



## Teacher-Student Relationship from the Perspective of Gen Alpha Learners

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### Abstract

The teacher-student relationship plays a crucial role in shaping students' academic success, psychological well-being, and overall development, particularly during the elementary school years. The present research study aims to provide an in-depth analysis of the perception of teacher-student relationship from the perspective of Gen Alpha Learners. The study employed a quantitative research approach, to capture a comprehensive understanding of Gen Alpha learners' perspectives on their relationship with teachers. The participants included a diverse sample of Gen Alpha learners from multiple schools across different socio-economic backgrounds. The quantitative phase involved the distribution of a structured questionnaire designed to assess learners' perceptions on key aspects of the teacher-student relationship, such as trust, communication, support, and mutual respect. The survey also collected demographic information to identify potential variations in perception across different learner groups. The quantitative analysis revealed that overall, Gen Alpha learners' reported moderate level of perception towards their relationship with teachers. However, variations emerged based on demographic factors, such as gender, and medium of instruction indicating the need for a more nuanced understanding of their relationship. Implications of this study include the need for Gen Alpha educators and administrators to cultivate positive teacher-student relationship that foster trust, effective communication, and support. This research provides valuable insights into Gen Alpha learners' perceptions of teacher-student relationship, shedding light on the complex dynamics that shape their educational experiences.

**Keywords:** *Teacher-Student Relationship, Elementary Students, Academic Achievement, Behavior.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Students spend most of their day at school rather than at home. The development of many important interpersonal relationships occurs in

the living environment that is the classroom (Longobardi et al., 2016). Teachers spend almost 10 months a year with children for approximately five to seven hours a day. A teacher plays a pivotal

role in the development of a student's character. As a result, students will become better citizens and human beings. In this regard, the teacher-student relationship is extremely important. Relationships are a vital component of youth development, as has long been recognized (Scales et al., 2020). An effective teacher-student relationship would result in the student paying more attention in class and showing more respect to the teacher. Warm, sympathetic, and responsive exchanges between a teacher and student define a positive connection between them (Roorda et al., 2011; Engels et al., 2016). Positive educational experiences are thought to start with strong teacher-student relationship (Cook et al., 2018). For a learning experience to be approachable and inviting to students, a positive relationship between the teacher and student can be established for both individuals at either end. From this perspective, a teacher and student who can communicate effectively, respect each other in class, and demonstrate interest in learning from each other will establish a positive classroom relationship. A more positive learning environment is created in the classroom when students and teachers can communicate with one another. It may be particularly important at the young age to establish positive relationship with teachers to facilitate adjustments. Teacher-student relationship has a tremendous impact on their academic achievement and behavior. It is predicted that students will have a greater level of engagement in school when they have more positive relationship with their teachers. To prevent students from dropping out, it is essential to foster relationship between teachers and students as a mechanism to create a learning environment conducive to learning.

## 2. RELATED LITERATURE

Numerous studies from throughout the globe have demonstrated the significance of the teacher-student interaction for a variety of developmental outcomes (Wu et al., 2010; Allen et al., 2011; Cook et al., 2018). Relationship between teachers and students are multifaceted (Hagenauer et al., 2015). Students' achievement over time and engagement are predicted by teachers' perceptions of their relationship with them (Roorda et al., 2011; Gregory et al., 2014; Prewett et al., 2019). Improved teaching strategies and emotional support during learning

activities are ostensibly two ways in which teachers who exhibit positive and encouraging interactions with their students may increase engagement in the classroom setting (Hajovsky et al., 2020). Positive teacher-student interactions encourage students to develop and help them feel like members of the school and community (Ibrahim & El Zaatari, 2020). For students to become more motivated, teachers must put out effort in the way of stimulation (Aristika & Juandi, 2021). A positive teacher-student connection also indicates how well a classroom or institution can foster learning and socio-emotional growth (Ye et al., 2022). Students themselves state that they value having good teacher-student interactions at school and that these ties have a significant impact on their motivation, engagement, and prosperity (Thornberg et al., 2022). Jadoon et al., (2022) concluded in their study that there are more opportunities for children to acquire positive behaviors when teachers and students have a close relationship. Adolescents are more likely to obtain higher learning outcomes when they respect and accept the guidance of their teachers (Ma et al., 2022). Findings of the study conducted by Walker & Graham, (2021) indicate that Teacher-child interactions are influenced by child traits like gender, linguistic proficiency, and self-control. De Ruiter et al., (2022) found that it is important for teachers to control their emotions and facial expressions while interacting with certain students if they want their interactions with them to have an affective quality. A well-functioning classroom requires both teachers and learners to be involved. It is of utmost importance for teaching and learning to be polite among students and teachers. This helps prevent misbehavior on the part of students. It is possible that misbehavior can involve bothering others to prevent learning, which could possibly include long bursts of anger or arguing with teachers. It is important to note that the conditions that determine an individual's elementary school age criteria have changed substantially over the years. They accept everything that has happened without passing judgment. Elementary students perceive environments and relationship among themselves. The elementary students not only need the help of the teacher but also the assistance of their own elder friend since they have a lower level of emotional and psychological aspects of adaptation.

They might have problems with their relationship with teachers. So, the present study analyzes elementary students' perceptions towards the teacher-student relationship.

### 3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the perceived level of teacher-student relationship by elementary students.
- To find out the differences, if any, in the perception of teacher-student relationship of elementary students with respect to then demographic variables- Gender (Male/Female) and Medium of instruction (Tamil/English).

### 4. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

- H1: The perception of teacher-student relationship of elementary students is moderate.
- H2: There exists no significance difference between male and female elementary students in their perception towards teacher-student relationship.
- H3: There exists no significance difference between Tamil and English medium elementary students in their perception towards teacher-student relationship.

## 5. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 5.1. Research Method

The present study adopted survey method. A sample of 300 elementary students studying Eighth standard from schools in Karaikudi locality, Tamil Nadu by using simple random sampling technique.

### 5.2. Research Instrument

The investigator used a self-reported survey questionnaire to assess the perception of elementary students towards teacher-student relationship. In this questionnaire 84 statements were used to assess the perception of teacher-

student relationship. Target students were rated their perception using 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1- Strongly Disagree to 5- Strongly Agree.

### 5.3. Validity and Reliability

Before starting the actual data collection, the investigator conducted pilot study using self-reported survey questionnaire having 95 statements by selecting 50 students from a particular school in Karaikudi locality. The data obtained from pilot study underwent statistical analysis to find the difficulty index and discrimination level. The range values for Difficulty Index are 0.00 – 1.00 and the range values for Discrimination Index is -1.0 - +1.0. The items having difficulty level of  $< 0.2$  were eliminated. After eliminating the defective items, the tool consists of 87 items underwent to establish validity. The investigator has given the tool to 3 research experts in the field of Education and Educational Psychology. Based on their suggestions and recommendations some of the items were deleted and some of the items were modified thus content validity has been established. The final tool consists of 84 items which is used to analyze the perception of elementary students towards teacher-student relationship. The reliability of the tool was tested using split-half method, to enable fresh administration of the tool to assess the teacher-student relationship. The reliability of the tool was found to be 0.83.

The purpose of the survey was explained by the researcher prior to the actual data collection. Printed questionnaire was distributed to the targeted population. After the data collection, the investigator went through the questionnaire manually to ensure that the responses were given to all the items in the questionnaire. Incompleted responses were eliminated. The final sample included 300 survey responses which were analyzed statistically.

## 6. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The collected data were analyzed using statistical procedures like descriptive analysis and differential analysis. In descriptive analysis, Mean, Standard Deviation (SD), Percentage Analysis, were calculated, whereas in differential analysis t – test was employed to test the hypotheses which are subjected to the statistical findings.

**H1: The perception of teacher-student relationship of elementary students is moderate****Table-1:** Percentage analysis with respect to demographic variables

Variables	Category		Level of relationship					
			Low		Moderate		High	
			No	%	No	%	No	%
Gender	Male	118	28	23.7	75	63.6	15	12.7
	Female	182	24	13.2	122	67.0	36	19.8
Medium of Instruction	Tamil	192	34	17.7	114	59.4	44	22.9
	English	108	18	16.7	83	76.9	7	6.5
Total (N=300)			52	17.3	197	65.7	51	17

Table 5 shows the results of the elementary students perceived level of teacher-student relationship with reference to the demographic variables. From the total (n=320), it is inferred that the elementary students have perceived moderate level of teacher-student relationship. This means that the relationship between teachers and students falls somewhere in the middle of a spectrum ranging from negative to positive. A moderate teacher-student relationship suggests that there is a reasonable level of engagement, communication, and mutual respect between teachers and students, but it may not be exceptionally strong or deeply connected.

**H2: There exists no significant difference between male and female elementary students in their perception towards teacher-student relationship****Table-2:** Significance test with respect to the gender

Variable	Category	N	Mean Square	Standard deviation	t-value	Table value
Gender	Male	118	309.25	39.702	3.951	1.96
	Female	182	327.20	36.360		

Since the calculated t-value (3.951) is greater than the table value (1.96), at 5% level of significance, the hypothesis is rejected. It is inferred that there exists a significant difference between male and female elementary students in their perception of teacher-student relationship. From the means score presented in Table 2, girls perceived better teacher-student relationship when compared to boys, this may due to various factors. These factors can include social and cultural influences, and individual differences in behavior and communication styles.

**H3: There exists no significant difference between Tamil and English medium elementary students in their perception towards teacher-student relationship****Table-3:** Significance test with respect to the Medium of instruction

Variable	Category	Number	Mean square	Standard deviation	t-value	Table value
Medium of instruction	Tamil	192	323.76	40.472	2.273	1.96
	English	108	313.71	34.442		

Since the calculated t-value (2.273) is greater than the table value (1.96), at 5% level of significance, the hypothesis is rejected. It is inferred that there exists significant difference between the Tamil and English medium elementary students in their perception of teacher-student relationship. From the mean scores, Tamil medium students are better in their perception of teacher-student relationship when compared to English medium students. Perceptions of teacher-student relationship can be influenced by various factors, including language of instruction. In Tamil Nadu, where Tamil is the primary language, so Tamil medium students may feel more comfortable and connected with teachers who speak their native language.

## 7. DISCUSSION

The aim of the present study is to analyze the perception of teacher-student relationship by elementary students. The findings from the descriptive analysis, Table 1 shows that the teacher-student relationship perceived by elementary students is moderate. Academic achievements are strongly predicted by the degree of connection to the teacher (Longobardi et al., 2016). In a moderate teacher-student relationship, teachers likely maintain a professional demeanor, provide necessary guidance and instruction, and have some level of rapport with their students. However, it may not be characterized by an exceptionally close bond or extensive personal connections. The specific factors contributing to a moderate teacher-student relationship can vary and may depend on various aspects such as classroom dynamics, teaching methods, student behavior, and the overall learning environment. In primary school, students who have a positive attitude toward their teachers are more likely to maintain positive relationships with their teachers at later stages of their education and social emotions, societal involvement, and interpersonal skills are positively associated with teacher-student relationships (Wanders et al., 2020). The study conducted by Engels et al., (2016) found that positive teacher-student relationship in high school may prevent pupils from eventually losing interest in their behavior. Student perceptions of teacher respect and teacher use of exclusionary discipline were associated with higher restorative practices implementation levels. (Gregory et al., 2016).

From the differential analysis, it is inferred that there is a significant different between boys and girls and Table 2 shows that girls perceive higher teacher-student relationship than boys. Girls tend to be more verbal and expressive compared to boys, which may align more with the teaching methods and communication styles

commonly used by teachers. Societal and cultural norms can influence how girls and boys perceive and experience their relationships with authority figures, including teachers. Cultural expectations may promote nurturing and caring behaviors for girls, leading to more positive interactions with teachers. However, it is important to note that this finding cannot generalize all girls or boys studying in elementary school will necessarily have the same perception, as individual experiences can vary. Research in the past has supported the findings of the present study. Uslu, F., & Gizir, S. (2017) stressed in their study that it is more difficult for boys to form a close relationship with their teachers because boys are more conforming and self-regulatory than girls, resulting in a less familiar relationship between them and their teachers (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). From Table 3, it is inferred that there is a significant different between Tamil and English medium elementary students and the mean scores shows that Tamil medium elementary students perceive higher teacher-student relationship than English medium elementary students. Perceptions of teacher-student relationship can be influenced by various factors, including language of instruction. Across gender and language background, teacher-student relationship appeared to play an important role (Martin & Collie, 2019). Language plays a significant role in communication and understanding. They may incorporate local examples, traditions, and references into their teaching, which can enhance students' connection and engagement with the material and contribute to a positive teacher-student relationship. Tamil medium students might have stronger language skills in their native language compared to English medium students. This proficiency can enhance communication, comprehension, and engagement in the classroom, leading to a perception of a better teacher-student relationship.



## 8. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Professional development for teachers plays a crucial role in fostering positive teacher-student relationship. Teachers can benefit from professional development programs that focus on effective communication and active listening skills. These skills enable teachers to understand and respond to students' needs, concerns, and perspectives, fostering trust and open communication within the teacher-student relationship. Improving teachers' personal and professional abilities may create positive teacher-student relationship, minimize conflict, and treat students' emotional and behavioral challenges (Poulou, 2017). Teacher educators play an important role in the professional development of pre-service teachers by modelling behaviors and exemplifying the beliefs and attitudes that they are attempting to instill in pre-service teachers (Uslu & Gizir, 2017). Some possible suggestions for students and teachers to develop teacher-student relationship are as follows:

- The best possible way to have a good communication with teachers is to talk freely to the teachers and discuss problems.
- Students who are from the same school should let outside-student know the expectations of teachers.
- Teachers should pay attention to both the front-seaters as well as the back-seaters.
- Teachers are supposed to take some time out of the routine class and discuss with all the students about their grievances faced by them and invite the students for their suggestions and ideas. It is the duty of teachers to give equal status to all students of the class. Teachers are supposed to spend some time with students from outside, have more contacts, praise, encourage and socialize with all the students.
- To the low achievers, teachers should always give more care, help, sympathy, and give more space to them to come forward and work. They should also give them more challenging exercises, so that they are motivated and encouraged to show their skills, abilities, and talents.
- Students who are introverts should try to come forward, and teachers should also help them to do so.

## 9. CONCLUSION

In recent years, research has emphasized how teacher-student relationship can affect students' peer relationship, parents-children relationship, academic achievement, and social adjustment. There is a higher chance of school failure for students who do not form supportive relationship with their teachers. Several aspects of children's classroom experiences are affected by poor relationships between teachers and students. Children's ability to form relationship with teachers may become more constrained as they grow, which means the function of these relationships may shift from providing links to resources inside the classroom to providing links to resources outside. Researchers must conduct longitudinal studies that specifically examine teacher-student relationship to better understand these potential developmental shifts. Furthermore, more research needs to be conducted on the consequences of negative relationships between older students and teachers. Future research suggestions on teacher-student relationship can explore several areas to deepen understanding and contribute to the enhancement of educational practices. Conducting longitudinal studies that follow students and teachers over an extended period can provide insights into the long-term effects of teacher-student relationship on academic, social, and emotional outcomes. Investigating how cultural and contextual factors influence teacher-student relationship can provide valuable insights into the diverse experiences of students and teachers across different cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic contexts, and educational systems. With the increasing use of technology in education, future research can investigate how technology-mediated interactions impact teacher-student relationship.

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