The Association Between Student-Teacher Relationship and Academic Performance

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Research Question

- How is student-teacher relationship quality related to the student’s academic performance?
- Does this association vary by socioeconomic status (SES)?

Background

- Schools are a primary source for a child’s development. The relationship between students and teachers may influence this development.
- Relationship quality between teachers and students has been found to be a predictor of how well students perform academically (Hamre & Pianta, 2001).
- Attachment theory suggests that a teacher who is supportive and involved with a student may supply the student with the means to succeed in the classroom (Hughes, 2011).
- Mother’s level of education is a common indicator of SES. Students who live in areas of high poverty may not have access to good-quality schools who hire committed teachers (Murray & Malgren, 2005).

Hypotheses

- As student-teacher relationship quality increases, the student will perform better academically.
- This association will be greater for children who have mothers with a higher SES.

Data & Sample

- The sample for this study focused on the wave when the children were in the fifth grade (N=924).

Measurements

Student-teacher relationship:
- Measured by the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS: Pianta, 1992).
  - Conflict: mean of 7 items, ranging 1 to 5; high = ≥ 1.5 (38.9%), low = < 1.5 (61.1%).
  - Closeness: mean of 8 items, ranging 1 to 5; high = ≥ 4 (59%), low = < 4 (41%).

Academic performance:
- Measured by teacher’s report.
  - Mathematics: mean of 13 items, ranging 1 to 5; high = ≥ 3.5 (56.3%), low = < 3.5 (43.7%).
  - Reading: mean of 10 items, ranging 1 to 5; high = ≥ 3.7 (57.4%), low = < 3.7 (42.6%).

SES:
- Measured by the student’s mother’s level of education.
  - Has college degree + (38.8%).
  - No college degree (61.2%).

Analyses

- Cross tabulation and Chi-square test using SAS.

Results

- Students who had low conflict with their teacher were more likely to score higher in mathematical thinking and reading than those students who had high conflict with their teachers (Fig. 1 & Fig. 2).
- Students who had high closeness with their teacher were more likely to score higher in mathematical thinking and reading than those students who had low closeness with their teachers (Fig. 3 & Fig. 4).

Summary of Findings

- As hypothesized, student-teacher relationship quality is positively related to the student’s academic performance in math and reading among fifth graders.
- There was no difference by SES in this relationship.

Conclusion

- The results of this study demonstrate the importance on the quality of the relationship between a teacher and a student, regardless of SES.
- This association can be studied further, but future researchers could use different measures to increase the validity.

Implication

- The sample for this study focused on the wave when the children were in the fifth grade (N=924).

References


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