Research

# How Relationships Impact Teacher Job Satisfaction

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**Abstract:**

*This study aimed to extend the knowledge of teacher job satisfaction by specifically examining predictors at the teacher level. Several components of job satisfaction were examined for their hypothesized impact, including the focused predictor of teacher-student relations. Based on the United States sample in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) 2018 data, the author explored this issue utilizing responses from 2,560 lower secondary school teachers nested within 166 schools. Using the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus, & Folkman, 1984) as a framework, the study found that teacher-student relationships are a positive and significant predictor of teacher job satisfaction. After controlling for relevant predictors, teacher relationships with their students were the strongest predictor of their job satisfaction present in the study. Discussions and implications are presented.*

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# INTRODUCTION

It has been well documented that a focus on teaching and learning provides the most significant influence on student learning (Robinson et al., 2008). The groundbreaking work of Grissom and colleagues (2021) has demonstrated paths at which leadership also impacts students, the vast majority of which begun their educational careers as teachers. With this in mind, retaining effective teachers has been, and should continue to be, a priority of educational leaders and researchers. This study examines one component of teacher retention, job satisfaction. According to DiPerna and Shaw (2018), teacher job satisfaction rates among K-12 educators continue to decline. Job satisfaction is a critical element to teacher effectiveness. It has been associated with lower absenteeism rates, reduced stress, turnover, and the use of innovative instructional practices in classrooms (Banerjee et al., 2016).

Teacher job satisfaction is a complex issue to understand because it results from teachers' assessment of work and their work experiences (Van der Ploeg & Scholte, 2003). These assessments can vary widely between teachers in different settings or even within the same teacher on a given day. This study seeks to understand how relationships impact teachers' job satisfaction.

Though teacher job satisfaction has been studied extensively over the past three decades (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015), little is known about the impact relationships with students have on teacher job satisfaction (Spilt et al., 2011). An in-depth interview study of 60 teachers found that relationships with students were the most important source of enjoyment and motivation (Hargreaves, 2000). Teacher-student relationships have also been mentioned as one of the core reasons teachers remain in their profession (O'Connor, 2008). Along this vein, in her study of teacher occupational commitment, Collie (2021) found that disruptive student behavior was a significant predictor of lower teacher occupational commitment. This finding is critical to the collective understanding of how relationships with students influence teacher job satisfaction. When the teachers in a building lack these fundamental relationships with their students, the students then are more prone to demonstrate disruptive behavior (Aldrup et al., 2018). In other words, for teachers to have higher levels of occupational commitment, they can foster more positive relationships with students to avoid disruptive behavior.

This balance between improved relationships and less disruptive behavior drives the relational conversation. Schools are caught in the middle of this as they are comprised of complex and intricate relationships. By examining teachers' direct perspectives, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships that exist. Thus, bettering our understanding of teacher retention and, ultimately, school effectiveness. By examining teacher-student relationships, we can better understand the interrelations at play and their effects on teacher job satisfaction.

This study suggests that teacher job satisfaction is grounded in Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping. The primary premise of the transactional model is that coping strategies are mediated through the relationships between the stressors and the primary and secondary appraisals (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Student misbehavior has widely been considered the most influential for teachers (Dicke et al., 2014). Another way to consider this model is to think of stress as the outcome of the interaction between a stressor and an individuals' perception of control over that stressor. If an individual perceives low job control with high job demand, it will create a stressful situation. Individuals then appraise, cope, and experience this occupational stress (Goh et al., 2010).

In a school setting, this model can be framed as how teachers internalize their daily experiences. Interactions are appraised by teachers and internalized as stressful or positive. The majority of interactions a teacher will have on a typical day are with their students and their colleagues. This study sought to understand better the roles these relationships play. When considering teachers' relationships with students, it is vital to consider the reciprocal effects these connections have on teacher job satisfaction. If a student perceives a positive relationship with a teacher, they are more apt to display respectful behavior in the classroom (Goodman, 2009). This respectful behavior then contributes to teacher job satisfaction and can enhance the overall climate of the school (Hernández & Seem, 2004). If the goal of educational leaders is to retain effective teachers, we must better understand how the daily interactions teachers have with their students and colleagues impacts their satisfaction with their job.

In the following section, a review of the literature is presented.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher job satisfaction has garnered a considerable amount of research over the past three decades (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015) and for a good reason. Job satisfaction is an area of interest in a multitude of fields, including education, business, and psychology. Employee job satisfaction can act as a gauge of the mental health of an organization, as well as provide a metric for comparison. While there is no generally agreed upon definition of job satisfaction (Brezicha et al., 2020), there are schools of thought surrounding motivation and its role in job satisfaction. These theories, combined with large international databases such as the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), allow researchers the opportunity to examine teacher job satisfaction in different ways.

### Teacher Attrition

Since the early 1980s, there has been a looming teacher shortage. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Teacher Shortage Areas Nationwide Listing report (2019), there has been a teacher shortage of some capacity in every state since 1991. This persisting shortage has been predicted as Ingersoll (2001) explained that evidence suggests the possibility of severe shortages of qualified teachers in years to come. One piece of this

evidence is the decline in teacher preparation enrollments. According to the U.S. Department of Education Title II Data Collection (2019), teacher preparation program enrollments have fallen 35% nationwide in the last five years. In 2015, tens of thousands of teachers were hired on an emergency or temporary credentials to meet school needs (Sutcher et al., 2016). These emergency credentialing programs placed an increased burden on individuals who are not prepared to teach and undermines the quality of education for students, especially students in schools with the highest areas of need. Over one-third of issued credentials and permits in California went to teachers not fully prepared for their assignments (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). As fewer teachers are entering the field, the rate of student enrollment continues to climb. Student enrollments are projected to grow by three million in the next decade, driven by immigration and higher birth rates (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Another issue facing education in the United States, beyond professionals choosing other fields besides teaching, is the alarming rate teachers are leaving the profession. About one-third of teacher attrition is due to retirement. Two-thirds of teachers leaving the field depart before retirement age, primarily because of dissatisfaction with certain aspects of their teaching conditions (Sutcher et al., 2016). Hiring and retaining qualified teachers continues to be a problematic task across the country. According to the U.S. Department of Education Teacher Follow-up Survey (2012-2013), 20% of teachers either moved schools or left the profession entirely. This high level of attrition is exacerbated in early career teachers. Chang (2009) found that 25% of teachers leave the field before their third year. Billingsley (2004) states that nearly half of teachers depart after five years. This attrition rate is considered high when comparing it to other fields and occupations (Ingersoll, 2001).

Teacher attrition is more problematic than simply not being able to fill classrooms (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). Attrition can impose significant costs on schools (Sutcher et al., 2016), negatively affect student achievement (Ronfeldt et al., 2013), and perpetuate equity issues in historically hard-to-staff schools (Day & Hong, 2016). Student achievement is then undermined as a function of teacher inexperience, under preparation, and instability (Sutcher et al., 2016). Schools then suffer from diminished relationships, the expense of training new teachers, and a lack of institutional knowledge. Conversely, schools with more stable teacher populations have increased collaboration and promote teacher effectiveness (Jackson & Bruegmann, 2009).

Investigating teacher attrition might be one way in which school leaders can improve issues associated with staffing. A more specific investigation into teacher job satisfaction might yield more significant results considering factors such as family or personal issues and retirement are beyond a school's control. Addressing teacher job satisfaction may allow schools to retain effective teachers and attract new ones to the field. Ingersoll (2002) suggests that addressing a few critical aspects of the teaching position would lower turnover rates, decrease school staffing problems, and lead to increases in school performance. By identifying and promoting factors that enhance teacher job satisfaction, educational leaders and policymakers may be better able to address teacher turnover.

## Teacher-Student Relationships

One component of teacher job satisfaction is teachers' relationships with students. Students' daily interactions with teachers are closely linked with teachers' personal and professional identities (Spilt et al., 2011). Relationships between students and teachers have long been thought to be critically important to children's academic, social, behavioral, and emotional development (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015). In their cross-case analysis, Stronge Ward and Grant (2011) found that nothing is more critical to student achievement than the teacher. Hattie (2009) found that the quality and nature of the relationships students have with their teachers had a more substantial effect on their achievement results than socio-economic status or teacher professional development. Teacher-student relationships have also been mentioned as one of the core reasons teachers remain in their profession (O'Connor, 2008). Conversely, Skaalvik and Skaalvik (2011) found that student discipline and behavior were negatively related to job satisfaction.

Moving forward, research on teacher relationships is crucial because as teachers form strong relationships with students, the students feel cared about and more connected to the school. When the student feels more connected to the school, they often have higher levels of achievement. These higher levels of achievement promote teacher job satisfaction (Michaelowa, 2002; Thapa et al., 2013). Thus, giving teachers a more intrinsic reason to develop stronger relationships with their students.

Bonds with school members are vital for students from challenging backgrounds because supportive adults can help students learn strategies for overcoming adversity. If students know their teachers have confidence in them, their confidence will grow. "When students felt engaged, encouraged, and supported, they participated more fully and experienced success" (Shepard et al., 2012, p. 52). In turn, students that trust their teachers are more likely to be engaged and focused on their schoolwork and academic achievements.

Research on teacher-student relationships has found that these relationships are foundational in building trust, increasing student motivation, and engagement and improving student achievement (Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013; Freiberg, 2014; Murray, 2014). Aldrup et al. (2018) found that relationships work reciprocally between students and teachers. In their study, Kudlats and Brown (2020) build beyond the concept of teacher-student relationships into one of the principal-student relationships. The authors identify the significant role that teacher-student relationships play for both parties and extend the priority of the relationship to effective school leadership. Though intriguing, their study omits a significant understanding of how relationships with students impact job satisfaction?

## Teacher Job Satisfaction

The need to address the teacher shortage dates back to the 1980s. Retaining effective educators is critical due to their direct impact on student learning (Robinson et al., 2008).

Addressing growing concerns of academic inadequacy in the United States requires the retention of solid teachers and the recruitment of future educators. The demand to increase recruiting new teachers to the field stems from two competing issues: increasing student enrollments and an aging teacher workforce (Ingersoll, 2001). While there is nothing to be done for the increasing number of students coming into the schools, one way educational leaders have tried to increase the supply of qualified teachers has been through recruitment initiatives such as loan forgiveness, tuition reimbursement, alternative accreditation, and teacher residency models (Sutcher et al., 2016). Offering these initiatives has not been enough to address teacher turnover in the United States. Future initiatives need to develop sustainable change that can address why professionals are choosing not to enter the field of teaching and why those who did have left the classroom entirely.

The research on students and teachers offers several well-documented concepts that could prove pivotal to developing sustainable changes to recruit and retain teachers. First, teachers with higher levels of job satisfaction are more likely to remain in the profession (Ingersoll, 2001; Woods & Weasmer, 2004). Second, how teachers perceive their school climate can positively or negatively affect their job satisfaction (Collie et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2011). Third, increased student achievement promotes teacher job satisfaction (Michaelowa, 2002; Thapa et al., 2013). Strong relationships with teachers can increase student achievement through the School Connectedness Theory (Wingspread, 2004). Therefore, relationships with teachers are beneficial for students emotionally and academically (Loukas et al., 2006).

Previous studies have looked at the factors associated with teacher job satisfaction, such as work-related stress (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2015), school climate (Aldridge & Fraser, 2015; Renzulli et al., 2011), Job Demands-Resource Theory (Collie, 2021), and school processes (Shen et al., 2012). However, subsequent research assessing other aspects of a school's climate, including, for instance, teacher relationships, quality, order, and discipline, is warranted (Loukas et al., 2006). Assessing teacher relationships from the teacher-level instead of the principal-level has understandably been noted as the most appropriate measure of teacher job satisfaction. Fan et al. (2011) found that the majority of variation in perceived school climate (over 80% in each category) was accounted for using data from the individual level. The relatively small influence of school-level variables compared with individual-level variables illustrates the weakness in previous research, which exclusively engaged with school-level data since the majority of variation in perceptions of student climate was unaccounted for due to the omission of individual-level variables.

To understand teacher-student relationships can influence teachers' job satisfaction, we must understand teachers' daily experiences and stressors. The transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) can be used to do this. In this model, an individual's reaction to stress is guided by the interpretation of an external stressor that triggers an emotional response. The subject then evaluates the interpretations based on their relevance and goal congruency. An external stressor is related to the subject's goals or values and therefore triggers emotions. Incidents that are goal incongruent to the subject trigger

emotions such as anger or fear (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Repeated daily experiences of unpleasant emotions in response to stressors can result in negative changes in well-being. In contrast, repeated daily experiences of pleasant emotions can result in positive changes in well-being (Spilt et al., 2011).

This theory identifies the conceptual basis of the study. Teachers are exposed to stressors from a variety of sources, including students and colleagues. Teachers' daily interactions can be a continued source of pleasant or unpleasant emotions. By analyzing how the teachers perceive their relationships with their colleagues and students, we can understand if these stressors are ultimately positive or negative. The school can also be understood as an external stressor. The overall climate of the building could either produce positive emotions or negative stressors. Through examining these external stressors (colleagues and students), this study can gain a unique understanding of the influence they might have on teacher job satisfaction.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Using the transactional model of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), we can identify the relationships staff have with students based on their type of transaction. This model identifies the conceptual basis of the study. Teachers' daily interactions can be a continued source of pleasant or unpleasant emotions. The overall climate of the building could either produce positive emotions or negative stressors. By examining the impact of these stressors, this study can gain a unique understanding of how specific relationships impact teacher job satisfaction.

Analyzing and interpreting the directionality of a relationship also can yield extremely valuable information. If, for example, teacher-student relationships do, in fact, positively influence teacher job satisfaction, then we can understand this interaction as one with low demand and high control, ultimately leading to alleviating teacher stress and an increase in job satisfaction.

This study was guided the research question: *to what extent do student-teacher relationships impact teacher job satisfaction?* The conceptual framework is presented in Figure 1.
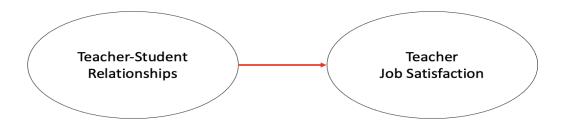
**Figure 1 Conceptual Framework**

## METHODOLOGY

### Data Source and Sample

The data for this study comes from the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS). The TALIS 2018 data were collected by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) from 34 participating countries. In each country, the OECD sampled about 200 schools and about 20 teachers in each school. TALIS 2018 followed the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 1997) to clarify the levels of education it examined: ISCED level 1 was primary education, ISCED level 2 was lower secondary education, and ISCED level 3 was upper secondary education. The target population for the main study of TALIS 2018 was ISCED level 2 teachers (e.g., middle school teachers in the United States). This study only analyzed responses from schools and teachers located in the United States for a sample of 2,560 lower secondary school teachers nested within 166 schools.

This data set was selected for two salient reasons. The first reason is that it contains appropriate measures of the key components of this study: teacher job satisfaction and teacher-student relationships. The second reason is its ability to examine a universal construct like job satisfaction from a representative pool of teachers. By using large-scale data, this study can act as a baseline for future comparative studies between countries or examine the impacts of differing policies. Zakariya (2020) identified several concerns with the development of the teacher job satisfaction scale. Based on this information, the researcher measured each construct individually to ensure appropriate measurement development.

#### Measures and Variables

**Dependent Variable.** Teacher job satisfaction was a construct that was formed into three scales by OECD, job satisfaction with the current work environment (T3JSENV), job satisfaction with the profession (T3JSPRO), and satisfaction with target class autonomy (T3SATAT). The first scale was used for this study as it is a more appropriate measure of teacher job satisfaction since it is more aligned to the research question. The construct

includes four items to examine the extent teacher-student relationships predicted teacher job satisfaction TT3G53C "I would like to change to another school if that were possible," TT3G53E "I enjoy working at this school," TT3G53G "I would recommend my school as a good place to work," and TT3G53J All in all, I am satisfied with my job". All items were measured on a four-point Likert scale, where the responses categories were: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. The reliability for the scale rendered an acceptable alpha reliability coefficient of $\Omega = 0.891$ for the United States.

**Independent Variables.** The independent variable in this study is teacher-student relationships. The index of teacher-student relationships (T3STUD) was measured from the teacher perspective by a set of four items on a four-point Likert scale with response categories of "1 = never or almost never, 2 = a few times a year, 3 = a few times a month, and 4 = once a week or more." The survey items include statements about teachers' experiences with their students in their schools during the past twelve months TT3G49A "in this school, teachers and students usually get on well with each other," TT3G49B "most teachers in this school believe that the students' well-being is important," TT3G49C "most teachers in this school are interested in what students have to say," and TT3G49D "if a student from this school needs extra assistance, the school provides it." Higher scores for this variable indicate stronger positive levels of teacher and student relationships within a building. The reliability for the scale rendered an acceptable omega coefficient of $\Omega$ 0.848 for the United States 2.

**Control Variables.** For this study, participant gender, level of education, and teaching experience were controlled. Controlling for these variables allowed the researcher to analyze the amount of variance they account for compared to the predicting variables. Guided by relevant literature, these variables were selected specifically for their hypothesized impact on the outcome variables. For example, Guramatunhu-Mudiwa and Bolt (2012) found that teachers in North Carolina perceived that female principals outperformed their male counterparts in instructional and administrative roles. This difference in perception based on the gender of the teacher could then be controlled for as a background variable.

### Statistical Analysis and Procedure

In this study, the complex measures and data structure determined the need for a sophisticated statistical analysis procedure. The research question inquired about the extent to which student-teacher relationships impacted teacher job satisfaction. Each topic was first operationalized as a latent construct. To do so, each scale needed to be generated and tested against the model fit indices previously mentioned. For each construct, the individual items were retrieved from the TALIS teacher data. Single-level confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was utilized to construct teacher job satisfaction and teacher-student relations scales. Single-level multiple regression with latent variables while controlling for some teacher background information was performed. This controlling of covariates was done by

developing an initial model that did not include the focused predicting variable. The amount of variance the covariates accounted for was then recorded. In the next step of the analysis, the focused predicting variable was included, and the difference in the amount of variance accounted for in the model was calculated. The model diagram is presented in Figure 2. The bold path and arrow represent the focused effect, while the dash path and arrow represent the controlling effects of the background variables.
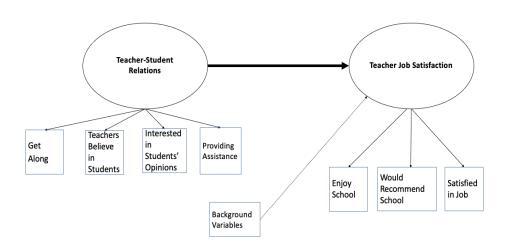


**Figure 2. Model Diagram**

## Model Fit and Variance Explained

Multiple model fit indices were used to evaluate the fit between the proposed CFA models and the data. This attention to fit is vital as a model that poorly fits the data is not appropriate for interpretation and does not measure the constructs as accurately as possible. A poor model fit indicates that the model is influencing the data to allow for unsupported findings. This is significant to quantitative studies as the findings need to be interpreted only if they meet the model fit requirements. Otherwise, any model could be used to make any sort of claim without factual support. For example, in a study, the researcher could heavily influence the findings to make the results come out the way they intend. Utilizing model fit indices, lower-level model fit shows that the model suggested by the researcher is not a reasonable interpretation of what is going on in the data.

The following stand-alone fit indices and their acceptable values were utilized in this study: the comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) and the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973), both acceptable if above .90; and the root mean square error approximation (RMSEA; Browne & Cudeck, 1992) and the standardized root mean residual (SRMR), both acceptable if below .08. The chi-square statistic was also incorporated. Since the chi-square statistic is sensitive to large sample sizes, it was mainly used to compare competing models in this study. Since the maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) estimation method was applied, I applied the scaled chi-square to

test the chi-square difference instead of using the chi-square from the Mplus output, as recommended by Muthen and Muthen (2017). Both the Akaike information criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1974) and the Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978) were used to compare competing models. Smaller AIC and BIC values indicate better model fit and model parsimony. Past the model fit, the amount of variance explained by each construct was analyzed. This information could allow for some idea about the effect size of relationships on teacher job satisfaction.

IBM SPSS 26 was used for the data preparation and used Mplus 8.0 for all data analysis. The MLR method was used to estimate the CFA and SEM models. This method ensured that the standard errors and model fit indices were corrected, addressed missing responses, and the results were robust to violation of data normality (Muthen & Muthen, 2017).

## FINDINGS

The model fit for each of the constructs displayed sound psychometric properties teacher-student relations (CFI = .990, TLI = .969, RMSEA = .017, SRMR = .007), and teacher job satisfaction fit (CFI = .957, TLI = .939, RMSEA = .009, SRMR = .051). From there, a single-level regression was applied with latent variables. The first null model developed acted as a baseline and only included the outcome variable, job satisfaction, and the three covariates. This was done to ensure the further proposed models were, in fact, accurate measures of the data. This baseline model indicated that in total, the background variables accounted for about 7.5% of the total variance. These results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1 Estimated R-Squares Model**

|                 | Estimate | s.e.  | p     |
|-----------------|----------|-------|-------|
| Baseline Model  | 0.075    | 0.001 | 0.000 |
| Complete Model  | 0.659    | 0.002 | 0.000 |

A full model was built to address the research question, including the key predictor of teacher-student relations. The model fit indices are presented in Table 2. The standardized regression results are presented in Table 3. A model diagram with standardized estimated effects is presented in Figure 3. The results showed that teacher-student relations ($\beta$ = .526, p < .001), had statistically significant and positive effects on teacher job satisfaction. The model explained about 65.9% of the total variance in teacher job satisfaction. This means these relationships explained about 58.4% of the total variance in teacher job satisfaction. Among all four predictors, teacher-student relations presented the largest effect on teacher job satisfaction. The second-largest effect was teacher education ($\beta$ = .025, p < .001). Teacher gender and experience also presented significant effects.

**Table 2 Complete Model Fit Indices**

| $\chi^2$ | df | AIC | CFI | TLI | RMSEA |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1382.265 | 37 | 97463.303 | 0.944 | 0.928 | 0.010 |

**Table 3 Standardized Model Results**

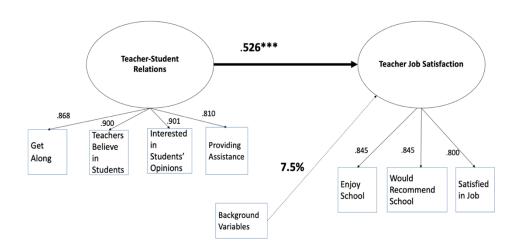| DV | IV | Estimate | s.e. | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teacher Job Satisfaction | Teacher Gender | 0.019 | 0.002 | 0.002 |
| | Teacher Education | 0.025 | 0.002 | 0.000 |
| | Teacher Experience | 0.020 | 0.002 | 0.000 |
| | Teacher-Student Relations | 0.526 | 0.005 | 0.000 |



**Figure 3. Model Diagram with Standardized Estimated Effects**

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study examined an issue that concerns the majority of educators in the field and academia. This study demonstrates the importance that relationships have on teacher job satisfaction. Based on the teacher sample from the TALIS (2018) survey, relationships have shown to be a significant predictor of teacher job satisfaction in the United States. The findings echo the work of Aldrup et al. (2018) and Lavy and Bocker (2018), who found that teacher-student relationships play a significant role in teacher well-being. The findings also answer their call for a more focused investigation of teacher-specific views. The results of this study come directly from teachers and demonstrate the benefits relationships offer from a transactional lens. A strong focus on relationships helps teachers cope with the other external stressors present in their school settings. Stressors such as school working conditions and workload, which have been found to influence teacher job satisfaction as

heavily as student behaviors (Toropova et al., 2021). The following paragraphs present the conclusions and implications for practice.

### Relationships Matter

The research question that guided this study was focused on relationships between teachers and students. Practically, this finding is critical as it helps foster the conversation around the need for Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and teacher self-care. These findings are consistent with previous research of O'Connor (2008) that outlines the importance of relationships for teachers to be satisfied in their jobs. The findings of this study complement previous studies' conclusions of the importance relationships can play (Ansari et al., 2020; Williford & Pianta, 2020), and affirm that teachers interpret relationships as low demand, high control stressor, and provide empirical evidence from a large-scale study.

As previously mentioned, the reciprocal nature of these relationships is imperative to note. When standardized tests seem to be valued above all else, educators need to understand that relationships with students are not "just another thing." We need to realize that the time we put into relationships with students is just as paramount to their success as it is to ours.

### Implications

The implications of this study are intriguing due to their allowance for application. Understanding that relationships with students are an important factor that significantly impacts teacher job satisfaction can be utilized by students, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and anyone with a vested interest in education. Furthermore, school administrators should especially feel encouraged since the findings demonstrate that the factors that influence teacher job satisfaction heavily are ones in which they have some locus of control. It is difficult for an administrator to account for a teacher's age or level of education. However, administrators at all levels can understand that teachers are more satisfied with their jobs through enhanced relationships with students. If the goal of educational leaders is to retain effective educators, relationships need to be considered a significant factor.

From a development perspective, those tasked with developing principal preparation programs should strongly consider including aspects of teacher-student relationships in their course work and readings. Working with future leaders, we should consider relationship building as a central component in instructional leadership. Professional development time, community outreach initiatives all stem from developing and maintaining these fundamental relationships. These results, along with others (Veldman et al., 2013; Kudlats & Brown, 2020), can serve as a baseline for future studies to examine other ways in which relationships impact students, teachers, and principals.

# LIMITATIONS AND RECOMONDATIONS

There are several limitations to this study. First, the data for this study is secondary in nature. The researcher did not develop the survey, nor was he involved in its deployment or initial analysis. Thus, the research methods are less flexible. The data was collected before the development of this study which means that the research questions posed must rely on the specific questions derived from the initial survey.

Second, job satisfaction is a complex and nuanced construct. This study sought to identify the extent to which one construct, teacher-student relationships, impacted teacher job satisfaction. Obviously, some other constructs and topics influence job satisfaction. This study demonstrates the first step in understanding how meaningful relationships are for educators. A more complex model could and should be developed to pinpoint the multiple components associated with teacher job satisfaction. This study, however, sought to examine one hypothesized to be fundamental closely.

A final limitation of the study is that it does not include student perceptions of their relationships with their teachers. Student data would allow the researcher to understand how they felt about their relationships and see if there is alignment between perceptions of students and teachers.

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