

EFFECT OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP ON STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of the teacher-student relationship on students' motivation at the primary school level in Lahore. The study aimed to investigate teachers' views on the teacher-student relationship and its effect on students' motivation, as well as ways to solve related problems. This study was descriptive, employing causal comparative research design. A questionnaire comprising 24 items close-ended statements were developed on 5 points Likert type scale was used for this research. The sample of the study consisted of 400 teachers of Public Primary Schools in Lahore district and a purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample for this study. The questionnaire was piloted by 50 teachers and the reliability of the instruments was checked by Cronbach's Alpha, which was found 0.875. Descriptive statistics, independent sample t-test were used to find out the analysis of the data. Results showed that there was a strong effect of teacher-student relations on student motivation. The results indicate that positive teacher-student relationships are critical to students' academic, emotional, and behavioural development in primary education. These interactions not only enhance motivation and participation but also foster better behaviour and stronger academic outcomes. So, it is concluded in the light of the above results that teachers' relationships are very important for students and teachers, both learning and teaching. It is therefore recommended that teachers adopt inclusive, student-centred, and emotionally responsive teaching practices. By building secure, trusting, and encouraging classroom environments, teachers can help students become more motivated, confident, and successful learners.

Keywords: Effect, Relationship, Motivation, Students and Investigate.

INTRODUCTION

The connection between teachers and students significantly effects students' motivation during the primary school years. At this early stage of

development, children are highly influenced by the attitudes, encouragement, and emotional support provided by their teachers (Roza et al., 2021). A

supportive and caring teacher-student relationship helps students feel accepted and valued, which is crucial for developing internal motivation. When learners sense that their teacher understands their unique needs, supports them, and believes in their abilities, they tend to become more engaged and show increased interest in their academic activities (Dewaele & Alfawzan, 2018). Teachers who provide constructive feedback, recognize student efforts, and create an emotionally safe environment help build students' confidence and willingness to engage with challenging material. On the contrary, a distant or negative teacher-student relationship may lead to low self-esteem, disengagement, and a lack of interest in school activities. Therefore, the quality of this relationship directly influences how motivated students feel to participate, persist, and achieve in their academic journey. Motivated students are more attentive, goal-oriented, and proactive, and these traits are often nurtured through strong emotional and academic support from teachers (Liu, 2017). Students are more inclined to adopt a positive outlook on learning and demonstrate resilience when they view their teacher as understanding, just, and accessible. Teachers who recognize students' efforts, provide regular encouragement, and set achievable goals tend to nurture intrinsic motivation among students (Acar et al., 2022). These students often engage more deeply with the learning material, demonstrate curiosity, and take responsibility for their academic progress. Emotionally confident students tend to be more willing to participate in classroom activities and are less afraid of making mistakes. On the other hand, learners who experience indifferent or negative interactions with their teachers may feel anxious or undervalued, which can lead to decreased motivation, avoidance of academic work, or even behavioral issues (Luz, 2015). A teacher's enthusiasm for teaching directly impacts students' willingness to learn. Academic success is not only influenced by individual traits and study habits but also by the nature of the student-teacher relationship. Schools function as environments where interpersonal interactions are frequent, and the teacher-student connection plays a central role in shaping these dynamics. A teachers' relationship with students, and even with themselves, holds significant importance for fostering motivation in the classroom. The quality of these relationships has a direct effect on the overall educational process (Stephanou & Doukeridou, 2020). Therefore, it

becomes essential for teachers to inspire and support students in developing a positive attitude toward learning. This can be accomplished by adopting effective motivational strategies. Motivation can generally be divided into two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic. Extrinsic motivation involves external influences, such as rewards or societal pressure, which may drive students to learn a language for career advancement, recognition from teachers, or social approval (Markus et al., 2022). In contrast, intrinsic motivation is internally driven and relates to personal enjoyment, curiosity, and satisfaction derived from engaging in the learning process. Learners with intrinsic motivation are often guided by the joy of discovery and the challenge of mastering new knowledge. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), intrinsic motivation is fueled by feelings of competence, autonomy, and connectedness. In conclusion, both encouraging and discouraging relationships with teachers significantly influence students' motivation and engagement in learning (Tobia et al., 2019). Students who share positive bonds with their teachers are less likely to be absent and often experience a strong sense of belonging within the classroom (Mjelve et al., 2022). Moreover, many overlook the fact that nurturing teacher-student relationships can also support the development of essential academic skills. Teachers can serve as psychological role models, with students forming a sense of reliance on them for guidance. This bond may lead learners to align their educational goals with the expectations and encouragement of their teachers (Mallik, 2023).

Objectives of the Study

To explore the nature of teachers' relationship with students at primary school level.

To find out the role of the teacher-student relationship at the primary school level.

To find out the effect of teacher-student relationship on students' motivation at primary school level.

To explore teachers' perceptions of how their relationships with students influence learning outcomes.

Research Questions

What is the nature of teachers' relationship with students at primary school level?

What is the role of the teacher-student relationship at the primary school level?

What is the effect of teacher-student relationship on students' motivation at primary school level?
What are the teachers' perceptions of how their relationships with students influence learning outcomes?

Literature Review

The relationship between teachers and students is widely acknowledged as a crucial element in fostering better learning outcomes and academic achievement. Teachers significantly influence students' journey toward reaching their educational goals. The students often spend a large part of their week engaged in interactions with their teachers. Positive and supportive teacher-student interactions have been found to facilitate academic improvement, while negative or strained relationships may create barriers to effective learning (Cook et al., 2018). Overall, a strong teacher-student relationship is not only essential for academic advancement but also for the emotional and social development of children. This dynamic significantly impacts students' academic success, social behaviours and psychological well-being, making it a vital component of quality education. When the relationship is built on trust and mutual respect, it enhances students' participation and helps establish a nurturing classroom climate. Mallik (2023) emphasizes that such relationships involve understanding individual student needs, empowering them with choices, and motivating them to improve consistently. In primary education, this connection is particularly critical due to the developmental changes occurring across cognitive, emotional, and social domains. Educators who exhibit empathy and provide consistent guidance can help students feel secure and connected, allowing them to manage the complexities of early development. A strong bond with teachers during these years helps nurture students' critical thinking, self-confidence, and identity formation, as teachers also serve as mentors who support both academic and personal growth (Stephanou & Doukeridou, 2020). Positive teacher-student relationships not only foster academic interest but also improve classroom behaviour and student self-esteem. When teachers acknowledge and respond to each student's individual learning style and emotional needs, it encourages students to participate more actively in their education. Many scholars have highlighted the essential role these relationships play in establishing a motivating classroom culture. Teachers who show

genuine care help create an environment where students are motivated to be involved and enthusiastic about learning (Fang et al., 2023). When students enjoy being in class, they tend to stay focused, behave well, and remain actively engaged. Moreover, such relationships serve as protective factors for students who may be at risk of academic failure, helping them stay on track and build resilience (Longobardi et al., 2021). Teachers can foster strong relationships through effective communication, meaningful feedback, and a genuine interest in their students' development. Studies consistently show that learners who feel supported by their teachers tend to perform better academically. These relationships are anchored in trust, open dialogue, and mutual respect. When teachers show understanding and compassion, they create an inclusive classroom atmosphere where students feel safe, accepted, and willing to participate (Derakhshan et al., 2022). Researchers have classified teacher relationships into two main categories: intrapersonal, which involves a teacher's self-reflection and personal awareness and interpersonal, which focuses on their interactions with others, such as students and members of the school community. Among these, the interpersonal relationship between teachers and students plays a key role in shaping the emotional atmosphere of the classroom. When students feel a strong emotional bond with their teachers, they are more likely to engage actively in class discussions, ask questions, and share their ideas. This feeling of being acknowledged and respected enhances their involvement in learning activities (Johnston et al., 2022). A notable advantage of such positive teacher-student relationships is the increase in students' internal motivation. They tend to embrace academic challenges more confidently, remain dedicated to their studies, and pursue educational success when supported by an encouraging teacher. Teachers who cultivate these relationships help create inclusive and dynamic classroom environments that promote academic growth (Semeraro et al., 2020). Support from teachers also enhances students' belief in their capabilities, encouraging persistence even when faced with difficulties. The classroom becomes a welcoming space where learners feel confident in their abilities and open to new ideas. Students who enjoy strong bonds with their teachers not only perform better but also benefit emotionally. Positive interactions reduce anxiety, loneliness, and stress, leading to healthier mental states. Teachers who

understand their students' strengths and limitations can offer tailored guidance, creating a stable and affirming learning experience (Sethi & Scales, 2020). Additionally, a sense of belonging that stems from these relationships promotes active participation and a constructive attitude toward school. Good teacher-student relationships can also reduce behavioural problems. When students feel respected and heard, they are less likely to exhibit disruptive conduct. Instead, they tend to follow class norms, collaborate with peers, and maintain self-discipline. A harmonious classroom environment benefits all students by minimizing distractions and maximizing learning opportunities (Roorda & Koomen, 2021). In early education, where children are still developing emotional control and social skills, teacher support is especially crucial. A caring teacher helps students manage their emotions and encourages cooperation and kindness. Teachers who offer structure, fairness, and empathy help prevent behaviour issues and promote positive habits. In contrast, strained or inconsistent relationships can lead to defiance, disengagement, and low motivation. As Platz (2021) notes, teachers who prioritize communication and use reinforcement positively are more successful in building respectful classroom communities. In this way, strong student-teacher relationships serve as both a preventive and corrective strategy for behavioural management, laying the groundwork for emotionally secure and academically successful learners.

Materials and Methods

This research employed a descriptive quantitative approach, utilizing a causal-comparative design to investigate the effect of teacher-student relationship on students' motivation at primary school level in Lahore district. Data were collected through a questionnaire. The primary purpose of the study was

to explore the potential cause-and-effect of relationship between teacher-student on students' motivation in primary education. The study population included all primary school teachers of the Lahore District. Through a purposive sample technique, 400 primary school teachers were selected. The researchers developed a questionnaire to evaluate the effect of the teacher-student relationship on students' motivation. The instrument consisted of two sections: the first section collected demographic details such as teacher name and gender, while the second section comprised 24 closed-ended items focused on the study's core variables, rated on a five-point Likert-type scale. To ensure the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted with 50 teachers from public primary schools. The internal consistency of the 24-item scale was measured using Cronbach's Alpha, resulting in a reliability coefficient of 0.875, indicating strong consistency. The validity of the questionnaire was established through expert evaluation and feedback. For data collection, the researchers personally visited various public primary schools for boys and girls in Lahore district. The responses were analysed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) to identify general trends. In addition, an independent samples t-test was applied to assess whether there were statistically significant differences in teacher responses based on demographic factors such as gender. All ethical standards were strictly upheld throughout the data collection process. Participants were fully briefed about the confidentiality of their responses and informed that the data would be used exclusively for academic research. All collected information was securely stored and treated with strict confidentiality.

Results and Discussion

Table 1

Descriptive Analysis of the Nature of Teachers' Relationship with Students at the Primary School Level

Sr. No	Statements	M	SD
1.	I treat all students with respect regardless of their academic performance.	4.05	1.089
2.	I maintain a positive and supportive relationship with my students.	4.01	1.405
3.	I listen attentively when students share their concerns.	3.79	1.402
4.	My students feel comfortable approaching me for help.	4.16	1.279

5.	I make efforts to build trust between me and my students.	3.95	1.333
6.	I encourage open communication between myself and my students.	3.99	1.098
7.	I create a classroom atmosphere where students feel emotionally safe and valued.	4.01	.786
8.	I show empathy and understanding towards students' individual challenges.	4.04	.677

N=400

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics related to the nature of teachers' relationships with students. The item "My students feel comfortable approaching me for help" received the highest mean score of 4.16, reflecting a strong level of agreement among the participants. This indicates that the majority of teachers believe their students feel safe and confident when seeking their support. The results reflect a generally positive perception of the teacher-

student relationship, highlighting a classroom environment characterized by support, approachability, and empathy. Such relationships are instrumental in fostering trust and emotional well-being, which in turn promote student engagement, minimize anxiety, and enhance the overall inclusiveness and responsiveness of the learning space.

Table 2

Descriptive Scores about role of the teacher-student relationship at the primary school level

Sr. No	Statements	M	SD
1.	A healthy relationship with students improves classroom behaviour.	4.00	.988
2.	A good rapport with students encourages their active class participation.	4.04	.678
3.	A strong teacher-student relationship helps me manage the class effectively.	3.90	1.402
4.	Positive interactions with students improve their social development.	4.12	.898
5.	My relationship with students helps create a positive learning environment.	4.14	.876
6.	I believe my interactions with students directly influence their academic engagement.	4.01	.544
7.	Positive teacher-student relationships enhance students' interest in learning.	3.87	1.011
8.	A healthy teacher-student bond contributes to a more collaborative learning environment.	3.95	1.111

N=400

Table 2 describes the descriptive statistics related to role of the teacher-student relationship at the primary school level. The statement "My relationship with students helps create a positive learning environment" received the highest mean score of 4.14, categorized under "strongly agree." This suggests that a majority of teachers recognize the importance of building strong, positive connections with their students in fostering a

supportive and effective classroom climate. The data also indicate that primary school teachers are viewed not only as instructors but also as mentors, caregivers, and facilitators, contributing to the development of trust, emotional safety, and open communication. These nurturing relationships help students feel more secure and confident, leading to improved academic participation and enhanced social-emotional growth.

Table 3

Descriptive analysis about the effect of teacher-student relationship on students' motivation at primary school level

Sr. No	Statements	M	SD
1.	Students are more motivated when they feel valued by the teacher.	4.01	.823
2.	I notice that students work harder when they have a good relationship with me.	4.04	.778
3.	A caring relationship with students boosts their intrinsic motivation	4.32	.677
4.	My encouragement increases students' interest in learning	4.16	.888
5.	Students respond more positively to lessons when they feel emotionally supported.	4.12	.776
6.	Motivated behaviour among students improves when they feel valued and understood by their teacher.	4.01	.867
7.	A respectful teacher-student relationship boosts students' confidence in their learning abilities.	3.99	1.023
8.	Students tend to stay focused and show consistent effort when they feel connected to their teacher.	4.04	.655

N=400

Table 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics concerning the effect of teacher-student relationships on students' motivation at the primary school level. Of all the items, **Statement 3: "A caring relationship with students boosts their intrinsic motivation"** achieved the **highest mean score of 4.32**, placing it within the **"strongly agree"** category. This suggests that most teachers firmly believe that

cultivating a warm and supportive bond with students significantly enhances their **internal drive to learn**. The elevated mean score indicates a shared understanding among teachers that **emotional support and positive teacher-student interactions** are essential factors in encouraging young learners to engage actively and remain motivated in the classroom.

Table 4

Descriptive Scores about the teachers' perceptions of how their relationships with students influence learning outcomes

	N	M	SD
Teachers Perceptions	400	4.16	.913
Valid N(list wise)	400		

Table 4 outlines the descriptive statistics concerning teachers' views on how their relationships with students affect learning outcomes. The **mean score of 4.16**, categorized as **"strongly agree,"** indicates that most teachers strongly believe that **positive teacher-student relationships play a crucial role** in enhancing students' academic success. These results suggest

that when learners feel emotionally supported and recognized by their teachers, they are more inclined to be **motivated, actively involved, and perform better** in their studies. The data support the notion that **strong interpersonal connections in the classroom** promote better focus, greater classroom participation, and overall improved achievement among primary school students.

Table 5

Independent Sample t-test on Gender Difference

Gender	N	M	SD	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Male	180	3.91	.521	-1.653	248	.100

Table 5 indicates that gender did not have a statistically significant effect on teacher-student relationships, as the p-value was greater than the .05 significance level. An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the responses of male and female teachers. Under the assumption of equal variances, the analysis revealed no notable difference in relationship scores between male teachers ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.521$) and female teachers ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 0.671$); $t (-1.653)$, $p = 0.01$ (two-tailed). These results suggest that both male and female teachers exhibit similar patterns of interaction with their students at the primary level.

DISCUSSION

The core purpose of this study was to investigate how teacher-student relationships effect students' motivation in primary schools. The first objective aimed to explore the nature of teachers' relationship with student at primary school level. To address this, the research posed the question: What is the nature of teachers' relationship with student at primary school level? Analysis of the teachers' responses through descriptive statistics revealed that most teachers view their relationships with students as caring, supportive, and easily approachable. These findings are consistent with the work of Fang et al. (2023) and Malik (2023), who highlighted the significance of trust and emotional support in fostering secure and confident student-teacher interactions in early education settings. The second objective was to find out the role of the teacher-student relationship at the primary school level. The research question was: what is the role of the teacher-student relationship at the primary school level? The results indicated a high average score of 4.14, suggesting that teachers consider their relationships with students essential in creating a stimulating and positive learning atmosphere. These outcomes align with the perspectives of Churchill et al. (2011), who emphasized that teachers are instrumental in promoting student engagement and building a collaborative classroom culture. The third objective was to find out the effect of teacher-student relationship on students' motivation at primary school level. The guiding research question was: What is the effect of teacher-student relationship on students' motivation at primary school level? Findings showed that emotionally supportive relationships significantly enhance students'

intrinsic motivation. Teachers reported that encouragement and empathy from them contributed to students' internal desire to learn. This conclusion supports Semeraro et al. (2020), who asserted that emotionally secure teacher-student connections are key to cultivating a genuine passion for learning. The fourth objective was to explore teachers' perceptions of how their relationships with students influence learning outcomes. The corresponding question asked: What are teachers' perceptions of how their relationships with students influence learning outcomes? Descriptive analysis showed that teachers strongly believe their interactions with students positively affect academic achievement. This is supported by Fang et al. (2023), who found that strong teacher-student bonds are associated with improved classroom participation and higher academic success. In summary, the findings effectively addressed all research objectives and provided clear answers to the research questions. The evidence confirmed that strong, positive teacher-student relationships play a vital role in enhancing students' motivation, behaviour, and academic outcomes at the primary school level.

Conclusion

This study aimed to explore how teacher-student relationships effects students' motivation at the primary school level. The first objective focused on the nature of teacher relationship with student at primary school level. The results revealed that most teachers perceive their interactions with students as nurturing, accessible, and emotionally supportive, emphasizing the importance of creating a classroom atmosphere where students feel secure and confident in seeking help. Such relationships foster mutual trust and promote effective communication between teachers and learners. The second objective was to find out the role of the teacher-student relationship at the primary school level. The results indicate a high mean score ($M = 4.14$), indicating that teachers strongly believe their interactions are central to fostering a classroom culture that encourages student engagement and participation. Supportive teacher-student dynamics were viewed as essential for maintaining a positive and productive learning atmosphere. The third objective was to find out the effect of teacher-student relationship on students' motivation at primary school level.

Findings showed that students are more likely to be intrinsically motivated when they share respectful and caring bonds with their teachers. These relationships inspire students to take ownership of their learning and strive for academic achievement. The results highlight the influential role of teachers in shaping students' attitudes toward education and instilling a lifelong interest in learning. The fourth objective was to explore teachers' perceptions of how their relationships with students influence learning outcomes. The findings confirmed that emotionally supportive and trusting relationships contribute significantly to improved learning outcomes. Teachers noted that students who feel connected to their teachers tend to be more focused, less anxious, and better able to perform academically. The results indicate that positive teacher-student relationships are critical to students' academic, emotional, and behavioural development in primary education. These interactions not only enhance motivation and participation but also foster better behaviour and stronger academic outcomes. It is therefore recommended that teachers adopt inclusive, student-centred, and emotionally responsive teaching practices. By building secure, trusting, and encouraging classroom environments, teachers can help students become more motivated, confident, and successful learners.

Recommendations

Foster supportive and approachable teacher-student relationships at the primary level by encouraging teachers to be emotionally available, respectful, and attentive to individual student needs.

Provide professional development and training programs for primary school teachers focused on building trust-based, caring, and motivational classroom environments.

Encourage teachers to use positive reinforcement strategies that promote intrinsic motivation, such as praise, recognition, and emotionally engaging lesson delivery.

Integrate relationship-building activities into daily classroom routines to enhance student-teacher interaction, including group discussions, reflection sessions, and classroom community-building exercises.

Adopt student-centred teaching methodologies that create safe spaces for participation, self-expression, and collaborative learning, which are shown to improve both motivation and behaviour.

Establish mentoring systems within schools where experienced teachers model positive teacher-student relationship practices for new or less experienced educators.

Encourage regular reflection and feedback from students about their classroom experiences, to help teachers better understand students' emotional and academic needs.

School administrators should recognize the importance of emotional climate in the classroom and support policies that prioritize relational pedagogy alongside academic instruction.

Involve parents and caregivers in the educational process by promoting home-school communication and reinforcing supportive relationships beyond the classroom.

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