

Effects of Teacher-Student Relationships

Calandra Weaver, Edward Lazaros, Christopher Davison

Ball State University, USA

Abstract

Teacher-student relationships are important for understanding how students at all levels (i.e., secondary and post-secondary) can have a positive school experience. Teacher-student relationships are also an important aspect in how students gain knowledge through their education. When teachers support their students, they encourage motivation and engagement. Additionally, teachers can adjust the ways they interact in teacher-student relationships to effectively manage their class. Lastly, these relationships are either strengthened or weakened through diversity and parental involvement. Teachers can utilize this information to adjust their interactions with students, which is especially important during the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: Teacher-student relationships; Motivation ; Engagements; Interactions

1.Introduction

Students spend a significant amount of time around teachers, so their relationships with their teachers depend on numerous factors and influence their overall school experience. The section “Effects of Teachers’ Support on Students’ Motivation and Engagement” explains how students engage differently in classes depending on their interactions with teachers. Interactions with teachers also impact how much students learn from the class. Teachers should understand how to use their authority to manage their students, so the section “Effects of Classroom Management on Behavioral Performance” expands on how teacher-student relationships impact students’ behavior. In addition, teachers and students communicate with each other differently depending on parent involvement, which is detailed in the section “Effects of Parental Involvement.” The section “Effects of Diversity” explains how teachers may develop biases and interact with diverse groups of students differently. Lastly, the section “Effects of COVID-19” details how teachers changed their communication in response to COVID-19 school closures. To summarize, teachers need to understand the influences and result of different teacher-student relationships, so they can adjust their methods to better accommodate their students.

2.Effects of Teachers’ Support on Students’ Motivation and Engagement

Teachers can use positive teacher-student relationships to provide support and motivate their students. As found by Burton and Campbell’s (2019) study on ninth grade students, teachers can cultivate positive teacher student relationships by displaying passion. Students notice their teachers’ passion which helps them feel more supported and become involved in the class (Burton & Campbell, 2019) . According to Demir et al. (2019, p. 28), when students do not feel supported by their teachers, they are more likely to miss their classes. When

students have greater levels of teacher-student rapport, or trust with their teachers, students are more likely to attend their classes. Students have more time to build rapport with their teachers when they attend class regularly, so this may promote continual attendance. Cheung (2019, p. 356) states that positive teacher-student relationships help students transition to middle school. Students adjusted to middle school well if they were engaged in school, valued school, and believed in their abilities. Additionally, according to Liu and Chiang's (2019) Chinese study, students had higher levels of motivation when they interacted with their teachers more often.

Students are often more engaged with their education when their teachers show them support. Martin and Collie (2019) found that when students interacted negatively with their teachers, they engaged in school less. However, the number of negative interactions with teachers did not cause their school engagement to decrease exponentially. When students accumulated more positive interactions with their teachers, they engaged in school more. Then, students with higher engagement reported that they had learned more in class and that their teachers were more effective (Demir et al. 2019). Teachers can manage the time they spend with students to influence their students' academics. In Burton and Campbell's (2019) research, teachers spent more time developing teacher-student relationships because their math class sizes were small. As a result, the students exhibited an increase in their self-efficacy and became better at explaining and doing math. Nernere (2019) studied English classes in Indonesia and found that teachers created teacher-student interactions by sharing ideas with students. Teachers generally initiated interactions to meet lesson goals. The teachers in this study aimed for English language acquisition, so they used verbal instruction, a type of teacher talk, to motivate their students to focus. They expect their students to respond to their instruction in a specific way, so they provide feedback on their students' responses. In this study, the teachers spoke English to their students as teacher talk, and the students participated by responding in English. In contrast, teachers use student talk when sharing their personal ideas and discussing students' ideas. Teachers use this to support their students and increase classroom engagement.

3.Effects of Classroom Management on Behavioral Performance

Classroom management refers to maintaining students' behavior. Teachers can improve the ways they manage their classrooms through teacher-relationship training. Teachers can learn to establish, maintain, and restore relationships with their students through establish-maintain-restore (EMR) training. Teachers with EMR training developed more positive teacher-student relationships than those who did not receive the training (Cook et al., 2018, p. 227). According to Duong et al. (2019), when teachers participated in EMR training, their students were better engaged with school and exhibited less disruptive behavior. Additionally, Gonzales-Ball and Bratton (2019) found that preschool teachers can take child- teacher relationship training to better teach preschool students with behavioral problems. Toward the beginning of the study, the students were uncomfortable with the increased time they spent with their teachers. However, as the training continued, teachers felt more confident interacting with the students, and by the end of the training, the students had significantly less disruptive behavior than they displayed prior to their teachers' training.

Discipline is important for classroom management because teachers become increasingly authoritative in teacher-student relationships. According to McMahon et al. (2019, p. 6), teacher directives, discipline, and poor academics commonly lead to students' verbal aggression, such as name-calling, giving threats, or talking back. Students can be negatively affected by the way teachers manage misbehavior. When teachers behave negatively

causing students to show verbal aggression, teachers do not usually receive blame. Amemiya et al. (2019) found that students can be affected by minor infractions and suspensions in similar ways. Students do not stop engaging in misconduct after receiving a minor infraction, but instead, they misbehave more. Students especially increased their misconduct after a minor infraction if they had higher school engagement because they believed they had autonomy and deserved fair treatment. Teachers discipline students differently based on their emotional intelligence (EI) according to Valente et al.'s (2019, p. 747) study on Portuguese schools. Teachers disciplined better when they had more classroom experience but lower EI. Teachers struggled with discipline when they had higher EI and were favored by students. Lastly, teachers discipline their students differently based on race because black students were treated more poorly and seen as more disruptive than white students who behaved similarly (Scott et al., 2019, p. 28). Teachers judge black students' behavior more intensely and suspend them more than white students (Amemiya et al., 2019, p. 12; Scott et al., 2019, p. 28).

4. Effects of Parental Involvement

Students may engage in school and interact with their teachers differently because of their families' involvement with school (Cheung, 2019; Pratt et al., 2019). Smith et al.'s (2019, p.370) study found that elementary students receive higher levels of family-school engagement than middle school students. Students experience a lot of changes while transitioning to middle school, but as parents become more involved with students' school experience, students are more likely to have positive teacher-student relationships (Cheung, 2019). Parents can help cultivate positive teacher-student relationships by discussing proper school behavior and positive teacher-student relationships with their children. Teachers can use positive teacher-student relationships to encourage parent involvement and help students adjust to middle school.

Several factors in family-school engagement can lead to either positive or negative teacher-student relationships. According to Smith et al. (2019, p. 370), family-school engagement is higher in families who are white, have a higher socioeconomic status, and are less disruptive.

Pratt et al. (2019, p. 41) found that when kindergarten students had cumulative family stressors, the students had lower literacy, math skills, and classroom participation, and these skills worsened when they had negative teacher-student relationships. Kindergarten students liked school significantly less when they had both family stressors and negative teacher-student relationships (Pratt et al. 2019). According to Hourii et al. (2019, p. 425), teachers can increase parent involvement through parental wise feedback which means teachers inform parents about their high expectations and their belief that students can meet the expectations. Family-school engagement influences students to behave better in the classroom (Smith et al, 2019).

5. Effects of Diversity

Teacher-student relationships are impacted by diversity, which includes but is not limited to gender, racial, ethnic, political, and religious diversity (Parker & Trolan, 2019, p. 3). Students base their overall view of their campus' diversity on their teacher-student relationships, so students negatively viewed their campus diversity, if their teachers did not respond to diversity well. Students with a negative view of campus diversity had teacher-student relationships characterized by doing creative work, doing work beyond normal class work, conducting research, or discussing issues unrelated to the class with the teacher or asking a teacher for a letter

of recommendation (Parker & Trolan, 2019). Liang et al. (2019, p. 8-9) say boys of color from ages 12-19 need to give and receive respect in their teacher-student relationships. These students mistreated disrespectful teachers, leading to negative teacher-student relationships. When teachers nonverbally communicated in a domineering way, made unfavorable remarks, and treated them differently than other students, students of color engaged in their classes less and believed they lack support. Black students received more minor infractions than white students, showing negative teacher-student relationships (Amemiya et al., 2019).

Students had a positive view of the diversity climate on their campus if their teachers responded to diversity well (Parker & Trolan, 2019). Their teacher-student relationships were characterized by frequent email or in person communication, equal treatment, and availability to see the teacher outside the classroom. Male students of color need teachers who can relate to students' diverse backgrounds (Liang et al., 2019). Teachers improve their relationships with students of color by implementing psychological need satisfaction, meaning they need to recognize the autonomy of their students to encourage their students' happiness (Froiland et al., 2019). Teachers need to know strategies to help them teach diverse students and develop positive teacher-student relationships with them. This would improve students' academics and behavior (Liang et al., 2019).

6.Effects of COVID-19

Schools cancelled their in-person classes during March 2020 in response to the global COVID-19 pandemic, so teachers needed to maintain their teacher-student relationships online. According to Daniel (2020, p. 3), teachers needed to reassure students and parents about educational changes even if the school did not direct their teachers to communicate with parents. Teachers may have shifted to become more reassuring figures within teacher-student relationships than prior to COVID-19. Because of this, school counsellors played a larger role in teacher-student relationships. According to Minke (2020), school counsellors should have communicated with teachers, students, and parents to best manage issues that arose from COVID-19. Daniel (2020, p. 3) says teachers and school counsellors may have provided better support to some students than their parents who were especially stressed by the COVID-19 situation. According to Hamilton et al. (2020, p. 20), when K-12 school reopen, teachers intend to focus on their students' wellbeing more than they did prior to school closures.

Teachers communicated their instruction differently during distance learning. According to Oerther and Peters (2020, p. 303), college professors used videos to convey instruction and encourage students to think critically, and they used learning management students to move students through the instruction and activities. However, professors struggled to motivate students to care about the instruction, which would have created a more personable connection between the teacher, students, and instruction. This shows that professors struggled to communicate with their students. According to Fawns et al. (2020), college professors needed to communicate with their students about the effectiveness of their online teaching methods. Teachers and students should collaborate to create a productive distance learning environment. Furthermore, K-12 instruction was affected by distance learning too. Hamilton et al. (2020, p. 11) found that 88% of teachers did not teach all of the curriculum they expected to teach this school year, so many teachers did not expect students to complete as much work. Teachers struggled to communicate with their students through distance learning.

7. Conclusion

Teacher-student relationships significantly impact students' sense of belonging within the classroom and willingness to engage in a class. When teachers demonstrate their care for students, the students experience positive outcomes from their relationship with their teacher. However, teacher-student relationships can impact students negatively, such as when they are misjudged based on race or are disciplined for minor issues. Therefore, in the future, teachers can better adjust their interactions to accommodate their intentions as a teacher as well as their students' needs as individuals. When understanding the negative relationships that may develop from excessive discipline and racial misjudgments, teachers can acknowledge where they may need to change their own behavior. This creates a positive and engaging classroom environment through teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, disruptive events such as COVID-19 produce significant negative impacts on the classroom and teacher-student interaction.

References

- [1] Amemiya, J., Mortenson, E., & Wang M. (2019). Minor infractions are not minor: School infractions for minor misconduct many increase adolescents' defiant behavior and contribute to racial disparities in school discipline. *American Psychologist*, 1-14. <http://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000475>
- [2] Burton, L. M., & Campbell, B. D. (2019). Fostering self-efficacy and engagement: A case of alternative teaching and learning in high school mathematics. *Journal of Ethnographic & Qualitative Research*, 13(4). Retrieved from <http://www.jeqr.org/>
- [3] Cheung, C. S. (2019). Parents' involvement and adolescents' school adjustment: Teacher-student relationships as a mechanism of change. *School Psychology*, 34(4), 350-362. <http://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000288>
- [4] Cook, C. R., Coco, S., Zhang, Y., Duong, M. T., Renshaw, T. L., & Frank, S. (2018). Cultivating positive teacher-student relationships: Preliminary evaluation of the establish-maintain-restore (EMR) method. *School Psychology Review*, 47(3), 226-243. <http://doi.org/10.17105/SPR-2017-0025.V47-3>
- [5] Daniel, J. (2020). Education and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Prospects*, 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09464-3>
- [6] Demir, M., Burton, S., & Dunbar, N. (2019). Professor-student rapport and perceived autonomy support as predictors of course and student outcomes. *Teaching of Psychology*, 46(1), 22-33. <http://doi.org/10.1177/0098628318816132>
- [7] Duong, M. T., Pullmann, M. D., Buntain-Ricklefs, J., Lee, K., Benjamin, K. S., Nguyen, L., & Cook, C. R. (2019). Brief teacher training improves student behavior and student-teacher relationships in middle school. *School Psychology*, 34(2), 212-221. <http://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000296>
- [8] Fawns, T., Jones, D., & Aitken, G. (2020). Challenging assumptions about "moving online" in response to COVID-19, and some practical advice. *MedEd Publish*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.15694/mep.2020.000083.1>
- [9] Froiland, J. M., Worrell, F. C., & Oh, H. (2019). Teacher-student relationships, psychological need satisfaction, and happiness among diverse students. *Psychology in the Schools*, 56(5), 856-870. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22245>

- [10]Gonzales-Ball, T. L., & Bratton, S. C. (2019). Child-teacher relationship training as a head start early mental health intervention for children exhibiting disruptive behavior. *International Journal of Play Therapy*, 28(1), 44-56. <http://doi.org/10.1037/pla0000081>
- [11]Hamilton, L. S., Grant, D., Kaufman, J. H., Diliberti, M., Schwartz, H. L., Hunter, G. P., Setodji C. M., & Young, C. J. (2020). *COVID-19 and the state of K-12 schools: Results and technical documentation from the spring 2020 American Educators Panels COVID-19 surveys*. RAND Corporation. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA168-1.html
- [12]Hourii, A. K., Thayer, A. J., & Cook, C. R. (2019). Targeting parent trust to enhance engagement in a school-home communication system: A double-blind experiment of a parent wise feedback intervention. *School Psychology*, 34(4), 421-432. <http://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000318>
- [13]Liang, C. T. H., Rocchino, G. H., Gutekunst, M. H. C., Paulvin, C., Melo Li, K., & Elam-Snowden, T. (2019). Perspectives of respect, teacher-student relationships, and school climate among boys of color: A multifocus group study. *Psychology of Men & Masculinities*. 1-12. <http://doi.org/10.1037/men0000239>
- [14]Liu, R., & Chiang, Y. (2019). Who is more motivated to learn? The roles of family background and teacher-student interaction in motivating student learning. *The Journal of Chinese Sociology*, 6(6), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40711-019-0095-z>
- [15]Martin, A. J., & Collie, R. J. (2019). Teacher-student relationships and students' engagement in high school: Does the number of negative and positive relationships with teachers matter? *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(5), 861-876. <http://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000317>
- [16]McMahon, S. D., Davis, J. O., Peist, E., Bare, K., Espelage, D. L., Martinez, A., Anderman, E. M., & Reddy, L. A. (2019). Student verbal aggression toward teachers: How do behavioral patterns unfold? *Psychology of Violence*, 1-9. <http://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000256>
- [17]Minke, K. (2020). Finding stability in uncertain times: Together we thrive. *Communique*, 48(7). Nernere, M. S. (2019). Teachers' beliefs on teacher-students interaction in young learners' English class. *Indonesian EFL Journal*, 5(2), 113-120. <https://doi.org/10.25134/iefj.v5i2.1903>
- [18]Oerther, D. B., & Peters, C. A. (2020). Educating heads, hands, and hearts in the COVID-19 classroom. *Environmental Engineering Science*, 37(5), 303. <https://doi.org/10.1089/ees.2020.0161>
- [19]Parker, E. T., III, & Trolan, T. L. (2019). Student perceptions of the climate for diversity: The role of student-faculty interactions. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. 1-12. <http://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000132>
- [20]Pratt, M. E., Swanson, J., van Huisstede, L., & Gaias, L. M. (2019). Cumulative family stressors and kindergarten adjustment: The exacerbating role of a teacher-child conflict. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 65(1), 28-53. <http://doi.org/10.13110/merrpalmquar1982.65.1.0028>
- [21]Scott, T. M., Gage, N., Hirn, R., & Han, H. (2019). Teacher and student race as a predictor for negative feedback during instruction. *School Psychology*, 34(1), 22-31. <http://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000251>
- [22]Smith, T. E., Reinke, W. M., Herman, K. C., & Huang, F. (2019). Understanding family-school engagement across and within elementary- and middle-school contexts. *School Psychology*, 34(4), 363-375. <http://doi.org/10.1037/spq0000290>
- [23]Valente, S., Monteiro, A. P., & Lourenço, A.A. (2019). The relationship between teachers' emotional intelligence and classroom discipline management. *Psychology in the Schools*, 56(5), 741-750. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22218>