

WORKING TO GET THERE: STUDENT AND TEACHER RELATIONSHIP TOWARDS A MEANINGFUL TEACHING AND LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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ABSTRACT

The enhancement of a meaningful learning experience becomes more pronounced when positive relationships exist between teachers and students. Student-teacher relationships (STR) are intricately tied to the everyday scenarios prevalent in the current generation. They exert significant effects on student engagement, encompass common challenges that may impede the establishment of positive rapport, and are perceived to influence the actualization of a meaningful teaching and learning experience. Employing a convergent mixed-method approach, the study utilized an expert-validated interview protocol and survey questionnaire. Audio-taped semi-structured interviews and surveys among purposively selected (n=16) and randomly picked (n=250) Grade 10 students and teacher-participants computed through the Raosoft sample size calculator in Southville 5A Integrated National High School were performed. Based on the descriptive statistical tools and thematic analysis with themes validation through focus group discussion, the most common STR situations relate to collaborative, encouraging, and respectful affairs among students and teachers. The most common effects of STR on students' engagement are linked to active participation, increased interest to learn, and improved self-confidence. Meanwhile, factors that hinder positive STR correlate with ineffective communication, poor classroom environment, and high teacher expectations. Further, positive STR impacts authentic learning, the realization of equity and equality, and the idea of learning from setbacks. To-Get-There and successfully achieve meaningful teaching-and-learning experiences, the study recommends ways to foster positive STR, addressing challenges, establishing effective communication including expectations, consistent provision of equal and equity opportunities, and the nurture of values among students and teachers such as empathy, respect, self-growth, and reflective thinking.

Keywords: Convergent-parallel mixed research approach, Meaningful teaching-and-learning experiences, Student-teacher relationships, Binan City, Laguna, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of the student-teacher relationship (STR) play a pivotal role in shaping the educational experience, exerting a profound

influence on both academic achievement and overall well-being. This relationship, characterized by its positivity and supportiveness, has been recognized as a key factor in enhancing motivation and success among learners (Martin, 2019; Vasquez, 2022). Conversely, negative or strained



STRs can pose significant obstacles to a student's ability to thrive academically and personally. As noted by Vipperman (2021), the impact of STR extends beyond mere interactions, influencing both behavior and the learning process.

A compelling argument suggests that fostering positive STRs not only cultivates an environment conducive to learning but also nurtures students' enthusiasm for academic engagement and achievement (Vipperman, 2021). Moreover, research indicates that teachers who prioritize creating supportive learning environments, treating all students with respect, maintaining high expectations, and facilitating individual success contribute to the establishment of strong bonds between students and educators (States et al., 2017). This interconnectedness between positive STRs and academic outcomes underscores the significance of cultivating a conducive and respectful learning atmosphere for both students and teachers alike.

Researchers have recently stressed the continuous increase in learners' anxiety and well-being issues. With this, there is a pressing need to investigate the everyday STR situations in these present days in schools that will guide a meaningful teaching and learning experience. Students with a broader range of relationships with different teachers and even student personnel tend to engage more in class and co-curricular activities (Martin, 2019). Additionally, according to Groves et al., 2015 and Solheim et al. 2018, the quality of student-teacher relationships is the most critical factor that affects student engagement. In this regard, building positive and supportive relationships between students and teachers can lead to increased student engagement and improved academic achievement. According to Article XI, Section 2 of the Code of Ethics for Professional Teachers, a teacher shall place a premium on self-discipline as the primary principle of personal behavior in all relationships with others and in all situations.

Correlated to this, "professional relationships" can refer to their connections as teachers with their coworkers, students, parents, guardians, and the larger community. The success of a teacher's teaching profession is aided by their ability to establish proper working connections with

all parties involved in the educational system (Gunawan et al., 2018; Bafadal et al., 2018). Subsequently, this professional STR includes teachers as transmitters of knowledge and students as passive recipients. Putri and Imaniyati (2017) and Astuti et al. (2019) stated that using teacher professional ethics has a favorable relationship with teachers' teaching performance, which can enhance student learning outcomes.

Literature on effective teaching and learning suggests several barriers and challenges that impede the realization of positive STR. Studies revealed that students' emotions, such as enjoyment, boredom, frustration, and anger, were experienced while engaging in learning tasks. Teachers who engage students in course lessons to prevent academic boredom, poor self-efficacy and confidence, and anxiety-related concerns tend to attain meaningful teaching and learning and promote lifelong learning. A study also found that students' perceptions of their relationships with teachers, including feelings of trust and respect, can play a role in their academic emotions and self-regulated learning. (Kula, 2022). Recently, because of the pandemic, online student-teacher interactions become less effective than in-person interactions (Hebebcı et al., 2020; Niemi & Kousa, 2020). Due to a lack of nonverbal cues and spontaneous interactions in face-to-face settings, students are less engaged, and practical learning experiences are compromised.

The study is anchored to the Self-Determination Theory, which explains the linkage between teacher-student relationships and good school adaptation or motivation by fulfilling three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which is crucial for motivation and holistic well-being. Autonomy refers to the sense of control over one's life and decisions; competence refers to feeling capable and effective in one's actions; and relatedness refers to feeling connected and valued in relationships with others. SDT posits that fulfilling these needs leads to more intrinsic and sustained motivation. In contrast, deprivation of these needs can lead to decreased motivation and adverse outcomes (Deci and Ryan, 1993, as cited by Ackerman, 2018). This theory explains that learners have a natural tendency to explore their



surroundings, grow, learn, and develop; thus, cultivating inherent interests within the learner is an essential goal in education. Another theory that the study was based on is the attachment theory. The theory explains that early relationships between infants and caregivers (e.g., parents, and grandparents...) shape how individuals form future relationships with others. Secure attachments result in positive outcomes, whereas insecure attachments result in adverse outcomes. The theory of attachment is an ethical approach to personality development (Salter et al., 1991). To conceptualize, these cited theories utilized the idea that relationship helps to develop a more collaborative and enjoyable work environment. According to the concept of inner working models of attachment relationships, early relationships shape students' self-concept and successful future undertakings.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study delves into the everyday scenarios of student-teacher relationships (STR) prevalent in the current generation. It aims to examine the effects of STR on student engagement, identify common challenges impeding positive rapport between students and teachers, and explore the perceived impact of STR on the realization of a meaningful teaching and learning experience.

METHODOLOGY

The convergent-parallel mixed research approach was utilized to investigate the perceived impact of common student-teacher relationships in the new generation in realizing meaningful teaching and learning experiences. The research process can be qualitative and quantitative, having equal weight (QUAL+QUAN; Morse 1991 as cited by Demir and Pismek, 2018). The research concurrently conducts the qualitative and quantitative approach, having the same phase and process, analyzes the two components, and interprets the results together (Cresswell and Pablo-Clark, 2011, as cited by Demir and Pismek, 2018).

The participants comprised sixteen (eight (8) students and eight teachers) for qualitative and 250 Grade 10 students and faculty members of the Southville 5A Integrated National High School. The 16 purposively selected participants for qualitative were based on a direct adviser-advisee relationship (3 class advisers and 3 of their students; 1 paper-adviser and the editor-in-chief student; and 4 SSC and club advisers and four officer-students). Additionally, faculty were teaching for about five years and above, while students were enrolled in SY 2022-2023 and are currently a candidate for graduation. Meanwhile, participants for the quantitative include 250 students and teachers among 707 total population. The sample size was computed using a Raosoft sample size calculator with a 5% margin of error and 95% confidence level.

Permission to conduct the data gathering and ethical considerations such as parent consent for the students and consent to participate for the faculty-respondents were gathered. Pseudonyms were given to co-researchers following the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Necessary data were gathered through semi-structured interviews ranging from 30 minutes to 1 hour and physical survey collection guided by an expert-validated interview protocol. Both protocols for the interviews and the survey tool were formulated according to the study's rationale. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim and were returned to the co-researchers for checking and validation.

The researchers employed thematic analysis and descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, and mean. Discovered themes and recommendations were validated through a follow-up focus group discussion (FGD).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following results emerged anchored on the gathered data.

1. Common Existing Student-Teacher Relationships



Table 1
Common Existing Student-Teacher Relationships

Quantitative data	Qualitative data
Top 5 Mean Scores from Survey Questionnaire	Merged Themes from the Interviews
Allowing choices on how they perform and interpret specific tasks or assignments (m=3.58, Very Common)	RIPES as most common STR Situations...
Guiding and supporting in doing tasks/assignments helped me to increase confidence in myself (m=3.52, Very Common)	Respecting the environment, especially in the promotion of inclusivity and diversity.
Providing an interesting and entertaining discourse during lectures and activities inside and outside the classroom (m=3.52, Very Common)	Inspiring and motivating classroom participation because of the recognition, empathy, and open communication
Providing a learning environment that allows growth and the fulfillment of my potential for intellectual, emotional, physical, and psychological growth (m=3.50, Very Common)	Proactive and collaborative situations to address students' concerns and needs.
Respecting and including my opinion and abilities in the learning process and in producing activities for my classmates and teammates (m=3.50, Very Common)	Encouraging and assisting relationships with those students with poor academic performance and well-being.
	A supportive approach to students' problems, wants, and the activities the organization would like to conduct.

Table 1 exhibits the common student-teacher relationships in this new era related to collaborative, encouraging, and respectful learning environments. Both the survey and interview responses among participants and co-researchers highlight situations wherein students and teachers work together (allowing choices, guiding, and collaborating), inspire one another (supporting, allowing growth and fulfillment, motivating, and encouraging), and regard each other (allowing to choose, respecting opinions and abilities, and providing respectful learning environment). Parallel to the study finding of DeVito (2016), students nowadays are active partners in the learning process, especially when they have the opportunity to take part in decision-making, are motivated, and find the learning environment respectful.

Likewise, the result supports the idea of the self-determination theory, that satisfying the intrinsic and supporting the goals of a learner would lead to autonomy of learning, greater self-competence, and relatedness to others and sudden situations. Numerous studies have demonstrated that both intrinsic and the more self-determined types of extrinsic motivation contribute to engagement and optimal learning. Satisfying basic psychological needs stimulates a deep approach to learning and reduces avoidance strategies, which leads to increased academic achievement and better relationships with other people (Salikhiova et al., 2020). Characteristics of

the most favorable conditions for learning have been studied, and it stresses that a good student-teacher relationship is characterized as respectful and sensitive to students' needs, motivating, skilled in their teaching, and an expert in engaging students. Teacher support was associated with collaboration, respect, appreciation, and fairness, which are vital to students' learning (Bergmark & Kostenius, 2017).

2. Effects of Positive STR on Student's Engagement

Table 2
Effects of Positive STR on Student's Engagement

Quantitative data	Qualitative data
Top 5 Mean Scores from Survey Questionnaire	Merged Themes from the Interviews
I am more likely to attend class regularly and participate in classroom discourse (m=3.62, highly evident)	SIDED as effects of positive STR...
I feel more motivated to improve my academic performance through constructive feedback and recognize my strengths (m=3.52, Highly Evident)	Stimulated interest in learning and being connected.
I am more likely to understand the discussion very well and be more ready to apply it. (m=3.44, Highly Evident)	Increased self-awareness and self-belief in doing tasks and school activities.
I feel more interested in exploring new things and challenging activities that cater to my learning style. (m=3.40, Highly Evident)	Decreased anxiety and shyness in participating in classroom discourse.
I'm more appreciative to my teachers especially when they acknowledge my mistakes and provide constructive feedback and solutions for improvement. (m=3.40, Highly Evident)	Enriched excitement and interest to work with others such as classmates, teachers' administrators, and the entire school community.
	Dynamic and lively participation among students

The main effects of a positive student-teacher relationship are linked to Active Participation, Increased Interest in learning, and Improved Self-confidence. Active participation was identified as the effect of positive STR due to respondents' strong agreement that they are more likely to attend classes regularly and participate fully. In contrast, dynamic participation with enriched excitement was thought of. Learning results are enhanced when students actively participate in group discussions with instructors and peers. This situation shows that good student-relationship exists (Li et al., 2022).

Increased interest to learn was developed among the student-respondents anchored to their strong agreement that they feel an improvement in their academic performance, likely to understand the discussion, more interested in exploring, and a direct response of having more interest to learn



and be more connected. Vazquez (2022) mentioned that teachers with relative strategies for building strong relationships with students lead to improved attainment and application of the intended learning outcomes, academic achievement, well manners, and increased motivation to comprehend and learn. Moreover, the study by Kula (2022) found that teachers who can engage students in lessons to prevent academic boredom will surely help students increase their learning.

Furthermore, improved self-confidence is one of the effects of the positive STR, as most of the respondents strongly agree and answered it directly. Signs that reflect this study's finding include responses, "I feel more motivated," "I am more interested," increased connectedness, decreased anxiety and shyness, and the enriched excitement to work collaboratively. Students with positive and encouraging relationships with their teachers tend to feel more in control of their education because they are more likely to feel at ease asking questions, getting assistance, and participating in class discussions. This feeling of control can boost engagement in the learning process and improve academic performance (Skipper & Douglas, 2015). In addition, according to Li et al., 2022, when a teacher shows students that they are trustworthy and interested in listening and making further efforts, they are more likely to be confident in completing more complex tasks.

3. Challenging Factors that Hinder STR Towards Meaningful Teaching & Learning

What hinders positive student-teacher relationship to produce meaningful teaching-and-learning experiences are: ineffective communication (misunderstanding of the explanations, unclear and untimely feedback, and incomplete, vague, and unclear instructions and directions), poor class environment (diverse personality, conflicts and tensions, incomplete and insufficient materials and equipment, misbehavior and unruly attitudes, inadequate and lacking resources), and high teachers' expectations (anxious and afraid in front of teachers, high

standards, and teacher's anticipations are too high).

Table 3
Challenging Factors that Hinder STR Towards Meaningful Teaching & Learning

Quantitative data	Qualitative data
Top 5 Mean Scores from Survey Questionnaire	Merged Themes from the Interviews
Being anxious and afraid around my classmates and teachers, especially when I was asked to proceed in front of the classroom (m=3.08, Agree)	Delay as factors hindering positive STR...
Conflicts and tensions because of the students and teachers' diverse personality (m=3.08, Agree)	Different behaviors, beliefs, and culture.
Difficulty improving students' work/outputs due to unclear and untimely feedback. Misunderstanding to explanation adds to the problem (m=3.05, Agree)	Elusive and vague instructions and directions from teachers.
Incomplete and inefficient equipment and materials needed in accomplishing activities and classroom works (m=3.04, Agree)	Lacking and Inadequate resources in class and in accomplishing activities.
High standards of teachers and advisers in dealing with performance tasks and doing org's projects (m=3.02, Agree)	Anticipations are too high, believing that students can do everything.
	Yobbish misbehavior and unruly students

Teachers should clearly explain and communicate criteria through rubrics. Effective communication allows students to participate in decision-making and create more engaging and motivating learning realizations. When students clearly understand what is expected of them because teachers have talked about it, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning and be motivated to meet the teacher's high expectations. (DeVito, 2016).

Another study consistent with the study findings is Kula's (2022) research, which found that teachers' high standards and perception of students can cause high anxiety and well-being issues. Trust and respect will be compromised, influencing their academic emotions and self-regulated learning. Research by Jiang et al. (2021) has shown that strict teachers can hurt students' motivation and learning. Students who perceive their teachers as strict and with high expectations may be less likely to participate in class and may have lower levels of academic achievement.

The learning environment comprises both physical and human elements, and students' academic achievement and interpersonal relationships can be influenced by these conditions. The human component plays a crucial role in shaping engagement and overall student success. Simultaneously, the physical aspect of



the learning environment has the potential to either facilitate or hinder the learning process. Barriers within the learning environment impede progress towards achieving intended learning outcomes and the broader institutional objectives (Malik & Rizvi, 2018).

4. Perceived Impact of STR Towards Meaningful Teaching and Learning Experience

Table 4
Perceived Impact of STR Towards Meaningful Teaching & Learning Experience

Quantitative data Top 5 Mean Scores from Survey Questionnaire	Qualitative data Merged Themes from the Interviews
I can apply and achieve my academic goals when my teachers/mentors provide guidance and support (m=3.54, Strongly Agree)	BEST as the impact of positive STR...
I feel loved and equal with everyone because of my positive rapport and passionate teachers/mentors (m=3.52, Strongly Agree)	Better attainment of learning is evident. Equal opportunities and provision of special needs are given when necessary.
I believe that with a positive STR with my teachers/mentors, I'm secure and cared and I'm in an encouraging learning environment (m=3.47, Strongly Agree).	Engagement is increased.
Having positive STR, I'm more aware of my mistakes/flaws, and that these mistakes/flaws become my strengths (m=3.45, Strongly Agree)	Setbacks and imperfections were given feedback and actions for improvement were implemented.
I am more inclined to take responsibility for my learning when I feel connected to my teachers/mentors (m=3.40, Strongly Agree)	Timely and relevant assessments and corrections are fostered and promoted.

Positive student-teacher relationship impacts the Attainment of Authentic Learning (application and achievement of academic goals, accountability for own learning, better attainment of learning, and relevance are promoted), Realization of Equity and Equality in Schools (feeling of love, equality with everyone, secured, cared, encouraged), and teaching the idea of Learning from Setbacks (Being aware of flaws/mistakes then turning to one's strengths, improvement are implemented, and corrections are fostered).

According to Li et al. 2022, learning results are enhanced and fruitful when students actively participate with teachers in challenging tasks and extended activities. Students' involvement and teachers' collaboration drive students to explore the relevance of what they are learning, fully understand the content, and easily apply the competencies. Positive teacher and student rapport can lead to a lifelong love of learning and

a greater sense of academic achievement, added to Kula (2022).

In connection with the promotion of equity and equality, teachers are expected to ensure that the needs and requirements of each student are taken into utmost consideration to ascertain the success of all students. Equality and equity in the classroom are significant factors that improve quality teaching and learning. It is indispensable to develop equality and equity in the school environment to enable students to acquire essential values such as empathy, acceptance, and respect and be involved in promoting an inclusive learning environment (Paul, 2019).

Moreover, with positive STR, students learn to evaluate and manage their behavior, have better academic performance, and have positive attitudes toward themselves and others (Varga, 2017). Good teacher support is described as respect, appreciation, and fairness, vital for growth and improvement. Students become aware of their weaknesses and strengths and can apply a growth mindset – leading to a change in perspectives, behavior, and attitudes toward life (Bergmark & Kostenius, 2017).

CONCLUSIONS

The most common student-teacher relationships are relative to collaborative, encouraging, and respectful situations. Due to positive rapport, active participation, increased interest to learn, and improved self-confidence become observable and evident among the learners. However, teachers and the entire school community should carefully plan to avoid ineffective communication, poor learning environment, and too high expectations of learners, as these are the factors that hinder positive and sound associations in the school. Lastly, positive STR impacts the attainment of authentic learning, the realizations and promotions of equality and equity, and learning from mistakes and one's imperfections.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study findings' implications suggest fostering positive student-teacher relationships



and addressing the challenges and factors that delay its practice and observance among the institution members. Effective communication of teachers' feedback, assessment, and expectations should be well-established. Academic leaders should also prioritize the sustainable provision of the needs of the students to concretize inclusive education (equity and equality). Lastly, DepEd's maka Diyos, makatao, makakalikasan, at makabansa core values alongside empathy, respect, love of learning and growth, and reflective thinking should be taught well to students to make positive STR in a more significant position.

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Jenalyn Gamboa is a senior student of elementary education at the Polytechnic University of the Philippines – Biñan Campus, where she has consistently earned the President's Lister honor for her outstanding academic performance. She also benefits from the Iskolar ng Binan scholarship program, which recognizes and supports her excellence and financial needs. She has presented her study titled "Working To-Get-There: Student-Teacher Relationship Towards a Meaningful Teaching and Learning Experience" at the 1st Research Colloquium in Binan. She is passionate about teaching and learning and aims to foster positive and meaningful interactions with her students in the future. She is passionate about teaching and learning and hopes to inspire young minds with her dedication and enthusiasm.



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Angelene N. Lacson is currently a 4th-year student taking a Bachelor of Elementary Education in Polytechnic University of the Philippines Biñan Campus. She is one of the authors of the research entitled "Working To-Get-There: Student Teacher Relationship Towards a Meaningful Teaching and Learning Experience," presented at the previous 1st Biñan Research Congress. She also has had a consistent dean's lister in her current school from 1st year until the present.



Ms. Patricia Sugarno is a passionate student pursuing a Bachelor's in Elementary Education. She researched with her team how the student-teacher relationship affects the meaning of teaching and learning experiences. She wants to apply the insights from her research to her future teaching practice and create a supportive and engaging learning environment for her students. Patricia is an outstanding student who consistently earns a place on the President's and Dean's lists. She is also a recipient of the 'Iskolar ng Biñan'

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