



SCHOOL CLIMATE IN THE CONTEXT OF TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIP: MAINSTREAMED STUDENTS' AND THEIR TEACHERS' VIEWS

EL AMBIENTE ESCOLAR EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA RELACIÓN DO-CENTE-ESTUDIANTE: PERSPECTIVAS DE LOS ALUMNOS INTEGRADOS Y SUS PROFESORES

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of the current study was to identify mainstreamed students' and their teachers' views on school climate within the context of the teacher-student relationship. Criterion sampling, one of the purposeful sampling methods, was used to select the participants of this research, which was designed as a case study. Ten elementary school students with learning difficulties who could express themselves participated in the research, along with their teachers. The data were collected via a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers and analyzed through inductive content analysis. The data obtained from the interviews were examined under two themes: the teacher-student relationship and its reflection on the learning environment. It was found that both teachers and mainstreamed students provided positive explanations about the teacher-student relationship. Attachment was considered a vital factor, and a positive school climate was underlined. In creating a school climate, the mutual relationship between teacher and student affects the sense of belonging, classroom management, and school commitment.

Keywords: School climate, Teacher-student relationship, Mainstreaming practice.

RESUMEN:

Este estudio pretende determinar las opiniones de alumnos y profesores de inclusión sobre el clima escolar en el contexto de la relación profesor-alumno. Se utilizó el método de muestreo por criterios, uno de los métodos de muestreo intencional, para formar el grupo de estudio de la investigación, que se diseñó como un estudio de casos. La investigación se llevó a cabo con diez alumnos con dificultades de aprendizaje que son estudiantes de primaria y que pueden expresarse bien y con sus profesores. Los investigadores analizaron los datos del estudio. Para recoger los datos se utilizó un formulario de entrevista semiestructurada. Los datos obtenidos se analizaron mediante análisis de contenido inductivo y se analizaron bajo dos temas: el alcance de las relaciones profesor-alumno y su reflexión sobre el entorno de aprendizaje. Se determinó que las relaciones profesor-alumno se explicaban con expresiones positivas tanto por parte de los profesores como de los alumnos de inclusión, se consideraba que el amor era un factor importante y se hacía hincapié en el clima escolar positivo. Se ha observado que la relación profesor-alumno afecta a las relaciones mutuas, al sentido de pertenencia, al método de clase y al apego escolar en la creación del clima escolar.

Palabras clave:

Ambiente escolar, Relación profesor-alumno, Prácticas de inclusión



INTRODUCTION

The Salamanca Statement underscores the imperative of promoting inclusive and quality education practices for students with special needs within the international regulatory framework. In line with the objective of 'Education for All,' it emphasizes that every child, without exception, has the right to education. Although the Statement does not explicitly mention mainstreaming, it clearly advocates for providing opportunities for students with special needs to study together with their peers (Yilmaz & Melekoğlu, 2018). Accordingly, it is a vital need to promote child-friendly schools and create conducive learning environments to enhance student learning. Such environments accommodate the needs of each student, boost classroom engagement, and facilitate effective learning, which are all associated with the school climate.

The school climate, encompassing the learning-teaching process, goals, and interpersonal interactions within the school community, is regarded as an indicator of the caliber of school life. As stated by Cohen et al. (2009), it involves safety, teaching and learning, relationships, and environment-structural dimensions. The first pertains to a school's social, emotional, and physical safety. The teaching and learning dimension encompasses professional development, leadership, and instructional quality. Respect for diversity and cooperation in the school setting characterizes the relationship. The last aspect relates to other tangible features of the school, like cleanliness. Each of these dimensions is effective in evaluating teaching for mainstreamed students by providing a general framework for how professional development is supported in the school environment, how leadership qualities -social and emotional-, ethics, learning styles, and intelligence are perceived (Cohen et al., 2009).

The success of mainstreaming depends on a positive school climate, which enables the creation of a conducive learning environment for students with special needs and promotes the educational process at school. High motivation of students (Zins et al., 2004), prevention of problem behaviors (Dernowska, 2017), and increase in academic success are reflections of a positive school climate. Accordingly, it is a vital factor affecting the success of mainstreaming. Teachers serve as a unifying force in integrating students with special needs and fostering a positive classroom environment (Sucuoğlu et al., 2013) and play a critical role in creating a positive school climate.

Positive relationships among school members are as essential as the specific roles each member plays in shaping the school climate. Within this framework, given that student learning occurs in schools, the teacher-student relationship, which is an aspect of school climate and contributes to academic development and learning outcomes, becomes paramount. The quality of this relationship

influences students' achievement across all age groups and educational levels (Alderman & Green, 2011). It promotes developing equitable learning environments for all students (Sointu et al., 2017). Numerous research has highlighted a medium-level correlation between the quality of the teacher-student relationship and students' commitment to school, their success (Quin, 2017), and executive functions (Vandenbroucke et al., 2018). It is well known that students exhibiting strong commitment to the school have positive relationships with their teachers in contrast to students who have problems with their teachers. School disengagement, absenteeism, and dropout are observed in students who do not get along with their teachers. Moreover, the nature of the relationship between teachers and students affects teachers' perceptions and stress levels (Collie et al., 2012). Teachers who perceive high levels of motivation in their students and evaluate their behavior as positive tend to report lower stress levels, higher instructional quality, and greater job satisfaction (Klassen & Chiu, 2010).

From this perspective, how students and teachers perceive the school climate is primarily emerging as a strong predictor of social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Bear et al., 2005). Given its profound impact on students' development in these domains, it is necessary to emphasize the school climate and the teacher-student relationship. The teacher-student relationship, an integral part of education, influences one another and the entire objective of education, assisting students in learning and enabling them to reach their full potential (Darling-Hammond & Cook-Harvey, 2018). It has generally been addressed indirectly in research on mainstreaming practices and school climate. Although previous studies have examined teachers' viewpoints on mainstreaming, there remains a gap concerning school climate. Nevertheless, previously on a positive school climate, quantitative studies were conducted focusing on the teachers' perspectives rather than the teacher-student relationship (e.g., İlkin, 2022) and at different educational levels within the framework of general education (e.g., Şahin & Atbaşı, 2020). Even though the relevant literature contains a large number of studies on mainstreaming practices and school climate, the scope of the latter in mainstream schools and teacher-student relationships, which are crucial components of school climate, have only been partially investigated. Furthermore, while the importance of school climate and teacher-student relationships is emphasized in the relevant literature, a notable aspect of these studies is their focus on teachers' views and the lack of attention given to school climate in the context of mainstreamed students.

Identifying the views of teachers and students is of utmost importance to foster their relationships in that positive relationships yield diverse benefits in mainstreaming practices, such as improved student outcomes, cultivation of

peer relations, development of a sense of belonging, and decrease in problem behaviors. Hence, the purpose of the present research is to investigate the school climate based on mainstreamed students and their teachers' views. Accordingly, conducting interviews with mainstreamed students and their teachers is paramount to shed light on the current situation. These interviews would ascertain their perception of the school climate regarding their relationship, the extent of this relationship, and how this relationship is reflected in peer interactions, academic achievement, classroom management, and school commitment. The findings of this research are expected to guide future practices for enhancing the teacher-student relationship to create a positive school climate. Additionally, it is hoped to contribute to the existing literature in the field with new insights and understanding. This study aims to determine mainstreamed students' and their teachers' views on school climate within the context of the teacher-student relationship.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This research was designed as a case study with a qualitative approach. A case study is a descriptive method employed to gain an in-depth understanding of a limited system (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The fundamental feature of qualitative case studies is the investigation of one or more cases. It was adopted in the current research since the purpose was to provide a detailed description of the relationship between teachers and students within the mainstreaming framework, which is a component of the school climate, and to uncover the perspectives on this relationship and its impact on the learning environment.

Participants

The criterion sampling method, a purposive sample method that enables selecting participants with predetermined criteria related to the research problem, was used to choose the participants of this study. In the present study, the teachers had to meet the following criteria: a) be employed at an elementary school, b) have a mainstreamed student in their classroom, and c) be willing to participate in the research. Besides, the mainstreamed students were required to meet the following criteria: a) be enrolled at an elementary school, b) be willing to participate in the study, and c) be able to express themselves. Half of the teachers participating in the research (5; 50%) were female, and the others (5; 50%) were male. All of them held undergraduate degrees. Seven teachers were 16 years or more in service, one between 11-15, and two between 6-10 years. Moreover, they were working at middle socioeconomic status schools. Of the mainstreamed students, six were male, and four were female. Four of these students, diagnosed with learning difficulties, were second graders. Two students were in third grade, and four were in fourth

grade. Codes were utilized to report their comments, such as 'P1, P2' for teachers and 'S1, S2' for students.

Data collection tool

Data were collected via a semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. Prior to developing the interview questions, the literature was reviewed, and previous research conducted on teacher-student relationships and addressing the school climate within the framework of mainstreaming practices were examined. Interview questions were formulated to address the key points deemed significant within the scope of the research. Subsequently, a draft interview form aimed at identifying the opinions of both teachers and mainstreamed students was presented to three field specialists. Based on their feedback, one question in the teacher and student interview form was revised. To determine the usability of the interview form, a pilot trial was performed with two teachers possessing characteristics similar to the participant teachers and a student with learning difficulties.

Data analysis

The obtained data were analyzed through inductive content analysis. Datasets were utilized to identify themes and categories (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). In this regard, codes emerged from the participants' statements, forming clusters of meaning. Similar data were gathered, and they were systematically examined and analyzed by reviewing documents related to the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). After the interviews, the second author of the research meticulously managed verbatim transcription of audio-recorded data. Themes and sub-themes were identified in alignment with the codes, after which those interrelated were combined.

Validity and reliability

The validity of the research was ensured by giving direct quotations of the participants' views and explaining the findings based on these quotations. For internal validity, the relevant literature was reviewed regarding the role of teacher-student relationships in establishing school climate. Field specialists were also consulted for the interview questions. Further, a thorough description of the participant selection process, interview question preparation, and data analysis procedures was provided to ensure external validity. Additionally, reliability in qualitative research was achieved through dataset coding conducted by multiple researchers, thereby ensuring consistency among the codes (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To verify the accuracy of the interview transcripts, the first author also listened to the audio recordings to confirm there were no omissions. Then, the coding phase was started. After comparing the codes and themes they had independently developed, the researchers reached a consensus and produced a coding key for the participants. Two experts' opinions were sought over the interview transcripts and

the coding key. The formula 'Agreement / (Agreement + Disagreement) x 100' was used to determine whether the coding matches. Inter-rater reliability regarding the interviews with teachers was found to be .95, whereas it was .92 concerning student interviews.

Ethical approval

This research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Tokat Gaziosmanpaşa University, Social Sciences and Humanities Research, and was conducted by ethical standards and guidelines (Approval Number: 01.09; 14.01.2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Within the scope of the research, themes, sub-themes, categories, and codes were formed for each question, and the views of mainstreamed students and teachers were reported (Figure 1).

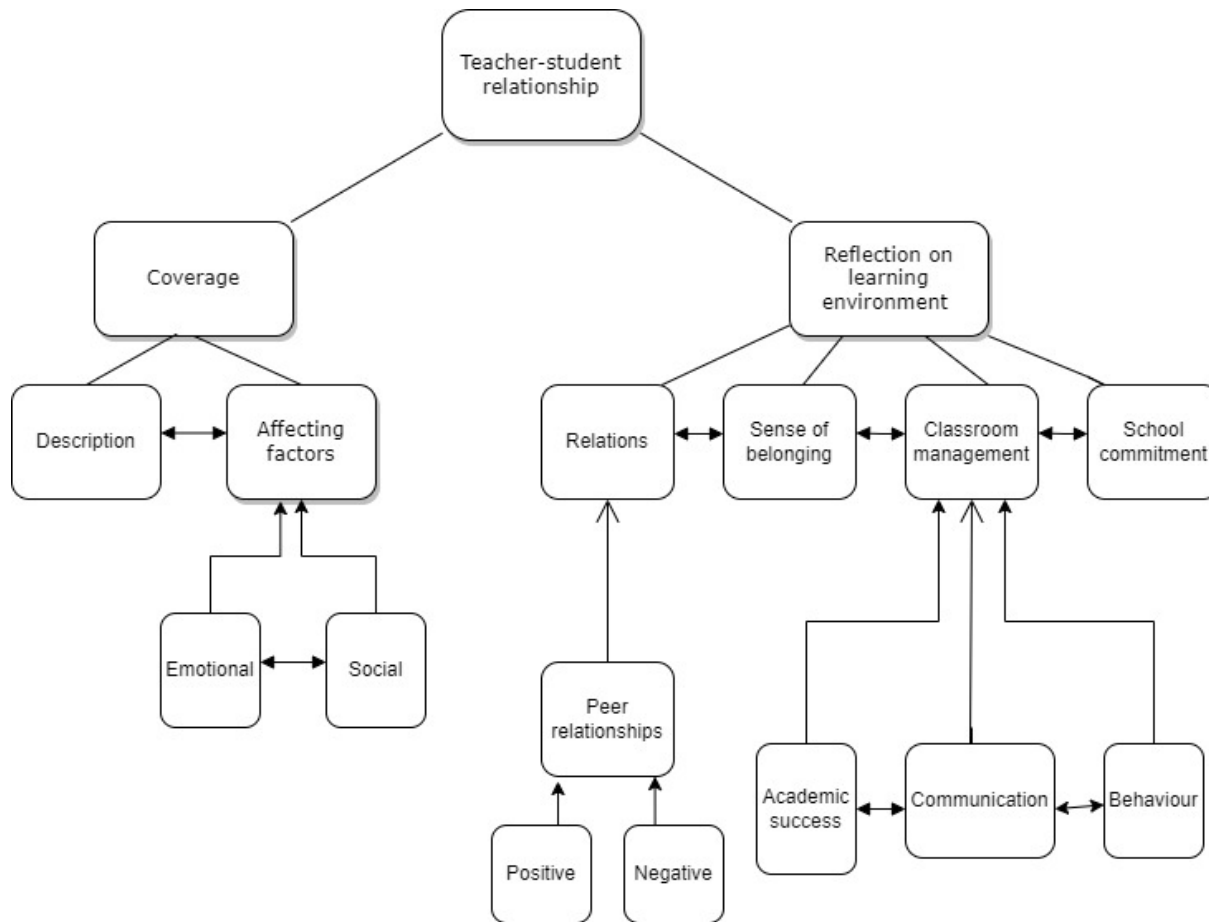


Fig 1: Themes and Sub-themes Obtained from the Interviews

Views on the teacher-student relationship

The teachers and mainstreamed students who participated in the research emphasized the teacher-student relationship within the school climate by defining it and highlighting the factors influencing it

Description

When their descriptions of the teacher-student relationship were analyzed, it was noticed that both teachers and the mainstreamed students focused on a positive concept. The participants expressed this concept as an attachment. As for the teachers, establishing a teacher-student relationship hinges on the fact that they should make students like them. It was underlined that it is linked with valuing students, exhibiting more positive attitudes by comprehending their attributes, providing individualized attention, and ensuring they act without hesitation. Regarding this issue, P8 commented, *“Love is at the core of an optimistic outlook on life. When you glance at your students, you must see if they are happy or sad.”* On the other hand, students described the concept as an attachment to the teacher. Students elaborated on their

teachers' abilities to deliver the topic brilliantly and entertainingly, be attentive, chat, and play games as reasons for their attachment. S2 said, *"I like him to instruct me, make me play with toys, and chat with me,"* and S8 reported, *"She teaches very well. She loves me very much."* The participants' thoughts indicated a positive school climate. It was revealed from teacher viewpoints that diverse definitions were developed regarding teacher-student relations to foster a positive school climate. Among them, only one teacher conveyed that it is noteworthy to love one's profession and that a positive teacher-student relationship will commence with this love.

Affecting factors

The views on the factors affecting the teacher-student relationship were examined under emotional and social factors. The teachers and students emphasized the significance of attachment in terms of emotional factors. The majority of teachers indicated that establishing a positive teacher-student relationship is based on attachment. P4 expressed, *"Friendly students and teachers who do not mind showing their teeth while smiling are one step ahead in building bonds."* It was noted that behaving attentively toward students and listening to them also brings respect, fair treatment, understanding, tolerance, happiness, and avoiding prejudice. Only two teachers reported that teachers' happiness is effective in establishing a positive teacher-student relationship. It is also striking that one of the teachers sharing this view also underlined the significance of loving the profession.

Students' opinions were in line with those of the teachers. Since they like their teachers, they pay attention to exhibiting appropriate behaviors, believing that their teachers will be glad rather than disappointed. The students remarked that they established positive bonds with their teachers based on attachment. S5 said, *"I think every school is the same without my teacher. I may have friends in other schools, but not the same teacher."* The teachers' practice of providing students with plausible explanations for their inappropriate behaviors and avoiding reactive responses underscores the significance of tolerance and understanding in the learning environment. One of the students, S8, noted, *"My teacher warns me at first. As I like him, I do what he says."*

With regard to the social factors, the focus was on developing efficient communication and establishing a climate of trust. Effective communication between teachers and students was found to reinforce the positive climate. However, if communication cannot be established, peer relationships and adherence to the rules fail. As for teachers, a positive teacher-student relationship provides an opportunity for the advancement, safety, and productivity of the learning environment. Commenting in this respect, P3 said, *"Students who communicate well with their teachers have no problems with the school climate. However,*

students without good teacher-student relationships are troubled with school rules and exclusion." On the other hand, the students' remarks demonstrated that increased communication and interaction among peers and feeling safe at school rely on a positive teacher-student relationship. S1 noted, *"I love my school because of my teacher. I have friends, cousins, and teachers there. Our school garden is big, and I play games with my friends there."*

Reflection of the teacher-student relationship on the learning environment

Teachers and students assumed that their relationship directly influences the learning environment in forming the school climate. In this context, perspectives on mutual relationships, sense of belonging, classroom management, and school commitment were discussed.

Mutual relationship

It was revealed that both teachers and students agreed upon the impact of the teacher-student relationship on positive or negative peer relationships. When this relationship is positive, it is reflected in students' communication with their peers, their involvement in social events, their social acceptance, and their sense of happiness. The teachers specifically believed that their behavior had a decisive impact on peer relationships. Teachers who exhibit a favorable attitude towards their students mirrored in their behavior serve as role models for other students. P9 declared, *"Students the teacher likes and listens to are also approved by their peers. They complement each other."* Additionally, P3 noted, *"Students who communicate well with the teacher have no problems with the school climate. However, students without good relationships with their teachers are troubled with school rules and exclusion among friends."* According to teachers, the happiness or unhappiness of the students in the classroom is primarily influenced by their interaction with the teacher. Establishing positive interaction contributes to the students' positive behaviors in the subsequent process. Similarly, the students expressed that they appreciate attending school since they love their teachers and friends, their classmates treat them nicely, and they play games at school. S6 reported, *"It makes me love some of my friends."*

Teachers who highlighted negative peer relations concluded that excessive attention given to the mainstreamed students can breed jealousy among others. Students interpret teachers' reactions to behaviors as signs of like or dislike. In such cases, peers' communication with one another reflects the way they witness. Students who believe their teacher is more engaged with mainstreamed kids are less likely to accept them. P1 commented, *"The fact that the teacher reacts positively to some children and negatively to others leads the children to believe that s/he likes some students and dislikes others."* Some mainstreamed students indicated that their peers' behavior towards

them differed from that of their teachers. S6 stated, *“My friends are not like my teachers.”*

Sense of belonging

The teachers and students believed that their mutual relationship was also influential in creating a sense of belonging, which can affect social acceptance and responsibility taking. Participation in activities, a sense of safety, and class attendance all demonstrated social acceptance. Rising students' willingness to attend classes seemed closely tied to their classmates and their level of participation in activities. The teachers stated that students who develop a sense of belonging and thus exhibit positive behaviors boost their social acceptance. A student waving goodbye when leaving school, partaking in games, or actively contributing to classroom discussions was given examples associated with a sense of belonging. P10 expressed, *“My student has gained a sense of belonging to the school. His behaviors, such as eagerness to take on roles in class, coming to school with pleasure, and not leaving without waving to the teacher, imply a sense of belonging to the school.”* It can be highlighted that teachers' dedication contributes to mainstreamed students gaining a sense of belonging. They valued assuring participation in games with other students, playing games together, allocating roles in various activities, inspiring them with pleasant comments, and prioritizing what students enjoy. Students held similar viewpoints. They stated that their attachment to the teacher leads to being loved by their friends. They also mentioned that they spend time in the school garden or the canteen during breaks and that even when they do not know the answer, they still raise their hands in class. S3 said, *“I have a good time with my friends at school.”* Furthermore, the teachers and students stressed the motivating and sharing aspects of the sense of belonging in the context of taking responsibility. The students noted that thanks to the excellent teacher-student relationship, they try to complete assignments and fulfill their duties, even if they have shortcomings. They also declared that completing a task serves as a motivation for them. P3 remarked, *“By not isolating him from other students, playing games together, assigning him duties in various activities.”* In this respect, S5 pointed out, *“If I dislike my teacher, I cannot achieve in my classes. She tries to teach me; I love my teacher. I cannot learn if I do not like her.”*

Classroom management

The teachers and students addressed academic success, communication, and in-class behavior under this heading. They pointed out that increased self-confidence and willingness to attend classes boost academic achievement. The positive teacher-student relationship in creating the school climate encourages efforts for success. The teachers who prioritize positive teacher-student relationships were found to tailor their actions based on student

characteristics to increase academic achievement. They desired to make the classroom experience more engaging by breaking away from monotony and considering attention spans. Of the teachers, P10 stated, *“Course achievement is advancing because self-confidence is enhancing. He attends classes more willingly.”* As for the students, attachment to the teacher plays a vital role in understanding the courses better; thus, they can get higher scores. However, a decline in student achievement is observed if a negative relationship exists between teacher and student. Thus, it can be asserted that academic achievement is influenced directly by the positive teacher-student relationship. S7 declared, *“My previous teacher did not help; I could not succeed. I love my current teacher; I study willingly.”* S4, on the other hand, pointed out, *“I write better because I love my teacher.”*

A positive teacher-student relationship also increases the quality of communication. The teachers emphasized establishing effective communication with students regarding both the course content and extracurricular activities. They remarked that they prioritize communication with pupils by discussing what they do outside school or topics relevant to daily life. They believed such conversations foster communication between teachers and students and among students themselves, creating a more collaborative classroom environment. In addition, creating a sense of belonging in the student and supporting a sense of trust were also seen as part of communication. P7 said, *“Classrooms with a positive teacher-student relationship are more likely to prevent disciplinary problems at school, as they comply fully with the classroom rules.”* It was also identified that students' opinions were also consistent with the teachers. Teachers' dialogues with students are specifically crucial for them. Effective teacher communication instills a sense of belonging in students in the classroom and school. Additionally, it was thought that effective communication in a positive school climate is reflected in peer relationships and creates a sense of trust. S2 said, *“I love the trees in the garden, the school's interior, the canteen, and my friends.”*

In addition, the teachers stated that a positive teacher-student relationship is effective in reducing negative and increasing positive behaviors in the classroom, thus ensuring an orderly classroom environment. P1 reported, *“I think and notice that positive behaviors are more effective in classroom management. Although negative behaviors may be effective in the short term, they do not indicate good management in the long run.”* The teachers also declared that students obey the classroom rules owing to positive relationships. When student opinions were examined, it was clear that kids try to follow classroom rules as they like their teachers. S6 said, *“I am trying to obey the classroom rules.”* **School commitment**

Concerning school commitment, the teachers, in general, stressed that their relationship has an impact on peer

relationships, appropriate behavior, and communication. In accordance with the previous findings, they stated that an effective teacher-student relationship is the foundation for developing a school climate. It was believed that they are role models for students to be liked by their peers and that positive relationships will enhance positive interaction and communication among students, thus preventing potential problems in the school environment. P3 noted, *“Students’ dislike of school may be class-based due to some of their friends. The relationships we establish here and our communication style are important for managing the process positively.”* In cases where negative peer relationships occur, it was noticed that mainstreamed students may become reluctant to come to school and feel isolated because of exclusion. Based on the students’ opinions, they enjoy school overall. The fact that students liked their teachers and found them caring and supportive had a crucial role in forming this attachment. Even though the students sometimes faced problems with their peers, they tended to perceive student-student relationships more positively. They adhered to the rules set by their teachers and were willing to communicate.

DISCUSSION

Positive or negative teacher attitudes toward students with special needs are one of the most critical variables influencing mainstreaming. Teachers’ attitude toward mainstreamed students significantly influences other students’ behavior as they tend to imitate their teachers. It can be remarked that the success of mainstreaming and creating a positive school climate depends on the teachers’ attitudes. Therefore, students need to be guided to develop a liking for school, to communicate effectively with their peers, and to exhibit positive behaviors. Teachers’ evolving perspectives on mainstreamed students will likewise affect students’ perceptions, and thus, a positive school climate can be achieved (Moran et al., 2012). In mainstreaming, the teachers’ attitude towards the mainstreamed students, their approach to academic success, and classroom rules directly influence the peer acceptance of these students. According to the findings of the current study, the teacher-student relationship has an impact on the learning environment, and these impacts can be observed in the context of mutual relationships, a sense of belonging, classroom management, and school commitment.

The classroom is the primary environment for learning, where students interact with their peers and teachers. The purpose is to increase the academic success of mainstreamed students who receive education alongside their typically developing peers and to enhance social acceptance of them, that is, to be successful in the social context. The quality of peer and teacher-student relationships are two significant factors that primarily play a role in creating an inclusive classroom climate, and these

factors serve to achieve social and academic goals. Both factors that constitute the classroom climate are linked to students’ social behaviors (Roubinov et al., 2020). The research results revealed that teacher-student relationships have either positive or negative effects on peer relationships. Effective communication and social acceptance were realized when the teacher-student relationship positively affected peer relations, consistent with the findings of the studies in the literature. These studies highlight that positive teacher-student and peer relationships prevent exclusion (Thornberg et al., 2022). On the contrary, peer acceptance was not achieved when the teacher-student relationship negatively influenced peer relationships. This was due to the perception that teachers prioritize mainstreamed students.

Encouraging students to become friends with their peers promotes an inclusive education and creates a positive school climate. It was discovered that teachers play a significant role in fostering a sense of belonging for mainstreamed students. Moreover, they engage in motivating behaviors such as involving them in games, assigning tasks in the classroom, encouraging, and using pleasant words to ensure peer acceptance to establish a sense of belonging. It was also observed that attachment and positive peer relations as a reflection of the teacher-student relationship were determining factors in ensuring belonging. They were influential in instilling a desire to attend school in the students. Parallel with the research findings in the literature, positive teacher-student relationships foster a sense of belonging in children, which is a crucial component of a positive school climate (Cantor et al., 2019).

Teachers must possess efficient classroom management skills to create a positive classroom climate and learning environment. Teachers who are adept in these skills ensure the creation of a positive climate in which each student can learn at their own pace and actively participate in activities, and any potential problem behaviors can be eliminated before they occur (Evertson & Emmer, 2013). This study indicated that teacher-student relationships influence academic success, communication, and in-class behavior. It was disclosed that when a positive teacher-student relationship is developed, mainstreamed children’s academic success and in-class involvement increase while negative behaviors decrease. In light of prior findings, the capacity to communicate successfully serves as the foundation for the development of a sense of belonging. Effective communication enhances appropriate classroom behavior and averts potential discipline problems. However, the success of the process entirely depends on the teacher-student relationship, which is reflected in the student-student interaction. The literature underscores that when students form positive relationships with their teachers and friends, their academic success and class participation increase (Zins et al., 2004), and problem behaviors are minimized and eliminated (Dernowska, 2017).

In conclusion, peer relationships, appropriate behaviors, and communication that emerge from the teacher-student relationship effectively advance mainstreamed students' commitment and attachment to school.

CONCLUSIONS

Research findings unveiled that within the school climate context, both teachers and mainstreamed students prioritize positive aspects of the teacher-student relationship and a positive school climate. They emphasize the concept of attachment when defining this relationship. A fundamental structure emerges from the teachers' and the students' attachment to one another, indicating a positive teacher-student relationship. Emotional and social factors are regarded as vital in establishing teacher-student relationships according to the perspectives of the teachers and mainstreamed students in the current study. Teachers' tolerance, compassion, care, and ability to communicate effectively and create a sense of safety for children are deemed critical. In addition, it was determined that teacher-student relationships are an essential factor reflected in the development of positive peer relationships, a sense of belonging, classroom management, and school commitment. Positive teacher-student relationships have positive effects on learning environments and contribute to creating a positive school climate.

Limitations

The current study was subject to two limitations. Firstly, the study group comprised a total of twenty participants, including ten elementary school students with learning difficulties and their teachers. Consequently, there is a need for further research to be conducted with students with different types of disabilities and at different educational levels to enhance the generalizability of the findings. Secondly, the data were collected solely through interviews. Employing multiple data collection methods, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, can increase internal validity in qualitative research, compensating for the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another (Streubert & Carpenter, 2011). Future research may combine these methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

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