Academic Language Proficiency as a Psychological Barrier to Higher Education Access: Voices of First-Generation University Students

[1]Tooba Ahmed, [2]Zahra Iqbal, [3]Ali Arshad, [4]Dr. Aminah Qayyum, [5]*Omar J. Alkhatib, [6]Dr. Amina Hanif Tarar, [7]Waqas Mahmood, [8]Dr. Rabia Anwar

[1]Lecturer in English, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad, Lahore Campus. Email: toobaahmed@cuilahore.edu.pk

[2]PhD English Language Education, The Near East University Cyprus. English Lecturer, Departments of English Language and Literature and American Culture Literature, Girne American University Cyprus. Email: zahra112329@gmail.com

[3]M. Phil. Education, Leadership and Management, Department of Architectural History and Theory, National College of Arts, Lahore, Pakistan.

Email: ali.arshad@nca.edu.pk

[4]Lecturer Education, Govt College Women University Faisalabad.

Email: aminahqayyum@gcwuf.edu.pk

[5]Doctor of Philosophy, United Arab Emirates University.

Email: omar.alkhatib@uaeu.ac.ae

[6]Assistant Professor Psychology Government College University Lahore. Email: amnah.tarar@gmail.com. https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1020-4237

[7]Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Training, Faculty of Education, the Islamia University Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Research Fellow, INTI International University Nilai, Malaysia.

EMAIL: waqas.mahmood@iub.edu.pk. ORICID: 0000-0003-4295-4454

[8]Lecturer in Department of management sciences, Govt. Sadiq College Women University Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Email: rabea.anwar@gscwu.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: Omar J. Alkhatib

Corresponding Author Email: omar.alkhatib@uaeu.ac.ae

HOW TO CITE:

Tooba Ahmed, Zahra Iqbal, Ali Arshad, Aminah Qayyum, Omar J. Alkhatib, Amina Hanif Tarar, Waqas Mahmood, Rabia Anwar (2026). Academic Language Proficiency as a Psychological Barrier to Higher Education Access: Voices of First-Generation University Students. International Journal of Special Education, 41(7s), 402-410.

ABSTRACT:

The present study aimed to explore the academic language barrier in accessing university education for the first generation students in Pakistan. A qualitative phenomenological design was used and 100 first generation undergraduate students were selected from public sector universities of Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Semi-structured interviews were the main data collection tool and were carried out in Urdu and English language depending on the preference of the participants. Thematic analysis was used to find common themes in the data. Results indicated that low levels of academic English proficiency caused significant psychological distress such as language anxiety, low academic self-efficacy and a strong sense of intellectual exclusion. Participants consistently

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:
Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication underthe terms and conditions of the Creative CommonsAttribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

reported the English dominated academic environment as a source of feelings of inadequacy and alienation that, in turn, affected their motivation and academic achievement. The study found that language barriers were not only academic difficulties but also psychological barriers that stem from the inequitable educational system. The results have significant implications for the policy of the universities, pedagogy, and inclusive higher education in Pakistan..

Keywords: Academic language barrier, university education, first generation students, academic English proficiency, psychological distress, language anxiety, low academic self-efficacy.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of access to higher education as a key pillar of social mobility and economic development, especially in developing countries like Pakistan, has long been acknowledged (Roshan & Rahman, 2025). In the last 20 years, Pakistan has seen a significant growth in university enrolment, because of government efforts to make tertiary education more democratic. While the quantitative increase has been achieved, there are qualitative differences that have remained and continue to be faced by a greater proportion of first generation university students than their continuing generation counterparts, namely academic, social, and psychologic challenges. Of these obstacles, one of the most daunting and least studied is academic language proficiency, which silently influences the lives of thousands of students who come to university campuses with the drive and promise to find a path to success but without the linguistic capital required to navigate the formal academic landscape (Ahmad et al., 2021).

The first generation of university students in Pakistan is an extremely precarious segment of the higher education system. These are young men and young women who are embarking on a university education, and university is a social, cultural, and academic experience. They come from families where neither parent has a university education, and therefore have no prior experience of academic norms, expectations, or the codes of language used in academic discourse (Anand & Niaz, 2022). The situation is further complicated by the linguistic ecology of Pakistan in which Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki, Sindhi, Pashto and many other regional languages are spoken along with English, which is the language of instruction, examination and academic communication at the university level (Hussain, 2021). The abrupt transition for students who studied only in Urdu-medium schools in rural and peri-urban areas to an English medium academic environment is a linguistic and psychological shock of significant magnitude (Ahmad et al., 2025).

There are many theories in the sociolinguistic and educational psychology literature about the relationship between language and identity in educational contexts (Fatima & Ahmad, 2025). Language is not just a means of communication; it is a repository of cultural identity, social belonging and cognitive confidence (Ahmad et al., 2020). Students are not just suffering a technical linguistic deficiency when they are asked to work in an academic language that they have not yet mastered (Sarwat et al., 2021). Many students feel a greater psychological dissonance, a longing to belong that their voice is not enough, that the intellectual space of the university was not designed for them (Kumar et al., 2024). Several scholars have described this phenomenon as linguistic alienation or academic identity threat, and it has been observed in the following ways: students are silent in class; they avoid academic writing assignments; they do not seek faculty assistance; and they are more likely to underperform in school and drop out (Andleeb et al., 2025).

The issue is complicated further in Pakistan by the legacy of colonial education in the country (Ehtsham et al., 2023). The dominance of English as the language of academic prestige goes back to the British colonial policy, which was a systematic

process of marginalizing indigenous languages and positioning English as the language of the production of elite knowledge (BIBI et al., 2025). The post-Independence educational policy in Pakistan did not challenge this hierarchy in any significant way and English remains a strong gatekeeping mechanism in universities, which gives an edge to students from English medium and urban educational backgrounds and discriminates against students from Urdu medium and regional language educational backgrounds. The psychological impact of this structural inequity is often overlooked in institutional talk but it is very real for the students living with it (Sultan et al., 2024).

The city level context of the current study is also important. Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Rawalpindi are the major urban centers of Punjab and the majority of the rural and semi-urban population in these and their surrounding areas are unable to afford English-medium education (BATOOL & MALIK). Islamabad is the federal capital and a city with a relatively higher proportion of educational institutions using English as the medium of instruction, and is therefore a contrasting but also instructive site in which first generation students from less privileged linguistic backgrounds have to deal with an environment that is arguably even more dominated by English academic culture (Khan, 2010). The five sites provided a rich and contextually diverse setting for exploring the role of academic language proficiency as a barrier in a range of urban educational settings.

The voices of the first generation students have been missing from most of the research on higher education in Pakistan where the focus has been on structural and policy-level analysis, rather than on the lived psychological experiences of first generation students in higher education institutions (Shah et al., 2026). This study focused on these voices, as it was believed that a deep and empathetic understanding of the voices of those who are most marginalized by existing systems is essential for meaningful educational reform. The present research aimed, in part, to contribute to an emerging literature that considers language as a political and psychologically significant aspect of the educational experience in postcolonial societies rather than a neutral academic ability.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the experiences of first generation university students on academic language proficiency as a psychological obstacle in public sector universities in Pakistan.
2. To determine the particular psychological impacts that resulted from the limited academic language proficiency of first-generation students, such as language anxiety, low self-efficacy, and academic alienation.
3. To explore the role of the English medium academic environment of Pakistani Universities in the academic confidence, participation and performance of first generation students from Urdu medium educational backgrounds.

Research Questions

1. What are the lived experiences of first generation university students with academic language proficiency as a psychological hurdle to gain access to higher education in Pakistan?
2. What specific psychological issues did the first generation students link to limited academic language proficiency, such as language anxiety, decreased self-efficacy, or academic exclusion?
3. How did English-medium academic environment of public sector universities affect the academic confidence, classroom engagement and academic performance of first generation students of Urdu medium schools?

Significance of the Study

The study has significant impact on the policy, practice and academic support of higher education in Pakistan. It highlighted the psychological aspects of academic language barriers that first generation students experience and thus, it addressed a crucial research gap in the context of Pakistani educational research. The results were presented to the university administration, curriculum planners, and language support practitioners and highlighted the pressing need for inclusive language policies. The study also made a significant contribution to international scholarship on linguistic equity in postcolonial higher education contexts, providing

evidence-informed insights for designing specific interventions that would benefit vulnerable student groups.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of language proficiency and psychological wellbeing in educational context has been the subject of continued scholarly interest in various educational environments around the world (Yu et al., 2025). Linguistic barriers in academic settings have been shown to have pervasive psychological effects, which go beyond the simple issue of language, impacting students' identities, motivations, and academic journeys (Ramadani, 2025). These consequences seemed to be especially pronounced for first-generation university students, who came to university without the linguistic and cultural advantages that enabled their continuing-generation counterparts to make the transition (Raza et al., 2023).

Language anxiety was one of the most well documented psychological reactions to the academic language barriers of university students (Lodhi & Ahmad, 2025). Language anxiety was conceptualized as a set of negative emotional responses, such as fear, apprehension and self-consciousness that occurred when demands for language use were placed in the academic context (Iqbal et al., 2026). Research across different national settings has shown that language anxiety was a significant barrier to academic success, to participation in class and to a sense of academic competence (Lodhi et al., 2026). The situation in Pakistan was such that, although English was the language of instruction in universities, it was a second or third language for the overwhelming majority of students, thus creating a structural situation of language anxiety (Mughal et al., 2025).

Building on social cognitive theory, the concept of academic self-efficacy was used as another theoretical framework to explore the psychological effects of language barriers (Okojie, 2025). Academic self-efficacy was defined as students' confidence in their ability to accomplish academic tasks, and studies have repeatedly shown that a lack of confidence in one's linguistic abilities has a significant impact on academic self-efficacy (Mensah et al., 2023). Often, students who had difficulty with academic English began to feel intellectually unable, extending beyond language tasks to include their academic identities. This loss of self-efficacy was especially devastating for first-generation college students, who had already come to university without any higher education experience in their families (Woreta et al., 2025).

Theorists such as those within the Bourdieu tradition of cultural and linguistic capital provided valuable structural explanations of the disadvantages of linguistically marginalized students in higher education. In this theoretical context, academic institutions served as institutions in which certain linguistic resources, the ones that were linked to dominant and prestige language varieties, were rewarded and valued, while others were devalued and excluded (Jackson-Cole & Chadderton, 2025). First-generation university students from non-English-medium education backgrounds were brought to university with a variety of linguistic capital the university did not acknowledge, resulting in a deep structural disadvantage that was experienced psychologically as shame, silence and self-exclusion from academic participation (Kostromitina et al., 2025).

Studies specifically designed to the postcolonial educational systems identified other aspects of this problematic (Ramadani, 2022). Colonial language hierarchies were embedded in educational systems, and students from non-elite linguistic backgrounds faced not only a language learning difficulty, but also a highly politicized environment where their linguistic identity was devalued in the implicit manner (Asllani & Ramadani, 2025). Pakistani scholars have recorded the ways in which the promotion of English in the universities reified the social inequalities of the colonial era, and would thus serve as a mechanism of exclusion, which would lead to unequal treatment of the students from the rural and low-income backgrounds and those who had been educated in Urdu medium schools (Ali, 2026). The mismatch between students' linguistic environments at home and the language requirements of university life was directly linked to the students' experiences of cultural

displacement and intellectual inferiority in university settings (Ramadani, 2021).

In the decade that followed, research on the experiences of first generation students became more focused on the context (Davis, 2023). Research on similar postcolonial settings such as India, Bangladesh and some African countries showed that the first generation students consistently reported higher academic language anxiety, lower academic self-efficacy, and higher rates of dropping out than their continuing generation counterparts did. These results reinforced the cumulative effect of language barriers for students who faced multiple transitions, such as socioeconomic stressors, family expectations, and lack of familial academic support, which all compounded and exacerbated the psychological impact of language marginalization (Alam, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers employed qualitative research design to explore the role of academic language proficiency as a psychological obstacle to access of higher education for first generation university students in Pakistan. A phenomenological approach was used, which enabled the researcher to record the lived experiences and subjective perceptions of students who had no family academic support to navigate higher education.

Participants

One hundred first generation university students in undergraduate programs of public sector universities in four major cities of Punjab and federal capital Islamabad were selected for the study. The cities were Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Rawalpindi (Punjab) and Islamabad as a research site. Twenty people were selected from each city, providing equal and balanced representation from all five cities. The participants were from 18 to 28 years of age and came from various linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds, mostly rural, semi-rural, and peri-urban areas around these cities where Urdu, Punjabi, Saraiki or other regional languages were used as the main language at home. Of the 100 participants, 58 were male and 42 female. The inclusion criteria included that both parents were not university graduates, that all participants had studied in secondary schools through Urdu medium education and that they were enrolled in university for at least one full academic semester at the time of data collection.

Data Collection

The main data collection tool adopted by the researchers was the semi-structured interview. The length of each interview was around 45 to 60 minutes and was done in Urdu and English as per the comfort and the language of each interviewee. Informed consent was obtained for all sessions to be audio recorded. The interview guide contained open-ended questions to focus the discussion on themes of English language anxiety, unfamiliarity with academic discourse, diminished academic self-efficacy, and psychological barriers in formal university settings.

Data Analysis

All one hundred interviews were recorded and transcribed word by word by the researcher and Urdu and regional language responses were translated to English as needed. Thematic analysis was used to explore the data for common patterns and categories. The coding process was divided into two phases: open coding was used to produce initial categories from the raw data, and axial coding was used to find meaningful relationships among the themes that arose. To ensure credibility and transferability of final interpretations, member checking and peer de-briefing were used.

Ethical Considerations

The institutional review board granted formal ethical approval before data collection. The confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdrawal were carefully observed during the whole research process.

RESULTS AND DATA ANALSYIS

The thematic analysis of one hundred semi-structured interviews revealed eight main themes that together shed light on the multifaceted psychological terrain that first-generation university students traverse about academic language skills. Below is a description of each theme with

supporting evidence from responses from participants across all five-research sites.

Theme 1: Pervasive Language Anxiety in Academic Settings

Language anxiety was the most common psychological experience reported in all five-research sites. The fear of, apprehension about and self-consciousness in, using academic English in lectures, seminars, written assignments and examinations were described as intense. Lahore and Faisalabad students said that their anxiety was highest during oral presentations and classroom discussions, as they felt the eyes of their peers and faculty members were a source of stress. The female participants from peri-urban areas of Rawalpindi also stated that their fear of being stammered in the language strengthened the gendered notion of their academic suitability.

Theme 2: Erosion of Academic Self-Efficacy

Throughout, the participants spoke of the gradual erosion of their confidence because of repeated experiences of linguistic inadequacy, not only in language-related tasks but also in their academic identity. A number of students from Islamabad reported coming to University with good academic records and a high level of discipline, but then losing their confidence in their own academic abilities and discipline within the first semester of English based academic environment. This cumulative psychological decay was very similar to what researchers have theorized as academic identity threat, in which students internalized the devaluation of the institutions in which they were raised as proof of their own intellectual inadequacy.

Theme 3: Academic Alienation and Sense of Exclusion

Everyone from all the five cities reported that they felt a lack of feeling part of the intellectual community of the university in general. This exclusion took place not by overt discrimination, but by the subtle means of a common academic language in which they were not fluent. Study groups, faculty-student exchanges and informal intellectual exchanges were conducted largely in English and gradually marginalizing students who have limited academic English skills. Some participants in Multan and Rawalpindi talked about deliberately not attending office hours or academic clubs due to the language demands of these spaces being overwhelming and psychologically threatening.

Theme 4: Linguistic Identity Conflict and Cultural Displacement

Many of the participants indicated that they had a strong tension between the languages of their homes and the language of the university. Students reported that feeling that their mother tongues, Punjabi, Saraiki or Urdu, were devalued in an implicit manner in the university setting, creating an unsettling feeling of cultural displacement. This identity conflict was especially felt in the participants from southern part of Punjab who felt that their cultural identity was not recognized, not significant and was not accepted as a true university student due to the linguistic requirement of the university.

Theme 5: Fear of Negative Evaluation by Peers and Faculty

The overall impression of participants was that they were very afraid to be judged badly by peers and teachers when they tried to speak English in academic contexts. This fear was expressed as students deliberately avoiding speaking in class, avoiding volunteering to participate, and not asking questions for clarification when the teacher was speaking. This fear was expressed most strongly by students from Islamabad, where the academic culture seemed to be more strongly geared towards the use of English. Many reported experiencing one or more times of knowing, the right answer to a question but being silent because they did not want to risk their limited English proficiency being exposed to other students in the class.

Theme 6: Maladaptive Coping Strategies and Academic Avoidance

Many participants adopted coping mechanisms that resulted in a negative effect on their academic achievement, due to the psychological effects of their academic language barriers. These encompassed rote learning of academic texts

without true understanding, selective avoidance of assessment tasks involving longer writing in English, and avoidance of modules with a high language content. Some students were provided with Urdu medium supplementary materials and peer study groups, while most were not provided with any structured language support. The cost of private English tuition further deepened the disadvantage of the participants from the lower income groups in Faisalabad and Multan.

Theme 7: Inadequate Institutional Language Support

The overall reaction of the participants was negative regarding the lack of meaningful academic language support in their universities. Although a number of institutions provided English language courses within foundation year programs, these courses were reported as being generic, not sufficiently contextualized to the disciplinary demands and pedagogically misaligned to the actual language challenges that students faced. There was a high level of interest among students in all five-research sites for ongoing, subject-specific language development assistance. The lack of this was seen as not only a lack of academic skill but as a message that the school did not really care about or value the success of linguistically disadvantaged students.

Theme 8: Role of Faculty Attitudes in Shaping Psychological Outcomes

Attitudes of faculty were found to be a critically important factor in either exacerbating or reducing psychological barriers of students. Those who found faculty members, who were willing to explain things in Urdu, accept language problems and provide a conducive environment for studying languages, reported significantly less language anxiety and more academic confidence. On the other hand, those whose faculty had a strong belief in using English exclusively and were impatient or disapproving with linguistic mistakes experienced increased feelings of shame, isolation and disengagement from school. This discovery underscored the significant role of personal pedagogical attitudes on the psychological health of first generation students.

DISCUSSION

This study confirmed and greatly expanded on previous work on linguistic marginalization in postcolonial higher education environments. The eight themes identified from the thematic analysis were all interrelated and represented academic language proficiency as a multidimensional psychological barrier for the first generation university students in Pakistan, which worked in tandem at the individual emotional, social identity, interpersonal interaction and institutional levels. The linguistic supremacy of English in Pakistani universities essentially reproduced the colonial linguistic hierarchy and made it the norm to consider English language as an academic skill requirement, which became a constant psychological and social exclusion mechanism. Of particular interest was the fact that faculty attitudes and institutional support structures were found to be in the front line in either reinforcing or mitigating these barriers, which clearly highlighted the importance of pedagogical culture and policy-level intervention in addressing the linguistic inequities that disproportionately affected first-generation students from Urdu-medium educational backgrounds.

CONCLUSION

This study found that for university students who were the first in their families to pursue higher education, academic language proficiency was a very strong and important psychological barrier to access and participation in higher education in Lahore, Faisalabad, Multan, Rawalpindi, and Islamabad. The research brought to light the voice of one hundred voices, in which the linguistic marginalization created language anxiety, undermined academic self-efficacy, caused feelings of alienation, induced identity conflict and led to self-exclusion from academic life. These experiences were not a consequence of personal shortcomings, but of systemic inequalities in the English dominated higher education system in Pakistan. It was necessary for meaningful reform to be given institutional priority for language support, inclusive pedagogy, and the recognition of linguistic diversity as an asset rather than a deficit.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommended that universities should establish their academic language support centers and provide English literacy courses in each field to the first generation students. Professional development programs had to include instruction in an approach to teaching that recognized students' home languages and supported their acquisition of academic language. Admission and foundation year programs needed to be redesigned so that there was sustained, contextualized language preparation. Policy frameworks at the Higher Education Commission level required explicitly acknowledge linguistic diversity and to require institutional accountability for equitable language support for all students enrolled.

REFERENCES

Ahmad, S., Akram, M., & Ali, M. (2021). The Impact OfEsl Teachers' Use Of Motivational Language On Students Learning: A Study Of Esl Learners At Elementary Level In Pakistan. *Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology*, *18*(10), 1187–1196.

Ahmad, S., Kaker, M. W. K., Rafi, S., Bibi, A., & Gul, H. (2020). The empowerment of language over the meek creature (women) through the discourse in the novel "a thousand splendid suns". *Ilkogretim Online*, *19*(4), 5909–5915.

Ahmad, S., Khurram, S., Smerat, A., Andleeb, N., Aysha, S., Sultan, A., & Ahmad, S. (2025). An investigation into the relationship between emotional intelligence and academic success among university students. *Pegem Journal of Education and Instruction*, *15*(1), 555–571.

Alam, F. (2025). Postcolonial Bangladesh and neocolonial assimilative literacy practices: the case of private schools and English language programmes. *Third World Quarterly*, *46*(18), 2519–2537.

Ali, R. (2026). 'We are still British or American colony, we are still a colony, we are not free': language ideologies, policies in education in Pakistan. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, *27*(1), 67–90.

Anand, K., & Niaz, L. (2022). The Precarious State of Academic Freedom in Higher Education: The Case of India and Pakistan. *Research in the social scientific study of religion*, *32*.

Andleeb, D. N., Fatima, D. N., Ali, A., KHAN, D. T., Tanvir, M. M., Iqbal, D. S., Mahmood, W., Ashfaq, D. M. S., & Ahmad, S. (2025). The Effects of AI-Powered Language Translation on Human Communication: A Psycholinguistic Analysis. *TPM–Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, *32*(S4 (2025): Posted 17 July), 1671–1682.

Asllani, A., & Ramadani, A. D. F. (2025). FACULTY OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES.

BATOOL, S. W., & MALIK, D. S. TRANSITION OF STUDENTS FROM RURAL TO URBAN AREA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS.

BIBI, D. W., AKBAR, D. H., AHMAD, S., & MUSHTAQ, S. (2025). EXPLORING PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS'PERSPECTIVES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SINGLE NATIONAL CURRICULUM IN DISTRICT PESHAWAR. *TPM–Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, *32*(S7 (2025): Posted 10 October), 185–193.

Davis, J. (2023). *The first generation student experience: Implications for campus practice, and strategies for improving persistence and success*. Routledge.

Ehtsham, M., Ahmad, S., Anjum, H. M. S., Shaker, A. S. A., Sajid, M. K. M., Lodhi, K., & Al Anazi, N. (2023). A Study Of Teachers' And Learners' Approach Regarding Code-Mixing And Code-Switching In English Language Classrooms At College Level. *Journal of Namibian Studies*, *33*.

Fatima, N., & Ahmad, S. (2025). Formulaic language in high-stake research writing: Investigating the semantic implications of collocations and fixed expressions in postgraduate dissertation. *Research Journal in Translation, Literature, Linguistics, and Education*, *1*(4), 36–47.

Hussain, A. (2021). *The Further Education Experiences of Young Males of Pakistani-Origin: A Case Study* University of Huddersfield].

Iqbal, Z., Fatima, N., Ali, M. M., & Ahmad, S. (2026). TEACHER AGENCY AND CURRICULUM ADAPTATION IN HIGH-STAKES TESTING ENVIRONMENTS: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY IN EAST ASIAN EFL CONTEXTS. *Liberal Journal of Language & Literature Review*, *4*(1), 413–425.

Jackson-Cole, D., & Chadderton, C. (2025). Minoritised students navigating postgraduate education in England's elite universities: Yosso's community cultural wealth framework adapted for the UK. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 1–20.

Khan, M. M. (2010). Issues of access in public and private Higher Education institutions in Islamabad Pakistan.

Kostromitina, M., Naismith, B., Burstein, J., & Plonsky, L. (2025). Beyond GPA and language proficiency: A systematic literature review of international students' academic success factors. *Review of Education*, *13*(2), e70089.

Kumar, D., Ahmad, S., & Lodhi, K. (2024). Exploring the Role of Digital Technology in Enhancing Learning Experiences in Pakistani Classrooms. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, *8*(2), 380–393.

Lodhi, K., & Ahmad, S. (2025). A Review of Research on the Impact of Early Childhood Education on Cognitive and Social Development in Young Children. *Pakistan Journal of Multidisciplinary Innovation*, *4*(1), 60–66.

Lodhi, K., Rusconi, G., & Ahmad, S. (2026). The Significance of Emotional Intelligence in Student Success and Its Integration into Educational Curricula. *Journal of Religion and Society*, *5*(01), 187–193.

Mensah, C., Azila-Gbettor, E. M., Nunyonameh, C. R., Appietu, M. E., & Amedome, S. N. (2023). Research methods anxiety, attitude, self-efficacy and academic effort: A social cognitive theory perspective. *Cogent psychology*, *10*(1), 2167503.

Mughal, M., Habib, A., & Shaheen, F. (2025). Teaching anxiety and foreign language anxiety among English teachers of colleges in Pakistan. *Journal of Distance Education and Research*, *5*(1), 54–69.

Okojie, S. O. (2025). *The Efficacy of Metacognition on the Academic Performance of International Students in a Diverse and Inclusive University through the Lens of Bandura's Social Cognition Theory* Jackson State University].

Ramadani, F. (2021). Role of Language and Identity in the Field of Disclosure of Cultural Studies. *Available at SSRN 5463856*.

Ramadani, F. (2022). Symbolism in The Old Man and the Sea by Ernest Hemingway. *Available at SSRN 5475908*.

Ramadani, F. (2025). Evolving Representations of Racial Prejudice and Discrimination in American Literature: From Twain to Angelou. *Available at SSRN 5463761*.

Raza, S. A., Ahmed, S., Asif, A., & Rani, A. (2023). The impact of burnout on the psychological well-being of ESL students in higher education environment. *Siazga Research Journal*, *2*(3), 147–156.

Roshan, S., & Rahman, F. (2025). Education and social mobility: A pathway to economic and social empowerment. *Global Social Sciences Review*, *10*(1), 124–133.

Sarwat, S., Alvi, M. K., Ahmad, S., Anjum, H. M. S., & Muhammad, H. (2021). English language teaching and acquisition: implementing a systematic blend of deductive and inductive method in nonnative countries. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, *18*(08), 4524–4544.

Shah, S. H., Jbeen, A., & Ashiq, M. (2026). Mapping institutional challenges in Pakistani LIS schools and pathways forward: a qualitative study. *Reference Services Review*, *54*(2), 178–202.

Sultan, A., Anwar, S., Aysha, S., Ahmad, S., & Sajidl, M. K. M. (2024). The Pragmatics of Politeness in Cross-Cultural Communication: A Comparative Study of English and Pakistani Interactional Norms. *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq*, *7*(1), 384–392.

Woreta, G. T., Zewude, G. T., & Józsa, K. (2025). The mediating role of self-efficacy and outcome expectations in the relationship between peer context and academic engagement: a social cognitive theory perspective. *Behavioral Sciences*, *15*(5), 681.

Yu, Q., Brunsting, N. C., Smart, J., & Bingham, W. P. (2025). Language proficiency, second language educational experience, and psychological well-being among international students at US Universities. *Research in Higher Education*, *66*(1), 3.