

Exploring the Role of Student-Teacher Interaction in Establishing Positive Learning Environments



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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I hereby declare that this thesis is the student's own work and effort. All sources of information incorporated here have been duly acknowledged. This thesis has been submitted with my approval.



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DECLARATION

This thesis is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever contributions of others are involved, every effort is made to indicate this clearly, with due reference to the literature, and acknowledgement of collaborative research and discussions.



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Dedication

I dedicate this research to the loving memory of Zeenat Jehan, my dearest grandmother. I am sorry I could not show you this when you were still here.

Further credit to my mother, Shamarup Qureshi for always being there when I needed her.

Final credits to all the giants on whose shoulders I stood to get where I am.

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Abstract

Through this paper, the role of student-teacher interactions in establishing positive learning environments have been explored thoroughly in Bangladeshi learning contexts. The aim of this paper was to identify and analyse the role of student-teacher interactions under the dimensions of motivation, engagement, classroom environments, strategies and challenges. A multimethod qualitative methodology was used to collect data through classroom observations and a focus group discussion, and the participants have been chosen for both data collections using a purposive sampling method to obtain context specific data. The findings have strongly suggested a correlation between the theories of Self Determination Theory, Attachment Theory and Care Theory and student-teacher interactions in the establishment of positive learning environments. The findings show that the role of student-teacher interactions is both dynamic and instrumental to the dimensions of motivation, engagement, the classroom environment as well as several strategies that teachers use to address the challenges they have faced. The contributions of this research have furthered the understanding of student-teacher interactions in relation to the establishment of positive learning environments in a Bangladeshi learning context.

Keywords: student-teacher interaction, engagement, motivation, Bangladeshi classrooms, qualitative research

Chapter I

Introduction

1.1 General Overview

One of the more critical aspects of teaching and pedagogy at large is the motivation and growth of students in safe and positive learning environments. There can be little doubt when measuring the importance of student-teacher interactions in realising this aspect of education. The historical shift away from traditional methods and theories of learning (Yue, 2024) to more modern methods of motivation focused learning (Ng, 2019) suggest that the increasing importance of establishing positive learning environments must be tempered by informed and educated approaches to student-teacher interaction (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

1.2 Context of the Study

The “relationship between students and teachers is crucial” (Pastore & Luder, 2021) to achieving the goal of establishing healthy learning environments. Despite the many advancements in the field of teaching and critical pedagogy, it is only recently that particular focus has been directed towards the role of student-teacher interactions. This focus has been even less pronounced in countries such as Bangladesh where critical pedagogy lies at the mercy of uncertain political states and unclear directives and motivations in the educational sector as handled by the government. This is backed up by research (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014) that claims that the “discontinuous nature of policy direction in education in Bangladesh has failed to bring about sustained development of educational policies in the country.”

Due to a combination of several factors, there is a lack of proper and informed student-teacher interaction philosophies, especially in Bangladeshi contexts. These stem from a variety of reasoning including but not limited to educational policy (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014), insufficient teacher training (Rahman Talukder et al., 2021) and a general unwillingness to invest into the long-term development of infrastructure (Chowdhury & Sarkar, 2018). Addressing this issue with proper research-based solutions can result in a positive learning outcome for any formal classroom setting.

1.3 Statement of Problem

The role of teachers in assisting their students more often than not does not limit itself to just academic support. As caretakers and stewards of the wellbeing of the children in their care, teachers quite often find themselves ill equipped to face the rising number of challenges and pressures that students face in an increasingly complex world. Research indicates “that almost a quarter of adolescents will experience a mental health issue in any given year” (Lancet Global Mental Health Group, 2007), thereby warranting more attention and further research. In most cases, “schoolteachers are often the first to respond when a student presents with a mental health issue in the classroom” (Gunawardena et al., 2024). Therefore, when educators are ill equipped to understand the impact of how their interactions can play a role in alleviating or exacerbating the problems a student faces, positive outcomes and learning environments cannot be expected to follow. This situation requires attention if we want to provide safe learning spaces and environments for future generations.

Despite the strong role that students have always played for this country, this country has rewarded them with educators that are not equipped with the pedagogical skills to identify, nurture and rehabilitate at-risk students. The aforementioned metrics and risk factors have warranted further research into the language of conflict resolution by teachers and how effective it is at establishing positive learning environments. The primary demographic of people affected by this problem include school children, teachers of primary and secondary schools, school management and administration as well as employers and local economies. The quality of the interaction and support provided to at-risk students by teachers might directly affect their mental health and academic quality, in the short and long term as well as improving their overall quality of life. The resulting improved interactions help educators and instructors to more effectively support students and strongly increase the standard of education and learning at secondary schools by establishing positive learning environments.

The particular focus of this study was on the interactions between educators and students including but not limited to conflict resolution and preventative measures in secondary schools. This part of the education system has been wholly underrepresented and thus requires close attention and investigation. If educators are relying on interactions based on teaching practices that are unoptimised and uninformed, the establishment of proper and positive learning environments will forever remain an idealised future instead of one based in reality. An Australian study found that “mental health issues are more prevalent in children and adolescents from low socioeconomic status” (Gunawardena et al., 2024) and this situation must be considered to be even more dire when the same lens is applied to the disenfranchised and generally traumatised nature of students in Bangladesh (Hasan et al., 2021). This understanding can only serve as an invitation to promote

and undertake further research into the nature of positive student teacher interactions in building and establishing positive learning environments.

1.4 Research Objectives

- To examine the influence of student-teacher interactions on engagement, motivation and the classroom environment
- To identify the strategies and challenges that affect the development of positive student-teacher relationships

1.5 Research Questions

- How do student-teacher interactions influence student engagement, motivation, and the classroom environment?
- What strategies and challenges affect the development of positive student-teacher relationships?

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study aimed to collect data from experienced teachers and intermediate school students from Bangladeshi primary and secondary schools. Through a variety of sampling techniques, a qualitative study has been conducted on the topic to determine the key findings of the research.

1.7 Significance

Student-teacher interactions have been proved to improve academic performance when applied positively and with clarity (Telli, 2016). Students have been known to demonstrate higher levels of motivation, engagement and overall learning when exposed to meaningful communication via positive interactions and relationships (Roorda et al., 2017). Insights into this dimension of pedagogy can be used to improve not only a teacher's ability to support their students but can expand into improvements on policy making and institutional policies on a national level. In the context of Bangladeshi education (Chowdhury & Sarkar, 2018), both of these dimensions of the pedagogical landscape are severely lacking both attention and further research which this paper aimed to address.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses aspects of the research such as acquainting the reader with the topics of discussion, the scope of the issue, and existing gaps in addressing the issue. The consequences and implications of the study have been discussed as well as the background information. The main objectives of the research alongside the sample size and target population have also been highlighted and see further explanation in the methodology section in Chapter 3.

Chapter II

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

One of the critical aspects of teaching and pedagogy at large is the motivation and growth of students in safe and positive learning environments. There can be little doubt when measuring the importance of student-teacher interactions in realising this aspect of education. The historical shift away from traditional methods and theories of learning (Yue, 2024) to more modern methods of motivation focused learning (Ng, 2019) suggest that the increasing importance of establishing positive learning environments must be tempered by informed and educated approaches to student-teacher interaction (Pianta & Hamre, 2009).

The ways a teacher might choose to interact with students or the philosophy that they adopt when approaching interactions with students can play a critical role in overall learning outcomes and environments (Wang, 2023). Research has proven the role positive student-teacher interactions and relationships hold in the course of learning and motivation (Sakiz et al., 2012). The aforementioned motivation is also a core component in determining a child's level of attendance, classroom participation, social activities and overall formative experience overall. Therefore, teachers that have a higher threshold of supportive and facilitative characteristics such as emotional intelligence can more easily assess several aspects of a student's experience such as emotional states and social situations (Pozo-Rico & Sandoval, 2020). Replace learning outcomes can be improved through the regulated and informed use of positive means of student-teacher interaction (Henry & Thorsen, 2018), especially in Bangladeshi contexts.

2.2 Theories of Student-Teacher Interaction

There are several theories and frameworks that informed educators and ELT practitioners can rely on when basing their interactions on the relevant research. This report focused on the theoretical bases of the Self Determination Theory, Attachment Theory and Care Theory. According to the research (Roorda et al., 2017; Davis, 2003; Pastore & Luder, 2021), these theories are relevant to the nature of this report as they have been shown to positively impact learning outcomes.

2.2.1 Self Determination Theory

In the case of the Self Determination Theory, it is defined as ‘a macro-theory of human motivation and personality that examines people’s inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs’ (Ryan & Deci, 2020) and further posits that these needs ‘require supportive social contexts to flourish.’ The same paper outlines the role of the teacher in establishing autonomous learning practices through positive reinforcement and caring relationships as a means of building competence as well as fostering the emotional regulation and autonomy needed to reduce burnout and performance pressure.

2.2.2 Attachment Theory

Attachment Theory, first posited by Bowlby and expanded on by Ainsworth (Holmes, 2014), discusses the need for positive relationships between a child and its caregivers. These serve to establish and enhance a child’s sense of safety when exploring new environments, educational or otherwise. This assurance of safety is integral in relation to this report by merit of the fact that established and caring relationships between a student and their instructor are instrumental in

developing that child's educational inquisitiveness and enthusiasm to engage with instructions and lessons (Roorda et al., 2017; Carmona-Halty et al., 2019). Thus, deep learning processes can be further incubated and developed through such positive relationships and practices (Carmona-Halty et al., 2019).

2.2.3 Care Theory

Care Theory was developed by Nel Noddings to emphasize the importance of relationships and interactions between students and instructors based on caring to prioritise the holistic education of the learner as opposed to rigid methods (Nel Noddings, 2002). Research done (Yan, 2019) finds strong relevancies between care focused education and the determination of a child's academic performance. Thus, this theory strongly supports the importance of establishing safe learning environments and how supportive and positive student-teacher interactions are a key first step in that direction (Yan, 2019).

2.3 Student-teacher interaction's Effect on Engagement, Motivation and the Classroom Environment

The effects of positive interactions on the domains of engagement, motivation and the overall classroom environment can be quite instrumental in a young learner's growth and development.

2.3.1 Student-teacher interaction's Effect on Motivation

Research conducted under the presumption of the fact that interaction possesses supporting qualities when applied to and supporting the dimension of motivation posits that there are definitive benefits in regards to learning outcomes (Pastore & Luder, 2021). Further

justification for this notion can be drawn from the Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020), which explains and supports this notion of assessing the quality of teacher-student relationships to “provide for optimal, healthy development”.

2.3.2 Student-teacher interaction’s Effect on Engagement

According to research on the topic (Roorda et al., 2017), “it has been repeatedly suggested that the affective quality of dyadic teacher-student relationships influence students’ engagement.” Further research found positive correlations between the degrees and depth of student-teacher interactions and relationships to positive levels of engagement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Davis, 2003).

2.3.3 Interaction and Classroom Environment

The teacher’s role in establishing positive classroom environments that improve the learner’s ability to learn more effectively and productively have been well documented (Bucholz & Sheffler, 2013). The interactions that a teacher has with one student is a key variable in the shaping and overall nature of the entire learning environment. Teachers that cultivate more positive interactions in a classroom hold greater sway over the effectiveness of learning in that given environment. This is a sentiment that is widely agreed upon that interpersonal behaviour is crucial to the effectiveness of the teaching (Telli, 2016). Therefore, the role of positive student-teacher interactions in the establishment of positive classroom and overall learning environments cannot be underestimated.

2.4 Strategies for Building Positive Relationships

One of the most prominent strategies in building positive relationships with students can be drawn from the Politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (Brown & Levinson, 1988). This theory proposed that politeness can serve the role of a unified determinant to ease and alleviate face threatening acts in social contexts. This idea of a self-determined image that people uphold (Goffman & Best, 2017) is the foundation of politeness theory. Research on the application of Politeness theory finds certain authors suggesting that politeness is regarded as a useful method in fostering relationships” (Peng et al., 2014).

2.5 Challenges to Effective Interaction

There are several obstacles an instructor must overcome in order to successfully build positive relationships and learning environments, especially in Bangladeshi educational contexts. These challenges come in the form of proportionally large classroom sizes, a lack in pedagogical investment and training as well as cultural and social barriers to developing positive relationships through positive student-teacher interaction.

2.5.1 Large Classrooms

Large classroom sizes pose a sizable threat and a significant challenge to educators attempting to interact positively and form stable connections with students due to the logistical issues prevalent with dividing a finite sum of attention and time between a large number of students. Work done (McNeely et al., 2002) indicates that “the size of schools is negatively correlated with school connectedness.” Previous research reviewed in previous sections can attest to the necessity of school connectedness with a learner’s sense of autonomy and self-evaluation

(Ryan & Deci, 2020). This issue is also widespread and prevalent in Bangladeshi learning environments as overcrowded classrooms are a common sight in schools around the country (Rahman Talukder et al., 2021). Such crowded environments are a hindrance to any instructor attempting to establish positive learning environments.

2.5.2 Lack of Pedagogical Investment and Training

One of the easiest methods of facilitating meaningful interactions between students and teachers is by policy level investment and training for the growth and development of effective and well-equipped instructors who are ready to handle the problems of limited resources present in Bangladeshi classrooms. Most Bangladeshi educational policies are not indicative of forward-thinking long-term investments into quality improvements (Chowdhury & Sarkar, 2018). If the proper investment in infrastructure, equipment and pedagogical training is not made, future teachers might find themselves more ill equipped to face problems with little to no resources or points of reference.

2.6 Research Gap

Through the comparison and review of literature on the particular issue of assessing the role of student-teacher interaction in establishing positive learning environments, certain gaps in the existing research have presented themselves. The formal lack of pedagogy and discourse surrounding the topic warranted further investigation and has analysed possible future strategies based on the collected data. Literature on the topic have addressed changing contexts (Yue, 2024; Yan, 2019) in Bangladeshi classrooms (Chowdhury & Sarkar, 2018), inadequacies in the policymaking and institutional levels (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Hasan et al., 2021; Talukder et al., 2021) and explore the roles of student-teacher interaction and relationships (Borremans et al.,

2024; Bucholz & Sheffler, 2013; Carmona-Halty et al., 2019; Che Ahmad et al., 2017). This study aimed to unify these dimensions by the identification of existing methods of student-teacher interaction practised by teachers and their perspectives, especially in Bangladeshi learning contexts. This has been done through a qualitative lens with data being collected through observations and focus group discussions. The data was then assessed for relevancy according to existing theories and frameworks based on the literature and the study has analysed possible strategies particular and suitable for the Bangladeshi learning context and environment. The methodology, instruments and sampling have been discussed further in the following third chapter.

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter was primarily focused on the identification of the thematic clusters of engagement, motivation and effective strategies in regards to the role of student-teacher interaction in establishing positive learning environments and how current educators approach this role in a local context. A systematic investigation reveals that while copious amounts of research have been done on why student-teacher interaction is necessary internationally, Bangladesh still lacks a solid and comprehensive amount of research into the scope of interaction and effective strategies to determine the establishment of positive learning environments more easily and effectively.

Chapter Three

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This methodology section covers all aspects of the data collection process as well as the reasoning for the research being conducted. The research followed a qualitative approach with respect to the collection of data that represented the role of positive student-teacher interaction in establishing positive learning environments.

3.2 Research Design

Qualitative research is defined as “an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2015). Since student-teacher interaction has been established in the literature review section (Chapter 2) as a social and human factor, the identification of language and terms used in establishing positive learning environments has been done through a qualitative observation process. Furthermore, to expand on the findings of this research, a focus group discussion was held to determine the effectiveness of such language and suggest improvements.

3.3 Population

The population of this data collection were teachers of primary and secondary English medium schools, school management and administration in Bangladeshi classrooms. Since the population demographic was quite large and a proper study was unfeasible, sample sizes had been drawn from this population with respect to purpose and convenience.

3.4 Sample

The initial data collection concerned itself with the role of student-teacher interaction in the classroom, and this was done by observing a sample of five teachers from Mangrove School according to a purposive sampling method. A purposive sampling method had been chosen to target experienced instructors with direct experience and relevance to the phenomenon under investigation, to ensure the collection of context specific data. A focus group discussion was conducted as well with three (Krueger et al., 2015) trained educators with at least five years of teaching experience and similar backgrounds, discussing their perspectives.

3.5 Sampling Technique

For the purposes of data collection, purposive sampling techniques have been used to select participants for the interview to determine the role of student-teacher interaction in establishing positive learning environments. A purposive sampling method has been chosen which targeted experienced instructors with direct experience and relevance to the phenomenon under investigation, to ensure the collection of context specific data.

The focus group discussion has had its participants selected via a purposive sampling method to choose experienced individuals with similar pedagogical backgrounds. This has provided solid data on the topic of student-teacher interactions and the perspectives of teachers on the matter.

3.6 Instruments

In this research, classroom observations were conducted for the initial data collection according to standard protocol. Due to the nature of the observation and the logistical

considerations of recording the classroom and transcribing relevant interactions, 5 teachers and classrooms were observed and recorded. A classroom checklist was consulted and noted in during the observations (Appendix A).

For the second part of the data collection, a focus group discussion has been used to discuss and expand on the findings of the first data collection. Experienced teachers and educators have been asked to provide notes and feedback on the interactions that have directed their own teaching methods and practices. A questionnaire (Appendix B) has been developed to direct conversations and ultimately determine the opinions and feedback of the group.

3.7 Data Collection

Participants of the observation have included the students in the classroom and the respective teachers directing the room. Their interactions were recorded and transcribed to ensure the collection of rich qualitative data. While there can be no guarantee that the burden of observation has induced non-standard behaviour in the students and perhaps even the teacher, the data collection has been conducted via non-invasive and unassuming recording and transcription to reduce these burdens. The data collection for the Focus Group Discussion was conducted through a mixture of tape recording, note taking and participant observation (Stewart et al., 2007). The resulting data was organised through transcription and reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.8 Data Analysis

Transcriptions have been made of the interviews and then the data has been analysed. From the classroom observations, to find the language of student-teacher interaction, the data has been

interpreted through a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to identify common themes between the usage of language.

The focus group discussion has also been entirely transcribed. The data was then analysed via the thematic analysis procedure which identified and established common themes and areas of feedback in regards to the effectiveness of the student-teacher interactions used by most teachers as determined during the classroom observations. Ultimately, the findings of both data collections have been scrutinized to establish common themes and find thematic congruences with the goal of presenting a triangulated finding.

3.9 Research Ethics

During both points of data collection, the confidentiality and privacy of participants are safeguarded and kept anonymous. This has been done to ensure the reliability and validity of teacher responses and maintain an atmosphere of trust where the participants can answer freely and openly.

3.10 Chapter Summary

In summary, this research has been conducted via a multimethod qualitative assessment. The research method is illustrated, and two sets of instruments has been used for data collection: classroom observations and a focus group discussion. The population of the study has been defined as well as the sampling sizes and techniques alongside explanations of the research ethics and the means of data analysis.

Chapter Four

Findings

4.1 Introduction

In order to better understand the role of student-teacher interaction in the establishment of positive learning environments, five classroom observations and one focus group discussion was conducted. Transcriptions of the classroom observations and the focus group discussion were produced. In order to effectively answer the research questions and satisfy the research objectives, the findings from the classroom observations have been utilised to answer the first research question whereas the findings from the focus group discussion have been used to supplement the answer to the second research question.

4.2 Demographic Profile of the Participants

Both pieces of data collection have been conducted in Mangrove School, a primary and secondary English Medium teaching child from the stages of playgroup to A levels. All of the teachers have been purposively selected from this school for both ease of access to critical data and opinions as well as the opportunity to gather opinions and data from the perspective of a colleague, removing barriers to communication and logistics through pre-existing rapport. The age profiles of the teachers range from the mid-20s to the late 60s, providing a plethora of perspectives both fresh and experienced.

The classroom observation data has been collected on 5 classrooms ranging from classes 4 to 8. These observations have provided insight into the interactions between teachers and students in a classroom environment. Through these classroom observations, several insights into the application of strategies as well as challenges faced by instructors have also been revealed. The real-life application of their individual strategies has been analysed to provide a complete picture of student-teacher interaction. As a result, there is strong evidence to suggest that student-teacher interactions play a vital role in establishing positive learning environments. In the classroom observations, CO stands for Classroom Observation. Therefore, CO1 refers to the first teacher whose classroom practice was observed, CO2 stands for Classroom Observation 2, CO3 stands for Classroom Observation 3, CO4 stands for Classroom Observation 4, and CO5 stands for Classroom Observation 5.

Table 1. Information on Classroom Observations

Name	Teaching Experience (Year)	Gender	Age	Qualification
CO1	22	Female	55-60	Ph.D
CO2	8	Female	40-45	MA
CO3	21	Male	50-55	MA
CO4	14	Male	35-45	MA
CO5	3	Female	20-25	BA

The focus group discussion was conducted with three instructors, all of whom were quite experienced with teaching English in a secondary school setting. Their remarks and statements have been instrumental in understanding the thought process behind the strategies that instructors

employ when interacting with children in the classroom as well as the challenges that instructors face when interacting with children in the classroom. In the focus group discussion, FG T stands for Focus Group Teacher. Thus, FG T1 refers to the first of the three participants in the focus group discussion, FG T2 stands for Focus Group Teacher 2, and FG T3 stands for Focus Group Teacher 3 accordingly.

Table 2. Participants' Profile of Focus Group Discussion

Teacher	Gender	Teaching Experience (Years)	Age	Qualification
FG T1	Female	5	25-30	MA
FG T2	Female	22	50-55	MA
FG T3	Female	10	40-45	MA

4.3 How do student-teacher interactions influence student engagement, motivation, and the classroom environment?

The findings on the role of student-teacher interaction and their influence on student engagement, motivation and the classroom environment have been presented under the themes of (1) Engagement, (2) Motivation, (3) Positive learning environments, (4) Strategies for the development of positive classroom environments and (5) Challenges towards the development of positive classroom environments. These themes have been extracted from a close examination of the transcriptions of the classroom observations and the focus group discussion as well close cross examination of the research objectives and research questions.

From the classroom observations, the findings have suggested that student-teacher interactions have a significant role to play because of the classroom dynamics that teachers operate between as well as the ways they maintain this dynamic. All of the teachers have used some form of positive interaction to either better engage with their students or motivate them further or maintain a positive learning environment despite challenges using the implementation of strategies consciously or otherwise. All of the teachers have used positive reinforcement, tonality and collaborative activities to foster conducive learning environments to varying degrees and through different methods. The transcription of the recordings has allowed for close examination of the strategies employed and the in-person attendance of the observation coupled with field notes have clearly laid out the challenges that teachers faced.

From the focus group discussion, the findings have suggested that teachers consider the importance of student-teacher interactions as well as validate the usage of strategies whilst indicating the many barriers and disruptions that challenge teachers on a regular basis. The three teachers were mostly in agreement with each other on the various talking points presented by the conductor and as such provided strong data and points of reference for the overall research to rely on. Whilst each teacher had different points of focus on the dimensions of student-teacher interaction, they were still in agreement on the overall outcome that student-teacher interaction plays a vital role in the establishment of positive learning environments. A close examination of the transcription of this discussion has provided a strong basis for drawing conclusions and supporting previous theoretical points with varied points of reference.

4.3.1 Influence of Student-Teacher Interactions on Engagement

One common trait implied directly in the case of the FGD data and inferred through observation in the classroom observations, is the fact that teachers often rely on positive interactions and elements of novelty to actively engage with students in a variety of situations. Through the classroom observations, we have observed all five teachers utilise an element of positivity to elicit responses or keep the students from getting distracted from the learning process. In the case of CO2, frequent questioning helps elicit feedback and the use of verbal exercises, “Now, randomly I will say some words, and you will tell me what we should write before it” helps keep students practically and productively engaged in the classroom. In another example, a teacher asks students, “Are there any spelling mistakes on the board?” in order to transform the role of students from passive listeners to active participants and auditors.

Through the focus group discussion, it has been found that the teachers agree with each other on the role of student-teacher interactions on engagement and have congruent opinions on the topic. For example, “If you are a rigid teacher or if you are a very angry or aggressive...they will never reach out to you for any kind of problems...you will never get the true feedback of your lessons” (FG T1) is in accordance with the teacher’s view on student-teacher interaction especially in the dimension of student engagement. Furthermore, “Without interacting you cannot get the desired outcome...they will not respond if you are not approachable” (FG T2) is in agreement with the previous statement further solidifying their opinions on the need for positive student-teacher interactions on engagement. The teachers have also commented on the use of novel measures to re-engage distracted classrooms and boost the rates of overall engagement. One teacher has discussed the role of cultural elements and popular media in laying the foundation for future relationships and acting as icebreakers for interactions or activities.

4.3.2 Influence of Student-Teacher Interactions on Motivation

The data has suggested that there are several factors that teachers pay close attention to when using student-teacher interactions to create and regulate motivation.

During the classroom observations, the data has suggested a number of practices and elements to student-teacher interactions that have been used to increase student motivation. Several teachers have been observed with open body language, cheerful tones, inclusion as well as other aspects of their teaching being used to keep students motivated to continue the learning process and being a part of it. For example, CO2 says, "Have you ever seen racing cars racing on the field?...Imagine yourselves as a racing car. Put pressure on your accelerator. Hurry and run." This metaphor allows the teacher to both motivate students to finish the work faster but also to reduce the banality of taking notes.

During the focus group discussion, the teachers have all agreed that student-teacher interactions are very important in keeping students motivated. They have provided examples of how they induce and retain motivation by adding a human element to the students. There have been discussions of using encouragement using mannerisms and shaping lessons to be inclusive to both stronger and weaker students. For example, "I always encourage them...I praise them a lot...positive manner and positive feedback help them a lot to interact and complete the work" (FG T1). The teacher here strongly expounded the merits of integrating positive mannerisms and feedback to make sure that students feel motivated enough to stick with the lesson and complete it without disruption. Another participant in the focus group discussion used an example to discuss a particular scenario with a class six student on the weaker side of his academics, "I tried and I'm

still trying to include him...encouraging him and I do not raise my voice at him...I keep reminding him that yes, he is also able to do it” (FG T2). This example shows insight into the mentality that despite being motivating overall, teachers have to recognise that certain individual students will require a lot more attention and care in how they are being interacted with by their instructors.

4.3.3 Influence of Student-Teacher Interactions on Classroom Environments

The studies have shown that teachers have certain actions and measures they undertake to make sure that positive learning is possible in their respective classroom environments. The methods of establishing such positive learning environments are discussed in the focus group discussion, while observations have revealed the applications of interactions that serve to create such learning environments during the classroom observations.

During the classroom observations, several teachers have used student-teacher interactions in multiple ways to positively influence and develop the classroom environment. CO2 has been observed using several methods to keep the classroom environment conducive to learning despite drawbacks present in the classroom. In one interaction, CO2 says, “I made a mistake here. See?...Make the correction, please.” This interaction is an example of humility and allows students to feel safer in admitting their own mistakes thus normalising errors as an integral aspect of the learning process.

During the focus group discussion, almost all of the teachers have agreed on the role of student-teacher interaction in the establishment of positive classroom environments. The participants have spoken on the need for students to feel and understand that their teacher is someone quite close to them, akin to family. For example, “we can build up a very warm and loving relationship...they will feel safe in the classroom” (FG T1). In this example, the teacher

discusses the need for students to feel safe in the classroom in order to absorb the learning efficiently. This view is reinforced by another participant in the study stating that, "Teachers needs to acknowledge that students matter...they know that the teacher loves them and really cares for them and their opinion matters" (FG T2). However, the participants have also noted that there is a fine line to be maintained between being friendly and being authoritative. This can be seen in the example, "They have to respect me...but there will be a friendly environment (where) they can come with their problems easily" (FG T1).

Table 3. Findings from Classroom Observation and FGD in Joint-Display Analysis

Themes	Relevant Quotes from FGD	Information from Classroom Observations
Motivation	"I always encourage them...I praise them a lot...positive manner and positive feedback help them a lot to interact and complete the work." (FG T1)	CO2 used racing car metaphors to motivate students, indicative of teachers' usage of positive interaction and inclusivity to help motivate students.
	"I tried and I'm still trying to include him...encouraging him and I do not raise my voice at him...I keep reminding him that yes, he is able to do it." (FG T2)	Inclusive practices such as group involvement.
Engagement	"If you are a rigid teacher or if you are very angry or aggressive...they will never reach out to you for any kind of problems...you will never get the true feedback of your lessons." (FG T1)	Teachers maintained friendly body language and cheerful tones to cultivate engagement.

	“Without interacting, you cannot get the desired outcome...they will not respond if you are not approachable.” (FG T2)	CO2 engaged students by asking them act as active reviewers of the content presented instead of just passive listeners.
Classroom Environment	“We can build up a very warm and loving relationship ...they will feel safe in the classroom.” (FG T1)	CO2 admitted to a mistake on the board, normalising mistakes and creating a safe space for students to ask questions without fear.
	“Teachers need to acknowledge that students matter...they know that the teacher loves them and really cares for them and their opinion matters.” (FG T1)	CO1 used conflict resolution to defuse a rising conflict using calm and inclusive language to keep both parties satisfied.
	“They have to respect me...but there will be a friendly environment (where) they can come with their problems easily.” (FG T1)	

4.4 What strategies and challenges affect the development of positive student-teacher relationships?

While there has been data inferred from the classroom observations conducted as to how teachers handled unique situations and responded to negative ones, the focus group discussion has allowed us to look more closely at the mindset and philosophy that teachers tend to adopt when considering how to handle a situation or deal with negative circumstances when it comes to student-teacher interaction.

4.4.1 Strategies for the development of positive student-teacher interactions

In data from the classroom observations, one teacher handled a unique situation where students were in conflict regarding an issue. However, CO1 defused the situation by interacting with both parties in a calm and soothing manner. Instead of singling out the disruptive student, the teacher asked them to assist the teacher in the front of the class with menial work. Throughout this interaction, CO1 used positive reinforcement such as “No problem”, “I can’t ask a student of mine to come help me in the front?” to make sure all parties felt heard but not insulted. This interaction suggests that student-teacher interaction is instrumental in maintaining not only student-teacher relationships but also maintaining the overall classroom environment.

From the focus group discussion, the participants have discussed several strategies to develop and maintain student-teacher relationships and foster interaction. For example, one participant noted the importance of sharing real life experiences and how that helps them become more relatable to the students (FG T1). This point was agreed on and then further developed by FG T2 who further added that the use of pop culture references from music or movies might be an effective way to foster a rapport between students and teachers. When asked whether they draw any inspiration from any theoretical backgrounds, FG T1 referred to their use of Vygotsky’s social constructivism (Macblain, 2018) and FG T2 commented on their use of attachment theory as a method for building relationships that keep children motivated. FG T2 also discussed the need to make sure that students can approach the teacher “without getting scolded” and that the teacher is proactively asking students for feedback.

4.4.2 Challenges affecting the development of positive student-teacher interactions

The classroom observations have revealed that there are several barriers to the development of positive student-teacher interactions. In the case of CO1, the aforementioned

example of a conflict between students was also indicative of the challenges that instructors face in the classroom. Conflicts between students can arise for a multitude of reasons and these can hamper interactions with the teacher when he/she tries to mediate. In another interaction, CO3 deals with another challenge to positive-student teacher interaction in the form of faulty classroom materials. In response to the faulty equipment, the teacher had to invest time into fixing and explaining the nature of the problem to the students which does not inspire confidence in the teacher through this interaction and hampers the learning process. Another observation from the classroom of CO2 found that several students did not bring the required copies and materials forcing the teacher to restructure the planned lesson to accommodate the disruption. These were only some examples of the challenges that teachers often face in their classrooms in the pursuit of student-teacher interactions.

The focus group discussion has been quite instrumental in the exploration of this dimension of student-teacher interaction because they have been able to expound and explain the thought processes that allow them to recognise some of the challenges that they face in teaching. All participants have noted and indicated a range of issues ranging from a lack of training and parental involvement to cultural pressure on teachers and instructors to institutional concerns such as a lack of recognition, appreciation and fair compensation. These can be seen in the forms of a lack of resources in, “we are not trained enough to conduct the classes for specially challenged students” (FG T1), and “Teachers need to go to a counsellor as well...the emotional buildups, they get to talk about it” (FG T2). These statements are indicative of a general sentiment that teachers are not invested heavily enough into which can weigh on instructors’ minds and present itself as a barrier to developing proper relationships through student-teacher interaction. Another worrying trend that the participants have discussed is the cultural shift in parental responsibility that teachers

feel are diminishing. All the participants have discussed how they feel like “parents...do not care...they’re less involved in their children’s life” (FG T2) and as such all responsibility is placed upon the teacher, “Parents...completely want to rely on the teachers only...they become reluctant to get involved” (FG T1). This might place undue stress on teachers when interacting with the children as they feel burdened with a responsibility that should be shared between parents and teachers. Furthermore, teachers have also expressed concerns with institutional issues such as a lack of fair pay or appreciation and consideration for what they feel is a thankless job at times. This can be seen in, “if a teacher is not getting the proper remuneration...he or she will never be interested to teach” (FG T2) as well in a further comment, “a teacher needs to feel that yes, his or her contribution matters” (FG T2).

Table 4. Findings from Classroom Observation and FGD in Joint-Display Analysis

Themes	Relevant Quotes from FGD	Information from Classroom Observations
Strategies	“Sometimes students fight...and we have to stop it then and there...we try to resolve the problem by guiding them back to the right way.” (FG T1)	Conflict resolution by CO1 asking students to reflect on their actions before engaging with them on the task again.
	“Sometimes you have to adjust your lesson plan based on the mood of the students...if they’re not interested you have to change the way you deliver the lesson.” (FG T2)	CO5 adapted the activity on the go to adapt to diminishing amounts of student interest.

	“I think our culture is very important...we can relate examples from Bangladeshi society or religion to explain topics” (FG T3)	CO2 included relevant and relatable examples such as cricket, food and cars.
Challenges	“Sometimes there are too many students in the class...you cannot give individual attention to each of them” (FG T2)	Large classroom sizes force teachers to limit solo interactions in favour of group instruction.
	“We don’t get much training on pedagogy...most training is about content, not how to handle students” (FG T3)	Strong lack of investment into teacher training, pedagogy is apparent. For example, in CO2, time was wasted managing faulty equipment.
	“Parents are also disengaged...they don’t want to come to Parent Teacher Meetings or follow up with their children’s studies” (FG T1)	CO2 had several interruptions when taking the class because of missing materials from the students. Parental oversight would have lowered the number of missing items and shared the burden of responsibility between both parties instead of just the teacher.

4.5 Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 is representative of the findings from the data collection conducted on classroom observations and the focus group discussion held at Mangrove School, Dhaka in order to understand the dynamics of student-teacher interactions in shaping positive learning environments. The first data was collected on five teachers conducting classes for students from grades 4 to 8 and the second data was collected to understand the perspectives on student-teacher interaction from three experienced teachers. The findings were indicative of the fact that positive student-teacher

interactions were useful in establishing positive learning environments through motivation, engagement and healthy classrooms. A number of strategies for the development of positive classroom environments were identified alongside challenges and barriers to the development of these environments. The findings lend credence to the idea that constructive student-teacher interactions play a strong role in creating positive and healthy learning environments.

Chapter Five

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings from Chapter 4 by analysing them through the lenses of the theoretical bases provided in Chapter 2. The findings have then been further analysed across the themes of (Motivation), (Engagement), (Classroom Environment), (Strategies for the development of positive learning environments) and (Challenges against the development of positive learning environments) derived from the research objectives in order to satisfactorily address the research questions. This has allowed the results to find a place in the pedagogical discussion surrounding the topic of student-teacher interaction and making it suitable for Bangladeshi contexts (Rabbi et al., 2024).

5.2 Student-teacher interactions and their effects on Motivation, Engagement and Classroom Environments

The findings suggested that student-teacher interaction have significant impact of the dimensions of motivation, engagement and the overall classroom environment. Data collected have implied that student-teacher interaction is the main means of addressing these dimensions for learners in the classroom.

5.2.1 Motivation

The results from the findings in Chapter 4 suggest that teachers consistently use positive student-teacher interactions for a multitude of reasons. Positive reinforcement, tonality as well as inclusivity were amongst the ways in which positive student-teacher interactions have been used in the classroom to boost and engage the motivation of students by teachers. The findings from the classroom observations further suggest that the aforementioned positive student-teacher interactions are in practice whereas the focus group discussion revealed an emphasis on encouragement and positive feedback. These findings are in alignment with the theoretical framework of the Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020). The teachers were found often addressing the three tenets of this theory, autonomy, competence and connectedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Autonomy (Kharroubi & ElMediouni, 2024) was addressed through offering situations and opportunities for students to express themselves. Competence was acknowledged and reinforced through constant and consistent assurance and verbal praise, for example by FG T2's attempts to incorporate a lagging student into the classroom by reassurance and reminding them that, "he is also able to do it". Connectedness was also established by attempts by teachers to build rapport and connection between students and the respective teachers. The discussion also finds support through congruence with research done (Roorda et al., 2017) that the inclusion of this theory in student-teacher interaction is known to positively impact learning outcomes when integrated properly, especially in Bangladeshi contexts and classrooms.

5.2.2 Engagement

The data has not failed to establish the relationship between positive student-teacher interaction and classroom engagement. Teachers from both the classroom observations and the

focus group discussion have reported on the importance of being approachable, friendly and incorporating novel aspects into the lesson when attempting to elicit proper feedback and participation in the classroom (FG T1, FG T2). This finding finds research justification with assertions that engagement is influenced heavily by the quality of student-teacher relationships and interactions (Roorda et al., 2017). Theoretical justification can be provided through the work done in Attachment Theory (Holmes, 2014) which posits that students are more often than not more responsive to teachers that they think are supportive emotionally and otherwise. Students are more likely to take perceived risks such as asking questions or joining discussions if they feel that they are less likely to face negative outcomes as a result of participation according to this theory. Thus, the instructor's role in making the student feel more secure in participating comes about as a result of the student-teacher relationship and the student-teacher interactions that shape them.

Furthermore, (Hamre & Pianta, 2001) also implies that the nature of student-teacher relationships often dictates future learning outcomes and overall participation. Several of the teachers from the focus group discussion have spoken about the negative role of rigidity and overt maintenance of discipline which is in alignment with research explored in previous chapters (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Sakiz et al., 2012; Nel Noddings, 2002).

5.2.3 Classroom Environments

Another correlation found in both studies is an active and conscious effort to create positive learning environments in the classroom for students through the use of student-teacher interactions. In the classroom observations, the observation of CO1 where the instructor used calming and inclusive words to defuse a verbal conflict between students was demonstrative of the fact that even a single instance of effective student-teacher interaction can retain the equilibrium

of a classroom environment (Arifin et al., 2024). These positive interactions also fall in line with research done (Telli, 2016) that strongly supports the notion that interpersonal behaviour is crucial to the effectiveness of the teaching being done. This example of preventative interpersonal behaviour is crucial to the maintenance and regulation of a learning conducive classroom environment.

The discussed theoretical framework of Care Theory (Nel Noddings, 2002) finds some of its characteristics reflected in the focus group discussion conducted. In the focus group discussion, the instructors discussed a need for healthy equilibrium between both authority and approachability. The holistic view of teaching presented in Care Theory which prioritises healthy relationships and growth for a learner instead of a single-minded focus on academic achievement, instead choosing a view of the learner as a whole. These views suggest that the classroom is more organic and dynamic than static and that instructors play an active role in maintaining and regulating this learning environment.

5.3 Strategies and Challenges in the development of positive learning environments

From the studies conducted, several insights into the perspectives of instructors on their perceived strategies and challenges when using positive student-teacher interactions to build healthy learning environments. Certain theoretical implications made earlier in the paper were not as supported by the data while certain other implications were supported and solidified by the data analysed.

5.3.1 Strategies for the development of positive learning environments

There were a variety of strategies involved including but not limited to conflict resolution using student-teacher interaction, building rapport through the use of personal stories and relatable cultural references to bridge the supposed cultural gap between students and teachers. These strategies were inferred from the classroom observations and shared more directly by the participants of the focus group discussions. The teacher's use of conflict resolution (CO1) is a practical application of the idea that mediating conflicts that result in face-threatening scenarios being negated is a good strategy to maintain positive interpersonal relationships (Peng et al., 2014; Vinokur et al., 2024). The teacher's (CO1) strategy of mediating the situation into a collaborative task is also reflective of previous research done on the usage of face-saving strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1988). The general usage of positive reinforcement and language also reflected conscious strategies in making students feel more comfortable in their learning environments. In the focus group discussion, almost all of the participants have touched on the need for strong interpersonal relationships driven by positive student-teacher interactions. Mentions of building rapport akin to family (FG T1) and reinforcing the freedom of opinions (FG T2) have also been mentioned as valid strategies. However, they have also discussed the need to maintain fine lines of authority which is supported by research done that indicates the effectiveness of classroom environments with high attention to discipline and authority while also paired with strong student-teacher relationships (Aunola et al., 2000; Steinberg et al., 1992; Lee, 2012). This congruence is suggestive of the effectiveness of building positive relationships through positive student-teacher interactions to ultimately result in a cohesive learning environment.

5.3.2 Challenges in the development of positive learning environments

There were certain assumptions made based on previous research done by (Talukder et al., 2021) that suggested that large classroom sizes were an obstacle to creating positive learning

environments through the hindrance of lesson delivery and lack of opportunities for student-teacher interaction. However, the findings have suggested that teachers have faced difficulties elsewhere. The classroom observations and, especially the focus group discussion, have strongly implied the challenges to be a lack of systemic effort and investment, coupled with institutional barriers and reported cultural shifts.

Findings from the classroom observations found disruptions such as conflicts between students and issues with materials and equipment. This resource shortage has been discussed in previous research explored on the topic (Talukder et al., 2021) where lacking in infrastructure have proven to be consistent in Bangladeshi learning contexts. These lacking in infrastructure have also been noted in concerns raised during the focus group discussion. These concerns include a lack of pedagogical training, diminishing parental involvement (Kovács et al., 2024) and little to no institutional investment and support. These factors are consistent with previous studies on the topic in the context of Bangladeshi learning environments (Chowdhury & Sarkar, 2018; Talukder et al., 2021) which also point to such factors as detrimental to the ability of teachers to interact with students meaningfully. Teachers have expressed sentiments of being given little recognition and inconsistent remuneration for their efforts (FG T2). A lack of investment (Liu et al., 2024) into improving these conditions can only create a negative feedback loop of teachers that feel burdened into thankless jobs, naturally hindering their ability to use student-teacher interactions to create positive learning environments. The growing disconnects between parents and the responsibilities they have in the growth and development of their children has also been pointed out as a growing cause of stress for teachers. Research conducted (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014) on inconsistencies in parental involvement in Bangladeshi contexts align with these findings. These issues coalesce into a vicious system where the teachers lack adequate support, leading to a diminished capacity

for student-teacher interactions (Godhe, 2023) to influence the classroom which ultimately hinders the development of positive learning environments in the classroom.

5.4 Proposed Framework

The findings and discussions have allowed for the emergence of a proposed framework representing the role of student-teacher interaction, their theoretical bases and the outcome regarding motivation, engagement and classroom environment. Based on the findings, a framework (Figure 1) has been proposed based on RQ1.

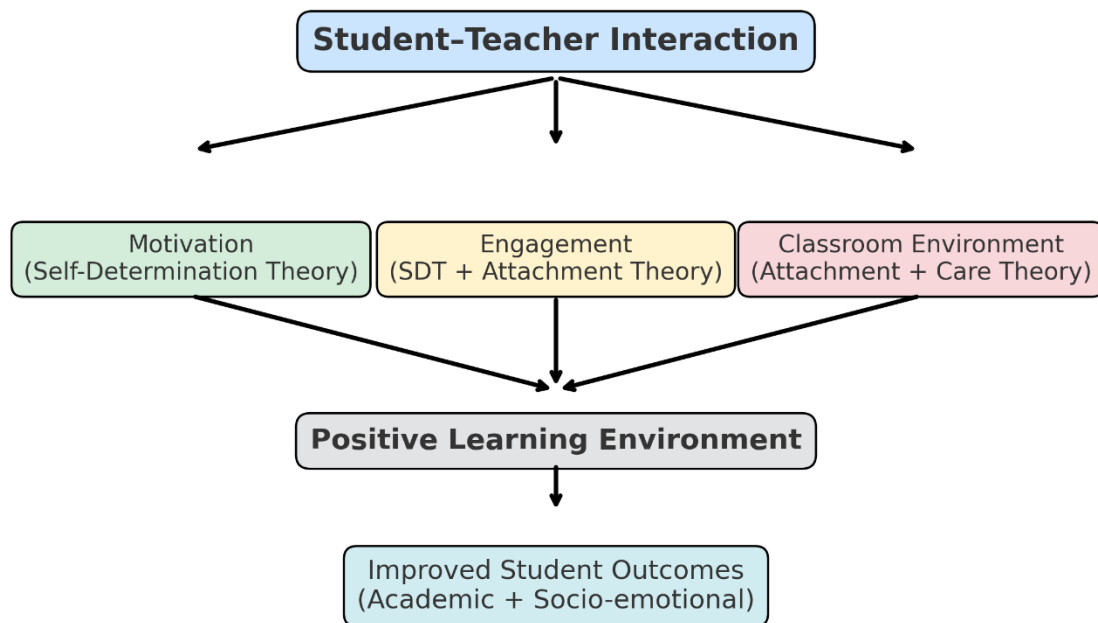


Figure 1. Proposed Framework for student-teacher interaction regarding motivation, engagement and the classroom environment

This framework (Figure 2) observes the role of strategies and barriers to student-teacher interaction in the establishment of positive learning environments. The findings of the research conducted have shown several dimensions to the two themes of the second research question (RQ2) such as conflict resolution, adaptive teaching methods for strategy. For challenges, dimensions such as limited training and a lack of parental involvement have also presented themselves as factors influencing the overall learning environment.

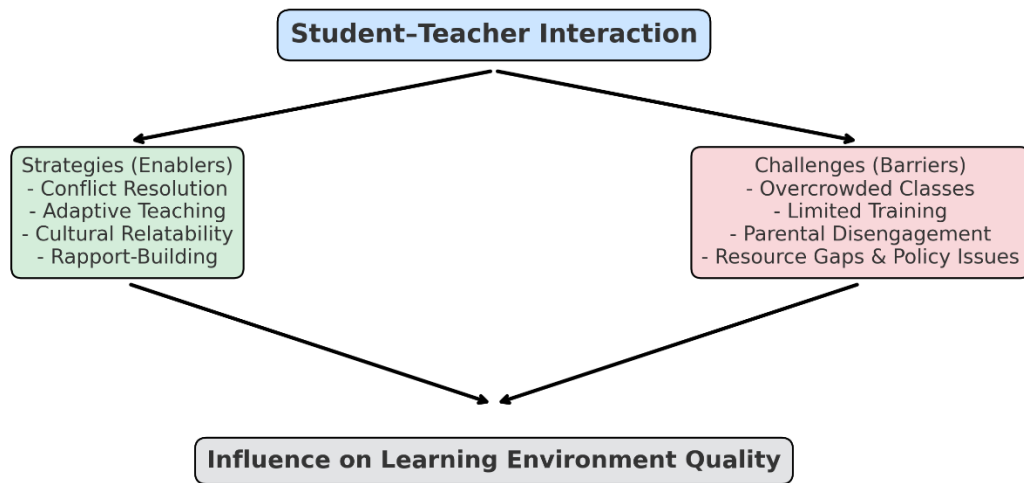


Figure 2. Proposed Framework for student-teacher interaction regarding barriers and challenges to the establishment of positive learning environments

This framework (Figure 2) observes the role of strategies and barriers to student-teacher interaction in the establishment of positive learning environments. The findings of the research conducted have shown several dimensions to the two themes of the second research objective (RO2) such as conflict resolution, adaptive teaching methods for strategy. For challenges, dimensions such as limited training and a lack of parental involvement have also presented themselves as factors influencing the overall learning environment.

5.5 Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to explore the role of student-teacher interactions in establishing positive learning environments within Bangladeshi classrooms. The findings from the

data collected and the studies and analysis conducted are indicative of the importance of student-teacher interactions in the dimensions of student engagement, motivation and the classroom environment. The classroom observations were key in understanding how teachers practically used student-teacher interactions to motivate and engage students which fell in alignment with the principles of Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2020) and Attachment Theory (Holmes, 2014). The focus group discussion was also instrumental in relating the values of Care Theory (Noddings, 2002) to the use of student-teacher interactions by teachers to create warm and friendly learning environments for students to pursue knowledge in. This in turn, validated previously explored research expounding the virtues of positive student-teacher relationships and positive learning outcomes (Roorda et al., 2017; Hamre & Pianta, 2001).

RQ1 asked how student-teacher interactions influence student engagement, motivation, and the classroom environment. The studies demonstrated that positive student-teacher interactions in the form of constant and consistent encouragement and emotional support were quite effective in creating more participative and inclusive classrooms confirming existing theoretical perspectives (Ryan & Deci, 2020; Noddings 2002).

RQ2 asked what strategies and challenges affected the development of positive student-teacher relationships. Several strategies were identified and discussed over the course of the studies such as positive reinforcement, respectful conflict resolution and using relatable references reflecting previously discussed frameworks (MacBlain, 2018; Brown & Levinson, 1988). More than a few challenges also were identified including a lack of pedagogical training and investment, lackings in institutional infrastructure alongside a lack of parental involvement. The successful implementation of the strategies found were obstructed by these issues, which are emblematic of studies conducted previously on similar topics (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Talukder et al., 2021).

There have been certain limitations present in the study. Chief among these constraints has been the reliance on a purposively selected sample group of teachers from a single institution, Mangrove School. This has had impacts on the generalisation of the research conducted and the data collected. The focus on qualitative methods in both the classroom observations and the focus group discussions might have added an element of observation bias. The research has also limited itself to the perception of teachers and therefore, little consideration has been given to the opinions of students on whom positive student-teacher interactions have been analysed. Another concern might have been the collection of data from only English teachers which may not be reflective of contexts and realities in the broader spectrum of Bangladeshi educational contexts. Limited access to articles and journals that are relevant to the topic on account of financial constraints have also hindered the progress of the research.

This study has attempted to fill in the gaps in the literature present in the research, especially in the context of Bangladeshi EMI classrooms. Future research conducted could examine the topic more closely by adopting mixed method approaches to more accurately reflect the contexts and realities of the Bangladeshi educational system. Future research could also explore similar topics in Bangladeshi contexts by addressing the role of student-teacher interactions in online platforms due to the nature of globalisation and changing trends in education (Xiao et al., 2023).

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Appendices

Appendix A: Teacher Observation Checklist

1. Lesson plan
2. Teaching Materials
3. Student-teacher interaction
4. Teacher-student interaction
5. Duration of the class
6. Use of encouraging words
7. Seat arrangement
8. Challenges (Disruptions)
9. Motivation
10. Engagement
11. Changes to classroom environment
12. Observed strategies by the teacher
13. Feedback strategies by the teacher
14. Empathy

Appendix B: Focus Group Discussion Protocol

Questions

1. Why are student–teacher interactions so central in ELT classrooms?

2. How do teacher–student interactions shape learner engagement?
3. What kinds of teacher behaviours or feedback most influence learner motivation?
4. Can you share an example of interaction strategies that have worked well to keep students engaged and motivated?
5. What aspects of teacher interaction help create a safe and inclusive classroom?
6. How do strong teacher–student relationships affect the overall classroom atmosphere?
7. What interaction practices reduce anxiety and encourage participation?
8. What strategies do you find most effective for building positive student–teacher relationships?
9. How can teachers balance authority with rapport and trust?
10. What role does teacher availability (e.g., after class, feedback channels) play in sustaining relationships?
11. What challenges make it difficult to build positive teacher–student relationships?
12. How do institutional or cultural factors shape these challenges?
13. If advising novice teachers, what would be your top suggestion for overcoming these issues?
14. If you could give one key insight about the role of student–teacher interaction in ELT, what would it be?