

Assessing teacher-child relationship quality using multiple methods and perspectives: A reflection

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- Teacher-child relationship
 - influences the child's mental representation of the self
 - guides child's expectations of and behaviours to others
- Teacher-child interaction provides a model
 - influences peer group's perceptions and social acceptance
- Predicts a range of child developmental outcomes
 - social, motivational and behavioural adjustment to school, at transition and longitudinally
 - academic success and perceived academic abilities
- Measures: teacher-rated, child-rated, representational



- Measurement Issues: need for a variety of approaches and multiple perspectives
 - ‘inside’ / ‘outside’ perspectives (D, V & B; H & V)
 - consistencies/ inconsistencies across different perspectives
- Measurement Clarity: need to define terms
 - internal working models... behaviours... perceptions (S & K)
 - constructs of relationships, measurement invariance (K & V)
- Measurement Strength:
 - concurrent and predictive value of different approaches
- Implications for teachers and schools



- Teachers rate characteristics of the relationship:
 - own feelings about their relations with the child
 - beliefs about child’s feelings towards them
 - child’s behaviours in interacting with the teacher
- Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (Pianta)
 - Warmth and open communication
 - Conflict
 - Dependency (additional items: Koomen et al)
- Adapted Network of Relationships Inventory (Hughes)
 - Warmth
 - Conflict
 - Close



- Teachers describe the relationship and provide examples of particular times spent together
 - taps unconscious internalised model of the relationship
- Teacher Relationship Interview (Pianta & Stulman)
 - Expressed negative affect (anger/hostility)
 - Expressed helplessness
 - Neutralised negative affect
 - Expressed positive affect
 - Sensitive practices
 - Coherence
- Expressed affect was moderately correlated with STRS ratings of closeness, conflict (S & K)



- Children rate characteristics of a dyadic relationship
 - perceived emotional availability and affective quality
- Network of Relationships Inventory (Buhrmester & Furman)
 - Warmth
 - Conflict
 - Close
- Child ratings of warmth were not correlated with teacher ratings (H & V)
- Child ratings of conflict were moderately correlated with teacher rated warmth (-.25) and conflict (.43)



Observed interaction

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- Observers rate relationship behaviours Adapted CLASS-K for teacher (La Paro, Pianta, Stuhlman)
 - positive affect/sensitivity/support in interaction
 - negative affect/disrespect in interaction
- Child behaviour
 - Dependency in interactions with teacher
- Observed teacher affect was moderately correlated with STRS ratings for closeness, conflict (D,V & B)
- Observed child dependency was moderately correlated with STRS ratings for dependency
- Future: consider observation of dyad



Peer report

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- Peers identify what characterises the relationship as witnesses to daily teacher-child interactions
- Peer nomination of
 - Teacher support
 - Child aggression
- Peer nominations of teacher support (H & V) were
 - moderately correlated with teachers' ratings of warmth, conflict and close
 - weakly correlated with child-rated warmth and conflict



- Child gender
 - T-rate conflict higher for boys / closeness higher for girls
 - cautionary note (K & V) - measurement invariance suggests teachers' ratings may be otherwise influenced
- Child age
 - closeness typically drops in the upper years of school
 - little change in levels of conflict and dependency
 - cautionary note (K & V) - measurement invariance suggests teachers' ratings may be otherwise influenced
- Ethnicity
- Externalising behaviour
 - higher teacher-rated conflict and dependency (S & K)
 - more expressed anger & helplessness (S & K)



- Disruptive (externalising) children
 - closeness, sensitive practices, and coherence correlated with relational conflict (-.34, .28, .43)
 - supports child-driven model of relationship quality
- Non-disruptive children
 - closeness not correlated with conflict (.08)
 - sensitive practices correlated with closeness (.39) and dependency (.30)
 - supports a teacher-driven model of relationship quality



Teacher-related relationship processes (S & K)

- characteristic of the dyad
 - expressed affect, helplessness
 - coherence in describing relationship
- characteristic to the individual teacher
 - sensitive practice: classroom management style, ability to empathise with child, ability to provide emotional support and promote child's social and cognitive dev't
 - neutralizing negative affect (avoidant)



- T-C R quality (teacher-report) forms early in the school year and tends to be consistent over time
 - does this differ for different dimensions?
 - does this differ by length of time between assessments?
 - is it also the case for child-report?
- Negative dimensions of the T-C relationship are more predictive of child adjustment/achievement than positive dimensions
 - research needs to account for externalising problems but also disentangle this from relational qualities
- Evidence that positive dimensions are also salient
 - further research using child and observer measures