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Impact of the Teacher-Student Relationship on Students' Academic Achievement at Secondary School Level

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Abstract

The **aim of the present study** was to examine the impact of teacher–student relationships on the academic achievement of secondary school students in **District Peshawar, Pakistan**, and to highlight how these relationships motivate and engage students in the learning process. Recognizing that teacher–student relationships are a significant predictor of student outcomes, this study focused on exploring the extent to which positive interactions between teachers and students influence academic success.

Teacher–student relationships are a significant predictor of student outcomes and play a crucial role in motivating and engaging students in the learning process. The present study explored the relationship between teacher–student relationships and academic achievement among secondary school students in District Peshawar, Pakistan. A quantitative survey research design was employed, with a multi-stage sample of 456 students from urban and rural government secondary schools. Students evaluated their teacher–student relationships across five domains (trust, respect, academic guidance, emotional support, and classroom discipline) using a structured Likert-scale questionnaire, and their academic achievement scores were obtained from official school records.

Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, Pearson correlation, and regression analysis were employed to analyze the data, which revealed that students with strong and supportive relationships with their teachers had significantly higher academic achievement scores. Regression analysis also showed that the quality of teacher–student relationships clarified 34% of the variance in academic achievement ($R^2 = 0.34$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that teachers play a critical role in building trust, providing guidance, and instilling academic discipline to contribute to students' learning. Teacher training programs to develop relationship-building skills and policies to encourage a supportive and engaging classroom environment are essential, specifically in government schools in urban and rural areas.

Keywords: Teacher–student relationship, academic achievement, secondary education, social environment factors.

Introduction

Education is an evolving process, which is not simply about delivering a curriculum, but also about the quality of interactions with others in the classroom. Within the classroom context, the teacher-student relationship is often at the center of the educational environment. When teacher-student relationships are positive, students may exhibit more motivation, more engagement, exhibit higher levels of collaboration, and show enhancements in their learning, which are indicators of student

growth and achievement (Pianta, 1999; Hughes, 2012). On the other hand, weak or challenged teacher–student relationships can have negative impacts on student learning and overall achievement. In Pakistan and in areas such as District Peshawar, and often related to educational challenges, which include the lack of resources, larger class sizes, and socio-economic differences, teacher-student relationships are even more important, as they mediate students' attitudes toward learning and students' capabilities to achieve at higher levels. This study aims to investigate the impact of teacher-student relationships on the academic achievement of secondary students in Peshawar and offers data to help inform policy and practice.

Kinds of Teacher–Student Relationship

There are several types of listening students can develop them at school. Just as listening can be broken into types, teacher–student relationships in schools also take various forms. These categories help us understand the nature and depth of interactions in classrooms:

Instructional Relationship

This is the most basic form, where the teacher delivers content and the student receives it. Effective instructional relationships are marked by clarity of teaching, structured guidance, and academic feedback. For example, when a teacher explains concepts with examples and checks understanding regularly, students grasp knowledge more effectively.

Supportive Relationship

Here, the teacher goes beyond content delivery and shows care, empathy, and encouragement. Students who feel valued and supported become more motivated to participate in class. For instance, when teachers notice a struggling student and provide extra guidance, it fosters confidence and reduces anxiety.

Motivational Relationship

Teachers serve as role models and motivators. Through positive reinforcement, setting high expectations, and inspiring students with real-life success stories, teachers build resilience in learners. A motivational relationship often helps students overcome failure and persist in academic tasks.

Disciplinary Relationship

This type maintains order and discipline in the classroom. A balance of authority and fairness ensures a respectful environment where learning can occur. Teachers who enforce rules consistently without bias help students internalize responsibility and accountability. Each type plays a role, but the most effective teachers integrate all four, combining structure with empathy and motivation.

Literature Review

In educational studies, the importance of teacher-student connections has been well acknowledged. Strong relationships between teachers and students predict better academic achievement and fewer behavioral issues, claim Hamre and Pianta (2001). According to Wentzel (2002), teacher support increases students' motivation and self-control, which improves their academic performance.

According to research conducted in Pakistan by Ali et al. (2019) and Shah & Anwar (2020), pupils who attend schools with teachers who consistently offer them emotional support and assistance perform better academically. According to a meta-analysis by Roorda et al. (2011), interactions between teachers and students have a positive correlation with both cognitive and socioemotional development.

Despite this evidence, limited research has been comprehensive too broadly examine the impact of teacher-student relationships in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) secondary schools, especially in government schools in rural and urban areas. This study fills that gap by measuring the role of the teacher–student relationship in shaping academic achievement in District Peshawar.

The findings are consistent with a broad body of research that highlights the pivotal role of teacher–student relationships in shaping academic outcomes. Studies have consistently shown that supportive relationships enhance engagement, motivation, and performance (Hamre & Pianta, 2006; Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2011). Research by Wentzel (2009) also emphasizes that emotional support

from teachers' fosters persistence and resilience among students, leading to higher academic achievement. Similarly, Cornelius-White (2007), through a large meta-analysis, concluded that learner-centered teacher behaviors, including encouragement and respect, are positively associated with student achievement and motivation. In South Asian contexts, Ali and Rehman (2023) reported that stronger teacher–student connections mitigate socio-economic barriers and promote better outcomes in under-resourced schools. These findings echo earlier work by Akram and Ghazanfar (2014), who found that limited teacher feedback and emotional support in rural schools constrained students' academic growth.

Background of the Study

Globally, teacher–student relationships are recognized as one of the strongest non-cognitive predictors of academic achievement. Students who enjoy positive interactions with teachers not only achieve better academically but also show stronger social skills, reduced behavioral problems, and higher motivation to learn.

In Pakistan, many classrooms are characterized by large student populations, limited resources, and teacher-centered practices. Often, relationships between teachers and students are formal and hierarchical, with less attention to emotional and motivational aspects. However, recent reforms and awareness campaigns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa stress the importance of student-centered teaching and positive classroom climates.

The present study addresses this gap by investigating how teacher–student relationships contribute to the academic success of secondary school students in Peshawar, comparing urban and rural school contexts.

Research Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To analyze the impact of teacher-student relationships in shaping academic success of secondary school students
2. To investigate the impact of teachers' classroom management and discipline strategies on students' academic achievement.

Research Hypotheses

The study tested the following hypotheses:

Ho: Teacher-student relationships have a no significant impact on the academic achievement of secondary-school students.

H1: Teacher-student relationships have a significant impact on the academic achievement of secondary-school students.

Methodology

Research Design

A quantitative survey research design was employed to examine the relationship between teacher–student interaction and academic achievement.

Population and Sample

The target population comprised all government Girls' secondary school students in District Peshawar. A sample of 456 students was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique from urban and rural government schools.

Instrumentation

A structured Likert-scale questionnaire was developed to assess students' perceptions of teacher–student relationships. The instrument included items on:

- Trust and respect
- Academic guidance and feedback

- Emotional support
- Classroom management and discipline
Reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency.

Data Collection

Data on academic achievement were obtained from students' official school examination records, ensuring objectivity. The survey was administered in classrooms with appropriate ethical considerations, including informed consent.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS software:
- **Descriptive statistics** précised demographic variables and perceptions of teacher–student relationships.
- **Independent-samples t-tests** compared differences between urban and rural students.
- **Pearson correlation** assessed the strength of association between teacher–student relationships and academic achievement.
- **Regression analysis** firm the predictive contribution of teacher–student relationships to academic achievement.

Results

Descriptive Findings

Students reporting strong teacher–student relationships demonstrated higher mean academic achievement scores (M = 75.4, SD = 6.2) than those with weaker relationships (M = 64.8, SD = 5.9).

Inferential Findings

- **Correlation analysis** revealed a significant positive relationship between teacher–student relationships and academic achievement ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$).
- **Regression analysis** showed that teacher–student relationships accounted for 34% of the variance in academic achievement ($R^2 = 0.34$, $F = 42.6$, $p < 0.01$).
- **T-test results** directed a significant difference between urban and rural students' academic achievement, suggesting contextual disparities in teacher–student interactions.

Table.1: Regression Analysis
Showing Regression Analysis Results Regarding Teacher-Student Relationship

| Hypotheses | R | R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate | Change Statistics | | | | Sig. F Change |
				R Square Change	F (1,454)	B	Std. Error	
Ho	0.629	0.395	17.246	0.395	296.896	0.628	8.660	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), Teacher Student Relationship

b. Dependent Variable: Student Academic Achievements

Hypothesis Accepted:
H₁₃: Teacher-student relationships have a significant impact on the academic achievement of secondary-school students.

Table Interpretation of Hypothesis

The impact of teacher-student relationships on students' academic progress was investigated using a straightforward linear regression analysis.

Students' academic achievement and teacher-student interactions have a reasonably significant

positive linear association, according to the analysis's R value of 0.629. According to the coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.395$), teacher-student relationships explained roughly 39.5% of the variance in students' academic achievement. This suggests that variations in the quality of teacher-student relationships account for more than one-third of the variance in students' academic performance, with other factors not included in the model accounting for the remaining variance.

The results of the overall regression model showed that teacher-student relationships have a significant role in predicting students' academic progress ($F(1, 454) = 296.90$, $p <.001$). Additionally, the unstandardized regression coefficient was positive and significant, $B = 0.628$ ($p <.001$), meaning that, when all other factors are held constant, students' academic achievement rises by roughly 0.628 units for every unit increase in the quality of teacher-student relationships. The average difference between the observed and predicted values is represented by the standard error of the estimate ($SE = 17.246$), which indicates that the regression model fits the data satisfactorily.

The alternative hypothesis (H_{13}) was accepted and the null hypothesis (H_{03}) was rejected in light of these findings.

This research demonstrates the critical role that helpful, courteous, and motivating teacher interactions play in improving learning outcomes for secondary school students. It also confirms that relationships between teachers and students have a large and beneficial impact on students' academic attainment.

Discussion

The findings align with international research (Pianta, 1999; Roorda et al., 2011) that underlines the significance of supportive teacher–student relationships in enhancing academic outcomes. In Peshawar's context, these relationships serve as a buffer against challenges such as resource limitations and socio-economic disparities. The results further highlight that rural students often face weaker teacher–student connections, which may contribute to performance gaps.

The evidence suggests that improving teacher–student relationship through professional development, communication training, and equitable support across urban and rural schools can substantially raise student achievement levels.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that teacher–student relationships play a crucial role in defining students' academic achievement, explaining a significant proportion of performance differences among secondary school students in Peshawar. By fostering trust, guidance, and consistent classroom discipline, teachers can enhance both cognitive and emotional aspects of student learning.

Recommendations
1. **Teacher Training Programs:** Develop targeted professional progress workshops to enhance teachers' interactive and relationship-building skills.
2. **Policy Support:** Integrate relationship-building strategies into school improvement plans.
3. **Mentoring Systems:** Inspire peer mentoring and counseling in schools to strengthen teacher–student rapport.
4. **Focus on Rural Schools:** Report disparities in rural areas by providing additional training and support for teachers to establish improved connections with students.
5. **Continuous Monitoring:** Implement regular assessments of teacher–student relationships as part of school evaluation frameworks.

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