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**AN APPLICATION OF STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP SCALE  
(STRS) AT HIGHER SECONDARY LEVEL IN MIRPUR AZAD JAMMU  
AND KASHMIR**

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**ABSTRACT**

Student-teacher Relationship is closely related to student's learning. Student-teacher relationship not only effect student's academic learning but also social and emotional success. Students who have close relationships with their teachers are more capable of school achievements than the students who don't have any close relationship with their teachers. This proposed study examined the key elements and factors of student-teacher relationship that affect student's learning using the STRS. The student-teacher relationship scale (STRS) is a scale designed by Piñata (1991). The scale is widely used to see the perceptions of teachers regarding their relationship with their students. The main aim of the study was to help and guide the pre-service and in-service teachers about the importance of student-teacher relationship. So, the Quantitative Research Design was used to study said phenomena. In quantitative research design data was

collected through survey design. The data was collected from the 85 teachers of public and private colleges to see their perceptions of student-teacher relationship

## INTRODUCTION

For Numerous theorists, learning and social relations are so interweaved that one cannot occur without the other. According to Marzano (2003) Positive student-teacher relationship is the foundation and basic element which positively affect all other aspects related to student-teacher inside the school. (p.91). Relationship that a teacher evolves with his students plays a significant role in student's academic growth and learning. As Hallinan (2008) writes "Learning is a process that involves cognitive, social and psychological dimensions, and both processes should be considered if academic achievement is to be maximized" (p.271).

It is believed that student-teacher relationship is one of the most significant aspect which effect student's educational path positively (Baker, 2006).

The relationship between teacher and student is not one that is lately being analyzed. It is one of the relationships that is most studied, particularly in the discipline of Education. The educational discipline has a significant effect on the relationship between students and teachers. The teacher student relationship is the most condemnatory aspect in establishing a learning atmosphere. Some students may not reach their full potential academically, socially or developmentally if they are disentangled at school and unable to communicate to the adults in the learning environment. According to the American Academy of child and Adolescent Psychiatry (2004) stated that students can become truant, isolated or act out in efforts to display desperate behavior for seeking help from an adult. Poor academic performance, deficit interest in school activities or the use of the drugs are often sign a student is struggling and in need. When teachers know their students well enough they can identify these problems easily.

The relationship in which students engages with the teachers play a significant role in their psychological development. Piñata's teacher-student Relationship Scale is commonly used to assess the quality of teacher-student relationship. The nature of student-teacher relationship determines their academic success (Piñata, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995).

. "A major factor affecting student's development, school engagement and academic motivation, teacher-student relationships form the basis of the social context in which learning takes place" (Hughes & Chen, 2011; Roorda et al., 2011; Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011).

"Positive teacher-student relationships are characterized by a high degree of warmth, open communication, and support from teachers" (Drugli, 2013).

Negative teacher-student relationships result in conflicts. "Negative teacher-student relationships are characterized by high level conflict and negative emotions, with discord in interactions between teachers and students" (Drugli,2013).

Doumen et al. (2012) suggest that "these three relationship dimensions have been established in numerous research studies with various sample characteristics" (Pianta, 2001) "and in variety of countries" (Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005; Gregoriadis & Tsigilis, 2008; Koomen, Verschueren, & Piñata, 2007). "Closeness, conflict and dependency in the student-teacher relationship have primarily been measured with the student-teacher relationship scale" (STRS; Piñata, 1996, 2001).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Social-emotional development is related to the fact that a child recognizes, organizes, and explains emotions, forms secure relationships with individuals in their environment, and learns the expectations of their social environment and culture”

Gardiner & Kosmitzki (2008) defined “high quality teacher-student interactions as consistent, stable, respectful, and fair interactions that facilitate student’s view of their teachers as a secure base”. “High quality teacher-student interactions can also be typified by rich communication in instructional exchanges between the teacher & student” (Cabell, DeCoster, LoCasale-Crouch, Hamre, & Pianta, 2013). Numerous research studies have shown that caring student-teacher relationship play a significant role in creating healthy classroom (Davis, 2001), “as well as that they encourage student’s connections to school and the production of desired outcomes for students, both socially and academically” (den Brok et al., 2010; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). The positive student-teacher relationship is more helping and effective for those students who have behavioral problem or at risk (Henricsson & Rydell, 2004; Hughes et al., 2001). For instance, many research studies have shown that most of the problems arises in the classroom is due to the negative student-teacher relationship (Martin & Dowson, 2009). Inadequate relationships between teachers and students may lead to disengagement towards school.

“Although the parent-child relationship plays a large role in children’s social-emotional competence in the years prior school” (Ranson & Urichuk, 2008), “after the start of formal schooling, interpersonal relationships in the school setting influence children’s development, particularly in relation to self-concept” (Piñata, Hamre, & Stuhlman, 2003). “Indeed, meta-analysis show that aspects of the student-teacher relationship impact student outcomes, including motivation to learn, behavior and cognitive skills” (Allen, Witt, Wheelless, 2006; Cornelius-White, 2007).

Doumen et al. (2012) suggest that “these three relationship dimensions student-teacher relationships; closeness, conflict and dependency”. have been established in numerous research studies with various sample characteristics. It is examined in the literature that “the most frequently stated indicator of highly effective schools for students is a caring environment exhibiting a homelike atmosphere in which teachers treat all students with respect and care and interact with them in relationships like the extended family” (Tosolt, 2010). Likewise, it has been stressed that” when teachers express care toward students, behave sensitively, communicate respect and interest, and remain warm and engaged, this not only improves individual relationships, student’s sense of school belonging, cooperation among students, and motivates students to learn, as well as prevents and diffuses disturbing behavior, but also affect the broader climate and reduces classroom conflicts” (Giani & O’Guin, 2010; Ma, 2003).

Teacher attitudes are very significant as they affect teacher-student relationship positively or negatively. “Increasing number of studies has indicated that children’s well-being in the school and the emotional quality of teacher-student interactions are fundamental for school adjustment, learning and achievements” (Baker et al., 2003; Catalano et al., 2004; Pekrun, 2005; Sakiz et al., 2012; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). All children will develop attachment relationships with an adult who treat them with care, but the quality will depend on interaction between child and adult. According to attachment theorists, “four attachment types can be identified: secure, insecure/avoidant, insecure/resistant and insecure/disorganized or controlling”

(Main & Cassidy, 1988; Moss & St-Laurent, 2001). Attachment relationship impact school adjustment and learning.

Attachment theory is used to explain the ways in which a child establishes his/her relationships with adults and peers in early stages of his/her life. It has also been one of the determinants of social and behavioral outcomes in early years of schooling, and often, beyond (Babadi, 1990; Cohn, 1990; Davis, 2003; Lynch & Cicchetti, 1997; Pianta, 1994; Pianta et al., 1997). Children, from infancy, have natural “attachment seeking responses” (Bowlby, 2007; p.309).

To feel secured children, seek attention and comfort from adults that must be satisfied. When children are being satisfied at their first two years of life they can form attachments. Children built secure attachments where they feel comfortable in a relationship. Children can have more than one attachment relationship at a time, and it has been determined that when more than two secure attachment relationships are formed, children are typically more resilient (Bowlby, 2007). Conversely, Bowlby explained that infants must have their responses satisfied to “terminate their attachment seeking responses” (p.310).

The review of the literature manifest that various researchers investigated the effect of student-teacher relationship on student learning. In literature review number of evidences have been presented that indicate that developing strong student-teacher relationship can contribute to student learning and success. In reviewing the literature, the researcher come to know that students with STRs characterized by more closeness are more likely to have better academic outcomes while students with STRs characterized by more conflict tend to have poorer academic outcomes (Buyse et al., 2009; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Roorda et al., 2011). Research has shown that relationships characterized by higher level of conflict are associated with higher levels of externalizing and antisocial behavior and lower levels of positive work habits (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2005; Silver et al., 2005).

Finally, research has shown that student-teacher relationship is closely related to academic and behavioral outcomes.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The aim of this study was to explore which aspects contribute in establishing an environment that will lead to positive student- teacher relationship. This study was designed to bring out the voice of teachers and students. It was aimed to see the perceptions of teachers and students about positive student-teacher relationship.

This study could be taken into educational reforms. This study could be utilized by in-service and pre-service training courses for teachers to enhance their knowledge about this sensitive aspect of student’s learning. As positive student-teacher relationship can enhance student’s motivation towards learning and negative relationship between teachers and students can lead to academic, emotional and social damage.

## **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The proposed study aims to explore the distinct classroom environment to gain knowledge about necessary elements for creating caring, trusting, and positive relationship among teachers and students by using STRS (Piñata, 2001). This study also, designed to bring

out voices of teachers and their perceptions about teacher-student relationship and its impact on student's academic performance and motivation that will lead to learning. Teachers must develop a positive relationship with the students to enhance their motivation level for their learning. According to Downey (2008) writes that "teachers need to know how their daily work in classrooms can be infused with interactions and instructional strategies that research has shown can make a positive difference in the lives of students who are at risk of academic failure" (p.56).

## **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

This study has following objectives:

1. To identify the nature of student-teacher relationship at higher secondary level in Mirpur AJ&K
2. To explore the perceptions of teachers about the teacher-student relationship
3. To suggest strategies and recommendations to improve student-teacher relationship

This study is practical in nature that will help teachers to make a stronger bond with their students for student's academic achievement and learning.

## **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This study will serve to compare the perceptions of teachers and students about their relationship and effect of that relationship on student's learning. Literature provides evidence that "strong relationships between students and their teachers are essential to the development of all students in school" (Hamre & Piñata, 2006; Birch & Ladd, 1998). According to Hamre and Piñata positive teacher-student relationships are very important resource for students. When teachers have strong relationship with their students then, students work confidently in the classroom as they know their teachers will be there for their assistance and help. "Although research is growing in this area, more empirical evidence is needed on aspects of teacher-student relationship to better effectively integrate this skill into existing teacher programs" (Hamre & Piñata, 2006; Sarason, 1999; Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder (2004)). The significance of student-teacher relationship cannot be overlooked according to Downey (2008). This current study focuses on teacher-student relationship. This study will contribute in the field of education so that teachers will come to know which strategies they should use to enhance student's learning.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **DESIGN OF THE STUDY**

The present research "An Application of student-teacher relationship scale (STRS) at Higher Secondary Level in Mirpur Azad Jammu and Kashmir" was a survey research design. "Survey research design are procedures in which investigator administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of the population" (John Creswell).

### **POPULATION**

All public and private college teachers were selected as a participant of the study. Both male and female teachers had taken part in the study. Participants were selected from district

Mirpur Azad Jammu and Kashmir because that was convenient for the researcher. The researcher had taken permission before conducting the process of data collection.

## **SAMPLING**

Simple random sampling technique was used for the study. By using simple random technique data was collected through various inter and degree colleges of Mirpur Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Every teacher was taken as sample in the population of Mirpur Azad Jammu and Kashmir to represent his opinions and views about the purposed study.

## **VALIDITY and RELIABILITY**

The reliability of this scale was measured by Hulya Gulay Ogelman in 2014 and the value of Cronbach alpha were conflict (.86), Closeness (.80), Dependency (.65). Similarly the values for the scale measured by Koomen et al., (2012) were conflict (.88), closeness (.90), dependency (.78). When the value of Cronbach alpha is .7 or higher it is acceptable. Hence, STRS was highly reliable to use for this study.

## **DATA COLLECTION TOOLS**

Survey questionnaire was used for collection of data. The researcher had used student-teacher relationship scale which was developed by Pianta (1991). "The (STRS) is a 28-item self-report instrument used to assess teacher's perceptions of his/her relationship with a student". "Specifically, STRS measures student-teacher relationship patterns in terms of conflict, closeness and dependency as well as the quality of the overall relationship between student and teacher" (Pianta). Both male and female teacher have given their opinion.

## **PROCEDURE FOR DATA COLLECTION**

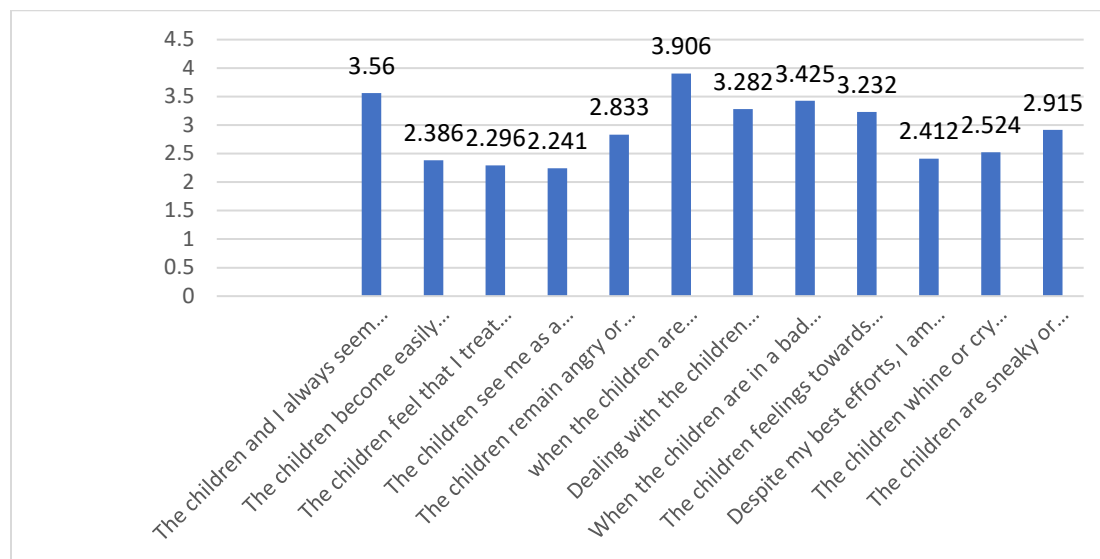
The teachers were given questionnaire by the researcher personally. Survey questionnaires for teachers had taken 10-15 minutes in completion. Before giving the questionnaire, researcher had given complete instructions for filling the survey form.

## **Data Analysis**

"The STRS is a 28-item self-report instrument that uses a five-point Likert-type rating scale to assess a teacher's perception of his or her relationship with a student, a student's interactive behavior with the teacher, and a teacher's beliefs about the student's feelings towards the teachers" (Pianta, 2001). The STRS consists of 28 items which are divided into three components: Conflict, Closeness and dependency. 12 items for conflict (2, 11, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26), 11 items for closeness (1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 21, 27, 28), and 5 items for dependency (6, 8, 10, 14, 16). These components are separately examined by Higher secondary level teachers in Mirpur AJ&K.

## **CONFLICT**

"Measures the degree to which a teacher perceives his or her relationship with the student" (Pianta). The higher level of conflict shows that teacher struggle with the student (Pianta, 1991).

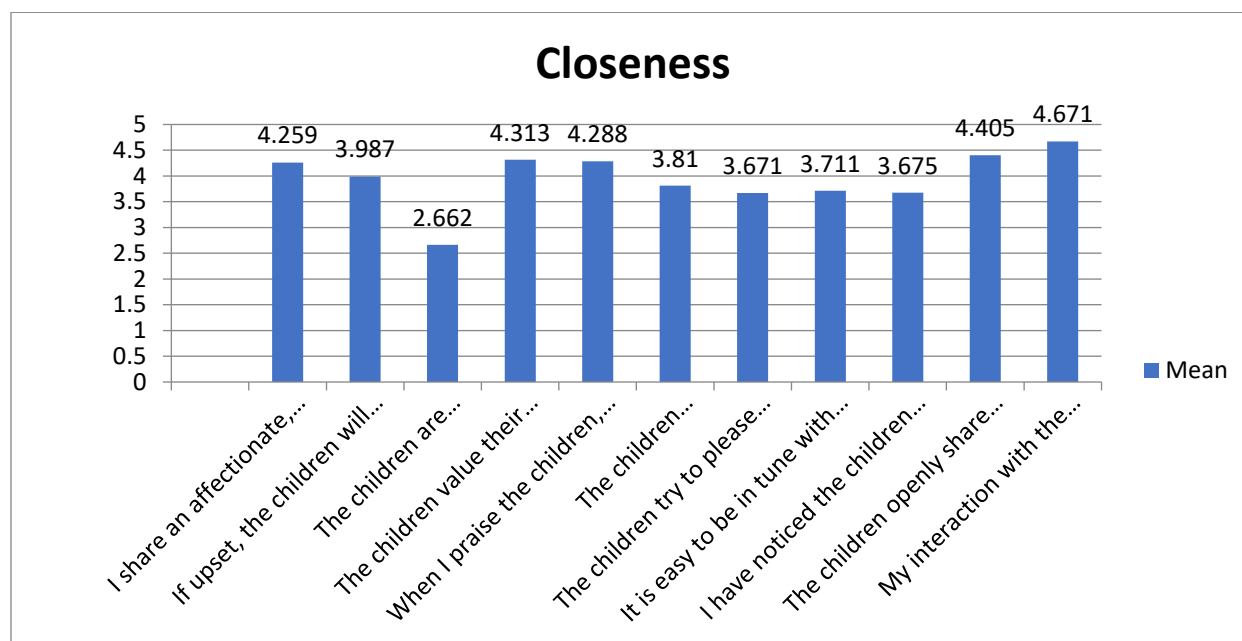


**FIGURE-1: CONFLICT**

The results in the figure shows that mostly teachers believe conflict among student and teachers can ruin their whole day. When conflict ratio is higher among student-teacher relationship than it will affect not only the children but the teachers as well. The highest mean in the table is 3.906 which shows that teachers are inclined towards the statement that when student misbehave they response well to the teacher's look or tone of voice. It means teachers are agreeing with the statement that they and children have an understanding among them. The high value of mean in the conflict factor shows that teachers are struggling hard in developing the student-teacher relationship. But they are unable to do so due to lack of understanding and cooperation between them.

## CLOSENESS

“Measures the degree to which a teacher experiences affection, warmth and open communication with the children” (Pianta, 1991). “High closeness scores indicate that the relationship is characterized by warmth, and the teacher believes he or she is effective because the student uses the teacher as a source of support” (Pianta, 1991)



**FIGURE-2: CLOSENESS**

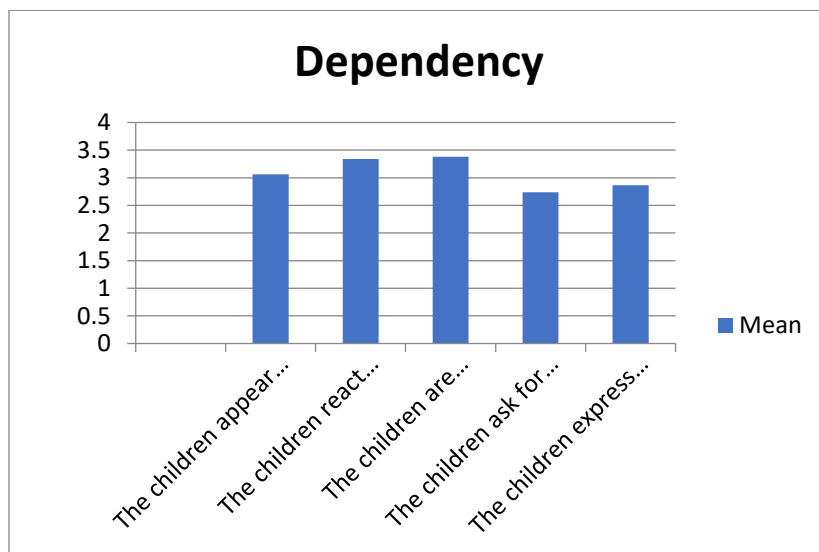
All the statements and respective mean results can be seen in the bar chart. All the statements have the high mean value except one statement which has the mean value of 2.662 which shows that teachers might understand the statement, or they don't want to respond openly.

In this chart, we can see that all statements are inclined towards the fact that teachers have a caring and close relationship with their students which yields many positive results. In close student-teacher relationship students are more confident and good in communication to share every problem with their teachers.

#### 4.5 DEPENDENCY

“Measures the degree to which a teacher perceives students overly dependent on him/her” (Pianta, 1991). “High dependency scores suggest that the student reacts strongly to separation from teacher, requests help when not needed, and consequently the teacher is concentrated about the student's overreliance” (Pianta, 1991).



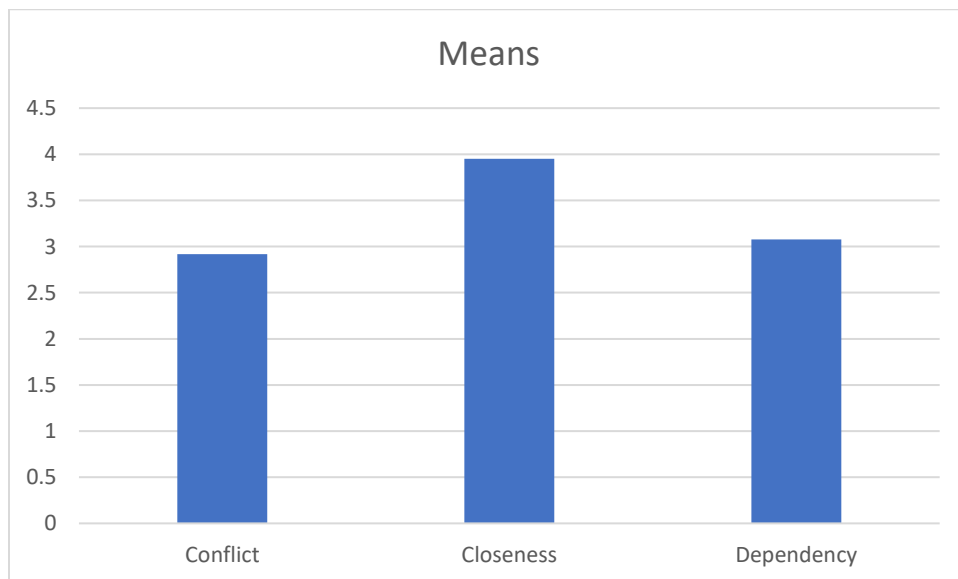


**FIGURE-4.3: DEPENDENCY**

The results in graph shows that teachers somehow believe that student's dependency on teachers affect the relationship among them. Closeness and dependency have a minor difference. Closeness can create positive student-teacher relationship that will improve student's learning. But when student get too close with teachers they may start depending on them when they don't even need their support at all. We can see the statement and respective mean results in the bar chart. The highest mean result is 3.381 and the lowest mean value is 2.735 in the bar chart.

### CUMULATIVE MEANS

Cumulative mean is calculated to show that which factor of Pianta scale (STRS) affect the student-teacher relationship the most.



**FIGURE-4.4: CUMULATIVE MEANS**

In the above chart we can see that closeness has the higher ratio. Which means teachers have close relationship with their students. After closeness dependency has the ratio of 3.077 which shows that students depend a little bit on teachers. But conflict has the less value which means students and teachers have less conflict. In concluding this, it is observed by the researcher that teachers might not understand the dependency factor completely because when dependency factor is high between teachers and students it creates conflict while in the table we can see that conflict factor has less mean than the closeness and dependency.

## DISCUSSION

This study was aimed to see the student-teacher relationship and its effect on student's learning. Hence, it is concluded that a student-teacher relationship is very important for student's learning. And the current study shows that according to the perception of teachers at higher secondary level in Mirpur AJ&K, they have a positive relationship with their students. Because the analysis of results shows that student-teacher relationship has the higher ratio of closeness, less ratio of conflict and a little bit ratio of dependency. The study helped the researcher to know about different aspects related to the student-teacher relationship. The study showed that creating a positive environment in the classroom will help in establishing positive relationships between students and teachers. But positive student-teacher relationship can be practiced everywhere at every level of education if the above given strategies and recommendations are made an essential part of every teacher's training course. There is extensive research on this topic and every researcher has given his/her perception on the topic. The need is to understand the student-teacher relationship and practice that understanding in real environment. Because positive student-teacher relationship is the only thing which can enhance student's learning by making them confident.

The researcher came to know about the fact that teachers can play a vital role in developing student-teacher relationship. Because if a teacher knows all the strategies and techniques he/she can create difference in the lives of students. Positive student-teacher relationships depend on both the student and teacher. But, the teachers have more responsibility in this regard. Because with his/her competencies it will become easy to create a required environment in the classroom. Teachers can solve most of the classroom related problems by just establishing their relationship with students. It will be a success for teacher if he/she manages to develop positive relationships with the students because positive student-teacher relationships have long-lasting impact on student's lives.

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIP

No research is completed ever there is always need of improvements and further research. Keeping this in mind the researcher has suggested some strategies and recommendations that will help the other researchers to keep in mind while studying the same topic.

- Individual differences should be kept in mind
- Praise the students
- Try to know student's perception on different aspects of learning and classroom environment
- Know the social background of the students

- Treat every child/student with love and care
- Listen them when they are trying to share something
- Give them extra time when they needed
- Tell them you care of their opinion in classroom
- Tell them you see them as an important part of the classroom

Above given strategies are most important which can be used to develop a positive student-teacher relationship. These strategies are important at any level of education and learning because the students of higher grade also have the emotions and self-respect. Teachers are not supposed to degrade self-respect of any student.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Following are the recommendations for further study;

- Student-teacher relationship should be made an essential part of pre-service and in-service teacher's training
- Student's perception should be taken for their relationship with teachers
- There is a limited number of teachers who had response to the current study. More data should be collected from the teachers
- In the current study only, single questionnaire was used to collect data, it is recommended to use different tools to collect data like observations and interviews to observe the situation deeply
- The data was collected only from the Mirpur AJ&K which is an urban area, while study should be conducted both in rural and urban areas to see the differences and perceptions of people

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