

# The Role Of Teacher-Student Relationships In Promoting Emotional Well-Being In Primary Schools In West Bengal

Ataur Hossain<sup>1</sup>, Md Sajjad Hossain Ansari<sup>2</sup>, Raju Sarkar<sup>3</sup>, Suraj Bhattacharjee<sup>4</sup>  
*Ph.D. Scholar, Department Of Education, Jadavpur University, Kolkata*

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## **Abstract**

*Students' emotional well-being was essential for their overall growth and academic achievement, especially during the critical early years of primary education. This study examined how teacher-student relationships influenced emotional well-being in primary schools in West Bengal. Through a qualitative approach, the research involved semi-structured interviews with 20 primary school teachers and focus group discussions with students from varied socio-economic backgrounds in both urban and rural areas. A thematic analysis of the findings revealed that empathetic and supportive interactions between teachers and students played a crucial role in creating a positive and nurturing learning atmosphere. Teachers who displayed warmth, patience, and a deep understanding of their students' emotional needs were better at promoting resilience, alleviating anxiety, and boosting students' self-esteem. However, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, limited time, and insufficient training in emotional intelligence for teachers were identified as obstacles to building strong teacher-student connections. The study recommended integrating emotional well-being training into teacher education programs and implementing policies that supported smaller class sizes and a more inclusive curriculum. Overall, the research emphasized the importance of teacher-student relationships in fostering children's emotional health and advocated for a comprehensive approach to primary education in West Bengal.*

**Keywords:** *Emotional well-being, Academic success, Primary education, Teacher-student relationships, Socio-economic diversity, Empathy, Emotional intelligence, Holistic education.*

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## **I. Introduction**

The emotional well-being of students is crucial for their development, as it affects their social interactions, academic performance, and overall happiness. It encompasses the ability to manage emotions, build positive relationships, and cope with stress in a healthy way. Since teachers play a key role in children's lives, they have a unique opportunity to impact the emotional health of their students. This research aims to examine how teacher-student relationships contribute to students' emotional well-being in primary schools. By using qualitative methods such as interviews, classroom observations, and focus groups, the study seeks to capture the real-life experiences of both teachers and students. In West Bengal, known for its rich cultural and educational legacy, examining these relationships becomes especially important due to the varied socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the students. Emotional well-being is deeply connected to learning, influencing children's cognitive growth, social skills, and ability to handle challenges. Teachers, as central figures in students' daily lives, have a unique opportunity to create meaningful emotional experiences, nurture resilience, and establish a positive learning atmosphere. When marked by trust, empathy, and clear communication, teacher-student relationships not only improve emotional health but also enhance academic performance and social behavior. However, despite the acknowledged importance of these relationships, there is limited understanding of how they promote emotional well-being within West Bengal's distinct socio-cultural context. Primary schools in the state mirror broader societal dynamics, with economic inequalities, cultural diversity, and educational challenges shaping interactions between teachers and students. Additionally, the demands of rigid curricula and limited resources often hinder teachers from going beyond academic responsibilities. This qualitative research focuses on examining how teacher-student relationships influence emotional well-being among primary school students in West Bengal. By conducting interviews, observing classrooms, and holding focus group discussions with teachers, students, and parents, the study aims to uncover the real-life experiences and perspectives that define these connections. Using a qualitative approach allows for a deeper understanding of the complexities and context that numbers alone cannot capture. Teachers can serve as mentors, role models, and sources of emotional support, and the way they build relationships with students—through offering encouragement, creating safe spaces for expression, and establishing trust—can significantly shape students' emotional development. Moreover,

understanding how teachers promote emotional well-being can help create strategies for supporting students who may face emotional challenges. Positive teacher-student relationships are not only beneficial for emotional well-being but also help foster an environment where students can thrive academically, as emotionally supported children tend to be more engaged in learning and have a positive attitude toward school. The nature of teacher-student relationships is shaped by various factors, including communication styles, teacher empathy, classroom atmosphere, and cultural sensitivity. Positive teacher-student relationships play a crucial role in supporting students' emotional well-being, laying the groundwork for both academic achievement and personal development. When these relationships are built on trust, care, and empathy, they foster a safe, supportive environment where students feel valued, understood, and secure (Hamre & Pianta, 2001). Studies have shown that strong teacher-student relationships can help alleviate emotional challenges, reduce behavioral issues, and boost self-esteem, leading to better results in both academic and social areas (Wentzel, 2003). Additionally, teachers play a key role in modeling emotional expression and regulation, which is vital for shaping students' emotional well-being. Teachers who show empathy, patience, and responsiveness to students' needs help create an environment where emotional expression is welcomed and valued. These behaviors not only support emotional development but also assist in the socialization process, teaching students how to manage their emotions and interact with peers in a positive way (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). Teachers who show empathy and understanding are more likely to create an environment where students feel valued and heard, which in turn encourages emotional expression and supports emotional health. This research also investigates teaching strategies that support students' emotional needs. Teachers who are attentive to students' emotional cues, provide constructive feedback, and create opportunities for social connection contribute to a secure emotional environment, helping students better manage their feelings, cope with stress, and build resilience. Additionally, the study considers the challenges teachers face in fostering positive relationships that support emotional well-being, such as large class sizes, a lack of training in emotional intelligence, and external factors like students' home environments. Identifying these challenges will help inform recommendations for strengthening teacher-student relationships and improving emotional support in the classroom. Emotional well-being is not only an individual concern but also a collective one, and the classroom is a microcosm of the larger school community. Teachers who prioritize emotional well-being can influence the overall school culture, encouraging inclusivity, respect, and emotional health, which in turn can positively affect students' attitudes and behavior. This study also highlights the importance of cultural and contextual factors that shape teacher-student relationships. A teacher who recognizes and addresses these emotional needs can greatly lessen feelings of isolation or academic stress, ultimately fostering improved mental health and emotional strength (Eisenberg & Hofer, 2007). Teachers in different regions and cultural contexts may approach emotional well-being in diverse ways, influenced by local norms, values, and available resources. Furthermore, the research explores how education systems can support teachers in promoting emotional well-being, such as through professional development, mental health awareness programs, and integrating social-emotional learning into curricula. Finally, the long-term impact of teacher-student relationships on emotional well-being is a key consideration. Positive relationships in early school years can lay the foundation for emotional resilience and mental health in the future. Students who experience emotional support from their teachers are more likely to develop strong coping skills, a positive self-image, and solid social skills that help them throughout their lives. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge about the importance of social-emotional learning in schools, offering insights to guide teachers, school administrators, and policymakers in promoting emotional well-being. By focusing on teacher-student relationships, this study emphasizes how educators can significantly influence students' emotional development, helping create an environment where children's emotional and academic potential can flourish.

### **Significance of the Study**

The connection between teachers and students plays a crucial role in fostering emotional well-being in primary schools. When teachers establish positive and caring relationships with students, they create an atmosphere where children feel safe, respected, and valued. This type of environment allows students to open up about their emotions, concerns, and challenges, building trust with their teachers. Teachers who show understanding and compassion help boost students' self-esteem and resilience, making it easier for them to cope with difficulties. Emotional support from teachers often leads to better academic outcomes, as students are more motivated and engaged in their learning. Teachers also act as role models, teaching valuable emotional skills like empathy, self-control, and problem-solving. A strong teacher-student bond provides a sense of belonging, reducing loneliness and anxiety among students. In such classrooms, children are more likely to develop healthy emotional coping strategies and a positive view of themselves, which is essential for their overall emotional and social growth. The way teachers interact with students and the relationships they build with them are vital in promoting students' well-being, as they offer emotional support and address their social and emotional needs by Zheng, F. (2022). A strong teacher-student relationship is essential for fostering a positive learning environment that supports Chinese students' psychological well-being, ultimately enhancing their academic achievements

(Cao, 2024). Teaching satisfaction and resilience act as bridges between self-efficacy and the well-being of middle school English teachers, boosting their job commitment, lowering stress levels, and strengthening their connections with students (Wang, X., Gao, Y. 2024). Teacher self-efficacy, perceived school climate, and psychological well-being directly contribute to teaching enjoyment among EFL teachers. Additionally, school climate indirectly impacts teaching enjoyment by influencing teacher self-efficacy and psychological well-being (Zhang, L., Fathi, J. 2023). Enjoyment is the most powerful and lasting predictor of L2 achievement among rural Chinese junior secondary students, whereas anxiety has a long-term negative effect on their performance (Li et al 2022). The experience of boredom in language classrooms differs from student to student, shaped by both personal and contextual factors, emphasizing the importance of effective strategies for second language acquisition (Pawlak et al 2020). Job satisfaction, especially in the area of communication, has a positive influence on the well-being of secondary school teachers in Gilgit, Pakistan (Hussain, S. 2020). Factors such as self-efficacy, opportunities for promotion, positive student behavior, and favorable working conditions greatly influence teacher job satisfaction and well-being, fostering increased engagement from teachers, students, and parents (Ortan et al 2021). The AWaRE model explains how teacher well-being and resilience are connected, emphasizing the role of appraisals and emotions to help educators gain a deeper understanding of the resilience process (Hascher et al 2021). There are moderate to strong correlations between teaching efficacy and school connectedness as measured by single-item scales and longer rating scales of teacher well-being. Additionally, teacher stress rose by almost 20% from October to June, while school connectedness and teaching efficacy both declined by a similar percentage. The findings highlight the need for assessment and intervention strategies to support teacher wellness (Von Der Embse et al 2021). Subjective well-being is shaped by factors such as demographics, health, social interactions, activity levels, and personality, with different theoretical perspectives offering insights into what contributes to happiness (Diener, E. 1984). A positive internal team environment, along with support from the institution and family, contributes to the psychological well-being of management students, with academic engagement serving as a crucial factor in this connection (Chaudhry et al 2024). Personal resilience and the quality of teacher-student relationships help protect students from mental health challenges during COVID-19, with varying effects based on age groups (elementary vs. secondary) and gender (Zhu et al 2021). The experience of flow has a positive effect on the subjective well-being of Chinese university students, with academic self-efficacy and self-esteem serving as key mediating factors (Wu et al 2021). Strong student-teacher relationships are linked to fewer internal and external behavioral issues, with children's sense of hope acting as a key factor in this connection (Lin et al 2021). On the other hand, Teacher support enhances the mental well-being of Chinese adolescents by reducing negative emotions and boosting resilience, with resilience having a more significant impact as a mediator than negative emotions (Guo et al 2020). Moreover, Enhancing the school climate can boost students' involvement in school activities, but this happens only when it influences their well-being, rather than through direct or indirect means (Lombardi et al 2019). Being able to voice opinions and receiving positive recognition enhances student well-being in various ways, including having a say, being heard, enjoying rights, and feeling respected (Anderson et al 2016). The strong bonds teachers form with their students, along with positive attachment experiences, can help decrease teacher burnout and improve their sense of personal achievement (Milatz et al 2015).

### **Theories incorporating Emotional Well-Being**

**Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:** Maslow's theory proposes that emotional well-being depends on fulfilling basic human needs, starting with physiological needs and progressing through safety, love, esteem, and eventually self-actualization. Emotional health improves as individuals satisfy higher-level needs, particularly love, belonging, and self-esteem.

**Positive Psychology (Seligman):** Martin Seligman, a leading figure in positive psychology, identifies five key elements of emotional well-being: Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment, often referred to as PERMA. These factors are essential to happiness and life satisfaction.

**The Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson):** Barbara Fredrickson's theory suggests that positive emotions, like joy and gratitude, expand our thinking and actions, fostering personal development and building resources such as social connections and resilience, which enhance overall well-being.

**Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan):** This theory highlights the importance of intrinsic motivation and three basic psychological needs—autonomy, competence, and relatedness—in boosting emotional well-being. When these needs are satisfied, people experience higher mental health and well-being.

**Attachment Theory (Bowlby):** John Bowlby's attachment theory stresses that secure, loving relationships in early life play a key role in emotional regulation and well-being in adulthood. Healthy attachments help people develop resilience and cope with stress more effectively.

**Emotion Regulation Theory:** This theory examines how people manage their emotions, especially during challenging times. Effective emotional regulation can improve emotional well-being by helping individuals deal with stress, anxiety, and negative emotions in a healthier way.

Cognitive Behavioral Theory (CBT): CBT emphasizes the impact of our thoughts on our emotional well-being. Negative thought patterns can harm emotional health, but by identifying and challenging these thoughts, individuals can enhance their emotional state.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's Flow Theory proposes that people experience greater emotional well-being when they participate in activities that help them achieve "flow." Flow is a state where individuals are fully immersed and focused on what they are doing, leading to high levels of satisfaction and happiness.

Social support theory suggests that emotional well-being is significantly impacted by the quality of our relationships with others. Having strong social networks offers emotional support, helps lower stress, and boosts overall happiness.

Covington's Self-Worth Theory highlights the significance of preserving self-esteem for emotional well-being. People are driven to maintain a positive sense of self-worth, and any threats to it can lead to emotional distress.

Silvan Tomkins' Affect Theory suggests that emotions are the main drivers of human behavior. According to this theory, emotional experiences play a key role in personal growth and overall emotional well-being.

Hobfoll's Conservation of Resources Theory proposes that emotional well-being depends on a person's ability to protect and preserve their resources, such as social support, time, and energy. When these resources are threatened or run low, stress and emotional distress tend to rise.

Attachment-Based Emotional Regulation: This theory emphasizes the importance of early attachment bonds in shaping how we manage emotions as we grow older. Strong, secure attachments to caregivers help individuals develop healthier emotional regulation abilities and contribute to better emotional well-being in adulthood.

Resilience Theory: Resilience theory examines how individuals can positively adapt to challenges and stress, a key factor in emotional well-being. Resilient individuals are able to stay optimistic and find purpose, even in tough situations.

### **Emotional Well-Being in Educational Practices: Worldwide Perspective**

Emotional well-being plays a crucial role in student development, influencing learning achievements, social relationships, and mental health. Around the world, educational systems are becoming more aware of how emotions affect academic performance and the development of life skills. This highlights the growing recognition of the importance of emotional well-being in education worldwide. Emotional well-being is the capacity to handle emotions, build healthy relationships, and deal with stress. In the context of education, it involves students' sense of happiness, confidence, and their ability to tackle both social and academic difficulties. Emotional well-being is crucial for academic success, resilience, and promoting positive behaviors. In the United States and Canada, there is an increasing awareness of the value of social-emotional learning (SEL). SEL programs are widely included in school curricula to develop skills like self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and responsible decision-making. In the U.S., initiatives such as CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning) emphasize these skills across all grade levels. Schools also encourage emotional support systems, with mental health professionals offering counseling and interventions. Several European nations have incorporated emotional well-being into their educational policies. For instance, Finland, famous for its innovative education system, prioritizes holistic learning that includes emotional well-being. Finnish schools provide a nurturing environment, focusing on equal opportunities, student welfare, and emotional coping strategies. In the UK, mental health programs like "Mental Health First Aid" training and school-based counseling services are in place to support students emotionally. In countries such as Japan and South Korea, where academic demands are high, there is a growing focus on emotional well-being. Japan has introduced initiatives to raise mental health awareness in schools, emphasizing the need for a balance between academics and emotional health. South Korea has made progress in supporting students' mental well-being by offering counseling services and after-school programs designed to reduce stress. In Africa, emotional well-being in education is becoming increasingly important, though the availability of resources and the extent of implementation vary. Countries like South Africa have incorporated emotional learning into schools, but many others are still developing their approaches. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based programs often complement government efforts to promote emotional well-being in schools, focusing on stress reduction and resilience-building. On the other hand, In both Australia and New Zealand, mental health and emotional well-being are central to their educational systems. Programs like "Mind Matters" in Australia and "Kiwi Can" in New Zealand help students develop emotional regulation, resilience, and effective coping strategies. These initiatives aim to enhance both students' mental health and their academic performance.

### **Emotional Well-Being in Educational Practices: West Bengal Perspective**

In West Bengal, a region renowned for its deep cultural and educational history, focusing on emotional well-being within schools can enhance both learning results and the relationship between teachers and students. Students' emotional well-being is strongly linked to their academic success. Positive emotions like happiness, confidence, and a feeling of belonging create a supportive learning atmosphere. Conversely, negative emotions like stress, anxiety, and depression can hinder focus and lead to poor academic results. In rural areas of West Bengal, many students struggle with issues like poverty, family pressure, and social stigma, which impact their emotional health and, consequently, their academic performance. In West Bengal, teachers frequently face high-stress levels due to factors like large class sizes, heavy administrative tasks, and the challenge of managing diverse student groups. A teacher's emotional well-being is also shaped by their interactions with students, access to professional development, and available resources. When teachers are emotionally healthy, they are more capable of creating supportive learning environments for their students. Cultural and social factors have a major impact on emotional well-being in West Bengal. The state is home to a variety of ethnic and socio-economic groups, and students from disadvantaged backgrounds often struggle with emotional challenges caused by discrimination, limited resources, and family issues. Improving emotional well-being in the education system requires offering support through counseling, peer support networks, and teacher training. In response to the emotional difficulties students face, several schools in West Bengal have begun integrating mindfulness practices, emotional learning programs, and counseling services. Some government and non-government initiatives are also focusing on raising mental health awareness and offering counseling support to both students and teachers. The West Bengal government has introduced programs like the "Mental Health and Well-being Initiative" to improve emotional well-being in schools. This initiative focuses on offering counseling, mental health education, and teacher training in emotional intelligence. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play an important role by running programs that help build resilience in both students and teachers.

### **Implications for Educational Policy and Practice**

Authorities should require training programs that emphasize emotional intelligence, empathy, and communication skills for teachers. Such initiatives will strengthen teachers' capacity to foster positive and supportive relationships with students, promoting their emotional well-being. Integrating Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) programs into the primary school curriculum can enhance teacher-student relationships and support students in managing their emotions. These programs should focus on nurturing empathy, teaching conflict resolution, and building teamwork skills. Policies should encourage the creation of school counseling programs to meet students' emotional and mental health needs. Counselors can collaborate with teachers to create strategies that foster emotionally safe and supportive classroom environments. Policies should encourage a culture of respect and inclusivity in schools. Teachers can be encouraged to adopt participatory teaching techniques that build trust between students and teachers, fostering emotionally supportive learning environments. A teacher's emotional well-being plays a crucial role in their ability to build positive relationships with students. Policymakers should put support systems in place, such as mental health resources and peer support groups, to ensure teachers are emotionally prepared to connect with students in a meaningful way. Policies should promote the involvement of parents in their children's emotional and educational growth. Workshops or community programs can help parents understand the value of teacher-student relationships and their role in supporting their child's emotional well-being. Moreover, Policies should account for the unique cultural and socio-economic contexts of West Bengal. Local traditions, values, and challenges should be considered when designing interventions to strengthen teacher-student relationships. Smaller class sizes enable teachers to spend more time with each student, helping to build stronger relationships. They also create a better environment for providing both emotional and academic support.

## **II. Conclusion**

This qualitative study examined the importance of teacher-student relationships in promoting emotional well-being among primary school children in West Bengal. Through detailed interviews and observations, it was found that the emotional health of students is closely linked to the quality of their interactions with teachers. Key themes emerged, including the critical role of teacher empathy, emotional support, and effective communication in fostering a supportive school environment. Teachers who demonstrated emotional intelligence, actively listened, and genuinely cared for their students' well-being were able to create a trusting and safe atmosphere. This sense of trust allowed students to feel comfortable expressing their emotions and participating more actively in learning. On the other hand, negative or disengaged interactions between teachers and students contributed to feelings of isolation, stress, and a lack of engagement. The study also highlighted the significance of teachers understanding their students' socio-cultural backgrounds. Teachers who acknowledged the emotional and cultural needs of their students were better equipped to offer personalized support, which enhanced students' emotional resilience. This finding stresses the value of culturally responsive teaching practices in fostering emotional well-

being. Additionally, the research pointed to the need for teacher training programs that focus on social-emotional learning (SEL), conflict resolution, and emotional intelligence. Teachers expressed a strong interest in professional development that would provide them with the necessary tools to address students' emotional needs effectively. In conclusion, this study reinforces the idea that teacher-student relationships are essential for promoting emotional well-being in primary schools in West Bengal. The quality of these relationships not only impacts students' emotional health but also influences their academic success. To be effective, educational policies must focus on creating supportive and empathetic school environments where teachers are trained and encouraged to build strong, positive relationships with their students. The findings advocate for an integrated approach that addresses both the emotional and academic aspects of education, ensuring that students receive the support needed for their overall development.

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