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Editorial: Student-teacher relationship quality research: past, present and future, volume II

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Student-teacher relationship quality research: past, present and future, volume II

The present Research Topic is in continuity with the previous one (Vol. I, [Fabris et al., 2022](#)) and aims to further stimulate scientific research on the quality of the teacher-student relationship and its impact on students' development and learning processes. On this Research Topic, we have collected 12 empirical research papers from different nations, both from the East and the West. The selected papers not only have the merit of expanding current knowledge on the contribution of the teacher relationship to students' psychological adjustment and learning, but also offer important insights for the development of further research in the near future.

Three cross-sectional studies conducted in China were devoted to analyzing the contribution of the teacher-student relationship to students' learning outcomes and psychological wellbeing in the context of foreign language (English) learning. In the first study, [Wang and Kang](#) focused on the positive influences of teachers' and students' interpersonal communication skills on second language (L2) learners. In the second study, [Li and Chu](#), inspired by rhetorical/relational goal theory, found that teacher confirmation and teacher caring play a significant role in improving Chinese EFL learners' empowerment. In the third study, conducted with a sample of 748 college students, [Zhou](#) extended the knowledge of the relationship between perceived teacher caring and Chinese EFL students' wellbeing and identified grit as a significant mediator of this relationship. Overall, these studies are pedagogically important as they draw foreign language teachers' attention to the importance of their interpersonal communication skills in promoting better learning.

The cross-sectional study presented by [He et al.](#) reported that growth mindset and grit in teachers have a direct positive influence on teacher wellbeing, with grit playing a mediating role in the link between teacher mindfulness and occupational wellbeing. Similarly, [Wang X's](#) found a significant relationship between the level of mindfulness and a more positive quality of teacher-student relationship, identifying the possible mediating role of emotional intelligence. This finding supports the importance of introducing mindfulness training for teachers and suggests that emotional intelligence is an important element in the teacher-student relationship dynamic.

Other studies have instead focused on the quality of the teacher-student relationship and its association with various indicators of psychological adjustment, such as risk of victimization, satisfaction with school life, aggressive or externalizing behavior, and subjective psychological wellbeing. [Yang et al.](#) identify a close relationship with the teacher as a protective factor for the exacerbation of externalizing behaviors in rural adolescents. The authors extend current knowledge by identifying a possible chain mediation effect of peer relationship and mental health between the teacher-student relationship and externalizing problem behaviors. This relationship in adolescents appears to be moderated by parental knowledge. Two Italian studies, on the other hand, were interested in investigating elements of the teacher-student relationship and the risk of victimization or aggression in the peer group. In this direction, [Longobardi et al.](#) presented an innovative cross-sectional study investigating teachers' attitudes toward physical appearance as a possible risk factor for bullying victimization. The authors emphasized how teachers' perceptions of their students' physical appearance can affect the quality of the teacher-student relationship, which in turn can have an impact on students' psychological adjustment and risk of victimization. However, [Gini et al.](#) have proposed an interesting and innovative longitudinal study on the relationship between teacher unfairness and aggressiveness (both proactive and reactive) in adolescence. The data show that students who feel unfairly treated by their teachers tend to have higher levels of aggression and lower levels of school satisfaction.

A number of studies have added to current knowledge about the role of the teacher-student relationship in promoting greater emotional and psychological wellbeing. In this direction, [Wang T](#) showed that Chinese students' perceptions of their teachers' caring and supportive behaviors can largely influence their psychological and subjective wellbeing. This not only points to the crucial role of the quality of the teacher-student relationship in students' emotional wellbeing, but confirm the need to develop awareness among teachers of how they can promote their students' psychological adjustment through a caring and supportive relationship. [Li and Zhang](#) found that a negative teacher-student relationship and lower levels of enjoyment of learning were associated with an increased risk of burnout in students. In addition, the analyzes provide the first evidence of the possible mediating role of emotional intelligence in explaining the relationship between teacher-student relationship quality, learning enjoyment, and student burnout.

Finally, [Wang et al.](#) examine the relationship between the quality of the teacher-student relationship and students' academic motivation for the ideological and political subject. The data showed that the teacher-student relationship had a direct, positive,

and significant influence on students' academic motivation for the ideological and political subject.

We have received several contributions to this Research Topic from China, and this is an important element considering that research on the quality of the teacher-student relationship has been conducted predominantly in Western cultures. However, despite the increased scholarly production on this topic from Eastern countries, we believe that in the near future it will become increasingly important to conduct cross-cultural research to understand the contribution of the teacher-learner to the students' developmental processes on a cultural basis ([Fabris et al., 2023](#)). Last but not least, each published paper offers interesting practical implications. However, we believe that it is increasingly important to develop research that aims to measure the impact of initiatives (e.g., training) designed to improve the quality of the relationship between teachers and students, and thus provide evidence for the usefulness of such interventions.

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