# Teacher-Student Relationship practices in a medical college

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Background:** Conducive environment creation in medical colleges is a difficult task due to the different expectations of teachers and students from each other. Factors affecting this interpersonal relationship need to be identified. By enhancing positive factors and eliminating negative factors we will be able to create a conducive environment for learning.

**Methodology:** Cross-sectional questionnaire-based study involving medical students and medical faculty. A standardized predesigned and pre-validated online questionnaire was circulated among medical students and medical teachers from various medical colleges using Google Forms. Collected responses were divided into 5 domains namely, Teacher-student relationship increases with years of teacher teaching experience, good relationship between teacher-students induces an impact on the overall growth of the students, good qualities of teachers are responsible for a better teacher-student relationship, Hurdles come across the teacher-student relationship and Factors/behaviors in a teacher causing decline in teacher-student relationship.

**Result:** Overall, 93.69% faculty and 92.2% students agreed for the first domain, 98.2% faculty and 91.49% students for the second domain, 96.4% faculty and 92.2% students for the third domain, 90.09% faculty and 74.47% students for the fourth domain, and 79.46% faculty and 61.7% students for the fifth domain **Conclusion:** Factors like more years of teacher teaching experience, good relationship between teacher-student, and good qualities of teachers are responsible for positive teacher-student relationship. Hurdles come across teacher-student relationships and factors or behaviors in a teacher causing decline in teacher-student relationships are responsible for negative teacher-student relationships.

**Keywords:** Teacher-student relationship, medical college, teacher, student.

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## Introduction

Conducive environment creation in medical colleges is a challenging task due to the different expectations of teachers and students from each other [1]. Many factors affect these interpersonal relationships including the personal factors (of both the teacher and the student) and the contextual factors. All these factors need to be identified. Having conducive environment in medical college for learning it needs to be facilitated. Creating an encouraging environment where students and teachers are on the same platform requires a multifactorial approach. Achieving it in every medical school though urged can be a tough job. Medical students are always enthusiastic about the medical profession and new curricula. Before entering the medical professional course, they used to study in a cocoon. This is a transitional period of their life as the young medical graduates are

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persuaded to the new and different curriculum. This new experience affects them cognitively, emotionally as well as psychologically [2]. To tackle this, medical students require some guidance, sympathy, and emotional support as well as some motivation [3]. This can be done by teachers as they are facilitators, organizers, counsellors, observers, and evaluators and thus have the most important role in the teaching-learning activity. Student-teacher relationships drastically impact teacher efficiency as well as student success. When the students feel appreciated, cared for, and connected to their teacher then they will have increased motivation to listen, learn, and achieve [4]. When students develop confidence that they are supported by the teacher they will work seriously by taking an interest, working hard, and starting reflective thinking. They will not hesitate to accept the challenges and at the same time, they will be ready to face the hurdles easily that come across [3]. They will be able to deal with the directions given to them and manage stress and criticism [5]. This will eventually boost student's attention to their goals: knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and responsiveness.

A teacher must promote strong teacher-student bonding as it helps foster the growth of medical students in every domain: cognitive, psychomotor, and affective [6]. If the students feel uncomfortable or not cared for in the classroom then the learning becomes complicated. In contrast when the students feel connected to their teacher then they will grow in every aspect.

When there is a positive teacher-student relationship then the students will be able to overcome the hurdles, attain their goals, and become more confident. It ultimately results in boosting their learning skills as well as their professional growth [7]. The teacher-student relationship is a vital element of both teachers and students' growth [8].

If the creation of a conducive environment is unable to do then instead of learning it hampers the growth of the medical students [9]. When there is a negative teacher-student relationship it creates many problems that hurt the students at all levels [10]. The attitude of a teacher has a great impact on the students either in positive or negative means or vice versa [11]. The factors responsible for maintaining proper teacher-student relationships need to be identified. By enhancing positive factors and eliminating negative factors affecting the teacher-student relationship we will be able to create a conducive environment for learning and achieve a good teacher-student relationship. Positive teacher-student relationships can affect the students cognitively, emotionally as well as psychologically [12].

Traditional teaching is teacher cantered. In it, there is a unidirectional flow only from teacher to student. It is a teacher who chooses what to teach and how to teach and students passively follow it [13]. Students are not aware of the expectations of the teacher, and this produces obstructions in the development of the students. Less weightage has been given to the communication between teachers and students. In interactive teaching, there is open communication between teacher and students and that helps to build good teacher- student relationships as there is clarity on the perception and expectations from each other. More teaching experience boosts the relationship between teachers and students. Teachers are also mentors of the students [14]. Teachers having good qualities help to foster teacher-student relationships as it influences the students in their shortterm as well as long-term success [15]. It is not only the teacher who is responsible for maintaining good teacher-student relationships but at the same time, it is the responsibility of the students also. So, this teacher-student relationship depends on either side, and it is interrelated to each other. During maintaining the teacher-student relationship it should be taken into consideration that there should be a proper balance in this relationship. There should not be extreme levels between closeness and distance [14]. If this balance is maintained, then it will help to develop a good teacher-student relationship and eventually growth of the students. It is the duty of both the teacher and the student to maintain these boundaries and take care not to cross them. Failure to maintain this balance will lead to a bad teacher-student relationship and ultimately hamper the growth of the students. Many factors produce hurdles in this teacher-student relationship. There is a need to identify these factors and nullify them to maintain good teacher-student relationships. This factor of the teacher-student relationship is still unexplored, and very little weightage is given to this relationship in medical education in India. It is very well considered abroad but there are very few studies reported from India on this aspect. Now there is the need to consider this teacher-student relationship for better development of students. This project aims to find out all those factors

concerning the teacher-student relationship to give a good insight into eliminating bad factors and facilitating positive factors in the future. It will help to develop a better teacher-student relationship which enhances the holistic approach towards the growth of medical students and ultimately results in a competent health care system. The aim of the study was to assess the teacher-student relationship with a multifactorial approach and perspective from both teachers and students in medical college, to identify factors affecting the teacher-student relationship and to find out positive and negative factors influencing teacher-student relationship.

# Methodology

The present study is a cross-sectional questionnaire-based study involving present medical students and working medical faculty. Inclusion criteria were presently studying medical students and presently working medical teachers in affiliated institutes. Exclusion criteria were passed out medical students and retired medical teachers as well as those who were not willing to participate in the study or did not return the questionnaire within the stipulated time.

Institutional Clinical Ethics Committee permission was taken before starting the study. Online informed consent was taken at the beginning of the survey questionnaire. The objectives of the study were explained online to the participants. Demographic information of the participants was noted. The study tool was a predesigned questionnaire adapted from previous studies with some changes to suit the local environment. A standardized predesigned and pre-validated online questionnaire was circulated among presently studying medical students and currently working medical teachers from various medical colleges using Google Forms on social media platforms such as WhatsApp. Confidentiality of participants was maintained throughout the study.

After the data was collected via the online survey, collected data was downloaded in Microsoft Excel spreadsheet format and a description of the responses was performed. The scoring was done by the total of each score marked on a 5-point Likert scale. Collected responses were divided into 5 domains namely 1) the Teacher-student relationship increases with years of teacher's teaching experience, 2) a Good relationship between teacher and students induces an impact on the overall growth of the students, 3) the Good qualities of a teacher are responsible for the better teacher-student relationship, 4) Hurdles come across the teacher-student relationship and 5) Factors or behaviours in a teacher causing a decline in the teacher-student relationship.

#### Results

111 faculties and 141 students participated in this study. The age of participating faculty was in the range of  $45 \pm 9$  years, 68 female faculties (61.2%) and 43 male faculties (38.8%) were there whereas 65 females (46%) and 76 males (54%) were there in the students group. The age of participating students was in the range of  $20 \pm 1$  years.

Comparison of perspective of faculties and students concerning domains of teacher-student relationship practices

Domain 1: Teacher-student relationship with increasing years of teacher's teaching experience. Table 1: Teacher-student relationship with increasing years of teacher teaching experience

Domain 1	Faculty r	Faculty response (%)		Student response (%)	
Agree	32.43		55.32		
Strongly agree	61.26	93.69	36.88	92.2	
Neutral	2.70		4.25		
Strongly disagree	0.00		0.71		
Disagree	3.61	3.61	2.84	3.55	

Table 1 shows that Overall, 93.69% of the faculty agreed (32.43% agreed, 61.26% strongly agreed) and 92.2% of the students agreed (55.32% agreed, 36.88% strongly agreed). 2.70% of the faculty and 4.25% of the students were of a neutral opinion. Overall, 3.61% of the faculty disagreed (3.61%)

disagreed, 0.00% strongly disagreed) and 3.55% of the students disagreed (2.84% disagreed, 0.71% strongly disagreed) with the fact that teacher-student relationship increases with years of teacher's teaching experience.

Domain 2: Good relationship between teacher and students induce impact on overall growth of the students.

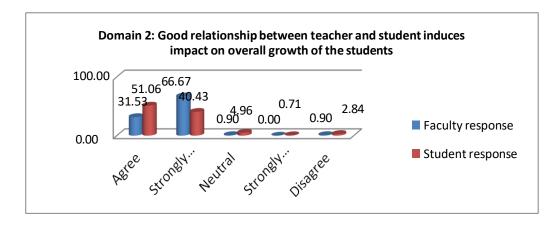


Figure 1: Good relationship between teacher and students induces an impact on the overall growth of the students.

Figure 1 shows that 98.2% of the faculty agreed (31.53% agreed, 66.67% strongly agreed) and 91.49% of the students agreed (51.06% agreed, 40.43% strongly agreed). 0.90% of the faculty and 4.96% of the students were of a neutral opinion. 0.9% of the faculty disagreed (0.9% disagreed, 0.00% strongly disagreed) and 3.55% of the students disagreed (2.84% disagreed, 0.71% strongly disagreed) with the fact that a good relationship between teacher and students induces an impact on the overall growth of the students.

Domain 3: Good qualities of the teacher responsible for the better teacher-student relationship

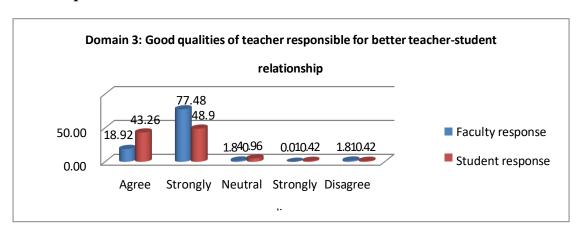


Figure 2: Good qualities of the teacher responsible for the better teacher-student relationship

Figure 2 shows that Overall, 96.4% of the faculty agreed (18.92% agreed, 77.48% strongly agreed) and 92.2% of the students agreed (43.26% agreed, 48.94% strongly agreed). 1.80% of the faculty and 4.96% of the students were of a neutral opinion. Overall, 1.80% of the faculty disagreed (1.80%)

disagreed, 0.00% strongly disagreed) and 2.84% of the students disagreed (1.42% disagreed, 1.42% strongly disagreed) with the fact that good qualities of teachers are responsible for better teacher-student relationships.

The above graphs show that these three domains, namely the Teacher-student relationship increase with years of teacher's teaching experience, a good relationship between teacher and students induces an impact on the overall growth of the students, and good qualities of a teacher are responsible for the better teacher-student relationship have a positive influence on the teacher-student relationship.

Domain 4: Hurdles come across the teacher-student relationship

Domain 4 Faculty response (%) Student response (%) Agree 32.43 52.48 57.66 21.99 Strongly agree 90.09 74.47 3.60 13.47 **Neutral** Strongly disagree 0.90 1.42 Disagree 5.41 10.64 6.31 12.06

Table 2: Hurdles come across the teacher-student relationship

Table 2 shows that Overall, 90.09% of the faculty agreed (32.43% agreed, 57.66% strongly agreed) and 74.47% of the students agreed (52.48% agreed, 21.99% strongly agreed). 3.60% of the faculty and 13.47% of the students were of a neutral opinion. Overall, 6.31% of the faculty disagreed (5.41% disagreed, 0.90% strongly disagreed) and 12.06% of the students disagreed (10.64% disagreed, 1.42% strongly disagreed) with the fact that there are hurdles that come across the teacher-student relationship.

Domain 5: Factors or behaviors in a teacher causing a decline in the teacher-student relationship

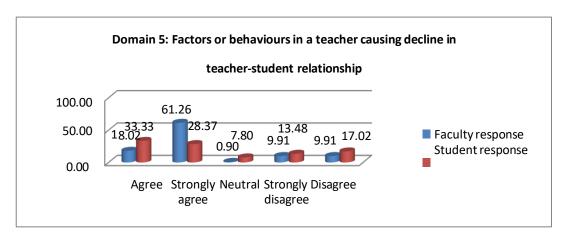


Figure 3: Factors or behaviors in a teacher causing a decline in the teacher-student relationship

Figure 3 shows that Overall, 79.28% of the faculty agreed (18.02% agreed, 61.26% strongly agreed) and 61.7% of the students agreed (33.33% agreed, 28.37% strongly agreed). 0.90% of the faculty and 7.80% of the students were of a neutral opinion. 19.82% of the faculty disagreed (9.91% disagreed, 9.91% strongly disagreed) and 30.5% of the students disagreed (17.02% disagreed, 13.48% strongly disagreed) with the fact that there are factors or behaviors in a teacher causing a decline in the teacher-student relationship.

The above graphs show that these two domains, namely Hurdles come across the teacher-student relationship and Factors or behaviors in a teacher causing a decline in a teacher-student relationship have a negative influence on the teacher-student relationship.

#### Discussion

"The strength of teacher-student relationships makes the difference in translating teacher's passion for teaching into student's passion of learning."

#### Beth Morrow

A teacher-student relationship will not develop suddenly. It requires nurturing like a sapling and will bloom slowly as time passes. In medical college medical teachers are mainly the essential backbone of medical education [16]. Medical teachers are an important key factor in the success of medical students' academic outcomes. When a teacher teaches with great passion and this passion is sensed by the students then a healthy environment of teaching and learning is created [17]. Once such a conducive environment is created then the students will automatically be attracted to the instructions given by the teachers during teaching as well as to the teaching techniques of the teacher and thus concentrate on what the teacher is teaching [18]. This helps the students gain the knowledge, attitude, and skills that will blossom them into good medical professionals. To develop a good interpersonal relationship between teacher and students both of them need to have mutual respect and must remain committed to the common goal of learning [19]. The teacher-student relationship is a multifaceted process that is an integral part of medical education [20]. The importance of this teacher-student relationship is also maintained from ancient times when the students lived in Gurukul, and the teacher called Guru was considered a sacred father or academic father of the students. This Guru worked towards helping their students gain knowledge and develop from all angles. Reaching to the stage of guru needs transformation of teachers to guru by passing through various stages (An Adhyapak, An upadhyay, An Acharya, A Pandit, An Adhrista, A Guru) as mentioned in ancient time. An Adhyapak imparts knowledge or information. An Upadhyay imparts knowledge and information and helps in building a good understanding or comprehension. An Acharya imparts skills. A Pandit provides a deep insight into a subject. An Adhrista has a visionary view and can teach you to think in that manner. A Guru awakens the wisdom and leads from darkness to light. The teacher-student relationship is necessarily from both sides. It is immensely needed to build up this relationship for a healthy environment of learning between teacher and student. The development of this relationship has a multifactorial approach, and these multiple factors need to be explored. To explore these factors, we prepared the same questionnaires for teachers as well as students. As the teacher-student relationship has two sides of the coin from the angle of students and from the angle of the teachers, understanding the perceptions of both for the same questions in different ways will give better insight on this topic. Any relationship depends on expectations and fulfillment of those expectations from both the parties involved. This study will give understanding of expectations from both sides (from teachers and from students). When teachers as well as students are involved in maintaining this relationship then there will be a positive outcome which will enhance the student's performance in a wholesome approach [21]. The teacher-student relationship can be defined as a dynamic system, by ecological systems theory in human development [22]. To maintain the homeostasis of this system the feedback and feedforward mechanisms must be reinforced in medical education. When there is a good teacher-student relationship it will help to make good quality medical students who will be a pioneer for the optimum health care system [23]. The National Medical Commission published guidelines on the professional responsibilities of medical teachers on 3rd April 2023 by the Ethics and Medical Registration Board [24]. The National Medical Commission also published guidelines on the professional responsibilities of medical students on 3rd April 2023 by the Ethics and Medical Registration Board [25].

In view of promoting the teacher-student relationship for the overall development of the students we

incorporated the questionnaires to the teachers as well as the students regarding this and the responses were divided into 5 domains. In the first domain, we tried to find out whether more teaching experience of teachers had any impact on the teacher-student relationship (Table 1). For this domain overall 93.69% of the faculty and 92.2% of the students agreed with the fact that the teacher-student relationship increases with years of teacher's teaching experience as the development of understanding occurs between the teachers and students over time, teaching methods of the teacher become familiar to the students. At the same time, teachers also become aware of what the students want, students feel free to give feedback regarding teaching methods and teachers will be able to alter their teaching approach according to students' comfort. As the teacher prepares a conducive environment for the students, the bond between them becomes stronger and the teacher's wisdom eventually gives the advantage to the students [26]. These findings are like the findings recorded by Nasir Hussain and others [7], Plaut and others [14] in their study. Farhah and others [27] in their study done in 2021 also reported that more teaching experience of teachers induces a positive impact on the teacher-student relationship.

In the second domain concerning the point of whether the overall growth of the students is influenced by a good relationship between teacher and students (Figure 1) overall 98.2% of the faculty and 91.49% of the students agreed on this. This may be because when there is a good relationship between teacher and students it will make the students feel motivated to learn, work harder, and make them more responsible. It will help them to cope with difficult tasks, handle directions, deal with criticism, and manage stress. Simultaneously it will boost their academic achievement, protect the students who were already exhibiting externalizing behaviors, and produce impact on the success of the students [28-30]. The significance of having a positive student-teacher relationship is that the students will follow the instructions, become positive, and supportive, and get motivated [31]. So, when teachers support their students in their learning environment, it can positively impact their social and academic outcomes [9-10]. This is vital for the long-term influence on the student's academic success. Students get stimulus and feel aspiration for learning [32]. Hence a good relationship between teacher and students will foster the overall growth of the students [33].

In the third domain to explore the relationship between the good qualities of teachers and the teacher-student relationship (Figure 2) overall 96.4% of the faculty and 92.2% of the students agreed with the fact that the good qualities of teachers are responsible for expanding teacherteacher-student relationship. According to them if the teacher is a powerful communicator, shows empathy, has patience, shares best practices, lifelong learner, has a positive attitude, and acts as a role model, then it will boost the relationship between students and teacher [34]. At the same time according to them when the teacher is self-reflective, follows ethics, facilitator, student assessor, curriculum evaluator, curriculum and course planner, creator of resource material and study guide, asks for feedback, passionate about teaching, focuses on collaboration, adaptable and flexible according to requirement then it will result in the development of a good relationship between students and teacher. Also, they recorded that when the teacher values real-world learning, having good listening skills, maintaining mutual respect and trust, being able to engage students, being able to set goals effectively, being able to make learning enjoyable, and being able to instill confidence in students then it will enhance the relationship between students and teacher. Researchers [35-37] recorded similar findings in their study. Henry and others [38] in their study conducted in 2018 also mentioned these findings. When between teacher and student there is proper communication and understanding then it will help the students to discuss any doubts with the teacher without any hesitation. It will also help teachers to solve the queries of the students and to share some important information.

In the fourth domain, there are many factors concerning hurdles that come across the teacher-student relationship (Table 2) overall 90.09% of the faculty and 74.47% of the students agreed with the fact that the monologue of the teacher, fixed perspective of the teacher, challenging nature of the students, lack of current and updated knowledge of the teacher, improper professional relationship among teachers and lack of balance between closeness and distance are some of the obstacles which produce negative impact on the teacher-student relationship. Researchers [37-38] recorded similar findings in their study. Maintaining optimum boundaries between teachers and

students is very important for both to sustain good relationships. This professional distance should be maintained by avoiding going too close to the students. Also, teachers should not be too personal with the students. This is a very crucial factor in avoiding a negative teacher-student relationship. In the current scenario, improper handling of social media like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram is responsible for this type of negative relationship to some extent. Appropriate use of social media can be a boon to the same. This use of social media is a key factor in maintaining good relationships between teachers and students. Teachers will always present themselves as excellent role models in front of the students when they understand and maintain the boundaries. Even though some closeness between teachers and students is required for the professional development of students, undue closeness must be avoided.

In the fifth domain, there are some factors or behaviors in a teacher causing a decline in a teacher-student relationship (Figure 3) overall 79.28% of the faculty and 61.7% of the students agreed with the fact. These factors may be criticism of a student in a group setting, discrimination based on race and gender, sexual harassment, favoritism in a team setting, asking students to handle personal tasks, forcing personal values on students, too much personal disclosure, involving students in faculty or administrative conflicts and inappropriate nonverbal communication. When the teacher favors any student then it will be an injustice to the other students and ultimately students lose faith in that teacher. Teachers as well as students should be honest and respected while dealing with the opposite gender and should be able to give proper justice while teaching. To have a 360-degree approach this topic can be studied with a mixed method. In the present quantitative study in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, or participant observation can be further studied to explore this topic in depth.

#### Conclusion

It can be concluded from the present study that there are some factors like more years of teacher's teaching experience, a good relationship between teacher and students, and good qualities of teachers which are responsible for positive teacher-student relationships. Some factors like hurdles that come across the teacher-student relationship, factors or behaviours in a teacher causing a decline in a teacher-student relationship are responsible for negative impact on the teacher-student relationship.

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