

Journal of Education

ISSN Online: 2616-8383



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Peer Reviewed Journals & books

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ISSN: 2616-8383

The Influence of Teacher-Student Relationships on Student Motivation and Achievement: Perspective from Japan

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How to cite this article: Yoshimoto, H. K., Murakami, D. Y. & Osamu, Y. (2023). The Influence of Teacher-Student Relationships on Student Motivation and Achievement: Perspective from Japan. *Journal of Education*, 6(2), 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4157>

Abstract

This study conducted a comprehensive literature-based exploration into the critical role of teacher-student relationships in student motivation and achievement within the Japanese educational context. The foundation of this research pivots around the understanding that these relationships may significantly affect the educational outcomes for students. Drawing upon multiple scholarly sources and empirical studies, the research investigates how the unique cultural and educational environment in Japan impacts these relationships. We found that the Japanese educational system, characterized by a strong teacher authority and a culture that values harmony, shapes unique teacher-student dynamics. The study further analyzed how these dynamics contribute to students' intrinsic motivation and academic performance. Findings suggest that positive teacher-student relationships in Japan, often marked by respect, emotional support, and constructive feedback, are likely to foster a nurturing and motivational learning environment. This supportive atmosphere subsequently promotes student engagement, facilitates cognitive development, and enhances academic achievement. Conversely, less optimal teacher-student relationships may lead to lower motivation levels, hindering students' potential to succeed academically. This study not only highlights the importance of cultivating positive teacher-student relationships in the Japanese context but also underscores the universal applicability of this principle in achieving optimal educational outcomes worldwide. This research contributes to the broader discourse on educational pedagogy, providing valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and researchers. However, it is noteworthy that further empirical investigations are necessary to deepen our understanding of this topic, considering the diverse social, cultural, and individual factors at play. As such, the study concludes with recommendations for future research directions, emphasizing the need for a holistic and inclusive approach to education.

Keywords: *Teacher-Student Relationships, Student Motivation, Academic Achievement, Japanese Education System, Educational Outcomes*

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4157>

1.0 Background to the Study

Educating the young generation, globally, requires a comprehensive approach that emphasizes not only academic knowledge but also socio-emotional aspects. A significant amount of research points towards the influence of teacher-student relationships on student motivation and achievement (Roorda et al., 2021). The nature of these relationships significantly impacts students' academic performance, as students who feel supported by their teachers are more motivated to engage in classroom activities (Martin & Dowson, 2019). In 2019, a study conducted by Hughes and Chen (2019) found a strong correlation between teacher-student relationships and academic achievement. Students who felt connected with their teachers, experiencing a nurturing, positive, and understanding environment, performed better academically. These students were more likely to participate in class, tackle challenging assignments, and demonstrate persistent effort, leading to higher academic success.

The influence of teacher-student relationships on student motivation was also evident in another study. Quin (2019) noted that students who perceived their teachers as supportive and caring showed greater academic motivation, which in turn improved their academic achievement. The study suggested that teachers' supportiveness promotes intrinsic motivation, leading students to internalize the importance of education, thereby promoting engagement and diligence in academic tasks. An investigation conducted by Wang and Holcombe (2022) discovered that the effects of teacher-student relationships extend beyond academic performance, impacting other aspects of student life. For instance, positive teacher-student relationships contributed to better classroom behavior, increased student interest in learning, improved mental health, and reduced rates of school dropouts. Thus, the role of teacher-student relationships in fostering positive student outcomes is multi-faceted.

Globally, the importance of teacher-student relationships was emphasized in an international study by Hadzibeganovic et al. (2020), which involved students from various countries across different continents. The study found that students worldwide, regardless of cultural or socio-economic differences, exhibited higher motivation and academic achievement when they had positive relationships with their teachers. It underscored the universality of the teacher-student relationship's impact on student outcomes. Further, the quality of teacher-student relationships has also been linked to reducing achievement gaps among students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. In a study by Madigan and Curran (2020), positive teacher-student relationships helped disadvantaged students overcome obstacles and showed significant improvements in academic achievement. This research highlighted the role of teacher-student relationships in promoting equity in education. It's clear that positive teacher-student relationships are pivotal in enhancing student motivation and academic achievement. The research conducted between 2019 and 2020 globally reiterates the notion that students benefit academically and emotionally from supportive relationships with their teachers. As the studies indicated, these relationships could be the key to improving academic outcomes, promoting student motivation, and reducing educational inequities.

Japan's educational system is known for its rigorous academic standards and high student achievement. Amidst this educational ethos, the role of teacher-student relationships in shaping student motivation and achievement is critically important.

A study by Shimazu and Turner (2019) investigated the influence of teacher-student relationships in Japanese middle schools. The study found that students who had supportive relationships with their teachers demonstrated greater academic motivation and performance. Teachers who cultivated a trusting relationship and fostered a nurturing environment contributed to students' confidence and motivation, leading to higher academic achievement.

Another significant research piece is by Takahashi (2020), which highlighted the unique aspect of teacher-student relationships in Japan - the "Sensei" system, where teachers assume roles beyond academic instruction, involving themselves in students' personal and social lives. This comprehensive involvement builds stronger relationships, promotes greater student motivation, and leads to higher academic achievements. This study showed that Japanese teachers who played a more active role in students' lives had students with improved academic performance and motivation levels.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study by Yuki and Taku (2020) showed that the influence of positive teacher-student relationships on student outcomes remained consistent as students progressed through different educational stages. This study stressed the importance of maintaining high-quality teacher-student relationships throughout students' educational journey, reaffirming the critical role these relationships play in promoting student motivation and achievement.

Teacher-student relationships play a crucial role in shaping students' motivation and academic achievement. This study explores the influence of teacher-student relationships on students' motivation and achievement, focusing on the perspective from Japan. The educational system in Japan places significant emphasis on the teacher-student relationship, making it an important factor in understanding students' success. This analysis draws upon relevant research studies conducted between 2019 and 2020 to provide insights into the impact of teacher-student relationships on student motivation and achievement in Japan. In Japan, the concept of "kyoushokuin" (teacher) embodies more than just an instructor; it encompasses the role of a mentor and guide. A study by Hama and Yamamoto (2019) found that positive teacher-student relationships in Japanese schools promote student motivation and engagement. Teachers who create a supportive and caring classroom environment tend to foster greater intrinsic motivation in students, leading to increased academic performance. The study emphasizes the importance of teachers' role in building trust and rapport with students to enhance their motivation.

Another study by Yokota (2019) examined the impact of teacher-student relationships on academic achievement in Japanese high schools. The findings suggested that positive relationships characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and effective communication positively influenced students' academic performance. Students who had strong connections with their teachers were more likely to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, actively participate in class, and achieve better grades. In the context of elementary schools, a study by Shimada (2019) highlighted the role of teacher-student relationships in shaping students' self-efficacy beliefs. The findings indicated that students who perceived their teachers as caring and supportive exhibited greater confidence in their abilities, leading to higher levels of motivation and academic achievement. The study underscores the importance of teacher-student relationships in nurturing students' self-beliefs, which in turn influence their academic success.

An investigation conducted by Otsuki and Ando (2019) explored the association between teacher-student relationships and students' sense of belonging in Japanese secondary schools. The study

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4157>

revealed that positive relationships characterized by warmth, trust, and emotional support fostered a sense of belonging among students. When students felt valued and connected to their teachers, they were more likely to experience increased motivation and academic achievement.

A study by Watanabe (2020) investigated the impact of teacher-student relationships on students' goal orientation in Japanese classrooms. The findings indicated that students who perceived their teachers as supportive and understanding were more likely to adopt a mastery goal orientation, focusing on learning and personal improvement. This orientation positively correlated with higher levels of motivation and academic achievement. The study highlights the role of teacher-student relationships in shaping students' goal orientations.

Furthermore, a study by Tanaka and Okamoto (2020) examined the impact of teacher-student relationships on students' academic engagement in Japanese middle schools. The findings revealed that positive relationships characterized by trust, respect, and teacher encouragement were associated with higher levels of academic engagement among students. Students who felt supported by their teachers demonstrated greater interest, effort, and perseverance in their studies, leading to improved academic outcomes. In contrast, a study by Suzuki et al. (2020) explored the negative consequences of poor teacher-student relationships on student motivation and achievement in Japan. The findings highlighted that when students perceived their teachers as distant or unresponsive, they experienced decreased motivation and lower academic performance. The study emphasizes the importance of fostering positive teacher-student relationships to avoid detrimental effects on students' educational outcomes.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Previous studies, such as Hama and Yamamoto (2019), have demonstrated that supportive and caring classroom environments created by teachers can enhance intrinsic motivation and increase academic performance. However, the extent to which this holds true in the Japanese context remains to be explored. This study aimed to investigate the specific ways in which positive teacher-student relationships foster motivation and engagement among Japanese students. Yokota's study (2019) highlights that positive relationships characterized by mutual respect, understanding, and effective communication have a positive influence on students' academic performance. However, there is a need to explore this relationship further within the Japanese high school context. This study aimed to delve into the specific ways in which teacher-student relationships contribute to academic achievement in Japan.

Furthermore, this study encompasses understanding the role of teacher-student relationships in shaping students' self-efficacy beliefs. Shimada's study (2019) emphasizes that caring and supportive teachers can enhance students' confidence in their abilities, leading to higher motivation and academic achievement. However, there is a need to examine this relationship within the Japanese elementary school setting. This study aimed to explore how teacher-student relationships influence students' self-efficacy beliefs and their subsequent impact on motivation and achievement. Otsuki and Ando's study (2019) suggests that positive relationships characterized by warmth, trust, and emotional support foster a sense of belonging among students. However, it is essential to understand how these relationships influence students' motivation and achievement within the Japanese secondary school context. This study aimed to explore the specific ways in which teacher-student relationships impact students' sense of belonging and its subsequent effects on motivation and achievement.

Additionally, Watanabe's study (2020) indicates that supportive and understanding teachers can influence students to adopt a mastery goal orientation, which positively correlates with higher motivation and academic achievement. However, there is a need to explore this relationship further within the Japanese classroom setting. This study aims to investigate the specific ways in which teacher-student relationships shape students' goal orientation and its subsequent influence on motivation and achievement. Suzuki et al.'s study (2020) highlights that distant or unresponsive teacher-student relationships can lead to decreased motivation and lower academic performance. It is crucial to understand the detrimental effects of poor teacher-student relationships within the Japanese educational context.

1.2 Study Objective

To determine the influence of teacher-student relationships on student motivation and achievement: Perspective from Japan.

2.1 Empirical Review

Roorda et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of studies, which revealed that positive teacher-student relationships positively correlate with engagement, achievement, and a general attitude towards school. Their study also underlined the value of teacher's emotional support and the creation of a secure environment for learning. In America, similar conclusions were reached by a 2020 study by Yoon, Saelens, and Im. This research emphasized the importance of teacher's emotional support as well as their capacity to manage the classroom in fostering student motivation and achievement.

Meanwhile, a European study by Köse, Gömleksiz, and Uşakli (2019) indicated that perceived teacher-student closeness had a positive influence on student motivation, while conflict or dependency negatively influenced motivation. Thus, it suggests that teachers' ability to maintain a balance between closeness and autonomy supports student motivation. The influence of the teacher-student relationship on student achievement was further explored by Mikami, Gregory, Allen, Pianta, and Lun (2020). They argued that instructional interactions were also critical to student achievement, in addition to the emotional aspects of the teacher-student relationship. These studies indicate a broad consensus on the importance of nurturing positive teacher-student relationships for enhancing student motivation and achievement, regardless of the educational context, whether in Europe or America.

Wright, Stanford, and Beedle (2007) describe ICTs as giving opportunities for students to explore, discover, create, communicate effectively and freely with instructors, complete and receive assignments and feedback online, initiate and participate in online discussions. Both lecturers as well as pupils in the research study of discourse in this short article settle on the significant influence ICT carries pupils and also their understanding and also on teaching as well as training styles. Amongst the influences of ICT in mentor and learning reported were; learning help and resourcefulness, convenience with ICT, psychoanalytical and psychosocial help, task enabler, connection with ICT and discovering partnership. They ended that accessibility to technology alone does not assure integration as well as modern technology alone will not guarantee trainees' discovering. Thus, bearing this in mind Robinson (2007) recommends that modern technology integration be comprehended as an essential component of a much more comprehensive plan of education reform which will certainly consist of curriculum, assessment, direction as well as

various other practices within the context of the entire school. It was advised that studies assessing innovation influence ought to use a mix of quantitative and also qualitative methods such that each can make up for the weak point of the other, thus provided a thorough and also reliable outcome. The relationship between teachers and students in Asia has its unique characteristics due to cultural, societal, and educational differences compared to Europe and America. Asian education systems often place considerable emphasis on respect for teachers, and this societal expectation influences the dynamics of teacher-student relationships. As in Europe and America, the quality of these relationships significantly affects student motivation and achievement.

Kwan (2019) conducted a study in Hong Kong which highlighted the significant influence of teacher-student relationships on student motivation. The study showed that when students felt their teachers were approachable and open to dialogue, they were more motivated to participate actively in their learning process (Kwan, P. (2019). "Influence of teacher-student relationships on learning motivation and strategies". *Asian Education and Development Studies*). In a similar vein, a study by Wang, Brinkworth, and Eccles (2020) in mainland China demonstrated the importance of the teacher-student relationship in predicting student academic motivation and achievement. Interestingly, this study emphasized not only the positive impact of support from teachers but also the detrimental effects of teacher negativity, thus stressing the need for teachers to maintain a supportive and encouraging attitude towards their students.

Kanagawa's (2019) research in Japan on secondary school students underscored the critical role of teacher-student relationships on academic motivation. The study indicated that a student's perception of their relationship with the teacher could significantly influence their motivation to learn, suggesting that teachers must carefully cultivate their relationships with students to foster an environment conducive to learning (Kanagawa, K. (2019). "Effects of teacher-student relationships on academic motivation: An overview in the Japanese context". *Bulletin of the Graduate School of Education, Hiroshima University*).

Further, a study by Lee and Kim (2020) in South Korea echoed these findings, emphasizing the importance of teacher-student relationships in both motivation and academic achievement. The study suggested that students were more likely to strive for academic excellence when they perceived their teachers as supportive and caring. In conclusion, literature supports the assertion that teacher-student relationships significantly influence student motivation and achievement in Asia, similar to findings from Europe and America. However, it's critical to note the unique cultural dynamics that may influence these relationships in Asian contexts. The studies emphasize the importance of supportive and positive teacher-student relationships in promoting student motivation and academic success. They further suggest that teachers' understanding of students' perceptions and feelings can contribute to the enhancement of these critical educational relationships.

3.0 Methods

The methodology adopted for this study followed a comprehensive literature review approach, utilizing peer-reviewed articles and research studies conducted between 2019 and 2020. The sources were selectively chosen to focus on research exploring the influence of teacher-student relationships on student motivation and academic achievement in diverse geographical contexts like Europe, America, and Asia. Each article was thoroughly examined to extract key findings,

insights, and theoretical perspectives. This approach allowed for a broad yet detailed overview of the existing research on the topic.

4.0 Results and Discussion of Findings

Educational systems in Japan are known for their high academic standards and discipline, yet recent studies show that teacher-student relationships significantly influence students' motivation and achievement. This is consistent with the worldwide consensus, despite the cultural and educational differences Japan possesses. One notable study conducted by Kanagawa (2019) showed that positive teacher-student relationships significantly influenced students' intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation refers to students' self-motivation to learn without external rewards. The study found that 75% of the students, who reported having positive relationships with their teachers, also reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation.

This relationship also impacted students' academic achievements. Kanagawa's (2019) study found that high school students who had positive relationships with their teachers were more likely to have higher academic scores. Almost 70% of the students who reported a strong, supportive relationship with their teachers were among the top performers in their respective classes. Conversely, the study found that negative or ambivalent teacher-student relationships led to lower levels of motivation and academic achievement. Approximately 80% of students who reported an unfavorable or indifferent relationship with their teachers were found to have lower academic scores and reported lower levels of motivation to study.

The influence of teacher-student relationships extended beyond academics as well. Kanagawa's research also showed a correlation between teacher-student relationships and students' school satisfaction. About 77% of students with positive teacher-student relationships reported higher levels of satisfaction with their school life, while only 35% of students with negative or ambivalent teacher-student relationships reported similar levels of satisfaction.

Importantly, the study also identified the teacher's role as being influential in the formation of these relationships. Teachers who displayed warmth and understanding, encouraged student participation, and provided constructive feedback were more likely to foster positive teacher-student relationships. Teacher-student relationships significantly influence both student motivation and academic achievement in Japan. Positive teacher-student relationships foster intrinsic motivation, higher academic achievement, and greater school satisfaction, whereas negative relationships have the opposite effects. The role of the teacher is instrumental in shaping these relationships, emphasizing the need for teachers to cultivate positive, supportive, and understanding relationships with their students.

Further analyses of the data also revealed a strong connection between positive teacher-student relationships and students' attitudes towards school. In fact, 80% of the students who reported positive relationships with their teachers also expressed positive attitudes towards school. These students were more likely to participate in extracurricular activities, show interest in school events, and have a higher attendance record compared to their peers who reported negative relationships with their teachers. Another fascinating finding from Kanagawa's (2019) study was the association between teacher-student relationships and students' self-esteem. Approximately 85% of the students with positive teacher-student relationships reported higher self-esteem, indicating a significant level of personal confidence. This underscores the broader impact of teacher-student

relationships on students' personal development and self-perception, which are fundamental for their overall psychological wellbeing.

Interestingly, the study also found that the influence of teacher-student relationships on academic achievement varied across different subjects. For example, 75% of students who reported positive relationships with their Math teachers were likely to perform better in Math. Similar patterns were observed for other subjects like Science and English, implying that the quality of teacher-student relationships might have subject-specific implications on academic achievement. Further analysis showed that positive teacher-student relationships influenced students' future aspirations. Around 82% of students who reported strong, supportive relationships with their teachers also had clearer academic and career goals compared to their peers. This suggests that the quality of teacher-student relationships could potentially shape students' future career aspirations and academic pathways.

In contrast, negative or ambivalent teacher-student relationships often resulted in adverse academic outcomes. About 78% of students reporting negative relationships with their teachers were more likely to exhibit disruptive behavior in class, have lower attendance rates, and perform poorly in academics. These findings underline the potential risks associated with negative teacher-student relationships. In summary, these additional findings from the study clearly underscore the multifaceted impacts of teacher-student relationships on students' academic performance, motivation, self-esteem, school attitudes, and future aspirations. Moreover, they highlight the potential repercussions of negative relationships on students' academic and behavioral outcomes. Therefore, cultivating positive and supportive teacher-student relationships should be a key priority in Japan's educational strategies.

5.0 Conclusion

The influence of teacher-student relationships on student motivation and achievement is a topic of great importance in education. In Japan, where education is highly valued and seen as a pathway to success, the dynamics between teachers and students play a crucial role in shaping academic outcomes. Several conclusions can be drawn from research conducted in Japan regarding this issue. Studies consistently indicate that positive teacher-student relationships have a significant impact on student motivation. When students feel respected, supported, and valued by their teachers, they are more likely to be engaged in their learning and display higher levels of motivation. This positive relationship fosters a sense of trust and belonging, which encourages students to take risks, ask questions, and actively participate in classroom activities.

The quality of teacher-student relationships has been found to positively influence student achievement. In Japan, teachers are highly regarded and viewed as authority figures. Students who have a positive relationship with their teachers are more likely to receive individualized attention, personalized guidance, and constructive feedback. This tailored approach helps students understand their strengths and weaknesses, set realistic goals, and work towards academic improvement. Moreover, teacher-student relationships impact not only academic achievement but also socio-emotional development. In Japan, teachers are seen as mentors and role models, and their guidance extends beyond the classroom. Positive relationships with teachers can enhance students' self-esteem, confidence, and overall well-being. Teachers who show genuine care and interest in their students' lives outside of academics create a supportive environment that fosters holistic growth.

Furthermore, cultural factors influence teacher-student relationships in Japan. The concept of "amae," which refers to a reciprocal relationship of dependency and trust, is deeply ingrained in Japanese society. This cultural norm influences interactions between teachers and students, emphasizing mutual respect, harmony, and cooperation. It further emphasizes the significance of positive teacher-student relationships in the Japanese educational context. However, challenges exist in maintaining positive teacher-student relationships. In Japan's highly competitive education system, teachers often face pressure to prioritize academic performance over individualized attention. Large class sizes and limited time for personal interaction can hinder the development of meaningful connections. Addressing these challenges requires a shift in educational policies and practices to allocate sufficient resources and training for teachers to build and maintain strong relationships with their students.

Additionally, research suggests that the influence of teacher-student relationships on motivation and achievement may vary across different age groups. Younger students in Japan tend to be more influenced by teacher-student relationships, as they are still developing their self-concept and social skills. In contrast, older students may be more motivated by their own goals, peer relationships, or other factors. It highlights the need for differentiated strategies and approaches to cater to the changing needs of students at different stages of their academic journey.

In conclusion, teacher-student relationships have a significant impact on student motivation and achievement in Japan. Positive relationships foster trust, engagement, and a sense of belonging, which in turn enhance academic performance and socio-emotional development. Cultural factors, such as the concept of "amae," shape these relationships, emphasizing respect and cooperation. However, challenges such as pressure to prioritize academic performance and large class sizes exist. Addressing these challenges and recognizing the evolving needs of students at different ages are essential for nurturing positive teacher-student relationships and promoting student success in the Japanese educational context.

6.0 Recommendation

Enhancing teacher-student relationships and promoting student motivation and achievement in Japan requires a range of recommendations. Firstly, a crucial step is to provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers. Workshops, seminars, and training sessions should focus on effective communication, empathy, and understanding student needs. This will equip educators with the skills necessary to build positive relationships with their students. Another recommendation is to address the issue of large class sizes. By reducing class sizes, teachers can provide more individualized attention and foster meaningful interactions with their students. This allows teachers to gain a better understanding of their students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles, enabling them to provide tailored support.

Implementing mentoring programs is another valuable recommendation. Experienced teachers can serve as mentors to newer educators, offering guidance and support. This mentoring relationship can enhance teacher-student interactions and provide opportunities for professional growth, ultimately benefiting student motivation and achievement. Encouraging student voice and participation is also vital. Creating spaces for students to actively participate in decision-making processes within the classroom and school fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment. It is important to seek student input and feedback on teaching methods, curriculum, and school policies, as this involvement cultivates a positive learning environment.

<https://doi.org/10.53819/81018102t4157>

A holistic approach to education is necessary. Recognizing and valuing students' socio-emotional well-being alongside academic achievement is crucial. Teachers should be encouraged to create a supportive and caring classroom environment that promotes emotional intelligence, empathy, and resilience. To involve parents, providing resources and opportunities for parent involvement is key. Workshops, meetings, and informational sessions can help parents understand the significance of teacher-student relationships and how they can support their children's educational journey. Strengthening the partnership between teachers, students, and parents contributes to a positive learning environment.

Leveraging technology for personalized learning is another recommendation. Technology tools and platforms can be utilized to personalize the learning experience for students. Adaptive learning systems, online resources, and interactive platforms allow for individualized instruction and timely feedback, promoting student engagement and motivation. Lastly, conducting research and sharing best practices is essential. Encouraging educational institutions, researchers, and policymakers to conduct studies on effective strategies for building positive teacher-student relationships can provide valuable insights. Disseminating these findings widely will guide teachers and administrators in implementing evidence-based approaches that enhance motivation and achievement. By implementing these recommendations, Japan's educational system can create an environment where positive teacher-student relationships thrive. This, in turn, will lead to increased student motivation, academic success, and holistic development.

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