

The Impact of Self-Worth and Teacher-Student Relationship on Students: A Comprehensive Review

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Abstract: This paper conducts a comprehensive review of variables and connections related to students' performance in connection with self-worth and teacher-student relationship within the educational setting. Findings from different countries indicate that self-worth has a positive correlation with academic performance, yet this relationship is intricate and influenced by multiple factors such as family, mindset, and culture. Besides, teacher-student relationship influences academic achievements, coping strategies, and social-emotional abilities through different mediating variables. Diverse measurement scales are employed across studies, accompanied by limitations like regional and cultural biases. Nevertheless, existing research suffers from constraints such as narrow geographical scopes and insufficient sample diversity. Research findings underline the complexity of these interrelationships, and proposes that future research should adopt a multi-pronged approach, conduct cross-cultural and longitudinal investigations, and explore the underlying mechanisms to foster the development of educational interventions.

1 INTRODUCTION

In the educational realm, promoting the holistic development of students has invariably been a key objective. As a subjective cognition and feeling of their own value, self-worth exerts a significant influence on the growth and process of teenagers (James, 1890). Teacher-student relationship, being one of the most essential interpersonal connections within the school context, holds a prominent role in the development of students as well (Dewey, 1930).

Educators have long recognized the importance of these factors. The notion of self-worth was initially put forward by the psychologist William James in the late 19th century. He proposed that self-worth was connected to the perceived achievement in significant aspects of life (James, 1890). Over time, the concept of self-worth has evolved and become central to various psychological theories, especially in the fields of motivation and human development (Harter, 1999).

As for the concept of teacher-student relationships, explored by various scholars over time, was notably emphasized by John Dewey. Dewey highlighted the importance of mutual respect and cooperation in fostering supportive learning environments (Dewey, 1930).

In today's increasingly complex educational environments, where student needs are diverse and multifaceted, it has become even more crucial to understand how the elements are interrelated (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In practical situations, self-worth can notably impact student's motivation and confidence in learning, thereby influencing their academic performance (Harter, 1999). Similarly, a strong teacher-student relationship can offer emotional support and guidance, helping to bolster both self-worth and academic success (Pianta, 1999).

2 RESEARCH OBJECTS

2.1 Self-Worth

Self-worth, which is characterized as the comprehensive self-evaluation that an individual holds with respect to themselves as a unique being (Harter, 1985), is widely considered to be a significant dimension in the realm of one's social and cognitive evolution (Harter, 1999). It is a multi-dimensional structure with a broad impact on one's cognition, emotion, and behavior, being influenced mainly by physical condition, family atmosphere, past experience, academic achievement, and social

expectations in the interpersonal environment. People in different regions and cultures have different definitions and understandings of self-worth, and there are significant differences between China and foreign countries. Based on the Chinese cultural background, according to the definition of adolescent students' sense of self-worth by Huang and Yang, self-worth has a multi-level system (Huang & Yang, 1998).

2.2 Academic Performance

Academic Performance is a multi-dimensional concept that combines numerous aspects such as students' knowledge acquisition, ability display, goal achievement, and the impact on future development during the learning process. It is an important indicator for measuring students' performance in the academic field.

2.3 Student-Teacher Relationship

The teacher-student relationship plays a crucial role in adolescents' development and mental health. This bond, established through educational interactions, encompasses their respective roles, positions, and mutual attitudes. As a vital component of the school environment, this relationship significantly impacts student growth (Pianta, 1999).

3 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF-WORTH AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

3.1 Academic Motivation

This part will cover several typical aspect that tightly related to academic performance. The first one is academic motivation.

Fahd. et al. did a survey to examine how self-worth influenced the academic motivation of university students. Samples are collected from the group of college students in The Islamia University of Bahawalpur in Pakistan through simple random sampling, containing 129 undergraduate, graduate, and master students from the university, involving 50 male students and 79 female students. Most respondents completed the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. This sampling method is relatively scientific as it ensures that every student has an equal probability of being chosen, thereby minimizing selection bias.

The study used developed self-worth contingency scale (Crocker et al., 2003) which has 35 items to measure seven aspects, including others' approval, physical appearance, outperforming others in competition, academic ability, family love and support, being a moral person, and God's love. Participants were required to rate each question of the scale by using Likert scales ranging from 1 ("hardly at all") to 7 ("very much"). The Cronbach's alpha was 0.86 for the analysis of reliability of this scale. As for the student motivation scale (Martin, 2001), it is a dichotomous scale consisting of 22 items, used to measure the achievement motivation of university students.

Fahd. et al. analyzed data by using reliability analysis. Moreover, they conducted a correlation analysis based on data results to figure out the further relationship between self-worth and student motivation. All these analyses were based on the total score of self-worth without exploring the specific relationships between each dimension and learning motivation.

Finally, they concluded that self-worth has a strong positive relationship with achievement motivation and significantly influences academic achievement. What's more, the research revealed that female students generally exhibit higher levels of achievement motivation compared to their male counterparts, while male students tend to perceive themselves as having greater self-worth than female students (Fahd et al., 2021). Nonetheless, this survey still had some limitations since results are from only a small number of college student groups might be biased. Future research may organize experiment involving more university students from different countries and compare their answers, so as to get a more general conclusion of their relationships.

3.2 Academic Achievement

Another type of academic performance will be discussed is academic achievement, which drawn the attention of Marques. et al.

In their study, 367 students from grade six (accounting for 69.8%) and grade eight (30.2%) of seven schools in northern Portugal were selected as the research subjects (female 53%, male 47%). As for the age, there were three tracing measurements in total, conducted in 2006 (Time 1 with 367 students aged 10 - 15), 2007 (Time 2 with 215 students aged 11 - 16), and 2008 (Time 3 with 202 students aged 12 - 16). Besides exploring the relationship between self-worth and academic achievement, researchers conducted a two-year follow-up questionnaire survey

to explore whether the relationships among variables would change over time and with the increase of age. They used Self-Worth Scale (SWS) to estimate self-worth of students. In the study, children were initially asked to select which of two sentences better described themselves, followed by rating each statement (e.g., "some kids like who they are, but others often wish they were someone else") on a four-point scale, with 4 indicating high self-worth and 1 representing low self-worth. Their responses were then used to compute individual item scores, ultimately deriving a comprehensive self-worth score. Across the three years of the follow-up survey, the Cronbach's alpha values for this scale were recorded as 0.77, 0.79, and 0.76.

They summed up the numerical values of each subject scores (including Portuguese, English and French languages, History, Geography, Mathematic, Physics-Chemistry and Natural Sciences, Musical, Physical, Visual and Technological Education) and then divide the total by the number of subjects, ranking from 1 to 5. 1 indicating the lowest achievement and 5 representing the highest achievement.

In their whole research, the self-worth scores were combined with data from other measures such as Children's Hope Scale, Students' Life Satisfaction Scale, and Mental Health Inventory - 5. Statistical analyses, including correlation and regression analyses, were then performed to examine the relationships between self-worth and other variables in order to test hypotheses regarding the role of self-worth.

In the correlation analysis, academic achievement had a moderate correlation with self-worth. There is a certain connection between the two, but it is not an extremely strong deterministic relationship. Students with higher academic achievement may tend to have a relatively higher self-worth, and vice versa, but there are other factors at play that affect this relationship, such as family environment, school environment, individual psychological condition, as well as social and cultural factors like cultural values and social expectation pressure.

The regression analysis revealed that self-worth was not identified as a significant factor influencing academic achievement. In contrast, other variables showed more significant predictive effects on academic achievement. This suggests that although self-worth is related to academic achievement, it may not be the primary or direct factor determining academic performance. Researchers also found that students with elevated hope scores tend to exhibit greater self-worth and enhanced academic

achievement, which indicated the connection between academic achievement and self-worth is part of a complex network of variables, involving a series of domino effect in other related variables (Marques et al., 2011).

Due to the limitations of regional culture, among numerous influencing factors and variables (hope, life satisfaction, mental health), this literature did not take cultural and contextual factors into account that whether they might play a role in the relationship between academic achievement and self-worth. The study was carried out in a specific Portuguese context, therefore, further research is needed to investigate how cultural disparities impact this relationship in various regions.

Nevertheless, in another research led by Iranian scholars, by focusing on 15-16-year old male Iranian students in the second grade of high school in Shahriar City, it is found that contingencies of self-worth significantly predict academic achievement. According to studies mentioned above, there is an obvious relationship between self-worth and academic performance, and there are several variables involved as well (Sepehrianazar et al., 2018).

However, the scales used to measure self-worth vary in different cultural regions, making it difficult to reach a consensus. Moreover, the currently studied areas are rather limited, mainly confined to Asia and Europe. Therefore, it is recommended to conduct cross-cultural research in the future to explore how the relationship between self-worth and academic achievement varies across different cultural backgrounds, so as to provide more targeted suggestions for educators and educational practice. In addition, some studies found no direct link between self-worth and academic performance. Future studies should conduct further research on the specific research mechanism between these two variables.

4 THE INFLUENCE OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP ON STUDENTS

In recent educational research, the role of teacher-student relationships on children has been significant focused. Five studies have explored this relationship from different perspectives, shedding light on how these interactions influence different aspects of children's growth.

Chamizo-Nieto et al. conducted a study to investigate the connection between emotional

intelligence, teacher-student relationships, and flourishing in academic performance of adolescents. The study involved a non-random convenience sample of 283 adolescents aged 12 - 18 (49.8% female), with an average age of 14.42. The majority (93.2%) were Spanish from two public secondary schools in Spain. Four measures were used, including The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS), the Flourishing Scale (FS), the Inventory of Teacher - Student Relationships (ITSR) completed by students and academic performance which was evaluated by the average grades of four mandatory subjects reported by students. All of them show good reliability as well as internal consistency.

After preliminary analysis, the problem of multicollinearity was insignificant. Model 7 of the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2017) was employed to explore the moderating role of the teacher-student relationship within the mediation model of flourishing between emotional intelligence and academic performance. The findings indicated positive correlations between both emotional intelligence and teacher-student relationship with flourishing, but their interaction was negatively related to it. It also discovered how changes in the quality of the teacher - student relationship altered the strength of influence of emotional intelligence on flourishing. When the teacher-student relationship was of lower quality, emotional intelligence had a stronger predictive impact on flourishing, which in turn affected academic performance. It means a healthy teacher-student connection is especially important for adolescents with low emotional intelligence, as it can positively affect their well-being and academic achievements (Chamizo-Nieto et al., 2021).

Although the study ruled out false variable associations caused by respondents' subjectivity, its cross-sectional design can not track the long-term impact of teacher-student relationship on student growth. It also overlooked factors like peer relationships and classroom dynamics. Peers can influence students' attitudes, affecting the teacher-student bond, and a competitive classroom may impact it differently than a cooperative one.

In addition to this Spanish survey serving teacher-student relationship as a moderator, other 4 studies from China have explored the impact of the teacher-student relationship as a major factor on students through different mediating variables.

One survey conducted by Wang et al. examined the chain mediating role of peer relationships and psychological suzhi on the relationship between teacher-student relationships and coping styles of

children. 688 children were selected, consisting of 236 fourth-graders, 221 fifth-graders, and 231 sixth-graders. Students are asked to completed the demographic information and 4 scales (Simplified Coping Style Scale, Teacher-Student Relationship Scale, Classmate Relationship Scale, The simplified version of the Psychological Suzhi Scale).

The research had 3 conclusions. Firstly, teacher-student relationship was found to predict children's coping styles, with peer relationships and psychological suzhi serving as mediators. Secondly, teacher-student relationships were shown to have a significant and positive effect on peer relationships as well. What's more, peer relationships and psychological suzhi played a chain mediating role in linking teacher-student relationships with coping styles (Wang et al., 2024).

In another similar study, it also concerning peer relationships. Using longitudinal research methods, the study analyzed the complex relationships and predictive effects among teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and social-emotional competence of primary school students at different time points. The results showed that teacher-student relationships have a bidirectional influence on both peer relationships and social-emotional competence. The teacher-student relationships have distinct bidirectional predictive connection with social-emotional competence of primary school students, but the connection with peer relationships is weaker, relatively complex and conditional.

Specifically, the 4th-grade teacher-student relationship doesn't significantly predict 6th-grade peer acceptance or rejection, but 4th-grade peer acceptance positively predicts the 6th-grade teacher-student relationship, while 4th-grade peer rejection negatively predicts it (Deng et al., 2025).

Apart from the discoveries mentioned above, teacher-student relationships also have a broad impact on learning progress.

According to the research from Zhou et al., the teacher-student relationship directly and positively affects mathematical problem-solving ability. The relationship can also indirectly affect it through self-efficacy and math anxiety (Zhou et al., 2020).

Another group focused on academic self-efficacy and executive function, indicating there is an interaction between the teacher-student relationship and executive function on academic self-efficacy. It can be explained that a good relationship can enhance the initial level of executive function on self-efficacy. In primary school upper grades, the teacher-student relationship quality declines in six months. But both initial level and decline rate of teacher-student

relationship positively predict academic self-efficacy. According to the research, a better initial relationship and slower decline lead to higher self-efficacy (Ai et al., 2024).

In conclusion, all of those studies show the importance of maintaining a good teacher-student relationship on self-development, whether in emotion, social connections or learning areas. The findings offer valuable inspiration for teachers in fostering better relationships with their students. Nevertheless, considering the restricted geographical area and the lack of diversity in the sample, the research outcomes might differ across various cultures. Consequently, further cross-cultural investigations are warranted to validate and expand these findings. It is also necessary to conduct research on students from diverse countries and cultures to test the universality of the research results.

5 CONCLUSION

Based on existing research, the relationship between self-worth and academic performance as well as the impact of teacher-student relationships on student development, reveals the dynamic changes in students' psychological and social behaviors within the school environment. Studies show that self-worth, as a core factor in students' psychological development, is positively correlated with academic performance. However, this relationship is not a simple causal chain but rather a complex network influenced by multiple factors including family environment, psychological state, as well as cultural background. The intricate interaction between these factors highlights the need for a nurturing educational environment that fosters both individual self-perception and positive social dynamics. Meanwhile, the teacher-student relationship holds a crucial position in shaping emotional, social, and academic outcomes of children. The quality of this relationship not only affects students' immediate academic performance but also has a crucial impact on their long-term psychological and social development. Via different mediating variables, it affects peer relationships, coping styles, and students' academic self-efficacy, indirectly influencing the overall flourishing of students.

Future research and educational practices should focus on the intricate interaction among these elements. Research has consistently highlighted the interconnection between self-worth and academic performance, while also recognizing the far-reaching impact of teacher-student relationships on student's

emotional and academic success. However, these dynamics cannot be fully captured through student's self-reports alone, as such measures may be subject to bias. A more robust research framework should incorporate diverse data sources, such as teacher evaluations, peer assessments, and direct classroom observations, to offer a comprehensive and accurate picture of these relationships.

Future studies should not only explore these dynamics within different cultural contexts but also investigate the underlying mechanisms that mediate the relationship between self-worth, teacher-student interactions, and academic outcomes. Variables like teaching style, students' personality traits, family socioeconomic status and etc., which are under-researched, may impact the relationships. Cross-cultural research will provide valuable insights into how these factors might function differently in diverse educational settings, thereby allowing for the development of contextually relevant strategies that optimize educational practices. Longitudinal studies tracking these variables over time will also be essential for understanding the long-term effects of teacher-student relationships and self-worth on student growth. Moreover, methodological rigor must be maintained, ensuring appropriate sample representativeness and the reliability of measurement instruments. By embracing a multi-faceted approach to data collection and expanding the scope of research, researchers can acquire more detailed and reliable data regarding the intricate relationships. With this enhanced knowledge base, the educational community is empowered to formulate more effective and culturally attuned strategies and interventions that are essential for nurturing the comprehensive growth of students on a global scale.

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