

## Teacher-Students Bonding: Insights from Theoretical Perspectives

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### Abstract

Building a good relationship between teachers and students will lead to a successful educational process. This article is about the relationship between teachers and students. Emphasis on bonding, safe-reliance and trustworthy aspects forms the core of this relationship. In addressing the issue of teacher-student relationship, several theoretical perspectives are discussed, including affective relationship quality theory, social support models and self-determination theory. In summary, educational scholars have presented several guidelines for discussing aspects of teacher-student relationship practise and construction that can be of use to educators out there.

**Keywords:** Building a relationship, Teacher with students, Theory of Affective Quality Relationships, Models of Social Support, and Self-Determination Theory.

### INTRODUCTION

According to Wentzel, K. R. (2009), effective teachers are those who can establish a good relationship with their students, who are emotionally close, secure and reliable. Prior to this, Ismail Abbas (2007) stated that building relationships between teachers and students

leads them to see students positively and serve them humanely. Wentzel, K. R. (2009) believes that quality relationships can enhance students' emotional development, build positive attitudes and motivate them to achieve academic results. In addition, genuine social skills can also be acquired.

The above opinion was first discussed by an-Nahlawi (1995) that the relationship between teachers and students is something important and can be demonstrated and practised by educators. This can be done through a patient attitude, honesty, constant improvement in insight, knowledge and study, resourcefulness and skill, steadfastness, fairness to all students and sensitivity to the phenomena of life, especially those of faith. Moreover, contemporary studies have proven that teachers have a significant impact on students' academic achievement and personality formation (Rohani Arbaa et al, 2010).

In building this relationship, teachers must also provide instrumental assistance and apply shared and caring community values in the classroom (Wentzel, K. R., 2009). In terms of Islamic education, teaching Islamic values enables students to see, listen, think and fully understand the knowledge being imparted (Suhaili Md. Shamsudin & Siti Syuhada Abd Rahman, 2011). This is when the teacher attends to the academic development of each student by discussing with students to identify their strengths and weaknesses (Rohani Arbaa et al, 2010).

According to Ismail Abbas (2007), the school or any educational institution can be compared to a large household and family. The basis for building a happy household is the value of love. Love is an innate quality of the human self, which is a strong link between people. Therefore, al-Ghazali (1987) has insisted that every educator should have a maternal attitude towards the father and act like a father and mother in dealing with the students. This can be done by considering each educated student as their own child. The essence and value of love (Arifin Mamat et al., 2011) must be instilled in every educator to respect the dignity of human beings, including students. These people must be treated as valuable assets that enhance their dignity, pride and honour (Ismail Abbas, 2007).

It is clear that the most effective teacher is the one who is most accessible to all his students (Mohd Sahandri Gani et al, 2010). This can be done through a personal touch. For example, the teacher establishes a professional relationship with the students by sharing current experiences in PdP and understanding each student personally in order to understand the students' problems. In addition, the teacher visits the students' world, e.g. eating together in the school canteen, playing sports together on the sports field and visiting sick students at home or in hospital. This indirectly leads to teachers interacting with students' parents to talk about their children, whether inside or outside school (Mohd Sahandri Gani et al, 2010).

The teacher's personality towards the students can also be shown without shaming the students, either face to face or in front of the class. This act means that teachers treat their students with great respect. Educators must also be kind, forgiving, positive, hopeful, belonging, compassionate, owning up to their own mistakes, caring, responsible, trusting, humorous, patient, fair and just and sincere (Mohd Sahandri Gani et al, 2010). All this will motivate students to try harder because they have a close relationship with their teachers.

### **THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

According to Wentzel, K. R. (2009), previous studies have found that there is a significant relationship between:

- (1) Positive interaction with the relationship between teachers and students.

(2) The relationship between positive interaction and the relationship between teachers and students with social and academic outcomes in school.

(3) The relationship between teachers and students with motivation.

The question here is how the relationship between teachers and students can influence the achievement of social and academic outcomes in school. This question is answered based on the following three theoretical models:

(1) Attachment theory.

(2) Social support perspective.

(3) Self-determination theory

### **ATTACHMENT THEORY**

This theory explains the relationship between children and attachment figures, especially the mother. Children will experience positive development in the formation of emotions and satisfy their basic needs if they are perfect and secure with their mother in parenting and care. For Rogers et al (2009), the father's pressure on the child's academic performance is the cause of low achievement. The mother's encouragement and support, on the other hand, motivates the child to perform better. This is confirmed by Vermeer et al. (2011): The family is the first instance for children's growth. There are two forms of relationships that affect children:

- i. A safe and secure relationship: in this relationship, the attitude of the mother is the father in developing an attitude of curiosity and exploration of the children's environment. In addition, parents need to be able to adjust positively so that children feel loved and trusted by those around them.
- ii. Insecure and unsafe relationships: In this context, it is necessary to avoid adopting attitudes that are risky, unpredictable and unaccountable. In addition, there are difficulties in controlling stress in new situations and a negative self-concept.

In addition, there is the influence of social actors, including parents, in the implementation of one's religion (Ahmad Firdaus Mohd Noor, 2010). According to Cornwall (1988), there are three religious social actors, namely parents, peers and the church. According to Walter (2009), there are three major social actors, namely parents, peers and the school. According to Mohd. Salleh Lebar (1998), one social actor that is most important is the family, including parents and close relatives. He added that they play the most important role in the formation of behaviour, attitude, beliefs, personality and certain skills.

In the context of religious education, family and friends are the unit that directly influences individuals, for example, through the transmission of religious content and forms of religious practise in each family (Ralph et al, 2009). This statement differs from that of Ahmad Firdaus Mohd Noor and Khairunnisa A Shukor (2011) who explain that the factors of parents and lecturers have the greatest influence on students. Jonathan & Nan Dirk De Graaf (1997) who stated that in countries that are quite secular, a family's religion can shape children's religious beliefs more than the influence of the country.

In Western countries, children are socialised by parents who have a strong connection to religious aspects. Most religiously devout parents honour the role of parenthood and consider it a noble duty guided by strong religious beliefs that they must instil in their children (Mahoney et al., 2003). According to Hadaway & Marler (1993), children even have the

potential to develop the same religious beliefs as their parents; switching to religious beliefs other than the religion in which you were raised is rare.

Potvin & Sloan (1985) found that at an early age, family control and personal experience in religion parallel each other and this results in the practise of high levels of religious activity, but as children get older this no longer parallels and only happens when family control becomes less. There are probably other socialisation factors that can influence the orientation of religious activities, for example peers. Most children begin to disengage from the faith of their parents, especially between the ages of 10 and 30, when children begin to make connections with the outside world, teachers and peer friends, when they mature and get jobs, have new friends and even get married (Jonathan & Nan Dirk De Graaf, 1997).

If they are brought up from childhood and have a close relationship with other family members, they can easily adopt religious teachings. Wilson & Sherkat (1994) have shown in their study that children who have a good relationship with their parents are less rebellious when it comes to religious issues. Families not only influence children, but also other socialisation instances that can influence their children (Ralph et al., 2009), for example the role of PTA in schools.

Therefore, children expect the new relationship that is established to be the same as the first relationships (at the beginning of life), whether positive feelings and trust or conflict and rejection or fear, dependency or teacher-student relationships (especially in kindergarten or primary school). This is because the type of relationship the teacher has with the students predicts the students' actions in school. This refers to a relationship that is sure to increase motivation for school activities. This is confirmed by Nik Mohd Rahimi Nik Yusoff et al (2008). The motivational element not only affects learning outcomes, but what is done and learned also influences further motivation.

**SOCIAL SUPPORT PERSPECTIVES.**

Based on this model, it is explained that emotionally supportive teachers have a positive impact on students' adjustment to school. This means that this model is different from the relational theory of affective quality. The difference can be seen in Table 1.0 below.

**Table 1 Differences in Relationship Theory Affective Quality and Social Support Model**

Theory Affective Quality	vs	Social Support Model
Emphasises the teacher-student relationship as one based on a stable history of interaction (previous experiences with the first aspect of the relationship)		The teacher-student relationship is a personal relationship that is the same: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="884 1563 1396 1675">i. Stable (e.g. teachers who have a year-long relationship with their students)</li> <li data-bbox="884 1720 1396 1823">ii. Short-term (e.g. counsellor-teacher school meeting only once a year)</li> </ul>

**SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY**

This theory explains the teacher's vision, which refers to the teacher showing interest in developing students' attitudes and emotional support. Studies conducted in Malaysia show that the teacher factor has a significant impact on students' academic achievement and

personal formation (Rohani Arbaa et al., 2010). This study is further strengthened by the assertion that teachers need to impart Islamic values to students in addition to teaching the prescribed subjects so that they can fully perceive, understand, think and internalise the knowledge imparted (Suhaili Md. Shamsudin & Siti Syuhada Abd Rahman, 2011).

This is achieved by teachers attending to the academic development of each student by having conversations with each of them to identify their strengths and weaknesses (Rohani Arbaa et al., 2010). This will lead to safe emotional outcomes as they build social relationships with others (Wentzel, K. R., 2009). This theory helps students to adapt positively to society. Meanwhile, the role of teachers will provide emotional and affective support. Overall, these three models and theories explain the level of emotional intimacy and security associated with positive social and emotional outcomes.

### **TEACHER- STUDENT RELATIONSHIP AS A SOCIALISATION CONTEXT**

Wentzel, K. R. (2009), explains the socialisation model, which proposes several mechanisms through which social interactions between students and teachers can influence motivation and attitudes towards goal pursuit. According to Nik Mohd Rahimi Nik Yusoff et al (2008), constructive interactions can be equated with motivation. Motivation is important because it can influence students' achievement levels by determining what, where and how they learn (Nik Mohd Rahimi Nik Yusoff et al., 2008). This is because through constant social interaction, students learn that they need to be accepted and competent in society, with the quality of social interaction giving the impression that they are valued and accepted. For example, teachers are able to create an environment where students can feel emotional support and security. In addition, teachers are able to create a unique interpersonal context that is tailored to the individual needs of each student.

In the classroom, the teacher communicates the rules and expectations and guides student achievement and attitudes by providing instrumental support. This model describes the significant motivation of teachers towards students as emotional support and a sense of security. It can be compared to the role of parents who treat children differently according to their individual needs. Therefore, teachers should do the same. Students' competence in school matters stems from the teacher-student relationship, where students learn to meet the teacher's expectations and aspirations, while the teacher provides support to help students succeed. Therefore, every teacher should provide quality feedback on every task done by the students (Regmi, K., 2012). Meanwhile, motivation must be continuously communicated to the students, at least in the form of a sentence, and most importantly, the words must reach the hearts of the students (Khuzaimah Sulaiman, 2013).

### **TEACHER COMMUNICATION AND EXPECTATIONS**

The level at which students achieve the goals set by the teacher depends on whether or not the teacher states these goals clearly and consistently (Wentzel, K. R., 2009). According to Wentzel, K. R. (2009), clarity and consistency can be achieved by building interpersonal relationships based on trust and fairness (equality). Interpersonal skills can be understood as the ability to understand the feelings, motivations, habits and desires of others. This means that interpersonal skills effectively influence others in practical ways, such as encouraging students to participate in a project (Salhah Abdullah, 2009), and making students willing to listen to and take seriously the teacher's goals and values (Wentzel, K. R., 2009). According to Nur Hafizoh Idris & Rohana Hamzah (2013), interpersonal skills are an essential element for a professional teacher.

According to Wentzel, K. R. (2009), teachers need to clarify individual goals and expectations as they are tailored to each student's abilities and performance. In interpersonal relationships, this can affect students' confidence in their abilities and performance. Esah Sulaiman (2012) explains that teachers' positive behaviour serves as a teaching model for students to follow. Negative teacher expectations indicate that the teacher has a poor view of the student's abilities (Wentzel, K. R., 2009). Conversely, when teachers communicate high expectations to students, it leads to a positive change in academic performance (Wentzel, K. R., 2009). Siti Roskina Mas (2008) explains that the role of the teacher is not only that of an educator and transmitter of knowledge, but also that of a catalyst for students' confidence in applying and implementing knowledge in daily life.

### **OPENNESS TO ASSIST, ADVISE, AND TEACH STUDENTS**

Teachers play an important role in imparting knowledge and training students in academics (Wentzel, K. R., 2009). Due to their expertise and knowledge, teachers are able to give better explanations and be more prepared to answer students' questions (Abdull Sukor Shaari, 2010). According to Wentzel, K. R. (2009), teachers are a source of continuous support for the development of social and academic skills. Promoting students' social and academic competence can take the form of information and advice (Wentzel, K. R., 2009). For example, in the form of settings or specific experiences that facilitate learning. Variety in the implementation of these different methods provides a learning experience, high student motivation (Kamarul Azmi Jasmi et al., 2011) and can make students really internalise and master the knowledge imparted (Tengku Sarina Aini Tengku Kasim & Faridah Che Husain, 2008), thus encouraging student interaction and participation (Regmi, K., 2012).

In previous studies, teachers have expressed their willingness to provide more support to students who cooperate, show engagement and seek their help. High levels of knowledge and even creativity and innovation can make a teacher's teaching and learning system more engaging, effective and enjoyable (Rafiza Abdul Razak & Siti Zarina Syed Nordin, 2013). Rozita Radhiah Said & Abdul Rasid Jamian (2012) explain that the combination of knowledge and teaching experience makes a teacher a progressive-minded educator. According to Mohd Aderi Che Noh (2010), the integration of strategies, approaches, methods and techniques further enhances the quality of the teaching process. Effective teaching practises are also linked to a creative mindset that incorporates creative aspects during the teaching process (Mohd Aderi Che Noh, 2010; Rohani Arbaa et al., 2010; Rozita Radhiah Said & Abdul Rasid Jamian, 2012).

### **EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND FEELING SAFE**

Emotional support and a sense of security are among the criteria that motivate students. Wentzel, K. R. (2009) notes that teachers tend to provide more physical safety for students, especially in peer relationships. Teachers contribute to the development of motivation in social relationships and academic achievement. This refers to caring and supportive teachers. Esah Sulaiman (2012) explains that teachers also act as counsellors who listen to students' problems and give them useful advice. High ability students appreciate teachers who advocate for them, encourage participation in class and share common goals with students. The support teachers offer to students takes two forms:

- i. Emotional support, for example, the teacher's empathy.
- ii. Instrumental support, for example, help and positive feedback.

Khadijah Alavi et al. (2012) therefore highlight the importance of educators, especially in the field of Islamic education and education in general, having emotional and social intelligence. This ensures that the teaching and learning process is more effective and seamless, engages students' interest and improves academic achievement and character. The results of previous studies suggest that the implications of this study improve students' academic achievement and character (Khadijah Alavi et al., 2012). In addition, a previous study by Ab. Halim Tamuri & Mohamad Khairul Azman Ajuhary (2010) that an educator who performs various tasks in imparting knowledge and developing skills and morals requires a person with high intelligence. Therefore, these skills should ideally be present in every teacher.

## CONCLUSION

This article shows that there is a positive relationship between teacher-student relationships and students' social and academic motivation and academic achievement, based on the literature review. Figure 1 illustrates the process of teacher-student relationship and summarises the ideas from the literature. It is also considered as the main outcome of this paper.

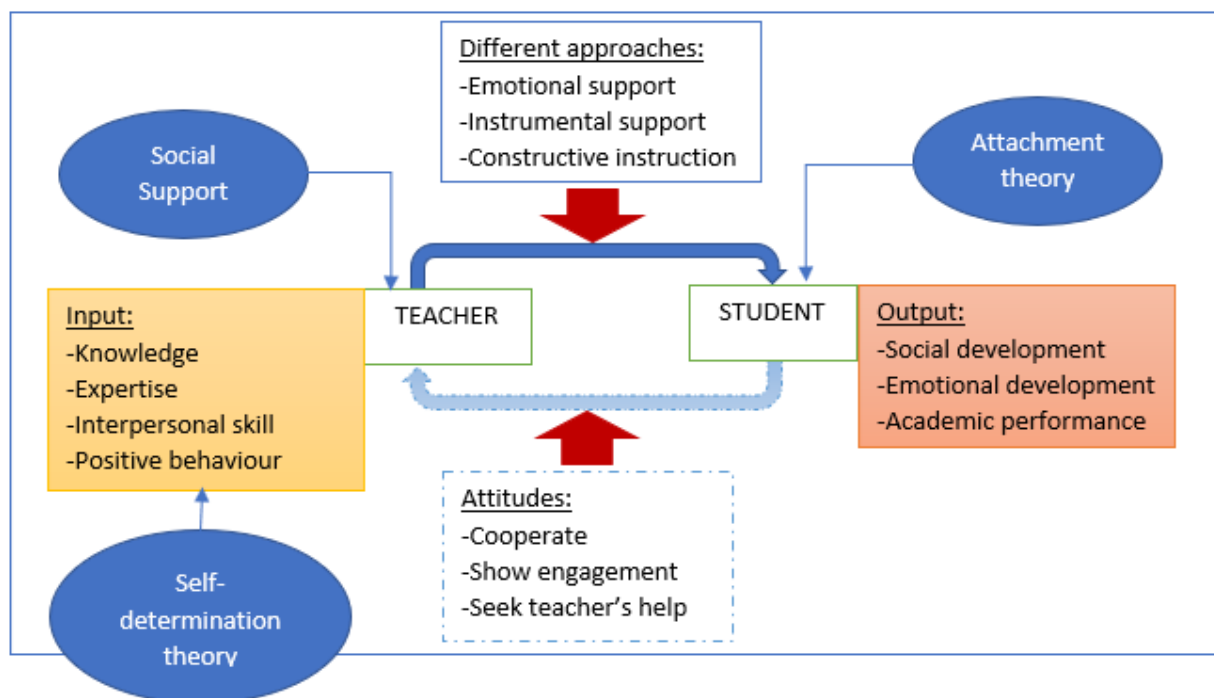


Figure 1. Framework of Teacher-Student Relationship towards Students' Higher Achievement

From Figure 1, it can be concluded that there are several factors that help teachers build a strong bond with students, which eventually motivates students to achieve higher. Teacher development is the input for this relationship. It consists of the teacher's knowledge, expertise, interpersonal skills and positive behaviour. Most often, teachers are referred by students to gain an understanding of the subject. Therefore, a teacher who is knowledgeable and considered an expert will always be contacted by students. A teacher who displays excellent interpersonal skills, including clarity and consistency, will come second as students feel safe around him/her as this relationship can develop on the basis of trust and fairness. The third point is positive behaviour. Teachers who show positive behaviour are always admired by the students. These teachers can easily influence students' behaviour simply by

setting a good example. This is confirmed by the study of Rohani Arbaa et al. (2010), which explains that the relationship between teacher and student is determined by the quality of the teacher, which is the most important factor in promoting eagerness to learn.

The input is supported by Self-Determination Theory, a theory that focuses on the vision of the teacher who aims to become an excellent educator who helps the Ministry of Education produce quality human capital for the nation. Along with the Social Support Perspective, teachers are seen as an important entity in the teacher-student relationship. It depends on the different approaches of teachers whether they provide emotional support to students to make them feel comfortable in school or provide them with books, papers and sometimes food and give them constructive instructions that meet their individual needs. This takes into account students' backgrounds, including ethnicity, culture, gender and other relevant aspects, and most research focuses on Europe, America and middle-class students. Therefore, it is important for teachers to know the background of their students before implementing the teaching and learning process (Tengku Sarina Aini Tengku Kasim & Faridah Che Husain, 2008; Esah Sulaiman, 2012; Regmi, K., 2012). This is because each student has their own attitudes and learning styles when seeking information and exploring new skills (Tengku Sarina Aini Tengku Kasim & Faridah Che Husain, 2008). This is based on the fact that different human thinking skills require some preparation on the part of the teacher in order to design and subsequently create effective teaching and learning. It is crucial to consider who and what is being taught and the context of learning in terms of the environment, social factors and psychology in the classroom (Regmi, K., 2012).

In addition to supporting students through tailored approaches based on student needs, teachers also rely on student collaboration. This relationship is strengthened when both sides cooperate. Students should also ask teachers for help rather than waiting for teachers to come to them for help, and they should engage when teachers begin to develop this relationship. Students' behaviour when they need teachers' help is in line with attachment theory, a theory that focuses on the bond between children and attachment figures such as family, friends and school. However, nowadays children spend more time at school, so there are more interactions between teachers and students/

In summary, the literature suggests that the teacher-student relationship is crucial for students, regardless of age, focusing on the function of emotional support in students' lives. Student motivation can also affect the teacher-student relationship, and there is a need to clarify how students can interpret the teacher's attitude and how teachers interpret student performance. Therefore, today's teachers should act as developers, facilitators and builders of skills. By highlighting students' diverse backgrounds and personalities, teachers have a role to play in building their social skills by being courteous to each other, respecting peers and taking responsibility for each other (Esah Sulaiman, 2012). In addition to building skills, teachers also have a greater responsibility in building students' noble character (Kamarul Azmi Jasmi, 2010; Esah Sulaiman, 2012).

For future directions, it is advised that researchers focus on the level of education, like primary or secondary or tertiary levels. This article discusses theories in general. Other researches can focus on sepecific theory that is found suitable for the research. Other than that, elements of teacher-students relationship should also include spiritual elements, for example, teachers' religious belief and other influential factors that fulfills the Philosophy of Education adopted by respective nation.



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