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Critical Analysis of the National Curriculum for English Language and Its Enactment of Listening and Speaking Objectives

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Research Article

Keywords: National Curriculum for English Language (NCEL), Communicative Competence, Listening and Speaking Skills

Posted Date: October 5th, 2026

DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-10292568/v1

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Additional Declarations: No competing interests reported.

Abstract

The English language plays a pivotal role in the Pakistani education system as a compulsory course and medium of instruction. The National Curriculum of English Language 2006, still operational, is designed to build communicative competence of learners by incorporating listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. But there is still a gap in the curriculum objectives, especially in the acquisition of listening and speaking skills. In this paper, the NCEL is critically examined to determine how such objectives are being fulfilled in listening and speaking. The study is based on the interpretivist paradigm and qualitative case study approach. The data were gathered by reviewing the documents with the help of a semi-structured curriculum review checklist that included eight indicators and six open-ended questions. The checklist was based on previous studies and tailored to the purpose of the study. Patterns and gaps in the curriculum were identified using the thematic analysis. The results show that the NCEL exhibits significant imbalances. Although the contextual activities partially cover speaking skills, they are not systematically tested. More importantly, there are no listening skills at all and no standards or benchmarks. This exclusion weakens the process of the formation of communicative competence, since listening is the basis of language acquisition. Also, a lack of summative assessment of speaking supports a system that is exam oriented and focuses on reading and writing. The paper also concludes that NCEL needs to be revised in order to promote balanced development of skills. It suggests the inclusion of listening skills, authentic communicative activities, and revision of assessment activities in supporting holistic language acquisition.

Introduction

The National Curriculum for English Language (2006), hereafter known as NCEL, is one of the frameworks developed by the Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan to provide the general guidelines that will be followed in the teaching and learning of English in Grades 1–12. It was envisioned as being a systematic and gradual document that would guarantee consistency in language development as it would gradually build on the prior knowledge of the learners at various stages of schooling. The curriculum envisions offering a consistent roadmap in the field of English language education in Pakistan although with special focus on developing communicative competence through the combination of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. It specifically states that “it offers holistic opportunity to students to develop language and also achieve competencies of using English language to communicate in academic and social contexts and also make them autonomous and lifelong learners who can adjust to the changing global and local society” (p. 1).

With such broad and ambitious goals, however, some critical issues emerge when we consider the effectiveness with which the conceptualization and structuring of the development of listening and speaking skills are carried out in the curriculum. Although the NCEL positions the communicative competence as one of its key targets, the expression of standards and learning outcomes related to oral skills tends to be abstract, general, and under-operational (Kakar & Kaukab, 2024). This poses crucial questions on how far the curriculum offers an effective and consistent model on how to develop the oral

communicative skills of the learners. Specifically, the question that has to be asked is whether the given objectives of listening and speaking are sufficiently specified, sequenced and pedagogically based to facilitate effective language acquisition.

English plays a key role in the education system of Pakistan both as a mandatory course and, in most cases, a medium of study (Channa, 2020). In this landscape, emerging oral communication skills are not only an educational necessity but also a fundamental skill to engage in social, professional, and global spheres (Aimen & Khadim, 2024). Nevertheless, even though there is a policy-level focus on communicative competence, the success of curriculum goals in facilitating the development of listening and speaking skills is a topic of concern (Bashir et al., 2020). According to the existing body of research, a notable mismatch between the intended goals of the language curriculum and its conceptual clarity can be identified, especially when it comes to oral skills (Mthembu, 2022). This implies that the problem may not just be in practice but also in the way these skills are framed, prioritized and organized in the curriculum itself.

Against this backdrop, the current research paper will critically examine the NCEL in terms of listening and speaking skills. It also looks at the way the curriculum has helped develop these skills in terms of its objectives and the effectiveness of the standards provided towards developing the oral communicative competence of learners. Through examining internal consistency, understandability, and the extent of curriculum aims, the research aims to identify gaps and contradictions which could obstruct the achievement of communicative aims.

The importance of this question is that it may be included in the current debates on curriculum reform and language education policy in Pakistan. Offering a critical and targeted analysis of listening and speaking within the framework of NCEL, it is possible to state that the study can provide the insights that should be taken into consideration to design the curriculum more precisely and with a focus on the context. The results should help teachers, curriculum developers, and policymakers to reconsider understanding of oral communication skills conceptualization and inclusion in national standards, which will ultimately help to create a more effective and balanced English language curriculum.

Literature Review

The history of English language education in Pakistan has experienced a dramatic change in the last 20 years, especially with the launch of the National Curriculum on English Language (2006) and its reform under the Single National Curriculum (2020) by the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, Pakistan (Tajammul et al., 2023). This move is part of a more general shift in the world where traditional, literature-based approaches to teaching languages were replaced by communicative and skills-based instruction methods that follow the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (Alkhirbash, 2023). The updated curriculum model emphasizes functional language use, combination of language skills and integration of interactive and technology-based pedagogies (Tajammul et al., 2023).

Likewise, Chan and Cheuk (2020) state that in the context of English language teaching, listening and speaking are well-established aspects. Although these signal a progressive orientation, scholars claim that curriculum documents tend to be aspirational, with a lack of conceptual clarity of how to organize and develop particular language skills, especially listening and speaking (Malikovna et al., 2022; Pitura, 2022), as they are foundational to communicative competence and central to the processes of second language acquisition. Theoretical approaches highlight that listening is the main source of linguistic input, which enables a learner to internalize phonological, lexical, and syntactic characteristics of language, whereas speaking is a productive competence that allows a learner to construct and negotiate meaning (Alzamil, 2021; Rustamov & Mirza 2023). Recent studies also emphasize the interdependence of these skills, implying that successful oral communication is a result of the dynamic interplay between comprehension and production (Timalsina, 2023). Nevertheless, most educational systems, such as in Pakistan, have historically given less emphasis to these skills compared with reading and writing, which is largely because of the exam-based systems, which focus on written performance (Bhutto & Rind, 2022; Newton & Nation, 2020).

An overview of curriculum documents suggests that listening and speaking are officially incorporated as core competencies, and the learning outcomes involve such aspects as oral fluency, pronunciation, comprehension, and interactive communication (Siddiqui, 2020). Recommended instructional strategies are usually pair work, group discussions, and presentations, which are indicative of adherence to communicative methodologies (Hu & Hai-ying, 2023). However, the critical reviews of the NCEL also point to the fact that these goals are usually vaguely stated and are not specified in relation to the development of skills, performance measures, and adaptation to the context (Bashir et al., 2021). The lack of clearly defined standards and benchmarks for oral skills is concerning as it points to the internal consistency of the curriculum and its ability to provide systematic support in the process of the development of communicative competence. This disconnect between theoretical knowledge and the curriculum is further reflected in the conceptualization of listening in language education (Irfan, 2021). Listening is not merely a passive activity but a complex cognitive process involving decoding, interpretation, and critical evaluation of spoken input (Rustamov et al., 2023). It is necessary to expose learners to a variety of real-life listening sources, such as informal conversations and scholarly language, in order to prepare them to communicate in the real world (Polat & Erişti, 2019; Rustamov et al., 2023). Moreover, critical listening skills were introduced as a necessity in the increasingly media-saturated environment, allowing learners to analyze information and understand what information is reliable and what is misleading (Alisoy, 2022). Nevertheless, the generalized way that curriculum frameworks approach listening does not effectively reflect its multifaceted nature and focus on the specifics of input needed and strategies to develop listening (Eragamreddy, 2024).

Likewise, speaking competence can be construed as an active and context-dependent ability that goes beyond grammatical correctness to encompass pragmatic, sociolinguistic, and interactional aspects (Abdulrazzaq, 2023). Studies have shown that authentic spoken language is identified by characteristic features of formulaic expressions, turn-taking, ellipsis, and audience and context adaptability (Abdulrazzaq, 2023; Wahyuningsih & Afandi, 2020). Being an effective speaker, in turn, means that

learners need to pursue meaningful interaction, arrive at real-time decisions, and negotiate meaning together (Fujiati et al., 2020). Research indicates that speaking activities must be practiced as simulated real-life communicative events, which prompts learners to react to the situation in a spontaneous and flexible manner, instead of conforming to memorized patterns (Masuram & Sripada, 2020). Moreover, the involvement and connection to the identities and experiences of learners are outlined as the keys to motivation and interest in speaking activities (Sudarmo, 2021). However, Siddiqui (2020) confirms that curriculum goals tend to be insufficient in reflecting these complexities, but rather, they introduce speaking as a range of generalized outcomes without adequate focus on interactional competence or situational variation.

The other important issue that has been raised in the literature is associated with the evaluation of listening and talking abilities. Although they have been acknowledged as important, oral skills are still underrepresented in formal assessment, which still privileges reading and writing (Nageen et al., 2025). This disparity cannot only deprive learners of a chance to exhibit communicative competence but also discredit the role of listening and speaking in the wider curriculum context (Oliver et al., 2005). The lack of standard and systematic methods of measuring oral proficiency (Isaacs & Trofimovich, 2012) also leads to the marginalization of these skills and generates discrepancies in the conceptualization and prioritization of oral proficiency.

At the tertiary level, the same trends can be noticed, since the curriculum frameworks recognize the significance of oral communication yet tend to be shallow regarding the definition of the learning outcomes and evaluation processes. Research shows that students often demonstrate a lack of competence in professional communication, implying that current curricular frameworks are inadequate to develop higher levels of speaking and listening skills demanded in the academic and working environments (Brink & Costigan, 2014). This highlights a systemic problem in English language education in Pakistan where the conceptual treatment of oral skills is still divided into various levels of education.

Recent research papers have suggested numerous pedagogical and curricular interventions to mitigate these issues, such as the use of authentic materials, interactive teaching methods, technology-mediated learning settings, and ongoing professional growth of educators (Mulyadi et al., 2021; Pham, 2021; Rubenstein et al., 2023). The effectiveness of innovative methods, including using multimedia and creative assignments, in the development of oral proficiency in learners has also been proven in the context of experimental studies (Afriyuninda & Oktaviani, 2021; Mahdi, 2022). Although such recommendations may provide valuable insights, they also indicate the necessity of curriculum documents being more informative and offering more precise guidelines for the systematic development of listening and speaking skills.

Therefore, a consistent trend can be observed in the literature, while the policy documents in Pakistan contain more and more references to communicative competence, the conceptualization and organization of listening and speaking in the framework of the curriculum remain inadequately

developed. The literature to date has been more concerned with pedagogical practices or general curriculum criticisms and has shown minimal concern for a specific documentary account of how oral skills are articulated, sequenced and operationalized by the NCEL itself. This gap underlines the necessity of a critical analysis of the objectives of the curriculum regarding listening and speaking, especially in terms of the clarity, coherence, and possible effectiveness of the objectives in promoting communicative competence.

Methodology

The research is informed by an interpretivist paradigm, considering curriculum texts as social texts with specific assumptions regarding language, learning, and communicative competence (Trangbæk & Cecchini, 2023). In the qualitative design, the study critically analyzes the National Curriculum of English Language (2006) designed by the Ministry of Education, Government of Pakistan, particularly the conceptualization and articulation of the listening and speaking skills in the curriculum objectives, standards, and benchmarks. A qualitative case study design has been adopted to enable a profound study of the NCEL as one, limited case (Razali et al., 2025). This is an especially appropriate method to analyze curriculum documents, as it enables a systematic analysis of their internal consistency, framework, and conceptual orientations (Hatch, 2023; Muzari et al., 2022). The unit of analysis includes parts of the curriculum that cover listening and speaking skills, allowing the specific analysis of the definition and structure of oral communication skills.

The data were gathered using documentary analysis, which is a methodological approach to studying written materials in the field of education (Mackieson et al., 2019; Morgan, 2022). The main analytical instrument was a semi-structured review checklist of curriculum based on eight indicators of clarity, progression, and correspondence between listening and speaking goals and communicative language principles. The checklist was based on previous studies (Syed et al., 2019) and optimized with the help of the review of the literature to ensure that it corresponds to the goals of the study. Open-ended prompts provided the flexibility in interpretation and the opportunity to engage more with the document (Munthe-Kaas et al., 2019). Similarly, thematic analysis was applied to analyze data, which made it possible to identify and interpret common patterns in the curriculum text (Christou, 2022; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This analysis entailed an iterative procedure of coding, categorization, and theme development that paid attention to coding, sequencing, and integrating listening and speaking skills. Textual evidence was provided to support the themes and increase the level of analytical transparency and credibility (Lochmiller, 2021). This methodological solution offers a coherent and rigorous foundation on how far the NCEL can offer a clear and conceptually based framework in the development of oral communicative competence.

Findings and discussion

This National Curriculum in English language in high school (2006) is the final part of formal education of the learners who decide to join the workforce after school, and at the same time it is useful to those

students who acquire additional specialization in their fields. Accordingly, the document aims to serve two greater aims of providing a wide range of high-school students with the core general linguistic skills and, at the same time, addressing the specific linguistic needs of students that consider further studies at a higher tertiary level.

In meeting these two purposes, the National Curriculum is designed to provide the coordinated assistance to the two parties. The core language skills are encouraged to all groups of learners, but the specific curriculum unit also has other segments with demonstration of disciplinary-relevant linguistic needs. In such a way, the document introduces an institutionally approved paradigm that will provide the full range of linguistic resources necessary to help the students succeed in the modern society, both if that success is achieved with the help of the labor market, and in case it has to be gained with the help of the further intense work on mastering the required knowledge. Thus, the choice of reading materials, along with the skills, purposes, and vocabulary to be instructed is all influenced by these considerations (Ilyas et al., 2020).

The selection of reading materials, the skills taught, the objectives of the instruction, and the vocabulary covered are all determined by careful consideration of the situations and aspirations of these two groups. The curriculum creators take into account the types of texts that will be relevant and beneficial to both those entering the workforce directly and those pursuing further specialization (Mumtaz & Quraishi, 2021).

Consequently, this stage of education is a crossroads where individuals make choices that shape their future paths. The language curriculum recognizes these divergent paths and tailors its content to equip learners with the language skills and knowledge they need, whether they are stepping into the professional world or continuing their academic pursuits (Ilyas et al., 2020).

The National Curriculum for English language 2006 identifies five competencies, namely: 1, Reading and Thinking Skills, 2: Writing Skills, 3: Oral Communicative Skills, 4:Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language, 5: Appropriate Ethical and Social Development, while it states a total of eight standards for key learning areas of the English language.(see Table 1)

Table 1
Competencies and Standards set in NCEL 2006

Competencies (C)		**Standards (S)**	
C1	Reading and Thinking Skills	S1	All students will search for, discover and understand a variety of text types through tasks which require multiple reading and thinking strategies for comprehension, fluency and enjoyment
		S2	All students will read and analyze literary text to seek information, ideas, enjoyment, and to relate their own experiences to those of common humanity as depicted in literature.
C2	Writing Skills	S1	All students will produce with developing fluency and accuracy, academic, transactional and creative writing, which is focused, purposeful and shows an insight into the writing process.
C3	Oral Communication Skills	S1	All students will use appropriate social and academic conventions of spoken discourse for effective oral communication with individuals and in groups, in both informal and formal settings.
C4	Formal and Lexical Aspects of Language	S1	Pronunciation: All students will understand and articulate widely acceptable pronunciation, stress and intonation patterns of the English language for improved communication.
		S2	Vocabulary: All students will enhance vocabulary for effective communication.
		S3	Grammar and structure: All students will understand grammatical functions and use the principles of grammar, punctuation, and syntax for developing accuracy in their spoken and written.
C5	Appropriate Ethical and Social Development	S1	All students will develop ethical and social attributes and values relevant in multicultural, civilized society.

Adopted from National Curriculum for English Language Grades I-XII, (2006, p. 10)

As mentioned earlier, the third competency in NCEL ensures oral communicative skills for learners so that they employ suitable social and academic norms of spoken interaction to facilitate effective verbal communication, both individually and within groups, in settings that range from casual to formal. The rationale for competency 3, the oral communicative skills, states language functions encompass the intentions behind students' spoken or written communication. These intentions could involve presenting a perspective, seeking information, or other such aims. Therefore, it becomes crucial to employ suitable language structures that align with the intended communicative purpose. The specific language form utilized is influenced by the level of formality in a situation, the nature of the message being conveyed, and the rapport between the speaker and the listener. Sensitizing students to the appropriate

conventions of expression across various contexts is imperative. This equips them to utilize language in a fitting manner based on the circumstances and their audience.

Additionally, there are two benchmarks set against competency 3 which emphasize utilizing a diverse array of linguistic indicators to effectively convey messages, suited to different purposes and co-purposes such as inquiries, persuasions, arguments, comparisons, and evaluations across a broad spectrum of situations. It expects learners to showcase mastery by means of structured speeches, personal verbal deliveries, and professional interviews, embodying the social and educational norms and interactions necessary for conveying information and ideas (see Table 1).

Besides, the NCEL also states students' learning outcomes which expect learners to assess and employ a diverse range of linguistic expressions tailored to different functions and co-functions, encompassing actions such as retelling, vivid depiction, seeking information, drawing comparisons, highlighting differences, succinct summarization, offering suggestions, making appeals, cultivating persuasion, expressing dissatisfaction, engaging in debates, gauging and presenting future prospects in relation to practical and educational aspirations (see Table 2).

Table 2
Benchmarks and SLOs against Competency 3: Oral Communication Skills

S#	Benchmarks	Grades XI-XII	Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)
1	BM 1	Use a variety of **linguistic exponents** to communicate appropriately for various **functions and co-functions** of inquiries, persuasions, arguments, comparisons, evaluations, in a wide range of **contexts**.	Evaluate and use expressions for various functions and co-functions: Recount, describe, inquire, compare, contrast, summarize, suggest, request, encourage, persuade, complain, argue, assess and relate future plans and probability concerning practical and academic goals.
2	BM 2	Demonstrate through formal talks, individual oral presentations and job interviews, the social and academic conventions and dynamics to communicate information/ ideas.	• Demonstrate heightened awareness of conventions and dynamics of group discussion and interaction. • Demonstrate use of appropriate conventions to give a job interview • Create and deliver group/ class presentations on various themes, problems and issues. • Evaluate to comment orally on the presentation of peers against a pre-developed student/ teacher criteria.

Note: National Curriculum for English, Grade I-XII (2006, p. 13)

Competency 3, which denotes communication skills, covers two standards according to the national curriculum (Baig et al., 2021). Standard 1 requires all students to use appropriate social and academic

conventions of spoken discourse for effective oral communication, both individually and in groups, and in both formal and informal settings. Besides, by identifying the primary role of oral communicative skills in mastering the English language, the NCEL includes a dedicated section for these skills in each unit. The study found that the NCEL comprehensively covers most elements outlined in Standard 1 of Competency 3. Likewise, competency 4 of NCEL denotes formal and lexical aspects of language, covering two key language skills: vocabulary building (Standard 1) and grammar fundamentals (Standard 2).

More interestingly, as far as the listening skill of the English language is concerned, our analysis uncovered a surprising gap in the English curriculum itself, which does not prioritize listening skills. In fact, the National Curriculum 2006 does not include any specific goals or benchmarks for developing students' listening abilities (Kakar et al., 2023). This oversight is particularly worrying because listening forms the foundation of language learning. It is how students pick up proper pronunciation, understand speech patterns, and grasp meaning in context, all crucial for real communication. By skipping dedicated listening exercises, we are essentially leaving out half of the conversation equation. The missing listening component points to a bigger problem with our language education approach. If the curriculum overlooks this vital skill, how comprehensive can our English instruction really be? Students deserve balanced training that covers all language aspects equally.

For students to truly thrive in English, listening needs to be treated as seriously as reading and writing. Imagine trying to have a conversation when one cannot understand what is being said to one. Incorporating targeted listening exercises would give students the well-rounded skills they need for actual communication, not just classroom performance. Currently, the NCEL is undermining students' language development by neglecting this critical element.

This oversight is a reflection of the insufficient emphasis of the national curriculum on listening, revealing a broader issue with the curriculum itself. The absence of listening exercises suggests that the curriculum may not fully address the comprehensive needs of language learners, which is a significant drawback. Similarly, the deficiency of listening skills also contradicts the study of established research (Teo et al., 2022) which establishes that in a typical day, listening is utilized nearly twice as much as speaking and significantly more than reading and writing, underscoring its pivotal role in daily communication.

The results therefore require reconsideration of the curriculum and the text itself that require an embedded framework that fully covers all the core competencies i.e., pronunciation and listening. This would help to give the learners a rounded education, the kind that would equip them with all aspects of communication. It is important that a strong drive is made in order to cover these gaps so that the aim of having full language proficiency and good communication skills can also be achieved.

An effective language curriculum should make sure that all four language skills areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are incorporated in it: the curriculum should ensure that the learners develop a linguistic repertoire in full. Within the speaking activities suggested in this balanced framework, those

that involve use of authentic contexts are indeed commendable. Situating language production in situations to which learners are likely to encounter outside the classroom, these activities promote relevance and practicality as well as fluency and confidence in the communication itself. However, the effectiveness of these situations depends on whether they can be aligned with heterogeneous backgrounds and experiences of students. This way, their effectiveness can be further enhanced and ensure that there is fair learning by making them both universal and representative in the various contexts.

Finally, these finding have also brought up a serious issue about the absence of summative assessment of speaking skills as it applies in the existing practices of education. It was determined that the lack of formal assessment of speaking skills, in examination, showed a bigger picture of exam-oriented teaching focusing on reading and writing more than on language as a broader variety; posing a screening effect as demonstrated by (Bhutto, 2022). This method usually causes the filing away of grammar and oral communication to the point when exams are scheduled and not being taught throughout the curriculum. Failure to formally evaluate speaking skills by an educational system means it will underestimate their value in overall language proficiency level as well as lower the motivation of the students to participate actively in the oral communication processes. Not only this gap overlooks speaking as a significant feature in the communication of the real world, but also impairs the language competence in general.

Nonetheless, this change is difficult to implement. It presupposes reform of the current assessment systems, curricula to involve frequent practice of the speaking abilities, and proper preparation of teachers to properly analysis students and guide them in the field of oral communication advancement. In addition, it requires a paradigm change in the educational institutions in terms of accepting and examining the speaking proficiency as a distinct parameter of success along with the conventional academic tools of success. Unless the changes are addressed, the fame of exam-oriented education will be difficult to change, and the cycle of using low-value of speaking skills and low importance of their development will be here to stay. Such scenario will fail to promote the global language fluency among students and their multisensory communication skills in the wider academic and practical environment.

Therefore, although incorporating speaking skills into summative tasks may be a promising way to develop more balanced language acquisition; its effective realization depends on the systematic change, which should be focused on the development of speaking skills during the educational process up to its high priority.

Recommendations

Hence, it is necessary to reform the material of the curriculum that can be closer to reflecting modern linguistic demands, especially those concerning the aspects of listening proficiency. Presently, none of the five mentioned competencies in the English language curriculum addresses listening skills. This addition is important because listening is an essential element of language acquisition, a key element in

building OCC. The revision of the curriculum through the integration of clear-cut speaking and listening skills will lead the provision of similar activities in textbooks, and also compel examination boards to include speaking and listening assessment, which would enhance a more comprehensive perspective on language learning and offer students a complete set of skills to communicate.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board/Ethics Committee The study was conducted in accordance with the institutional ethical guidelines and the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. As the study involved documentary analysis of publicly available curriculum documents and did not involve human participants, consent to participate was not applicable.

Consent for publication

All authors have reviewed and approved the final manuscript and consent to its publication. The manuscript has not been published previously and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Data Availability

The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Funding

This research does not avail any funding

Authors' Contributions

Muhammad Ashraf Bhutto conceptualized and designed the study, developed the methodology, conducted the data collection and analysis, interpreted the findings, and prepared the original manuscript draft. **Sarfaraz Ali** contributed to the literature review, data interpretation, manuscript revision, and critical editing. **Abdul Basit Soomro** assisted with data analysis, validation of findings, and manuscript review. **Shahid Hussain Mughal** supervised the research, provided methodological guidance, contributed to the interpretation of results, critically revised the manuscript for important intellectual content, and approved the final version. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Acknowledgements

The author gratefully acknowledges the support of colleagues who provided valuable feedback during the development of this research. No external funding was received for this study.

Funding Declaration

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors. No funds, grants, or other financial support were received for the conduct of this study or the preparation of this manuscript.

Clinical Trial Number

Clinical trial number: Not applicable.

Ethics Approval

Ethical approval was not required for this study in accordance with the institutional policies and national regulations governing non-interventional educational research. The study was conducted in accordance with accepted ethical standards for research involving human participants

Consent to Participate

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed of the purpose of the study, their right to withdraw at any time without penalty, and the confidentiality of their responses.

Consent to Publish

Not applicable. This manuscript does not contain any individual person's identifiable data, images, or personal information requiring consent for publication.

Ethics Statement

This research was a minimal-risk qualitative study involving semi-structured interviews with university faculty members. The study did not involve any clinical intervention, experimentation, vulnerable populations, and collection of biological materials, or procedures that could expose participants to physical or psychological harm. Participation was entirely voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process, and participants were free to withdraw at any stage without any consequences.

In accordance with the policies of the institution, the study was reviewed and determined to be exempt/waived from full Institutional Review Board (IRB) of SZABIST University because it involved minimal risk to participants. We have obtained the formal exemption/waiver from the IRB, and have included the ethics statement in the revised manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated during and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available because they contain information that could compromise the privacy and confidentiality of the research participants but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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