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How Teacher-Student Relationship Influenced Student Attitude Towards Teachers and School

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This study examines the influence of both student and teacher perception of the student-teacher relationship on student's attitude towards teachers and school. It also seeks to explore any gender differences in the perception of teacher-student relationship between male and female adolescents. A sample of 1,266 students (541 girls and 725 boys) from six different middle schools in Singapore participated in this study. Findings indicated that gender differences were observed for certain dimensions in the teacher-student relationship predicting their attitude towards teachers and school. Possible explanations for the obtained results were suggested and implications of the findings were also discussed.

Keywords: teacher-student relationship, gender differences, adolescent.

Increasingly, research in recent years has documented significant associations between aspects of teacher-student relationship and its impact on children's adjustment to school (Birch & Ladd, 1996, 1998; Pianta, 1992; Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003). School adjustment refers not only to the academic performance of children but it also includes their attitude and level of affect towards school, as well as their involvement or engagement in school (Birch & Ladd, 1996). The growing body of literature examining the nature of interaction between teachers and students also suggests that relationship with teachers has a unique contribution to different aspects of a student's overall development (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Davis, 2003; Pianta, 1997, 1999). According to Skinner and Belmont (1993), teachers are instrumental in influencing student's quality of behavioral and emotional engagement in school. Pianta (1997) indicated in his study that teachers as adults bring to their relationships with children, an "affordance value" where they provide resources to support a child's intellectual, emotional and social development.

Students who reported positive teacher-student relationships experienced more positive affect when in school and displayed better adjustment to school (Roeser, Midgley, & Urdan, 1996). Findings from past research also indicated that early experiences in positive teacher-student relationship help put children on a trajectory towards higher levels of school adjustment and competence and can serve as a buffer against risk (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Lynch &

Cicchetti, 1992). Negativity in the relationship with teachers serves as a predictor of a wide range of negative academic and behavioral outcomes (Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993).

In positive teacher-student relationships, perceived support from teachers was found to be a strong predictor of student's increased interest in class and improved behavior in school (Bru, Murberg, & Stephens, 2001; Hall & Hall, 2003; Harter, 1996; Murdock & Bolch, 2005; Wentzel, 1994; Wolk, 2003; Woolley & Bowen, 2007.). Murdock (1999), in his study on alienation in school experience, found that teacher's support and expectation were the strongest and most consistent predictor of student's engagement and compliance in school. Murray and Greenberg (2000) in their examination of student's social experience in school revealed that children who perceived teachers as supportive and responsive are better adjusted. It also helped to build warmth, trust and reduce the risk for deviant behaviors and academic failure (Murray, Murray, & Waas, 2008; Roeser et al., 1996).

Conversely, conflict in teacher-student relationship was found to affect the children's attitude towards school by creating an environment that was perceived as aversive rather than supportive to the child. Conflict between teacher and student was found to correlate positively with school avoidance and negatively with school liking, self-directedness and cooperation in the classroom. Likewise, in their study which looked at children's adjustment in school, Pianta, Steinberg, and Rollins (1995) found teacher reports

of conflict in relationships to correlate with increases in student problem behaviors and decreases in competence behaviors over time. They argued that teacher-student relationships that are characterized by conflict may lead to teachers attempting to control student's behaviors, thereby hindering efforts to promote a positive school environment for them. To a certain extent, this explains why negative teacher-student relationships involving difficult children are also related to teacher's efforts to exclude these children from the classroom.

While relationship between teacher and student has been the focus of many research in recent years, Wentzel (1997) commented that studies of young adolescents' perceptions of their relationship with their teachers have not been frequent. In their study which examined the roles of student perceptions of different aspects of the school climate as moderators of subsequent conduct problems in school, Loukas and Murphy (2007) revealed that although adolescents spend large amounts of time in school, relatively few studies have examined the role of adolescent perceptions on different aspects of school experience including teacher-student relationship, and on their emotional and behavioral adjustment.

For most students, adolescence is a time of change and transition (Wentzel, 1998). Unfortunately, these changing needs are not necessarily met by the middle schools they are in (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Furrer & Skinner, 2003; National Research Council and the Institute for Medicine, 2004; Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2000). Schools play an important role in facilitating or inhibiting the successful development of the adolescent through meeting these needs (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989). For instance, although needs for strong interpersonal relationships with adults outside the home intensify during this developmental period, the quality of relationships with teachers was found to be less than optimal (Simmons & Blyth, 1987). Past research has shown that adolescents tend to perceive their teachers as less caring and have fewer opportunities to establish meaningful relationships with their teachers (Eccles, 1993; Harter, 1996). Lynch and Cicchetti (1997) postulated that since children in middle schools meet multiple teachers in a day and no longer have a single teacher with whom they spend most of their time, opportunities to develop close relationships with teachers also decrease. Furthermore, in contrast to elementary schools, middle schools have been criticized for their formal and impersonal structure. They also tend to be ability-focused and promote social comparison at a time when self-consciousness in the adolescent is intensified (Roeser, Eccles, & Sameroff, 1998, 2000). Eccles and her colleagues (1989) and Roeser et al. (1998) argued that in view of the mismatches between meeting the individual needs of the adolescent and their learning environment, emotional or behavioral problems may develop.

More specifically, studies documenting the differences between male and female adolescent perceptions of their relationships with their teachers have also been few (Davis, 2003). Studies on adolescent perceptions of caring teachers found that girls were more likely to perceive care from teachers, express greater interest in school, and engage in more frequent pursuit of prosocial and social responsibility goals than boys (Sullivan, Riccio, & Reynolds, 2008; Wentzel, 1997). In another study which assessed the perceptions of young adolescents on their relationship with significant others, girls indicated they received more support from teachers while boys perceived greater levels of conflict with their teachers (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992).

Compared to adolescent samples, more research studies have been conducted with samples of younger children. Studies with kindergarten children showed that girls typically have fewer conflictual relationships with their teachers than boys do (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Even in the upper elementary levels, girls were found to have consistently higher academic grades and fewer discipline infractions than boys do (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Reciprocally, teachers also reported having significantly greater closeness in their relationships with girls and significantly more conflictual relationships with boys. Past research also indicated that girls are more likely than boys to describe a teacher as a significant individual in their lives besides their parents. They also have a greater tendency to perceive this significant individual as a source of support while boys perceive him/her as a source of help in facilitating their social and learning environment, but not as a source of emotional support (Howes, 1999; Pianta & Walsh, 1996). In their study which examined adolescents' descriptions of significant adults other than their parents, in their lives, Greenberger, Chen, and Beam (1998) found that girls were more likely to have a nonparental important adult in their lives when compared to boys. They were more likely to perceive their nonparental significant adult as sources of support for personal development while boys tended to perceive them as someone to have fun with.

In summary, relative to other age groups reviewed, effects of teacher-student relationship on adolescent attitude towards their teachers and school are not as widely researched, as evidenced by limited available published studies (Loukas & Murphy, 2007; Wentzel, 1997). Research investigating gender differences within this age group is also comparatively less (Furman & Buhrmester, 1992; Wentzel, 1997). This study aims to examine the influence of both adolescent's and teacher's perceptions of the teacher-student relationship on the adolescent's attitude towards teachers and their school in an Asian sample. It also seeks to address any gender differences between the boys and girls in their perceptions of the teacher-student relationship that may contribute to their attitude towards teachers and school.

METHOD

Participants

A sample of 1,266 students (541 girls and 725 boys) from six different middle schools in Singapore participated in this study. Singapore is an Asian country with multi-ethnic groups, consisting mainly of the Chinese, Malays, Indians, and the Eurasians. These participants are in grades 8 and 9 and they range from 13 to 15 years of age (M =14.15, SD = .87). Self-reported ethnic identification for the sample was as follows: 49.7% of the sample were Chinese; 42.4%, Malay; 4.8%, Indian; 1.1%, Eurasian; and 1.9% endorsed other ethnic groups that were not listed. A mere .1% of the sample did not provide information on ethnicity.

Fifty-five teachers (15 men and 40 women) from the same six middle schools also participated in this study. These teachers taught the participating students on a daily basis for 10 months and provided information on their students using the Teacher-Student Relationship Inventory (TSRI; Ang, 2005). Each teacher provided ratings for an average of 30 students in their respective form class. The teachers ranged in age from 23 to 59 years (M = 33.65, SD = 7.94) and their years of teaching experience ranged from 0.5 to 39 years (M = 7.65, SD = 8.65). Teachers' self-reported ethnic identification was as follows: 67.3% were Chinese; 18.2%, Indians; and 14.5%, Malays.

Measures

Teacher-Student Relationship Inventory (TSRI) (Ang, 2005). This 14-item scale serves to measure teacher's perceptions of the quality of their relationship with their students. The scale yields scores on three distinct dimensions of the teacher-student relationship namely, Satisfaction (five items), Instrumental Help (five items) and Conflict (four items). For each item, teachers rate their relationship with their students individually on a Likert scale of 1 (almost never true) to 5 (almost always true). For this study, internal consistency estimates of scores obtained on the three dimensions of TSRI were as follows: Satisfaction (5 items), α = .87, Instrumental Help (5 items), α = .90, and Conflict (4 items), α = .87.

Network of Relationships Inventory (NRI) (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). This scale requires the adolescent to rate persons in their social network with respect to 15 possible types of relationship qualities, with each scale consisting of three items. For the purpose and relevance of this study which looks specifically at the adolescents' perceptions of their relationship with their form teachers. In this study, a form teacher is defined as a teacher who not only teaches a certain subject to the class, but he/she is also in charge and responsible for all the students in the same class. This teacher also takes care of any administrative tasks that are related to these students. For the NRI, only nine

out of the 15 subscales are used and they are as follows: support, criticism, satisfaction, punishment, conflict, instrumental aid, antagonism, intimacy, and admiration. According to Furman and Buhrmester (1985), support, satisfaction, and admiration are also dimensions of the NRI social support subscale, while criticism and conflict are relationship qualities on the negative interactions subscale.

For each item, students rate their form teacher on a Likert scale of 1 (little or none) to 5 (the most). Past research studies using the NRI yielded cronbach alphas ranging from .80 (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985) to .90 (Burk & Larsen, 2005; Laursen, Furman, & Mooney, 2006). For this study, the internal consistency estimates obtained for the scores on the nine subscales were as follows: α = .71 (Support), α = .63 (Criticism), α = .77 (Satisfaction), α = .64 (Punishment), α = .80 (Conflict), α = .73 (Instrumental Aid), α = .74 (Antagonism), α = .73 (Intimacy), and α =. 74 (Admiration).

Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1998). Attitude to School (10 items) and Attitude to Teachers (nine items), from the Self-Report of Personality (SRP-A) of BASC are used to assess student adjustment to school. Students rate each item in the two subscales using a True-False format. The Attitude to School subscale examines a student's general opinion of the importance of school as well as his/her overall level of comfort with school-related matters. High scores on this scale are indicative of students' pervasive discomfort with school and they are unlikely to find anything satisfying about their experience in school beyond their relationships with friends. Students who score high on the Attitude to Teachers subscale are likely to perceive their teachers as uncaring, unfair or unmotivated to help his/her students and overall, these students are likely to be highly dissatisfied with their teachers. Scores on these two scales yielded Cronbach alphas of .82 (Attitude towards School) and .67 (Attitude towards Teachers), respectively.

Consent and procedure

Approval for data collection was obtained from the Ministry of Education in Singapore prior to conducting the research. Consent from the school principal, teachers and students was also required for data collection from schools in Singapore. The purpose of the study was explained to both the teachers and students involved. Both teachers and students were informed that they could refuse or discontinue their participation in the study at any time without penalty.

RESULTS

Preliminary descriptive analyses were performed on the nine subscales of the NRI, three subscales of the TSRI,

Table 1

Influence of NRI on Both Male and Female Adolescents' Attitude Towards Teachers and School

Gender and NRI	Attitude Towards Teachers				Attitude towards school			
	B	*SEB*	β	*t*	**B**	*SEB*	β	*t*
Female Adolescent								
Support	-.28	.14	-.11	-2.06*	-.48	.19	-.16	-2.68**
Criticism	.41	.15	.13	2.85**	.29	.19	.08	1.53
Satisfaction	-.51	.11	-.22	-4.60**	-.33	.14	-.13	-2.30**
Punishment	-.03	.11	-.01	-.24	.06	.15	.02	.42
Conflict	.76	.16	.25	4.87**	.66	.20	.20	3.29**
Instrumental Aid	-.12	.11	-.05	-1.1	-.03	.14	-.01	-.19
Antagonism	.34	.15	.11	2.24*	.42	.20	.12	2.10*
Intimacy	.20	.13	.08	1.48	-.01	.17	-.00	-.06
Admiration	-.51	.13	-.20	-4.01**	-2.70	.16	-.10	-1.63
Male Adolescent								
Support	-.32	.12	-.13	-2.75**	-.40	.17	-.13	-2.38**
Criticism	.52	.10	.21	5.04**	.24	.15	.08	1.60
Satisfaction	-.40	.10	-.18	-3.92**	-.63	.15	-.23	-4.34**
Punishment	.18	.09	.07	1.96*	.13	.13	.04	.97
Conflict	.43	.11	.19	3.88**	.54	.16	.20	3.43**
Instrumental Aid	-.22	.09	-.10	-2.45**	-.27	.13	-.10	-2.10**
Antagonism	.06	.12	.03	.52	-.09	.17	-.03	-.51
Intimacy	-.01	.11	.00	-.11	.20	.16	.06	1.25
Admiration	-.34	.11	-.15	-3.14**	.24	.15	.08	1.54

Note: NRI = Network Relationship Inventory. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

and the two subscales of BASC. No significant departures from normality were detected in terms of means, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis.

Multiple regressions were performed to analyze the influence of both male and female adolescents' perceptions of the student-teacher relationship on their attitude towards teachers and school with the NRI as the independent variable and the BASC (attitude to teacher) and BASC (attitude to school) as the dependent variables. Results of the analyses are shown in Table 1.

A series of multiple regression analyses were also performed to analyze the form teachers' perceptions of their relationship with the students on the students' attitude to teachers and school. Attitude towards teachers and school were each separately regressed on the TSRI. Results obtained are shown in Table 2.

Student perceptions predictive of their attitude towards teachers

Overall, both male and female adolescents' perceptions of their form teachers' support, criticism, satisfaction, conflict and admiration were predictive of their attitude towards their form teacher. For female adolescents, perception of conflict with their teachers accounted for the greatest amount of variance in scores on attitude to

teachers (7.6%) followed by satisfaction with their form teacher (5.1%); admiration (5.0%); criticism (4.1%); and support (2.8%). Comparatively, perception of criticism from teachers accounted for the greatest amount of variance in scores on attitude towards teachers (5.2%) for the boys. Conflict with form teacher contributed 4.2% of the variance in scores on attitude towards teachers followed by satisfaction (4.0%), admiration (3.4%), and support (3.2%).

From the results, it was observed that perceiving antagonism in the relationship with their form teacher was predictive only of female adolescent's attitudes towards teacher accounting for 3.4% of the variance. In contrast, instrumental help (2.2% of variance) from teachers and punishment (1.8% of variance) by teachers were predictive only of male adolescent's attitude towards their form teacher.

Student perceptions predictive of their attitude towards school

In terms of their attitude towards school, both male and female adolescents' perceptions of their form teachers' support, satisfaction and conflict were predictive of their attitude towards school. For the girls, perceived conflict with the teacher accounted for the largest amount of

Table 2

Influence of TSRI on Both Male and Female Adolescents' Attitude Towards Teacher and School

Gender and TSRI	Attitude towards teachers				Attitude towards school			
	B	SEB	β	t	B	SEB	β	t
Female adolescent								
Satisfaction	-.07	.03	-.11	-2.02*	-.05	.04	-.07	-2.75**
Instrumental Help	-.08	.02	-.15	-3.18**	-.03	.03	-.05	-1.09
Conflict	.11	.05	.12	2.27*	.15	.05	.15	2.87**
Male adolescent								
Satisfaction	-.06	.03	-.11	-1.89	-.08	.04	-.13	-2.15*
Instrumental Help	-.04	.02	-.07	-1.74	-.01	.03	-.02	-.50
Conflict	.06	.04	.10	1.90	.01	.04	.02	.32

Note: TSRI = Teacher Student Relationship Inventory. $*p < .05$; $**p < .01$.

variance (6.6%) followed by support from the teacher (4.8%); and satisfaction (3.3%). Satisfaction with the teacher (6.3%) accounted for the largest portion of the variance for the boys. This is followed by conflict with the teacher (5.4%), and support from the teacher (4.0%). Between genders, results obtained indicated that perception of antagonism (4.1%) was predictive only of female adolescent's attitude towards school, while instrumental help (2.7%) from the teacher was predictive only of male adolescents' attitude towards school.

Teacher perception predictive of student attitude towards teachers

Teachers' perception of the relationship with their students also exerted different levels of influence on students' attitude towards teachers and school. Based on the results, teachers' perceptions of their level of conflict and satisfaction with their students were predictive only of female adolescents' attitude towards their form teachers. For the female adolescents, teacher's perception of conflict with students accounted for the greatest amount of variance (1.1%) followed by satisfaction (0.7%).

Teacher perception predictive of student attitude towards school

In terms of attitude towards school, teacher's perception of conflict and satisfaction in the teacher-student relationship exerted influence on the female adolescent's attitude towards school. Perception of conflict accounted for 1.5% of the variance, while the dimension of satisfaction contributed 0.5% of the variance. In contrast, teachers' perception of satisfaction in the relationship was predictive only of male students' attitude towards school contributing 0.8% of the variance.

DISCUSSION

This study seeks to assess the influence of both male and female adolescent and teacher perception of the teacher-student relationship on the adolescent's attitude towards teachers and school in an Asian sample. For student perception, a few dimensions in the Network Relationship Inventory measure were predictive of student attitude to teachers and school for both genders.

Student perceptions predictive of their attitude towards teachers

Specifically, student perception of the level of support, criticism, satisfaction, conflict, and admiration with their form teachers influenced their attitude towards teachers. Support, satisfaction, and admiration are dimensions of the NRI social support subscale, while criticism and conflict are relationship qualities on the negative interactions subscale. Attitude towards teachers are measured in terms of student perceived support and care from teachers and this in turn, impacts student's level of engagement and interest in school (Murdock, 1999; Reynolds & Kamphaus, 1998).

Results obtained from this study indicated that young adolescents' perceptions of social support from teachers were predictive of their attitude towards their teachers which has implications on different student outcomes. Davis and her colleagues (2001, 2003) reported in separate studies while looking at the relationship quality between students and their teachers, that pupils who found their teachers to be supportive were more likely to display better attitudes towards their teachers and were more willing to expend effort in completing class tasks. Findings from these studies also indicated that students with supportive teacher-student relationship tended to "open up" and "listen" to their teachers more and were more likely to "work harder" for

these teachers whom they liked. They also experienced more positive social and emotional adjustment in school than students who had negative perceptions of teachers and school.

Conversely, dimensions such as criticism and conflict on the negative interaction subscale were also predictive of student attitude towards their teachers for both genders. As reflected in previous research, teacher-student relationships marked by conflict and criticism from teachers are linked with negative student behaviors and attitudes such as disrespect for teachers, less compliant with completing classroom tasks given by the teacher and in some cases, using the poor quality in their relationship with teachers as a reason for quitting academic tasks that are challenging (Davis & Couch, 2001). Further research has shown that relationships high in conflict were also associated with decline in student prosocial behavior and increased in aggression (Birch & Ladd, 1998). According to Birch and Ladd (1997), conflictual teacher-student relationships are typically characterized by harsh interactions and a lack of support between teacher and student. Children who experienced high levels of conflict with their teachers limit the extent to which they may be able to rely on that relationship as a source of support.

Student perceptions predictive of their attitude towards school

Closely linked with attitude to teachers is student attitude towards school. Based on the findings, perception of support, satisfaction and conflict in their relationship with their form teacher were predictive of their attitude towards school for both genders. In their study of young adolescents Roeser et al. (1996) found that students who perceived their teachers to be caring, trusting, and respectful of students also perceived their school environment to be understanding and warm. In contrast, when students perceived teachers to be biased and discriminatory, their perception of their school environment seemed to be unfriendly and less responsive. As reflected in previous research, teacher-student relationships marked by conflict are linked with negative student outcomes such as unfavorable school attitudes, school avoidance, classroom disengagement and poor academic performance (Birch & Ladd, 1997).

Gender differences in student perceptions towards teachers and school

In terms of gender differences, perception of punishment and instrumental aid in the teacher-student relationship was predictive only of male adolescents' attitude towards teachers, while perception of instrumental aid was predictive of their attitude to school. Empirical support from several research studies has shown that boys tend to perceive their teachers as a source of instrumental aid, in helping them to organize their social and learning environment. Teachers are more likely to be perceived as learning facilitators and

challengers by boys and less likely to be seen as a source of emotional support or close relationship for them (Howes, 1999; Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Boys' attitude towards school is developed on a similar perspective, wherein boys view their school as an organizational structure with policies that are instrumental in contributing to their learning environment and process. This close link between student attitude towards teacher and their attitude towards school is also supported by Roeser et al. (1996).

In terms of their perception of punishment in teacher-student relationship, misbehaviors from boys tend to be viewed by teachers as more serious than girls' and boys are perceived to be less compliant than girls. Although both boys and girls face conflict in their interactions with teachers, the relationship tends to be significantly more conflictual for boys (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Logically, this also translates to boys facing greater possibility of being punished by teachers compared to girls.

Perception of antagonism in the teacher-student relationship was predictive only of female adolescent attitude towards teachers and school. On closer examination of the three items in the antagonism subscale of the NRI, they are relational in nature (e.g., "How much do you and your teacher get on each others' nerves?" or "How much do you and your teacher get annoyed with each others' behavior?"). Gilligan (1982), in her investigation of developmental pathways of girls, found that when compared to boys, girls have a greater tendency to develop interpersonal relationships with teachers than boys do. As mentioned earlier, girls tended to perceive the teacher as a source of help while boys' perception of the teacher is more facilitative in nature (Howes, 1999; Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Unlike boys who do not perceive teachers as a source of emotional support, girls tend to have closer and more dependent teacher-student relationships (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Boys are emotionally less attached to their teachers and are perceived to be self-assured and free of anxiety (Greenberger et al., 1998). Some may perceive their teachers as someone to have fun with. Deci (1992) further argued that good interpersonal relationships provide students with a strong sense of school belongingness which helps sustain their level of interest in school. To a large extent, girls' perception of their closeness to their teachers is an important dimension in the teacher-student relationship which influenced both their attitude towards teachers and school.

Teacher perception predictive of student attitude towards teachers

Findings obtained using the Teacher-Student Relationship Inventory suggested that teacher perception of satisfaction, instrumental help, and conflict were predictive only only female adolescent attitude towards teachers. As reviewed in the relevant literature, teachers tend to develop better

interpersonal relationships with female students and also tend to view their relationships with them as less conflictual than they do with boys (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Teachers also reported having significantly more closeness in their relationships with girls but less closeness and more negativity in their relationships with boys (Kesner, 2000; Tatar & Emmanuel, 2001). Teachers also reported finding more positive work attitudes and school-oriented behaviors in girls than they do in boys (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Research from other studies also showed that girls tend to be less confrontational in their interactions with teachers and display more prosocial behaviors in interpersonal contexts than boys do. Such positive interactions tend to facilitate the development of closer interpersonal relationships between teachers and female students (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Cairns & Cairns, 1994).

Teacher perception predictive of student attitude towards school

Teacher perception of satisfaction and conflict in the teacher-student relationship were also predictive of the female adolescent attitude towards school. Unlike instrumental help, the dimensions of satisfaction and conflict are more relational in nature, and female adolescents tend to develop closer emotional attachments to teachers. Furthermore, research has established the close link between attitude towards teachers and school, with the former influencing the latter (Roeser et al., 1996). Likewise, teacher perception of satisfaction and conflict in the teacher-student relationship would exert some level of influence on female student attitude towards their school.

For the boys, only teacher perception of satisfaction in the teacher-student relationship was predictive of their attitude towards school. As established earlier in this paper, relationships between male student and their teachers are not as close or emotionally based and tended to be more task-oriented (Howes, 1999; Pianta & Walsh, 1996). Thus, what boys objectively experienced at the classroom level provide important cues as to how they would perceive the school.

IMPLICATIONS

In conclusion, findings from this study has added to the existing literature on the importance of teacher-student relationship and its influence on student school adjustment. More specifically, it examined the predictive power of student and teacher perceptions on students' attitude towards their form teacher and school. Based on this, important implications for educators, in terms of the importance of teacher perception and teacher education are raised. Results from this study showed that teachers' perception of their relationship with their students exerted significant influence

on students' academic performance, engagement in school, task compliance, and respect for teachers. In view of this, important decisions relating to students' academic status, for example, promotion or retention to the next grade, are based on these behavioral indicators. To a large extent, teachers' perception of the quality of their relationships with their students can have very far-reaching effects on students' academic pathways. School-based intervention programs aiming to build supportive and improve teacher-student relationship should thus be encouraged to help enhance school outcomes for students.

Findings obtained in this study further enhanced researchers' understanding of the teacher-student relationship as data was obtained from both the teacher and the student. Research studies conducted in the past tend to assess the relationship between teachers and pupils from only one of the participants in the relationship, that is, either from the teacher's perspective or from the student's (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Howes & Hamilton, 1993). In this study, the influence of teacher-student relationship on student attitude towards teachers and school from both the perspectives of student and teacher were examined. In future studies, the idea of asking parents of students to rate the relationship between their children and their teachers could be explored. With the parents' ratings, researchers could gain a deeper and more complete understanding of the teacher-student relationship.

Another contribution this study has made to the existing literature is that student assessment of the teacher-student relationship was done with a specific teacher, namely their form teacher, in mind. Wentzel (1997) commented on this as a limitation in her study in which students were not asked to respond with specific teachers in mind regarding their perceptions of the teacher-student relationship. Lynch and Cicchetti (1997) indicated that unlike in elementary school where students face a single teacher for most part of the day, adolescents face multiple teachers with whom they spend different lengths of time in a day. To assess the quality of teacher-student relationship more accurately, it would be necessary for students to base their perceptions on one single teacher.

An additional contribution of this study came from the findings on gender differences in adolescent perceptions of the teacher-student relationship on their attitude towards teachers and school. Whereas past research had looked at gender differences in teacher-student relationship among younger children (Hamre & Pianta, 2001), this study focused on gender differences in perceptions of teacher-student relationship among adolescents. Findings from this study suggested that boys and girls differ in their attitude towards teacher and school, depending on their perception of the teacher-student relationship. Further research could also explore whether the difference in either gender's perception of their teacher relates to the fact that girls truly value qualities of nurturance more while boys tend to value

dominance. The results also indicated that boys and girls perceived the role of teachers differently. Therefore, efforts in relating differently to both girls and boys are important for teachers as it has direct impact on students' motivation and behavior in the classroom.

Finally, the impact of teachers being mostly of the female gender also needs to be explored. This limitation needs further investigation as social and classroom contexts mutual to both teachers and boys need to be made in order for effective learning and relationship building to take place for the boys.

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