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The Impact of Teachers' Strict Classroom Behavior on Students' Academic Achievement: Exploring Students' Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

In this study, it was aimed to investigate the effect of teachers' strict behavior in the classroom on academic achievement in terms of students' perceptions. The research design used was quantitative descriptive-correlational research and research method used was cross sectional survey. The target population was the students of Grade 9 and 10 of public secondary schools of Badhber in the city of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Multi-stage sampling technique was used to select a total sample of 137 students. Five schools were selected by the convenience sampling method and 20 students (Grade 9 and 10) were randomly selected from each school. The structured questionnaire on Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Strict Classroom Behavior Scale (SSTSCBS) was developed and used to gather data. The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression in SPSS Version 27. The result showed that students in general had positive attitudes towards the strict behavior of teachers in the classroom regarding the discipline, concentration and study habits. It was also correlated with higher anxiety levels in students, however. Through the correlation analysis it is found that the academic achievement of students is significantly positively correlated with teachers' strict classroom behavior ($r = 0.211$, $p < .05$). In addition, regression analysis revealed that teachers' disciplinary classroom behavior was a significant predictor of academic achievement ($\beta = 0.607$, $p < .001$) accounting for 36.8% of the variance in students' academic performance ($R^2 = 0.368$). The research findings suggest that there is a positive link between strict classroom behavior and academic achievement, but the research also indicates that strict classroom behavior poses emotional difficulties for students, in the form of anxiety. The study calls for a balance in handling students in the classroom, in a way where discipline is implemented in conjunction with emotional support in order to improve the well-being of students and their academic performance.

Keywords: Strict classroom behavior, academic achievement, students' perception, classroom management and secondary students.



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INTRODUCTION

Education is an acknowledged principal for the development of the individuals and society. In the classroom, teachers' behavior and instructional approach have a significant impact on students' learning experiences, motivation, engagement, and academic success (Blazar & Kraft, 2017; Lundahl, 2025). Teachers' strict classroom behavior is a common but controversial practice as it involves high expectations, strict rules and authoritarian management from teacher's side, which is still prevalent in many Asian countries like Pakistan. However, certain educators and parents think that strictness is essential to discipline and helps achieve better academic results, whereas some recent studies indicate that strictness can cause negative effects like student anxiety, decrease in student motivation, decrease in self-efficacy, and long-term academic performance (Salainti, 2024; Peng et al., 2024). However, an approach that is balanced, integrating structure with emotional support (authoritative teaching) is more likely to yield positive outcomes in academic performance and wellbeing (Kloo et al. 2023; Jiang 2021).

In the past, there have been conflicting research results about strict teaching. Moderate amounts of structure and strictness will enhance classroom order and short-term compliance (Lundahl 2025). However, when students see strict behaviour as unfair or hard, it may also have a negative correlation with emotional exhaustion, engagement, and academic achievement (Peng et al., 2024; Salainti, 2024). In Indonesia, it was found that teachers' strictness has a significant influence on student engagement, feelings, and academic performance, suggesting that a moderate approach rather than strict teaching alone is needed (Salainti, 2024).

The perceptions of students' teachers' strictness is a crucial mediator. The emotional and cognitive reactions that students have to their teachers' behaviours are heavily dependent on how they interpret such behaviour, which subsequently impacts their learning achievement (Akram, 2019; Jiang, 2021). Student perceptions of strictness as caring and fair are more likely to result in positive outcomes. Negative perceptions, on the other hand, can result in disengagement and decreased achievement. In Pakistan, in many public secondary schools, strict control in the classroom is still the norm as a result of the large class size, cultural and traditional norms of teacher pedagogy. But there is little empirical research available on student's perception about such strict behavior and its real impact on students' academic performance, especially in urban areas such as Islamabad. The present research is greatly needed because of this literature gap. The current study is to explore secondary school students' perception of teachers' strict attitude in classroom and its correlation with their academic performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed in this chapter discusses the literature on teacher's strict behaviour in the classroom, students' perception of such behaviour, and the effects on academic achievement. The review is presented under the following themes to find out conceptual definition, theoretical background, empirical results of strict and balanced teaching styles, the mediation of students' perceptions, and the Pakistani/Asian context. It ends up by establishing the research gap.

Conceptual Framework

Teachers' strict classroom behaviour concerns the authoritarian teaching style based on strict rules, high standards, strict discipline, low emotional involvement and low students' autonomy (Salainti, 2024; Peng et al., 2024). It is contrasted with authoritative teaching, where there is a clear structure and expectations that are supported by responsiveness, independence encouragement and support (Barni et al., 2018).

Academic Achievement is usually defined by grades, test scores and overall academic



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success. The emotional reaction, learning outcomes and motivation of students are influenced by their interpretation of teachers' behavior, which is also known as Students' Perceptions (Jiang, 2021; Akram, 2019).

Theoretical Foundations

The study builds on the Parenting Styles Theory (adapted to the classroom setting) by Baumrind and on Self-Determination Theory (SDT). There are two styles of parenting according to Baumrind, authoritative parenting (high demand, high support) and authoritarian parenting (high demand, low support). Authoritative parenting styles have been proven to be more effective in academic and socio-emotional learning (Barni et al., 2018). According to SDT, students have an intrinsic motivation that flourishes when they feel they are autonomous, competent, and related. When the strictness is excessive and/or lacks support, autonomy and relatedness may be undermined, resulting in reduced engagement and achievement (Jiang, 2021).

Empirical Studies on Teachers' Strict Behavior and Academic Achievement

There is conflicting recent evidence. Classroom order, on task behavior and short-term academic compliance are positively related to moderate structure and clear expectations (elements of strictness) (Lundahl, 2025; Patall et al., 2023). Putra (2025) conducted a meta-analysis of effective classroom management and found that the achievement rate of students was moderately affected by this effective classroom management with coefficient 0.41. But highly didactic or repressive methods have long-term adverse effects. Salanti (2024) concluded that teacher harshness has the potential to raise student stress, emotional burnout, and lower engagement and academic outcomes without equal, if not counterbalanced, by support and communication. Likewise, Peng et al. (2024) found that the bad relationship between teachers and students, mediated by emotional exhaustion, adversely contributes to students' well-being.

Research on the comparison of styles indicates that students who are taught by teachers with authoritative classroom management exhibit greater frustration resistance, improved language abilities, and improved academic performance overall than students taught by authoritarian teachers (Gamri, 2024; recent primary school study, 2025).

The Role of Students' Perceptions

The perception of students is very important. The same degree of teacher strictness can be seen as a supportive structure or harsh control by the student, which was discovered by Jiang (2021). The strictness as fair and caring will increase the motivation; while the strictness as unfair will cause the decrease in the motivation and achievement (Akram, 2019). In Pakistan, Akram (2019) found a moderate positive link between the students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness (classroom management) and academic performance in English and Mathematics. But studies on strict behaviour are somewhat limited.

Context in Pakistan and Asia

The classroom management is very strict in most of the public schools of Asia and Pakistan as a result of large classes, cultural values of respect for authority and examination systems. Local studies of teacher attitudes and behaviour and some students' reports suggest that strictness enhances discipline and short-term performance, but others fear it and feel it lowers motivation. (George 2017, local studies of teacher behaviour). There is limited empirical research conducted in Pakistan that looks at students' perceptions of strictness and directly examines its effects on the students' academic performance, specifically at the secondary level in urban centers such as Islamabad. In this regard, there is a need for substantial investigation.



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Research Gap

While it is found in international literature that balanced (authoritative) teaching is more effective than only strict (authoritarian), limited research has been conducted to understand the perception of strict behavior of teachers among student population of secondary schools in Pakistan and its relation with the academic achievement of students. The present study aims to fill this gap.

Research Objectives

This study aims to examine the relationship between teachers' classroom behavior and academic performance in terms of strict behavior of teachers on students' academic achievement. In particular, the study is going to:

I. To examine students' perceptions regarding teachers' strict classroom behavior in the classroom.

II. To investigate the impact of teachers' strict classroom behavior on students' academic achievement.

III. To explore the relationship between students' perceptions of teachers' strict classroom behavior and their academic achievement.

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between students' perceptions of teachers' strict classroom behavior and their academic achievement.

Ho₂: There is no significant impact of teachers' strict classroom behavior on students' academic achievement.

Research Design

The type of research method used in this study was a quantitative descriptive-correlational research with a cross-sectional survey approach. A quantitative approach was selected because it enabled a systematic gathering of data in the form of numbers and then analysed statistically to look for relationships between variables and test hypotheses (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). This design works well for examining students' conceptions of teachers' strict classroom behaviour and its effects on student academic performance.

Population and Sample

The total population of the study was all public secondary school (9-10) students of Badhber, Peshawar (KP) Pakistan. There were about 1000 students in five secondary schools.

Multiple stage sampling was conducted. The five schools were chosen for convenience sampling because they were easily accessible and time was a constraint. A total of 20 (10 in Grade 9 and 10 in Grade 10) students from each school were randomly selected from class registers, thus yielding a total sample of $N = 100$ students.

Research Instrument

The data were gathered using a structured questionnaire on students' perceptions of teachers' strict classroom behavior scale which was developed by the researcher.

Data Collection Procedure

Official permission was obtained from school authorities. Students' and parents' informed consent were obtained. The questionnaires were filled out in classrooms by researcher. All selected students completed the survey (100% response rate). Confidentiality and anonymity was carefully observed.

Data Analysis

IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27 were used for data analysis. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were used to summarize the data. Pearson correlation and multiple linear regression were used to analyses the relationship between and effect of teachers' strict classroom behavior on academic



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achievement for hypothesis testing. A p value of $< .05$ was considered to be statistically significant. Before analyzing the data, the assumptions of the statistical tests were made.

Table 4.1: Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Strict Classroom Behavior (Ranked by Mean Score)

Rank	Statement	Mean	SD	Level of Perception
Positive Perceptions				
1	My teacher's strict behavior helps me become self-disciplined	4.48	0.61	Very High
2	My teacher's strict behavior keeps me focused in class	4.46	0.72	Very High
3	My teacher's strict behavior helps me understand the importance of discipline	4.35	0.68	Very High
4	My teacher's strict behavior helps me develop better study habits	4.31	0.78	Very High
5	My teacher's strict behavior motivates me to work harder	4.28	0.92	High
6	My teacher's strict behavior helps me stay focused and avoid distraction	4.27	0.81	High
7	My teacher's strict behavior makes me feel more focused	4.25	0.89	High
Negative Perceptions				
1	My teacher's strict behavior makes me feel anxious about making mistakes	4.40	0.75	Very High
2	My teacher's strict behavior makes me feel anxious about tests and exams	4.08	0.96	High
3	My teacher's strict behavior makes me feel uncomfortable asking questions	3.06	1.32	Moderate
4	My teacher's strict behavior makes my behavior aggressive	2.88	1.28	Moderate
5	My teacher's strict behavior makes me demotivated	2.56	1.25	Low
Mixed Perceptions				
1	My teacher's strict behavior is necessary for academic success	4.11	0.95	High
2	My teacher's strict behavior is fair and reasonable	4.09	0.92	High
3	My teacher's strict behavior helps me stay organized and manage time	4.06	0.89	High
4	My teacher's strict behavior has a positive impact on my academic performance	3.68	1.18	Moderate
5	I feel more confident when my teacher is	3.55	1.12	Moderate



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Rank	Statement	Mean	SD	Level of Perception
	supportive and less strict			
6	I prefer a more relaxed classroom environment	3.46	1.32	Moderate
7	I feel comfortable when my teacher is very strict	3.01	1.35	Moderate

In general, students' attitudes towards teachers' strict behavior in the classroom were found to be positive, particularly in relation to the self-discipline, concentration, and study habits of students. The highest mean score was achieved for staying focused in class (M = 4.46) and becoming self-disciplined (M = 4.48). Most students (85-94%) agreed that "strict behavior helps them focus and develop discipline". But there were also some negative effects that students reported on. High agreement was found between strict behavior and anxiety, particularly on feeling anxious about making mistakes (M = 4.40) and tests/exams (M = 4.08). Views on comfort level and preference for strict and relaxed classroom settings were varied.

In general, students understand that teachers' strict behaviour has academic and disciplinary advantages, but it also has significant emotional disadvantages, the most prominent of which is anxiety. That is, for many students, classroom conduct is seen as being useful but difficult.

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between students' perceptions of teachers' strict classroom behavior and their academic achievement.

Variables	1	2
1. Teachers' Strict Classroom Behavior	1	.211**
2. Academic Achievement	.211**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)		.013
N	137	137

Pearson product-moment correlation was performed to assess the correlation between the teachers' strict classroom behavior and academic achievement of students. Analysis showed a positive and statistically significant correlation between the two variables, $r = 0.211$, $p = .013$. This suggests that students with higher perceptions of teacher strictness had higher academic performance. The strength of the relationship is weak to moderate, but the result is significant at 0.05 level. Hence, the null hypothesis (H_{o2}) is rejected and it is concluded that teachers' strict behavior in class has a significant effect on students' academic achievement.

Ho₂: There is no significant impact of teachers' strict classroom behavior on students' academic achievement.

Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.607 ^a	.368	.362	2.92822

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	11.106	1.715		6.478	.000



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Teacher Strictness	.775	.102	.607	7.562	.000
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The impact of teachers' strict classroom behaviors on students' academic achievement was explored using regression analysis. The results indicated that teachers' strictness positively and significantly influenced academic achievement ($\beta = 0.607$, $t = 7.562$, $p < .001$). The model explained 36.8% of the variance in academic achievement ($R^2 = 0.368$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.362$). The results of these findings suggest that perceived teacher strictness is positively correlated with academic performance of secondary students.

Findings of the Study

Results of the study suggest a positive attitude of the students towards teachers' stringent conduct in classroom, especially in terms of discipline, concentration and study habits. The greatest mean scores were for becoming self-disciplined ($M = 4.48$) and staying focused in class ($M = 4.46$). The majority (85-94%) accepted that strict behaviour in the classrooms has a positive impact on discipline and concentration in learning activities.

The findings are nonetheless revealing of some negative emotional outcomes of classroom practices, however. Students reported a higher level of anxiety for fear of making mistakes ($M = 4.40$) and examination-related stress ($M = 4.08$), compared to other anxiety factors. Additionally, emotional support and preference for strict versus relaxed classroom environments were mixed, suggesting inconsistencies in student adjustment to strict teaching and experiences.

There was a positive, statistically significant relationship between teachers' strict classroom behavior and students' academic achievement ($r = 0.211$, $p = .013$) with correlation analysis. The relationship is weak but it is statistically significant, meaning that the more pupils think that the rules are strict, the better their school performance is. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

Likewise, regression analysis also showed that students' academic achievement is a significant positive predictor of teachers' strict classroom behavior ($\beta = 0.607$, $t = 7.562$, $p < .001$). The model accounted for 36.8% of the variance in academic achievement ($R^2 = 0.368$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.362$), which, by itself, indicated that classroom strictness was a significant contributor to academic achievement.

Discussion

The present study addressed students' perceptions of teachers' strict behavior in the class, and how it is related to student achievement. The results show an intricate relationship between academic advantages and emotional disadvantages, including anxiety in students, and strict classroom management. The descriptive findings show that the students' perception towards strict classroom behavior is overall positive, as they agreed mostly that the behavior is helpful in developing self-discipline and attentiveness, and that it helps them to focus and to improve their study habits. This is in line with past research indicating that classroom structures and proper classroom management are linked to better behavior control and student engagement in learning (Korpershoek et al., 2016). Good classroom management has been found to consistently be associated with higher student engagement and academic achievement, and it promotes a classroom environment that supports learning while minimizing disruptive behavior (Oliver et al., 2011). However, the present study also revealed that strict classroom behaviour is also strongly correlated with increased anxiety associated with fear of making mistakes and examination pressure. This discovery is confirmed by recent studies that articulated strict or rigid teaching methods can foster emotional distance and stress for students, especially when they are



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academically supportive (Frey & Tatum, 2024). Likewise, high control classrooms can potentially have adverse effects on the emotional health and comfort of students, although they might have positive effects on task engagement and discipline (Erdem & Kaya, 2023). Correlation analysis showed correlation with academic achievement was positive, but weak; the correlation between teachers' strict classroom behavior was $r = 0.211$, $p = .013$. This implies that the more strict the requirements, the better they are performed, but that the influence of the requirements is not very strong. This result supports the notion that classroom management has an indirect influence on academic achievement, through on-task behaviors and reducing disruptions, rather than directly impacting cognitive achievement (Blank & Shavit, 2016). More importantly, the regression analysis revealed that teacher's strict classroom behaviour was a significant positive predictor of student's academic achievement ($\beta = 0.607$, $p < .001$) accounting for 36.8% of the variance in academic achievement. This means that students' perceptions of the strictness of the school environment are an important factor in determining academic results. The results are in line with the results found in the meta analysis conducted by Korpershoek et al. (2016) and Putra & Yanto (2025) which indicated that classroom management strategies have a small to moderate but statistically significant effect on academic achievement in educational settings. The overall results indicate that the teacher's strict behavior in the classroom is a double function pedagogic approach. It can sharpen students' discipline, concentration, and academic achievement on the one hand, but on the other hand it can create a psychological pressure and anxiety among students. This duality highlights the fact that being strict in the classroom is not a negative or positive value, but depends on the way in which it occurs and on what students see it as (Frey & Tatum, 2024). Thus, a balance of structure and control with emotional support might be optimal in the classroom with the goal of optimizing academic and emotional outcomes.

Conclusion

The present study investigated students' perceptions of teachers' strict classroom attitudes and their effects on academic achievement. The results suggest that overall, students feel that the implementation of strict classroom management is advantageous for improving discipline and concentration in the classroom as well as students' study habits. Furthermore, there was a strong relationship between strict classroom behavior and the emergence of self-discipline and the increase in classroom attentiveness, which indicates the role of strict classroom behavior in classroom order and structure. The study also reveals that the demands of strict classroom behavior come at a cost. Students reported higher level of anxiety in general, especially fear of making mistakes and examination-related stress. This means that strictness can cause academic structure and behavioral regulation, but it can also impose emotional pressure and have a negative impact on psychological well-being of students. The statistical analysis also revealed that teachers' strict rules in the classroom have a positive but weak correlation with students' academic attainment, and regression analysis indicated that the strict rules in teachers' classroom is a significant predictor of students' academic performance, accounting for a considerable variance in academic performance. The findings indicate that the strictness of the classroom is one factor which aids in achieving academic success but not the only one. The overall findings of the study are that the teachers' classroom behavior has a double-edged effect in the learning process. It helps students achieve academic success and become better behaved and focused, but at the same time brings challenges to students' emotions, such as anxiety. Thus, the ideal classroom must strike a balance between discipline and structure and emotional support and student-centred practices to ensure the best possible learning results as well as the health and well-being of students.



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Recommendations

As a result of the study, the following three recommendations are made:

1. Every classroom will have an established classroom routine. Classroom routines will be in place in all classrooms.
2. Teachers need to have a well-balanced classroom management style; one that is strict where needed, but is also emotionally supportive. Discipline and structure can help to boost focus and student success, but discipline needs to be managed in a manner that does not unnecessarily create stress for students.
3. Building Ties with the Community Teachers should foster an environment in which students feel free and secure to engage in learning activities without fear of failure. Positive reinforcement, constructive feedback and positive communication can help ease student anxiety while still keeping the students on track academically.
4. Effective Classroom Practices Teacher Training Regular professional development opportunities for teachers should be offered that emphasize effective practices for classroom management. Such trainings should focus on discipline maintenance as well as students' emotional state and self-confidence in learning.

Future Recommendations

1. Mediating and Moderating Variables were included. Mediating and Moderating variables were included. The relationship between strict classroom behavior and academic achievement should be further investigated with other factors: student motivation, academic self-efficacy and classroom engagement.
2. Extension to other levels and contexts: Further studies are needed at different levels of education (primary, secondary and higher secondary) and across different types of educational institutions to make comparisons between the effects of strict classroom behavior in different settings.
3. Students should be instructed to employ Mixed-Method and Longitudinal Designs. Future studies are encouraged to employ mixed method or longitudinal research designs to provide more in-depth and comprehensive understanding of the academic and psychological effects of strict classroom behavior over time.

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