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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe and understand positive middle-years teacher-student relationships and their effects on students in order to ascertain if the study’s data would be consistent with the study’s conceptual framework. The following three research questions provided the direction for this study:

1. In what ways do middle-years teachers create positive teacher-student relationships?
2. What are middle-years teachers’ understandings of the effects of positive teacher-student relationships?
3. What are middle-years teachers’ understandings of why positive teacher-student relationships are important?

A conceptual framework was developed to guide this study, which outlined the characteristics of positive teacher-student relationships as: having high expectations, networking with parents, creating dialogue with students, practicing social skills, practicing appropriate self-disclosure, and using rituals and traditions in the classroom (Griffin, 1998). Five effects of positive teacher-student relationships on students were identified: improved self-concept, improved motivation to learn, increased desire for others’ well-being, increased feeling of security and attachment, and increased desire to improve society (Epp, 1995).

Qualitative research was used in this study. Using semi-structured interviews, data were collected from a purposeful sample of five middle-years teachers. Mayan’s (2001) latent content analysis was the process used in analyzing the research data in this study.

The teachers in this study indicated there were five ways they created positive teacher-student relationships: through classroom management and discipline of their students, by having high expectations for their students’ behaviour and academics, by communicating with both
students and their parents, by being positive with students, and through spending time with their students outside of the classroom. The participants indicated positive teacher-student relationships had effects on both students and the school. The interviewees found the effects of positive teacher-student relationships on students were: having a sense of belonging and being motivated to learn. The teachers noted the effects of positive teacher-student relationships on the school were: a decrease in student misbehavior and a safe school environment. The study’s participants found teacher-student relationships were important, because of the positive effects on students and the school.

Examining these and other findings could provide teachers, administrators, and researchers with some understanding of positive teacher-student relationships and their effects on students and the school. Hopefully, this understanding of positive teacher-student relationships could help middle-years teachers to develop positive relationships with their students, thereby providing students with a sense of belonging, improving students’ motivation to learn, decreasing student misbehavior, and improving the school environment.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

- Purpose of the Study ......................................................... 1
- Research Questions .......................................................... 1
- Significance ................................................................. 1
- Researcher’s Positionality ............................................... 2
- Delimitations ................................................................. 2
- Limitations ................................................................. 2
- Assumptions ................................................................. 3
- Organization of the Study .................................................. 3

**CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

- What are Relationships? ................................................... 4
- Types of Relationships .................................................... 4
  - Teacher-Student Relationships as Influential Relationships ............ 5
  - Characteristics of Influential Relationships ................................ 5
- Positive Teacher-Student Relationships ................................ 6
- Characteristics of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships ............... 6
  - High Expectations ....................................................... 7
  - Networking ..................................................................... 7
  - Dialogue ....................................................................... 7
  - Practice ........................................................................ 7
  - Self-Disclosure ............................................................. 7
  - Using Rituals and Traditions ............................................. 7


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Effects of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships</th>
<th>19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved Self-Concept</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Motivation to Learn</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Desire for Others’ Well-Being</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Feeling of Security and Attachment</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased Desire to Improve Society</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual Framework</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Design</th>
<th>30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case Study</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Use a Case Study</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviewing: Method of Data Collection</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Types of Interviews</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why Use Interviews?</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coding the Data</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorizing the Data</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating the Categories and Finding Themes</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF THE DATA

Description of the Interview Participants

Participant #1: Jackie
Participant #2: Christine
Participant #3: Steven
Participant #4: Helen
Participant #5: Nathan

How Positive Teacher-Student Relationships are Created

Classroom Management and Discipline

Classroom Expectations and Routines
Fairness and Consistency

Having High Expectations for Behavior and Academics

Communication
How to Communicate with Students
How to Communicate with Parents

Being Positive with Students
Being a Role Model .................................................. 58
Showing Kindness and Care toward Students .................. 60
Showing Interest in Students’ Lives .............................. 61
Being Encouraging .................................................. 63
Spending Time with Students Outside of the Classroom ........ 64
How Participants Spent Time with Students Outside of the Classroom .................................................. 64
Why Participants Spent Time with Students Outside of the Classroom .................................................. 66
The Effects of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships ........ 69
The Effects of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships on Students .................................................. 69
Sense of Belonging .................................................. 69
Motivation to Learn .................................................. 73
The Effects of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships on School .................................................. 76
Decrease in Student Misbehavior .................................. 76
Safe School Environment .......................................... 80
Summary .............................................................. 85

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS .......... 87
Review of the Research Questions .................................. 87
Review of the Methodology ........................................ 87
Discussion of the Findings ......................................... 90
In What Ways do Middle-Years Teachers Create Positive Teacher-Student Relationships? .......................... 90
Using Classroom Management and Student Discipline………. 90
Having High Expectations for Behavior and Academics……….. 93
Communicating with Students and Parents…………………… 94
    Communicating with Parents…………………………… 94
    Communicating with Students………………………….. 95
Being Positive with Students…………………………………… 97
    Being Kind and Caring…………………………………… 97
    Being a Role Model……………………………………… 98
Showing Interest in Students……………………………………. 99
Encouraging Students…………………………………………. 100
Spending Time with Students Outside the Classroom………… 101
What are Middle-Years Teachers’ Understandings of the Effects of
    Positive Teacher-Student Relationships…………………… 102
The Effects of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships on
    Students…………………………………………………….. 103
    Having a Sense of Belonging……………………………… 103
    Being Motivated to Learn…………………………………. 104
The Effects of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships on the
    School………………………………………………………… 105
    Decrease in Student Misbehavior………………………… 105
    Safe School Environment…………………………………. 106
What are Middle-Years Teachers’ Understandings of Why Positive
    Teacher-Student Relationships are Important?………………. 108
Appendices

A. Letter to Request Permission to Conduct Research to the Director of Education… 131
B. Letter of Information to Principals………………………………………………….. 133
C. Invitation of Participation to Teachers………………………………………… 135
D. Possible Semi-Structured Interview Questions………………………………… 137
E. Consent Form……………………………………………………………………………. 138
F. Consent for Release of Transcripts………………………………………………… 141
List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework………………………………………………………….. 28

Figure 2. Graphic Summary: How Positive Teacher-Student Relationships are Created… 68

Figure 3. Graphic Summary: The Effects of Positive Teacher-Student Relationships……84

Figure 4. Graphic Summary: Presentation of the Data……………………………………86

Figure 5. Original Conceptual Framework………………………………………………113

Figure 6. Revised Conceptual Framework………………………………………………116