

## Effect of Shyness on Student-Teacher Relationship at Elementary School Level

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### Abstract

The purpose of this research was to investigate the effect of shyness on student-teacher relationships at the elementary school level. The study was quantitative in which causal-comparative design was used. Through convenient sampling, two districts were selected. Using convenient sampling, two tehsils were chosen from both districts, Shalimar and Cantt from Lahore and Kot Radha Kishan and Chunian from Kasur. Researchers selected 500 students for data collection. Two questionnaires on shyness and student-teacher relationships were used as instruments in this study. Both questionnaires were self-developed on close-ended statements. The reliability of the shyness scale was  $r = .79$  and the reliability of the student-teacher relationship was  $r = .77$ . The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test and one-way ANOVA. The major findings of the study indicate that the level of students' shyness is medium in elementary classes and significant differences in shyness in students at the elementary level. The second result of this study was that there was a weak effect of shyness on student-teacher relationships. Based on demographic factors, shyness was a significant difference in gender and grade. Similarly, when we analyzed the student-teacher relationship based on demographic factors, there was a significant difference in gender and grade. So, it is suggested that teacher Provide constructive feedback privately and avoid highlighting mistakes in front of the class to reduce shyness in students and to improve relationship with students.

**Key Words:** Effect, Shyness, Relationship, Elementary School Level.

### Introduction

Shyness is a common personality trait that can greatly affect different aspects of a child's development, particularly their interactions with teachers and peers (Parvez, 2013). In elementary schools, where children are still developing key social skills, the impact of shyness on student-teacher relationships becomes especially significant. This article describes how shyness can influence, and sometimes complicate, the relationships between young students and their teachers (Zakaria et al., 2018). Shyness is generally characterized by social inhibition, nervousness, and a

reluctance to engage in social interactions. It can manifest in varying degrees from child to child, ranging from mild hesitation to intense anxiety in social settings. While shyness is a common and natural trait, its influence on student-teacher relationships depends largely on the strategies teachers use to create a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment. Shy students may be reluctant to participate in class discussions, answer questions, or volunteer for activities, which can hinder their academic growth and limit their exposure to a variety of learning experiences (Mjelve et al., 2019). In a school setting, shyness can show up in various ways and can affect a child's social, academic, and overall well-being. It is often linked to social anxiety, causing distress or avoidance in social situations, which can hinder a person's ability to achieve communication or professional goals. According to the American Psychological Association, shyness refers to the tendency to feel nervous, anxious, or insecure during social interactions, especially with strangers. Shyness can have a variety of causes, including genetic and social factors. It is a temperamental trait often marked by wariness, anxiety, and self-consciousness in response to new social experiences or perceived judgment (Li et al., 2020). Teachers play a decisive role in class environmental training, create support and a comprehensive atmosphere, and can help shy students feel more comfortable expressing themselves (Crozier, 2020).

### **Objectives of the study**

1. To find out the level of shyness in students at elementary school level.
2. To find out the effect of shyness on student-teacher relationships at elementary school level.

### **Research Question**

1. What is the level of shyness in students at elementary school level?
2. What is the effect of shyness on student-teacher relationships at elementary school level?

### **Review of related literature**

Crozier (2000) defined shyness as a "state of discomfort or inhibition that disrupts the achievement of one's interpersonal or professional goals." Similarly, Cheek et al. (1990) noted that shyness involves a tendency to feel anxious, insecure, or nervous in social situations due to concerns about interpersonal outcomes. Shy students may struggle to seek help from teachers when facing academic challenges, leading to unaddressed learning gaps that can negatively impact their overall academic performance. Shyness is characterized by feelings of awkwardness, worry, or anxiety during social interactions, particularly with unfamiliar people (Sangani & Jangi, 2019). Teachers play a key role in shaping the classroom environment, and by creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere, they can help shy students feel more at ease when expressing themselves. Breaking down classroom activities into smaller, more manageable groups can provide shy students with a less intimidating space to engage with peers and teachers. Building trust is also crucial (Zhou, 2015). Teachers can hold one-on-one meetings with shy students to address their concerns, monitor their academic progress, and explore their interests, creating a safe environment for communication. Recognizing and praising the efforts of shy students can boost their confidence and encourage more active participation in class activities (Ahmad et al., 2020). Shyness in elementary students can be caused by a variety of factors, including Genetics and temperament is a main cause. Some children are naturally more predisposed to shyness due to inherited traits. Children who are biologically more sensitive or have a more reactive temperament may be prone to shyness. Family environment is also a major cause. Overprotective or controlling parenting styles can contribute to shyness, as children may feel less confident in unfamiliar situations. Conversely, a lack of emotional support or encouragement can also hinder social development. Negative social past experiences, such as being teased, rejected, or bullied, can lead to shyness.

Children who have faced such experiences may develop a fear of social interactions and become more withdrawn. Some children experience anxiety in social situations, fearing judgment or embarrassment, which can manifest shyness. This anxiety can prevent them from engaging fully in social or classroom activities. Cultural norms that emphasize quietness, politeness, or restraint may contribute to shyness in some students. Additionally, children in environments where they feel unsafe or unsupported might exhibit shy behavior. Children who have limited opportunities to interact with peers outside of school, such as through playdates or extracurricular activities, may struggle with social skills and exhibit shyness when placed in new or unfamiliar settings. Shyness is a natural part of development for some children, especially during transitions, such as entering a new grade or school. Many types of shyness badly affect teacher-student relationships such as situational shyness in students refers to shyness that occurs only in specific situations or contexts. Unlike chronic or generalized shyness, situational shyness is temporary and usually triggered by particular environments or social settings where the student feels uncomfortable or unsure. Students may feel shy in new or unfamiliar situations, such as meeting new classmates, speaking in front of the class, or joining a new group activity. However, they may behave confidently in familiar settings, like at home or with close friends. Once the student becomes more familiar with the situation or gains confidence, the shyness often diminishes. For example, a student might feel shy at the beginning of the school year but become more outgoing as they adjust to their new environment (Zhao et al., 2020). Chronic shyness is another type of shyness in students refers to a persistent, long-term pattern of shyness that affects various aspects of a student's life. Unlike situational shyness, which occurs in specific circumstances, chronic shyness is more consistent and pervasive, making it difficult for students to engage in social interactions, participate in classroom activities, and form relationships with peers and teachers. Students with chronic shyness tend to feel shy in a wide range of social situations, whether at school, home, or public places. This type of shyness is not limited to specific scenarios and is often present regardless of familiarity with the people or environment. Chronic shyness is often accompanied by a deep sense of social anxiety. Students may worry excessively about being judged or embarrassed, which can cause them to avoid social interactions and remain isolated (Xu et al., 2021). Reactive shyness occurs when students feel shy in response to certain triggers, such as criticism, being the center of attention, or unfamiliar social dynamics. These students may become more withdrawn or quiet when faced with stressful or overwhelming situations, but otherwise may not display shyness (Zakaria et al., 2018). Introverted shyness refers to shyness that is rooted in a student's natural introverted personality, rather than social anxiety or fear of judgment. Introverted students tend to feel most comfortable in quiet, solitary activities and smaller, more intimate social settings. While they may not actively seek out social interactions, this type of shyness doesn't necessarily stem from fear or discomfort in social situations. Instead, introverted students may simply prefer spending time alone or with a close group of friends, and they often need time to recharge after socializing. In the classroom, introverted shy students may be quiet, reserved, and reflective, contributing thoughtfully when they feel ready. They are not necessarily anxious but tend to avoid highly stimulating environments, such as large group activities. While this kind of shyness may limit social engagement, it usually doesn't create significant barriers to their academic success. With understanding and support, introverted students can thrive, participating at their own pace without pressure to be more outgoing (Abidi, 2012). Developmental shyness is a natural stage in a child's growth, particularly during early childhood and elementary years, when students are still learning to navigate social situations. This type of shyness often arises as children encounter new experiences, such as starting school, meeting new people, or adjusting to unfamiliar environments. Developmental shyness is typically temporary, as children gradually build confidence and become more comfortable in social settings over time. It is a normal part of emotional and social development, as children may initially feel unsure or hesitant in new situations. As they grow older

and gain more social experience, most children overcome this type of shyness and become more socially engaged. Teachers and parents play a key role in helping children through this phase by providing reassurance, gentle encouragement, and opportunities to interact with others. Since developmental shyness is usually short-lived, it rarely causes long-term issues, but supporting children during this stage is crucial for helping them develop healthy social skills (Stratton, 2021). Contextual shyness refers to shyness that emerges in specific situations or environments, rather than being a consistent trait across all aspects of a student's life. A child with contextual shyness may feel confident and outgoing in familiar settings, such as at home or with close friends, but become reserved or anxious in unfamiliar or formal environments, like school or public events. This type of shyness is often triggered by the surrounding context, such as the presence of authority figures, new peers, or large groups. For example, a student may interact comfortably with their family but feel shy when speaking in front of classmates or teachers. Contextual shyness is typically linked to a lack of familiarity or comfort with certain environments, and it may fade as the child becomes more accustomed to these situations. While it can affect participation in class or social activities, contextual shyness is usually manageable with support. Encouraging gradual exposure to new contexts and creating a positive, supportive environment can help students become more confident and overcome shyness in these specific situations. Understanding these types of shyness can help teachers and parents identify the root causes and provide appropriate support for students to overcome or manage their shyness (Batoool & Zubair, 2018). There are also Levels of Shyness such as low level of shyness and high level of shyness in Students. Low level of shyness such as students with a low level of shyness are generally comfortable in social situations and show minimal signs of anxiety or hesitation. They tend to participate actively in class, engage with peers, and communicate easily with teachers. These students are more likely to take on leadership roles, initiate conversations, and seek out new social experiences. Low shyness typically does not interfere with academic or social development, and these students are more likely to form strong relationships with both classmates and teachers (Mjelve et al., 2019). High level of shyness in Students with a high level of shyness often experience significant discomfort in social situations and may avoid interactions with others. They are likely to withdraw from class participation, struggle with making friends, and hesitate to speak up in front of others. These students may exhibit signs of anxiety, such as blushing, fidgeting, or avoiding eye contact, especially in unfamiliar or group settings. High shyness can affect both academic performance and social development, as these students may miss out on opportunities for learning and forming relationships, potentially leading to feelings of isolation (Sangani & Jangi, 2019).

### **Teacher–Student Relationships**

Teachers play a crucial role in supporting various aspects of children's development. As the primary adults in their lives outside the home, they significantly influence not only students' academic progress but also contribute to the overall growth of the community. Teacher-student relationships are regarded as micro-systems that have a profound impact on children's growth (Zhou, 2015). In the absence of guardians, teachers serve as authoritative figures whom children turn to for support and guidance. They should provide a supportive framework that allows children to navigate the classroom and engage with their peers. Relationships with teachers are particularly vital for children's social, emotional, and academic development, especially during early childhood (Zhao et al., 2020). In elementary grades, teacher-student relationships can offer social stability and psychological safety for children (Xu et al., 2021). It is clear that adult-child relationships influence school change, and specifically, teacher-student relationships are complex structures comprising various elements, including the teacher's attributes, the child, classroom activities, and the broader classroom and school environment in which these relationships occur (Butt et al., 2019).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

The research employed a quantitative approach and utilized a causal-comparative research design. The researchers tried to find out the cause and effect of shyness on student-teacher relationships at elementary school level.

### **Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprised students from elementary schools in the districts of Lahore and Kasur. The researchers selected these two districts within the Lahore division.

### **Sample of the Study**

The researcher used a convenient sampling technique to select the sample from two districts in Punjab. In the first stage, the researcher chose two tehsils, Kot Radha Kishan and Chunian, from the Kasur District, as well as two tehsils, Shalimar and Model Town, from the Lahore District. The researchers selected one boys' school and one girls' school from each tehsil while using a convenient sampling technique. Data was collected from students in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades, with 30 students sampled from each class, resulting in a total of 500 students included in the study.

### **Research Instruments**

Data was collected with the help of two questionnaires.

1. Shyness Scale
2. Student-Teacher Relationship Scale

Both questionnaires on shyness and student-teacher relationships were prepared by the researchers with the help of expert teachers.

### **Instrument Development of Shyness Scale**

The shyness instrument was developed by researchers. Initially, it included 45 items, which were refined under the guidance of a supervisor and validated by three education experts with 20 years of experience. The reliability of the instrument was .79 which was found by Chron back Alpha formula. The questionnaire comprised two sections: the first section focused on students' demographic variables (such as gender and class), while the second section contained closed-ended questions regarding factors related to shyness. This questionnaire consisted of a 5-point Likert scale.

### **Instrument Development of Student-Teacher Relationship Scale**

The researchers also developed the Student-Teacher Relationship (STR) instrument, which had a reliability score of .77. This questionnaire consisted of 25 closed-ended questions focused on the student-teacher relationship, using a 5-point Likert scale.

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected directly from the students. The researchers personally distributed the questionnaires by visiting the schools and attending classes with the teachers' permission.

### **Data Analysis**

The data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics, including t-tests and one-way ANOVA. Descriptive statistics were employed to assess the frequency, mean, and standard deviation of the variables, while t-tests were used to determine differences between the two groups. For variables with more than two groups, one-way ANOVA was utilized.

## Data analysis and interpretation

Table 1

### *Demographic Distribution of the Sample*

Demographic	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	325	65
	Female	175	35
Class	Six	116	23
	Seven	164	32.6
	Eight	220	44

Table 1 presents the demographic breakdown of the sample. The table shows that the study's sample includes 175 female students and 325 male students. There are 116 students from class six, 164 from class seven, and 220 from class eight.

Table 2

### *Descriptive values of Students' shyness*

Shyness	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I feel comfortable in all social situation	3.23	1.012
Happy	2.96	.883
Confident	2.94	.977
Easily to interact	2.70	1.143
Calm	3.01	1.220
Secure	3.42	1.155
I enjoy class participation confidently	3.78	1.082
playing with friends	3.47	1.210
people gathering	3.02	1.260
I feel do well to talk with strangers	3.15	1.233
read aloud in classroom	2.58	1.063
talk with boys	2.83	1.343
talk with girls	2.63	1.484
speak in public	3.14	1.249
I easily control myself in the condition of sweating and heart racing when meeting with a new person	3.04	1.113
Sitting in a new social gathering	3.22	.968
discussing in classroom	2.44	.974
I easily make eye contact with others	3.16	1.038
attend social events	3.03	1.039
making friends	3.66	1.089
I feel satisfied when my classmate supports me	3.37	1.180
my parents	3.77	1.184
my teacher	3.30	1.184
I feel relaxed when my parents pressure me	3.20	1.107
Teachers	2.95	1.064
Friends	2.44	1.320
Siblings	2.66	1.246
I feel comfortable in every financial condition	2.14	1.189
parents dis attachment	3.58	1.191

losing friends	3.44	1.148
I feel secure when I meet people who belong to another culture	2.89	1.130
another religious	2.97	1.140
another cast	2.86	1.248
I am confident about my social skills	2.84	1.247
behavior with others	3.34	1.073
social attachment with people	2.68	1.337

N=500

Table 2 displays the descriptive statistics for students' shyness, highlighting the mean and standard deviation for each item from the questionnaire. A total of 36 items were assessed, with the table providing the mean and standard deviation values for each one. All statements received responses within the "strongly agree" and "agree" categories. The highest mean score of 3.78 was recorded for the statement, "I enjoy class participation confidently" (M = 3.78, SD = 1.082).

Table 3

*Descriptive Value of Student-teacher Relationship*

Statement	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I feel comfortable with my teacher	4.38	.875
My teacher guides me.	3.91	1.038
I easily talk with my teacher.	3.29	1.213
My teacher is fair to me.	3.05	.965
My teacher understands me.	3.75	.983
My teacher solved my problems.	3.94	1.183
My teacher supports me.	3.55	1.116
I openly share my problems with my teacher.	2.86	1.193
I have a good relationship with my teacher.	2.95	1.383
My teacher motivates me.	4.11	.880
I like my teacher	3.40	1.430
I enjoy being in my teachers' classroom.	3.39	1.388
My teacher respects me.	3.58	1.109
Sometimes when I do wrong my teacher is angry with me.	3.60	1.115
My teacher allows me to argue in class discussion	3.74	1.157
I feel my teacher pays more attention to others	3.45	1.242
My teacher permits me to share something.	3.74	1.154
Sometimes my teacher effort on me.	3.54	1.166
I feel my teacher cares about others	3.68	1.137
I feel I am safe with my teacher.	3.19	1.220
I depend on my teacher for help	3.74	1.200
I wish my teacher had spent more time with me.	3.59	1.292
I wish my teacher knew me better.	3.04	1.061
My teacher wants me to be good for others.	3.35	1.208
I want my teacher to be kind to me.	2.57	1.339

N=500

Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics for the student-teacher relationship, detailing the mean and standard deviation for each item from the questionnaire. A total of 25 items were assessed, with the mean and standard deviation values for each listed in the table. The statement "I want my

teacher to be kinder to me" ( $M = 2.57$ ,  $SD = 1.339$ ) shows the lowest mean, implying that students may not perceive a strong connection with their teachers. In contrast, the statement "I feel comfortable with my teachers" ( $M = 4.38$ ,  $SD = .875$ ) has the highest mean, suggesting that students generally maintain a positive relationship with their teachers.

Table 4

*Descriptive statistics of students' shyness*

Shyness	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	3.07	.305

$N = 500$

Table 4 indicates that the level of shyness among elementary students is moderate. The mean score ranges are categorized as Low (1 – 1.67), Medium (1.68 – 3.33), and High (3.34 – 5). The results show a medium level of shyness, with a mean score of ( $M = 3.07$ ) and a standard deviation ( $SD = .305$ ), suggesting that the participants display some degree of shyness.

Table 5

*The difference in boys' and girls' shyness level*

Gender	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	325	3.09	.322	-2.19	498	.029
Female	175	3.03	.266			

Table 5 examines the comparison of students' shyness in the classroom according to gender. The results from the independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in shyness scores, with male students ( $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = .322$ ) displaying higher scores than female students ( $M = 3.03$ ,  $SD = .266$ );  $t(498) = -2.19$ ,  $p = .029$ . Thus, it can be concluded that there is a significant variation in shyness levels among students based on their gender.

Table 6

*One-way ANOVA on student' shyness in terms of grade level*

Students' grade level	Sum of Squares	<i>Df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>
Between Groups	1.825	2	.912	10.161	.000
Within Groups	4.4633	497	.090		
Total	46.458	499			

Table 6 presents a comparison of students' shyness across different grade levels. The one-way ANOVA results revealed a significant difference in shyness based on grade level, with  $F(2, 497) = 10.161$ ,  $p = .000$ . This indicates that students' shyness levels vary significantly by grade. A post hoc Tukey test was performed to identify the specific differences in shyness between the three groups.

Table 7

*Post Hoc Tukey on student' shyness in terms of grade level*

Grade (I)	Grade (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	<i>P</i>
6 <sup>th</sup>	7 <sup>th</sup>	1.55(*)	.000
7 <sup>th</sup>	8 <sup>th</sup>	.103(*)	.003



Note. \*The mean difference value is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 7 presents the results of a post hoc Tukey test conducted to evaluate differences in students' shyness based on their grade level. The findings reveal a significant difference between grade 6 and grade 7, with a mean difference of 1.55 and a p-value of .000. Furthermore, a difference was observed between grade 7 and grade 8, with a mean difference of .103 and a p-value of .003. Thus, it can be concluded that students' levels of shyness differ significantly among grades 6, 7, and 8.

Table 8

*Difference between boys and girls in student-teacher relationship*

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>p</i>
Male	352	3.56	.383	-4.316	317.813	.000
Female	175	3.39	.438			

Table 8 shows a comparison of the student-teacher relationship based on gender. The results of the independent samples t-test revealed a significant difference in the scores for male students regarding their relationships with teachers ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SD=.383$ ) and female ( $M=3.39$ ,  $SD=.438$ );  $t(317.813) = -4.316$ ,  $p=.000$  based on their gender.

### Discussion

The present study was to find out the effect of shyness on student-teacher relationships at elementary school level. In districts Lahore and Kasur. It was found that levels of shyness differ between male and female students. Additionally, significant variations in shyness were observed among students in grades 6, 7, and 8. The study also investigated the connection between shyness and student-teacher interactions, concluding that these relationships differ based on gender.

The 1st objective of this research was to find out the level of shyness in students at elementary school level. The findings indicated a moderate level of shyness in these classes, with a significant value ( $p = .000$ ) suggesting that these students do exhibit shyness. Existing literature indicates that shy individuals often experience anxiety and insecurity in social situations, leading them to frequently avoid interactions with others (Wills et al., 1999). In general, a low level of shyness does not typically cause significant problems for children.

The second objective was to find out the effect of shyness on student-teacher relationships at elementary school level. The result of the study indicates the overall effect of shyness on these relationships, revealing a weak influence. Prior research suggests that shyness has a limited effect on the closeness of student-teacher relationships, aligning with findings from studies conducted in Western contexts (Rudasill et al., 2009; Rydell et al., 2005).

### Conclusion

The result of this study indicates that students exhibit a medium level of shyness, with significant findings confirming the presence of shyness at the elementary school level. The analysis reveals that the various factors of shyness have a weak effect on the student-teacher relationship. When comparing shyness based on gender, a significant difference was observed. Similarly, the comparison of shyness levels across grade levels also revealed significant differences. Furthermore, an analysis of the student-teacher relationship about students' gender indicated a significant difference. Based on these results and findings, the study concludes that shyness has a significant yet weak effect on the student-teacher relationship.

## Recommendations

- A supportive atmosphere encourages students to open up without fear of judgment.
- Teachers should greet students warmly and maintain a friendly demeanor to make them feel comfortable.
- Teachers should implement activities like group discussions, pair work, and presentations in a supportive setting as these activities help shy students gradually overcome their hesitation in expressing themselves.
- Teachers should be available outside class hours to help students with their concerns or difficulties.
- Teachers should organize activities in the classroom that promote social interaction among students and between students and teachers. This approach can help students reduce their level of shyness.
- The school should conduct counseling sessions for shy students to improve their interpersonal skills.
- Given that the findings indicate girls are shyer than boys, teachers should encourage girls to participate more in classroom discussions and activities to foster social interaction.
- Personal attention makes students feel valued, helping reduce their shyness.
- Pair shy students with supportive peers in group tasks to build their confidence.

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