

Research Paper

## Importance of Positive Educational Relationships: A Study of Teacher-Student Relationships and Its Impact on Academic, Social, and Emotional Adjustment Among Students

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### ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes how the relationships between students and teachers can impact education and learning, especially with regards to holistic development of children. The study covers the students of Army Public School in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, and uses methods like the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) and ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). It reviews different ways researchers have studied these relationships, and expands upon the same. Also examined was the attribute of gender through independent sampling, and if it added to the educational relationships in a particular way, whether positive or negative. This paper adds to the existing discourse of the different approaches that may be applied for a better understanding of encouraging holistic development for growing children. It explores if having a close relationship with teachers is important for students' academic motivation and social goals, or if it is instead optional to have rather than essential for success in these areas.

**Keywords:** *Educational relationships, positive relationships, holistic development, academic understanding, social concerns*

Schooling is one of the most important ventures of a child's life, especially in their early developmental stages. The behaviors they witness around themselves, the lessons they learn, and the manners they observe all end up influencing them in some way in a classroom setting. As previously pointed out in the context of this topic by scholars, schooling is often the first 'genuine' contact outside a child's previous life and a new one where they can meet fellow children who will become their peers (Arul & Arul, 2016, p. 29).

But even more important than that is the fact that a teacher is, time and again, the main role model for the child to look up to and imitate, particularly in the space of the classroom and the school, a territory that is outside the domain of their home. Because the home is a guarded space often necessitated by the restrictions of parental care and important restraints for the child's own health and safety and therefore usually regulated, the school can often

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Received: September 28, 2025; Revision Received: March 27, 2026; Accepted: March 31, 2026

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become a more secure domain where the child can explore interests under supervision that allow for bonding between peers and foster supportive relationships that can aid in adjustment and stabilization of the several aspects of a student's life: academic, social, emotional and more.

### ***Expected Role of Supportive Bonds***

Such positive relationships between teachers and students have been shown to lead to betterment in the bonds between a child and their peers, something that Hughes (2012, p. 320) concludes as resulting in the perception of academic and social competence for said children. This is particularly because the approach to analyzing the teacher-student relationship should be centered around the individual rather than just the theoretical frameworks that suffice as methods for understanding the same. As Dong et al. (2021) put it, “[b]oth parents and teachers should pay more attention to developing children’s interpersonal trust, build better teacher-student relationships, and focus more on how children feel about the relationship.” This is because supportive educational bonds build interpersonal trust and reliance, especially from the point of view of students. Such a conclusion rings particularly true for students from backgrounds and social circumstances that may not fall under the umbrellas of conventional or traditional spaces.

Furthermore, as writers Murray and Malmgren (2005, p. 138) have observed, “[o]ne finding that has consistently emerged from this work is that supportive adult-child relationships can promote social, emotional, and academic adjustment among children and youth exposed to multiple risks”. Thus, it is significant that steps be taken towards the creation and improvement of procedures that are not suited just for a general homogeneity of students, but also takes into account the different factors of social and cultural differences, including children from poverty-stricken areas, and those with disabilities, amongst others. As Murray and Greenberg (2001) point out, students with disabilities are at a greater risk of developing additional social and emotional adjustment problems that fall outside the defining characteristics of specific disability classifications, majorly because of the lack of studies that could have otherwise pushed for progress in this area.

Connections like these are thus a priority when accounting for the techniques through which a positive relationship between teachers and students can be developed, especially when it comes to sharing personal troubles and crises. According to Hughes (2012), adults become a base of security for children, allowing them to safely explore and engage with the environment in their surroundings, while also offering them an additional source of stress regulation. Those children and students who have strong personal bonds to depend upon usually fare better in stressful situations, which in turn leads to the promotion of stability and normative adjustment (Murray & Greenberg, 2001, p. 25).

### ***Frameworks and Methods used in Existing Research Context***

Dong et al. (2021) used structural equation models to collect and correlate the data between interpersonal trust and its influence on social adjustment amongst students, concluding that from the students’ perspective, an encouraging education relationship between themselves and their teachers often helps them to adapt to social environments: both in interactions with peers in classrooms, and outside of academic institutions and their home, involving interactions with the world at large. In contrast, Liu (2024) uses convenient sampling method, and then cluster sampling method via using questionnaires with strict non-anonymity. This grouping is done in an effort to get the perspective of both teachers and

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students, though it is not just mentioned but also emphasized upon that this result is more reflective of certain countries where the teachers are respected. Another factor that is highlighted upon is the classroom structure that differs greatly: one teacher often has to interact with over thirty students, which differs from most Western countries where the convention is for the class size to be lesser and increase chances of individual and interpersonal interactions between the students and teachers. He goes on to recommend sandplay therapy, as well as group counselling, for children struggling with social adjustment, concluding that “teachers should exert more effort into building good relationships with students, and show more concern about how students perceive the relationship.” (Liu, 2024).

Meanwhile, the validation of Teacher Emotional Support Scale or TESS, as abbreviated – has been confirmed in the context of the perception of high school students with regards to the emotional support they feel that they have received from their teachers, or the lack thereof, along with practical applications of the same (Romano et al., 2020). However, this study in particular was focused around Italian educational institutions. As Romano et al. (2020) go on to observe, various studies have “highlighted the direct link between low levels of teachers’ emotional support and adverse academic outcomes, such as anxiety”. Such obstacles can severely limit academic potential, and even act as drawbacks that restrict academic progress for the students, because they find their teachers to be neither dependable nor reliable enough to share their struggles with.

This in turn results in what can be termed as eventual detachment from the spheres of academia and the lack of a mentor/guiding figure within the same, which in turn complicates the relationships of these students: with their peers, with authority figures and with the world of education at large.

In conclusion, positive relationships between students and teachers makes the students feel valued and understood. When students perceive their teachers as approachable and encouraging, they become more likely to engage actively in the learning process. This dynamic engagement could be in the form of showing increased motivation to participate in class discussions, enjoying collaboration with peers, and taking initiative in their learning. Existing research indicates that students who feel connected to their teachers show higher chances of achieving higher academic performance, since they are willing to invest effort in their studies.

Teachers who possess positive relationships with their students are more likely to feel fulfilled and motivated in their profession. These feelings of support and respect encourages educators to adopt teaching strategies that can be personalized to meet the diverse needs of their students. When teachers feel valued, they are more likely to trust in modifying their pedagogy via experimenting with new methods. Subsequently, this leads to improvements in instructional quality, ultimately benefiting student learning outcomes.

When teachers in schools foster important connections with parents, it encourages greater parental involvement in the children's education. This involvement can manifest in a variety of forms: from attending school events to participating in parent-teacher meetings, and motivating both homework and learning processes at home, in a domestic sphere where the children feel safe. Increased parental engagement often leads to enhanced student

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achievement, since the parents who are actively involved in their children's education will tend to reinforce the value of knowledge while providing additional support.

Thus, positive educational relationships contribute significantly to students' emotional as well as psychological well-being, from feeling a sense of belonging and connection within their academic community. They therefore often develop resilience and effective coping strategies to deal with hardship. Supportive relationships with both teachers and peers can help students navigate challenges both academically and personally since the students feel safe to express themselves and take risks in their learning. This, according to existing discourse, ultimately leads to personal growth and academic success.

### ***Research Aim and Objectives***

The aim of this paper is to examine the variety of factors that affect educational relationships, particularly in a positive sense that leads to progress and improvement, including influence on the various stakeholders in the educational ecosystem.

These analyses include, but are not limited to: the role of positive bonds between teachers – sometimes as parental/guiding figures and the students, the impact of educational relationships beyond the domain of academia and academic institutions, and the elements that often lack research in this field. The last part includes the question of gender, which is often an important factor in such surveys, since the difference is relevant to the effect that it has on positive educational relationships as a whole. This includes students from less traditional family structures, a factor that may make it difficult for them to identify with or work in tandem as easily with their peers.

While solutions to the same may be elaborated upon briefly at best, in-depth analysis of the findings and their effects on the student population goes beyond the scope of this particular paper, as well as its present study. This is distinctly because this paper is more concerned about the theoretical and societal frameworks used in understanding the aforementioned aspects and comparing it with the existing research context and past studies, rather than an in-depth examination of the same with regards to the queries raised in the following contents.

The objective of this study is to primarily understand the effect of positive educational relationships with regards to students' academic success, as undertaken in an Army Public School.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### ***Sample***

The sample population that has been taken for this particular study involves school-going students, as well as their respective classroom teachers, in the city of Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh.

The sample size used for this research includes 200 adolescent students from the educational institution.

### ***Instruments***

Two measures were used in this study,

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- 1. STRS for student-teacher relationship:** The STRS is a measure of teachers' relationships with an individual child in their classroom (Pianta, 2001). The student-teacher relationship Scale-Short Form, often abbreviated to STRS, is a teacher-report instrument designed for teachers that assesses the teacher's perception of their relationship and connection with a student on the key factors, or subscales, of conflict, closeness, and dependency. This scale offers 15 items that are to be rated on a 5-point scale by the teacher. The STRS consisted of 15 items, out of which eight items are related to closeness (1, 3, 4R, 5, 6, 7, 9, 15) and seven items are related to conflict (2, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14). Item 4 is reverse-scored. Closeness measures the emotional bond between the teacher and the student. Conflict assesses the extent of conflict or tension in the teacher-student relationship (as Pianta, R., 2001 Student-Teacher Relationship Scale-Short Form).
- 2. AISS for adjustments of school students:** AISS is an adjustment inventory for school students (A.K.P. Sinha and R.P. Singh). The AISS inventory consisted of 60 items, covering three areas of adjustment: educational, emotional, and social, 20 items for each area of adjustment.

### *Procedure*

Different schools in the city of Gorakhpur were contacted, and subjects were selected from their students and teachers. It has been taken care of that samples are consistent with student-teacher relations for the last five years. Before gathering data, the school authorities granted the necessary permissions, and consent was secured from both the students and teachers. The students and teachers were guaranteed that their responses would remain confidential and anonymous.

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for interpreting educational adjustment via treating educational adjustment as a continuous dependent variable and comparing its means across different groups as defined by a categorical independent variable. Regression analysis has also been used to quantify the relationship between teachers and students. Independent sampling, for the students, is entirely unrelated to individuals or data points in another group or sample, thus allowing for comparisons between distinct populations to prove the hypothesis.

### **Conclusions Derived from Study (Figures 1–5, Tables 1–5)**

In Figures 1–5 and Table 1, closeness in teacher–student relationships showed a strong negative correlation with conflict ( $r = -.508$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Educational adjustment was positively related to emotional ( $r = .547$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and social adjustment ( $r = .398$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Similarly, emotional and social adjustment were strongly correlated ( $r = .597$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

In Table 2, the model, including closeness and conflict, explained only 0.6% of the variance in educational adjustment, which is not statistically meaningful.

In Table 3, the ANOVA test confirmed that the regression model was not statistically significant ( $F = 0.591$ ,  $p = .555$ ), suggesting that closeness and conflict are not strong predictors of educational adjustment.

In Table 4, neither closeness ( $\beta = -.056$ ,  $p = .499$ ) nor conflict ( $\beta = -.089$ ,  $p = .283$ ) were significant predictors of educational adjustment. The constant was significant, but the

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independent variables did not make a meaningful contribution to the model, which could not be explained by factors such as random chance.

Finally, in Table 5, an independent samples t-test was conducted to compare teacher–student relationship dimensions across gender. Results revealed that girls ( $M = 33.33$ ,  $SD = 2.61$ ) reported significantly higher closeness with teachers than boys ( $M = 32.49$ ,  $SD = 2.79$ ),  $t(198) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .038$ . However, there was no significant difference in conflict that was observed between girls ( $M = 11.74$ ,  $SD = 2.95$ ) and boys ( $M = 11.78$ ,  $SD = 2.81$ ),  $t(198) = -0.11$ ,  $p = .915$ .

### Graphs and Tables

Figure 1

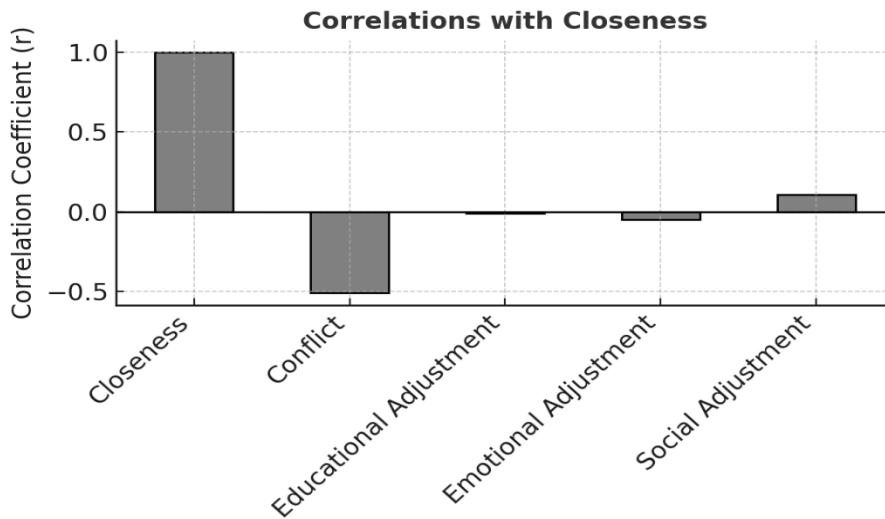
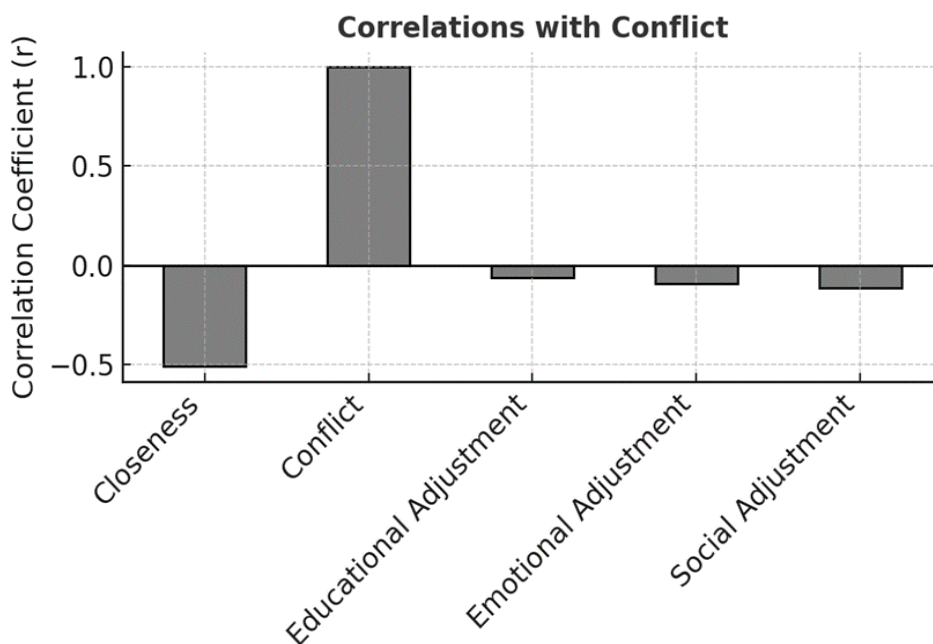


Figure 2



# Importance of Positive Educational Relationships: A Study of Teacher-Student Relationships and Its Impact on Academic, Social, and Emotional Adjustment Among Students

Figure 3

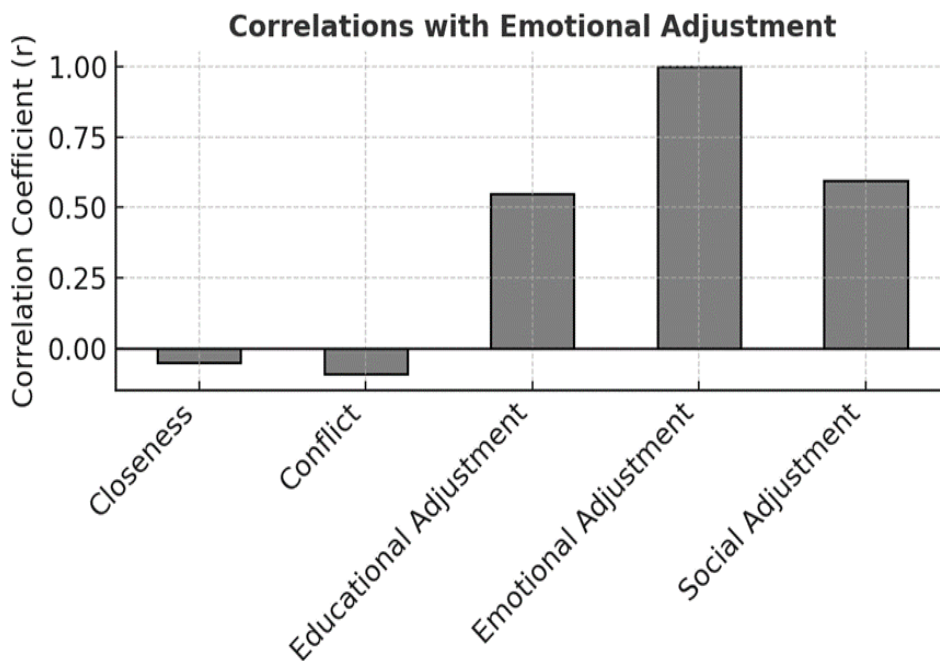
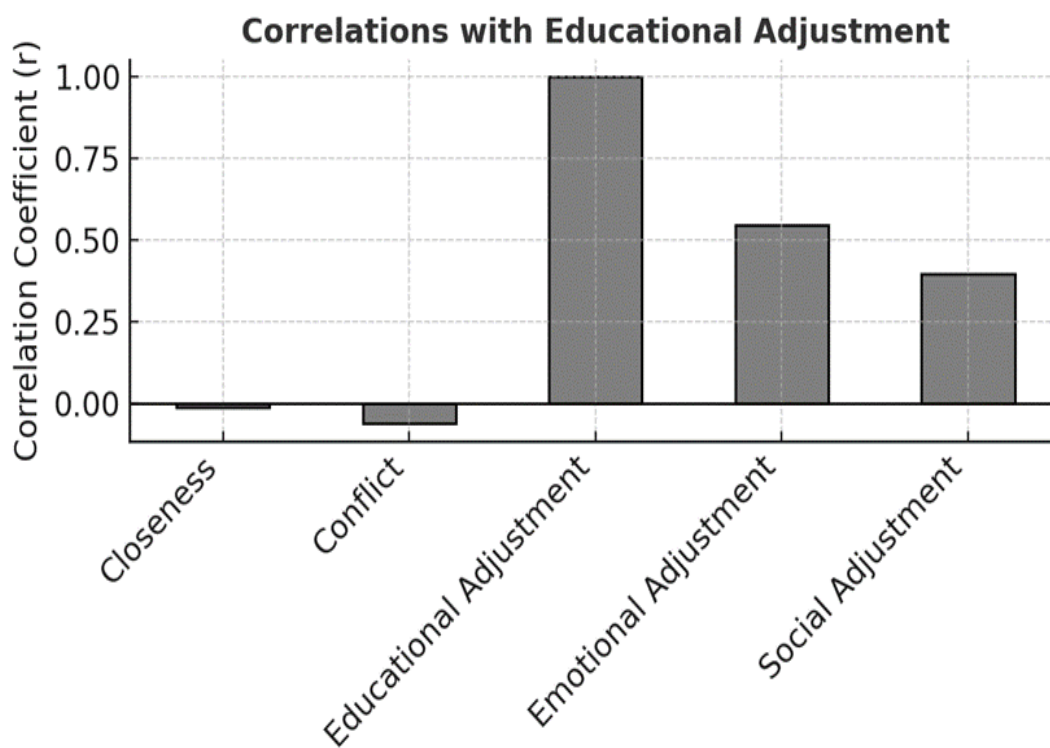
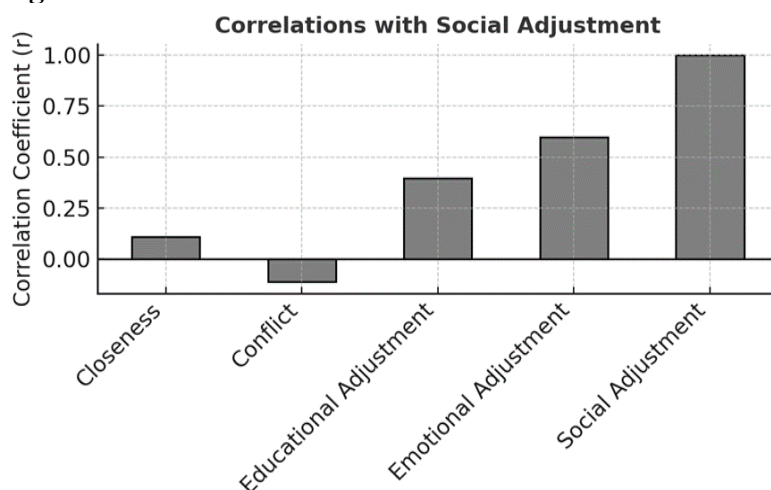


Figure 4



**Importance of Positive Educational Relationships: A Study of Teacher-Student Relationships and Its Impact on Academic, Social, and Emotional Adjustment Among Students**

**Figure 5**



**Table 1 Correlations between Teacher–Student Relationship and Adjustment Variables**

**Variables: Closeness, Conflict, Educational Adjustment, Emotional Adjustment, Social Adjustment**

	Closeness	Conflict	Educational Adjustment	Emotional Adjustment	Social Adjustment
Closeness	1	-.508**	-.011	-.050	.110
Conflict	-.508**	1	-.060	-.092	-.112
Educational Adjustment	-.011	-.060	1	.547**	.398**
Emotional Adjustment	-.050	-.092	.547**	1	.597**
Social Adjustment	.110	-.112	.398**	.597**	1

*Note.* See Figures 1–4, which use correlation coefficient, for details.

**Table 2 Model Summary (Predicting Educational Adjustment from Closeness & Conflict)**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1		.077	.006	-.004

*Note.* Closeness signifies a positive relationship, conflict signifies a negative relationship.

**Table 3 ANOVA (Educational Adjustment as Dependent Variable)**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	78.291	2	39.146	0.591	.555
Residual	13058	.429	197	66	.286
Total	13136	.720	199		

*Note.* Educational Adjustment is the continuous dependent variable, while the others are categorical.

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**Table 4 Coefficients (Regression Predicting Educational Adjustment)**

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	21.803	9.706	–	2.246	.026
Closeness	-.165	.244	-.056	-0.677	.499
Conflict	-.253	.235	-.089	-1.076	.283

Note. This analyzes the relationship between the different variables through linear regression.

**Table 5 Group Statistics of Teacher–Student Relationship by Gender**

Variable	Gender	N	M	SD	SE
Closeness	Girls	72	33.33	2.61	0.31
	Boys	128	32.49	2.79	0.25
Conflict	Girls	72	11.74	2.95	0.35
	Boys	128	11.78	2.81	0.25

Note. M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation, SE = Standard Error.

**Table 6 Independent Samples t-test for Teacher–Student Relationship by Gender**

Variable	Levene's Test F	p	t	df	p (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.	95% CI of Diff. (LL – UL)
Closeness	0.94	.335	2.09	198	.038	0.84	0.05 – 1.63
Conflict	0.00	.969	-0.11	198	.915	-0.05	-0.88 – 0.79

Note. LL = Lower Limit; UL = Upper Limit of 95%, CI.  $p < .05$ .

**Results**

As seen above, a multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine whether or not teacher–student relationship quality (closeness and conflict) predicted students’ educational adjustment.

The model was not statistically significant,  $F(2,197) = 0.591, p = .555$ ,  $F(2,197) = 0.591, p = .555$ ,  $F(2,197) = 0.591, p = .555$ , and accounted for less than 1% of the variance in educational adjustment ( $R^2 = .006, R^2 = .006, R^2 = .006, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = -.004, R^2 = -.004, R^2 = -.004$ ).

Individually, neither closeness ( $\beta = -0.056, p = .499$ ) nor conflict ( $\beta = -0.089, p = .283$ ) emerged as significant predictors. Thus, teacher–student closeness and conflict did not significantly contribute to predicting students’ educational adjustment.

Tables 5 & 6 studied the gender aspect and concluded that though girls reported higher closeness with the teachers, there was negligible conflict between them and the boys to be

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accounted for. As such, it did not have much effect on the overall conclusions derived from the study.

### **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Although the factor of teacher–student relationships is widely regarded as central to student outcomes, the present study did not find significant effects of closeness or conflict on educational adjustment. This suggests that academic adjustment may be influenced more strongly by other factors, such as emotional resilience, peer support, family expectations, or classroom climate. This may be particularly because the study was conducted in an Army Public School in India, where the students are more self-reliant because one of their parents is engaged in a profession where discipline gets imbibed within the child as well.

This may be as to why the students' emotional relationship with their teachers does not seem to affect their education as much as previous studies in this domain, for they are more emotionally resilient and likely come from a home where the family expectations revolve around academic encouragement and support. Aside from that, strong friendships and close bonds with peers may have also led to a stronger sense of satisfaction with the ideas of attending school and receiving education, without being necessarily connected to one or more of the teachers in particular.

Last, but not the least, the inclusion of a specific type of schooling environment – like in the Army Public School – may have been a reason for why the students do not report a close relationship with their educators. A disciplined but inclusive and engaging classroom climate can cause the students to enjoy spending time in an educational institution, without an obligation of developing a positive relationship with any of the teachers. This is also because the student to teacher ratio is different in India, where every class naturally has 20 – or usually more – students studying under a single teacher for a particular subject. Thus, closeness between students and teachers is frequently not an expectation in this environment. Therefore few, if any, attempts are made to bridge the gap beyond that of a professional relationship between a teacher and a student. A teacher usually cannot pay equal attention to such a large class, and so no strong bonds of positive educational relationships are directly formed between the students and their educators.

However, the correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships between educational, emotional, and social adjustment, pointing towards the holistic nature of student development. It is therefore more nuanced to assume that teacher–student relationships affect academic adjustment indirectly by first influencing emotional security or social belonging, which then fosters better academic outcomes. This nuanced understanding allows for more work to be done in this area, to identify the gaps in the current study as well as continue to expand the discourse as a whole. This, in turn, is expected to contribute to the growing field of children's holistic development and how positive educational relationships – amongst other factors – may contribute to the existing and future interpretations of continuing and upcoming data. Thus, there is no proof of significant effect, since the results were inconclusive.

This study is, therefore, expected to be adding to the existing discourse with the conclusion being that more research needs to be done in this area, by using additional data and existing resources as a starting point. The sampling of students have to include wider ranges and

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different forms of schooling. Better research design may also help in accounting for different sections of students.

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### Acknowledgment

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

### Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

**How to cite this article:** Sharma, L.K. & Mishra, A. (2026). Importance of Positive Educational Relationships: A Study of Teacher-Student Relationships and Its Impact on Academic, Social, and Emotional Adjustment Among Students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(1), 2883-2893. DIP:18.01.288.20261401, DOI:10.25215/1401.288