility among female students in modern university settings (Ochola & Juma, 2014). Female academic performance has improved globally, and so has their role in leading academic tasks. At institutions like



Islamia College Peshawar, many female students may feel pressure to prove themselves. This motivates a focus on performance and accountability. It challenges the idea that women communicate only to build relationships and not for achievement. Another key result was from Q8. Female students prioritised harmony over winning arguments. This strongly supports existing literature that links female communication with compromise and mediation (Kaseh, 2014). In contrast, male communication is often more confrontational and competitive. By choosing harmony, females create a safe space for dialogue. This behaviour reflects their use of inclusive and facilitative speech (Park et al., 2013). In classrooms, such traits lead to better group cohesion. In Q9, no significant difference appeared in expressing challenging opinions. Both genders showed similar confidence. This finding diverges from older literature which claimed males were more outspoken in class (Francis et al., 2003). The result may reflect the effect of modern educational reforms. Today's classrooms aim to empower all students to speak. This reduces the historical male dominance in academic debates. Q10 showed that females adapt their communication style based on the peer's gender more than males. This shows flexibility and social sensitivity. It supports earlier studies that found females are more responsive to context and audience needs (Belephant, 2017).

### **Perceived Effectiveness of Gendered Communication**

The result for Q11 showed no significant gender difference in how students perceived their ability to express academic ideas. This indicates both male and female students felt confident when sharing academic thoughts. These findings suggest a growing sense of equality in classroom participation. According to Garini and Mualimin (2021), men usually use direct, assertive speech, while women tend to be more indirect. However, this study found both genders expressing similar levels of self-confidence. This may indicate that women are adopting assertive strategies in academic settings. It also reflects the influence of structured classroom formats where all students are encouraged to speak. Hughes (2020) supports this by explaining that educational settings often minimise gendered behaviours. Lee and McCabe (2021) found that in some classrooms, male dominance in speaking time is declining as inclusive participation rises. Tannen's (1990) Genderlect Theory explains men use "report talk" and women use "rapport talk," but this study suggests those patterns may

shift depending on context. In the formal, academic space of Islamia College Peshawar, females may adopt more “report talk” to succeed. As a result, both genders feel equally capable of expressing ideas. This outcome signals a move towards balanced classroom communication styles.

For Q12 and Q13, female students scored significantly higher in seeing their communication as effective for building relationships and improving academic performance. This supports the idea that women use communication to connect, not just inform (Tannen, 1990). Ariyani and Hadiani (2019) observed that female students value supportive group conversations more than public speaking. In line with that, females in this study believed their communication built stronger peer ties. Relationship-based language creates trust, which is vital for group tasks. Garini and Mualimin (2021) noted that women use politeness to reduce tension and maintain cooperation. These habits may help females perform better in collaborative learning. Galano et al. (2021) found women tend to dominate in small-group settings by promoting harmony. This may be why they see their communication as academically beneficial. Renigunta et al. (2022) stated that men prefer competitive formats like debates, which may focus more on content than relationship. Female students may link collaboration with success, while males may separate social bonding from academic outcomes. Natano et al. (2024) concluded that females prefer connection and males prefer dominance in speech. The results here support that claim. Female students view their style as more effective because it creates a learning-friendly atmosphere.

A significant difference was also seen in Q14. Female students believed their communication helped resolve misunderstandings more effectively. This aligns with Genderlect Theory’s view that women avoid conflict and seek compromise (Tannen, 1990). Hargrave (2023) found that women often soften language and use polite expressions to avoid confrontation. Egamberdiyeva (2024) added that women are more skilled in using non-verbal cues to maintain peace. At Islamia College, female students may rely on polite speech and attentive listening to solve problems. Ariyani and Hadiani (2019) observed that women tend to support their peers' views, which also helps reduce conflict. Garini and Mualimin (2021) support this by stating that female communication often includes validating others' perspectives. This explains

why women in the study viewed their communication as more helpful for resolving classroom issues. However, Q15 and Q16 showed no gender difference. Both male and female students felt equally understood and did not believe gender influenced peer responses. This suggests that the learning environment supports mutual respect. Fakhr and Messenger (2020) observed that academic spaces in Pakistan are slowly becoming more gender-neutral. This balance may reflect growing social awareness and classroom inclusivity. Equal peer response suggests reduced gender bias in classroom interaction.

Moreover, Q17 showed no significant gender difference in confidence for achieving group goals. This result suggests both male and female students now feel equally effective in team-based communication. Obidovna (2022) noted that men often dominate in formal discussions, yet women excel in collaborative tasks. This balance may indicate shifting group dynamics in classrooms. Galano et al. (2021) found that women take more facilitative roles, while men lead debates. But in structured academic groups, all members may contribute equally. Q18 showed a significant difference, with females feeling their communication built a stronger social presence. This aligns with findings by Fontanini et al. (2020), who stated that women use inclusive talk to build networks. Ratanaphithayaporn and Rodrigo (2020) also confirmed that women tend to use supportive speech to enhance peer visibility. These habits help female students feel more socially connected. Meanwhile, Q19 and Q20 revealed no gender difference. Both groups agreed their communication helped them feel heard and promoted personal growth. This matches conclusions from Ashraf et al. (2021), who noted that self-expression and development are increasingly equal among Pakistani university students. Bano and Ahmad (2018) added that female students now view communication as a tool for empowerment. These results suggest growing equality in how both genders perceive their communication's value in learning and social contexts.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored how male and female students at Islamia College Peshawar communicate. It focused on academic settings and students' perceptions of communication effectiveness. The research used a structured questionnaire and analysed the results using SPSS. Findings showed that both genders share some

communication behaviours. Male and female students were equally confident when expressing opinions or using body language. However, significant differences also appeared. Female students used more polite and indirect language. They listened more, built rapport first, and avoided conflict. Males were more direct but not significantly so. In terms of perceived effectiveness, females believed their style helped them succeed more. They saw benefits in building relationships, academic outcomes, and resolving misunderstandings. Both groups agreed communication supported their personal growth. These results support the Genderlect Theory. Men prefer “report talk” while women use “rapport talk” (Tannen, 1990). But the findings also show some narrowing of gender gaps. For example, both genders felt confident in class. This reflects a shift toward equality in learning spaces. Overall, the study highlights the importance of understanding communication differences. It shows that inclusive communication benefits everyone in academic settings.

### **Limitations of the Research**

The study had a few limitations. First, the sample was small. Only 100 students participated, all from one college. So, the results cannot apply to all universities in Pakistan (Balogun & Olanrewaju, 2016). Second, the data was self-reported. Students might have answered in a socially acceptable way. Their responses may not always reflect real communication behaviour (Nyarko-Sampson et al., 2021). Third, the study only looked at male and female genders. It did not include non-binary or other gender identities. It also did not consider class, academic performance, or background. These factors can affect how people communicate (Ashraf et al., 2021). Finally, the study focused on perceptions. It did not test actual outcomes. It did not compare perceptions with real academic performance or peer feedback. This limits how well we can measure true effectiveness.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

Future studies should include more colleges and a larger sample. This would help make the results stronger and more widely useful (Fontanini et al., 2020). A broader sample improves accuracy and generalisability. It also reflects more student voices across institutions. They should also include other research methods. Interviews, group observations, and peer evaluations would give a clearer picture. This would help check if reported behaviours match real ones (Canetto, 2019). Mixed methods

would offer deeper, more reliable insights. Researchers should explore other gender identities too. Studying non-binary or gender-diverse students would give a fuller view of communication styles (Ratanaphithayaporn & Rodrigo, 2020). This would ensure findings are inclusive and relevant to all learners.

Lastly, future studies should link communication to academic success. For example, comparing survey answers with grades or teacher ratings. This would show whether students' perceptions match actual performance (O'Connor et al., 2015). It could reveal how communication styles influence outcomes. These steps would help build on this research. They would create more inclusive and practical findings for education in Pakistan.

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