



Students' Perceptions of Teachers' Teaching Styles and Their Perceived Relationships with Confidence and Classroom Engagement in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

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The role of teaching style in shaping students' learning experience in higher education institutions is significant, particularly regarding students' confidence and engagement. This qualitative study was designed to explore the perceptions of university students about the instructional approach of their teachers and their perceptions about the instructional approach and its perceived relationship to their confidence and engagement within the classroom. The sample consisted of 21 undergraduate students from the BBA, English, and Education departments of the University of Swat, who were purposively selected. The main data collection method was semi-structured interviews lasting approximately 40 – 60 minutes, and complemented by two focus group discussions with 6 – 8 students in each group. The data were analyzed thematically, organized with the six phases of analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Facilitative, student-centered, and interactive teaching strategies were frequently reported to foster students' confidence, motivation, participation, and cognitive involvement. In contrast, Authoritarian, rigid, lecture-heavy, and monotonous teaching approaches were often linked to reluctance, passivity, and diminished participation. Practices that were seen as particularly valuable included collaborative learning, role-playing, concrete demonstrations, constructive feedback, and teacher empathy. The results indicate that students' interpretations of instructional practices are crucial for understanding how these practices are experienced in terms of their confidence and participation in the classroom. The findings emphasize the importance of responsive, participatory, and supportive pedagogy in higher education and underscore that the qualitative design does not establish cause and effect.

Introduction

Teaching style refers to the ways in which teachers plan for learning, explain expectations, arrange classroom interactions, and interact with students during the learning process. Grasha (1996) identified five different orientations to teaching, ranging from expert and formal authority to personal model, facilitator, and delegator, which indicate different levels of teacher direction, student autonomy, interaction, and instructional support. However, recent studies indicate that teaching in higher education is not limited to fixed categories but also encompasses multiple dimensions and flexibility, as teachers combine and adapt various approaches depending on learning goals, disciplinary context, and students' needs (Postareff *et al.*, 2024). Among these approaches, learning-oriented approaches are based on interaction, active knowledge building, and meaningful student participation. A meta-analysis of

104 higher-education studies shows that active and student-centered instruction was associated with better learning outcomes than a traditional lecture-based approach, even in the context of education and other social-science courses (Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023). Therefore, variations in teaching style can have a significant influence on students' perceptions of opportunities for participation, autonomy, interaction and learning.

Students' perceptions of these teaching practices are particularly relevant because engagement is related not only to what the teachers do but also to how students understand the support, relationships, and opportunities for learning that are provided to them. Modern studies present engagement as a holistic view that manifests in behavioral, emotional, and cognitive ways, and all three can be influenced by the quality of instructional and interpersonal support received by students (Tao *et al.*, 2022). In a meta-analysis of 71 studies, the authors discovered that perceived teacher support was positively associated with academic achievement, and this relationship between teacher support and achievement was partially mediated by students' behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement (Tao *et al.*, 2022).

In the context of higher education in particular, positive teacher-student relationships are recognized as a key component of teaching and learning, communication, and students' academic experiences (Hagenauer *et al.*, 2023). A recent systematic review of higher-education research further identified several ways through which perceived teacher support positively influences student engagement, including motivational factors, feelings of self-efficacy, psychological-need satisfaction, supportive learning environments, and positive teacher-student relationships (Prananto *et al.*, 2025). This evidence supports the importance of considering students' perceptions of teaching styles as significant in understanding differences in their confidence, involvement in classroom activities, and engagement.

Academic self-efficacy is a construct that is closely related to confidence in learning and is defined as students' beliefs in their abilities to engage successfully with academic tasks, face challenges, and manage their learning. Self-efficacy has been consistently identified in recent higher-education research as a motivational and psychological resource that is linked to academic achievement, persistence, self-regulated learning, adaptive learning strategies, and students' willingness to undertake challenging academic activities (Fatima *et al.*, 2022; Lu *et al.*, 2022; Mitchell *et al.*, 2023; Thompson *et al.*, 2024). Students with higher self-efficacy tend to adopt positive learning strategies, ask for help, persevere in the face of challenges, and take the feedback seriously to enhance their future achievement (Lu *et al.*, 2022; Thompson *et al.*, 2024). Most importantly, confidence is not just an innate quality but can be fostered during students' educational experiences.

The teaching methods that offer students tangible challenges, ensure opportunities for success, offer clear, positive feedback, allow them to work collaboratively, provide them with autonomy in their learning, and offer them the right kind of instructional support can help students develop their sense of competence and confidence (Johannes & Haase, 2024; Mammadov & Schroeder, 2023; Posta Reff *et al.*, 2024). Further, in the university context, research has confirmed that the interpretation and application of teacher and peer feedback can have a positive effect on students' self-efficacy and self-regulated learning (Fatima *et al.*, 2022; Lu *et al.*, 2022).

The interpersonal component of teaching is also important because students experience learning not only in terms of teaching methods but also through their relationships and interactions with teachers. Current literature on higher education research has identified approachability, care, trust, respect, communication, professional support, and interpersonal responsiveness as key characteristics of teacher-student relationships (Hagenauer *et al.*, 2023). Such relationships can foster learning environments that make students feel more comfortable when asking questions, adding ideas, reacting to feedback, taking academic risks, and engaging in classroom activities. Recent systematic review evidence suggests that perceived teacher support is positively related to higher education students' engagement, and that this perception of support can be mediated by a range of factors including motivation, self-efficacy, psychological need satisfaction, academic emotions, and the quality of teacher-student relationships (Prananto *et al.*, 2025; Ouyang & Wong, 2025). These relational aspects are also aligned with the current student-centered pedagogy, which values meaningful engagement, co-operation, dialogue, student agency, self-determination, responsiveness to students, and an adequate pedagogical structure and guidance (Otto *et al.*, 2024; Posta Reff *et al.*, 2024). Autonomy-supportive environments are also linked to positive academic outcomes, autonomous motivation, behavioral engagement, self-beliefs, self-regulation, as well as better learning outcomes in higher education compared with conventional lecture-based instruction (Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023; Mammadov & Schroeder, 2023).

Classroom engagement, then, is far more than just showing up or being present in a classroom. Instead, current research views engagement as a multifaceted and dynamic phenomenon with components of students' affective, cognitive, behavioral, and social dimensions of involvement in learning (Bond *et al.*, 2020; Bergdahl *et al.*, 2024). Engagement can be described in several ways:

behavioral engagement involves active participation in learning, discussion, persistence, task completion, and collaborate with peers and teachers; emotional engagement includes students interest, enjoyment, motivation, curiosity, and positive responses to learning; cognitive engagement involves focused attention, reflection, strategic thinking, problem solving, and self-regulation; and social engagement refer to meaningful interactions and collaboration with teachers and peers (Bond *et al.*, 2020; Bergdahl *et al.*, 2024).

Therefore, engagement is influenced by how students' individual characteristics interact with the teaching, learning, and relevant conditions that are present in the classroom environment. Perceived teacher support is linked to behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement, and these are correlated with relationships between teacher support and academic outcomes (Tao *et al.*, 2022). Further systematic reviews also show that the learning support, assessment and feedback, course design and delivery, instructional practices, teacher–student interactions, and learning environment are significant factors affecting students' engagement in higher education (Prananto *et al.*, 2025; Wang *et al.*, 2026). Thus, instructional practices that provide appropriate support, interaction, autonomy, active participation, constructive feedback, and responsiveness enhance students' confidence and class engagement in a way that will influence the competence, support, involvement, and psychological safety students feel in the classroom.

Therefore, there is a good amount of evidence found in the literature to examine the interconnected roles of instructional practices, students' perceptions, confidence, and classroom engagement. Current studies show that engagement is influenced by various factors related to the instruction, relationship, motivation, and context, such as teacher support, feedback, opportunities to participate, teacher–student interaction, and students' perceptions of the learning environment (Bergdahl *et al.*, 2024; Hagenauer *et al.*, 2023; Prananto *et al.*, 2025; Tao *et al.*, 2022). There is, however, a significant body of this literature in which these relationships are studied using typologies of engagement, cross-sectional surveys, correlational models and wide multidimensional measures of engagement, which may offer less understanding of how students themselves make sense of specific teaching practices and classroom experiences (Prananto *et al.*, 2025). This contemporary approach to student-voice scholarship thus highlights the need to understand students' accounts as valuable sources of information about teaching and learning, rather than simply using the pre-established indicators of instructional effectiveness (Gillett-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024; Sun *et al.*, 2023). Qualitative inquiry is particularly useful in this context because it can highlight the experiences of students describing specific teacher practices, the meanings or significance of those practices for the students, what types of practices are experienced as supportive or restrictive of student confidence and engagement, and how interpersonal communication, feedback, participation opportunities, and teacher responsiveness are woven together in students' descriptions of confidence and engagement (Hagenauer *et al.*, 2023; Kamran *et al.*, 2).

While some previous studies have found connections between instructional practices, teacher support, self-efficacy, and multidimensional measures of engagement or quantitative measures of engagement, most of this research has used these quantitative correlational or multidimensional measures of engagement. Less is known, however, about students' views of specific classroom practices as promoting or hindering their confidence and engagement. This is especially applicable in the context of higher education in Pakistan, where the majority of qualitative studies have explored the students' perspectives on teaching practices and confidence in a classroom without providing detailed insights into the students' experience of the classroom from their own perspectives.

Thus, in the present study, the lived experiences and perceptions of undergraduate students at the University of Swat, Pakistan, regarding their teachers' teaching styles were explored, specifically the understanding of teachers' teaching styles and the link between their classroom experiences and confidence and engagement in the classroom. The importance of this contextual focus is underscored by recent student-voice research that has emphasized the need to understand educational experiences in a variety of cultural and institutional contexts rather than relying on the assumption that the findings from experiences in predominantly developed-country contexts are transferable to other contexts (Sun *et al.*, 2023). Studies conducted in the higher education sector of Pakistan also indicate that teachers' communication, approachability, feedback, classroom behavior, and opportunities to engage meaningfully in class are influencing factors that shape students' perceptions towards teaching (Kamran *et al.*, 2022b; Kosar *et al.*, 2020). The present study, however, does not attempt to establish causal relationships or statistical prediction or mediation among the teaching style, confidence, and engagement. Rather, it uses a qualitative interpretive approach to explore how students explain and make sense of their perceptions of relationships between instructional practices, their confidence, their participation, and their involvement in the classroom in their specific university setting (Gillett-Swan & Baroutsis, 2024; Hagenauer *et al.*, 2023).

Objectives

The main objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To explore how students describe and interpret their teachers' teaching styles in university classrooms.
2. To understand how students perceive different teaching approaches in relation to their confidence in learning.
3. To examine students' perceptions of different teaching approaches in relation to classroom engagement.
4. To identify the specific teaching practices that students consider most supportive of their confidence and classroom engagement.

Research Questions

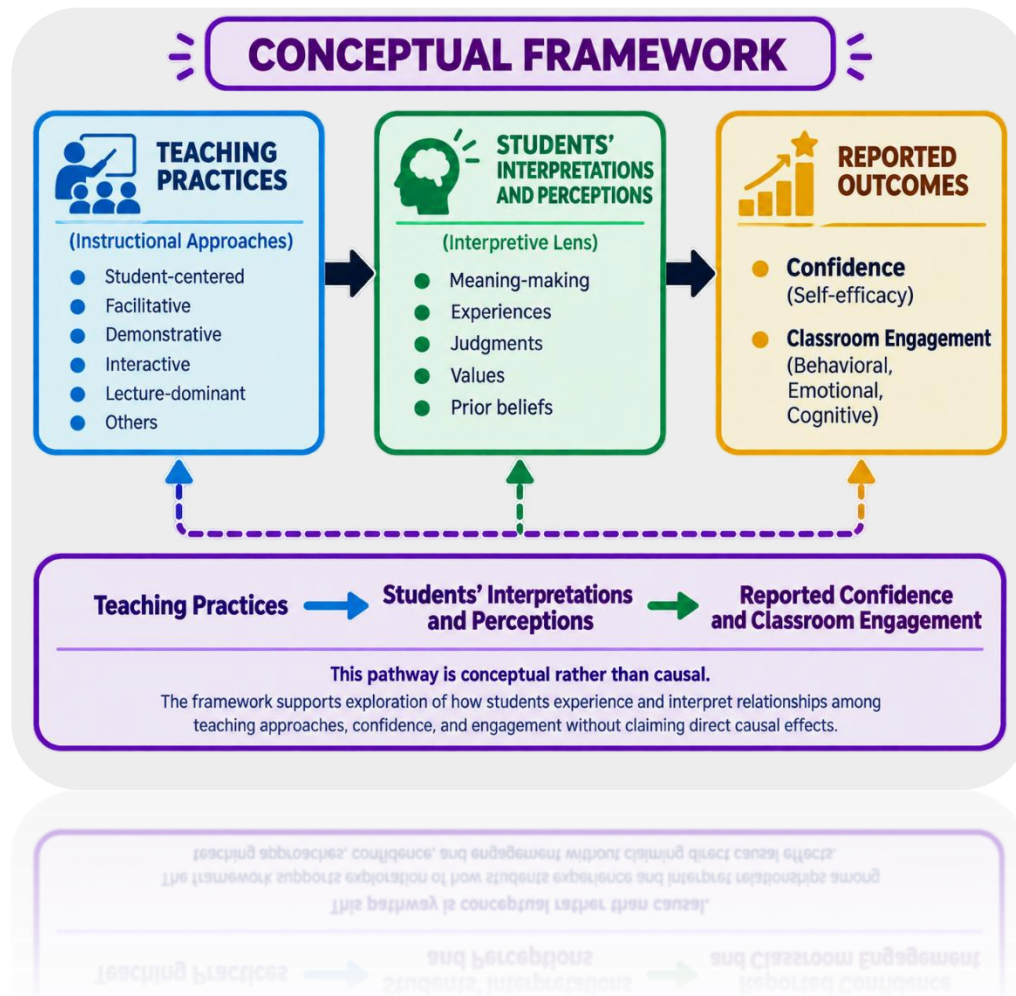
The main Research Question of this study is as follows:

1. How do students describe and interpret their teachers' teaching styles?
2. How do students perceive different teaching approaches in relation to their confidence in learning?
3. How do students perceive different teaching approaches in relation to classroom engagement?
4. Which teaching practices do students consider most supportive of their confidence and classroom engagement?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this study is presented to show the conceptual relationships between teaching practices, students' interpretations, students' confidence, and students' involvement in the classroom. Some teaching approaches, such as student-centered, facilitative, demonstrative, interactive, and lecture-oriented, can provide differential opportunities for participation, feedback, autonomy, collaboration, dialogue, and application.

The classroom practices are given meaning through students' perceptions. In this study, students' perceptions are not recognized as mediated variables that are statistically tested. Instead, students interpret the instruction practices and how they believe these practices influence their confidence, willingness to participate, motivation, interest, persistence, and cognitive involvement.



Teaching Practices → Students' Interpretations and Perceptions → Reported Confidence and Classroom Engagement

It is a conceptual pathway and does not imply causality. The framework thus allows for the exploration of the experiences and interpretations students make regarding the relationships between teaching approaches, confidence, and engagement, but does not infer direct causal relationships.

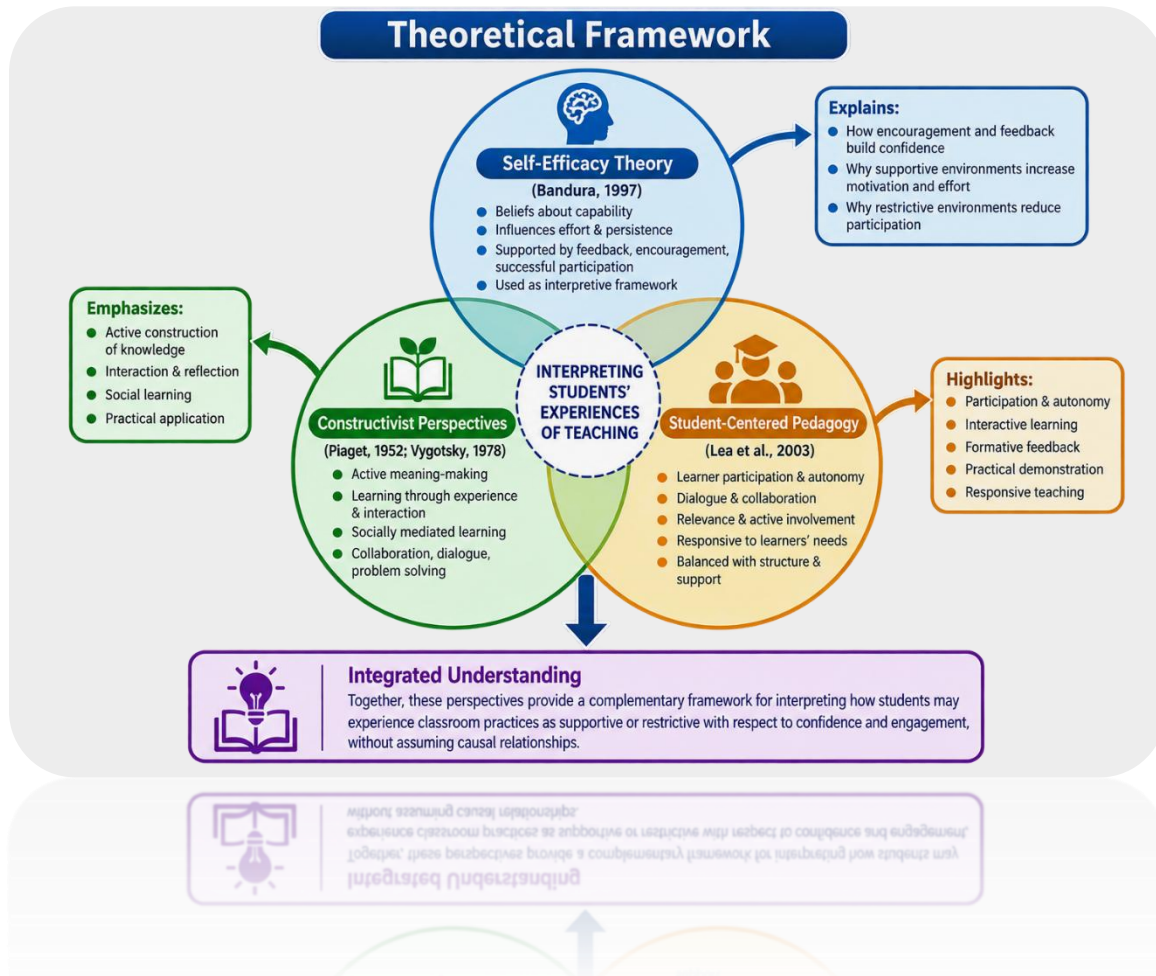
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is based on three complementary perspectives: Self-Efficacy Theory, constructivist perspectives on learning, and student-centered pedagogy.

This psychological approach to understanding students' confidence in learning is offered by Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory. Self-efficacy is defined as people's beliefs in their ability to perform certain actions. These beliefs can influence effort, perseverance, motivation, and willingness to engage in difficult tasks. Feedback and successful participation, encouragement, collaborative activity, and opportunities to apply knowledge within the university classroom could constitute experiences for students that are interpreted as reinforcing their confidence. On the other hand, a very judgmental and restrictive classroom atmosphere can inhibit students from speaking up, asking questions, or taking intellectual risks. In this research, self-efficacy theory is not employed as an actual quantitative measure, but rather as an interpretive framework.

Constructivist theories, such as those proposed by Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978), focus on the active construction of meaning in the process of learning, which is facilitated by experiences, interactions, reflections, and connections with social and educational contexts. This way of viewing learning is more than just taking information from an instructor.

Collaboration, discussion, problem-solving, questioning, and the application of knowledge to real-world situations can all be ways for students to actively build their understanding. This focus on socially mediated learning is particularly relevant to classroom dialogue, peer interactions, and instructional guidance. These views offer a theoretical underpinning for understanding why students might appreciate interactive and participatory pedagogy.

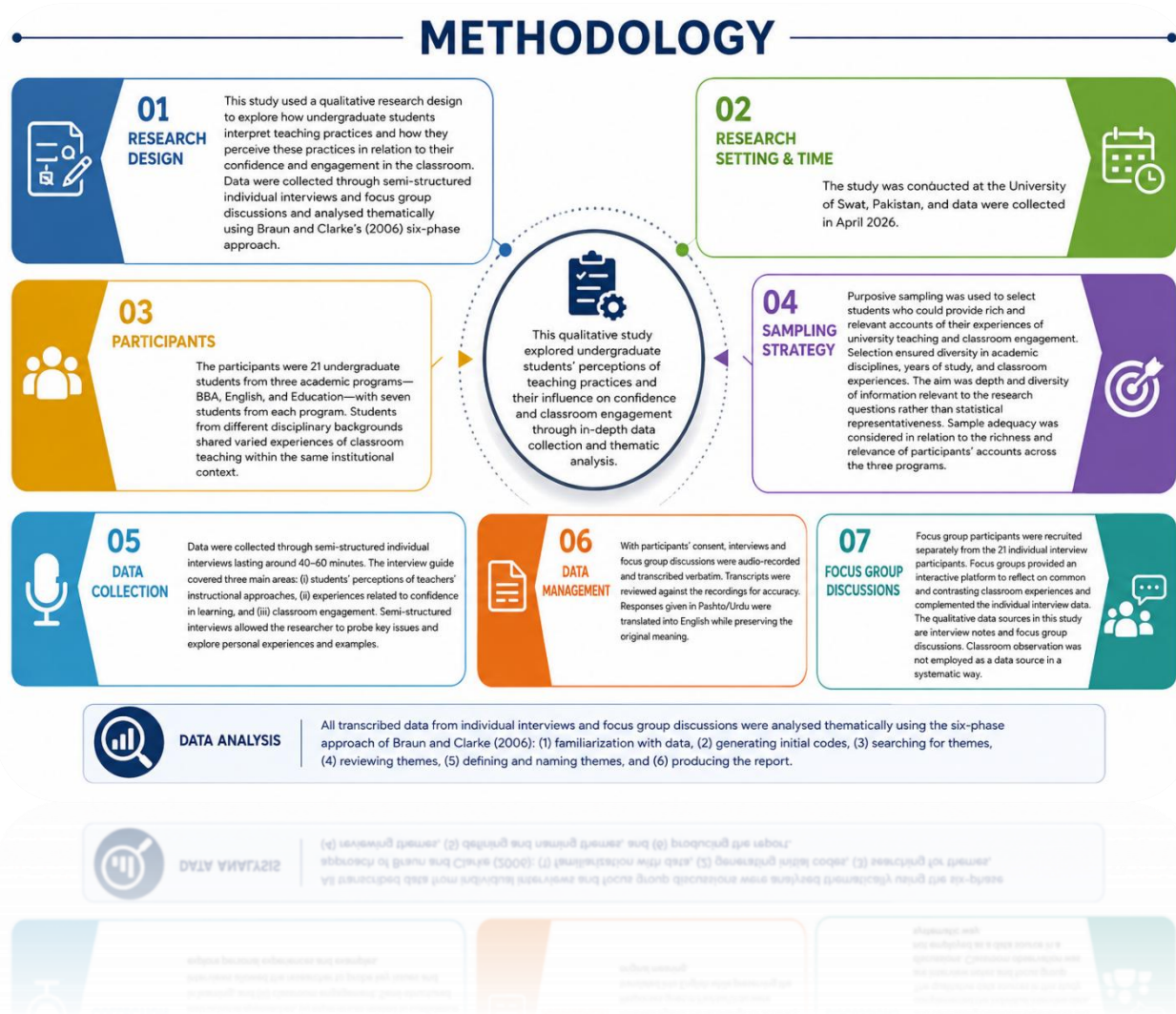


Student-centered pedagogy focuses on learner participation, autonomy, dialogue, relevance, active involvement, and responsiveness to student learning needs. Lea *et al.* (2003) suggest that students can appreciate student-centered methods and, at the same time, stress the ongoing significance of proper instructional organization and assistance.

In this study, student-centered pedagogy offers a practice-oriented way of examining various instructional approaches like collaborative learning, discussion, formative feedback, practical demonstration, and the opportunities afforded to students to actively participate in classroom learning.

Self-Efficacy Theory, constructivist perspectives, and Student-Centered Pedagogy work together to provide a complementary framework for interpreting students' experiences of teaching. Self-Efficacy Theory provides an explanation for the above (encouragement, feedback, and successful participation may correlate with confidence). Constructivist approaches highlight the need to engage in interaction, participation, and meaningful learning. Student-Centered Pedagogy emphasizes teaching practices that allow for autonomy, dialogue, application, and student engagement. Together, these viewpoints provide a way to understand that some classroom practices could be seen as supportive or restrictive to students' confidence and engagement in particular, but without implying causal links.

Methodology



This research used an interpretive qualitative study research design to answer the questions of how undergraduate students interpret their teachers' teaching practices of the teachers and how they perceive these practices in regard to their confidence and engagement in the classroom. The choice of a qualitative approach was justified because the study aimed to get detailed descriptions of the experiences and interpretations of the students rather than measure relationships or causal effects. The data were collected using semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions and were analyzed thematically following the six-phase approach developed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The study was conducted at the University of Swat, Pakistan, and data were collected in April 2026. The participants were 21 undergraduate students from three educational streams: BBA, English, and Education. Seven students were selected from each program. Students from different disciplinary backgrounds provided diverse perspectives on classroom experiences while sharing the same institutional context.

Students were selected through purposive sampling, which targeted those who were able to give rich accounts of their experiences of university teaching and participation in classes. Selection was made to obtain a range of academic disciplines, years of study, and classroom experience. Rather than for statistical representativeness, the aim of purposive sampling was to capture detailed and diverse accounts relevant to the research questions. Sample adequacy was considered in relation to the richness and relevance of participants' accounts across the three academic programs rather than statistical representativeness.

Semi-structured individual interviews were used to gather data. The interviews were conducted for around 40-60 minutes and included three main areas: students' perceptions of teachers' instructional approaches, students' experiences related to confidence in learning, and students' classroom engagement. Semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to follow up on key issues and explore the experiences and examples provided by each participant.

With participants' consent, interviews and focus group discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcribed perceived teacher support was reviewed for accuracy with recordings. The reporting of the [Pashto/Urdu] language responses was done by translating them into English, but care was taken to keep the meaning of the original responses intact.

The focus-group participants were recruited separately from the 21 individual interview participants. The focus groups were used as an interactive forum for exploring common and contrasting classroom experiences and complemented the individual interview data. The qualitative data sources that are used in the study including interview notes and focus group discussions. Classroom observation was not employed as a data source in a systematic way.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation, and the opportunity to refuse to participate without penalty. Before data collection, informed consent was obtained. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by anonymizing respondents' data and using pseudonyms or non-identifying descriptions when reporting the findings.

Research materials were kept in password-protected files in such a way that only the researcher could access them. Interview and focus-group procedures were implemented in a non-threatening, private manner, to ensure the comfort and confidentiality of participants. The research adhered to relevant institutional research ethics procedures.

Data Analysis

The qualitative information was analyzed thematically using Braun and Clarke's 6-phase approach (2006): familiarization with the data; initial coding; development of candidate themes; review of themes; definition and naming of themes; final analytic account of the themes. The analysis was designed to highlight patterns of students' descriptions of teaching practices, their self-confidence, their classroom engagement, and their favorite teaching practices, while also pay attention to differences in their experiences.

Analysis started with multiple readings of the interview and focus group data to become familiar with the participants' stories. Codes were initially generated for meaningful segments of the data focused on teaching practices, classroom interaction, feedback, confidence, participation, motivation and engagement. Codes were then grouped together into candidate themes based on their relatedness. Themes were coded, and then candidate themes were cross-checked with both the coded extracts and the data set as a whole to evaluate their conceptual distinctiveness and coherence within the theme. Themes were then developed, delimited, and labeled with respect to the research questions. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with each participant and compared to find common themes and divergent experiences.

The trustworthiness and Reflexive Rigor principles can be summarized as follows:

A number of strategies were used to enhance the credibility of the study. Member checking was used to build credibility by giving the participants opportunities to check the accuracy of the interpretations. Description of the institutional context, participant programs, and research setting served as facilitation toward transferability.

The issue of dependability was handled by providing information about research protocols and analysis decisions. Researcher reflexivity and cross-checking of individual interview data and focus group discussions were used to ensure conformability. These strategies were designed to increase the transparency and consistency and to acknowledge the interpretative nature of qualitative inquiry.

Reflexivity was taken into account during data collection and analysis to ensure that prior experiences and assumptions of the researcher did not impact the process of interpretation. The researcher also considered and discussed his expectations of what effective teaching, student participation, and teacher-student relationships would look like, and attempted to differentiate them from the students' descriptions. During the coding and theme development process, reflexive notes were created to document analytic decisions and alternative interpretations.

The use of individual interviews and focus group discussions helped to build credibility and allowed for a comparison between individual and group accounts. If member checking was conducted, it was used to give participants a chance to clarify and confirm interpretations. Transferability was facilitated by providing a detailed description of the institutional setting, academic programs, characteristics of the participants, and study procedures. Dependability was addressed by providing records of data-collection protocols, coding choices, and theme development. Throughout this process, I employed reflexive consideration of researcher assumptions and attention to recurring and contrasting participant accounts in support of confirmability.

Thematic Analysis

Interviews were conducted with 21 undergraduate students in the BBA, English, and Education programs at the University of Swat and the data were analyzed thematically, resulting in the following themes: perceptions of teaching styles, confidence levels of students, and classroom engagement. Analysis was conducted in accordance with the six-step process detailed by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, coding, theme development, reviewing themes, and defining and naming these. The three main themes that arose are Perceptions of Teaching Styles, Confidence, and Influence on Classroom Engagement, with sub-themes that further elucidate students' experiences.

Theme 1: Perceptions of Teaching Styles

A diversity of teaching styles was reported by the students in their programs. Several highlighted the use of student-centered, interactive, and facilitative styles as being very effective in the facilitation of understanding and participation. For example, one BBA student commented that,

"When the teacher asks us to solve any real-life problem in the class, I feel more confident in doing it," said an English student. "When the teacher encourages us to talk in class, I am active in the debates and role plays."

On the other hand, rigid, authoritarian, and lecture-oriented approach to teaching was linked to negative perceptions. These styles were reported by students as putting a strain on them and restricting their participation. A student from the education program shared,

"I feel intimidated in rigid lectures and do not want to ask questions," while another said, "It's hard to be engaged in lectures; I just note down what is said." A BBA student said,

The results indicate that students were very responsive to the way in which content was presented and appreciate the presentation of content that is interactive.

Theme 2: Perceived Relationship Between Teaching Practices and Student Confidence

One of the main themes was students' links between teaching methods and self-efficacy and self-confidence. Participants frequently reported that their confidence was supported by student-centered and collaborative approaches, peer feedback, and role play. However, one Education student said, "I feel a sense of belonging and am happy to join the club."

An English student said, "Group work enhances students' confidence in designing lessons." "Peer feedback increases my confidence in my writing abilities."

Conversely, authoritarian or purely lecture-oriented approaches were reported to reduce students' confidence, as students were hesitant to ask any questions or share their opinions. A BBA student commented,

"I felt concerned and less confident about speaking out,

Highlighting the relationship between a restrictive teaching style and loss of confidence. Overall, students frequently associated their confidence with the amount of encouragement for student participation, feedback, and use of the knowledge in a practical setting.

Theme 3: Perceived Relationship Between Teaching Practices and Classroom Engagement

Student participation at school was correlated with their teacher's approach in the classroom. Students' accounts were often linked to interactive and student-centered approaches, as well as behavioral and cognitive engagement, in which the students actively participated in discussions, presentations, and problem-solving. For instance, a BBA student said,

"When we solve problems together, I do actively participate," and an English student said, "I like active participating in presentations and discussions."

In comparison, passive and lecture-based approaches resulted in passive participation with little student engagement. One Education student commented that engagement is low and that I just take notes. This indicates that a more dynamic teaching practices is required to make it engaging and interesting. Results indicate that students' perceptions of teaching strategies were related to their intentions to put in effort, be active and interact during classroom activities.

Sub-Themes: Preferred Practices and Learning Support

Students identified specific teaching practices that enhanced both confidence and engagement, including:

1. **Collaborative learning:** Group work, peer review, and joint problem-solving.
2. **Interactive activities:** Discussions, debates, and role-playing.
3. **Practical demonstrations:** Case studies, lesson modeling, and examples.
4. **Constructive feedback:** Supportive corrections and encouragement.

In all three programs, these practices were consistently linked with greater motivation, confidence, and active involvement. Students reported that these strategies helped to make learning easier and helped to make the classroom a positive place for their learning because ideas were appreciated and errors were viewed as opportunities for learning.

Table: Themes, Sub-Themes, and Supporting Evidence

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Description	Sample Student Evidence (Quotes)
1. Perceptions of Teaching Styles	Student-Centered Teaching	Interactive, discussion-based, and participatory teaching approaches preferred by students.	"I enjoy classes where the teacher involves us in activities and discussions."
	Facilitative / Supportive Style	Teachers guide learning, offer help, and encourage student participation.	"When the teacher supports us, I feel more open to asking questions."
	Authoritarian / Rigid Style	Strict, lecture-heavy methods that restrict student participation.	"I feel intimidated in rigid lectures and hesitate to speak."
	Monotonous Teaching	Lack of variety, long lectures, limited interaction.	"Sometimes the lecture is so dry that I lose interest."
2. Perceived Relationship Between Teaching Practices and Student Confidence	Encouragement Teacher Support	& Motivation and verbal appreciation increase confidence.	"When the teacher appreciates me, I feel more confident."
	Collaborative Learning Boosts Confidence	Group work, peer feedback, and teamwork improve self-efficacy.	"Working in groups boosts my confidence."

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Description	Sample Student Evidence (Quotes)
3. Perceived Relationship Between Teaching Practices and Classroom Engagement	Constructive Feedback	Supportive corrections help students trust their abilities.	"Peer feedback helps me improve and trust my skills."
	Confidence Reduced by Rigid Teaching	Strict or judgmental behavior discourages participation.	"I feel pressured and less confident in strict classes."
	High Engagement through Interactive Methods	Activities, discussions, and real-world examples promote active participation.	"I actively participate when we solve problems together."
	Behavioral Engagement	Students participate more when the teaching style is dynamic.	"I enjoy presentations and discussions actively."
	Emotional Engagement	Interest, enjoyment, and motivation rise with engaging teaching.	"When the class is interactive, I feel motivated."
4. Preferred Teaching Practices	Passive Engagement in Lecture-Only Classes	Listening, note-taking, minimal participation.	"In long lectures, I just listen and take notes; nothing more."
	Collaborative Activities	Group tasks, peer review, and teamwork.	"Group work helps me learn better and stay involved."
	Practical Demonstrations	Use of examples, case studies, demonstrations.	"Examples and demonstrations make perceived teacher support easier."
	Interactive Learning Activities	Role-plays, debates, sessions.	Q&A "Debates and role-plays make the class interesting."
	Constructive, Timely Feedback	Supportive comments and guidance improve learning.	"Feedback from the teacher helps me improve and stay confident."
	Teacher Empathy & Approachability	Friendly, understanding teachers reduce fear and build trust.	"When the teacher is friendly, I feel comfortable asking questions."

Discussion

This study investigated undergraduate students' perceptions of their teachers' teaching methods in terms of confidence and engagement in the classroom. In all thematic analysis, students described classrooms as conducive to participation, asking questions, applying concepts, perceiving teacher support, working cooperatively, and receiving supportive feedback.

On the other hand, the participants frequently cited rigid, judgmental, lecture-heavy, and repetitive environments as factors that hindered participation. The results presented must be viewed as students' perceived relationship, lived experiences, and not as demonstrated causal effects.

The descriptions provided by the students imply learning experiences with teaching style is more than a way to present academic content. It is also a message about authority, involvement, independence, probing, and appropriate classroom conduct.

The framework proposed by Grasha (1996) can be divided into more authority-oriented and facilitative/delegative approaches. Similarly, González-Peiteado and Pino-Juste (2016) highlight the need for the role of teaching styles in addressing differences among learners. The current study suggests that facilitative and student-centered teaching approaches are considered highly valued since they seem to situate students as actors, not as the receivers of information.

This interpretation also aligns with research on student-centered learning, which shows students appreciate being able to engage in some activities and that adequate instruction and support are needed (Lea *et al.*, 2003). Bandura's (1997) Self-Efficacy Theory can be applied in understanding students' description of confidence. Confidence was often linked by participants with successful participation, collaborative learning, teacher encouragement, practical application and constructive feedback. These experiences may afford opportunities for mastery, social encouragement and supportive evaluation. The results also align with those of Honicke and Broadbent (2016) who concluded that academic self-efficacy is a meaningful correlate of university performance, motivation and self-regulatory processes. However, the present results should not be interpreted as evidence that a specific style of teaching results in higher self-efficacy. Instead, they noted that there were more supportive classroom environments for confidence than others.

Students' accounts captured behavioral, emotional, and cognitive aspects of engagement in the classroom. Behavioral engagement was demonstrated through participation in discussions, presentations and collaborative activities; Emotional engagement was demonstrated through interest and motivation; and Cognitive engagement was demonstrated through problem solving, application, reflection and active thinking. This multidimensional interpretation aligns with the views of Fredricks *et al.* (2004) and with the higher education models that view engagement as a process that emerges from the interactions between individuals and environments (Kahu, 2013; Kahu & Nelson, 2018).

Similarly, Boekaerts (2016) conceptualizes engagement as part of the learning process and Zepke and Leach (2010) argue that two factors active learning and supportive teacher-student relationships are important conditions for engagement. This is the contribution of the present qualitative results to this literature, insofar as they show how the students themselves make the distinction between simply being present in the class and feeling called upon to participate.

Student perceptions of teacher empathy and approachability appeared alongside certain instructional methods and did not seem to be two distinct aspects of the classroom's interpersonal climate. The result aligns with Hagenauer and Volet's (2014) suggestion that teacher-student relationships are an important aspect of university experiences. Positive teacher interactions can help students feel comfortable asking questions, asking for clarification, giving answers, and learning from errors. The finding also conforms to the constructivist and student-centered conception of learning, defined as learning that occurs due to dialogue, guided interaction, collaboration, and participation (Vygotsky, 1978; Lea *et al.*, 2003). Collaborative learning, discussion, problem solving, practical demonstration, and role play are methods that are preferred by students, which are consistent with constructivist learning, which emphasizes an active approach to learning and acquiring knowledge.

Piaget (1952) stresses that learners have to actively build their understanding, while Vygotsky (1978) focuses on the social and interactive nature of learning. The participants' responses indicate that learning contexts that foster dialogue, collaboration, and application were perceived as more meaningful and engaging than environments where the participants were only listening. The results indicate some priorities for the university's teaching and faculty development. Teachers may find that effective student-centered learning does not mean no teacher direction, but can be clear and well organized academically with opportunities for students to be involved in meaningful learning. The suggested practical strategies with participants' accounts are all grounded in the classroom, collaborative problem solving, case-based and practical examples, role-playing when relevant, formative feedback, opportunities for questioning, and respectful interpersonal communication.

The contribution of this study is not to confirm or disconfirm specific teaching methods as objectively leading to confidence or engagement, but rather to reveal how students themselves understand these relationships. The results show that instructional approach and interpersonal climate were experienced together; opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, feedback, practical use, and teacher approachability were part of students' experiences of whether a classroom was supportive or limiting of participation and confidence.

The focus of faculty-development programs may then be on both teaching methods and classroom relations. Teachers can keep high academic while providing students with opportunities to make contributions, ask questions, make mistakes, and get meaningful feedback.

At the institutional level, student feedback on teaching can help to gauge the conditions that can promote or hinder engagement. However, this does not imply that one teaching style should be prescribed in all situations. Rather, it may be necessary to adjust the proportions of structure, interaction, feedback, practical application, and autonomy to fit the disciplinary and student needs.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided on the basis of the students' accounts in this study for the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education:

First, it is necessary to embed more opportunities for active involvement of students in the classroom by making full use of the following methods: classroom discussion, collaborative problem solving, group work, presentation, role play, and real application of course materials. Participants universally saw these as conducive to confidence, motivation, and engagement in the classroom.

Second, teachers must offer positive, timely, and supportive comments that pinpoint students' strengths and areas for growth and potential future steps. Feedback should be given in a way that will motivate students to ask questions, learn from their errors, and build confidence in their learning skills.

Third, increase faculty development focus on student-centered and facilitative learning styles, and still uphold academic structures appropriately, along with teacher guidance. Student-centered teaching does not mean that the role of the teacher is diminished, but rather that the teacher should ensure that there is a good balance between the requirements for success on the one hand and autonomy, dialogue, collaboration, and active learning on the other.

Fourth, universities should promote supportive teacher–student relationships that are approachable, empathetic, respectful and open. The results indicate that the interpersonal climate in the classroom is closely linked to students' desire to participate, express opinions, ask questions, and take academic risks.

Furthermore, departments' quality-enhancement units could utilize systematic student feedback more effectively to determine classroom practices that students feel help or hinder their confidence and engagement. Feedback should be used for formative improvement and not as a sole measure of the effectiveness of teaching.

Last but not least, universities must not impose one teaching model on all subjects and situations. Rather, teachers should be encouraged to adjust the ratio of teaching structure, interaction, feedback, practice, cooperation, and individualization, in line with the subject matter, learning goals, and the needs of the learner.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The results should be interpreted with some caution.

One of the limitations of this research was that it was conducted at one university with 21 undergraduate students from three academic programs. The findings are thus not necessarily meant to be generalized statistically to all university students, but are provided for contextual and interpretive understanding.

Second, the results obtained are mainly self-reported experiences and perceptions of the students. Teachers' instructional practices were not systematically observed by the researchers.

Third, due to the interpretive qualitative study nature of the study, it is not possible to make causal interpretations or statistical mediation inferences between the teaching approaches, student perceptions, student confidence, and student engagement in the classroom.

Fourth, this study mainly covered the students' perspectives, and no teachers' narratives were included. The incorporation of the views of the teachers may give a more comprehensive picture of teaching practices in the classroom.

Lastly, the study was done in one institutional and cultural context. Learning experiences about teaching can vary by university, content area, geographic area, and educational system.

Future studies might include more than one university, more than one academic discipline, include classroom observation, explore teacher and student views of confidence and engagement, and adopt a mixed-methods or a longitudinal approach to completely explore the relationship between student confidence and engagement with teaching practices.

Conclusion

This study examined university students' perceptions of teachers' teaching strategies and the relationship between their teaching strategies and the students' perceived confidence and engagement in the classroom. Interactive, facilitative, and student-centered teaching was often reported as supportive of confidence, motivation, participation, and active involvement, while rigid, judgmental, lecture-heavy, and monotonous teaching was often reported as a factor in hesitation and passive involvement.

There was a strong emphasis on collaborative learning, hands-on application, feedback, interactive sessions, and teacher empathy in the students' responses. The results confirm that students make evaluations not only based on how much information is given, but also on how they are given opportunities to engage, participate, and interact, apply information, ask questions, and receive supportive feedback.

The findings imply that students' interpretations of classroom practices are important to understand how teaching is experienced through the lenses of self-efficacy, constructivism, and student-centered pedagogy.

Teaching approaches that incorporate clear academic organization and interaction, constructive feedback and learner participation, practical application, and supportive teacher-student relationships may thus be encouraged in universities and faculty development programs. However, as a qualitative study, the findings are based on students' perceived relationships and experiences, not on the actual causal influences.

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