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FROM LESSONS TO LIFELONG EFFECTS: TEACHERS AS POSITIVE GUIDES OR TRAUMATIZING FIGURES

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Abstract
Teachers have a significant part to play in the development of students' emotional, psychological and social attributes as well as in their academic performance. Supportive educators are able to create confidence, resilience, motivation, and lifelong learning; however, if teachers engage in negative behaviors that include humiliation, favoritism, excessive criticism, or emotional neglect, these behaviors can lead to long-lasting emotional distress and educational trauma. This conceptual article discusses the double-edged sword effect that teachers can have as a positive guide and a potential source of trauma, drawing from educational psychology, developmental psychology and educational research. The article draws on Social Learning Theory, Attachment Theory and Trauma-Informed Educational Theory to consider how the teacher-student relationship impacts upon the learner's self-esteem, engagement in learning, emotional state, interpersonal relationships and life outcomes. It was emphasized that positive classroom experiences foster psychological safety, positive motivation, and healthy identity formation while negative experiences in the classroom can lead to anxiety, poor self-estee,m, fear of failure, and lifelong disengagement from learning. It is also noted in the article that teacher preparation curricula should incorporate the emotional intelligence, trauma-informed pedagogy, and effective communication skills in addition to instruction. We should look at teachers as significant role models whose behaviour can have a lasting impact on their students and we need to embrace teaching practices that instil an emphasis on empathy, respect and emotional support. This can help ensure that classrooms are not only a place where students learn the information that they need but also build confidence and resilience as they prepare for personal and professional success.

Keywords:
Teachers, teacher-student relationship, educational trauma, positive guidance, emotional development, lifelong learning, psychological well-being, trauma-informed education.

Introduction:
The role of teachers in shaping the lives of their students is profound and multifaceted. They can serve as positive guides, mentors, and sources of inspiration, nurturing intellectual curiosity and personal growth. Conversely, they also have the potential to become traumatizing figures, inflicting emotional harm and hindering development. In this essay, we will explore how teachers can exert lifelong effects on their students, both positive and negative, and examine the factors that contribute to either outcome.(Lam & Hui, 2010)

Teachers wield considerable influence over their students, not only academically but also emotionally and socially. A positive teacher-student relationship can foster a sense of belonging and support, providing a safe space for students to explore and express themselves. Research indicates that such relationships are correlated with academic success, emotional well-being, and even long-term life outcomes.(Luthar & Mendes, 2020)

Positive teachers inspire and motivate their students, instilling confidence and a love of learning. They recognize and nurture individual strengths, offering encouragement and guidance along the way. By fostering a growth mindset and resilience, they empower students to overcome challenges and pursue their goals with determination.

Furthermore, teachers can serve as role models, demonstrating important values such as empathy, respect, and integrity. Through their words and actions, they shape students' attitudes and beliefs, influencing their moral development and character formation. In this way, teachers contribute not only to academic growth but also to the cultivation of responsible, compassionate citizens.(Kızıltepe et al., 2023)

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However, not all teacher-student relationships are positive, and the consequences of negative interactions can be profound. Traumatizing teachers may exhibit behaviors such as bullying, favoritism, or neglect, creating an environment of fear and hostility. For students subjected to such treatment, the classroom becomes a source of stress and anxiety rather than a place of learning and growth.

Negative experiences with teachers can have lasting effects on students' self-esteem and confidence. They may internalize criticism and develop a negative self-concept, doubting their abilities and potential. Moreover, traumatic interactions with teachers can erode trust in authority figures and institutions, affecting students' attitudes toward education and society as a whole.(Gusfre et al., 2023)

Several factors contribute to the likelihood of teachers becoming positive guides or traumatizing figures. Personal qualities such as empathy, patience, and cultural competence play a crucial role in fostering positive teacher-student relationships. Teachers who are attuned to their students' needs and experiences are better equipped to provide effective support and guidance.(Ivaniushina & Alexandrov, 2022; Whitted & Dupper, 2007)

Additionally, institutional factors such as class size, resources, and administrative support can influence the quality of teacher-student interactions. Overcrowded classrooms and limited resources may impede teachers' ability to meet students' individual needs, increasing the risk of negative outcomes. Conversely, supportive school environments that prioritize professional development and teacher well-being can enhance the quality of instruction and promote positive relationships.

Teacher education and professional development programs also play a critical role in preparing educators to support students effectively. Training in areas such as classroom management, conflict resolution, and cultural sensitivity equips teachers with the skills and knowledge needed to create inclusive, supportive learning environments. Ongoing professional development opportunities enable teachers to refine their practice and stay abreast of best practices in education.(Baier et al., 2019; Ivaniushina & Alexandrov, 2022; Ünlü & Avci, 2023)

So in the intricate tapestry of education, teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the minds and futures of their students. The impact of these pedagogical influencers extends far beyond the classroom, often leaving indelible imprints on the individuals they teach. This research paper delves into the dichotomy of teachers as positive guides and potentially traumatizing figures, exploring the nuanced interplay between guidance and unintended emotional repercussions within the educational landscape.

As scholars such as Bandura (1977) and Vygotsky (1978) have asserted, teachers are not mere transmitters of knowledge but are also social agents who shape cognitive and socio-emotional development. The positive influence of educators is well-documented, as they inspire curiosity, foster critical thinking, and impart valuable life skills(Baier et al., 2019). However, an emerging body of research acknowledges the potential for educators to unintentionally become sources of trauma, negatively impacting students' psychological well-being and academic performance (Ünlü & Avci, 2023).

The notion of trauma within an educational context is multifaceted, encompassing various experiences such as harsh criticism, punitive measures, or the failure to provide a supportive learning environment (Binder, McMahon, & LaBelle, 2009). This paper seeks to explore the blurred boundaries between positive guidance and unintentional trauma, aiming to dissect the factors that contribute to either outcome.

By examining case studies, psychological theories, and educational practices, this research endeavors to shed light on the intricacies of the teacher-student relationship. Additionally, it seeks to identify effective pedagogical strategies that promote positive mentorship while

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minimizing the risk of unintentional trauma. Through a comprehensive analysis of literature, qualitative studies, and statistical data, we aim to contribute to the ongoing discourse surrounding the responsibilities and ethical considerations associated with the teaching profession.

In essence, "From Lessons to Lifelong Effects: Teachers as Positive Guides or Traumatizing Figures" endeavors to unravel the complexities inherent in the teacher-student dynamic, offering insights that can inform educational practices and policy-making to cultivate positive and empowering learning environments.

In conclusion, teachers have the power to shape the lives of their students in profound ways, with effects that can last a lifetime. Positive teacher-student relationships can inspire growth, resilience, and academic success, while negative interactions can cause lasting harm and hinder development. By fostering supportive environments, cultivating positive relationships, and prioritizing teacher education and well-being, we can ensure that teachers serve as positive guides rather than traumatizing figures in the lives of their students.

Literature Review:

Teachers play a crucial role in shaping the lives of their students not only academically but also emotionally and psychologically. Their influence extends beyond the classroom, impacting students' perceptions of themselves and the world around them. They can serve as positive guides, nurturing intellectual growth, fostering self-esteem, and inspiring lifelong learning. However, there is also the potential for teachers to become traumatizing figures, exerting negative impacts that persist long after students leave the classroom.

Numerous studies highlight the positive effects of supportive and caring teachers on student development. For example, research by (Białek et al., 2024) demonstrates that teacher-student relationships characterized by warmth, trust, and communication contribute to academic achievement and socio-emotional well-being. These relationships create a sense of belonging and trust, fostering a conducive learning environment where students feel safe to explore and express themselves (Budd et al., 2020). Similarly, (Zhou et al., 2019) found that supportive teacher-student relationships contribute to students' academic success, emotional well-being, and overall development. Moreover, teachers who demonstrate empathy and encouragement help students build resilience, enhancing their ability to cope with challenges both inside and outside the classroom (Heaviside et al., 2021)

Furthermore, researches emphasizes the role of teachers as mentors and role models. Positive teacher-student interactions can inspire students to set ambitious goals, develop a growth mindset, and strive for excellence. Effective teaching practices, such as personalized feedback and scaffolding, empower students to reach their full potential (Sönmez & Hocaoğlu, 2023). Consequently, students who experience supportive relationships with teachers are more likely to exhibit higher levels of self-esteem, motivation, and engagement in learning (Al-Darmaki et al., 2022)

However, not all teacher-student interactions result in positive outcomes. Studies have shed light on the detrimental effects of negative teacher behaviors on students' well-being and academic performance. For example, research by (Luthar & Mendes, 2020) suggests that harsh disciplinary practices, such as public shaming and punitive measures, can lead to feelings of shame, anxiety, and low self-worth among students. Similarly, teachers who exhibit biases or favoritism may inadvertently reinforce stereotypes and exacerbate feelings of exclusion among marginalized students(Förster et al., 2022). Research by (Abdel Razek Barakat et al., 2020; Morales-Monsalve et al., 2023)indicates that negative interactions with teachers, such as criticism, neglect, or hostility, can lead to feelings of alienation, low self-esteem, and even psychological distress among students.

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Studies have highlighted the prevalence of teacher bullying and harassment in educational settings. Verbal abuse, intimidation, and bullying tactics not only undermine students' confidence but also erode trust in authority figures. These negative experiences can have long-lasting psychological consequences, contributing to issues such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Ehring et al., 2011)In extreme cases, traumatic interactions with teachers may deter students from pursuing education altogether, perpetuating a cycle of disengagement and academic underachievement.

Several factors influence the nature of teacher-student interactions and their long-term effects. One significant factor is teachers' own experiences and beliefs about education. Research by (Anttila et al., 2018) suggests that teachers who have undergone trauma themselves may be more prone to exhibiting negative behaviors in the classroom. Additionally, systemic factors such as high teacher turnover rates, inadequate training, and lack of support can contribute to the prevalence of harmful teacher-student dynamics.

Furthermore, the cultural and socioeconomic context in which teaching occurs plays a crucial role in shaping teacher-student relationships. Students from marginalized backgrounds are more vulnerable to experiencing negative interactions with teachers due to systemic inequalities and implicit biases (Alim et al., 2008). Therefore, interventions aimed at promoting positive teacher-student relationships must address broader societal issues such as equity, diversity, and inclusion(Rubie-Davies et al., 2014).

Teachers wield significant influence in shaping the lives of their students, with the potential to be either positive guides or traumatizing figures. While positive teacher-student relationships can foster academic success and emotional well-being, negative interactions can have detrimental effects on students' self-esteem and mental health. It is essential for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to recognize the importance of promoting supportive and inclusive learning environments where all students feel valued and respected. By prioritizing strategies that enhance positive teacher-student interactions and address systemic barriers, we can ensure that teachers serve as positive guides rather than traumatizing figures in students' lives.

Methodology

This article is based on Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977), Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969) and Trauma-Informed Educational Theory. According to the Social Learning Theory, children learn behaviors, attitudes, and emotional reactions from role models. The power of teachers' words, attitudes and behaviors makes them influential figures that impact students' academic motivation, self-confidence and inter-personal skills. Positive interactions with teachers promote resilience, empathy and a love of learning; negative interactions can normalize fear, aggression or withdrawal.

As attachment figures, teachers are also explained by Attachment Theory. Individuals who learn in an environment that offers emotional security, acceptance and encouragement will become confident and psychologically healthy. On the other hand, ongoing criticism, humiliation or neglect can take a toll on the emotional security of children, which can impact academic performance and social relationships.

The concept of "educational trauma" is derived from trauma-informed educational thinking, which contends that adverse classroom events can result in educational trauma. Emotional abuse, public humiliation, or inappropriate or excessive punishment can have long-term psychological effects such as anxiety, low self-esteem, school refusal, and loss of trust in adults. All of these theories have been used to understand how the teacher can affect student's academic outcomes and emotional and social growth over time.

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Discussion

Teachers are in a unique position in children's life because they influence children at the most crucial period of their cognitive, emotional and social development. Establishing foundations early is the responsibility of parents, while teachers help shape children's experiences, sense of self, and attitudes towards learning. Teaching is therefore not just about the content of the academics; it's about building confidence, motivation, empathy, and resilience.

A range of positive teacher-student relationships has been consistently linked to enhanced academic performance, emotional health, and social competence. Parents, teachers who are encouraging, recognizing students' strengths, offering constructive feedback, making classrooms inclusive, can promote confidence and intrinsic motivation of learners. Teachers are important in many successful people's lives because they believed in them at times when they needed it and shaped how they chose to go about their careers and their lives.

Teachers can, however, have a negative impact. Often, harsh criticism, favoritism, humiliation and ridicule, discrimination, or excessive punishment can cause emotional scars that last a lifetime. Exposure to repeated negative interactions can lead to a sense of chronic anxiety, fear of failure, lowered self-esteem, and refusal to engage in learning environments. These experiences can continue to impact professional relationships, communication styles, and self-confidence long after they have occurred in adulthood.

One of the reasons that educational trauma is not widely recognised is that the impact is not apparent. Emotional harm can be undetected and have a devastating impact on mental health, unlike physical harm. Repeated verbal aggression or emotional neglect can cause students to develop insecurities and lead them to become perfectionists, avoid people, or become depressed.

In addition, modern classrooms have become much more focused on emotional intelligence, psychological safety, and student-centered learning. These approaches are based on the premise that positive teacher-student relationships are essential to effective education. Empathetic, patient, fair and culturally sensitive teachers foster a psychologically safe environment for students to ask questions, make errors, and think critically.

Professional learning programs should, therefore, be designed to go beyond the scope of subject area and pedagogical skills to cover emotional intelligence, classroom communication, trauma-informed practices, conflict resolution, and mental health awareness. This type of instruction allows teachers to understand how their interactions may impact students in the long-term and how they can use their practices to promote both academic achievement and emotional health.

In the end, teachers can be a source of ongoing psychological suffering or be a lifelong mentor. The difference may be in the day-to-day exchanges that are delivered with respect, encouragement, understanding and fairness.

Implications

Teachers need to understand that daily interactions in the classroom can impact life beyond the classroom. Good teaching should incorporate positive reinforcement, empathy, constructive feedback and respectful communication.

Professional development should consist of training for schools on EI, classroom management, trauma-informed education, and student mental health. It is also important to have processes in place at the school where pupils can report negative experiences happening in class, in a safe space.

The curriculum for teacher education should include psychological and socio-emotional skills as well as pedagogical knowledge for the benefit of policy makers. Apart from

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academic achievement, the quality of education should be assessed using students' emotional status and classroom environment.

Future research should include educational trauma in different cultural contexts, long-term effects of teachers' behaviors on students' psychology, and interventions to enhance positive teacher-student relationships.

Conclusion

Teachers have a profound impact on their students, affecting their identity, emotions, self-confidence, and attitudes to learning and relationships beyond the classroom. Positive teachers make a positive difference by inspiring learners to be curious, resilient and believing in themselves, and thus positively influencing them for a lifetime. However, teachers who humiliate, neglect, discriminate, or use emotional aggression in the classroom can cause educational trauma that can have reverberations well beyond the classroom.

Knowing teachers as teachers and as strong social influences highlights the significance of caring, emotionally supportive, and child-focused teaching methods. Therefore, the emotional environments children are exposed to in schools should be measured as a crucial component of educational success, in addition to their examination outcomes. In doing so, teachers can make sure they are fostering empathy, fairness, and psychological safety—and that their teaching goes beyond the classroom to impact students' lives for years to come.

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