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**Teacher-student relationship in upper
secondary school –
the great importance of collaboration
and the small things**

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Background

- The Teacher student relationship (TSR)- is essential for students' motivation and achievement
- Literature review: an association between TSR, student mental health and drop out
- Subjective experiences of the daily interplay in TSR was unknown

2 studies

1. Qualitative study – interviews with students
2. Qualitative study – interviews with teachers
and helpers



Collaborative research



Competence group



Co-researcher: Natalia
Holter-Sørensen

- Discussed the research themes
- Collaborated in developing the interview guide
- Collaborated on analysis
- The co-researcher participated in the interviews and collaborated on writing the article

'You notice that there is something positive about going to school': how teachers' kindness can promote positive teacher-student relationships in upper secondary school

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to obtain students' first-person perspectives of their experience of positive teacher-student relationships (TSRs) in upper secondary school. We also explored their experiences of qualities of TSRs concerning students' mental health and dropout from upper secondary school. We used a qualitative and participative approach, whereby key stakeholders were included as co-researchers. Seventeen students participated in semi-structured individual interviews and focus groups. Interview data were analysed via thematic analysis. Participants' experiences were clustered around five themes: (1) it takes two: mutual responsibility in TSRs, (2) don't be unfair: negative experiences challenge TSRs, (3) talk to us: bonding and problem solving through conversation, (4) help us: adapting to students' academic and personal needs, and (5) we need kind teachers: the importance of teachers' demeanour. The findings demonstrated the value of positive TSRs and illustrated the ways in which they promote students' well-being at school.

ARTICLE HISTORY

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KEYWORDS

Teacher-student relationship; dropout; mental health; upper secondary school

Background

This study explored students' experience of teacher-student relationships (TSRs) in upper secondary school. Qualities of TSR concerning students' mental health and dropout have also been explored. Positive relationships between adolescents and adults are perhaps the single most important ingredient in the promotion of positive youth development. As schooling is central to adolescents' lives, previous studies have highlighted the crucial role played by TSRs (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Pianta & Allen, 2008). TSRs have also been recognized as pivotal to students' motivation and learning (Hattie, 2009; Nordenbo, Larsen, Tiftikçi, Wendt, & Østergaard, 2008).

The TSR

The conceptual framework for understanding TSRs has roots in numerous traditions within the fields of education and psychology. The original framework was most strongly influenced by attachment theory, which emphasizes the attachment between parents and children and its influence on children's other relationships later in life (Sabot & Pianta, 2012). Positive TSRs are characterized by a high degree of warmth, open communication, and support from teachers (Drugli, 2013). Teachers' tolerance, empathy,

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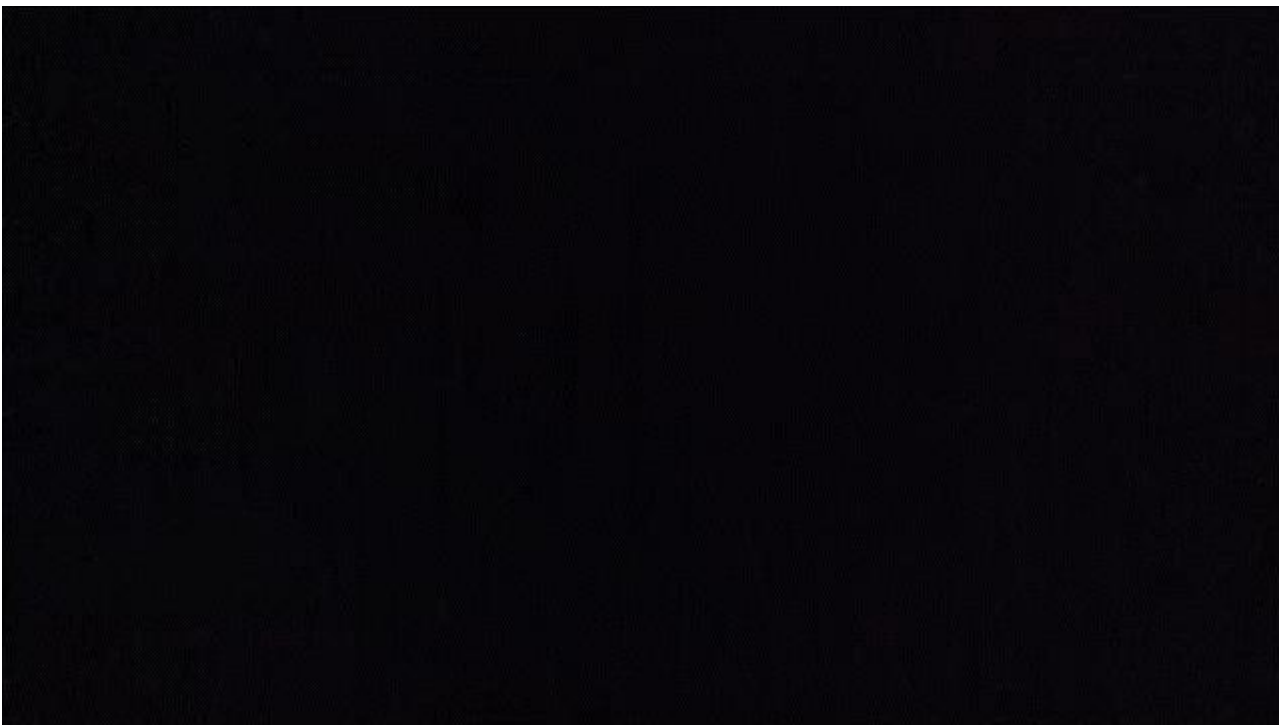
1 Qualitative study- students' experiences of TSR

- 17 students
- Focus groups
- Individual interviews
- Students at risk of drop out
- Students that had dropped out
- Average age 17,9 years

1. Findings

1. **It takes two-** mutual responsibility for the TSR
2. **Don't be unfair-** negative experiences can challenge TSR
3. **Talk to us -** bonding and problem-solving through conversations
4. **Help us-** Adaptation to students' academic and personal needs
5. **We need kind teachers-** The importance of teachers' demeanor







Summary

- Students expect closer and more personal relationships with their teachers
- Students expect to have one-on-one talks with their teachers
- Students expect and wish for kind and helpful teachers

2 Qualitative study of teachers' and helpers' experiences

- Focus groups
- 15 teachers
- 12 helpers
- Teachers in vocational and general studies programs
- Helpers: school psychologists, school nurse, social workers
- Experiences of working with students at risk of drop out

EMPIRICAL STUDY

They need to be recognized as a person in everyday life: Teachers' and helpers' experiences of teacher-student relationships in upper secondary school

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore how teachers and helpers experience that teacher-student relationship (TSR) is developed and promoted in upper secondary school. We also explored their experiences of qualities of TSR with students with mental health problems or at risk of dropping out. The study used a qualitative and participative approach; key stakeholders were included as co-researchers. Focus group interviews were held with 27 teachers and helpers. A thematic analysis was conducted. The participants' descriptions of important experiential dimensions of TSR were clustered around four themes: (1) to be recognized as a person with strengths and challenges in everyday life, (2) collaborative relationships between students and teachers, (3) flexible boundaries in the relationship between teachers and students and (4) organization of classes and procedures set the stage for TSR. Collaborative, emotional and contextual qualities were found important to the development of TSR in upper secondary school. Experiences of negative qualities of TSR can contribute to push students out of school. Teachers and helpers experience that TSR may have the potential to play a role in promoting mental health in students' everyday life.

Key words: Teacher-student relationship, dropout, mental health, upper secondary school

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This article will explore teachers' and helpers' experiences of how teacher-student relationship (TSR) is promoted and developed in upper secondary school. We will also address TSR with students with mental health problems or at risk of dropping out. Schooling is central for young people, and the relationship between teachers and students is pivotal in students' everyday lives. Thus, TSR has been a focus of both educators' and researchers' attention for decades (Pianta, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003; Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

The TSR develops through interaction and communication between teachers and students. Both attachment theory and developmental systems theory can be used to understand the concept of TSR. Children and youths' different attachment styles are associated with their relationships with teachers (Pianta & Allen, 2008; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). In a

developmental systems theory perspective, different multilevel systems (individual, family, classroom, peers, school organization and environment) interact in the development of TSR (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). Positive TSR is characterized by closeness, warmth and perceived support from teacher. Negative TSR is characterized by conflict, negative emotions and lack of report (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Drugli, 2013; Sabol & Pianta, 2012). There is substantial evidence that a positive TSR is crucial for students' motivation, achievement and learning (Bergeron, Chouinard, & Janosz, 2011; Hattie, 2009; Nordenbo, Larsen, Tiftik, Wendi, & Østergaard, 2008; Rooda, Koomen, Spill, & Oort, 2011). In addition, Rooda et al. (2011) argue that TSR is even more important for students' academic adjustment, as they grow older. However, the quality of TSR is declining and less positive among older

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2 Qualitative study -Teachers' and helpers' experiences of TSR

1. To be recognized as a person with strengths and challenges in everyday life
2. Collaborative relationships between teachers and students
3. Flexible boundaries in the relationships between teachers and students
4. Organization of classes and procedures set the stage for the TSR



Summary

- Teachers worry a lot about their students
- Teachers want more knowledge about students' mental health
- Teachers wish for more collaboration and support from helpers and collaborators





Conclusions

- The great importance of the small things
 - Help and small adjustments are important
 - Smile and facial expressions are important in everyday life
 - Lack of support and help can be understood as rejection
- Collaboration and mutuality
 - Relationships are developed thru collaboration on common tasks and school work
- New and future expectations and demands
 - Teachers competence
 - Teachers involvement

Teachers

- Teacher should prioritize conversations with students
- Teachers should be aware that students are affected by their demeanour (happiness)
- Teachers having a hard time should seek help and assistance from the school administration

School administrators

- School administrators must facilitate a positive school environment
- School administrators must provide a structure that facilitate and encourage conversations between teachers and students
- School administrators must provide guidance and support for teachers

Authorities

- Authorities must provide economical support –to facilitate ample time to conversations between teachers and students
- The number of student per teachers should be considered
- Reinforce teachers' education of mental health and how to establish TSR

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