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Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](https://openjournal.org)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19897165>**Role of Teacher-Student Relationship in Classroom Management****Dr. Bushra Salahuddin**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study investigated the role of teacher-student relationships in classroom management in public secondary schools of District Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The objectives were to know about the perceptions of male and female teachers separately regarding this role. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed. The population comprised 1,200 secondary school teachers (650 male, 550 female) across 60 public schools. Using stratified random sampling, a sample of 240 teachers (130 male, 110 female) was selected. A five-point Likert scale questionnaire was used for data collection. Data were analyzed using percentages, means, and standard deviations, and an independent samples t-test. Male teachers demonstrated significantly more positive perceptions of TSR's role in classroom management (mean = 4.08, SD = 1.01; 73.1% agreement) compared to female teachers (mean = 3.31, SD = 1.14; 40.9% agreement), with female teachers showing higher neutrality (36.4%) and greater variability. The t-test revealed a statistically significant difference ( $t = 5.547$ ,  $df = 238$ ,  $p = 0.0007 < 0.05$ ), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. The study concludes that male teachers hold significantly stronger and more positive perceptions than female teachers regarding the importance of teacher-student relationships for effective classroom management in District Bannu, underscoring the need for context-sensitive, gender-aware professional development programs in resource-constrained, post-conflict educational settings.*

**Keywords:** *Teacher-student relationship, classroom management, gender differences, post-conflict education, District Bannu, multi-grade teaching.*

## Introduction

It's not just content that is delivered in the classroom; it's a social ecology where the nature of human relationships often determines the effectiveness or failure of the learning journey. Central to the ecosystem is the teacher-student relationship, a fundamental component that has a significant impact on the learning ecosystem (Usgaonker, 2024). Modern research in education has shifted from authoritarian approaches to classroom discipline to a relational paradigm, which suggests that classroom management is intimately bound up with the nature of relationships between teachers and students. By building trust, respect and communication between teacher and student, teachers are not only being pleasant; they are strategically preventing disruptive behaviour, and creating a positive learning environment (Aldrup et al., 2022). This view shifts management from a focus on control to a focus on being human - a positive human connection where students are motivated to engage in learning activities because they want to rather than because they have to.

A supportive teacher-student relationship is not only crucial for immediate classroom management, but can also be a potent predictor of student engagement and achievement. Research has recently been carried out to empirically validate that a positive relationship plays a significant predictive role in the academic success of adolescents, with academic engagement playing a significant intervening role (van Herpen et al., 2025).

Students who feel their teacher-student relationship is positive and supportive show greater classroom engagement, reading comprehension and resilience to persevere when academic learning is difficult (Van Bergen et al., 2020).

This engagement is complex and involves participation to do with behaviour, cognition and emotion and is the "doing" that turns curriculum into learning. The importance of the teacher-student relationship is so crucial that it has been found to have a greater positive impact on student engagement than peer support, and that negative teacher-student relationships cannot be fully remedied by peer support (Collie, & Martin, 2023).

In particular, in the realm of classroom management, the teacher-student relationship is no longer considered a soft skill, but central to the classroom management practices. Positive relationships have been found to decrease disruptive behaviour, to foster a positive classroom climate and to mitigate the escalation of classroom disputes (Ansah, 2024).

Much of the research comes from Western or non-Pakistani regions, and may not consider the intricate interplay of cultural, economic, administrative, and infrastructural challenges that shape the teaching landscape in Bannu (Wang et al., 2020). Most local studies have addressed large-scale problems such as out-of-school children, policy implementation challenges or resource constraints, while little has been done to understand the micro-level, relational aspects within the classroom (Zeb et al., 2023). This research aims to fill this gap by empirically examining the role of teacher-student relationships on the practical issues of classroom management in this contextualised, underexplored district (Yaseen & Tariq, 2024).

## Literature Review

The teacher-student relationship (TSR) has long been acknowledged as a critical element of successful education, but recent understandings of TSRs go beyond simple "like or dislike" conceptions. Informed by attachment theory and self-determination theory, researchers now conceptualise positive TSRs as being warm, trusting and emotionally supportive, and negative TSRs as hostile, conflict-laden and dependent (Emslander et al., 2025). A recent second-order meta-analysis by Emslander et al. (2025) that considered more than 70 years of research and 26 meta-analyses with a total sample of 2.64 million students, confirmed large, significant associations between positive TSRs and academic achievement, motivation, and classroom behavior. In addition, according to self-determination theory, when teachers satisfy students' core psychological needs for autonomy, competence and relatedness, intrinsic motivation is enhanced, which in turn decreases the incidence of inappropriate classroom behavior (Guilbeau, 2025). Increasingly, classroom management interventions have leveraged these principles to promote a shift from controlling to relational pedagogies (Korpershoek et al., 2025).

The literature is rich with evidence that high quality TSRs are strongly linked with a plethora of academic outcomes in various educational contexts. Emslander et al.'s (2025) meta-analytic update revealed that affective TSRs have significant effects on student engagement and achievement, with effect sizes similar to other large-scale educational interventions. In a Pakistani study, Afzal et al. (2023) used quantitative methods to investigate the effects of TSRs on the academic achievement of university students in Lahore and found that high-quality teacher-student relationships significantly positively impacted academic achievement, accounting for 34% of the variance in student grades. The basis for this effect is often student motivation; in Pakistan, Akram et al. (2024) found positive TSRs were positively associated with online learning engagement, with this effect being significantly mediated by student intrinsic motivation. Likewise, Ferrell (2025) reported that the positive impact of TSRs on student engagement was greater than the impact of peer support, highlighting the essential and distinctive role of the teacher in supporting academic motivation.

Beyond their direct impact on academic achievement, TSRs play a key role as a source of student engagement and school connectedness, which are crucial aspects of classroom management. Engagement has three distinct components - behavioral, emotional and cognitive - and a systematic review of the literature using the PRISMA protocol concluded that students with positive TSRs report higher levels of all three forms of engagement (Quin, 2020). On the other hand, students with negative or indifferent TSRs are more likely to disengage, skip classes and disrupt classrooms (Hattie & Zierer, 2020). Classroom climate is a key mediator in this process; Jiang et al. (2024) identified teacher profiles and found that "supportive" teachers with high TSR and classroom management skills exhibited the most positive classroom climate, with high student engagement, cooperation, respect and low disruption. Roorda et al. (2021) verified that positive TSRs are predictive of increases in student engagement over time, and negative TSRs are predictive of decreases, implying a reciprocal relationship that may be self-perpetuating.

The relationship between classroom management and TSR is certainly one of the most practical and relevant of recent educational findings and is highly relevant to the current thesis in District Bannu.

Positive TSRs are not a replacement for classroom rules and routines but a critical pre-emptive approach that prevents misbehaviour from occurring. Korpershoek et al.'s (2020) meta-analysis showed the most effective classroom management interventions are those that improve instruction, classroom rules and routines, and TSR. Aldrup et al. (2022) found that in a longitudinal study, positive teacher-student relationships (TSRs) effectively predicted lower classroom disruption, and teachers who reported fewer classroom management problems were able to subsequently establish better relationships with their students, establishing a bi-directional relationship. A positive relationship yields a relational "store of goodwill" and when the teacher needs to address a student's misbehaviour, the advice is more likely to be listened to and followed if it comes from a trusted, supportive adult (Gregory & Evans, 2022). Conversely, Endedijk et al. (2022) demonstrated that students' problem behaviour has a negative impact on their peer relationships, with a partial mediating effect of TSR, which suggests that a poor TSR may lead to classroom disruption.

Lastly, it is essential to understand that the effects and characteristics of TSRs are not universal but depend on cultural, economic and institutional factors. Large-scale meta-analyses, such as those of Emslander et al. (2025) and Korpershoek et al. (2020), are mostly based on studies from Western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (WEIRD) societies, and may not apply to non-Western contexts. Expectations about teacher authority, respect and emotional displays influence perceptions of the "positive" and "effective" TSR (Wang & Degol, 2020). In collectivist societies, for instance, a more respectful but emotionally distant relationship may be preferred over the warm, informal relationships predominant in Western classrooms. Pakistani studies, such as Afzal et al. (2023) and Akram et al. (2024) verify the significance of TSRs in a Pakistani context but are mostly confined to urban, university, or relatively well-resourced environments. There has yet to be a study exploring TSRs in a rural, post-conflict, and resource-poor context like Bannu, where overcrowding, administrative burdens on the teachers, and multi-age classrooms affect the practicality and dynamics of TSRs (Yaseen & Tariq, 2024).

Classroom management has historically been conceived of as the teacher actions and teaching strategies that create a learning environment in which the classroom is productive, orderly and safe, but recent research has significantly expanded this definition. The initial approaches highlighted reactive, punitive, disciplinary and control-oriented frameworks; recent meta-analyses promote proactive, instructional and relationship-oriented approaches that prevent behavioral problems from arising (Korpershoek et al., 2020; Egeberg et al., 2021). In a recent systematic review, Olivier and Archambault (2023) identified three key classroom management components: classroom organisation (routines, transitions, physical environment), behaviour management (rules, expectations, consequences) and instructional management (engaging tasks, student autonomy). Additionally, the seminal work of Hattie and Zierer (2020) defined classroom management as a "mindframe" in which teachers are seen as evaluators of their influence on student learning and behaviour, and a shift from reaction to reflection and data collection. This shift reflects a shift in thinking about management as an integral part of instruction - well-managed classrooms originate from engaging academic tasks as well as clear behavioral expectations (Martin & Collie, 2023).

A rich literature has established evidence-based, classroom management strategies that predict effective practice across classrooms and grades. In a meta-analysis, Korpershoek et al. (2020) identified the most effective classroom management strategies as setting clear rules and routines during the first few weeks of school, giving positive feedback on a regular basis, using non-verbal cues to redirect off-task behaviour, and offering proportionate and consistent consequences for inappropriate behaviour. In a large-scale observational study, Sutherland and colleagues (2022) found that teachers with a high ratio of positive to negative classroom interactions (5:1) had more compliance and fewer disruptive events. Proactive approaches, such as "teaching" behavioral expectations like content knowledge has been found to reduce off-task behaviour by 40% when compared to classrooms where rules are posted but not explicitly taught (Simonsen et al., 2020). Further, using restorative approaches - which prioritise repairing harm rather than punishing wrongdoing - is increasingly supported by research as a classroom management strategy that supports relationships between teachers and their students while intervening in inappropriate behaviour (Gregory & Evans, 2022).

Classroom management has a strong influence on student behaviour, engagement and achievement, and is one of the strongest teacher-related predictors of student success. In a longitudinal study, Aldrup et al. (2022) found classroom management at the start of the school year was predictive of student disruptive behavior and academic engagement over months later. On the other hand, classrooms with poor transitioning, unclear expectations, and disciplinary measures result in higher rates of student off-task, aggression and distress (Olivier & Archambault, 2023).

### **Statement of the Problem**

In District Bannu, teachers are overcrowded, teaching multiple grade levels, and have long working hours, along with post-war issues, which affect teacher-student relationships. No research has empirically explored the impact of this relationship in Bannu's challenging circumstances. This has led to reactive management as crowd control, with no contextual information for teachers. This research fills this gap, by exploring the true impact of the teacher-student relationship on classroom management in the stressful context of Bannu.

### **Research Objectives**

1. To know about the perceptions of male and female teachers regarding the role of teacher-student relationship in classroom management in district Bannu.
2. To compare the perceptions of male and female teachers regarding the role of teacher-student relationship in classroom management in district Bannu.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the perceptions of male teachers regarding the role of teacher-student relationship in classroom management in district Bannu?

### **Research Hypothesis**

H<sub>01</sub>: There is no significant deference between the perceptions of male and female teachers regarding the role of teacher-student relationship in classroom management in district Bannu.

## Research Methodology

This quantitative descriptive study aimed to explore the role of teacher-student relationships (independent variable) in classroom management (dependent variable) in public secondary schools of District Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The population consisted of 1,200 secondary school teachers (650 men, 550 women) from 60 schools according to District Education Office. Stratified random sampling (based on gender of school) and Yamane's formula (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error) resulted in a sample of 240 teachers: 130 male teachers from 16 boys' schools and 110 female teachers from 14 girls' schools. A questionnaire was designed using a 5-point Likert scale, developed through literature review, validated by education experts, and pre-tested with 30 teachers (16 male, 14 female) not included in the sample. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha: the cut-off point was 0.7. Data were collected after obtaining separate consent of male and female District Education Officers, distributing the Urdu questionnaire (translated and back translated) in paper form in the staff meetings to all teachers (took about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire). The data were reported in terms of percentage, mean and standard deviation, and T-test to test the hypothesis.

## Results and Data Analysis

Data analysis was done through descriptive analysis (i.e. Frequency, percentage, Mean, and Standard Deviation) and Inferential Analysis (i.e. T-test) which was also used to find the difference between the perceptions of male and female teachers about the role of teacher-student relationship in classroom environment (District Bannu).

**Table: Perceptions of male and female teachers regarding the role of teacher-student relationship in classroom management in district Bannu.**

| Responses    | Respondents   |            |                 |            |
|--------------|---------------|------------|-----------------|------------|
|              | Male Teachers |            | Female Teachers |            |
|              | No            | %          | No              | %          |
| <b>SA</b>    | 40            | 30.8       | 15              | 13.6       |
| <b>A</b>     | 55            | 42.3       | 30              | 27.3       |
| <b>N</b>     | 20            | 15.4       | 40              | 36.4       |
| <b>DA</b>    | 10            | 7.7        | 15              | 13.6       |
| <b>SDA</b>   | 5             | 3.8        | 10              | 9.1        |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>130</b>    | <b>100</b> | <b>110</b>      | <b>100</b> |
| <b>Mean</b>  | 4.08          |            | 3.31            |            |
| <b>SD</b>    | 1.01          |            | 1.14            |            |

The table shows that the views of male (n=130) and female (n=110) teachers in District Bannu on the role of teacher-student relationship on classroom management. For male teachers, 30.8% strongly agreed and 42.3% agreed, giving 73.1% positive responses; 7.7% disagreed, 3.8% strongly disagreed (11.5% negative); and 15.4% were neutral. The mean for male teachers was 4.08 (SD = 1.01), suggesting strong agreement. By comparison, female teachers' responses included 13.6% strongly agreed, 27.3%

agreed (40.9% positive), 13.6% disagreed, 9.1% strongly disagreed (22.7% negative) and 36.4% neutral. Females' mean score was 3.31 (SD = 1.14), which indicates a moderate less agreement. In summary, males' perception of the positive role of teacher-student relationships in classroom management is higher than that of females, who are more neutral and have more variability.

**Table: Comparison of male and female teachers regarding the role of teacher-student relationship in classroom management in district Bannu.**

| Teachers        | N   | Mean | S.D  | Teachers comparison |                 |             | Level of significance ' $\alpha$ ' |
|-----------------|-----|------|------|---------------------|-----------------|-------------|------------------------------------|
|                 |     |      |      | $t_{calculated}$    | $t_{tabulated}$ | $p_{value}$ |                                    |
| Male Teachers   | 130 | 4.08 | 1.01 | 5.547               | $\pm 1.97$      | 0.0007      | 0.05                               |
| Female Teachers | 110 | 3.31 | 1.14 |                     |                 |             |                                    |

According to the comparative analysis displayed in the table, there is a significant difference between males and females teachers' attitudes towards the role of teacher-student relationships in classroom management in District Bannu. Male teachers (N=130, Mean=4.08, SD=1.01) show a considerably greater degree of agreement than female teachers (N=110, Mean=3.31, SD=1.14). The t-calculated value (5.547) is higher than the t-tabulated value ( $\pm 1.97$ ) at 0.05 significance level with a p-value of 0.0007. As the p-value is lower than the alpha level (0.05), the null hypothesis is rejected; this means that the difference is not by chance. Therefore, male teachers have more positive perceptions than female teachers about the importance of teacher-student relationships in classroom management.

### Findings

Male teachers in District Bannu show significantly more positive perceptions (mean = 4.08; 73.1% agreement) of the role of teacher-student relationships in classroom management than female teachers (mean = 3.31; 40.9% agreement). Female teachers expressed higher neutrality (36.4%) and a higher degree of variability (SD = 1.14) compared to male teachers (SD = 1.01); suggesting that while male teachers strongly believe teacher-student relationships are important for classroom management, female teachers are less confident and more polarised in their opinion.

The independent samples t-test showed a statistically significant difference between teachers' perceptions ( $t = 5.547$ ,  $df = 238$ ,  $p = 0.0007 < 0.05$ ) about the role of teacher-student relationships in classroom management in District Bannu. Male teachers (M = 4.08, SD = 1.01) were significantly more positive than female teachers (M = 3.31, SD = 1.14). Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, leading to the conclusion that teacher-student relationships' role in classroom management is viewed more positively by male teachers than by female teachers.

## Discussions

This study shows a statistically significant gender difference ( $t = 5.547$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) in perceptions of the effect of teacher-student relationships on classroom management in District Bannu. Male teachers ( $M = 4.08$ , 73.1% agreement) show significantly more positive perceptions compared to female teachers ( $M = 3.31$ , 40.9% agreement). This implies male teachers are more likely to perceive positive relationships improve classroom management. Men might have more social power to develop trust with students, whereas women may be under more pressure in a post-conflict, conservative milieu (Huyghe, 2025). Pakistani research supports this notion, with gender playing a critical role in classroom management strategies, confirming this trend as regional (Afreen et al., 2025; Zahir & Tofail, 2025).

Female teachers were more neutral (36.4%) and less consistent ( $SD = 1.14$ ), displaying less consistent and confident opinions. This could be because of specific issues such as domestic commitments, limited freedom of movement and administrative support, which reduce the impact of relational approaches. National reports indicate female teachers' higher work-related stress (Khan & Saeed, 2025) and psychological distress is associated with lower self-efficacy and emotional intelligence (Ali & Shah, 2025). Male teachers' low variability ( $SD = 1.01$ ) and high agreement show they consistently favour relationship-based approaches. Although positive teacher-student relationships enhance academic performance in Pakistan (Amir & Manzoor, 2025), this study adds to the body of knowledge by reporting gender differences in the overcrowded and stressful environment of Bannu (Khawas & Nasreen, 2026; Aslam & Saleem, 2025). Interventions should prioritise gender-sensitive training based on female teachers' limitations and positive attitudes of male teachers as role models.

## Conclusions

Overall, the research finds District Bannu male teachers have more positive views than female teachers on the importance of teacher-student relationships in classroom management. While male teachers strongly agree that relationship-based approaches are effective in managing classrooms, female teachers merely agree, and have greater neutrality and variance in their responses. The statistical test found this gender gap is indeed significant, allowing the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, it is found that male teachers in District Bannu are more confident than female teachers in believing that classroom management is facilitated by good rapport between teachers and students, whereas female teachers are less certain and more mixed in their beliefs, probably because of specific contextual, cultural, or professional limitations to teaching in the district.

## Recommendations

1. **Gender-Sensitive Professional Development;** Organize targeted workshops for female teachers in District Bannu to build their confidence in using relationship-based classroom management strategies. These workshops should focus on overcoming their specific cultural and professional challenges, such as family responsibilities and transportation issues.
2. **Mentorship Program;** Implement a peer mentoring program where supportive male teachers who strongly approve of relational approaches mentor female teachers in demonstrating trust-building and other positive communication strategies in a supportive and culturally-sensitive manner.

- 3. Remove Administrative Barriers;** District education authorities should provide flexible class timetables and minimise administrative work to support female teachers to spend more time in relationship-building with their students. Further, providing informal teacher-student interaction areas in girls' schools may also address cultural constraints.

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