Exploring the Role of Teacher-Student Relationships in Academic Achievement: A Qualitative Study in Primary Schools

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This qualitative research study investigates the urgent role of teacher-student relationships in academic achievement among elementary school students in West Java, Indonesia. By employing interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and parent surveys, data was collected to understand the dynamics of these relationships and their impact on academic outcomes. Thematic analysis revealed key themes, emphasizing the importance of positive teacher-student relationships, factors influencing these interactions, and their significant correlation with academic achievement. The findings underscore the urgency of prioritizing positive teacher-student relationships in educational settings to foster a supportive learning environment and enhance students' academic success.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Educational researchers and practitioners have long recognized the important role that teachers play in students' lives, beyond simply imparting academic knowledge. The relationships that develop between teachers and students extend beyond the confines of the classroom, influencing students' attitudes towards learning, self-confidence and overall school experience. Particularly in the primary school years, when children are in the early stages of their cognitive and socio-emotional development, the nature of teacher-student interactions can greatly shape their educational trajectory.

Teacher-student relationships play an important role in promoting academic achievement. A positive teacher-student relationship can significantly affect students' motivation, engagement and overall well-being, which in turn can improve their academic performance [1]–[3]. Positive teacher-student relationships can help fulfill students' needs for security and acceptance, which are critical to their social and emotional development [1]. In addition, these relationships can contribute to the development of students' social competence, especially for those who may feel isolated from their peers [1]. Teachers who build strong relationships with their students can create a supportive learning environment that promotes academic success [2].

In addition, the quality of the socio-educational environment, including teacher-student relationships, can significantly affect students' academic performance [3]. A study conducted in Agboville found that school

performance depends on factors such as sense of security, learning conditions, teacher-student relationship conditions, and overall student satisfaction and well-being in the school environment [3]. In addition to teacher-student relationship, teaching style also plays a role in the motivation of students' academic achievement [4]. Interactive and facilitator teaching styles were found to be positively correlated with students' internal achievement motivation, while specialized teaching styles, formal authority teaching styles, and teacher-student interaction were found to be positively correlated with students' external achievement motivation [4]. In addition, pedagogical strategies and relationship building can influence student success [5]. Students believe that instructors should have the intention to build relationships with them, and relationship-building tactics used by instructors can lead to increased engagement and learning [5].

In conclusion, a positive relationship between teachers and students is an important factor in creating academic achievement. It can increase student motivation, engagement and well-being, leading to improved academic performance. In addition, teaching styles and relationship-building strategies can further contribute to student success in educational settings.

Positive teacher-student relationships have many benefits beyond academic achievement. Positive teacher-student relationships can help fulfill students' needs for security and acceptance, which are critical to their social and emotional development [6]. Strong teacher-student relationships can contribute to the development of students' social competence, especially for those who may feel isolated from their peers [6]. Positive relationships between teachers and students can increase a sense of school belonging, which is associated with better overall well-being [7], [8]. Aligned teacher-student relationships can help reduce dropout rates and increase student motivation and resilience, especially in "second chance" schools where students are at risk of dropping

out [9]. Positive teacher-student relationships have been associated with better social-emotional outcomes, such as reduced depressive symptoms and increased self-esteem [10]. In a study comparing a coaching psychology intervention with a positive psychology intervention, participants in the coaching psychology group, which emphasized the importance of the coaching relationship, experienced additional benefits in terms of subjective well-being and psychopathology beyond those experienced by the positive psychology group [11].

In summary, positive teacher-student relationships can contribute to various aspects of student well-being, including social and emotional development, social competence, sense of school belonging, resilience, mental health and overall well-being. These relationships play an important role in fostering a supportive learning environment, which goes beyond academic achievement, and helps students thrive in various aspects of their lives.

Teacher-student relationships have been recognized as an important factor in shaping students' academic achievement and overall educational experience. In the context of primary schools in West Java, Indonesia, fostering positive and supportive teacher-student relationships is particularly important, as this critical phase lays the foundation for a child's future academic journey. The quality of these relationships can have a profound impact on students' motivation, engagement and emotional well-being, ultimately affecting their academic performance and long-term success. In West Java, an Indonesian province rich in cultural heritage and a diverse educational landscape, understanding the dynamics of teacher-student relationships is all the more important. As teachers strive to create inclusive and supportive learning environments, they must navigate a range of cultural norms, diverse student backgrounds and individual learning needs. By exploring the impact of teacher-student relationships in this specific context, educators and

policymakers can gain valuable insights for designing effective strategies and interventions that can improve the academic achievement and overall well-being of primary school students.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

The literature on teacher-student relationships draws from several theoretical perspectives to understand the impact of these relationships on students' academic achievement and development. The three main theoretical frameworks underpinning this study are attachment theory, social learning theory and socio-emotional development theory.

Attachment theory, proposed by [12], emphasizes the importance of a secure emotional bond between teachers and students. According to this theory, when students feel emotionally connected to their teachers and experience a sense of security and trust in the learning environment, they are more likely to be receptive to learning, actively engage in class, and develop higher levels of academic achievement [13].

Social learning theory, proposed by [14], states that students learn not only from direct teaching, but also by observing and imitating the behavior of others, especially their teachers. Positive teacher-student relationships can model pro-social behavior, academic engagement, and resilience, thus influencing students' attitudes towards learning and academic achievement [15]–[20].

Theories of socio-emotional development highlight the link between emotional well-being and academic success. Teachers who build supportive and caring relationships with their students can encourage emotion regulation, self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation to learn, all of which are important factors in promoting positive academic outcomes [21].

2.2 Teacher-Student Relationship and Academic Achievement

A number of studies have consistently demonstrated the importance of positive teacher-student relationships in promoting academic achievement. [22] found that students who felt a strong emotional bond with their teachers were more likely to be motivated, engaged in their studies, and demonstrate higher academic achievement. In contrast, negative or conflictual relationships have been associated with lower levels of academic engagement, lower self-esteem, and poorer academic outcomes.

In primary school, where students are in the crucial stage of acquiring basic skills and attitudes towards learning, the impact of the teacher-student relationship is profound. Early positive experiences with teachers can shape students' attitudes and beliefs about themselves as learners, impacting their future academic journey [23].

2.3 Factors Affecting Teacher-Student Relationships

Several factors contribute to the development of positive teacher-student relationships. Teacher characteristics play an important role, with traits such as warmth, empathy, communication skills and respect being crucial in fostering supportive interactions [13]. Teachers who show a genuine interest in their students' well-being and academic progress are more likely to build strong relationships with their students.

In addition, student characteristics, including socioeconomic background, previous academic experiences and cultural norms, can influence the nature of teacher-student interactions [24], [25]. Teachers who are sensitive to individual differences and diverse needs will be better equipped to build effective relationships with their students.

The classroom environment also plays an important role in shaping teacher-student relationships. Factors such as class size, classroom management strategies, and overall school culture can facilitate or hinder the development of positive relationships between teachers and students [26].

3. METHODS

The research design for this study is qualitative, aiming to understand the nuances of the teacher-student relationship and its impact on academic achievement from multiple perspectives. A qualitative approach is well suited to exploring the underlying factors that influence these relationships and how they contribute to students' educational experiences in the context of West Java. Through in-depth interviews, observations and focus group discussions, the study sought to obtain rich and detailed data, which is essential for understanding complex interactions in educational settings.

3.1 Participants

Participants in this study were selected from primary schools in the West Java region, representing a diverse group of teachers, students and parents. A purposive sampling technique was used to ensure a mix of participants based on various criteria such as age, gender, socio-economic background and school location. By including multiple perspectives, this study aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the role of teacher-student relationships in academic achievement.

3.2 Data Collection

Various data collection methods were used to triangulate the findings and enhance the validity of the study. Data collection methods include:

Semi-structured Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with primary school teachers to gain insight into their experiences, perceptions and strategies regarding teacher-student relationships. The interviews explored factors that influence this relationship and its impact on students' academic outcomes.

Focus Group Discussions: Separate focus group discussions were organized with primary school students to capture their perspectives on their relationships with teachers. These discussions explored students' experiences, feelings and perceptions of how their interactions with teachers affect their learning and academic motivation.

Observation: Classroom observations were conducted to observe and document the nature of teacher-student interactions. These observations provide valuable real-time data on the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship and classroom atmosphere.

Parent Survey: Surveys were distributed to parents of primary school students to gather their perceptions of the teacher-student relationship and its impact on their child's academic achievement and well-being.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data collected from interviews, focus group

discussions and observations. Thematic analysis involved identifying recurring patterns, themes and concepts within the data. Data were coded and analyzed systematically to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research questions and to draw meaningful conclusions from the findings.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Results

This qualitative research study investigated the role of teacher-student relationships in academic achievement among primary school students in West Java, Indonesia. Through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, classroom observations and parent surveys, rich data was collected from teachers, students and parents to gain insight into the dynamics of this relationship and its impact on academic outcomes. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data, leading to the identification of key themes and patterns.

Theme 1: The Importance of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

The results underscored the important role of positive teacher-student relationships in shaping students' academic achievement. Teachers who show warmth, empathy and respect to students are perceived as creating a supportive and inclusive learning environment. Students report that they feel more motivated, engaged and connected to the learning process when they have positive relationships with their teachers. Parent surveys also indicated that students who have strong relationships with their teachers show higher levels of self-confidence and self-assurance.

Theme 2: Factors Affecting Teacher-Student Relationships

Various factors were found to influence the development of positive teacher-student relationships. Teacher characteristics, such as approachability, communication skills and a genuine interest in students' well-being, are crucial in building a sense of trust and safety in the classroom. In addition, classroom management strategies that encourage student participation and foster a sense of belonging also have a positive impact on teacher-student relationships. Cultural factors were also found to play a role, with teachers who were sensitive to cultural diversity and norms being better able to relate to their students.

Theme 3: Impact on Academic Achievement

The study revealed a significant correlation between positive teacher-student relationships and academic achievement. Students who reported positive relationships with their teachers showed higher levels of academic engagement, increased willingness to seek help when faced with challenges, and stronger intrinsic motivation to learn. Observational results further supported these findings, as classrooms with positive teacher-student interactions showed higher levels of on-task behavior and active student participation.

4.2 Discussion

The results of this qualitative study are in line with previous research highlighting the importance of positive teacher-student relationships in promoting academic achievement. The findings reinforce the theoretical frameworks of attachment theory, social learning theory and socio-emotional

development theory, which emphasize the impact of emotional connections and supportive interactions on students' learning experiences.

This study's emphasis on the importance of teacher characteristics in influencing these relationships highlights the critical role of teachers in creating a nurturing and conducive learning environment. Teachers who prioritize building positive relationships with their students can have a profound impact on their students' attitudes to learning, leading to improved academic outcomes.

This research also highlights the importance of recognizing cultural factors in teacher-student interactions. In a diverse context like West Java, where cultural norms and values vary, teachers who embrace and respect cultural diversity can improve their relationships with students, creating a more inclusive and accepting classroom atmosphere, this study supports previous research that has addressed such [22], [27]–[32].

The findings of this study have valuable implications for educators, school administrators and policy makers. By prioritizing the development of positive relationships between teachers and students, schools can create environments that support students' academic success and social-emotional development. Implementing professional development programs for teachers to improve their communication and interpersonal skills can also play an important role in fostering these relationships.

In addition, this study underscores the urgency of addressing teacher-student relationships as a top priority in education. As the foundation of a child's educational journey is laid in the first years of primary school, investing in creating positive and supportive teacher-student relationships is crucial to shaping students' future academic journey and their overall well-being.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The qualitative approach, while providing rich insights, may not fully capture the intricacies of the entire population. Future research could incorporate quantitative methodologies to complement the qualitative findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of teacher-student relationships on academic achievement.

In conclusion, the results of this qualitative study emphasize the importance of fostering positive teacher-student relationships in primary schools in West Java. The research reaffirms the critical role of teachers in shaping students' academic success and emotional well-being. By prioritizing these relationships and implementing evidence-based strategies, educators and policymakers can work towards creating more empowering and inclusive learning environments, which benefit the academic achievement and holistic development of primary school students in the region.

5. CONCLUSION

The urgency of this research lies in addressing the pressing need to cultivate positive teacher-student relationships in elementary schools in West Java. The study's results demonstrate that teachers who establish warm, empathetic, and respectful connections with their students foster a conducive learning environment. These positive relationships positively impact students' academic engagement, motivation,

and overall academic achievement. Cultural sensitivity and inclusive classroom practices also play essential roles in nurturing such relationships.

This research highlights the pivotal role of teachers in shaping students' educational journeys and overall well-being. Educators, school administrators, and policymakers must urgently prioritize initiatives that support the development of positive teacher-student relationships. Investing in teacher training programs to enhance interpersonal skills and cultural sensitivity can create an inclusive and empowering learning atmosphere for students.

By acknowledging the urgency of fostering positive teacher-student relationships, schools in West Java can work towards providing equitable educational opportunities for all students. Implementing evidence-based strategies to strengthen these connections will ultimately contribute to improved academic outcomes and a more holistic educational experience for elementary school students in the region. As a result, this research urges educational stakeholders to take immediate action to cultivate positive teacher-student relationships and create a nurturing educational environment for all students in West Java.

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