

How Teacher Support Affects Migrant Children's Learning Satisfaction

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Abstract: *Teacher support significantly affects student learning and directly relates to their academic development. Learning satisfaction is the subjective perception and evaluation of learning quality on the part of the student, which represents, to certain extent, the quality of education. Based on data from a questionnaire survey of 1251 migrant children in grades three throughout six, this study analyzed how teacher support impacted the learning satisfaction of migrant children. Research findings indicated that teacher support had a significantly positive effect on migrant children's learning satisfaction; and that teacher support indirectly and positively affects their learning satisfaction through the separate mediating effect of their learning engagement as well as via the chain mediating effects of their academic adjustment and learning engagement.*

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IN CHINA, migrant children, also referred to as “children of migrant workers,” are those who move to urban from rural areas with their migrant worker parents and are under the age of 18. This group emerged amid the accelerated social transformation in China. Statistical data show that in 2022, there were a total of 13.6468 million children of migrant workers enrolled in compulsory education schools, including 9.6986 million primary school students and 3.9483 million junior secondary school students.

Migrant children often find themselves in a relatively underprivileged or marginalized position in schools and have more academic adjustment problems than their non-migrant peers. Strengthening migrant children support systems to guarantee their access to public basic education services and improve their learning satisfaction and quality of education concerns educational equity of the nation. It has a direct impact on the achievement of developmental goals of balanced compulsory education and social harmony.

According to the ecology of human development theory, the microsystem composed of the family, peers, and school is the primary environmental determinant of the individual's development. Moreover, research has revealed that human factors have a greater impact on student learning satisfaction than physical factors. The in-class learning environment built on teacher-student interactions is an important factor for students' academic performance. Teacher support is the supportive attitude and behavior of a teacher perceived by students in their learning, which directly or indirectly affect their learning engagement and ultimately impact their academic performance. Recent studies found that teacher support significantly positively predicts academic adjustment and engagement in secondary school students. Based on existing theoretical and empirical research, this study developed a theoretical model for the effects of teacher support on migrant children's learning satisfaction and analyzes the paths of the impacts.

A Theoretical Model for the Effects of Teacher Support on Migrant Children's Learning Satisfaction

Teacher support can positively predict student learning engagement, and migrant children's learning engagement directly affects their learning satisfaction. Hence, the present study proposed hypothesis one: teacher support impacts migrant children's learning satisfaction through the mediation of student learning engagement. Student learning satisfaction enhances as their learning needs are met, or their learning goals are achieved. Given this, hypothesis two was put forward: student academic adjustment mediates the effect of teacher support on migrant children's learning satisfaction.

The literature indicates that there are interplays between the four variables of teacher support, student academic adjustment, student learning engagement, and student learning satisfaction. Thereby, structural equation modeling was adopted to define the structural relationships between teacher support and migrant children's learning satisfaction. Hypothesis three was posed: teacher support affects migrant children's learning satisfaction via the chain mediating effects of student academic adjustment and learning engagement.

Research Methods

Research Participants

Using convenient sampling, children of migrant workers were selected as research participants from three schools from Beijing, Shanghai, and Wuhan and questionnaire surveyed. A total of 1,251 (705 males and 546 females) valid participants were included, ranging from grade 3 throughout 6, with 288, 297, 330, and 336 students from the four grades, respectively.

Research Tools

The Migrant Children Learning Satisfaction Scale

This is a self-developed four-point scale with 38 items grouped in six dimensions: classroom environment, teaching techniques, teacher-student relationship, peer relationship, family relationship, and academic achievement. The coefficient of internal consistency reliability of the scale is 0.89, and its split-half reliability coefficient is 0.87. Items with a less-than-0.3 factor loading were deleted after the first confirmatory factor analysis, and after that, an additional confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. The results show that the factor loading of each item is between 0.33 and 0.76, indicating good construct validity of the scale. The overall goodness-of-fit indicators of the model by confirmatory factor analysis are $\chi^2/df = 4.10$, NFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.95, RMSEA = 0.05, indicating good construct validity of the questionnaire.

The Teacher Support Scale

The six-point student-perceived teacher supportive behavior scale developed by Ouyang (2005) has relatively high reliability and validity, including 19 items in three dimensions: learning support, emotional support, and capability support. The three factors could explain 50.64% of the total variance, indicating that the questionnaire has good construct validity. The reliability of the questionnaire is 0.87. The higher the student scores on the questionnaire, the more teacher support he or she receives.

The Student Academic Adjustment Scale

“School adjustment scales for Chinese primary and secondary school students” were developed by Jiang et al. (2017), among which the scale for the 3rd-6th graders was used in this study. It adopts a five-point rating method, including 17 items in three dimensions: learning motivation, learning skill, and learning difficulty. The correlation coefficient between each item and its corresponding dimension ranges from 0.39 to 0.61, all above the significance level of 0.01. The correlation coefficients between dimensions are lower than the dimension-total correlation coefficient, indicating the scale has desirable construct validity. The test-retest reliability of the scale is 0.78, and its criteri-

on validity is good. The higher the student scores on the scale, the better the student's academic adjustment.

The Migrant Children Learning Engagement Scale

The self-developed five-point scale for measuring learning engagement of migrant children includes 31 items grouped three dimensions: cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, and behavioral engagement. The scale has an internal consistency coefficient of 0.97 and a split-half reliability coefficient of 0.93. Confirmatory factor analysis shows that the factor loading of each item in its respective dimension is between 0.68 and 0.83, indicating good construct validity of the scale, which is also confirmed by the overall goodness-of-fit indicators of the model: $\chi^2/df = 4.46$, NFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.92, CFI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.06.

Research Findings

The Direct Effects of Teacher Support on Migrant Children's Learning Satisfaction

Teacher support could significantly and directly predict migrant children's learning satisfaction. The academic guidance and emotional care from the teacher made migrant children feel respected and recognized, thus generating a strong sense of identification with and belonging to the school and fueling positive emotional experience of learning in them. Teacher support could also positively impact academically struggling migrant children by enhancing their self-confidence, boosting their sense of hope, and encouraging self-motivation in them.

The Separate Mediating Effect of Learning Engagement

Teacher support could effectively instigate student learning engagement. Student learning engagement posed a separate mediating effect on the relation between teacher support and migrant children's learning satisfaction, which confirmed hypothesis one. Teacher support suits the needs of migrant children for a sense of security, promotes the development of harmonious teacher-student relationships, improves their academic resilience, and stimulates their intrinsic motivation, thus enhancing their level of learning engagement. The more teacher support migrant children obtain, the greater their sense of hope for their studies, resulting in their increased investment of time and energy in learning, which can help upgrade their academic performance and consequently, their learning satisfaction.

The Chain Mediating Effects of Student Academic Adjustment and Learning Engagement

The connection between teacher support and student academic adjustment exists in various student groups. This study expanded the scope of research on the topic by targeting at migrant children, and thus, increased the generalizability of the research results. Increased teacher support made the smooth adjustment of migrant children to their studies possible by heightening their interest in learning and boosting their pursuit of self-development, and thus led to increased learning engagement of this group. Better completion of learning tasks contributed to improving their academic performance, generating enhanced learning satisfaction in them. As a result, hypothesis three was verified.

Conclusion

Based on the ecology of human development theory, this study conducted a relatively comprehensive analysis of the relations between teacher support and the academic adjustment, learning engagement, and learning satisfaction of migrant children. A construct model for the external and internal factors affecting migrant children's learning satisfaction was created, which corroborated the hypotheses of the study.

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