

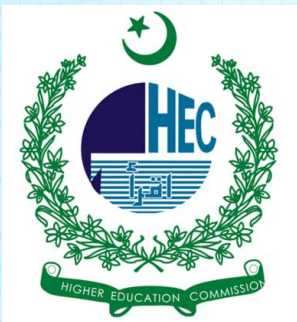
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Communication Obstacles and Student Engagement: A Case Study of Non-English Major Undergraduates at the University of Peshawar



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Abstract

This study explores the communication barrier and their influence on students' participation within the context of Computer Science Department, University of Peshawar through the lens of Muted Group Theory. The theory is developed by by Edwin and Shirley Ardener, reflects how dominant linguistic and cultural norm suppress marginalize voices and create discrimination. A total of 20 participants including 9 male and 11female students were selected for this study. Sixteen (16) undergraduate and (4) postgraduate Computer Science Department students participated in the open-ended questionnaire. Thematic analysis approach was implemented for data analysis. This paper explores the process and the value of culture in contexts of higher education where students from diverse linguistic and socio-economic backgrounds meet. Based on the findings, the result shows language problem, technical jargon, cultural hierarchies, fear of criticism and being judged, and fear of making mistakes, anxiety and gender dynamics in the classroom contribute to muted-ness make hurdles for students to fully participate in the academic setting. Moreover, findings show strategies recommended to overcomes these issues. The recommended strategies are training sessions, workshops, and self-efforts, work on building confidence level.

Keywords: Communication barriers, computer science students, undergraduate, postgraduate, Muted Group Theory

Introduction

Communication is essential to productive learning and participation in educational setting. However, students face problems in communication and participation in academic discussions that belong to culturally and linguistically diverse environment. In addition, marginalized groups including women, ethnic minorities and students from low-socio economic backgrounds also face additional challenges in striving academic setting that is set up around the dominant discourse. This paper focuses on the Computer Science Department at the University of Peshawar, where learners from culturally, linguistically and diverse demographic backgrounds experience different level of communication barrier in classroom discussions. It is general perception that women find themselves marginalized group as compared to men because of limited access to power. They depend on men socially and culturally in their lives, and in academic setting as well, their position is not equal. However,

some previous studies explored this phenomenon in the society but no effort has been made to focus on the academic setting where educated and working women have equal opportunities as men. Hence, it is important to find out the influence of this phenomenon on students participation and communication in classroom environment at Computer Science Department, university of Peshawar.

Muted Group Theory, developed by Edwin and Shirley Ardener (1975), provides a theoretical framework for understanding these communication barriers that contribute to silencing some students groups that influence on their academic involvement. Muted Group Theory by Kramrae (1981), argues that in patriarchal and hierarchical societies the discourse of the dominant group is more valued, and making the voice of marginalized group 'muted' or less likely to engage in meaningful conversation. By applying MGT to the context of university classroom, the purpose of this study is to investigate that how the communication process in the department makes certain students prioritized over others.

The importance of this study is to highlight the communication problems faced by students in a technical and male-dominated field. It also provides important insights into how educational institutions can develop inclusive educational practices that encourage students to actively engage in participation irrespective of their gender, socio-economic background, or other factors that make hurdles in communication. The findings of this study may also shape university policy about communication and inclusivity, ensuring that all students participate equally and succeed academically.

Research Questions

1. How do students (male and female) experience communication barrier from the lens of Muted Group Theory?
2. What are the factors that make students feel marginalized in the department?
3. How does culture affect the participation of male and female students in academic discussions and activities?

Literature Review

In educational setting, the concept of communication barrier is an important area particularly when it is investigated through the lens of the Muted Group Theory (MGT). The theory first introduced by Edwin Ardener, in his essay "belief and the problem of women", and explored the problem of woman. (Burton, 2020) According to Kramarae's Muted Group Theory (1981), language intentionally shapes gender norms and social reality. According to Kramarae (2005)

women are more guarded in their communication than men, including what they can say and how they can say it, and the respond they have to an interaction. She continues that men have been the primary creators of accepted language practices constructed to convey their experiences, leaving women constrained. Kramarae (2005) admits that other social groups that encounter asymmetrical interactions face similar problems. This literature review looks at how MGT might be used to better understand communication barriers and students' participation, specifically in the Computer Science Department at the University of Peshawar. Language is a man-made medium of communication (Griffin et al., 2021), as it is not created by women, it ignores the experiences and opinions of women at professional and personal level, marginalizing women from dominant group (Kramarae, 1981). In order to share experiences/concerns, or put forward feedbacks/opinions at the academic setting, women have to use a man-made language portraying the present asymmetric power dynamic in the society (Syawal et al., 2024). For this Edwin Ardener (Griffin, et. al., 2021), metaphorically apt for the phrase 'the black holes in the men's universe' (p. 410) meaning that they are unknown to the male-dominating society and in order to express themselves they have to adopt man-made language and communication style to fit in this male-dominated discourse i.e. patriarchal society, resulting into the feeling of disempowerment (Kramarae, 1981).

Since all academic instructions are given in language, Roy-Campbell and Qorro (1997) emphasized that language is a significant component of academic success. Furthermore, according to Janks (2010), "Language is not everything in education, but without language, everything in education is nothing" (p. 5). Shumbusho (2020) expanded on it by giving the compelling argument that learning cannot take place when the student or learner is not familiar with the language of instruction. Both the teacher and the student must communicate with one another in order to have a learning environment, communication between teacher and a student is not possible without language.

Snigdha and Hasan (2024) shed light on the concept of communication barriers. According to them, it is a hurdle in a free flow of messages that are sent and received. Language obstacles, behavioural hurdles, attitude barriers, and cultural barriers are some of the elements that make communication difficult (Snigdha & Hasan, 2024). Communication is the most important part that is needed in every walk of life. We need effective communication skill that we use to express ourselves properly, no matter how much knowledge we have, but if we cannot express ourselves properly that knowledge is useless. Students studying

computer science and engineering face different kinds of communication problems, including environmental, psychological and linguistic ones. According to a study by Kakepoto et al. (2022), major challenges include nervousness, reluctance, and low confidence, fear of criticism and lack of language.

It is evident that how educational methods and language norms marginalize students with worse communications abilities is a clear example of muted-ness that MGT describes. For example insufficient course material, lectures and inconsistent communication make it difficult for the students to adapt to the dominant academic course (Students Voice AI, 2025). These problems support MGT's claim that dominant groups shape the language that subordinate groups must use it, which usually results in misunderstandings or the silencing their voices (Cunningham & Egan, 2024). Men and women interact with other members of their gender in distinct style in the classroom. Men tend to bond with one another through 'playful insults', and 'put downs', whereas women like to bond through the descriptive process of their concern. Women are most of the time are quiet in their seats during class discussions, while men feel that they have to dominate the class debate.

There are also environmental and cultural factors on communication barriers and students' participation. Environmental factors are like peer pressure, fear of being judged, and unsupportive environment that make communication weak. Cultural differences include disparities in communication style, customs and beliefs. For example, students from minority culture or linguistic background try hard to express their ideas and opinions in a setting which is dominant by different culture. According to MGT, these students are frequently compelled to adapt the communication style of the dominant culture which can mislead their genuine point and experiences (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). In addition to silencing their voices, but this process also reinforce structure inequalities in educational organizations.

While the existing current literature covers different factors like language hierarchies, psychological factors, exclusionary pedagogies, and gender differences which make hurdles in communication. As this paper is focusing on the communication barrier and students' participation through the lens of Muted Group Theory at Computer Science Department, University of Peshawar.

Methodology

Keeping in view the nature of the research, the researcher used qualitative mode of inquiry. Qualitative methods were chosen because this research has nothing to do with numerical data

rather it deals with communication barriers and students' participation. The site of this study was The Computer Science Department, University of Peshawar. A total of 20 participants including 9 male and 11 female students were selected for this study. Their ages ranged from 18-25. Sixteen (16) undergraduate and (4) post graduate students of Computer Science Department participated in the open-ended questionnaire.

Instrument

A qualitative research methodology was used to investigate communication barrier and students' participation in the Computer Science Department, University of Peshawar. The tool was a set of open-ended, thematically structured questions intended to get insight into students' attitudes, perceptions, and personal experiences with regard to participation and communication in their academic setting. The questionnaire consisted of 9 questions.

The structure of the questions thoroughly examines communication barrier. Topics covered in the questions are; how peer react to ideas, gender discrimination when expressing ideas, how much importance is given on particular language style, how students perceive the departmental environment and unequal treatment of students, how hierarchical cultural background affect communication, how gender and cultural differences influence group interactions, feel hesitant due to fear of judgement or embarrassment, and there is a need to improve communication.

The aim of the questions is to investigate a variety of communication barriers in the context of academic setting such as contextual, social, cultural, psychological and technical elements. These questions deal with problems like anxiety, fear of being judged, linguistic and cultural barriers, resource availability and departmental environment that can hinder students' engagement and comprehension. Using open-ended questionnaire can provide detailed and deep comprehension of communication barrier.

Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis

For the data analysis, thematic analysis techniques were used to get the underlined meaning of the responses given on the questions. In this chapter of the paper the researcher discusses the written answers of the participants reveals the true meaning. The data is analyzed according to the questions given in questionnaire. First of all responses were received, and then themes were developed after coding, chunking and clustering. Each item of the questionnaire is followed by explanation. After the analysis the following findings are found.

Peer Reaction to Ideas

In response to this question, most of the students have the same view. In general, the responses show that students' ideas are valued and given positive feedback during group projects and classroom discussions. Some reactions are different depending on group dynamics. Many students experienced thoughtful participation and positive feedback; others encounter difficulties like mixed responses and negative reactions from fellows. One of the students stated, "Sometimes my peer does not support me because of the envy they have" (R1, Personal Communication, March 26, 2025). Despite all these differences, many students believed that such interactions in the classroom are fruitful for learning and community building. As one of the respondents stated, "According to my point of view classroom discussions and group projects can be incredibly valuable for learning and building a sense of community" (R2, Personal Communication, March 26, 2025).

Situation Based on Gendered Discrimination

The responses to this question can be described into several themes; gender discrimination, inexperience of gender discrimination and gender issue in career setting. The responses show a kind of mixed experiences regarding gender biased in academic settings. Some students experienced gender biased that their ideas are overlooked due to gender discrimination, many others said that they have not experienced such situation or they are not able to recall such kind of situation. Some of the students stated that gender biased exist not only in academic setting but also in professional setting. According to one of the respondents, "It's not always obvious, but sometimes people might not value women's ideas as much or make assumptions about what they are interested in" (R1, Personal Communication, April 8, 2025). Some respondents suggested strategies to deal with the situation, students need to emphasize the point and make sure that the ideas are understood and clear. Just one of the female students said, "Yes, there have been instances where my ideas were dismissed in group discussions, only for the same point to be later acknowledged when presented by a male classmate. This has made me more aware of the biases that can exist in academic settings and the importance of assertiveness in discussions" (R2, Personal Communication, March 23, 2025). From these responses, it can be seen that gender discrimination exists even sometimes it is not overtly apparent.

Gender Influence and Valued Language

In response to this question, most of the respondents stated that formal, clear and direct,

assertive, academic, polite, and a kind of motivational language is more valued. However, this can sometimes create a gap in participation because male students are more confident and can dominate the discussion while female students cannot raise their voices. Some respondents said that English is also preferred language since its widespread use in academia, but it can also create a hurdle for those who are not fluent in speaking English. One student said, “I believe English is the most favoured language in my department because of its association with the elite status quo. Female students find it interesting, and male students often incur insecurities if their dominance is threatened by their inability to match the fluency level” (R1, Personal Communication, March 26, 2025). Few respondents thought that formal language is important both for female and male students as it is evident from the response of one of the students, “I think formal language is more valuable to everyone in my department. Everyone feels comfortable with this if it is male or female” (R2, Personal Communication, March 23, 2025). Some came up with the view that clarity of the point is important rather than the language used.

Department Environment and Unequal Treatment of Students

After the analysis of responses to this question, some respondents talked about equality, favoritism, inequality, and gender discrimination, while others expressed a kind of mixed experiences, and competitive environment. The direct statement of one of the students showed that there is a kind of mixed feelings.

The general environment in my department is a mix of academic rigor and social interaction. While most students are treated fairly, there are instances where favouritism can be observed, such as preferential treatment for students with strong faculty connections or those who perform exceptionally well. Additionally, students from different socio-economic backgrounds may experience varying levels of access to resources and opportunities. (R1, Personal Communication, March 23, 2025).

The participants perceived the general environment of the department differently. Some students felt that everyone is treated equally and there is no favoritism, while others felt favoritism and inequality based on strong connection with faculty members. Faculty member treat students differently based on social backgrounds, students’ performance, and gender. According to one of the students, “The environment in my department is such that some students are treated favourably by teachers, while others are not. This favouritism is reflected in everything, including grading papers, and it's evident in every aspect” (R2,

Personal Communication, March 26, 2025).

Some students stated that female students are encouraged to participate because they are shy, while others noted that female students get more attention from faculty members. From the responses given on this question it can be observed that the environment is generally supportive and competitive. Some participants are with the view that competitive environment can sometimes lead to unequal treatment.

Communication Barrier in Understanding of a Concept or Assignment

In answer to this question respondents said that language difficulty, technical comprehension gaps, students' prior knowledge, social anxiety or fear, and unclear instructions are all the factors which make hurdle in understanding of a topic. One significant hurdle is language, especially English because students said that they are non-native speaker and they sometimes do not understand English. One of the respondents answered!

Yes, there was a time when a professor explained a complex concept using highly technical language that was difficult to grasp. As a non-native English speaker, I struggled to fully comprehend the material. Although I attempted to ask for clarification, the professor assumed prior knowledge, making it even more challenging to understand. I later had to rely on classmates and external resources to bridge the gap. (R1, Personal Communication, March 23, 2025).

Moreover, Jargon and technical terms can make the understanding difficult, when the instructor assumes that students already know something without giving enough explanation as it is shown from one of the respondent's reply, "Yes, I once felt a communication barrier when a professor explained a complex concept using technical terms that were unfamiliar to me. It took some extra effort and asking questions to fully understand the assignment." (R2, Personal Communication, April 8, 2025). Teachers' unfamiliar accent can make the understanding of the topic difficult. Communication can also be difficult by social anxiety and stage fear during presentations. Some participants did not experience any major barrier indicating that some academic setting might be more effective or supportive in addressing these issues.

Hierarchical Culture and Class Participation

In response to this question, most of the students felt that influence of culture make us unwilling to participate which have a strong impact on our learning style. Some respondents had different cultural experiences; others had insufficient knowledge and uncertainty about

the issue. A direct statement from one of the respondents show that it is difficult for those to take part in class discussions that come from a culture which places strong emphasis on hierarchy and respect for authority.

Yes, students from hierarchical cultures may find it difficult to engage in class activities because they are often taught to respect authority and avoid questioning teachers. This can create hesitation in participating in discussions, asking questions, or challenging viewpoints. However, with encouragement and an inclusive classroom environment, such students can gradually develop confidence and overcome these barriers. (R1, Personal Communication, March 23, 2025)

According to a number of participants, students feel hesitation to raise their voices, ask questions and take part in class discussions because they are taught in their culture to avoid challenging authority figures. These students have more passive style and less likely to participate fully in class activities and express their opinion openly. Lack of confidence and mindset influenced by cultural norms can make their engagement difficult. Some participants stated that students from these cultures gradually develop confidence and overcome these barriers due to inclusive environment of classroom.

Gender and Cultural Differences in Group Participation

After the analysis of answers to this question, numbers of themes are highlighted; differences in participation based on gender, the impact of cultural values, confidence and socialization, language and intercultural communication. According to some participants, male students take the lead in class discussions while female students are more reserved due to traditional gender roles. This is especially noticeable in mixed-gender groups where men are encouraged to take leadership roles due to cultural norms. Female students may choose to take passive roles like taking notes rather than active one such as leading discussions. Respondents emphasized that participation is significantly shaped by cultural values. For instance one of the students stated:

Male and female students from different cultural backgrounds often engage in group activities or class discussions differently. For example, in mixed-gender groups, men may take leadership roles and speak more confidently, while women from cultures emphasizing hierarchy may feel hesitant to share their ideas or take active roles. This can lead to unequal participation with women sometimes being overlooked or taking passive roles like note-taking instead of leading tasks. (R1, Personal Communication, March 23, 2025).

Similarly, the other said, “Cultural norms strongly influence how people communicate and participate. In some cultures men might be expected to lead discussions more” (R2, Personal Communication, April 4, 2025). According to some respondents, variations in participations are due to confidence level of students. Male students are more assertive while female students are polite and collaborative which may limit their ability to participate in open discussions. Language barrier is also one of the reasons which can create the difference between male and female students participation according to some of the respondents. Students are also with the view that male students easily switch language while female students stay alone and isolated. For example one of the respondents stated:

Yes mostly, an example could be one of my friend who although feel out of the group when we communicate in Pashto but he tries to cut through either tell us to switch language or try to understand what we are saying. On the other hand, a female class fellow of ours feels a lot separated and feel discomfort when we use our language. (R3, Personal Communication, March 26, 2025)

Hesitation in Class Participation due to Fear of Judgement or Embarrassment

In response to this question most of the students talked about hesitation in the class and the fear of being judged. Some participants said that they are afraid of making mistakes and being judged. As one the female respondents said:

Yes, I have felt hesitant to participate in the class due to fear of making mistakes or being judged by peers. This often happened when discussing complex topics or expressing opinions different from the majority. To overcome this, I started preparing in advance, reading more about the topics, and practicing speaking in smaller groups before participating in larger discussions. Encouragement from supportive teachers and classmates also helped boost my confidence. Over time, I realized that making mistakes is part of learning, which made me more comfortable speaking up. (R1, Personal Communication, March 23, 2025).

Similarly one of them said, “Sometimes, if I felt my idea wasn't fully formed; I'd try to think it more before speaking” (R2, Personal Communication, April 8, 2025). Few others recommended strategies for overcoming fear and some talked about general experiences and confidence level. Overall, the responses reveal that many students feel reluctant to speak in the class due to fear of judgement, lack of confidence, lack of knowledge or ideas. They are afraid of getting negative feedback from the teacher and class fellows. They face these issues when they discuss complicated and unfamiliar topics. The respondents

mentioned strategies to overcome this fear like there should be proper preparation before speaking.

As one of the respondents mentioned, “Students who face this challenge can overcome it by building confidence through preparation, seeking support from instructors or peers, and reframing their mind set to view participation as a learning opportunity” (R3, Personal Communication, March 26, 2025). Some students focused on the importance of believing in you and try to accept that everyone makes mistakes and none has all the knowledge. Some students are with the view that positive response from teachers and fellows are also helpful in overcoming these issues. One of the female students said that practice speaking in smaller groups before confronting larger groups is also one of strategies. Some respondents said they never felt hesitant to participate in the discussion because of their confidence level. Some participant noted that feeling hesitant is common emotion, everyone experience it somehow.

Sources or Facilities to Enhance Departmental Communication

Participants talked about sources or facilities that would improve communication and participation in the classroom. Online platforms (WhatsApp groups), training sessions, discussions, group work, regular feedback, personal responsibilities to facilitate and improve better communication and participation. These social media platforms allow students to express, talk and discuss more freely about the subjects that are difficult to discuss in the class. One of the students stated:

Yes, several initiatives could enhance communication and participation in the department. Setting up online discussion forums or WhatsApp groups for academic discussions would allow students to express their thoughts more freely. Organizing workshops on public speaking and confidence-building could also encourage participation. (R1, Personal Communication, March 23, 2025).

Some respondents recommended holding training sessions on public speaking, confidence-building and better communication skills. This would help students to overcome communication issues.

From a very clear response to this question, it can be observed that students recommended group discussions, presentations, debates which can make students to converse with each other, and improve their listening and speaking skills. Some participants also stated that it is also personal responsibility to develop communication and participation skills. As

one of the students stated:

I think anyone who has difficulty in communication and social participation should work on their self-esteem, confidence and effective communication skills. It is more of a personal journey. Departments can provide opportunities but they cannot improve communication as there are more academic challenges they need to tackle. People can participate in virtual fellowships like the one by Amal Academy or more such opportunities. At the end of the day, no one can help you out more than you can yourself. (R2, Personal Communication, March 26, 2025).

Department can provide opportunities and resources but personal efforts play very significant role. Some of the suggestions included providing feedback on regular basis, anonymous suggestion boxes, and opportunities for class fellows' feedback can help students valued and heard. For example one of the students responded:

Having more open communication channels and using technology like discussion forums or messaging apps would improve communication and participation in the department. Regular feedback sessions and creating a safe space for asking questions would also help students feel more involved and confident. (R3, Personal Communication, April 8, 2025).

The research identifies multiple factors which influence students' communication and participation. The analysis demonstrates that language barrier, gender discrimination, cultural influences are major obstacles that have greater impact on participation and communication in academic setting. Language barrier, technical jargon make hurdles for students to comprehend and engage in class discussion, especially for learners who have problems in speaking English. Cultural barrier is also one of the major factors which make the participation difficult for the students. Some culture values hierarchy and authority, these norms influences students' performance in the classroom. Some participants feel socially anxious and fear of stage which may have hinder effective communication during presentations or discussions. Male students usually dominate discussion while female are shy and reserved. However, it can depend on cultural background and individual confidence level. Traditional gender roles may discourage female students from taking part in the classroom discussion.

Moreover, participants have recommended some strategies that can be helpful in overcoming these issues. Analysis of the responses shows strategies for improvement. Respondents suggested that through preparation, workshops, practice session can be arranged

in order to build confidence level of the students. There should be inclusive environment. Students also stated about online platforms which can facilitate the students to communicate openly. Some respondents experienced favouritism and observed that students are treated differently by the faculty members. They mentioned that favouritism is also one of the reasons which can have negative effect on communication and participation.

The analysis reveals that some participants felt their department treat students fairly, but there are cases where cultural and socio-economic background of students influences the treatment. Communication barrier can also have negative influence on students' academic performance because poor communication can limit the ability of the students to totally engage with course work and express their ideas. Overall, supportive and inclusive environment can provide opportunities for all students to participate equally in the classroom to succeed.

Discussion

The results in the study align with Edwin Ardener's Muted Group Theory which talks about power dynamics present in communication system, especially within hierarchical and patriarchal system. According to Muted Group Theory, dominant groups shape language norms, while silences the voices of subordinate groups, such as women and other marginalized groups. This discussion highlights how Muted Group Theory offers a framework for comprehending communication barrier and participation issues in the Computer Science Department, University of Peshawar with emphasize on gender, cultural norms and language barriers.

Muted Group Theory holds a view that dominant groups (historically men) create language to express their point of view, experiences and perspectives. Technical jargon and linguistic hierarchies that favour those fluent in dominant language like English are examples of how these appear in academic settings. The results shows that language barriers cause major challenges, such as students face difficulties in understanding technical terms and face hurdles in expressing their opinions. It supports the claim made by Griffin et al. (2021) that language marginalizes women experiences on a personal and professional level. This paper supports Kramarae's (1981) claim that language marginalizes subordinate groups by reflecting the experiences of dominant group. The differences between male and females students align with Kramarae's (2005) that women communication is restricted by social norms. The findings of this study show that fear of judgment and social anxiety aligns with

the psychological barrier to communication identified by Rani K.U. (2016).

The results also highlight that gender dynamics and cultural influences participation. The finding shows that male students dominate class discussion and group activities. On the other hand, female students are shy and reserved due to societal and cultural traditional roles. An example from the study also show that how female students feel hesitation because they are afraid to be judged and embarrassed. Students from culture where hierarchy and authority is valued also face problems in communication because respect for authority is highly preferred. Although the majority of the findings align with Muted Group Theory, but there are a few small exceptions. Few respondents recommended techniques for overcoming communication issues. These strategies include training programs, preparation, confidence boosting workshops. Furthermore, this paper also identifies contextual elements specific to the Computer Science Department at the University of Peshawar like linguistic diversity and technical jargon, which may not be adequately covered by existing Muted Group Theory framework.

Conclusion

The findings of this research demonstrated that the students of Computer Sciences Department, University of Peshawar faced multiple communication barriers due to several factors. The results show that language barrier, cultural norms, and gender differences, fear of criticism and being judged, social anxiety, fear of stage and fear of making mistakes make the communication difficult in academic setting. Therefore, the located barriers need to be addressed to prepare the students for better future. In order to overcome communication barriers among the students it is crucial to arrange workshops, training sessions, presentations to build-up confidence level of the students.

There are few limitations of this study such as its dependence on participant perceptions and self-reported data that may be influenced by personal biases or reluctance to discuss unpleasant experiences on sensitive topics like favouritism or gender discrimination. The results are specific to the context of Computer Science Department, University of Peshawar so it may not be apply to other departments or institutions with distinct cultural, socio-economic or linguistic context. Furthermore, the study does not take into account the ideas of administration and faculty, which could offer a more thorough comprehension of institutional practices and barriers.

The results highlight the substantial effects that cultural influences, language barriers, gender

discrimination, and favouritism on students' engagement and communication in educational environments. These barriers not only make the classroom engagement difficult but also have negative impact on students' academic performance, confidence and sense of belonging. The existence of such barriers can restrict opportunities and perpetuate inequality for some groups, especially female students and those from different linguistic or socioeconomic backgrounds. The findings show that in order to create a more welcoming, equal, and encouraging learning environment where all students can participate and succeed, educational institutions must immediately address these systematic problems.

The study recommends applying specific strategies like language support programs, workshops on communication skills, and practice sessions to boost student confidence and proficiency in order to overcome the identified barriers. Staff and faculty members should be trained to identify and deal with gender bias and cultural insensitivity. All students can feel appreciated if a supportive learning environment is established in the classroom through cooperative learning and equal opportunities. Various communication channels, visual aids, and online platforms are recommended for students with different language proficiency levels. To evaluate the success of these strategies, regular monitoring and feedback systems are significant.

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