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Impact of Teacher Expectations on Students' Behaviour and their Academic Performance

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Abstract

This research aimed to explain the impact of teacher expectations on students' behaviour and their academic performance, which has been studied for many years. The study focuses on the role of teachers, who play a significant part in student learning and psychological development. The study aimed to explore teachers' roles and expectations about a child's psychological development and how it affects their behaviour and academic performance. This was a qualitative explanatory research study, and it was used as the methodology. The research study used a purposive sampling method through open-ended semi-structured interviews, exploring ten questions (five questions were used for parents and five for teachers), focusing on 10 participants (five parents of primary level students and teachers teaching grade 1.) for their opinion on the expectations of teachers and its impact on the child's behaviour and academic performance. Feedback from the interviews showed different opinions and ideas from both groups. Since each child has unique abilities and a different learning style, the study recommends that teachers mentor each student, especially the struggling ones, to outgrow their current potential. Crucial to this intervention is to raise teacher expectations that have a direct and immediate effect on the psyche and motivation of a student and, hence, his performance in academics.

Keywords

Academic performance
 Psychological development
 Students' behaviour
 Teacher expectations

INTRODUCTION

A classroom environment is usually expected to affect students' learning capacity and overall psychology. Students' attitudes and expectations change daily, which encourages respect for others. According to Li et al., (2024), many recent research studies have shown the effect of teachers' expectations on students' performance and learning outcomes. As Gentrup et al., (2020) maintained, teacher expectations exist in classroom settings and positively and negatively affect students' learning outcomes. When teacher's expectations of their students are high, it positively impacts students' academic performance. When these expectations are low, they negatively impact students' performance, as stated by Flanagan et al., (2020). Flanagan et al., (2020) concede that teachers with more experience have higher expectations of their students than teachers with less experience.

According to Friedrich et al., (2015), students' past performance and other factors influence teacher expectations. Jelsma et al., (2022) state that teachers' recognition and observations are directly associated with students' suffering from anger, depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and behavioural disorders. Nonetheless, evidence shows that teachers' low expectations of students can create an environment contributing to their low achievement. Many researchers also believe that only students' current achievements meet teacher expectations accurately (Hinnant et al., 2009). According to Doyle et al., (2023), many studies have investigated and identified different characteristics of students that force teachers to expect highly from some students and lower from others. Research studies have also identified reasons that influence the expectations of teachers as well as results of students as high or low achievers depending on a few factors such as second language (Wang & Li, 2023), ethnicity (Bonfeld et al., 2022), and gender (Gentrup & Rjosk, 2018).

Teacher expectations can be defined as a key component or can be regarded as a predictor of student's progress and achievements. Teacher expectations play a vital role in students' life because it forms the basis of students' psychological and cognitive development. After all, what is expected of them affects their mindsets, directly or indirectly. According to Weinstein et al., (2004), teacher expectations have more impact in the early years of a student's life in schools and it reduces with higher grade levels in the schools, as stated by Wang et al., (2021). The primary purpose of this research is to create awareness about teacher's expectations, having positive and negative influences on students' behaviour and academic performance. This issue should be of great importance, as teachers and their expectations are very important for the entire learning process of students.

Research Objectives

- To investigate the relationship between teacher expectations, students' behaviour, and academic performance.
- To identify teacher expectation effects on students' behaviour and academic performance.

Research Questions

- What is the relationship between teacher expectations, students' behaviour and academic performance?
- How do teacher expectations affect students' behaviour and academic performance?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Teacher Expectation

Teacher expectations are the ideas teachers hold about their students' potential, performance, and achievements. It may help teachers determine the type of classroom instruction and methodologies to conduct lesson plans, impacting student's performance and learning outcomes. Teachers have different expectations from students in their classrooms. Students' gender, ethnicity, and social class may influence a teacher's expectations. Teachers can also project the future academic success of their students based on these expectations, which may be related to assessments or student performance. According to Ready and Wright (2011), teacher expectations influence students' performance as well as the behaviour of the teachers. These expectations may influence the results of their students in both positive and negative ways. Students' performance, directly or indirectly, depends on the teacher's expectations. According to Ali et al., (2018), teacher favouritism means the teacher prefers a particular group of students.

According to Alan et al., (2023), teachers' predetermined opinion toward an ethnic minority group negatively affects students' performance and learning, even without grading bias. Teacher expectations are part of school-wide expectations. Many studies have been conducted to examine how teacher expectations are communicated to students in a classroom and what the effects of these expectations are on students' learning and psychological development. Teacher expectations can be related to student achievement in three ways: as a self-fulfilling prophecy, a perceptual bias, and accurate assessments. Suppose teachers spend time more effectively on providing a framework of learning to students, giving them effective feedback, encouraging them to utilize critical thinking and higher-order questions, and managing their behaviour in a very positive and creative manner. In that case, all these factors impact positively on their learning. However, if a teacher provides fewer opportunities for their students to learn and explore new things, it negatively impacts their behaviour and academic performance.

Students' Psychology

Students' psychology is the study of the processes of a child development and their psychology from birth to the end of adolescence. It includes all the environmental, cultural, and genetic factors. It is the study of a child's conscious and subconscious thinking. According to Noble et al., (2007), a child's development, educational achievements and performance, and lifetime learning capabilities are all based on Early Childhood Education (ECE). Studying a child's psychology helps us learn how a child sees the world, goes through the progressive stages of development, interacts with parents, peers, and teachers, and learns new skills from social interactions. Child psychology mainly focuses on three areas of a child's development including physical development, cognitive development, and social or emotional development. Physical development concerns a child's physical growth and development. Cognitive development focuses on a child's thought processes, intellectual development, and learning capacity. Social or emotional development deals with a child's behaviour, feelings, understandings, attitudes, and interaction with their parents, peers, school, and other people around them (Schaffer, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive Theory

The early life processes of human development and growth are very challenging. As stated by Neviyarni (2020), there are three aspects of the growth process in early childhood, namely the process of biological development, cognitive development processes, and the children socio-emotional development. The cognitive theory given by the famous Russian psychologist Vygotsky in 1962 focuses on the idea of social interaction, contributing to cognitive development in children. He believes that the interaction with immediate family, teachers, and the more significant social circle affects the cognitive development process of a child. Teacher expectations are one of the essential elements of such interaction, enhancing a students' academic development. Khadijah (2016) maintains that cognitive development is a significant process in the psychological development of human life that includes intentions, consideration, understanding, reception of knowledge, problem-solving, and the belief system. This process of cognitive development starts at the age of 0-6 years, called the Golden Age phase. According to Gönen (2014), the Golden Age phase is a critical period in a child's development as basic skills and knowledge formation and development of personality and language occur in this period of human life.

Multiple Intelligences

In 1983, Howard Gardner introduced eight different types of intelligences, namely logical-mathematical, linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist, which transformed the study of teaching and learning practices (Gardner, 1983). As Davis et al., (2011) state, these different types of intelligence play an essential role in all human development and learning processes. Afini et al., (2023) emphasize using this intelligence in the teaching and learning process and understanding that different learning styles need to be catered according to the needs of the students. As maintained by Purwanto (2023), teachers are required to recognize that all students are different and they cannot learn in the same way, as well as use a variety of teaching methodologies that can satisfy and fulfil students' diverse needs and intelligence. Many teachers design the lesson plan to include creative techniques according to the individual student's learning style. This practice emphasizes the teacher's positive expectations, improving students' academic performance.

Bloom's Taxonomy

According to Ari (2013), Bloom's taxonomy is a significant framework that evaluates students' learning outcomes within the cognitive domain. Bloom's taxonomy is a hierarchical model of achieving learning objectives. Its six categories are knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. They are organized in an order of complexity from LOTS to HOTS. This model also focuses on the expectations of teachers for students' achievements. The revised Bloom's taxonomy is divided into knowledge and cognitive process. As maintained by Krathwohl (2002), both dimensions depend on each other, as knowledge is required to process the application of the cognitive domain.

Constructivism

In 1936, Jean Piaget introduced the concept of constructivism in his cognitive development theory (Baraquin & Laffitte, 2020). This theory includes the concepts of schema, accommodation, assimilation, and adaptation. This constructivist theory helps individuals construct new meaning through experience and hands-on activities. Constructivism is the internal process that encourages active learning by building new knowledge on past knowledge and experiences. As identified by Jonassen (2013), teachers have three crucial roles that they can perform in a constructive learning environment to support their students' learning: scaffolding, modelling, and coaching.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the approach, this research was qualitative because it helped enhance our knowledge related to teacher's expectations and their effects on students' behaviour and academic performance.

Qualitative research helps gather in-depth perceptions of data or a particular problem to generate new opinions or a solution to a problem. Based on the nature of findings, it is explanatory research, helping to define a situation, phenomenon, or a particular population, focusing on the what, where, when, and how questions. It helps to find correlations, trends, characteristics, and categories. For this study, purposive sampling (non-probability sampling) was used, as it helped us to understand a particular group of people and the effects of a particular situation on them in depth. Hence, the population for this study is defined as all the potential teachers of primary level (Grade 1) and parents of primary level students (Grade 1) from schools of Karachi who were interviewed to see the relationship between these two variables, namely teacher expectations and a students' behaviour and academic performance.

A semi-structured interview protocol was used to collect, analyse and evaluate the experiences of parents and teachers with 10 questions (5 questions from parents and teachers each), with informed consent from the participants and with the sequencing of questions, in finding a correlation between teacher's expectations and students' behaviour as well as academic performances. Appointments were made through email or WhatsApp to schedule meetings to conduct an interview. Open-ended questions were sent to the participants before conducting the interview, as it was a semi-structured interview protocol so that teachers and parents could prepare themselves and save time.

Thematic analysis was used through which the reliability and credibility of the research and its collected data were increased; collecting data by interviewing five teachers and five parents of Grade 1 students (5 questions for parents and teachers each) to determine what ways they are using to teach and convey knowledge to students. To ensure credibility, data from the interviews were collected from practicing teachers of primary level (Grade 1), working in different schools of Karachi, and parents of primary level students (Grade 1). Collected data was used to examine and evaluate the effects of teacher expectations on student behaviour and academic performance through a thematic analysis.

RESULTS & FINDINGS

Based on the data analysis, several themes emerged from the interviews conducted with teachers of primary level (Grade 1) and the parents of primary level students (Grade 1). The main themes that mainly took the attention from the responses of teachers in order to investigate teachers' expectations and their impact on students' behaviour and academic performance are learning strategies, multiple intelligences, differentiated instructions, the uniqueness of every child, the various teaching methodologies (ways of teaching), weaker student is needing more attention, evaluating students based on their works, teacher's motivation, teacher's enthusiasm, student's punctuality and regularity as well as teacher's every single face expression, gestures and words. The main themes that mainly demand attention from parents' responses to investigate teacher expectations and their impact on children behaviour and academic performance are setting up routines for children, children's willingness to go to school, addressing a child's complaints, constructive and positive feedback from teachers, and dealing with teacher biases.

Teacher's Perceptions and Opinions

Engaging Students with Different Learning Strategies to Develop Student's Learning Skills

According to one of the teachers interviewed, *"I engage my students through active learning strategies, plan lessons with engaging and motivating activities, to gauge student's interest and develop their learning skills."* According to a teacher interviewed, *"I incorporate differentiated instructions in my lessons, encouraging individual work, pair work and group tasks. That's how I engage a student with other student and myself as well as through discussions. And distribute the time according to their abilities and according to their understanding level."* A third teacher stated, *"We brainstorm ideas and opinions and write them on the board. We make sure that each child answers or participates in class discussions by telling them that their response is important and encouraging them simultaneously."*

Using Differentiated Activities to Cater Multiple Intelligence of Students

One of the teachers interviewed conceded, *“I believe that every child is unique and has their own learning abilities, some learn through hands on experiences, some are visual learners while some have other intelligences. It’s the way how a teacher develops the learning skills in a struggling child.”* Different studies have discovered that teacher expectations are a factor that influences students’ academic achievements and progress and is also considered a characteristic of effective and quality teaching. According to teacher interviews, teachers divide their learners according to their Multiple Intelligences and form mixed-ability groups for differentiated activities throughout the lesson. They know their children’s abilities, so they plan activities according to their abilities and interests to cater to each student’s multiple intelligences.

Teaching Methodologies and Way of Teaching Motivates Students to Perform Well

According to one of the teachers, *“It’s my teaching methodologies and way of teaching that motivates and engages learners to become above average and confident learners.”* Each teacher interviewed talked about teacher motivation’s role in a student’s learning process. It triggers the learner’s mind and develops the eagerness and curiosity to learn through interest, which affects the student’s performance. It directly affects students’ performance because they catch the vibes from their teachers; if the teachers feel low and are not performing actively, students will react similarly. If a teacher is active and full of motivation, it will be transferred to students and affect their performance positively.

According to the interviews, even teachers’ facial expressions, gestures, and words have a great impact on the students. If a teacher doesn’t feel like teaching for any reason, learners will not be engaged, as the connection between them will be lost to some extent. According to most teachers, if teachers have to teach students something new or different, teacher enthusiasm would be evident and shown through their body language. It will reflect through their students as well; they will feel and sense the spark in their teachers and will respond equally. However, when a teacher is down or not in the best of his/her mood, students notice that instantly and become sombre. This is where they need to put up the actor’s cloak and show students their best attitude.

Weaker Students Need More Attention to Improve Their Academic Performance

According to one of the teachers interviewed, *“Weaker students need more attention. All the students must be catered to according to grade level and curriculum while keeping their areas of improvement in mind. A good teacher is one who plans inclusive lessons. The teacher should pay attention to each of them, keeping their needs in mind”.* According to one of the teachers, *“An above average student would automatically be receptive and would not need a teacher’s attention. At the same time, students who’re intimidated by their peers and tend to shy away and need to be encouraged throughout in order to ensure a balance in the classroom and bring them up to the class level.”*

Evaluate Students on The Basis of Their Work to Enhance their Learning

According to one of the teachers interviewed, *“I don’t think so that it is real, that student’s physical attractiveness matters for a teacher.”* Teachers’ expectations are the anticipations of the behaviour and achievement of students based on intervening cues (such as students’ socio-economic status, gender, physical appearance, and test scores) and preconceptions, such as the result of anticipation. It may be so for some teachers, but for the sensible ones, it does not stand true. A good teacher never makes preconceived ideas about a student and constantly evaluates students based on their work, not looks. Some of their high achievers (be it boys or girls) are average-looking and come from mediocre backgrounds. However, hygiene and cleanliness are one thing that definitely takes all teachers’ attention.

Student’s Punctuality and Regularity

According to one teacher, *“When a student is punctual and regular to school, there are less chances for him or her to miss any topic or lesson that is conducted in the class.”* If students are aware of low expectations of their teachers, it will play a negative role in their academic achievements and outcomes. A learner needs to be on the pace of the curriculum as it is done only through punctuality and regularity. Both are related

as the more students miss school, the more work they will miss, eventually affecting their performance. If they do not come to attend the lessons, they will miss out on important concepts that only a teacher can teach better. Punctuality is the key to success in any field.

Parent's Perception and Opinion

Setting up a Routine for Students for Regular Attendance in School

A parent stated, *"I incorporate a routine for my children, to ensure that attend the school regularly."* Students' achievements and academic performances are affected by different expectations of their different teachers. They ensure their children's attendance at school by making them do their homework on time, reinforce classwork in school, prepare their wardrobes and bags with them every day to make them responsible, and ensure readiness as well as motivation to go to school the next day.

Willingness to Go to School Based on Teacher Feedback

According to one of the parents' interviewed, *"We talk about the willingness of my children to go to school, the eagerness to learn and teacher feedback. These factors influence their perceptions regarding the school and the teachers."* Students are affected in terms of their motivation, engagement as well as self-identity. Students also talk about their assessment report, their participation in activities, their active role in class discussions, their behaviour in the classroom, their interaction with teachers and classmates, their focus on their academic performance as well as their participation in extra-curricular activities. According to most parents, if there is any situation where they have to address their child's complaints about his/her teachers, they deal with it very gently. By communicating the issue with the child first and checking its authenticity, they try to find out the background of the complaint and only then communicate it with the coordinator and the principal. They seek to resolve the issue through communication and discussion with the teacher.

Constructive and Positive Feedback for Academic Performance

Some parents interviewed talked about their children's active participation in class and group discussions and getting constructive and positive feedback from their teachers. Expectations of a single teacher affect a student's whole school life. This feedback has been quite encouraging, a way forward in children's learning, which also positively impacts their child's academic performance.

Teacher's Biasness Affects Learning

A parent interviewed lamented, *"I believe that when teachers get bias or promote nepotism it should not be supported and immediate action should be taken because it not only gives unnecessarily over confidence to the ones receiving it, but also harms others as they feel low and think their opinion and contribution worthless, which stops the growth of a child."* Students show their responses and are affected by their teachers' expectations. Parents believe that teacher biases are one of the most important things to talk about. They should always take a stand for themselves, talk to higher management, and ensure the issues are solved.

Discussion

Teacher's expectations play a vital role in a student life because it greatly influences a student mental and behaviour development. Expectations are the way teachers behave towards students and make decisions about them. According to Timmermans et al., (2015), biased expectations of teachers can be of two types: general biases (for most students in the classroom) and specific biases (for specific groups of students). Teacher expectations are biased if the teacher expects low or high performance from a particular student or group of students. This research shows that teacher expectations positively and negatively impact a child's psychology and academic achievements.

According to Fisher (2013), teachers' expectations have been considered mixed perceptions with mixed results. It can negatively and positively impact children's psychology and academic performance.

Teachers have diverse expectations from students; they perceive some students as more intelligent than others, more capable, and more talented, while they see other students as less talented and proficient (Pantaleo, 2016). They are internalizing schemata of both high and low-achieving students, for example, the mental representations and behaviours of their students about the perceptions of the correct teaching of students. Teachers' expectations are the basis of establishing students' learning, influencing their psychology and academic performance. Teachers must hold high expectations for all students in their educational and individual duties (Yatvin, 2009). The key idea and objective of this research is that teachers' expectations do not always hurt a child's psychological and emotional development. However, they also motivate children's cognitive growth and confidence in their potential and competencies to boost their performance, efficiency, and productivity in attaining their academic goals.

The important reason for methodology is to give a framework for the methods employed. According to Van Houtte & Demanet (2016), if teachers have high expectations from their students, they will graduate more frequently. Teacher expectations formulate the basis of a child's psychological and cognitive development because what is expected from them affects their mindsets and performance, directly or indirectly. In this correlational study, the purpose was to produce generalizable data by concentrating on the variable of this study, where the dependent variable was the child's behaviour and academic performance and the independent variable was teacher's expectations. This research emphasizes teachers' expectations for their students and the influence of those expectations on students' cognitive, psychological, ethical, and academic performance. However, there can be a transformation of thoughts and ideas. Each student learns from their social interaction, including their teachers, and responds according to what is being expected from them. According to Boerma et al., (2016), a theoretical connection with academic results. If teachers offer a good learning atmosphere, spend more operative time on their students, and provide adequate responses and feedback to each of their students, it will automatically encourage learning in students.

CONCLUSION

Every child has different learning styles and observations help teacher to evaluate different methodologies, for example, audio-visual, kinaesthetic or experimental learning helps to create lesson plans according to the needs of the students helping them to be more active rather than being passive learners. Let's compare an above-average student with a weaker student. The above average student's comprehension level of understanding of any particular subject is relatively high. They might even excel without unique preferences, but the weaker students are in their learning process and need assistance and most importantly support and affection of the teacher to go through this challenging process. Unfortunately, the first impression is still considered the last. However, these things are merely fictional regarding the actual performances. Many responsible teachers help students overcome their low self-esteem by giving them non-biased judgments based on their learning process.

Scientifically, it has proven that we observe the energy from our surroundings; same goes for education; if as being a teacher, I am not well prepared and passionate about what I am going to teach to students, I cannot expect the student to be motivated or perform well, as I was not able to transfer that energy into them. Learning is not magic; you cannot pull out your wand and expect students to learn everything in a day. Those students who come regularly to school and take classes punctually and responsibly show significant progress as they go through the process of resilience and understanding through their daily experiences. Environment plays a vital role in a child's performance in the school. If the child gets a healthy, safe, and positive environment in the school, learning becomes smooth and enjoyable for both the kids and the parents. The growing awareness towards the teaching profession and proper training have dramatically evolved the attitude of teachers. I have found excellent, responsible teaching methodologies and performance in schools where a child-centric approach is used to achieve the holistic development of a child.

Contribution of the Study

Teacher expectations also positively influence children's behaviour and academic performance. Suppose teachers spend more time effectively providing the proper framework for learning, providing effective feedback, encouraging their students to use critical thinking and higher-order questions, and managing their students' behaviour positively and creatively. In that case, a child can significantly enhance his capabilities. Teacher expectations and interventions generally focus on changing low teacher expectations. Teachers with low expectations for their students' growth may provide fewer opportunities to learn and explore new things that could enhance their students' performance.

Recommendations

- Educationists should conduct research focusing on students from public schools and their relation with teacher expectations, by which this report can act as a preamble point for further thorough research.
- Future research could explore the learning opportunities being provided to specific socio-economic groups and their relationship with teachers' expectations.
- Researchers could conduct research focusing on grades at other levels (secondary level) and investigating the effects of teacher expectations on children's behaviour and academic performance in higher grades.

Competing Interest

The authors reported no potential conflict of interest.

Authors' Biography

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