



Students' perceptions about their relationship with teachers

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Introduction

❖ Nowadays, children spend several hours of their day at school, as a result teachers have an important role in their everyday life. Relationships between teachers and students play a significant role in children's development (Howes & Hamilton, 1992; Howes, Matheson, & Hamilton, 1994).

❖ Specifically, in periods when development processes are dealing increasingly difficulties and requirements, such as the transition from the family environment to the kindergarten, relationships between students and teachers may constitute a supportive framework. Under this circumstances the relationships between teachers and students provides stability and organization to development processes (Gregoriadis, 2005; Pianta & Steinberg, 1992).

Theoretical Framework

Relationships between teachers and students play a significant role in children's cognitive, social and emotional development.

Specifically:

Positive & supportive student-teacher relationships, help students to:

- ❖ enhance emotional & social development of children (Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004),
- ❖ improve school performance & adjustment (Zinsser, Bailey, Curby, Denham, & Bassett, 2013),
- ❖ increase motivation for learning,
- ❖ improve cooperation skills & reduce-student drop out of school (Birch & Ladd, 1996; Ergur, 2009; Hughes & Cavell, 1999; Pianta et al., 1992; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995; Spilt, Koomen, & Mantzicopoulos, 2010).

Negative relationships with teachers:

- ❖ reduce pre-social behavior of children and participation in the classroom,
- ❖ increase aggressive behavior towards peers and the probability of school failure (Hughes et al., 1999).

Method

It is significant to mention that the majority of studies, that examined the teacher-child relationship, were solely focus on teacher reports. On the other hand, there are only few studies that explored children's perceptions (Mantzicopoulos & Neuharth-Pritchett, 2003).

The aim of this work is to explore the perceptions of children about their relationship with teachers.

Sample

The sample include 216 pre-school children in West Greece.

Procedure

Individual interviews with children were conducted in order to pinpoint the perceptions of children regarding their relationship with teachers. Researcher asked questions to children and these responded with Yes or No.

Measure

The Young Children's Appraisals of Teacher Support was developed to measure young children's perceptions of the relationship with their teacher. The Young Children's Appraisals of Teacher Support has three subscales:

Warmth subscale measures child's perceptions of teacher support, encouragement & acceptance (11 items: e.g. Helps me when I don't understand?),

Conflict subscale estimate the children's perception of negativity in interactions with teachers (10 items: e.g. Gets angry with me?),

Autonomy Support subscale (6 items: e.g. Lets me choose work that I want to do)

(Mantzicopoulos, 2005; Mantzicopoulos et al., 2003).

Results

Children's perceptions of their relationships with their teachers:

- ❖ Children understand that relations between them and their teachers are based on support (84%) and autonomy (70%)
- ❖ Children recognize the existence of disagreement (51%) in their relationships with teachers

Discussion

Teachers should be aware of their students perceptions about the type of relationships that they have with children, because:

❖ if they have positive and supportive relationships with their students, teachers have to enhance this type of behavior

or

❖ if they have negative relationship with their students, they have to identify and correct their behaviors, with purpose to develop positive and supportive relationships with their students

It would be interesting to examine the children's perceptions about their relationships with teachers in a different social cultural framework and identify similarities and differences in students' perceptions.

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