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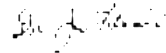
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This dissertation, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the College of Leadership and Professional Studies of Abilene Christian University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership



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School of Educational Leadership

Unlocking Academic Success: Exploring the Interplay of Relational Capacity in Educational
Leadership and Student Achievement

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

By
Veronica A. Robinson

October 2024

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Abstract

This dissertation explored the factors that influenced secondary teachers' perceptions relational capacity between teachers and students and their influence on student achievement within educational settings. The study was grounded in the recognition that relational capacity plays a pivotal role in fostering supportive teacher-student relationships, which were essential for enhancing academic outcomes and overall student well-being. The research problem addressed the need to understand how enhancing relational capacity in education could positively influence student achievement by creating an environment where students felt valued, understood, and motivated to excel academically. Using a qualitative approach, this research employed semistructured interviews as the primary data collection method. Ten educators from general education settings in North Texas participated in the study, sharing their perspectives and experiences regarding the strategies and challenges associated with building relational capacity. The sample was selected to encompass diverse educational backgrounds and teaching experiences, providing a rich basis for exploring the complexities of relational dynamics in educational contexts. The major themes derived from my analysis underscored the practical implications for educational practice, highlighting the significance of effective teaching strategies. These key findings emphasized the importance of active listening, consistent communication, personalized interactions, and fostering trust through reliability and consistency. Each of these strategies contributes to building stronger teacher-student relationships, ultimately enhancing the overall educational experience. Additional strategies identified included providing constructive feedback, creating safe learning environments, demonstrating empathy, and offering positive reinforcement to enhance student engagement and academic achievement. Moreover, the study highlighted the significance of involving students in decision-making processes, mentoring

and advising, modeling respectful behavior, celebrating diversity, and supporting extracurricular activities as integral components of effective relational capacity-building. In conclusion, this research enhanced the discourse on relational capacity in education by highlighting best practices for cultivating and maintaining positive teacher-student relationships. By providing empirical evidence and practical insights, this dissertation underscored the effectiveness of building relational capacity and its positive influence on student achievement. Future research should prioritize longitudinal studies to evaluate how sustained relational capacity-building practices influenced student learning and achievement across various educational contexts. The study emphasized the importance for educators to engage in ongoing reflection on their practices and solicit feedback from students, thereby fostering a supportive learning environment conducive to both academic success and personal growth.

Keywords: Efficacy, efficiency, engagement, relational capacity, relationships, student achievement, support

Table of Contents

Abstract	iv
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	x
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Statement of Problem.....	4
Purpose of the Study	5
Research Questions	6
Definitions of Key Terms	6
Summary	7
Chapter 2: Literature Review	8
Theoretical Framework	9
Wang (2022) and Choi and Lee (2021) on Relational Capacity	10
Koenen et al. (2022) and Pitt et al. (2020) Theories	13
The Multifaceted Dynamics of Relational Capacity in Education	16
Empirical Studies	20
Teacher-Student Relationships	23
Transformational Leadership and Collaboration	24
Professional Learning Communities and Collaboration	24
Interpersonal Trust and Culture	26
Classroom Expectations and Empirical Analysis	26
Synthesis and Critical Analysis	30
Synthesis of Common Themes	31
Teacher-Student Relationships	31
Perspective on Relational Capacity	33
Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and Academic Leadership	36
Navigating Social Cohesion, Diversity, and Educational Equity	44
Nurturing Relationships, Building Capacity	46
Education and Policy	51
Transformational Leadership	52
Gaps in Research.....	56
Summary	60
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	63
Research Design and Method	64
Population and Sample	66
Materials/Instruments	69
Data Collection and Analysis Procedures	70
Keys to an Effective Interview	71

In Vivo Coding	73
Steps in MAXQDA	74
Sample Transcript Excerpt.....	75
Coding Process and Data Analysis	76
MAXQDA Coding Process.....	78
Researcher Role	83
Ethical Considerations	85
Assumptions.....	87
Limitations	88
Delimitations.....	90
Summary	90
Chapter 4: Results	92
Results.....	93
Enhanced Student Motivation and Engagement	96
Improved Classroom Environment	97
Positive Influence on Academic Achievement	98
Active Listening and Empathy.....	99
Consistent Communication and Feedback	100
Overcoming Barriers to Engagement.....	101
Interconnectedness of Cognitive Engagement, Self-Efficacy, and Academic Achievement	103
Role of Relational Capacity in Enhancing Cognitive Engagement	104
Theoretical Framework of Effective Educational Practices	105
Seven Themes	106
Theme 1: Influence of Relational Capacity on Student Learning Outcomes	106
Theme 2: Relational Capacity During Critical Educational Stages	107
Theme 3: Personalized Interactions and Engagement Strategies	107
Theme 4: Challenges and Barriers to Building Relational Capacity	109
Theme 5: Socioeconomic Status and Its Influence on Relational Capacity	110
Theme 6: Role of Parental Engagement and Support Systems.....	111
Theme 7: Consistency, Routines, and Incentives in Relational Capacity	112
Best Practices for Building Relational Capacity	114
Summary	116
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations	117
Discussion	117
Limitations	124
Implications.....	125
Recommendations.....	127
Recommendations for Practical Application	129
Recommendations for Future Research	131
Summary	134
References	136

Appendix A: Principal Letter	143
Appendix B: Prospective Interview Participant Email	144
Appendix C: Prospective Interview Participant Flyer	146
Appendix D: Consent Form	148
Appendix E: Interview Questions	150
Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter	151

List of Tables

Table 1. Wang, Choi, and Lee on Relational Capacity	12
Table 2. Koenen and Pitt's Theories	15
Table 3. Participant Demographics: General Ed Educator Participants Race and Gender	67
Table 4. Sample of Participant Responses and Number of Theme Occurrences	81
Table 5. Linking Research Questions with Themes	94

List of Figures

Figure 1. Frequency of Research Participants Mentioning Information Related to the Seven Themes	113
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The relationship between students and teachers is a pivotal element in academic achievement (Koenen et al., 2022). Field (2003) posited that building relational capacity affected student achievement, emphasizing the critical role of positive teacher-student relationships. This study focused on the nuanced dynamics of teacher-student relationships, investigating whether educators who established positive connections with students yielded different outcomes in terms of student achievement (Culver, 2020). Specifically, Koenen et al. (2022) examined the association between student achievement and the relational capacity fostered between teachers and all students.

Newberry (2010) highlighted the significant and positive effects of supportive teacher-student relationships on student engagement and feelings of security within the classroom environment. Koenen et al. (2022) revealed that the dynamics between teachers and students extended far beyond conventional interactions, permeating the very fabric of the academic journey. This nuanced exploration provided insights into the profound effect that student-centered teacher connections could have on various facets, clarifying their significance.

The notion of student-centered teacher connections, as illuminated by Newberry (2010), prompted an exploration of the multifaceted dimensions inherent in these relationships. These connections went beyond the mere transactional aspects of teaching; they encapsulated a holistic approach that encompassed emotional, social, and academic elements. Culver (2020) emphasized that teachers could create an environment conducive to fostering a sense of belonging, empowerment, and emotional well-being by acknowledging and nurturing each student's individuality, taking into account the teacher-student ratio.

Field (2003) explored social and emotional learning programs, illuminating their crucial role in skill development and proactive addressing of educational challenges. These programs, designed to enhance academic proficiency and emotional intelligence, became pivotal in creating a well-rounded educational experience (Yassine et al., 2020). The significance of such programs lay in their ability to bridge the gap between cognitive and affective domains, fostering a comprehensive approach to student development. Field (2003) highlighted the importance of scrutinizing potential challenges and issues that might arise in implementing social and emotional learning programs for educators. The research suggested that while these programs held immense promise, their outcomes might have been contingent on various factors that could influence the effectiveness and success of social and emotional learning programs for educators. According to Field (2003) these factors may include:

1. **Teacher Training:** The extent and quality of training provided to educators on implementing social and emotional learning initiatives. Proper training ensures that teachers are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively integrate these programs into their teaching practices.
2. **School Culture and Environment:** The overall culture and environment of the school, including the level of support from school leadership, the availability of resources, and the emphasis placed on social and emotional development.
3. **Student Needs and Diversity:** The diverse needs and backgrounds of students within the school community. Social and emotional learning programs must be tailored to meet the specific needs of all students, taking into account factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, and individual learning styles.

4. **Community Support:** The level of support and involvement from parents, caregivers, and the broader community. Engaging families and community members in social and emotional learning initiatives can enhance their effectiveness and sustainability.
5. **Program Implementation Strategies:** The strategies and approaches used to implement social and emotional learning programs, such as curriculum design, classroom practices, and assessment methods. Effective implementation strategies are essential for ensuring that these programs significantly benefit students' social and emotional development.

By considering these various factors, educators and policymakers can better understand the complexities involved in implementing social and emotional learning programs and make informed decisions to optimize their effectiveness (Field, 2003).

Understanding these nuances became imperative in refining and optimizing the design and execution of social and emotional learning initiatives, to ensure that they effectively met the diverse needs of students (Yassine et al., 2020).

The research revealed the intricate interplay among teacher-student relationships, student-centered methodologies, and social and emotional learning programs, weaving a complex fabric that transcended conventional educational boundaries (Culver, 2020). This exploration extended beyond the realm of academic achievement, emphasizing the creation of an educational environment where students experienced both academic support and emotional nourishment. Furthermore, Field's (2003) research initiated a rigorous scrutiny of the outcomes associated with social and emotional learning programs, adding depth to our understanding of their qualitative effect on educational practices. Scrutinizing potential issues in program outcomes was instrumental in refining strategies and methodologies, maximizing the intended benefits and

contributing to a more comprehensive and practical educational framework (Yassine et al., 2020).

The research by Newberry (2010) and Field (2003) underscored the transformative potential embedded in supportive teacher-student relationships and student-centered teacher connections. It further illuminated the integral role of social and emotional learning programs in shaping students' academic and emotional landscape (Culver, 2020). This exploration served as a foundation for continued refinement, fostering an educational environment in which students thrived academically and developed the essential skills and resilience needed to navigate the complexities of life beyond the classroom (Koenen et al., 2022). Emphasizing the significance of Emotional Intelligence (EI), Wu et al. (2019) demonstrated its direct link with teachers' self-efficacy and its indirect association with teaching performance. Recognizing the need for training as part of preservice teachers' preparation, this study investigated its effect on teacher work engagement and student academic achievement (Wang, 2022).

Durlak et al. (2011) emphasized the role of daily teacher-student interactions in establishing a foundation for students' sense of safety, belonging, and security. The study explored how positive teacher-student relationships contributed to student success inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, it delved into the qualitative aspects of these relationships, providing a deeper understanding of their developmental processes and effects on education (Wang, 2022).

Statement of Problem

A significant problem in the educational field is the belief that student success is only determined by their level of intellect, social status, and poverty. All students can be successful, and it takes all stakeholders to ensure that success. However, according to Alter and Haydon

(2017), achieving this success requires the collective effort of all individuals or groups involved in the educational process, including students themselves, teachers, parents, administrators, policymakers, and community members. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration and support from various stakeholders to create an environment conducive to student success, encompassing academic achievement, personal growth, and overall well-being (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

Investing in positive teacher-student relationships significantly boosts student achievement (Alter & Haydon, 2017). However, researchers have also uncovered challenges and adverse outcomes associated with building relational capacity and its effects on student achievement. Although studies have shown this to be accurate, researchers have also revealed several issues and adverse outcomes connected to building relational capacity and its influence on student achievement (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

Lee (2012) identified a gap in the literature concerning the relationship between students and educators and its influence on student achievement. The study explored the lasting effects of teacher-student relationships, emphasizing their role in shaping students' future relationships (Culver, 2020). Positive teacher-student connections were deemed essential to academic life and broader personal development (Brandisauskiene et al., 2021). Additionally, Koenen et al. (2022) emphasized the enduring significance of teacher-student relationships on academic outcomes over two decades. The data collected aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by examining how relational capacity affects student achievement.

Purpose of the Study

This study examined the influence of building relational capacity on student achievement. By understanding how teachers developed relationships with students and the subsequent

contribution to learning and instruction, the research sought to provide valuable insights into effective educational practices (Wang, 2022). This initiative aimed to implement education programs for educators, equipping them with the knowledge and skills necessary to recognize and prioritize the significance of building relational capacity with their students. By fostering meaningful connections, these programs aimed to enhance educators' abilities to positively affect student achievement, creating an enriched learning environment conducive to academic success (Wang, 2022).

Research Questions

RQ1. How do secondary teachers perceive the importance of relational capacity in influencing student learning outcomes, within the theoretical framework of effective educational practices?

RQ2. In what ways do secondary teachers describe the processes involved in building relational capacity between teachers and students, considering its potential effect on students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement?

RQ3. How do secondary teachers conceptualize the relationship between student cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement, with a specific focus on the role of relational capacity, as informed by the theoretical framework of effective educational practices?

Definitions of Key Terms

Efficacy. The capacity of a product to achieve intended outcomes (Wu et al., 2019).

Efficiency. The production of educational outputs at the lowest resource level (Culver, 2020).

Engagement. Active involvement of students in a learning task (Yassine et al., 2020).

Relational capacity. The level of trust and safety between students and teachers (Pitt et al., 2020).

Relationships. Positive connections foster trust and support in school environments (Yassine et al., 2020).

Student achievement. The extent to which a learner has attained educational goals (Yalçın & Ereş, 2021).

Support. Advocacy for a child's education, providing information to maximize potential (Yassine et al., 2020).

Summary

This research addressed the need for a more profound investigation into the effectiveness of strategies, standard practices, and techniques to improve student achievement. According to Wang (2022) explored the potential outcomes of building relational capacity between teachers and students, seeking to offer evidence-based insights into effective educational practices. The importance of this research was underscored by the widening achievement gap, particularly for marginalized students, and the potential for positive teacher-student relationships to mitigate these disparities (Wang, 2022).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of the qualitative research was to examine the influence of building relational capacity on student achievement. In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework of the study was examined, exploring its intricate connection with the establishment of relational capacity between students and educators, as proposed by Yalçın & Ereş (2021). The discussion highlighted the potential adverse effects on student achievement without such relational capacity.

Yalçın & Ereş (2021) investigated the relationship between high schools' instructional capacities and students' achievement gains. Yalçın & Ereş (2021) utilized a relational screening model and descriptive research method, collecting statistical data on students' high school and UPE success scores from the Ministry of National Education and the Center for Evaluation, Selection, and Placement. Teachers' responses to the developed data collection tool, the Instructional Capacity Scale (ICS), were also considered. The Yalçın and Ereş (2021) study ICS encompassed six subscales: instructional management practices, teacher quality, quality and quantity of curriculum and materials, instructional climate, students' readiness to learn, and financial resources. The data underwent multilevel structural equation modeling (ML-SEM) analysis to determine direct or indirect relationships between dependent and independent variables. Results indicated that teacher quality and students' readiness to learn directly contributed to students' achievement, while there was an indirect relationship between instructional climate and instructional management practices.

Additionally, the chapter delved into Wang's (2022) theory regarding the discourse surrounding capacity building and its persistent and widely discussed nature within the field of education. It particularly focused on its effectiveness in enhancing student achievement. Wang (2022) examined the connection between teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) and students'

academic achievement, considering potential mechanisms underlying this relationship. Three hundred and sixty-five educators from 25 public secondary schools participated in the study, providing data through teacher emotional intelligence (EI) assessments, teacher self-efficacy, and teacher work engagement. In the exploration of the intricate interplay between capacity building, data-driven practices, and leadership styles, Abrams et al. (2020) and Perreault et al. (2020) derived insightful conclusions from their comprehensive research.

Research articles and studies related to the focus and purpose of this study were accessed using Abilene Christian University's (ACU) library and EBSCOhost's OneSearch engine (Wang, 2022). The keywords used for this search included *student achievement*, *relational capacity*, *effectiveness*, *relationships*, *successful educators*, *classroom behavior*, and *efficacy*. This evidence served as the foundation for Wang's (2022) examination of the connection between teachers' emotional intelligence and students' academic achievement.

Theoretical Framework

This study explored the link between student achievement and the relational capacity educators established with students. Wang (2022) presented valid data that solidified the interpretation of relational capacity's influence on student achievement. It examined the effects of classroom management on educators' capacity to foster positive relationships with students and identified variations that could influence the desired outcomes (Choi & Lee, 2021; Wang, 2022).

First, Wang (2022) and Choi and Lee (2021) suggested this was relevant to the proposed study because it provided more insight into factors that impeded building relational capacity. Additionally, it contributed to shaping the argument by challenging various perspectives or ideologies to determine the requirements for ensuring student achievement in relation to building

relational capacity (Pitt et al., 2020). Secondly, Koenen et al. (2022) argued that the theoretical framework supporting the assessment of classroom expectations emphasized a concentration on stand-alone interventions and their effectiveness in influencing student behavior. Within this framework, Pitt et al. (2020) extensively examined the efficacy of different classroom expectations, considering them as distinct interventions.

Wang (2022) and Choi and Lee (2021) on Relational Capacity

At its core, the essence of relational capacity lay in the commitment to treating students as individuals with distinct backgrounds, learning styles, and personal journeys (Wang, 2022). The elements and challenges associated with building relational capacity in an educational context were well articulated by Wang (2022) and Choi and Lee (2021). Relational capacity was grounded in the commitment to view students as unique individuals with diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and personal journeys, as emphasized by Wang (2022). This foundational recognition challenged traditional educational norms that relied on rigid instructional methods. Instead, it advocated for a departure towards a more flexible and responsive approach.

Wang (2022) argued that conceptualizing and defining relational capacity not only provided a comprehensive understanding of its fundamental components but also set the stage for further exploration. Wang (2022) cautioned that this foundational understanding established a framework for a comprehensive examination of empirical evidence, real-world applications, and the practical implications of relational capacity on student achievement. The exploration of relational capacity was anticipated to have evolved as an ongoing process of discovery, progressively revealing deeper insights into the dynamics of relationships within the educational context.

The commitment to treating students as individuals with distinct characteristics suggested a move away from a one-size-fits-all educational model (Choi & Lee, 2021). This shift acknowledged students' diverse needs and backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and effectiveness in the educational environment. This perspective aligned with the assertion by Choi and Lee (2021) that relational capacity contributed to a more inclusive and effective educational environment by considering the rich diversity among students.

One of the crucial components identified as integral to relational capacity was effective communication and mutual understanding, a concept emphasized by Wang (2022). This underscored that for relational capacity to flourish, educators had to possess the ability to convey information effectively while also comprehending their students' unique needs, perspectives, and learning styles. This two-way communication dynamic served as a bridge, fostering shared understanding between educators and students. Building relational capacity required a departure from traditional, uniform instructional approaches. Instead, educators were encouraged to adopt a more personalized and responsive method that recognized and valued the individuality of each student (Wang, 2022). This approach promoted inclusivity, effective communication, and mutual understanding, laying the foundation for more substantial and meaningful relationships within the educational setting. Recognizing the diverse needs of students and fostering effective communication were vital strategies to overcome barriers and enhance relational capacity in education (Choi & Lee, 2021). The concept of relational capacity stood as a testament to the profound recognition of the unique individuality inherent in every student (Wang, 2022). Unlike a standardized or one-size-fits-all approach, relational capacity emphasized the necessity for tailored and individualized strategies in the realm of education (Wang, 2022). This acknowledgment underscored educators' crucial role in understanding and actively responding to

the diverse strengths, challenges, and aspirations of each learner in their care. The following table (see Table 1) underscores the crucial role of educators in understanding and actively responding to the diverse strengths, challenges, and aspirations of each learner in their care, as highlighted by Wang (2022), and Choi and Lee (2021) in their discussion on relational capacity.

Table 1

Wang, Choi, and Lee on Relational Capacity

Components/perspectives	Emphasis/source
Essence of Relational Capacity	Commitment to treating students as unique individuals
Educational Norms	Challenge to traditional norms and rigid methods
Flexible Approach	Advocacy for flexibility and responsiveness
Inclusivity	Recognition of diverse needs and backgrounds
Effective Communication	Mutual understanding through two-way communication
Personalized Instruction	Departure from uniform instructional approaches
Tailored Strategies	Emphasis on individualized strategies
Overcoming Barriers	Recognition of diverse needs and fostering communication
Unique Individuality	Profound recognition of each student's uniqueness
Individualized Strategies	Tailored responses to diverse strengths and challenges

Note. Adapted from “Exploring the Relationship Among Teacher Emotional Intelligence, Work Engagement, Teacher Self-Efficacy, and Student Academic Achievement: A Moderated Mediation Model,” by L. Wang, 2022, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12, Article 810559 (<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.810559>). CC BY 4.0. Adapted from “Diversity as an Opportunity or a Challenge? A Cross-National Study of Ethnic Diversity and Students’ Generalized Trust,” by S. Choi and M. Lee, 2021, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 80, (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2020.102301>). Copyright 2021 by Elsevier.

Koenen et al. (2022) and Pitt et al. (2020) Theories

The theoretical lens employed in this context revolved around dissecting the diverse elements constituting classroom expectations. Pitt et al. (2020) scrutinized these elements individually, discerning their relative effectiveness when implemented as isolated interventions. The assumption was that researchers could discern their contributions to student behavior by isolating these elements. Pitt et al. (2020) examined literature revealing recommendations for strategies like enhancing agency, employing praise, fostering feedback literacy, and nurturing a growth mindset. Pitt et al. (2020) argued that students facing academic challenges could benefit from establishing strong connections with educators and peers. Additionally, exposure to environments abundant in feedback, with minimal consequences, facilitated the integration of frequent feedback and practice, and fostered the development of feedback literacy through peer assessment activities, which proved advantageous.

This theoretical stance recognized that not all classroom expectations carried the same weight in influencing student behavior, and a nuanced exploration was crucial for identifying those with more substantial contributions (Koenen et al., 2022). The theoretical framework was further enriched by considering multiple studies that specifically targeted the implementation of classroom expectations as discrete interventions. This approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of the nuances associated with the varied components of classroom expectations (Koenen et al., 2022). This study involved the analysis of narrative accounts provided by three teachers regarding their individual teacher-student and peer group relationships within their classrooms. A qualitative-interpretative analysis revealed three themes:

1. Educators' reflections on classroom relationships incorporated changeable and unchangeable clarifications.

2. Educators appeared to grapple with a tension between their reality of experience and their professional self-understanding.
3. Educators lacked a language to articulate their relational experiences in the classroom.

The culmination of the research findings resulted in a conclusion that emphasized the effectiveness of teaching specific classroom expectations in a focused manner within the theoretical framework. Educators encountered challenges and complexities when reflecting on classroom relationships, such as navigating tensions between personal experiences and professional understanding and facing difficulties in articulating their relational experiences in the classroom. Pitt et al. (2020) asserted that when consistently implemented, specific characteristics within classroom expectations demonstrated a more significant outcome than other intervention strategies. This theoretical perspective implied that, within the realm of student behavior improvement, the strategic emphasis on specific classroom expectations could yield more favorable outcomes than broader interventions (Koenen et al., 2022).

A noteworthy aspect of Koenen et al.'s (2022) theoretical framework was comparing the efficiency of teaching classroom expectations and a student self-monitoring intervention. Pitt et al. (2020) revealed that the "on-task" behavior experienced a notable improvement, specifically when the factor of classroom expectations was introduced. This observation implied a unique potency associated with implementing classroom expectations, surpassing the efficacy of alternative interventions (Koenen et al., 2022). In essence, the theoretical framework elucidated the intricacies of classroom expectations as stand-alone interventions, emphasizing the need for a nuanced understanding of their diverse components (Koenen et al., 2022). It positioned classroom expectations as influential entities that, when strategically addressed, could surpass the efficacy of other intervention strategies. This theoretical lens provided a foundation for

comprehending the dynamics at play in shaping student behavior within the context of classroom expectations (Koenen et al., 2022). The following table (see Table 2) presents the theories by Koenen et al. (2022) and Pitt et al. (2020), offering a comprehensive examination of classroom expectations by analyzing the effectiveness of isolated interventions, recognizing nuanced differences in expectations, and integrating findings from multiple studies.

Table 2

Koenen and Pitt's Theories

Elements of theoretical framework	Emphasis/source
Focus of Examination	Dissected diverse elements of classroom expectations
Effectiveness of Isolated Interventions	Analyzed the relative effects of individual elements.
Nuanced Exploration	Recognized differences in the weight of expectations
Multiple Studies Integration	Comprehensive examination of various components
Contributions to Student Behavior	Isolated elements to understand their contributions
Conclusion	Specific expectations had significant outcomes
Consistent Implementation	Specific characteristics yielded a greater significance
Efficiency Comparison	Compared teaching expectations vs. self-monitoring
Improvement in "On-Task" Behavior	Notable improvement with the introduction of expectations
Potency of Classroom Expectations	Unique effectiveness surpassing alternative interventions
Nuanced Understanding	Recognizing diverse components' effects on behavior
Strategic Emphasis	Classroom expectations' focused approach for favorable outcomes
Foundation for Comprehension	Dynamics shaping student behavior

Note. Adapted from “Understanding Teachers’ Experiences of Classroom Relationships,” by A.

K. Koenen, J. L. Spilt, and G. Kelchtermans, 2022, *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 109

(<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103573>). Copyright 2022 by Elsevier, and from “The

Conundrum of Low Achievement and Feedback for Learning,” by E. Pitt, M. Bearman, and R.

Esterhazy, 2020, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 45(2), 239–250

(<https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2019.1630363>). Copyright 2022 by Taylor & Francis.

The Multifaceted Dynamics of Relational Capacity in Education

The conceptualization of relational capacity within the educational context marked the initiation of a profound and multifaceted exploration (Wang, 2022). This exploration served as the bedrock for cultivating effective teaching and learning environments. Alter and Haydon (2017) argued that the discourse embarked on a journey through the intricate dynamics that defined relationships between educators and students. Underscoring the transformative potential in these connections suggested that the quality of relationships played a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape.

The conceptualization of relational capacity within the educational context marked the initiation of a profound and multifaceted exploration (Wang, 2022). This exploration served as the bedrock for cultivating effective teaching and learning environments. Alter and Haydon (2017) argued that the discourse embarked on a journey through the intricate dynamics that defined relationships between educators and students. Underscoring the transformative potential in these connections suggested that the quality of relationships played a pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape. This personalized approach required educators to understand the individual strengths that students brought to the educational setting, address their challenges, and align instructional strategies with academic and personal growth aspirations (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

In practical terms, the recognition of individuality within the framework of relational capacity prompted educators to embrace diverse teaching methodologies, engage in ongoing assessment and feedback, and create a learning environment that encouraged students to express unique perspectives (Alter & Haydon, 2017). This approach aimed to create an inclusive educational setting that catered to diverse ways students comprehended and engaged with the

material. Fostering an environment that recognized and accommodated individual differences contributed to a sense of belonging and empowerment among the student body (Wang, 2022).

Adams et al. (2017) argued implementing personalized approaches involved educators adapting instructional methods to accommodate diverse learning styles. Educators could incorporate various teaching techniques to cater to each student's unique strengths and challenges, creating a dynamic and responsive learning environment. Additionally, ongoing assessment and feedback mechanisms enabled educators to measure individual progress and adjust to improve learning outcomes (Adams et al., 2017).

Ultimately, the personalized approach encouraged by relational capacity enriched individual students' educational experience and contributed to creating a more inclusive and empowering learning community (Alter & Haydon, 2017). This approach aligned with the overarching goal of relational capacity: to cultivate meaningful and supportive relationships that enhanced the educational journey for all students (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

Culver (2020) argued that relational capacity catalyzed the development of positive teacher-student relationships. By acknowledging and responding to the individuality of each learner, educators demonstrated a commitment to understanding and supporting students on a personal level (Alter & Haydon, 2017). This personalized engagement created a supportive and nurturing educational environment where students were encouraged to participate actively in their learning journey (Yassine et al., 2020). Relational capacity, as a concept, championed the cause of recognizing and embracing the individuality of students. It promoted tailored and individualized approaches to education, urging educators to actively respond to each learner's diverse strengths, challenges, and aspirations (Wang, 2022). This commitment fostered a more

inclusive and effective educational environment laid the foundation for positive teacher-student relationships and a transformative educational experience for every student (Culver, 2020).

According to Wu et al. (2019), educators played a pivotal role in conceptualizing relational capacity through the lens of emotional intelligence. Cultivating empathy, being attuned to students' emotional states, and fostering a supportive atmosphere contributed to the depth and authenticity of these connections. Emotional intelligence guided the creation of meaningful and influential relationships within the educational setting (Wu et al., 2019).

Wu et al. (2019) examined whether teaching performance mediated the connection between teachers' emotional intelligence (EI) and self-efficacy. Four hundred and sixty-seven middle school teachers participated in the study, with 312 women (66.8%). These participants completed three questionnaires on EI, self-efficacy, and teaching performance. Relational capacity went beyond the traditional dichotomy of teacher and student to embrace collaboration and partnership (Wu et al., 2019).

Alter and Haydon (2017) highlighted the transformative potential that emerged when educators and students engaged as co-creators of knowledge. The shift from a one-sided imparting of knowledge to a collaborative knowledge-building process was central to this evolution. The alignment of goals and values between educators and students emerged as a cornerstone in building relational capacity (Wang, 2022). Shared aspirations created a sense of purpose, fostering a collective commitment to academic success and personal growth. The resonance between the goals and values of educators and students formed a solid foundation for meaningful relationships that transcended the confines of the classroom (Koenen et al., 2022).

Relational capacity thrived in constructivist learning environments where active participation, inquiry-based learning, and collaborative problem-solving were not only

encouraged but embraced (Wang, 2022). These environments empowered students as active contributors to their educational journey, breaking away from traditional models and fostering a more dynamic and engaging educational experience. The educational context evolved into a nurturing ground for relational capacity when it transformed into a supportive community. A sense of belonging, inclusivity, and shared responsibility amplified the effectiveness of these relationships, creating an environment where everyone felt seen, valued, and contributed to the growth and well-being of the educational community (Wang, 2022).

The continuous exchange of constructive feedback between educators and students emerged as a mechanism for refining and enhancing relational capacity. In turn, this level of relational capacity served as a tool for growth, improvement, and fine-tuning teaching and learning strategies (Adams et al., 2017). Feedback became a dynamic loop contributing to the organic development of relationships within the educational setting.

Alter and Haydon (2017) stated that the framework emphasized the temporal aspect of relational capacity. Time and consistency in interactions became crucial for the organic development of trust and understanding between educators and students. Like any meaningful endeavor, relationships required time and a commitment to consistent engagement (Yassine et al., 2020). Relational capacity significantly contributed to the creation of a positive learning culture (Wang, 2022). In that culture, enthusiasm for education became infectious, and students were inspired to explore the boundaries of their intellectual curiosity (Altugan, 2015). It set the stage for a dynamic and vibrant educational atmosphere where educators and students were motivated to achieve their highest potential (Bezaire & Johnston, 2022). As relationships within the educational context deepened, motivational factors took center stage. Students were more likely to be intrinsically motivated when genuinely connecting with their educators. This

intrinsic motivation drove students toward academic excellence and a lifelong love of learning (Adams et al., 2017).

Relational capacity emerged as a powerful tool in breaking down barriers to learning (Adams et al., 2017). It created an environment where students felt empowered to express their thoughts, seek assistance, and navigate academic challenges. Removing these barriers fostered a more inclusive and accessible educational environment for all students. Within the framework of relational capacity, social and emotional learning gained prominence (Wang, 2022). The educational context transformed into a space for holistic development, encompassing academic growth, emotional intelligence, and interpersonal skills (Wu et al., 2019). Students were nurtured as learners and well-rounded individuals equipped to navigate life beyond the classroom (Koenen et al., 2022). The prioritization of relational capacity brought about a transformative shift in the dynamics within the classroom (Koenen et al., 2022). A collaborative atmosphere emerged, promoting student engagement, active participation, and a shared sense of ownership over the learning process. The classroom became a dynamic and interactive space where everyone was actively involved in the educational journey (Koenen et al., 2022).

Empirical Studies

Both Culver (2020) and Wang (2022) emphasized the significance of psychological factors in student success. Culver (2020) discussed students' self-efficacy, highlighting its influence on academic outcomes. Wang (2022) reinforced this viewpoint by introducing relational capacity as a transformative factor.

Students with lower attainment levels often found themselves underrepresented in empirical studies, necessitating a deeper understanding of their feedback behaviors (Yalçın & Ereş, 2021). The endeavor to enhance student assessment and feedback literacy, transitioning

from 'feedback' merely as information about a task to understanding and using performance information, presented a substantial conceptual leap for students (Pitt et al., 2020). To address challenges related to this transition, focusing on the needs of students who struggled with the study due to dissatisfaction with their attainment levels was imperative. Yalçın and Ereş (2021) suggested strategies such as increasing agency, employing praise, developing feedback literacy, cultivating a growth mindset, and fostering strong relationships with educators and peers could positively influence students who underachieved. Exposure to feedback-rich, low-stakes environments that allowed repeated integration of practice and feedback and built feedback literacy through peer assessment activities were recommended approaches (Pitt et al., 2020).

Rosenbaum-Nordoft (2018) highlighted the significant variability in educational outcomes, including academic achievement, emotional well-being, and behaviors, among students who had experienced complex trauma. The potential challenges in forming relationships contributed to overall classroom functioning issues for such students. Rosenbaum-Nordoft (2018) suggested that acknowledging the high prevalence of trauma among students, educators were urged to comprehend the effects of trauma on student functioning to plan and prepare for their success effectively. Support for students who had experienced trauma encompassed understanding the functions of behaviors and fostering strong relationships between teachers and students. Yassine et al. (2020) suggested that successful interventions fostered mental well-being and academic achievement despite a school's mission to engage students in learning. A trauma-informed approach expanded how educators viewed educational success, encompassing academic achievement and mental health (Rosenbaum-Nordoft, 2018).

Bezaire and Johnston (2022) applied behavior analysis strategies, such as differential reinforcement, effectively employed in classrooms to reduce individual student problem

behaviors and enhance contingent teacher attention. The research underscored that student problem behaviors could be diminished, and overall classroom climate improved when emphasis was placed on increasing positive student-teacher relationships (Rosenbaum-Nordoft, 2018). The observed short and long-term benefits affirmed the importance of nurturing such relationships among students.

Bezaire and Johnston (2022) argued that quality daily interactions between students and educators provided social reinforcement, enabling educators to stimulate student success and overall levels of achievement. Disruptive behaviors, if unchecked, could significantly impede the development of student-teacher relationships and a teacher's effectiveness in instructing students. Hence, preventing negative student classroom behaviors was critical, as they might interfere with social-emotional well-being and academic achievement (Bezaire & Johnston, 2022).

Abrams et al. (2020) stressed the elements of interpersonal trust as specific indicators of collegial relationships. These indicators encompassed trusting and caring for one another and how educators discussed their frustrations, concerns, and sources of anxiety (Choi & Lee, 2021). Other crucial factors affecting instructional improvement outcomes included educators' data literacy, efficacy for data usage, relational trust, and the culture established by school leadership (Abrams et al., 2020). This approach also promoted stronger connections between educators and their leaders, contributing to improved organizational functioning and the overall outcome of student achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021).

According to Bezaire and Johnston (2022), despite variations in empirical support for specific expectations, the research underscored characteristics within classroom expectations that consistently demonstrated more pronounced implementation and significant effect than alternative interventions. The study established a significant empirical association between

national and ethnic diversity and trust. Choi and Lee (2021) highlighted the methodological significance and importance of addressing ethnic diversity issues in the literature. The research revealed both inconsistent presence and inequitable ethnic diversity due to ethnic segregation. The insights from this synthesis provided guiding principles for the empirical examination of the practical applications of relational capacity and its effect on student outcomes. This approach opened avenues for unlimited possibilities and diverse perspectives and increased the likelihood of overall success (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Bezaire and Johnston (2022) proposed an evaluation of the effectiveness of classroom expectations as stand-alone interventions. Despite the lack of empirical support for some classroom expectations, several characteristics consistently implemented demonstrated a more substantial contribution than other interventions (Pitt et al., 2020). The efficacy of classroom expectations was emphasized through various studies isolating them as independent interventions. Pitt et al. (2020) concluded that teaching classroom expectations more efficiently enhanced student behavior in a classroom setting than a student self-monitoring intervention. The study noted a decrease in "on-task" behavior only when classroom expectations were implemented, withholding other intervention components (Yalçın & Eres, 2021, p. 12).

Teacher-Student Relationships

Grooms and Childs (2021) emphasized the significance of teacher-student relationships and connections with school leaders, addressing the link between race, socioeconomic class, and student outcomes. Yassine et al. (2020) stressed the importance of socially valid, classroom-based interventions for behavioral success. Components related to relationship-building contributed to positive student-teacher relationships, reducing challenging behaviors. The connection between race, socioeconomic class, persistence, and disenfranchisement of

minoritized students was acknowledged (Rosenbaum-Nordoft, 2018). To guide educators in building relational capacity, there was a need for a blueprint that emphasized reaching students where they were and building from that point. A blueprint could significantly reduce the achievement gap and positively influence the entire student population (Williams, 2011).

While teachers may have perceived behavioral intervention measures as time-consuming, socially valid classroom-based interventions were identified as components conducive to behavioral success (Yassine et al., 2020). Components related to relationship-building contributed to positive student-teacher relationships, leading to reduced challenging behaviors. Ongoing teacher consultation was essential to augment effective classroom management strategies, and student-teacher relationships were necessary for successful behavior support models (Yassine et al., 2020).

Transformational Leadership and Collaboration

Abrams et al. (2020) established a positive relationship between job satisfaction and transformational leadership, which involved engagement and collaboration. Transformational leadership fostered motivation and morality, contributing to enhanced productivity and performance. Yassine et al. (2020) argued for a safe and trusting environment created by educators to affect student behavior positively. Effective use of data was emphasized, with the outcome determined by data use practices and structural context.

Professional Learning Communities and Collaboration

The significance placed on trust, professional learning communities, and effective distribution models within the educational context was underscored. This emphasis underscored the effectiveness of relational capacity on instructional outcomes (Altugan, 2015). Trust fostered a positive and collaborative environment in any educational setting. Trust among educators,

administrators, and other stakeholders promoted open communication, the exchange of ideas, and a sense of shared responsibility for student success. Moreover, school leaders had to consider the significance of collaboration, particularly the establishment of relational trust among staff, teachers, and principals, as they assumed the role of instructional leaders and cultivated environments centered on improvement (Abrams et al., 2020).

Professional learning communities (PLCs) were a network of educators collaborating to improve their teaching practices and student learning outcomes. The historical emphasis on PLCs suggested recognizing the value of ongoing professional development, collaborative problem-solving, and shared expertise (Balyer et al., 2015). When educators engaged in meaningful, collaborative learning experiences, it positively contributed towards instructional quality and student achievement.

Abrams et al. (2020) argued that effective distribution models referred to the strategic allocation and sharing of resources, responsibilities, and leadership within an educational institution. This approach ensured that educators and administrators effectively distributed expertise, workload, and decision-making. Educational institutions aimed to optimize their organizational structure and enhance instructional outcomes by emphasizing effective distribution models.

The historical emphasis on trust, professional learning communities, and effective distribution models underscored the enduring importance of relational capacity in shaping instructional outcomes (Balyer et al., 2015). These elements contributed to a collaborative and supportive educational environment, fostering continuous improvement in teaching practices and ultimately benefiting student success (Altugan, 2015). Bezaire and Johnston (2022) explored building students' intellectual and relational capacity through collaboration in preservice

classrooms. Abrams et al. (2020) asserted that professional learning communities effectively collaborated and evaluated data usage, influencing instructional practices. Balyer et al. (2015) examined how administrators could support collaborative efforts, with principal behaviors and actions playing a crucial role in supporting professional learning communities.

Interpersonal Trust and Culture

Abrams et al. (2020) stressed the importance of interpersonal trust, including trusting relationships among educators and open discussions of concerns and frustrations. Other factors influencing instructional outcomes included efficacy for data usage, data literacy, and the school culture established by leadership. Trust was critical to the effectiveness of instructional practices and contributed to a supportive and cohesive educational community.

Classroom Expectations and Empirical Analysis

Bezaire and Johnston (2022) proposed evaluating the effectiveness of classroom expectations as stand-alone interventions. Pitt et al. (2020) highlighted characteristics within classroom expectations consistently demonstrating more substantial outcomes than alternative interventions. Choi and Lee (2021) emphasized the methodological significance of addressing ethnic diversity issues in the literature, revealing inconsistent presence and inequitable ethnic diversity due to segregation. Bezaire and Johnston (2022) advocated for the practical implementation of behavioral strategies in classrooms, emphasizing various vital components. Firstly, teaching strategies based on applied behavior analysis effectively improved social-emotional skills and students' academic outcomes. Secondly, acknowledging the student-teacher relationship was crucial, playing a vital role in decreasing behavioral concerns among students in the classroom (Yassine et al., 2020). Thirdly, the consultation process supported teachers in implementing classroom-based behavioral interventions with increased fidelity (Yassine et al.,

2020). Student success across social, behavioral, and academic domains was frequently employed to support classroom-based interventions. Yassine et al. (2020) underscored that the student-teacher relationship, or relationship-building, was a simple and effective strategy for shaping student behavior and overall achievement.

Abrams et al. (2020) presented evidence that there were positive relationships between job satisfaction and leadership style. Transformational leadership, characterized by engagement with others to create a connection that increases both the leader's and the follower's motivation and morality, had proven effective in transforming individuals to accomplish more than expected (Yassine et al., 2020). Collaboration was highlighted as a means to achieve goals more effectively by combining complementary skills and strengths. Yassine et al. (2020) argued that an administrator's influence on a student's actions or achievement was almost nonexistent. With representation, educators were encouraged to create a space conducive to a safe and trusting environment for their students (Abrams et al., 2020). Once the proper environment was established, educators could expect their authority to be respected and their ideologies to be shared. The effectiveness of data use practices and the structural context of its use solely determined the effectiveness on student actions and achievement (Yassine et al., 2020).

Abrams et al. (2020) further asserted that leadership behaviors supported educators' instruction by conducting observations, organizing professional learning opportunities, providing prompt feedback, implementing a shared vision, and analyzing and engaging in data usage. Balyer et al. (2015) argued that professional learning communities had effectively collaborated and evaluated data usage. The study explored how educators prepared and collaborated with colleagues to implement instructional practices found compelling. According to Bezaire and Johnston (2022), building students' intellectual and relational capacity in the preservice

classroom and field placement could be valuable. Abrams et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of educators recognizing the influence they could have on student achievement through effective and efficient collaboration with data. The study also delved into how administrators could support the collaborative efforts of their educators, examining principal behaviors and actions that best supported professional learning communities (Balyer et al., 2015). The results indicated that school administrator support depended on interpreting state-mandated policies for professional learning communities (Balyer et al., 2015).

Through meta-analysis, it was discovered that there was limited consensus or evidence regarding the relationship between trust and ethnic diversity (Choi & Lee, 2021). Further investigation was suggested due to the diverse outcomes that could have been affected by geographical disparities. Choi and Lee's (2021) research primarily centered on the United States, potentially constraining the applicability of the results to other global contexts. The cultural and social intricacies shaping levels of trust might have exhibited notable variations across various geographical regions and countries.

Temporal limitations in Choi and Lee's (2021) discussion needed more specificity regarding the analyzed studies' timeframe. The evolution of social attitudes and dynamics over time was not adequately addressed, potentially hindering the accurate representation of current ethnic diversity and trust relationships. Discrepancies arose in findings from studies utilizing diverse datasets, such as the World Values Survey, Civic Education Study, Eurobarometer, and European Social data. Methodological variations, encompassing measurement tools, sampling techniques, and data collection methods, contributed to conflicting results and hindered the comparability of studies (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Choi and Lee (2021) emphasized negative associations between ethnic diversity and trust but neglected to explore potential positive relationships. A more comprehensive understanding necessitated the exploration of circumstances or conditions under which ethnic diversity might have enhanced trust or social capital. Factors such as life experiences, socioeconomic status, and cultural background could have influenced trust perceptions within age groups (Choi & Lee, 2021). The call for more evidence within student samples required elaboration on the potential limitations of using student populations. Students might have manifested distinct trust dynamics compared to the broader adult population, and their experiences might not have fully encapsulated the complexities of ethnic diversity and trust in society (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Choi and Lee (2021) proposed that linguistic diversity might have underrepresented ethnic diversity, suggesting that ethnic minority groups might adopt the host-country language. However, this assumption oversimplified the relationship between language and ethnicity, as linguistic diversity could signify cultural richness and diversity within a community. Addressing these limitations was imperative to fortify the study's contribution to understanding the ethnic diversity-trust relationship and enhance the findings' applicability across diverse contexts.

McAuliffe et al. (2019) provided valuable insights into the connections between ethnic diversity and trust within educational settings. However, the study also highlighted significant limitations, particularly the insufficient data available to draw definitive conclusions about how ethnic diversity influenced students' trust at the school level. This limitation was further emphasized by Choi and Lee (2021), who noted the need to consider variances in students' ethnicity and their relationships when exploring trust dynamics.

In addressing these methodological concerns, Abrams et al. (2020) advocated for reliable data analysis that includes empirical work, such as simulation and paired sample analysis. Their

study emphasized the importance of a well-developed codebook for team-based coding and analysis, incorporating both deductive and inductive approaches. By refining the methods used to analyze relational dynamics, these studies have significantly contributed to the broader discourse on relational capacity, leadership, and educational outcomes, offering key insights that enhance our understanding of these complex interactions.

In a related investigation, Pérez-Salas et al. (2021) utilized qualitative methods, including interviews and observations, to identify key themes of trust and mutual respect as essential components of effective teacher-student relationships that enhance student engagement. The findings from Pérez-Salas' study indicated that positive interactions between teachers and students not only fostered a supportive learning environment but also contributed to students' emotional well-being. This emotional support further encouraged students' involvement in the learning process, reinforcing the importance of nurturing strong relational dynamics in educational contexts. Together, these studies illuminate the intricate relationships between diversity, trust, and engagement, highlighting the necessity of intentional relational practices in education.

Synthesis and Critical Analysis

According to Culver (2020), when teachers believed they were equipped and fully capable of creating and maintaining student engagement and learning, they took the first step toward student success. Culver (2020) asserted that this remained true even in situations where students exhibited low motivation or challenging behaviors. Within the frameworks of social learning and social cognitive theory, this phenomenon was categorized as teacher self-efficacy (Wang, 2022). Teachers with high levels of self-efficacy were more open to innovative teaching

methods, thus making more extraordinary efforts to solve problems and adjust their overall teaching strategies (Culver, 2020).

Synthesis of Common Themes

Culver (2020) and Wang (2022) both emphasized the importance of teacher self-efficacy in student success. Culver (2020) highlighted that teachers who believed in their ability to engage and teach students effectively took a crucial step toward student success. Wang (2022) explicitly identified this belief as teacher self-efficacy, which was associated with openness to innovative teaching methods and a proactive approach to problem-solving.

Culver (2020) and Wang (2022) advocated for a comprehensive and holistic understanding of student success. Culver (2020) discussed exploring students' paths to success involving various elements such as grade levels, teachers, school administrators, and other stakeholders. Wang (2022) supported this approach, acknowledging the collaborative efforts of multiple educational contributors in shaping student success.

Teacher-Student Relationships

Wang (2022) and Koenen et al. (2022) focused on the pivotal role of teacher-student relationships in student success. Wang (2022) emphasized the multifaceted ramifications of these relationships on various aspects of students' educational journeys. Koenen et al. (2022) aligned with this perspective, contributing to the qualitative exploration of teacher-student relationships and seeking more profound insights into relationship development and its implications for education. The common themes across these studies revolved around the importance of teacher self-efficacy, the adoption of a holistic approach to understanding student success, and the significant role of teacher-student relationships in shaping students' educational experiences and outcomes.

Culver (2020) and Wang (2022) both explored the theme of teacher-student relationships, focusing on the dynamic interactions between teachers and students and how these interactions influence the overall educational experience. Pérez-Salas et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study that examined the significance of positive teacher-student relationships in enhancing student engagement, emphasizing the relational dynamics that foster a supportive learning environment.

In Pérez-Salas et al. (2021) research, it was found that students who developed strong connections with their teachers were more likely to actively participate in classroom activities. This finding underscores the crucial role of relational quality in influencing student engagement levels. The study highlighted that when students felt a genuine bond with their teachers, their willingness to engage in the learning process significantly increased, demonstrating how vital these relationships are to creating an effective educational atmosphere.

Wang (2022) aligned with this perspective by introducing the concept of relational capacity as an untapped resource within educational settings. Wang (2022) likened relational capacity to an art form, emphasizing the deliberate and creative aspects involved in building connections between teachers and students. By referring to relational capacity as an "untapped resource" and a "game-changer," Wang (2022) provided a metaphorical understanding that emphasizes the transformative potential of fostering strong relationships in education. This approach highlights the need for educators to intentionally cultivate relational capacity as a means of enhancing both teaching practices and student engagement. This recognition may have created a discrepancy in the perceived emphasis on qualitative research, with one perspective noting its significance and another acknowledging its scarcity.

Perspective on Relational Capacity

There needed to be more on relational capacity (Wang, 2022). While Wang (2022) saw it as an untapped resource with transformative potential, Culver (2020) did not explicitly use the term "relational capacity" and focused more on teacher-student relationships without delving into the concept as a distinct entity. Wang (2022) highlighted relational capacity as a potential game-changer with transformative power. This perspective might have differed from Culver's (2020) emphasis on teacher-student relationships and students' self-efficacy as contributors to a holistic understanding of education. Common patterns included a focus on psychological factors in student success, the importance of teacher-student relationships, the use of qualitative research, and the use of metaphorical language. Discrepancies included the frequency of qualitative research, perspectives on relational capacity, and the role attributed to relational capacity in the educational context.

Wang's (2022) perspective challenged educators, administrators, and other stakeholders to approach the development of relational capacity with creativity, innovation, and strategic planning. The perspective reframed routine relationship-building tasks, positioning them as an essential and transformative art form. When fully embraced, this approach could unlock untapped potential and catalyze positive change within educational settings.

According to Alter and Haydon (2017), many educators believed that teaching students and maintaining high engagement began with building positive relationships. Investing time in students and understanding them was invaluable. Building relational capacity yielded numerous benefits for both educators and students (Wang, 2022). When observing a student, it was crucial to look beyond assumptions and recognize their potential for greatness. By understanding their students' learning styles, educators could better grasp what engaged them and how to maintain

high levels of engagement (Yassine et al., 2020). Relational capacity, which built trust and showcased educators' caring nature, could positively influence all stakeholders (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

Nübold et al. (2020) explored mindfulness as a foundational element in leadership development. The study unveiled the significance of mindfulness as an essential building block for effective leadership. The benefits of adopting a multi-method approach in leadership development came to light, even as the study acknowledged certain limitations inherent in this methodology. Reflecting on the findings, Nübold et al. (2020) concluded that a more intricate design in mindfulness intervention studies was necessary, particularly considering pre- and postintervention measurements.

As elucidated by Nübold et al. (2020), mindfulness was characterized as a state of awareness involving attentiveness, nonjudgmental observation, and an open-minded disposition. The analysis of mindfulness intervention revealed that mindfulness training was not a quick fix for addressing deep-seated problems. Instead, it was portrayed as a nuanced and comprehensive strategy that required careful consideration. Implementing mindfulness within an organization was highlighted as a process requiring leaders to self-examine (Plank, 2020). This approach was perceived as a well-rounded strategy for fostering mindfulness while addressing sources of anxiety or known stressors. Leaders' acquisition of this critical concept was posited to allow organizations to reap authentic leadership benefits (Plank, 2020).

Nübold et al. (2020) argued that an individual with self-awareness of values conducted leadership in alignment with these values, defining such a person as an authentic leader. Authentic leadership, viewed interpersonally, was characterized by leadership grounded in self-concept and the intricate relationship between self-concept and actions. Nübold et al. (2020)

outlined characteristics of genuine leadership exhibited by authentic leaders, emphasizing leading with conviction, approaching leadership with originality, and basing actions on deeply held values.

McAuliffe et al. (2019) assessed relationships among nonmanagerial individuals and the perception of authenticity at various leadership and engagement levels. The study found that trust, specifically leadership trust, emerged as an indispensable and viable component for organizational success (McAuliffe et al., 2019). Leadership trust is characterized as a leader-follower relationship grounded in mutual respect, cooperation, commitment, and reliability (Plank, 2020). Effective leadership trust aligned with exchange theory, which proposed that leaders and members established a mutually reciprocal relationship. When followers trusted their leader, they were more willing to be vulnerable to the leader's leadership style and direction without concern for abusing their happiness and rights (McAuliffe et al., 2019).

McAuliffe et al. (2019) described authentic leaders as profoundly conscious of their thoughts and behaviors. Others perceived them as aware of their values, perspectives, knowledge, and strengths and keenly aware of the contextual environment. Yassine et al. (2020) emphasized that understanding authentic leadership was crucial for employee engagement. Leaders had to understand the importance of authenticity and ethics to succeed. According to McAuliffe et al. (2019), leaders had to comprehend the significance of authenticity and ethics to attain and sustain effective authority within their organizations.

Leaders were required to exhibit the highest ethical and moral standards in decision-making, communication, and action (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017). They were expected to lead so that others in their organizations could model and follow suit, as Nübold et al. (2020) outlined. McAuliffe et al. (2019) emphasized that authentic leaders demonstrated integrity, a sense of

purpose, and a commitment to the core values of the institution and the community. Authentic leaders sought to build and sustain organizations catering to all their stakeholders' needs (Plank, 2020). Reflecting on the research conducted by Nübold et al. (2020) and McAuliffe et al. (2019) it was evident that their exploration into the realms of Mindfulness and authentic leadership provided valuable insights that continued to shape the discourse on effective leadership practices. The recognition of the intricate relationship between Mindfulness, authenticity, and organizational success contributed to a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted nature of leadership development (Plank, 2020). As we looked back on these studies, their findings served as a foundation for future research endeavors and practical applications in the ever-evolving landscape of leadership studies.

Districts used data to plan, implement, and support a targeted improvement plan for all stakeholders in student achievement. Research had shown the efficacy of building relationships and how it was linked to student achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). Khalifa et al. (2016) argued that building relationships was essential to a successful outcome. Success was seen more often when all stakeholders were open to forming working relationships. When diverse groups of educators united, they availed themselves of limitless possibilities, different perspectives, and significant opportunities for achievement. Cansoy (2019) stated that relationships between leadership, behaviors, and teacher job satisfaction demonstrated that transformational leadership connected more consistently with job satisfaction than other leadership styles.

Exploration of Student-Teacher Relationships and Academic Leadership

Student-teacher relationships had been qualitatively examined to understand better relationship development and its influence on student achievement (Alter & Haydon, 2017). This qualitative exploration delved into various elements and steps in studying students' trajectories

toward success. In the context of academic leadership, it was essential to incorporate socially impartial outcomes aligned with the mission of educational institutions. This necessitated attentive listening to all stakeholders and an ongoing commitment to understanding and addressing concerns (Barnett, 2020).

According to Alter and Haydon (2017), the qualitative examination of student-teacher relationships provided insights into the intricate dynamics of these relationships and their implications for student achievement. This exploration involved a comprehensive analysis of various elements and stages in students' journeys toward academic success. The qualitative approach provided a deeper look into the factors contributing to positive student-teacher relationships and their subsequent contributions to achievement.

Leaders were encouraged to actively listen to the concerns of all stakeholders and remain vigilant about ensuring that their actions were in harmony with the organization's values (Plank, 2020). Barnett underscored the importance of leaders' adaptability and readiness to reassess strategies to respond effectively to evolving situations. Alter and Haydon's (2017) qualitative examination of student-teacher relationships and Barnett's (2020) insight into academic leadership converged on the significance of understanding the dynamics within educational settings. Integrating socially impartial outcomes, attentive listening, and alignment with organizational values were crucial for fostering positive relationships and achieving mission-driven goals within academic institutions (Choi & Lee, 2021). This research synthesis underscored the holistic approach needed for effective educational leadership and student success.

Alter and Haydon (2017) provided insight into the evolving role of educators and the significance of relational capacity in teaching. The progress in teaching methodologies had been

a subject of study, showcasing a shift from the traditional role of educators to a more collaborative approach. This transformation emphasized the importance of building strong relationships between educators and students, likening it to cultivating relationships in other contexts (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

The analogy between building relational capacity and other relationships suggested that the dynamics of fostering connections within an educational setting shared similarities with interpersonal relationships in broader contexts. However, Alter and Haydon (2017) introduced a critical distinction by highlighting that the effect of these relationships within the educational sphere could profoundly affect student achievement. This perspective enriched the understanding of the educator-student relationship, recognizing its potential as a catalyst for academic success.

Yalçın and Eres (2021) investigated the direct influence of students' ability and eagerness to learn on their academic achievement, emphasizing the connection between instructional climate and instructional management practices; the study suggested an indirect link between the overall learning environment and the outcomes of instructional strategies (Alter & Haydon, 2017). This insight highlighted the multifaceted nature of the educational process, where various factors converged to shape students' academic performance.

The assertion that a student's achievement level was the most influential variable for predicting academic success reinforced the idea that student outcomes were pivotal in the educational landscape (Alter & Haydon, 2017). This acknowledgment resonated with current educational research, underscoring the necessity of comprehending and tackling individual student requirements to augment overall achievement. Affirming that capacity building was foundational for school improvement introduced a broader perspective on collaborative efforts essential for enhancing educational institutions (Alter & Haydon, 2017).

Those mentioned above acknowledged the evolving nature of teaching and underscored the crucial role of relational capacity between educators and students. It connected the quality of relationships with student achievement and highlighted the intricate interplay between instructional climate, management practices, and academic outcomes (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). Additionally, the emphasis on capacity building as a cornerstone for school improvement signified the collective responsibility of educators and institutions to foster an environment conducive to effective teaching and learning (Koenen et al., 2022).

Rosenbaum-Nordoft (2018) suggested that teachers had to understand the complexities of trauma in student functioning to prepare for their success. Support for students who had experienced trauma included understanding the functions of behaviors and fostering strong relationships between the teacher and student. Grooms and Childs (2021) explained that the most significant relationship within schools was between teachers and students. There was a link between race, socioeconomic class, persistence, and disenfranchisement of minoritized students. All educators had to realize the importance of reaching students where they were and building from that point. Yassine et al. (2020) stated that classroom settings had to have effective behavioral interventions to support student achievement. Practicing classroom behavioral strategies involved various vital elements (Koenen et al., 2022). Initially, instruction strategies based on applied behavior assessment improved students' social - emotional skills and academic outcomes. Next, the student - teacher relationship had to be recognized, as it was vital in reducing behavioral concerns among students in the classroom.

Lastly, dialog encouraged teachers to execute classroom behavioral interventions with fidelity (Yassine et al., 2020). Abrams et al. (2020) emphasized that teachers actively pursued healthy relationships with their students to foster academic success. McDonald et al. (2013)

explored how teachers engaged in relationship-building practices. The study involved a sample of 12 educators working with students from various socioeconomic backgrounds.

Plank (2020) explored the connection between educational mission-driven organizations and initiatives supporting diversity and equity. The research involved a comprehensive analysis of organizational structures and programs that advanced these goals. Plank (2020) utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods, incorporating surveys and interviews to gather insights from stakeholders within the organizations under investigation. Choi and Lee (2021) stated that racial origin connected with students' trust at the country level.

According to Choi and Lee (2021), there were no prevalent research trends in measuring generalized trust. One approach treated generalized trust as a latent construct, necessitating multiple items for measurement. This method was commonly favored in single-country studies, particularly in small-scale study contexts, emphasizing psychometric properties such as measurement invariance (Choi & Lee, 2021). The alternative approach involved employing a single item for generalized trust, widely adopted in cross-national comparative studies (e.g., World Values Survey) or large-scale surveys (e.g., General Social Survey). There was a methodological trade-off. The former provided more robust measurement validity, while the latter enabled the execution of large-scale international studies (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Consistent with the latter approach, the 2016 International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) included an item prompting student participants to rate their trust in people in general (Choi & Lee, 2021). The measure of generalized trust in the 2016 ICCS utilized a 4-point scale, ranging from 1 to 4, setting it apart from the dichotomous measure of generalized trust present in the World Values Survey. Multiple-point scales were generally considered more valid than dichotomous scales in measuring generalized trust (Choi & Lee,

2021). To ensure clarity of interpretation, researchers reversed the scale, with high scores indicating greater generalized trust in this study (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Patterns were identified to link trust in relationships amongst diverse ethnic diversity groups from an analytical approach (McAuliffe et al., 2019). The research question challenged researchers to determine the “relationship between ethnic diversity at the country level and students’ generalized trust” (Choi & Lee, 2021, p. 2). Two distinct meta-analyses by Durlak et al. (2011) and Simões and Calheiros (2019) informed specific interventions pertinent to the study. Firstly, Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis focusing on after-school programs designed to foster the development of social and personal skills among participants, aiming at the effectiveness of these programs and identifying factors that contribute to their success. The findings revealed that program staff who adhered to four recommended practices demonstrated greater effectiveness, as survey results showed (Durlak et al., 2011).

The incorporation of recommended practices in the study indicated that the research aimed not only to assess the overarching implications of after-school programs but also endeavored to identify particular strategies or behaviors among program staff associated with favorable outcomes (Durlak et al., 2011). This information could have been crucial for educators, policymakers, and program developers looking to enhance the effectiveness of after-school interventions by emphasizing critical practices that contributed to desired outcomes. Durlak et al. (2011) examined 213 school-based universal social and emotional learning (SEL) programs involving 270,034 kindergarten through high school students. SEL participants demonstrated a significant enhancement in social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance compared to controls, resulting in an 11-percentile-point improvement in achievement (Durlak et al., 2011).

School teaching staff successfully implemented SEL programs, and program outcomes influenced the utilization of four recommended practices for skill development and the presence of implementation issues. These findings added to the growing body of empirical evidence supporting the positive effects of SEL programs (Durlak et al., 2011). Policymakers, educators, and the public could contribute to children's healthy development by advocating for integrating evidence-based SEL programming into standard educational practice.

According to Durlak et al. (2011), to assess the potential contributions of methodological aspects on outcomes, researchers coded three variables dichotomously: randomization to conditions, utilization of a reliable outcome measure, and utilization of a valid outcome measure, each classified as yes or no. Acceptable reliability for an outcome measure was defined as kappa or alpha statistics $\geq .60$, reliability calculated by product moment correlations $\geq .70$, and percentage agreement by raters $\geq .80$ (Durlak et al., 2011). Durlak et al. (2011) explained a measure was considered valid if authors provided data confirming its construct, concurrent, or predictive validity. Due to incomplete psychometric data, researchers coded reliability and validity dichotomously.

Furthermore, Durlak et al. (2011) stated that the research coded attrition as a continuous variable in two ways: (a) calculating total attrition from the combined intervention and control group sample from pre- to post- and (b) determining differential attrition as the subtraction of the attrition percentage from the control group from the attrition percentage of the intervention group. The study included six student outcomes as dependent variables: (a) social and emotional skills, (b) attitudes toward self and others, (c) positive social behaviors, (d) conduct problems, (e) emotional distress, and (f) academic performance.

Secondly, Simões and Calheiros (2019) conducted a meta-analysis focusing on school achievement, emphasizing teacher-student relationships' role in contributing to enhanced school performance. This analysis sought to explore the connection between the quality of teacher-student relationships and academic success. The meta-analysis included studies investigating the influence of positive teacher-student relationships on academic outcomes. Identifying teacher-student relationships as a crucial factor indicated that the study found a consistent and significant association between the quality of these relationships and improved academic performance. This insight was essential for educators, school administrators, and policymakers who may have considered investing in strategies and interventions that positively strengthened teacher-student relationships to effect students' overall academic success.

Simões and Calheiros (2019) examined a model to understand the interaction among factors influencing teaching style and interpersonal resources, which referred to various qualities, skills, and attributes that individuals possessed and utilized in their interactions with others. These resources played a crucial role in establishing and maintaining effective interpersonal relationships. Examples of interpersonal resources included communication skills, empathy, active listening, conflict resolution abilities, and social intelligence, which were all crucial to the capacity to build rapport. The analysis took into account variables related to teachers' experience.

Two hundred and ninety-seven educators from the educational system teaching in a rural region participated in the research. These two meta-analyses offered specific insights into best practices within after-school programs and the significant role of teacher-student relationships in contributing to enhanced school performance. These meta-analyses provided valuable evidence for educators and researchers, offering evidence-based guidance on interventions and practices that positively influenced students' social and academic development. Simões and Calheiros

(2019) conducted a study involving 297 teachers within the Portuguese educational system teaching in a rural region. Simões and Calheiros (2019) stated that a structural equation modeling approach was used; the primary finding indicated that teacher interpersonal self-efficacy and teacher–student closeness partially mediated the relationships between teacher epistemological sophistication, student misbehavior, and teacher burnout.

Simões and Calheiros (2019) stated that increased teacher depersonalization was linked to student misbehavior when mediated by interpersonal self-efficacy and teacher–student closeness. Additionally, higher attunement with students, signifying lower conflict, prevented emotional exhaustion resulting from student misbehavior and reduced professional accomplishment costs. Thus, in intense interpersonal settings like schools, teacher interpersonal resources, particularly teacher–student closeness and attunement, may not universally yield positive returns for educators. The study suggested implications for future research, including replicating this model across urban and suburban settings. Furthermore, it was advisable that teacher preservice and in-service training revisit the topic of interpersonal resources to enhance teacher well-being, considering its merits and limitations (Simões & Calheiros, 2019).

Navigating Social Cohesion, Diversity, and Educational Equity

Choi and Lee (2021) suggested that positive relationships could become harmful and often depended on how diversity was embraced and integrated within society. Supporting data were crucial in understanding social cohesion and diversity. The various forms encompassed ethnic diversity and global social solidarity, especially regarding political, social, and cultural conflicts (Choi & Lee, 2021). Cross-national investigations substantiated the study's robust validity, facilitating the execution of a comprehensive international study. Positive associations between ethnic diversity and generalized trust were underscored in the analysis conducted by

Choi and Lee (2021). Examining students' educational experiences revealed a direct association between school social relations and trust (McAuliffe et al., 2019). The prediction of students' generalized trust emerged as a particularly influential factor at the macro level in ethnic diversity analysis (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Barnett (2020) argued that educational organizations were mission-driven and known to prioritize initiatives that supported the organization's mission. More educational institutions today began to recognize diversity, equity, and inclusion as vital to their mission statements (Choi & Lee, 2021). This level of recognition created systems, departments, and programs dedicated to increasing diversity and promoting equity amongst all stakeholders (Barnett, 2020). For academic leaders to successfully incorporate socially impartial outcomes and a mission, they had to listen to all stakeholders. Choi and Lee (2021) believed leaders should pay attention to concerns that their actions did not align with the organization's values. They had to know when to step back and reassess how to adapt and adjust to the current situation to give the correct response. If notions of academic excellence and diversity needed to be clarified, administrators had to lead conversations to define them. Administrators had to maintain their role as institutional authorities by claiming that diversity and equity were everyone's business (Barnett, 2020).

Choi and Lee (2021) suggested that more equitable processes had to be implemented when an organization's process consistently denied opportunities for individuals to be heard. Academic leaders needed support from staff, students, and stakeholders. Even with the best visions planned, written, and modeled, leaders needed the support of their followers (Barnett, 2020). For a leader's actions to remain devoted to the overall vision and mission, they needed to find ways to focus on mutually beneficial goals while developing support between instructional

leaders, staff, students, and external stakeholders. Mission statements offered motivation, provided a general direction, portrayed the company's character, and established a tone or set of attitudes that guided its actions (Barnett, 2020). Barnett (2020) stated that good governance practices would help academic leaders achieve buy-in as they created democratic partnerships and encouraged collaboration among constituents.

Nurturing Relationships, Building Capacity

Adams et al. (2017) identified the significance of student learning capacities and their role in nurturing relationships with educators. Educators who desired improvement of current conditions understood the importance of building school capacity and focused on the components necessary to take action (Choi & Lee, 2021). When evaluating evidence in their schools, they developed learning organizations to manage and sustain change (Adams et al., 2017). Principals had to take consistent opportunities to engage in conversations that led teachers toward a more positive school culture where shared vision and mission shaped actions (Altugan, 2015). School leadership played a significant role in teacher motivation, the climate and culture where teaching and learning occurred, and the school's collaboration with stakeholders in the community (Adams et al., 2017).

A social characteristic of capacity could establish itself through teacher-student interactions in the learning process (Culver, 2020). Principal-teacher exchanges could have many transformative effects on instructional practices (McDonald et al., 2013). School principals who worked with teachers on student psychological needs and instructional support contributed to a learning environment where students experienced increased autonomy, competence, and confidence in achievement (Adams et al., 2017).

Adams et al. (2017) concluded that effective school leadership was connected with building positive relationships, which improved student success and overall school outcomes. Leadership's effects on student outcomes could operate through two main pathways (Adams et al., 2017). These pathways supported the development of teachers and teaching processes, as well as the influence of existing organizational conditions of the school. Standard operational procedures and organizational processes included building community partnerships and developing school procedures and plans (Adams et al., 2017). It was vital that this also existed at the classroom level through focused instruction and assessment to see improvement in student learning outcomes (Koenen et al., 2022).

School leaders' abilities, skills, and innate dispositions were a considerable component of their effectiveness as principals (Adams et al., 2017). They had to focus on instructional improvement, teacher support and training, and a strong willingness for effective collaboration (Choi & Lee, 2021). When schools demonstrated performance improvement, the qualitative data would always point to an improvement in principal's behaviors as the main driver. Overall, this could strengthen the justification for building a stronger focus on building capacity for school leadership where learning outcomes were deficient (Adams et al., 2017).

Pitt et al. (2020) examined the importance of leadership support in achieving organizational visions and explored instances where leaders faced challenges and failures despite well-designed visions. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining surveys and in-depth interviews (McNamara, 1999). The research population included instructional leaders, staff, students, and external stakeholders.

Foundational Role of Relational Capacity in Education. Yalçın and Eres (2021) provided context for the proposed study by synthesizing relevant research on the link between

relational capacity and student achievement. Yassine et al. (2020) stated that the literature review explored the influence of teacher-student relationships on cognitive engagement, emphasizing the foundational nature of relational capacity in education. This served as the bedrock for the proposed study, providing essential context through synthesizing pertinent research that navigated the intricate link between relational capacity and student achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021).

Yalçın and Eres (2021) created the Instructional Capacity Scale (ICS) as the instrument for data collection. The ICS comprised six subscales that encompassed instructional management practices, teacher quality, quality and quantity of curriculum and materials, instructional climate, students' readiness to learn, and financial resources. Multilevel structural equation modeling (ML-SEM) was employed to analyze the data, exploring direct and indirect relationships between dependent and independent variables (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). The results indicated that teacher quality and students' readiness to learn directly contributed to students' achievement.

By delving into the nuances of teacher-student relationships and their influence on cognitive engagement, the literature review shed light on the foundational nature of relational capacity in education (Yassine et al., 2020). The chapter emphasized the absence of a precise, universal formula for ensuring student success, acknowledging the significant variability among students regarding backgrounds, family income, ethnicities, cultures, and interests (Altugan, 2015). Recognizing this diversity challenged the efficacy of a one-size-fits-all strategy in academic settings, prompting a more nuanced approach (Culver, 2020).

Yassine et al. (2020) stated that the literature review underscored the profound contributions of teacher-student relationships on cognitive engagement, illuminating the pivotal role of relational capacity in shaping the educational landscape. It positioned these relationships

as critical determinants of student success and academic progress. The literature review delved into the intricate dynamics between teachers and students, emphasizing the substantial effect of teacher-student relationships on cognitive engagement (Yassine et al., 2020). This exploration revealed relational capacity's crucial role, shedding light on its profound significance within the educational domain. The review positioned these relationships as incidental interactions and fundamental determinants significantly shaping the educational landscape (Abrams et al., 2020).

Culver (2020) stated that at its core, the literature review underscored the notion that teacher-student relationships extended beyond conventional interactions, transcending the boundaries of routine educational exchanges. Yassine et al. (2020) argued that these relationships were portrayed as dynamic elements that went to the heart of cognitive engagement, affecting how students actively participated and engaged in the learning process.

Relational capacity emerged as a central theme within the literature, emphasizing its pivotal role in orchestrating meaningful teacher-student connections (Culver, 2020). Relational capacity was depicted as the foundation upon which successful educational experiences were built, acting as a catalyst for cognitive engagement (Yassine et al., 2020). This recognition suggested that the quality of these relationships held transformative power, influencing the depth and breadth of students' intellectual involvement (Bezaire & Johnston, 2022). Furthermore, the literature review positioned teacher-student relationships as critical determinants of student success and academic progress (Culver, 2020). It highlighted the multifaceted nature of these relationships, encompassing emotional, social, and cognitive dimensions. The interconnectedness between the quality of relationships and student outcomes became evident, emphasizing that the influence extended beyond the immediate educational context (Abrams et al., 2020).

The literature review comprehensively exhibited the symbiotic interaction between interactions, capacity, and engagement (Yassine et al., 2020). It argued that these were not components but woven threads that contributed to the tapestry. The review served as a testament to fostering relationships and cultivating capacity to pave the way for enhanced engagement and, subsequently, success in progress (Yassine et al., 2020).

Culver (2020) contributed valuable insights, asserting that educators experienced growth in their effectiveness in relationship building, especially when equipped with knowledge about data. This highlighted the dynamic nature of the educational landscape, where the interplay between pedagogical expertise and relational capacity became crucial. Culver (2020) accentuated the heightened importance of practical instructional goals and a culture of improvement, especially when considering organizational factors. This insight reinforced the interconnectedness of organizational dynamics and the effectiveness of instructional practices (McDonald et al., 2013).

The exchange of practical ideas emerged as a catalyst for enhancing educators' knowledge and expertise, fostering the development of established relationships (Abrams et al., 2020). These dynamics underscored the collaborative nature of education and the synergistic effect of shared insights. Educators were encouraged to be open to forming working relationships with diverse individuals, thus recognizing the essential role of building relationships (Koenen et al., 2022). This approach transcended traditional boundaries, opening avenues for unlimited possibilities, diverse perspectives, and an increased likelihood of overall success. Culver (2020) suggested that educators experienced notable growth in relationship-building effectiveness. This growth was particularly pronounced when educators mastered interpreting and utilizing data, emphasizing the interplay between data literacy and the ability to foster meaningful connections.

The collaborative exchange of practical ideas enhanced educators' knowledge and expertise. This collaboration extended beyond individual teacher-student relationships, fostering a community of educators committed to vast improvement and student success (Culver, 2020).

Adams et al. (2017) underscored the significance of cultivating established relationships within the educational ecosystem. These relationships were the bedrock for effective teaching and learning, emphasizing relational capacity's enduring ramifications on educators and students. Educators were encouraged to be open to forming working relationships with diverse individuals (Koenen et al., 2022). This inclusive approach recognized the wealth of perspectives that could enrich the educational experience and contribute to a more holistic understanding of student needs. Choi and Lee (2021) suggested that embracing diversity in relationships opened avenues for unlimited possibilities. By fostering connections with diverse individuals, educators created an environment where varied perspectives and insights flourished, contributing to a richer educational experience.

Education and Policy

Educational institutions increasingly relied on data-driven practices for student achievement, reflecting a broader shift toward evidence-based decision-making (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). However, challenges arose from the sheer volume of data, necessitating a delicate balance for effective utilization (Perreault et al., 2020). Understanding historical perspectives on data-driven approaches helped educators adapt to emerging trends while addressing challenges and contributing to evidence-based practices (McDonald et al., 2013). Abrams et al. (2020) highlighted the historical connection between educators' relationship-building proficiency and data mastery. In the past, leadership behaviors, such as data analysis, feedback, and collaborative visions, played a pivotal role in enhancing instruction (Abrams et al., 2020).

Abrams et al. (2020) examined the prevailing focus on data, which was a compelling driver for educational reform initiatives. Both administrators and educators found themselves inundated with data and heightened expectations for implementing data-driven practices in pursuit of school reform. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study delved into teachers' experiences participating in a pilot professional development program to enhance data literacy and use data practices within nine grade-level teacher teams across elementary and middle schools within a specific school district (Abrams et al., 2020). Through pre-, post-, and follow up surveys involving 28 teacher participants, the study revealed promising outcomes from the professional development program, with noteworthy increases in reported data literacy, efficacy, and teacher collaborative efforts (Abrams et al., 2020). Abrams et al. (2020) also explored school-level factors that contributed to supportive data use practices and fostered data cultures. Interviews with 15 school principals uncovered how structural elements, including district requirements, school expectations, and established policies, influenced teachers' data utilization.

Transformational Leadership

Perreault et al. (2020) focused on transformational leadership, revealing its historical effectiveness in enhancing motivation, morality, and leadership self-efficacy. Understanding the historical dimensions of this leadership style informed present leadership practices, guiding educational leaders in navigating organizational complexities (Cansoy, 2019). The historical exploration of relational capacity in education provided valuable insights into the complexity of data-driven approaches and leadership styles (Cansoy, 2019). This examination shed light on how educators and administrators contributed to leadership practices over time, guiding contemporary leaders in implementing effective strategies for organizational improvement (Plank, 2020). As education faced evolving challenges, historical perspectives offered a compass

for informed decision-making, emphasizing the enduring relevance of capacity building, data utilization, and leadership in shaping educational success.

The primary aim of this exploration was to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted interplay between capacity building, data utilization, and leadership approaches within the educational landscape. By delving into the research conducted by Abrams et al. (2020) and Perreault et al. (2020), the study sought to shed light on the intricate threads woven into the fabric of educational achievement over time. Educational institutions increasingly turned to data-driven practices as a strategic tool to fortify initiatives geared toward enhancing student achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). Recognizing data as a valuable asset in shaping educational strategies reflected a broader shift toward evidence-based decision-making in academic settings. However, integrating data-driven tools and practices had been challenging (McDonald et al., 2013).

The sheer volume of data available and the associated expectations had, at times, posed significant challenges for stakeholders within the educational domain (Perreault et al., 2020). Past experiences showed that navigating the complexities of data-driven approaches could be overwhelming, requiring a delicate balance to ensure that educators, administrators, and other stakeholders could effectively harness the potential of data without being inundated by its sheer magnitude. This discourse underscored the ongoing evolution in educational practices, emphasizing the importance of adapting to emerging trends while acknowledging the challenges inherent in integrating data-driven tools (McDonald et al., 2013).

By weaving together insights from Abrams et al. (2020) and Perreault et al. (2020), the exploration delved into the historical context, providing a foundation for understanding the present landscape of capacity building, data utilization, and educational leadership styles.

Through this nuanced exploration, educators were better equipped to navigate the intricate dynamics that underpinned educational success in a data-driven era (Abrams et al., 2020). Studies by Abrams et al. (2020) in the historical context illustrated a positive link between educators' proficiency in relationship building and their mastery of data. Establishing practical instructional goals and improvement cultures gained significance when organizational factors facilitated these processes (Altugan, 2015). In the past, meaningful relationships were nurtured by exchanging proven ideas and enhancing knowledge and expertise crucial for successful educational outcomes.

Leadership behaviors were pivotal in supporting educators' instruction, encompassing historical observations, data analysis, prompt feedback, professional learning opportunities, and shared vision implementation (Abrams et al., 2020). In the past, professional learning communities emerged as effective platforms for facilitating collaboration and evaluating data usage, emphasizing the transformative ramifications educators could have on student achievement through effective collaboration (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). As Abrams et al. (2020) revealed, administrators assumed a crucial role in supporting collaborative efforts. The study delved into principal behaviors and actions that enhanced Professional Learning Communities, with administrator support contingent on interpreting state-mandated policies (Balyer et al., 2015).

Abrams et al. (2020) underscored the critical historical role of interpersonal trust in shaping instructional improvement outcomes. Trusting and caring relationships among educators and open discussions of concerns and frustrations contributed to a positive educational culture in bygone years (Altugan, 2015). In the past, factors such as data literacy, efficacy for data usage, and the culture established by school leadership further shaped instructional improvement

outcomes. According to Abrams et al. (2020), administrative approaches and effective distribution models offered increased opportunities for educator independence in aligning data usage. This historical approach fostered more robust connections between educators and leaders, ultimately enhancing organizational functioning and student achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021).

Perreault et al. (2020) focused on transformational leadership, an extensively researched and analytically supported leadership domain in the past. Transformational leaders exemplified self-efficacy, engaging with others to enhance motivation and morality (Wang, 2022). This historical leadership style has been shown to transcend expectations, leading to increased productivity, performance, healthy professional relationships, and job retention. Perreault et al. (2020) conducted experimental studies assessing the effects of social climate on leadership self-efficacy and transformational leadership behaviors among university students. Historical results indicated that an essential needs-supportive climate significantly affected transformational leadership and leadership development. Cansoy (2019) identified behaviors characteristic of transformational leaders and emphasized the need for further research to understand how social climates promoted transformational leadership and leadership self-efficacy (Perreault et al., 2020).

The historical exploration of relational capacity in education has provided valuable insights into the complexity between data-driven approaches and leadership styles (Cansoy, 2019). This examination shed light on the historical dynamics that shaped the educational landscape, illustrating how educators and administrators made significant contributions to leadership practices that influenced past generations. Cansoy (2019) argued for the importance of comprehending and leveraging the dynamics between data-driven approaches and leadership styles. This understanding proved instrumental in guiding educational leaders as they navigated

the complexities of implementing effective strategies for organizational improvement (Plank, 2020).

By exploring data-driven approaches and the roles of leadership in collaborative data usage, the study shed light on the historical importance of interpersonal trust, distribution models, and transformational leadership in shaping instructional improvement outcomes (Perreault et al., 2020). According to Yassine et al. (2020), the effects on teacher-student relationships on student cognitive engagement in the classroom was deemed significant. Building relational capacity between students and educators was foundational, akin to establishing other interpersonal connections. Culver (2020) stated that the potential positive effect on student achievement, contingent upon the relational capacity between teachers and students, suggested a transformative shift in the educational landscape. Educators deliberated and engaged in discussions for decades regarding the genuine effectiveness of capacity building on student achievement (Yassine et al., 2020). In the past, school districts relied on data-driven approaches to enhance school improvement efforts and raise performance expectations for all stakeholders involved in student achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). However, over the years, the influx of data and the resulting expectations for utilizing data-driven tools and practices created a sense of overwhelm among stakeholders, including educators and administrators (Culver, 2020).

Gaps in Research

Williams (2011) suggested that bridging the gaps between data usage practices of educators and school leaders could be identified as a critical factor in improved capacity building. Further exploration of this topic was strongly recommended to gain a more comprehensive understanding. Teachers were encouraged to delve into their relationships with students, identifying factors that contributed to positive connections and those that did not

(Abrams et al., 2020). It was imperative for educators to actively pursue positive relationships with students, as those relationships played a crucial role in fostering remarkable success for both teachers and students (Culver, 2020).

The critical link between teacher-student relationships and student engagement warranted deeper investigation, especially considering the identified connection between cognitive engagement and high academic achievement (Culver, 2020). The implications of teacher-student relationships on student cognitive engagement, as identified in the literature, offered educators valuable insights into how behaviors could influence students (Culver, 2020).

Culver (2020) stated that many educational researchers concurred that teacher-student relationships were integral to overall academic success. It was essential to recognize that the methods advocated for building positive teacher-student relationships, while effective, could also yield adverse effects. Culver (2020) emphasized that a student's lack of trust, care, and expectations for their teacher could result in detrimental consequences. Trust between students and teachers became pivotal, with students relying on their perception of the teacher's genuine care (Abrams et al., 2020). However, notable gaps existed in the literature regarding the potential negative effects of recommended methods for building teacher-student relationships. Educational organizations increasingly recognized the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion, establishing systems, departments, and programs promoting diversity and equity among all stakeholders (Choi & Lee, 2021).

While this recognition was prevalent, more research had to be done on the potential drawbacks or challenges associated with implementing these initiatives, leaving a gap in the existing literature. According to Culver (2020), when organizational processes consistently denied opportunities for individuals to voice their perspectives, it became imperative to

implement more equitable processes. Academic leaders relied on support from staff, students, and stakeholders for success (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). Even with well-planned visions, leaders needed the support of their followers to align actions with the overall vision and mission. This necessitated focusing on mutually beneficial goals and developing support between instructional leaders, staff, students, and external stakeholders (Culver, 2020). However, there was a need for additional research to explore the effectiveness of such equitable processes in fostering a positive organizational climate and whether they addressed underlying issues of trust and collaboration, thus underscoring a gap in the literature.

The findings of this study underscored the need for additional research on the growth of professional learning communities and how administrators could significantly contribute to the success of these communities (Culver, 2020). Administrators played a crucial role, particularly in the initial phase of learning community development, with current literature supporting the positive contributions towards professional learning communities on student achievement (Plank, 2020).

Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) asserted that social interactions were crucial for a holistic understanding of an experience. Durlak et al. (2011) explained that studies indicated higher effectiveness and success, both in and out of the classroom, when there were positive relationships between teachers and students. Brandisauskiene et al. (2021) emphasized that teachers could make a significant difference in a student's life by understanding the effects of positive relationships on student engagement, self-efficacy, and achievement. Galey-Horn (2020) noted that students often exhibited minor behaviors, achieved higher academics, and developed better social skills when educators demonstrated care for their overall success. Students who

struggled to establish supportive, positive relationships with teachers were at a higher risk of school failure (Field, 2003).

Altugan (2015) emphasized the contextual issue of teachers' inability to build relationships with students and their willingness to acknowledge that positive relationships contributed to student achievement and reduced the achievement gap. Galey-Horn (2020) outlined the adverse effects of a teacher's failure to build and maintain relational capacity, resulting in an environment not conducive to learning. McGrath and Van Bergen (2015) pointed to recent research confirming the links between teacher-student relationships and academic achievement. The repercussions of experiencing a negative student-teacher relationship were significant, leading to antisocial behavior, peer rejection, negative attitudes toward school, and poor academic achievement. Students were at risk of experiencing negative relationships but could benefit significantly from positive ones, leading to improved attitudes about school and increased overall achievement (McGrath & Van Bergen, 2015).

Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) consistently affirmed that effective relationships between teachers and students contributed to a student's success both in and outside the classroom. Teachers' efforts to build positive relationships were recognized as vital to broader educational reform efforts (Balyer et al., 2015). Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) highlighted examining teacher-student relationships for insights into their development and influence on education. Building relational capacity supported students in and out of the classroom, aligned with the campus vision and mission, and fostered collaboration in professional learning communities (Galey-Horn, 2020). Strategies focused on systemic relational capacity were integral to cultivating new relationships and networking among stakeholders.

While the existing literature consistently underscored effective teacher-student relationships' positive contributions to student success, more research was needed on potential adverse effects, challenges, and specific strategies to address barriers in building and maintaining these relationships. Bloomberg and Volpe (2018) argued that future research should address these gaps to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding teacher-student relationships in educational settings.

Summary

This literature review encompassed an examination of the theoretical framework of the current study. Specifically, it delved into Wang's (2022) and Choi and Lee's (2021) contributions, offering insights into the factors hindering the development of relational capacity. Additionally, the review included theoretical evaluations presented by Koenen et al. (2022) and Pitt et al. (2020) which focused on the comprehensive analysis of the varied components of classroom expectations. The approach advocated in this chapter emphasized the importance of diverse perspectives in education. By welcoming a variety of viewpoints, educators created an inclusive environment that reflected the diversity among students, fostering a more comprehensive understanding of their needs (Choi & Lee, 2021).

The collaborative and open relationship approach increased the likelihood of overall success in the educational journey. By recognizing and leveraging the strengths inherent in diversity, educators created a supportive ecosystem that nurtured individual and collective achievements (Choi & Lee, 2021). The limitations of a one-size-fits-all strategy were highlighted, emphasizing the inadequacy of such an approach in addressing the diverse needs of students. This recognition challenged traditional paradigms and called for a more personalized and adaptive educational strategy.

Choi and Lee (2021) stated that this underscored the interconnectedness of organizational factors and the efficacy of instructional practices. Practical instructional goals and a culture of improvement were deemed integral components in the broader organizational context, shaping the landscape for relational capacity (Altugan, 2015). This research synthesis made the prominence of relational capacity in education evident. It emerged as a critical factor that transcended individual relationships, influencing the overall educational environment and contributing to a culture of continuous improvement (Altugan, 2015). Relational capacity was positioned as foundational in the educational context. Its contributions extended beyond individual interactions, shaping the very essence of the teaching and learning experience (Adams et al., 2017). The chapter laid the groundwork for understanding relational capacity as a fundamental element in education.

The collaborative exchange of practical ideas fostered a community of educators committed to continuous improvement. This collaborative ethos was essential in navigating the ever-evolving educational landscape and addressing the diverse needs of students. This chapter served as a guidepost for further exploration into the complex interplay between relational capacity and student achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). The review included discussions on the effectiveness of relational capacity on student achievement and the historical debates surrounding its significance (Yalçın & Eres, 2021).

The methodology used to conduct the present study is presented in Chapter 3. The steps taken to investigate the effects of relational capacity on student achievement, along with the factors that may have facilitated or hindered this outcome, were outlined in detail. Chapter 3 specifically addressed the research questions and objectives established, drawing on insights from the literature review. The study described the sample, elucidating the design and methods,

participant population, sample size, instrumentation, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

This study examined the influence of building relational capacity on student achievement and investigated the connections between relational capacity and student achievement. The research method employed a qualitative interview approach to explore teachers' efforts in establishing positive relationships with students and the subsequent effect on academic achievement (Choi & Lee, 2021). Data collection involved one-on-one interviews with 10 educators, focusing on their perspectives and experiences in developing robust relational skills with students (Muzari et al., 2022).

Muzari et al. (2022) highlighted qualitative research as socially responsive, emphasizing interpretation and sense-making processes in understanding individuals' experiences and contextual circumstances. This study utilized one-on-one interviews with educators to deepen insights into relational skill development. The findings from this study demonstrated that thematic analysis is an effective method for uncovering rich qualitative data, allowing the authors to distill educators' varied perspectives into coherent themes that reflect their experiences with inclusive education (Dixon et al., 2022). The authors highlighted how thematic analysis allowed them to uncover the diverse perspectives of teachers, providing insights into the systemic issues affecting educational practices in underresourced environments (Vandeyar & Mahomed, 2023).

Culver (2020) provided data substantiating the importance of relational capacity on student achievement by examining classroom management's role in fostering positive teacher-student relationships. This aspect enhanced understanding of barriers to relational capacity development (Culver, 2020) and contributed to formulating strategies for enhancing student achievement. The study addressed three research questions:

RQ1. How do secondary teachers perceive the significance of relational capacity in influencing student learning outcomes within effective educational practices?

RQ2. In what ways do secondary teachers describe the processes of building relational capacity and its potential effect on students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement?

RQ3. How do secondary teachers conceptualize the relationship between student cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement, focusing on relational capacity within effective educational practices?

Research Design and Method

The study employed a qualitative interview method to explore educators' nuanced approaches and experiences in building relationships with students (Abrams et al., 2020). It aimed to gain insights into teachers' strategies for fostering positive relationships, which are crucial for influencing students' academic success and socio-emotional development (Choi & Lee, 2021). Specifically, this research used qualitative interviews to investigate diverse strategies teachers use to establish and maintain positive connections with students.

Participants included a purposive sample of 10 experienced teachers recognized by their instructional leaders for their effective relationship-building practices across districts in the North Texas area. Once an IRB approval (see Appendix F) was received, the selection criteria began and focused on demonstrated abilities in fostering positive relationships with students. Recruitment began with sending an email to campus administrators (see Appendix A) which was used to facilitate access to teachers that they would deem appropriate for the study. Additionally, prospective interview participants were sent an email (see Appendix B) with an attached flyer (see Appendix C). Prior to participation, each teacher received a detailed consent form (see Appendix D) to ensure informed consent.

Data collection involved in depth, semistructured interviews to capture detailed information on strategies, communication styles, and contextual factors influencing teacher-student relationships (Culver, 2020). The interview questions (see Appendix E) were designed to elicit comprehensive responses regarding the participants' experiences and techniques

Thematic analysis, a robust method, was employed to systematically identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights within the qualitative data. Finlay and Stuart (2022) employed thematic analysis to investigate the effect of professional development on teachers' practices, revealing key themes that highlighted both the benefits and challenges associated with ongoing professional learning. Through their thematic analysis, Finlay and Stuart (2022) emphasized the importance of context in shaping teachers' experiences with professional development, demonstrating that effective practices varied significantly based on individual and institutional factors.

Vandeyar and Mahomed (2023) applied thematic analysis to explore teachers' experiences in underresourced schools, revealing significant themes related to their professional development needs and the challenges they faced in delivering quality education. This comprehensive approach enabled a thorough exploration of participants' experiences, ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings. The qualitative methodology facilitated a deep understanding of teacher-student interactions' dynamic and context-dependent nature. Best practices were not only effective in building relational capacity but also played a crucial role in enhancing student achievement. By fostering a supportive and understanding environment, teachers were able to motivate students, improve their engagement, and ultimately contribute to better academic outcomes. This study highlights the importance of relational capacity as a foundational element in the educational process, reinforcing the need for educators to prioritize

relationship-building as a key strategy for student success. The qualitative interview study provided valuable insights into effective strategies employed by teachers to nurture positive relationships with students. These insights, drawn from the nuanced perspectives of our participants, not only contribute to understanding effective pedagogical practices but also have the potential to inform and inspire future interventions aimed at enhancing teacher-student connections (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Population and Sample

The research conducted took place with educators in the North Texas area public secondary schools. The data were collected through interviews with secondary educators, purposively selected to ensure balanced representation across different content areas (i.e., general classroom teachers), with an average sample size of 10. Participants received invitations via email, utilizing their work addresses obtained from school district websites and referrals from educator's campus administration. Invitations outlined the study's purpose, expectations, interview details, and confidentiality agreements. Responses were organized based on years of experience, position, and methods used for relationship building.

Table 3 provides an overview of the demographics of the general education educator participants in this study. The table details the distribution of participants across different racial and gender categories, offering insights into the diversity of the educator group involved in the research. This demographic breakdown helps to illuminate the varied perspectives that contribute to the study's exploration of educational practices and outcomes.

Table 3*Participant Demographics: General Ed Educator Participants Race and Gender*

Participant	Race	Gender
A	White	Male
B	White	Male
C	Black	Male
D	White	Female
E	White	Female
F	White	Female
G	Black	Female
H	White	Female
I	Black	Female
J	Black	Female

All participants in the study were provided with informed consent forms to sign, aiming to reduce their vulnerability during data collection. These forms explicitly stated participants' right to terminate their involvement at any stage of the study. Each interview protocol comprised open-ended questions focused on participants' work experiences within their institutions, their perspectives on building relationships with students, and the influence of these relationships on academic achievement. Probing questions were used selectively to elicit further detailed responses.

To ensure confidentiality, participant information was de-identified and securely stored on an encrypted hard drive. Table 3 assigned each participant an identifier, such as General Ed

Educator A, B, and C, with no demographic details analyzed for identification purposes. The study did not consider other demographic factors, and no participants withdrew.

This detailed methodology outlines the approach to data analysis, focusing on three primary variables: years of experience, gender, and methods employed for relationship building. The standardized approach involved conducting open-ended interviews, ensuring consistency across all participants, guided by McNamara's (1999) methodology. Examining data related to years of experience provides insights into how participants' professional tenure influences their approaches to relationship building (Abrams et al., 2020). This variable acknowledges that educators at different career stages may utilize distinct strategies in fostering relationships within educational settings. By categorizing participants based on experience, the study aims to identify patterns and differences across various stages of professional development (Abrams et al., 2020). Analyzing data through this lens provides a nuanced understanding of how diverse roles influence relational capacity in educational contexts (Abrams et al., 2020).

Lastly, the methods employed for relationship building encompass a range of strategies used by educators to connect with students, including pedagogical approaches and interpersonal skills (Choi & Lee, 2021). This variable examines the diversity of practices and aims to identify effective methods, challenges, and innovations in relationship building within educational settings.

The use of standardized, open-ended interviews aligns with McNamara's (1999) approach, ensuring consistency in questioning and enabling participants to provide detailed responses (McDonald et al., 2013). This approach enhances flexibility while maintaining a structured framework for analysis, thereby promoting the reliability and validity of the study findings (Balyer et al., 2015). By applying rigorous methodological standards, the research aims

to uncover nuanced insights into the dynamics of relational capacity in educational contexts, contributing to a deeper understanding of effective educational practices.

Materials/Instruments

The research utilized specific tools and equipment to gather and analyze data. These instruments included:

1. Laptop: Used as the primary device for communication, data entry, and accessing research-related resources such as literature reviews, data analysis software, and interview protocols.
2. Google Invitations and Google Meets: Utilized for scheduling and conducting interviews with participants remotely. Google Invitations helped in setting up interview times, while Google Meets served as the platform for conducting the interviews themselves. This choice facilitated flexibility in interview scheduling and allowed for remote data collection, which is particularly useful in situations where in-person meetings are not feasible.
3. Microsoft Applications: These applications (e.g., Microsoft Word, Excel, and PowerPoint) were used for document preparation, data organization, and presentation of findings. Microsoft Word has been used for writing the dissertation itself, Excel for organizing interview schedules or data, and PowerPoint for creating presentation slides.
4. Recording Device: Employed to record interviews, ensuring accurate capturing of participant responses and preserving data for transcription and analysis. The use of a recording device enhances the reliability of data by minimizing the risk of missing or inaccurately documenting critical information during interviews.

5. MAXQDA Decoding Software Application: This software application aids in transcribing recorded interviews into text format. It facilitates the process of analyzing qualitative data by converting spoken words into written text, allowing researchers to review, code, and extract themes or patterns from interview data efficiently.

These instruments were selected to support various stages of the research process, from data collection to analysis and presentation. Each tool was chosen for its specific capabilities in facilitating remote communication, data management, and qualitative data analysis, ensuring the study's methodological rigor and the reliability of findings related to relational capacity and student achievement.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Campus administrators were contacted and asked to refer teachers for participation in this study. After selecting secondary general education teachers from schools across the North Texas area, the research employed semistructured interviews to collect data. Due to the various geographic locations within the North Texas area and the appeal for participants to join the study, videoconferencing was the exclusive option for conducting the interviews. The video conferencing application utilized was Google Meets. The interviews lasted from 45 to 60 minutes. Field notes were taken during interviews with study participants, enhancing trustworthiness in this study. The data collection process concluded with document analysis evaluating the data from each interview.

Interviews are the primary and established method for gathering qualitative data (Muzari et al., 2022). According to McNamara (1999), interviews are a two-person dialogue initiated by the interviewer to extract research-relevant information, facilitating direct verbal interaction and soliciting information within participants' natural social settings. Muzari et al. (2022) emphasized

interviews as a key method, providing direct citations from interviewees that offer insights into their thoughts and experiences. The thematic analysis examined the data to identify commonalities from each interview. The researchers highlighted several predominant themes related to how professional development influenced teachers' instructional strategies and collaboration with colleagues, illustrating the multifaceted nature of teacher growth (Finlay & Stuart, 2022). The findings of Vandeyar and Mahomed (2023) demonstrated that thematic analysis was a valuable method for exploring complex educational phenomena, as it enabled researchers to distill rich qualitative data into coherent themes that reflected the realities of educators' experiences.

Keys to an Effective Interview

Compelling interviews require the researcher to prioritize building rapport with participants and purposeful communication. Critical considerations for an effective interview, as outlined by Creswell (2018), include:

1. **Building Rapport:** Establishing a foundational connection with interviewees is crucial. The researcher should strive to create an atmosphere conducive to open communication by understanding the individual's background and experiences.
2. **Conversational Purpose:** The interview should be guided by a clear purpose, ensuring that each interaction contributes meaningfully to the research goals.

In employing qualitative data analysis and interviews, this study aims to uncover nuanced into the strategies employed by secondary teachers to foster positive relationships with students and the resulting outcome on academic achievement (Choi & Lee, 2021). The concurrent nature of data analysis and the emphasis on building rapport during interviews underscore qualitative research's dynamic and interactive nature.

The methodology employed for a qualitative interview study explored the perceptions of secondary educators concerning relational capacity connections to student learning. The study's primary objective is to investigate the relationships between teacher-student interactions, cognitive engagement, and student achievement (Yassine et al., 2020). Specific research questions (RQs) and corresponding sub-questions guide the inquiry process, providing a structured framework for the investigation. The subsequent sections elaborate on essential aspects, including the research setting, population, sample selection, data collection procedures, and ethical considerations, adhering to the guidelines established by the American Psychological Association (APA).

A qualitative interview study was chosen to facilitate personal interactions and gather detailed data through a discussion and follow-up questions format. According to Culver (2020), such studies reveal the growth in educators' effectiveness in relationship building, emphasizing the connection to data mastery of knowledge. Practical instructional goals and improvement cultures are considered crucial when examining organizational factors, promoting the exchange of practical ideas, and fostering relationships that contribute to overall success (Muzari et al., 2022). Pagliarin and Gerrits (2020) noted that qualitative research should commence with questions aligned with its primary purpose of promoting learning. The analytical steps involved aided in discovering and interpreting themes related to research questions that explored the nexus between relationship building and student achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021).

Dixon et al. (2022) utilized thematic analysis to explore educators' perspectives on inclusion, revealing significant themes that highlighted the challenges and successes of implementing inclusive practices in diverse classrooms. Dixon et al. (2022) identified key themes related to the beliefs and attitudes of teachers towards inclusion, illustrating how these

factors influenced their instructional strategies and interactions with students. Through their thematic analysis, Dixon et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of understanding the social and contextual factors that shaped educators' experiences with inclusion, providing insights into the complexities of fostering an inclusive environment.

The data collection window spanned 2 weeks, during which the response rate and overall ratio were determined by the number of emails sent and responses received. The instruments utilized for data collection included Google Meets, Google Forms, and a computer for database access. The interview component involved 10 participants holding diverse positions, including general classroom teachers. These interviews were conducted to obtain insights into various perspectives, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing positive relationships between educators and students in secondary education. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, de-identified, and stored on a secure and encrypted hard drive to ensure security and anonymity for all participants.

In Vivo Coding

In vivo coding was used to derive critical themes from the interview transcripts. The selected data collection method in this study enables the exploration of common patterns and themes concerning the effective strategies employed by secondary teachers to cultivate positive relationships with their students and the subsequent influence on academic achievement. Muzari et al. (2022) suggested that qualitative data analysis, distinguished by its focus on words, observations, images, and symbols, differs significantly from quantitative approaches, primarily for exploratory research purposes. This process involves becoming familiar with the data, revisiting research objectives, coding the data, and identifying patterns and connections (Muzari et al., 2022). In the process of in vivo coding, labels were assigned to group interview responses,

facilitating the identification of related themes and connections (Muzari et al., 2022). This coding method enabled the condensation of a considerable volume of data into a manageable format for subsequent data analysis.

MAXQDA was employed as the data analysis and coding software in this research, allowing for the identification of themes and patterns in the responses from teachers during interviews. The use of in vivo coding, combined with data analysis software, was instrumental in uncovering themes and patterns in the responses obtained during interviews (Muzari et al., 2022). In this study, interviews were conducted with teachers to explore their experiences in building relational capacity with their students and their perspectives on how this affects student achievement. The aim was to identify key themes such as "Challenges," "Benefits," "Best Practices," and "Effects on Student Achievement." Through these interviews, the study seeks to understand the methods teachers have found most effective in fostering strong, supportive relationships with their students and how these relationships contribute to academic success.

Steps in MAXQDA

Importing Data:

- Import the interview transcripts into MAXQDA.

1. Creating a Code System:

- Develop a coding schema with hierarchical codes. For instance:
 - Challenges
 - Trust
 - Student Participation
 - Benefits
 - Flexibility

- New Skills
- Strategies
 - Interactive Tools
 - Time Management
- Student Engagement
 - Motivation
 - Feedback

2. Coding the Data:

- Open the document browser and read through the interview transcript. Highlight relevant text segments and assign appropriate codes.

Sample Transcript Excerpt

I believe building relational capacity has had a significant effect on student achievement. I've noticed that when I invest time in developing strong relationships with my students, their academic performance improves. One challenge is finding the time to build these relationships, especially with larger class sizes. Another is balancing relational capacity with the need to cover curriculum content, but the benefits of doing so are substantial. Students are more engaged, motivated, and willing to participate in class. They also tend to perform better academically when they feel supported and understood. Three best practices I've found effective are fostering open communication, creating a supportive classroom environment, and implementing personalized teaching strategies. Open communication helps build trust, a supportive environment makes students feel safe and valued, and personalized strategies address individual learning needs, which boosts their confidence and academic success. These practices have a profound influence. When

students feel connected to their teacher, they are more likely to engage with the material and put in the effort needed to succeed academically. Strong teacher-student relationships are crucial for creating an environment where academic achievement can flourish.

(Participant J)

Coding Process and Data Analysis

3. Highlight Key Phrases and Assign Codes:

- Highlight "online teaching quite challenging" and apply the code Challenges.
- Highlight "students faced technical issues, like poor internet connections" and apply the code Technical Issues under Challenges.
- Highlight "difficult for them to participate in class activities" and apply the code Student Participation under Challenges.
- Highlight "one benefit was the flexibility it offered" and apply the code Flexibility under Benefits.
- Highlight "using various interactive tools to engage students" and apply the code Interactive Tools under Strategies.
- Highlight "students were more motivated because they received immediate feedback" and apply the code Motivation under Student Engagement.
- Highlight "received immediate feedback through digital platforms" and apply the code Feedback under Student Engagement.

This structured coding method facilitated the organization of a large volume of qualitative data into manageable categories, aiding in subsequent data analysis. MAXQDA was utilized as the primary data analysis software, allowing for a systematic identification of themes and patterns in the interview responses from teachers.

1. Simultaneous Data Collection and Analysis: Given the exploratory nature of this study, data analysis was conducted concurrently with data collection. This approach ensured real-time identification of emerging themes and allowed for the refinement of research questions and methods as necessary. The analysis revealed that educators achieved better outcomes when tailoring their expectations to fit their students and classroom environments. Yalçın and Eres's (2021) descriptive studies highlighted various expectations among educators, emphasizing the importance of effectively managing behavior through positive reinforcement.

2. Narrative Analysis:

- Familiarization with Data: The researcher thoroughly engaged with the qualitative data, repeatedly reviewing it to discern basic patterns and initial observations (Creswell, 2018).
- Revisiting Research Objectives: The collected data were aligned with the research objectives, and pertinent questions were identified for qualitative exploration.
- Coding or Indexing: The data were structured and labeled, identifying broad ideas, behaviors, and concepts, and assigning corresponding codes (Creswell, 2018). For instance, codes could include socioeconomic status, age, gender, and responses categorized as positive or negative.
- Identifying Patterns and Connections: Following Creswell's (2018) framework, themes and patterns in the coded data were identified. The most common responses to questions were examined, and areas for further exploration were identified.

In MAXQDA, assigning unique codes to interview participants to maintain their confidentiality involved replacing identifiable information with anonymized identifiers. Example

Scenario: Interviews were conducted with 10 teachers about their experiences with building relational capacity with their students and their perspectives on how this affects student achievement. To maintain confidentiality, each participant is assigned a unique code (e.g., Participant A, Participant B, Participant C, etc.).

MAXQDA Coding Process

Materials:

- MAXQDA software
- Anonymized interview transcripts
- List of codes and themes

Instructions:

1. Prepared the Documents:

- Started by importing the anonymized interview transcript files into MAXQDA.
- Went to "Documents" > "Import Document(s)" > Selected the transcript files.

2. Applied the Codes:

- For each relevant segment of the text, applied the corresponding code:
 - "Online teaching quite challenging" – Applied the code *Challenges*.
 - "Students faced technical issues, like poor internet connections" – Applied the code *Technical Issues* under *Challenges*.
 - "Difficult for them to participate in class activities" – Applied the code *Student Participation* under *Challenges*.
 - "One benefit was the flexibility it offered" – Applied the code *Flexibility* under *Benefits*.

- "Using various interactive tools to engage students" – Applied the code *Interactive Tools* under *Strategies*.
- "Students were more motivated because they received immediate feedback" – Applied the code *Motivation* under *Student Engagement*.
- "Received immediate feedback through digital platforms" – Applied the code *Feedback* under *Student Engagement*.

3. Anonymized Participant Data:

- Anonymized the document by replacing identifiable information with codes, if necessary.
- Right-clicked on the document in the "Document System" and selected "Edit Text."
- Replaced names with unique participant codes (e.g., PA, PB, etc.).

4. Created and Assigned Participant Variables:

- Created a variable for each participant to keep track of participant information without revealing identities.
- Clicked on "Variables" > "Document Variables" > "New Variable."
- Named the variable (e.g., "Participant Code") and assigned the corresponding code (e.g., PA) to the document.

5. Reviewed and Analyzed:

Data Analysis Using MAXQDA

Materials:

- Data (e.g., interview transcripts)
- MAXQDA software

- Code System
- Analytical approach

Instructions:

1. Prepared the Code System:
 - Imported data into MAXQDA.
 - Identified key concepts, patterns, and themes present in the data.
 - Created and categorized codes that represented these patterns and themes.
2. Systematic Exploration:
 - Applied the code system to the data. Carefully reviewed each segment, applying the appropriate codes.
 - Looked for connections and relationships between different codes and themes.
3. Conducted Structured Analysis:
 - Organized the coded data using MAXQDA's tools and features.
 - Interpreted the data, focusing on the codes and themes identified.
 - Drew meaningful conclusions by analyzing the relationships and patterns found.
4. Finalized:
 - Reviewed the analysis for consistency and completeness.
 - Documented the findings and conclusions.
6. Documented the Process:
 - Maintained a detailed record of the coding process, including any decisions and changes made during analysis.

The following table (see Table 4) provides a detailed overview of participant responses and the frequency of theme occurrences identified during the study. This figure presents a sample of the data collected through semistructured interviews, highlighting key themes that emerged from participants' feedback. By examining the number of times each theme was mentioned, the table offers insights into the commonalities and variations in experiences reported by the participants. This analysis helps to elucidate the prevalent patterns and trends within the data, providing a clearer understanding of the themes that are central to the study's findings.

Table 4

Sample of Participant Responses and Number of Theme Occurrences

Participant	6. The role of parental engagement and support systems	1. The influence of relational capacity on student learning outcomes	5. Socio-economic status and its influence on relational capacity.	3. Personalized interactions and engagement strategies.	7. Consistency, routines, and incentives in relational capacity.	2. Relational capacity during critical educational stages.	4. Challenges and barriers to build relational capacity.
A	X	X	X			X	X
B	X		X	X			
C		X	X	X	X		
D	X		X	X	X		X
E	X	X	X		X	X	
F	X	X		X	X		X
G	X	X	X			X	
H	X	X	X	X	X	X	
I	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
J	X	X		X	X	X	X
Total	9	8	8	7	7	6	5

MAXQDA facilitated the identification of the seven key themes that emerged from the interviews with participants, each offering valuable insights into building relational capacity and

its effect on student achievement. The software enabled systematic analysis through its coding and categorization features. By employing frequency analysis, code co-occurrence, and text search queries, MAXQDA helped identify recurring concepts and relationships between different topics.

Frequency analysis involves counting the number of times specific items or themes appear within a dataset. This method is used to identify patterns, trends, and commonalities in qualitative data, such as responses from interviews or surveys. By quantifying how often particular words, phrases, or themes occur, researchers can gain insights into the prominence and relevance of these elements within the data. This approach helps to highlight significant aspects of the data, making it easier to interpret and understand the overall findings. In essence, frequency analysis provides a way to systematically quantify qualitative information, offering a clearer view of the most frequently mentioned or emphasized points in the data. After obtaining frequency counts in MAXQDA, you can sort the codes based on their frequency.

This sorting is typically done in descending order, meaning the most frequently occurring codes appear at the top. This method allows you to quickly identify the most prevalent themes or topics in your data. By using MAXQDA's ordering features, you can efficiently manage and analyze large volumes of qualitative data, gaining valuable insights into the most significant and recurring elements within your dataset.

These methods allowed for a detailed exploration of how educators cultivate relationships with their students and underscored the significant role these relationships play in academic success. These themes are thoroughly discussed in Chapter 4, illustrating the nuanced approaches educators use and the profound effect of these relationships on student achievement.

Methods for Establishing Trustworthiness. Ensuring the credibility of this study was paramount throughout the data collection and analysis processes. To establish credibility, the initial steps involved obtaining teacher referrals from building administrators. After the administrators identified potential participants, these teachers were contacted and provided with an informed consent form. To foster honest responses, one must cultivate a rapport with the participants and emphasize the significance of providing truthful answers and supporting the explanations with relevant examples (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017).

Preserving confidentiality is a crucial ethical tenet designed to protect the privacy of study participants. This dedication guarantees the secure and undisclosed nature of personal information (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017) encompassing the safeguarding of sensitive data like personal details or responses to prevent unauthorized access or association with specific individuals. Trustworthiness components are deliberately integrated to bolster the reliability and credibility of this commitment (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017).

Trustworthiness involves implementing measures and strategies that enhance the overall dependability and validity of confidentiality assurance, ensuring the research maintains a high level of trust and integrity (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017). Trustworthiness components may include transparency in communication, establishing clear protocols, and implementing rigorous data security measures. These elements collectively contribute to the robustness and credibility of the confidentiality commitment within the research framework, instilling confidence in participants and stakeholders (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017).

Researcher Role

The researcher's role as a qualitative researcher is crucial in developing procedures for managing qualitative data. This underscores the qualitative researcher's pivotal role in managing

qualitative data, particularly in exploring and understanding the crucial relationships between teachers and students (Abrams et al., 2020). The researcher's role is positioned as central, reflecting the significance of their responsibilities in contributing to the success of reform efforts within the educational landscape (Abrams et al., 2020).

As a qualitative researcher, the individual is responsible for developing procedures for managing qualitative data. These procedures involve designing and implementing systematic approaches to collect, organize, and analyze qualitative information. The emphasis on qualitative data suggests an interest in the nuanced, contextual, and often subjective aspects of the relationships between teachers and students (Abrams et al., 2020). This approach aligns with the qualitative research paradigm, which seeks to delve into the depth and richness of human experiences (Muzari et al., 2022).

The effectiveness of relationships between teachers and students is considered a critical factor in the success of educational reform efforts. This assertion aligns with contemporary educational theories that recognize the profound influence of interpersonal connections on various aspects of the educational process, including student learning outcomes, engagement, and overall school climate (Yassine et al., 2020). By exploring these relationships, valuable insights were uncovered that could inform and guide educational reforms (Balyer et al., 2015).

Exploring and understanding relationships between teachers and students was multifaceted (Abrams et al., 2020). It involved delving into communication dynamics, trust-building, instructional methods, and the socio-emotional aspects of the teaching and learning process (McAuliffe et al., 2019). Equipped with qualitative methodologies, researchers were well-suited to capture the complexity and depth of these relationships, moving beyond

quantitative metrics to uncover the subjective experiences and perceptions of those involved (Balyer et al., 2015).

Using the term "vital" underscored the researcher's role in exploring and contributing to enhancing these relationships. By understanding the dynamics at play, Culver (2020) provided valuable recommendations and insights that informed educational policies, teacher training programs, or specific interventions to improve the quality of teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, it can be inferred that the researcher's work was situated within a broader context of educational reform (Balyer et al., 2015). Educational reform initiatives often addressed systemic challenges, enhanced educational outcomes, and created positive learning environments (Yassine et al., 2020). Culver (2020) focused on relationships and data that could have informed reform efforts in a targeted and influential manner, thus contributing greater insight. In essence, this highlighted the intricate and influential role of the qualitative researcher in navigating the complexities of teacher-student relationships. It underscored the broader implications of this exploration for educational reform efforts (Culver, 2020).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations in research played a crucial role in upholding the integrity and well-being of participants involved in a study (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017). These considerations encompassed a range of principles and practices to ensure the research process was completed with the utmost respect, transparency, and protection of participants' rights. One fundamental ethical aspect emphasized was maintaining confidentiality and anonymity (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017).

Confidentiality was a critical ethical principle that safeguarded participants' privacy by ensuring their personal information remained secure and undisclosed (Nicholson & Kurucz,

2017). This level of confidentiality involved protecting sensitive data, such as personal details or responses, from being accessed or attributed to specific individuals. On the other hand, anonymity went further by ensuring that participants' identities remained entirely unknown throughout the study, even to the researchers themselves (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017). This double-layered protection was vital in fostering a sense of trust among participants and encouraging open and honest contributions (McAuliffe et al., 2019).

According to McAuliffe et al. (2019), this level of protection underscored the importance of allowing participants to make informed choices regarding sharing their information. This ethical consideration recognized and respected the autonomy of individuals, acknowledging their right to decide the extent to which their data were disclosed. Providing participants with agency in this decision-making process empowered them and aligned with ethical principles prioritizing voluntary and consensual participation.

Nicholson and Kurucz (2017) emphasized that informed consent was a critical ethical component, as it was guided by U.S. federal guidelines. After the administrators identified potential participants, those teachers were contacted via email or phone and provided with an informed consent form using DocuSign. According to Nicholson and Kurucz (2017), obtaining informed consent was a foundational practice that ensured participants were fully aware of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, benefits, and voluntary involvement. This transparency was essential for ethical research conduct, as it allowed participants to make informed decisions about their participation based on a comprehensive understanding of what was expected of them and the potential implications of their involvement (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017).

Adhering to U.S. federal guidelines in obtaining informed consent demonstrated a commitment to following established ethical standards and legal frameworks. Balyer et al. (2015) stated that there must be clear and understandable information to participants, addressing any concerns or questions they may have and seeking explicit agreement before proceeding with the study. This ethical safeguard protects participants from potential harm, ensures their well-being, and upholds ethical standards and expectations governing research practices (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017).

Assumptions

The significance of lead teacher, mentors, and academic coaches' leadership behaviors in supporting educators' instruction is underscored by Abrams et al. (2020). Their findings highlighted leadership's pivotal role in shaping the educational landscape. According to Abrams et al. (2020), the assumption posited was that fostering effective relationships between teachers and students contributed positively to academic success. This aligned seamlessly with the overarching emphasis on relationship-building within the broader context of school improvement efforts (Abrams et al., 2020).

Abrams et al. (2020) shed light on the multifaceted nature of leadership behaviors within the educational realm. In this context, leadership went beyond administrative roles and encompassed actions and strategies that directly influenced educators' instructional practices. The acknowledgment of the influential role of leadership in supporting instruction emphasized the need for leaders to actively engage with and facilitate effective teaching practices (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). Yalçın and Eres (2021) rooted the assumption deeply in the understanding that the learning environment was significantly shaped by the quality of interpersonal connections practices, positively contributing to academic success.

When educators and students established positive and supportive relationships, it created an atmosphere conducive to learning, collaboration, and the overall well-being of individuals within the educational community (Abrams et al., 2020). This assumption also aligned harmoniously with the broader narrative of school improvement efforts. In pursuing enhanced educational outcomes and creating positive learning environments, there was a growing recognition of the pivotal role of relationships (Abrams et al., 2020). School improvement efforts increasingly emphasized fostering solid and positive connections among all stakeholders, specifically focusing on the teacher-student relationship (Culver, 2020).

According to Abrams et al. (2020), leadership behaviors were instrumental in shaping the culture of educational institutions. Leaders who prioritized and modeled positive relationships set the tone for the learning community. Specifically, this tone included interactions between teachers and students, collaborative efforts among educators, and the involvement of parents and other stakeholders. The assertion that leadership behaviors were crucial in supporting educators' instruction, coupled with the assumption that effective relationships between teachers and students positively influenced academic success, underscored the interconnectedness of leadership, relationships, and educational outcomes (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). This recognition emphasizes the need for educational leaders to actively foster a culture of positive relationships as an integral component of comprehensive school improvement efforts (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Limitations

Several significant limitations can influence the study's robustness and applicability. Drisko (2024) highlighted several delimitations that can affect a study's robustness and applicability in *Transferability and Generalization in Qualitative Research*. These include:

1. **Scope of the Study:** Delimitations define the study's boundaries, such as specific contexts, populations, and phenomena. While focusing on a narrow scope ensures manageability and relevance, it may limit the generalizability of findings.
2. **Sample Selection:** The choice of participants and settings influences the applicability of the results. Delimitations related to sampling, such as focusing on particular demographics or locations, can affect how the findings apply to other groups.
3. **Methodological Choices:** The research design and methods used for data collection and analysis act as delimitations. These choices influence the depth and relevance of the data and its applicability to different contexts.
4. **Theoretical Framework:** The theoretical perspective guiding the study can restrict its focus and influence how findings are interpreted, potentially limiting their applicability to other theoretical models.
5. **Time Frame:** The duration of the study can also serve as a delimitation, as findings may be specific to the research period and not account for subsequent changes or developments.

Drisko (2024) emphasized that these delimitations are crucial for understanding the limits of generalizability and applicability in qualitative research. They highlight the importance of recognizing these constraints when interpreting and applying research findings.

6. **Potential Bias or Truthfulness of Participants:** There is always a concern about the honesty and bias of participants in qualitative studies. Participants may provide responses that they perceive as socially desirable or that align with their own beliefs or experiences, potentially skewing the data and conclusions drawn from the study. This limitation

underscores the importance of triangulating data sources and using multiple methods to verify findings.

Addressing these limitations involves transparently discussing their potential influence on the study's outcomes and conclusions. It also highlights areas for future research, such as expanding sample sizes, using mixed-method approaches, and exploring diverse educational contexts to enhance the understanding of relational capacity's effects on student achievement.

Delimitations

Delimitations set boundaries and constraints for a study. These include focusing on specific educational settings, such as secondary schools or particular grade levels, and limiting the study to schools within a defined geographical or cultural context. The time frame may restrict the study to a specific academic year or semester, examining relational capacity and its effects within this period. Participant characteristics could be narrowed to specific demographics, such as students from particular socioeconomic backgrounds or educators with specific training.

The dissertation may also limit the scope to specific measurement tools and methodologies for assessing relational capacity and student achievement. Ethical considerations ensure adherence to guidelines on data collection, analysis, and participant confidentiality. The study acknowledges limitations in generalizing findings beyond its specific context or sample, considering potential challenges related to data availability and access to longitudinal or historical records relevant to the study's focus.

Summary

In Chapter 3, the research design and method, population, sample, instrumentation, qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, ethical considerations, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations outlined in this study. The primary objective of this chapter was to

delineate the research methodology employed to address the research questions. A comprehensive discussion encompasses the specifics of data collection, study participants, procedures, and interview questions, elucidating the intricacies of the study's implementation and participant selection.

Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the research findings, focusing on both narrative and document analysis. It highlights insights from 10 interviews with secondary teachers regarding their perceptions of how relational capacity influences student academic achievement. The chapter is organized into several sections: an overview of the research purpose, a detailed description and outline of the findings, a presentation of key themes identified from participant interviews, and a discussion on the significance of these results. The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the perceptions of secondary teachers of building relational capacity on student achievement and investigate the connections between relational capacity and student achievement. By exploring how educators' choices in building relationships with students influence academic outcomes, the study aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the teacher's perceptions of relational capacity on student achievement.

As described in Chapter 3, 10 educators with experience in general education in public schools in the North Texas metroplex participated in semistructured interviews. In Chapter 3, the methodology section detailed how these interviews were conducted, the narrative and document analysis techniques employed, and the thematic analysis process. The research interview questions are found in Appendix A.

Drawing from their own experiences as educators and observing the transformative power of relationships in students' lives, I emphasized the critical role of intentional relationship-building in fostering academic success. The study explored different perspectives and modes of operation of educators to provide insights into how educators can better equip themselves to increase student academic achievement. I set aside personal opinions to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perspectives, ensuring a thorough and unbiased analysis. The next

sections will delve deeper into the themes identified and discuss their broader implications for educational practices and policies.

Results

Ten general educators were interviewed for this qualitative study. The analysis process was simultaneous with collection, which included reviewing the responses and analyzing the data. The analysis was structured around the research questions guiding this study, with each question aiming to explore different facets of relational capacity in the educational context.

Table 5 provides a detailed overview of the connections between the research questions and the identified themes from the study. Each research question is linked to specific themes that emerged during the data analysis, highlighting how the study's findings address the core inquiries. This table demonstrates the alignment between the research objectives and key insights, providing a clear framework for understanding how the themes correspond to the central research questions. Column A lists the research questions, Column B presents the identified themes (1–7), Column C connects the themes to the responses addressing the research questions, and Column D outlines the outcomes associated with positive relational capacity. By mapping these connections, the table serves as a guide to the thematic structure of the study, ensuring that the research questions are thoroughly explored and answered.

Table 5*Linking Research Questions With Themes*

A Research questions	B Themes (1–7)	C Responses to RQs linking to themes	D Outcomes of positive relational capacity
RQ1: How secondary teachers perceive the significance of relational capacity in influencing student learning outcomes?	1. The influence of relational capacity on student learning outcomes.	Teachers perceive relational capacity as a cornerstone for positive student learning outcomes. They believe that strong relationships with students foster trust and respect, leading to improved academic performance and engagement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Student Motivation and Engagement. • Improved Classroom Environment. • Positive Influence on Academic Achievement.
	5. Socio-economic status and its influence on relational capacity.	Teachers note that students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds often face additional challenges, and relational capacity is critical in providing the support these students need to succeed academically.	
	6. The role of parental engagement and support systems.	Teachers perceive parental engagement as a key factor in building relational capacity, as supportive home environments complement the relationships built in school and enhance student learning outcomes.	
	7. Consistency, routines, and incentives in relational capacity.	Teachers highlight the importance of maintaining consistent routines and providing incentives to reinforce positive behaviors, which strengthens relational capacity and improves learning outcomes.	
RQ2: In what ways do secondary teachers describe the processes involved in building relational capacity between teachers and students, considering its potential effect on students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement?	2. Relational capacity during critical educational stages.	Teachers note that building relational capacity is crucial during critical educational stages, such as the transition to secondary school, where establishing trust can significantly influence student engagement and success.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active Listening and Empathy. • Consistent Communication and Feedback. • Overcoming Barriers to Engagement.

A Research questions	B Themes (1–7)	C Responses to RQs linking to themes	D Outcomes of positive relational capacity
RQ3: How do secondary teachers conceptualize the relationship between student cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement, with a specific focus on the role of relational capacity, as informed by the theoretical framework of effective educational practices?	3. Personalized interactions and engagement strategies.	Teachers describe using various personalized strategies, such as one-on-one meetings and differentiated instruction, to build relational capacity, thereby boosting cognitive engagement and academic achievement.	
	4. Challenges and barriers to building relational capacity.	Teachers discuss challenges such as limited time and resources, which can impede the processes of building strong relationships, potentially affecting students' cognitive engagement and achievement.	
	1. The influence of relational capacity on student learning outcomes.	Teachers conceptualize that strong relational capacity directly boosts student self-efficacy and cognitive engagement, leading to higher academic achievement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interconnectedness of Cognitive Engagement, Self-Efficacy, and Academic Achievement. • Role of Relational Capacity in Enhancing Cognitive Engagement. • Theoretical Framework of Effective Educational Practices.
	2. Relational capacity during critical educational stages.	Teachers believe that during critical educational stages, enhanced relational capacity can significantly bolster students' self-efficacy and cognitive engagement, resulting in better academic outcomes.	
	3. Personalized interactions and engagement strategies.	Teachers see personalized interactions as essential for fostering self-efficacy and cognitive engagement, with relational capacity serving as the foundation for these tailored strategies.	
	4. Challenges and barriers to building relational capacity.	Teachers acknowledge that overcoming barriers to relational capacity is crucial for maintaining students' self-efficacy and cognitive engagement, which are key to academic success.	

First, each of the research questions are described with examples from the interviews. Then after reviewing the research questions, the overall seven themes are reported with examples of excerpts from the interviews.

RQ1: How secondary teachers perceive the significance of relational capacity in influencing student learning outcomes within the theoretical framework of effective educational practices?

This question sought to understand the perspectives and beliefs of secondary educators regarding how relational capacity influences students' learning experiences. This question explores how educators at the secondary level perceive the importance and effects of building positive relationships with students on their overall learning outcomes.

This study explored secondary teachers' perceptions of the significance of relational capacity in influencing student learning outcomes within the theoretical framework of effective educational practices. The findings, derived from interviews and narrative data analysis, underscore the critical role of relational capacity in shaping educational experiences and outcomes (as shown in Table 5).

Enhanced Student Motivation and Engagement

Teachers reported that strong relational capacity significantly enhances student motivation and engagement. Through establishing trust and rapport with students, teachers foster a supportive environment that promotes active participation and enthusiasm for learning. Educators stressed that students who perceive themselves as valued and understood are more inclined to actively participate in their education, resulting in increased cognitive engagement and academic achievement.

Example:

I've observed that strong relational capacity significantly enhances student motivation and engagement. When we establish trust and rapport with our students, it creates a supportive environment that promotes active participation and enthusiasm for learning. It's really about making students feel valued and understood. When they perceive themselves this way, they're more inclined to actively participate in their education, which we've seen result in increased cognitive engagement and academic achievement. I had a student who was initially quite withdrawn and rarely participated. By taking the time to build a connection and show genuine interest in their well-being, I noticed a gradual change. They started to engage more in discussions and showed more enthusiasm in their work. This positive shift not only improved their academic performance but also contributed to a more vibrant and interactive classroom environment. (Participant G)

Improved Classroom Environment

The development of relational capacity contributes to a positive classroom environment. Teachers noted that when students perceive their teachers as approachable and supportive, they are more willing to engage in class discussions. This mutual respect and understanding atmosphere foster a sense of community and belonging, which is essential for effective learning.

Example:

Developing relational capacity significantly contributes to a positive classroom environment. When students see their teachers as approachable and supportive, they're more willing to engage in class discussions. This atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding creates a sense of community and belonging, which is essential for effective learning. In my experience, once students feel that their opinions are valued and that they are part of a supportive community, they become more active participants in the

classroom. For instance, I had a class where students initially hesitated to share their thoughts. By consistently showing support and being approachable, the classroom dynamic changed. Students began to open up, leading to richer discussions and a more collaborative learning environment. This sense of belonging not only enhanced their engagement but also improved their overall academic performance. (Participant C)

Positive Influence on Academic Achievement

The connection between relational capacity and academic achievement was a recurrent theme. Teachers observed that students with strong relationships with their educators tend to perform better academically. These students are more likely to seek help, persist through challenges, and demonstrate resilience, all contributing to improved academic outcomes.

Example:

The connection between relational capacity and academic achievement is significant. We've observed that students who have strong relationships with their educators tend to perform better academically. These students are more likely to seek help, persist through challenges, and demonstrate resilience, all of which contribute to improved academic outcomes. I had a student who was struggling with math. By building a strong relationship with them, they felt comfortable asking for help and expressing their difficulties. This openness allowed me to provide the necessary support and encouragement. Over time, their confidence grew, they persisted through challenges, and their performance improved dramatically. This experience reinforced the idea that when students feel supported and understood, they are more resilient and likely to achieve their academic goals. (Participant B; see Table 5, column D)

RQ2: In what ways do secondary teachers describe the processes involved in building relational capacity between teachers and students, considering its potential effect on students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement?

The question sought to understand the interactions between teacher-student relationships and student cognitive engagement. Researchers posed this question to investigate the effect of teacher-student relationship quality on students' cognitive engagement during classroom activities. This question sought to identify the nature and quality of the relationship between teachers and students contribute to or influence students' cognitive engagement. Cognitive engagement indicates the degree to which students are mentally involved, attentive, and actively participating in the learning process. By exploring this relationship, researchers aim to gain insights into how positive and supportive teacher-student interactions can enhance students' cognitive engagement, ultimately influencing their academic performance and learning outcomes. The responses to this question provided valuable information for educators, administrators, and researchers looking to improve teaching practices, enhance the classroom environment, and promote student success by fostering positive teacher-student relationships.

This study examined the processes secondary teachers employ to build relational capacity with their students and the potential effects of these processes on students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement. The findings underscore various strategies and their role in fostering a conducive learning environment.

Active Listening and Empathy

Active listening and demonstrating empathy were frequently mentioned as critical components. Teachers emphasized the importance of listening to students' concerns, validating their feelings, and providing emotional support. By doing so, educators create a safe space where

students feel heard and respected. This emotional safety is crucial for cognitive engagement, as students are more likely to participate and invest effort in their studies when they feel understood and valued.

Example:

Active listening and empathy are critical components of my approach. It's essential to listen to students' concerns, validate their feelings, and provide emotional support. By doing so, I create a safe space where students feel heard and respected. This emotional safety is crucial for cognitive engagement. When students know they are understood and valued, they are more likely to participate actively and invest effort in their studies. For example, if a student shares a personal challenge, I make sure to listen attentively and respond with empathy, letting them know their feelings are valid. This builds trust and encourages them to engage more deeply with the learning material. (Participant B)

Consistent Communication and Feedback

Teachers identified consistent communication and timely feedback as essential processes. They emphasized the role of regular check-ins, both formal and informal, to maintain open lines of communication. Providing constructive feedback that acknowledges students' efforts and offers guidance for improvement helps build trust and encourages continuous learning. This ongoing dialogue fosters a growth mindset vital for academic achievement.

Example:

Consistent communication and timely feedback are absolutely essential in my teaching practice. I make it a point to have regular check-ins with my students, both formally through scheduled meetings and informally through casual conversations. Providing constructive feedback is key—I focus on acknowledging their efforts and offering

specific guidance for improvement. This ongoing dialogue helps build trust and encourages continuous learning. When students know they can rely on regular, supportive feedback, it fosters a growth mindset that is crucial for their academic achievement. It not only helps them understand their progress but also motivates them to keep striving and improving. (Participant H)

Overcoming Barriers to Engagement

Teachers acknowledged challenges to building relational capacity, such as large class sizes and diverse student needs. Despite these barriers, they employed strategies like differentiated instruction, peer mentoring, and flexible teaching approaches to ensure all students receive the attention and support they need. Overcoming these barriers is crucial for maximizing students' cognitive engagement and academic performance.

Overall, secondary teachers described various processes for building relational capacity with their students. Personalized interactions, active listening, consistent communication, creating a positive classroom environment, using humor and engaging activities, involving parents, and overcoming barriers were all highlighted as effective strategies. These processes significantly enhance students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement by fostering a supportive and motivating learning environment. The findings suggest that prioritizing relational capacity is essential for promoting successful educational outcomes.

Example:

Overcoming barriers to engagement is definitely a challenge, especially with large class sizes and the diverse needs of students. However, I employ several strategies to ensure all students receive the attention and support they need. Differentiated instruction allows me to tailor lessons to meet the unique needs of each student. Peer mentoring helps build a sense of

community and provides additional support for students. Flexible teaching approaches, such as varying instructional methods and offering multiple ways for students to demonstrate their understanding, are also crucial. These strategies help maximize students' cognitive engagement and academic performance. (Participant J; see Table 5, column D)

RQ3: How do secondary teachers conceptualize the relationship between student cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement, with a specific focus on the role of relational capacity, as informed by the theoretical framework of effective educational practices?

This question aimed to examine teachers' perspectives on the relationship between student cognitive engagement and learners' self-efficacy, specifically in the context of student achievement. This question sought to understand how teachers perceive the influence of students' cognitive engagement, such as their active participation, focus, and mental involvement in learning activities, on learners' self-efficacy. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capability to succeed in specific situations or to accomplish a task. In this context, self-efficacy relates to students' confidence in their ability to achieve academic success.

Researchers or educators aim to discover the connection between students' cognitive engagement and self-efficacy beliefs by exploring teachers' perceptions. Teachers' perspectives on this relationship are valuable because they interact closely with students daily and can offer valuable insights into how students' engagement in the learning process influences their belief in their academic abilities. Understanding these dynamics can have implications for educational practices, as it may inform strategies to enhance student engagement, boost self-efficacy, and ultimately contribute to improved student achievement. The findings from such inquiries may

guide educators in creating supportive learning environments that positively influence students' beliefs in their academic capabilities.

This study investigated how secondary teachers conceptualize the relationship between student cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement, specifically emphasizing the role of relational capacity. The theoretical framework of effective educational practices is reflected in the findings, highlighting the significance of relational capacity in fostering optimal educational outcomes.

Interconnectedness of Cognitive Engagement, Self-Efficacy, and Academic Achievement

Secondary teachers described a deeply interconnected relationship between student cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement. Teachers noted that cognitive engagement—students' active involvement and investment in their learning—directly influences and is influenced by self-efficacy, the belief in their ability to succeed. Both factors are pivotal in determining academic achievement, as students who are cognitively engaged and possess high self-efficacy are more likely to perform well academically.

Example:

In our experience as secondary teachers, we have observed a deeply interconnected relationship between cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement in our students. Cognitive engagement, which refers to students' active involvement and investment in their learning, significantly influences their self-efficacy, or their belief in their ability to succeed. Conversely, self-efficacy influences the level of cognitive engagement students exhibit. This dynamic interaction between cognitive engagement and self-efficacy is crucial in determining students' academic outcomes. Students who are actively engaged in their learning and believe in their capabilities are more likely to

achieve higher academic success. They tend to participate more in class, tackle challenges with confidence, and persist through difficulties. Therefore, fostering both cognitive engagement and self-efficacy is essential for promoting academic achievement. By creating a supportive learning environment that encourages active participation and builds students' confidence in their abilities, we can help our students achieve their full academic potential. (Participant F)

Role of Relational Capacity in Enhancing Cognitive Engagement

Teachers highlighted relational capacity as a critical factor in enhancing cognitive engagement. Building strong, trusting relationships with students creates an environment where they feel safe and valued. Teachers observed that students are more willing to engage intellectually and participate in classroom activities when they perceive their teachers as supportive and approachable. Teachers reinforce this engagement through personalized interactions and consistent feedback, which help maintain students' interest and involvement in their studies.

Example:

As educators, we have found that relational capacity plays a crucial role in enhancing cognitive engagement among students. Relational capacity refers to the strong, trusting relationships we build with our students, creating an environment where they feel safe, valued, and respected. When students view their teachers as supportive and approachable, they are more inclined to engage intellectually and actively participate in classroom activities. This sense of trust and security encourages them to take academic risks, ask questions, and fully invest in their learning. We reinforce this engagement by providing personalized interactions and consistent feedback. By understanding each student's

unique needs and offering tailored support, we can sustain their interest and involvement in their studies. Building these strong relationships not only boosts cognitive engagement but also fosters a positive, dynamic classroom environment where all students can succeed. (Participant G)

Theoretical Framework of Effective Educational Practices

Within the theoretical framework of effective educational practices, educators position relational capacity as a foundational element that supports other key educational strategies. Teachers emphasized that relational capacity underpins various best practices, such as differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and collaborative learning. By prioritizing relational capacity, teachers can more effectively implement these practices, thereby enhancing students' cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement.

Example:

Within the theoretical framework of effective educational practices, I firmly believe that relational capacity is a foundational element supporting various key strategies. In my experience, relational capacity underpins best practices like differentiated instruction, formative assessment, and collaborative learning. By prioritizing strong, trusting relationships with my students, I can implement these practices more effectively. This focus on relational capacity enhances students' cognitive engagement, boosts their self-efficacy, and ultimately leads to better academic achievement. When students feel valued and supported, they are more likely to thrive in all aspects of their learning journey.

(Participant E; see Table 5, column D)

Seven Themes

Upon completing the review and coding of the data, seven themes emerged from the educator interview responses. These themes are thoroughly described, with relevant examples. To delve deeper into these findings, the following section will provide an in-depth and rigorous analysis of each theme, exploring its nuances. This comprehensive discussion will not only illuminate the core elements of each theme but also examine their interconnectedness and the broader effect on educational practices. By integrating detailed examples from the interviews, this analysis will offer a robust understanding of how these themes shape and are shaped by the educational context, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced perspective on relational capacity in education.

Theme 1: Influence of Relational Capacity on Student Learning Outcomes

Discusses how building solid teacher-student relationships can positively influence student motivation, cognitive engagement, and academic achievement, particularly in low-income school districts.

Example:

I have found that relational capacity profoundly influences student learning outcomes. For instance, in my experience, students who feel valued and understood by their teachers tend to perform significantly better academically. One particular student comes to mind—let's call him student X. This student struggled with math and often felt overwhelmed. I made it a point to build a rapport with him, taking time to understand his interests and challenges. Over time, the student began to trust me more and became more open to asking questions in class. This students' academic performance change was remarkable. Once student X felt supported, his attitude towards math shifted. He started

participating more in class, his homework completion rate improved, and his test scores steadily increased. This wasn't an isolated case either. I've noticed similar patterns with other students. When they perceive that their teacher genuinely cares about their well-being and success, they're more motivated to engage with the material and put in the effort needed to excel. This underscores the importance of relational capacity in fostering a productive learning environment. (Participant-C)

Theme 2: Relational Capacity During Critical Educational Stages

Emphasizes the importance of relationships in motivating students during critical periods, such as middle school, and highlights the significant shifts in student mindset and engagement post-COVID.

Example:

Navigating the challenges of remote learning during COVID-19 underscored the importance of relational capacity in critical educational stages. As a teacher, maintaining strong connections with my students became paramount. Despite the physical distance, I prioritized checking in with each student individually via video calls, ensuring they felt supported and understood. This personal approach helped alleviate their anxieties and encouraged active engagement in virtual classes. Building trust through consistent communication and personalized feedback became foundational in fostering a conducive learning environment amidst uncertainty. (Participant-H)

Theme 3: Personalized Interactions and Engagement Strategies

The personalized interactions and engagement strategies focuses on the methods educators use to build relational capacity through personalized interactions, humor, and engaging

activities, and the effectiveness of projects involving research and hands-on work in promoting active learning.

Example:

Personalized interactions and engagement strategies have become integral to my teaching practice. One approach I use is tailoring my communication to fit each student's unique needs and learning styles. For example, I had a student, Student Jane, who was very quiet and rarely participated in class discussions. I noticed she was more responsive in one-on-one settings, so I started holding brief, personalized check-ins with her after class. This gave her a safe space to express her thoughts and ask questions she might not feel comfortable asking in front of her peers. These personalized interactions significantly enhanced Student Jane's engagement and learning. The effect was notably profound. Student Jane became more confident in her abilities and gradually started participating in class discussions. Her grades improved, and she began to take more initiative in her learning. Additionally, I use a variety of engagement strategies tailored to different learning preferences. For instance, I incorporate interactive tools and activities that cater to visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners. This approach ensures that all students can engage with the material in a way that suits them best. I once conducted a project-based learning activity where students could choose topics, they were passionate about. This not only increased their engagement but also allowed them to take ownership of their learning. By providing opportunities for students to explore subjects that interest them, I've seen higher levels of motivation and deeper understanding of the material. Personalized interactions and tailored engagement strategies have made a substantial

difference in student outcomes, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic learning environment. (Participant-A)

Theme 4: Challenges and Barriers to Building Relational Capacity

Identifies typical challenges educators face, including barriers to student engagement, lack of support from administration, and student attendance and engagement issues.

Example:

One of the biggest challenges is the limited amount of time I have to spend with each student. With large class sizes, it's difficult to give each student the individual attention they need. This can make it hard to build strong, personal relationships with everyone. For example, in a class of 30 students, I might only get a few minutes each week to interact with each student individually, which isn't always enough to establish a meaningful connection. Time constraints often mean that I have to prioritize certain interactions over others, which can lead to some students feeling overlooked or undervalued. This can be particularly challenging for students who need more support or who might not be as proactive in seeking help. It's a delicate balance trying to ensure that all students feel seen and supported. Another significant barrier is the diverse range of backgrounds and experiences students bring to the classroom. Socioeconomic disparities, for example, can create gaps in how students relate to school and their peers. Some students may face external pressures, such as family responsibilities or financial difficulties, which can affect their ability to engage fully in the classroom. Building relational capacity in these circumstances demands a thorough understanding of each student's individual context, which can be challenging to achieve. I try to create an inclusive classroom environment where every student feels valued and respected,

regardless of their background. This involves being sensitive to their individual situations and providing additional support where needed. For instance, I make an effort to be flexible with deadlines for students who have outside responsibilities. I also incorporate diverse perspectives into my teaching materials and discussions to ensure that all students see themselves reflected in the curriculum. Another challenge is dealing with students' varying emotional and mental health needs. Some students come to school with significant emotional baggage, which can hinder their ability to form relationships and engage in learning. It's important to be patient and provide a supportive environment, but this can be emotionally taxing for teachers. Professional development and support from school counselors are crucial in helping teachers navigate these challenges. Self-care is essential. I make sure to set boundaries and take time for myself outside of school. Additionally, having a supportive network of colleagues to share experiences and strategies with is invaluable. Regularly collaborating with other teachers and school staff helps us all manage the challenges of building relational capacity and provides a sense of shared purpose and support. (Participant-D)

Theme 5: Socioeconomic Status and Its Influence on Relational Capacity

Examines how the socioeconomic status of a school district influences the capacity to build relationships, which in turn affects student learning outcomes and educational support systems.

Example:

Exploring the influence of socioeconomic status on relational capacity reveals nuanced dynamics in educational settings. As a teacher in a diverse school district, I've observed how socioeconomic factors shape students' perceptions and interactions within the

classroom. Students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds often exhibit varying levels of trust and engagement compared to their peers. Recognizing these disparities, I implement inclusive teaching strategies that accommodate diverse needs, such as providing additional resources and fostering a supportive atmosphere. By addressing socioeconomic influences proactively, I aim to cultivate a classroom environment where all students feel valued and empowered to succeed academically. (Participant-F)

Theme 6: Role of Parental Engagement and Support Systems

Emphasizes the role of parental engagement in fostering students' cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement, underscoring the importance of robust support systems to strengthen relational capacity.

Example:

Parental engagement is crucial in building relational capacity, creating a bridge between home and school that helps teachers understand and meet each student's needs. For example, proactive communication from parents about their child's strengths, challenges, and interests allows for tailored support, enhancing student engagement and performance. However, variability in parental involvement presents challenges, as work schedules, language barriers, and unfamiliarity with the school system can hinder effective communication. To address this, I employ various communication methods, including phone calls, emails, and translation services, and encourage parental participation in school events. Additionally, broader support systems like school counselors, social workers, and community organizations play a vital role. They provide resources and support to address diverse student needs. By staying informed about available resources and coordinating with these support systems, I ensure a holistic approach to student well-

being. This includes regular check-ins with counselors and connecting families with community organizations for financial or emotional support. A well-supported network creates a stable foundation for learning, encouraging regular attendance, active participation, and increased student confidence. This comprehensive support system strengthens relationships between teachers and students, leading to improved academic and socio-emotional outcomes. (Participant-J)

Theme 7: Consistency, Routines, and Incentives in Relational Capacity

Discusses the importance of routines, consistency, and personal touches in building relationships with students and using incentives to boost student engagement and achievement.

Example:

In my experience, consistency, routines, and incentives are vital for building relational capacity with students. Establishing clear routines helps create a predictable and stable environment, which students find reassuring and conducive to learning. For instance, starting each class with a brief check-in allows me to connect with students personally and understand their emotional states. Consistency in my expectations and responses also builds trust, as students know what to expect and feel secure in the classroom setting. Incentives play a significant role in maintaining student engagement and motivation. Simple rewards like praise, recognition, or small privileges can encourage positive behavior and academic effort. For example, I implemented a system where students could earn points for active participation and completing assignments, which they could later exchange for various rewards. This not only motivated them to engage more in class but also reinforced the idea that their efforts were valued and appreciated. Overall, the combination of consistency, routines, and incentives helps foster a positive classroom

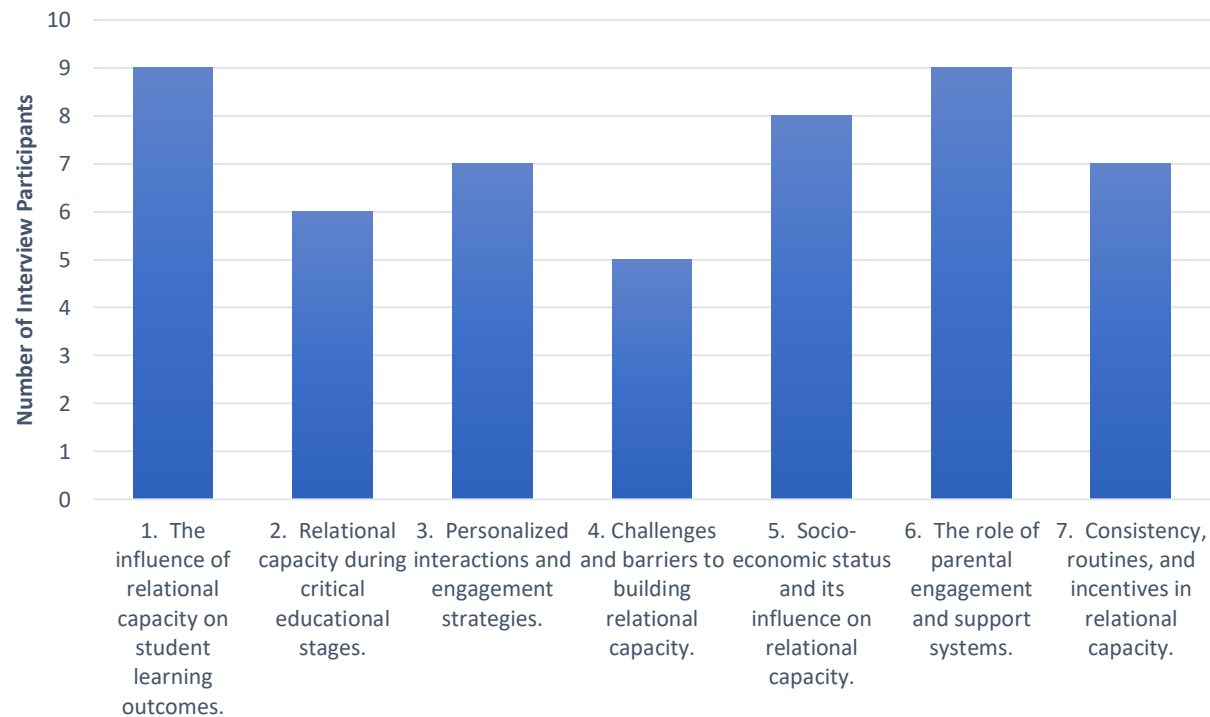
atmosphere where students feel supported and motivated to succeed. This approach has significantly enhanced my ability to build strong, supportive relationships with my students, ultimately benefiting their academic and socio-emotional development.

(Participant-B)

Figure 1 presents the frequency with which research participants mentioned information related to the seven identified themes. This figure provides a quantitative perspective on the qualitative data, showing how often each theme was referenced during the interviews or discussions. By analyzing the frequency of mentions, the table highlights the themes that were most prominent in participants' responses, offering insights into the relative importance or relevance of each theme within the context of the study. This information helps to clarify the key areas of focus for the participants and supports the interpretation of the study's findings.

Figure 1

Frequency of Research Participants Mentioning Information Related to the Seven Themes



The seven themes, identified from MAXQDA software, offered detailed and robust answers to the three research questions, previously outlined in Table 5 and described in detail below. Each theme was meticulously analyzed to ensure a comprehensive understanding, demonstrating the depth and interconnectedness of the findings. This thorough examination provides clear insights into the multifaceted nature of relational capacity in the educational context, effectively addressing the core objectives of this study.

Best Practices for Building Relational Capacity

Teachers identified several best practices for building relational capacity, which in turn support cognitive engagement and self-efficacy. The following best practices were identified by secondary educators as effective strategies for building relational capacity with their students. These practices were gathered from interview participants who shared methods they consistently employed each year to foster the building of strong relationships with their students. The educators emphasized that these best practice approaches helped create a supportive and trusting classroom environment, which they believed was critical for enhancing student engagement and academic success.

1. **Consistent Communication:** Regularly communicating with students through various channels (e.g., email, classroom discussions, and feedback).
2. **Active Listening:** Paying close attention to students' thoughts and feelings without interrupting.
3. **Personalized Interactions:** Getting to know students' interests, hobbies, and backgrounds to tailor interactions.
4. **Building Trust:** Being reliable and consistent in actions and words.

5. Providing Constructive Feedback: Offering feedback that is both supportive and specific to help students improve.
6. Creating a Safe Learning Environment: Establishing a classroom atmosphere where students feel safe to express themselves.
7. Showing Empathy: Demonstrating understanding and compassion for students' situations and feelings.
8. Positive Reinforcement: Recognizing and praising students for their efforts and achievements.
9. Setting High Expectations: Believing in students' abilities and encouraging them to reach their potential.
10. Facilitating Group Activities: Encouraging teamwork and collaboration among students.
11. Being Approachable: Making yourself available and open to student questions and concerns.
12. Involving Students in Decision-Making: Allowing students to have a say in classroom rules and activities.
13. Mentoring and Advising: Providing guidance on academic and personal issues.
14. Modeling Respectful Behavior: Demonstrating respectful interactions and expecting the same from students.
15. Sharing Personal Stories: Occasionally sharing appropriate personal experiences to build rapport.
16. Celebrating Diversity: Valuing and incorporating diverse perspectives and backgrounds in the classroom.

17. Supporting Extracurricular Activities: Attending and showing interest in students' extracurricular pursuits.
18. Utilizing Humor: Using humor appropriately to make the classroom more enjoyable and relatable.
19. Offering Choices: Giving students some autonomy over their learning activities and assignments.
20. Reflecting on Practice: Continuously seeking feedback from students and reflecting on teaching practices to improve relationships.

Summary

In conclusion, secondary teachers conceptualize the relationship between student cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement as deeply interconnected, with relational capacity playing a crucial mediating role. By building strong, supportive relationships, teachers enhance students' cognitive engagement and self-efficacy, thereby promoting better academic outcomes. The findings underscore the importance of relational capacity within the theoretical framework of effective educational practices, highlighting its role in fostering a conducive learning environment and supporting key educational strategies.

In Chapter 4, the study rigorously examined the themes and findings derived from a comprehensive narrative analysis of semistructured interviews and meticulous data analysis, illuminating the pivotal role of building relational capacity in enhancing academic achievement. In Chapter 5, the findings of extant literature were discussed, alongside an exploration of secondary education structures, limitations, recommendations, and conclusions.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This section provides a comprehensive overview of the problem statement, purpose, methodology, and limitations of the study. The study to examine the influence of building relational capacity on student achievement and investigate the connections between relational capacity and student achievement. Specifically, it sought to demonstrate how enhancing relational capacity in education can cultivate supportive relationships, thereby positively affecting student achievement. Through fostering trust, respect, and rapport, relational capacity creates a conducive learning environment where students feel valued, understood, and motivated to excel academically. The study defines success in education not only in terms of academic excellence but also in developing lifelong learning skills and personal growth.

The qualitative research explored the relationship between building relational capacity and student achievement. It delved into the processes, dynamics, and outcomes of fostering strong relationships between teachers and students (Muzari et al., 2022). Challenges and adverse outcomes associated with building relational capacity and its role in student achievement were identified and analyzed.

Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings from the qualitative research on building relational capacity and its relationship with academic achievement. It outlines key themes and insights gathered from the research, highlighting the importance of relational capacity in educational contexts. Recommendations for application in educational practice include prioritizing strategies that enhance relational capacity, such as fostering trust and communication between teachers and students, promoting supportive classroom environments, and integrating personalized teaching approaches.

Yassine et al. (2020) concluded that implementing relationship-building strategies positively affects student behavior and academic achievement. The study's findings recommend adopting such strategies in diverse educational settings to enhance student success, highlighting the important role of intentional relationship-building in improving both behavioral and academic outcomes. The research suggests that these positive outcomes are not limited to specific contexts but can potentially improve student success across various academic environments. Thus, Yassine et al. (2020) emphasized the broader applicability of relationship-building strategies, advocating for their adoption in diverse educational settings to foster overall student achievement.

The recommendation implies a universality in the efficacy of relationship-building, encouraging educators and institutions to consider and integrate such strategies as part of their broader educational approaches (Abrams et al., 2020). The term "relationship-building strategies" encompasses a range of intentional actions and practices to foster positive connections between educators and students (Abrams et al., 2020, p. 3).

These strategies may involve personalized interactions, open communication, mentorship, and other initiatives to create a supportive and engaging learning environment (Yassine et al., 2020). The positive changes observed in student behavior and academic achievement suggested that implementing these strategies influenced fundamental aspects of the educational experience. Yassine et al. (2020) contributed to understanding effective educational practices by emphasizing the benefits of relationship-building strategies on student outcomes. Their recommendation to adopt such strategies across diverse educational settings encourages educators and institutions to recognize the universal value of intentional relationship-building in promoting overall student success (Yassine et al., 2020).

Abrams et al. (2020) found that actively pursuing healthy teacher-student relationships contributed to academic success. Recommendations emphasized incorporating relationship-building practices in teacher training programs to equip educators for positive student engagement (McDonald et al., 2013). Abrams et al. (2020) shed light on the significant influence of actively cultivating healthy teacher-student relationships on academic success. Findings underscore that these relationships go beyond interpersonal dynamics and are crucial in shaping students' academic outcomes (Culver, 2020). This recommendation recognizes the pivotal role of educators in fostering positive student engagement. Suggesting that equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge to establish and nurture these relationships is essential for effectiveness in the classroom (Yassine et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the emphasis on teacher training programs aligns with the idea that these skills are teachable and developed through intentional training and professional development. By integrating relationship-building practices into teacher education, institutions can cultivate a new generation of educators who understand the significance of positive teacher-student relationships and are better equipped to implement these practices in their classrooms (Abrams et al., 2020). Abrams et al. (2020) highlighted the positive connection between healthy teacher-student relationships and academic success and advocates for systemic changes in teacher training programs. By embedding relationship-building practices into the training of educators, the study suggests a proactive and intentional approach to enhancing the overall educational experience for students (Abrams et al., 2020).

Plank (2020) concluded that educational organizations prioritizing diversity and equity initiatives positively influence mission-driven goals. Conducting research, Plank (2020) concluded that educational organizations prioritizing diversity and equity initiatives positively

affect achieving mission-driven goals. The findings suggest that a commitment to diversity and equity aligns with and enhances the overall success of educational organizations in fulfilling their mission-driven objectives (Choi & Lee, 2021). They are underscoring the importance of integrating diversity and equity initiatives into the broader mission of educational institutions for more effective and purpose-driven outcomes (Choi & Lee, 2021). The study recommended a continued focus on such initiatives, highlighting the need for ongoing assessments and adjustments to ensure sustained progress.

Pitt et al. (2020) identified the crucial role of leadership support in achieving organizational visions. Findings emphasized the need for leaders to focus on mutually beneficial goals and foster support among various stakeholders. Recommendations included leadership development programs that address the dynamics of support within educational institutions. Pitt et al. (2020) underscored the significance of leadership support in realizing organizational visions. According to findings, influential leaders should prioritize mutually beneficial goals and cultivate support among diverse stakeholders. Researchers suggested implementing leadership development programs to address the intricacies of support dynamics within educational institutions. The pilot professional development program can enhance teachers' self-reported levels of data literacy and efficacy in utilizing data practices, thereby reducing the typical anxiety associated with data-driven decision-making (Abrams et al., 2020). These recommendations aim to enhance leadership effectiveness and contribute to the overall success of organizational visions in educational settings.

Muzari et al. (2022) argued that qualitative research enabled a detailed examination of the processes involved in building relational capacity. The study investigated how teachers-built trust, communicated effectively, and engaged with students on an individual level (Muzari et al.,

2022). Qualitative methods enabled researchers to capture the nuanced dynamics of teacher-student relationships. Through interviews, observations, and document analysis, researchers uncovered the complexities of interactions between students and teachers within the classroom and beyond (Muzari et al., 2022).

According to Muzari et al. (2022), qualitative inquiry offers an understanding of the contextual elements shaping relational capacity. It is essential to acknowledge the socio-cultural backgrounds of both students and teachers, along with the school climate and institutional support structures. Muzari et al. (2022) asserted that robust relational capacity cultivates a supportive learning environment in which students are esteemed and incentivized to engage actively in their education.

Increased motivation and engagement are associated with higher academic achievement. Positive teacher-student relationships bolster students' belief in their ability to succeed academically (i.e., self-efficacy). Qualitative research can illuminate how relational capacity influences students' confidence in their academic skills and readiness to tackle challenging tasks (Muzari et al., 2022).

Qualitative studies by Muzari et al. (2022) illustrated how relational capacity shaped classroom climate and student behavior. They found that a positive classroom climate, characterized by trust, respect, and collaboration, fostered an optimal environment for learning and academic success. Their research explored the effectiveness of personalized support strategies in enhancing academic achievement, noting that the strength of teacher-student relationships played a crucial role in how teachers customized instruction, provided feedback, and addressed individual student needs. Muzari et al. (2022) provided valuable insights into the complex nature of building relational capacity and its influence on overall academic

achievement. Additionally, their research offered an in-depth understanding of the factors influencing student success in education, particularly through the lens of teacher-student relationships and the classroom environment.

Discussing findings from previous literature on building relational capacity and its influence on student achievement reveals several key insights and implications. The findings confirm prior research, aligning with existing literature that emphasizes the importance of building relational capacity in enhancing student achievement. Previous studies based on Wang (2022) and Choi and Lee (2021) have underscored the positive influence of stable teacher-student relationships on student motivation, engagement, and academic performance.

The existing literature corroborates the findings of this study by acknowledging challenges and negative outcomes associated with building relational capacity. This extends previous research that highlights obstacles despite recognizing the significance of relational capacity. These insights underscore the importance of understanding these challenges to develop effective strategies for overcoming them. However, existing literature also indicates a need for further investigation in this field, as emphasized by the study. While current research provides valuable insights, there are gaps and inconsistencies that persist. Therefore, further research is crucial to delve into the complexities of building relational capacity and its nuanced relationship with student achievement. Methodological considerations addressed in the discussion build upon past literature, emphasizing the importance of specificity in temporal limitations and methodological variations and exploring potential positive relationships between relational capacity and student achievement.

Cultural and contextual factors are highlighted in the discussion, drawing upon past literature to underscore their significance in understanding the relationship between relational

capacity and student achievement. Acknowledging geographical differences and considering how socioeconomic status and cultural background influence trust perceptions are part of this process.

The research findings underscore significant implications for educational practice, emphasizing the importance for educators to navigate challenges associated with building relational capacity through effective strategies. These strategies encompass providing professional development opportunities, fostering a supportive school climate, and promoting collaboration among stakeholders. By integrating these practices, educators can enhance their ability to cultivate strong relationships with students, thereby fostering a conducive learning environment conducive to academic success.

Drawing from best practices identified in the literature and supported by this study, educators should prioritize active listening to understand students' thoughts and feelings, engage in consistent communication across various channels, and tailor interactions based on students' interests and backgrounds. Building trust through reliability and consistency, providing constructive feedback that supports student growth, and creating safe spaces for student expression are foundational.

Additionally, demonstrating empathy towards students' circumstances, offering positive reinforcement for achievements, and setting high expectations to empower students further contribute to academic success. Educators can facilitate group activities to promote teamwork, maintain approachability for student concerns, and involve students in decision-making processes to foster a sense of ownership in the classroom. Furthermore, mentoring and advising students on academic and personal matters, modeling respectful behavior, and occasionally sharing personal experiences to build rapport are crucial.

Valuing and celebrating diversity, supporting students' extracurricular activities, using humor judiciously to enhance classroom dynamics, and offering students choices in their learning activities are also pivotal. Finally, educators should regularly reflect on their teaching practices, seek feedback from students, and adapt their approaches to continually improve relationship-building efforts. By aligning with these best practices, educators can navigate the complexities of building relational capacity effectively, ultimately enhancing student achievement and contributing positively to educational outcomes.

Limitations

Several limitations emerged during this study that may affect the depth and applicability of the findings regarding the connection between relational capacity and student achievement. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the results, as they present specific constraints on the research process and its conclusions. A significant limitation is the variability in educational contexts. The effectiveness of relational capacity can differ across schools, institutions, and cultural settings. What proves beneficial in one environment may not yield the same outcomes in another. This variability challenges the generalizability of the findings, and as such, any application of these results to broader contexts should account for these differences. While this study sought to address a range of educational settings, the inherent contextual variability may have affected the consistency of the findings.

Finally, the reliance on self-report measures, primarily through interviews, also represents a limitation. Participants' responses are based on personal perceptions and experiences, which may not fully capture the complexities of relational capacity. Although the study attempted to mitigate this by incorporating triangulation through document analysis, the subjective nature of self-reporting introduces potential biases. These biases could impact the

accuracy of the findings, as they reflect individual perspectives rather than an objective measure of relational capacity.

To overcome the identified limitations, several strategies were employed. First, to address the variability in educational contexts, we selected a diverse sample of schools from different cultural and institutional settings to provide a broader perspective. This approach aimed to account for context-specific differences and enhance the applicability of the findings. Second, to mitigate the reliance on self-report measures, triangulation was employed by cross-referencing interview data with document analysis. This combination of methods helped to balance the subjective nature of personal perceptions with more objective data sources. Addressing these limitations in future studies would contribute to a more robust understanding of the relationship between relational capacity and student achievement.

Implications

The relationship between relational capacity and student achievement has gained prominence in educational research, with scholars increasingly recognizing its importance. Wang (2022) highlighted the critical role of capacity-building in enhancing educational outcomes, particularly through fostering interpersonal relationships within schools. Similarly, previous studies by Abrams et al. (2020) and Perreault et al. (2020) established the connection between leadership styles, data-driven practices, and educational success. However, this study adds to the literature by specifically examining the impact of relational capacity, particularly teacher-student interactions, on student achievement. The findings contribute to a growing body of knowledge and offer practical applications for educators and policymakers by elucidating how relational capacity directly influences academic success.

A key implication for educational settings is the emphasis on cultivating strong, trust-based relationships between teachers and students. The findings support Pérez-Salas et al. (2021) assertion that positive teacher-student relationships are crucial for enhancing student engagement and academic performance. This highlights the need for professional development programs aimed at helping educators build relational capacity through skills such as active listening, empathy, and consistent communication. Furthermore, educational institutions should consider policy changes, such as reducing class sizes or introducing advisory systems, to provide teachers with more opportunities to establish meaningful connections with students. By doing so, schools can create a learning environment that fosters both academic achievement and socio-emotional well-being.

From a broader perspective, these findings suggest that relational capacity should be a core element in efforts to improve student outcomes. While existing research has focused on instructional strategies and leadership as key drivers of student success (Abrams et al., 2020), this study underscores the importance of interpersonal relationships as a critical, complementary factor. Future research should further investigate the long-term effects of relational capacity by conducting longitudinal studies that track the evolution of teacher-student relationships and their impact on achievement over time. Comparative studies that consider diverse demographic groups such as ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic background will also be essential for uncovering any disparities in relational dynamics and academic outcomes. These insights could inform targeted interventions and help develop more inclusive educational policies.

By addressing these implications, this study offers a more comprehensive understanding of how relational capacity shapes student achievement. It calls on educators and policymakers to prioritize relationship-building as a central aspect of school improvement, thus expanding the

scope of strategies used to support student success. These findings contribute to both theory and practice, offering valuable guidance for enhancing educational experiences and outcomes.

Recommendations

Recommendations for subsequent research should further explore the nuanced dynamics of relational capacity and its sustained influence on student outcomes across diverse educational settings. Understanding these complexities can inform evidence-based practices and policies aimed at optimizing educational experiences and outcomes for students. The study recommends that teachers explore and understand their own positive relationships with students, highlighting the critical link between teacher-student relationships and student engagement, thereby influencing academic achievement (Choi & Lee, 2021). Yassine et al. (2020) stated that it highlights a pivotal connection between the quality of teacher-student relationships and student engagement, acknowledging the subsequent influence on academic achievement (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). The implications of this recommendation profoundly affect educational practices and student outcomes. To begin, "explore" conveys an ongoing and dynamic process, encouraging teachers to delve into the intricacies of building positive relationships (Abrams et al., 2020). This approach implies continuous attention, adaptability, and a willingness to understand individual students' diverse needs and characteristics (Choi & Lee, 2021).

Understanding positive relationships in this context transcends mere familiarity; it involves a deeper awareness of the emotional, social, and academic dimensions shaping the teacher-student dynamic. Educators are prompted to surpass traditional roles and actively seek insights into their students' backgrounds, interests, and learning styles, fostering an environment of mutual respect and understanding (Choi & Lee, 2021). The emphasis on positive relationships underscores creating an atmosphere characterized by trust, support, and open communication

(Yalçın & Eres, 2021). These relationships can create the groundwork for a favorable learning environment where students feel appreciated, secure, and inspired to engage in the educational process actively. This recommendation establishes a critical link between teacher-student relationships and student engagement, encompassing involvement, interest, and active participation in the learning process (Yassine et al., 2020).

Cultivating positive relationships enhances student engagement, fostering a connection to educational material and heightened enthusiasm for learning (Yassine et al., 2020). Moreover, it acknowledges that student engagement, influenced by the quality of teacher-student relationships, directly contributes to academic achievement (Culver, 2020). The connection between academic achievement and relational dynamics highlights the holistic nature of effective teaching practices (Choi & Lee, 2021). When students are engaged with academic materials and feel a positive connection with their teachers, they are more likely to invest effort in their studies, resulting in improved academic outcomes.

The recommendation calls for a shift in teaching approaches, emphasizing educators' pivotal role in creating a supportive and engaging learning environment beyond simply transmitting information (Yalçın & Eres, 2021). By prioritizing positive relationships, educators contribute not only to the emotional well-being of students but also to their overall academic success (Choi & Lee, 2021). Overall, this recommendation urges teachers to actively explore and understand the significance of positive relationships with students, positioning the cultivation of these relationships as a fundamental aspect of effective teaching with far-reaching implications for student engagement and subsequent academic achievement (Yassine et al., 2020).

The methods outlined in this chapter ensure the validity and reliability of the study. The researcher's role, ethical considerations, and the chosen qualitative interview approach contribute

to a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of secondary educators regarding relational capacity connections to student learning (Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017). By implementing these recommendations, future research endeavors can contribute to a more evidence-based understanding of relational capacity's critical role in shaping student achievement. This knowledge can inform practical strategies for educators, guide policy decisions, and ultimately enhance students' educational experiences and outcomes globally. However, expanding this analysis to worldwide contexts may be problematic due to variations in cultural norms, educational systems, and socio-economic factors across different countries and regions.

Recommendations for Practical Application

The research design adheres to established guidelines and aims to provide valuable insights into teacher-student relationships and their influence on student achievement (Creswell, 2018; Muzari et al., 2022). Enhancing relational capacity and improving academic achievement can be achieved through several recommended practices. Additionally, focusing on mediating factors such as student motivation and socio-emotional well-being can provide deeper insights. Implement ongoing professional development programs for educators focused on enhancing relational capacity skills. Based on the findings regarding the significance of relational capacity in influencing student achievement, as a secondary principal, I would implement ongoing professional development programs specifically aimed at enhancing the relational capacity skills of educators. These programs would not only focus on the theoretical understanding of relational dynamics but also emphasize best practices that teachers can apply in their classrooms.

To begin, I would conduct a needs assessment within the school to identify specific areas where teachers feel they need support in building stronger relationships with their students. This

could involve focus groups or individual interviews to gather insights directly from educators about their experiences and challenges in fostering positive interactions.

Once the needs assessment is complete, I would design a comprehensive professional development curriculum that includes workshops, collaborative learning sessions, and peer mentoring opportunities. Key topics could include active listening, conflict resolution, culturally responsive teaching, and strategies for building empathy and trust in the classroom. By providing educators with tools and techniques to enhance their relational skills, we can create a more positive school culture that supports student engagement and achievement.

In addition to structured workshops, I would encourage the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs) where teachers can regularly meet to share experiences, discuss challenges, and celebrate successes related to building relational capacity. These PLCs would foster collaboration among staff and reinforce the idea that cultivating relationships is a shared responsibility that benefits the entire school community.

Furthermore, I would integrate opportunities for educators to reflect on their relational practices through ongoing coaching and feedback. This could involve classroom observations where peers or instructional coaches provide constructive feedback on how effectively teachers are engaging with their students and building trust. Finally, to sustain the momentum of these initiatives, I would allocate time during faculty meetings for teachers to discuss relational capacity successes and challenges, ensuring that this focus remains a priority in our school culture. By fostering an environment where relational capacity is recognized and valued, we can positively influence student outcomes and create a more inclusive and supportive educational experience for all learners.

Effective teacher-student relationships are foundational to student engagement and academic success. Continuous training can equip educators with the necessary skills to foster positive relationships in diverse classroom settings. Develop and promote initiatives that encourage active parental involvement in school activities and student learning. Parental engagement plays a crucial role in supporting relational capacity. Creating avenues for meaningful collaboration between educators and parents can strengthen the support system around students, contributing to their academic achievement.

Integrate socio-emotional learning components into the curriculum to explicitly teach and reinforce relational skills among students. SEL fosters emotional intelligence, empathy, and communication skills, which are essential for building and maintaining positive relationships. Incorporating SEL into academic instruction can create a conducive environment for relational capacity development. Adopt restorative practices within schools to resolve conflicts and build trust among students and between students and educators. Restorative practices emphasize repairing harm and restoring relationships rather than punitive measures. They promote a supportive and inclusive school climate conducive to relational capacity building.

Establish regular evaluation processes to assess the effectiveness of relational capacity initiatives and gather feedback from stakeholders. Ongoing assessment ensures that strategies are aligned with student needs and educational goals. Feedback loops allow for adjustments and improvements to maximize the benefits of relational capacity efforts.

Recommendations for Future Research

The study recommends further exploration of the nuanced dynamics of relational capacity and its sustained influence on student outcomes across diverse educational settings. Understanding these complexities can inform evidence-based practices and policies aimed at

optimizing educational experiences and outcomes for students. Teachers are encouraged to explore and understand the positive relationships they foster with students, recognizing the critical link between these relationships and student engagement, which ultimately influences academic achievement (Choi & Lee, 2021; Yalçın & Eres, 2021; Yassine et al., 2020). This approach suggests ongoing attention, adaptability, and a deep understanding of students' diverse needs and characteristics.

Understanding positive relationships goes beyond familiarity; it involves awareness of the emotional, social, and academic dimensions that shape teacher-student dynamics. Educators are urged to transcend traditional roles by actively seeking insights into students' backgrounds, interests, and learning styles, creating an environment characterized by trust, support, and open communication (Choi & Lee, 2021; Yalçın & Eres, 2021). Cultivating positive relationships is highlighted as enhancing student engagement, fostering a connection to educational materials, and increasing enthusiasm for learning (Yassine et al., 2020). This engagement directly contributes to improved academic outcomes by encouraging students to invest effort in their studies (Culver, 2020).

The recommendation underscores a shift in teaching approaches, emphasizing educators' pivotal role in establishing supportive and engaging learning environments. Prioritizing positive relationships not only supports students' emotional well-being but also enhances their overall academic success (Choi & Lee, 2021; Yalçın & Eres, 2021). Implementing experimental designs to investigate causal relationships and evaluating professional development initiatives for teachers are crucial steps.

Hargreaves and O'Connor (2022) conducted a qualitative study to examine how collaborative professionalism among teaching teams fostered relational trust, highlighting its

significance in enhancing teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Hargreaves and O'Connor (2022) identified key themes through their research, illustrating that open communication and shared goals among teachers were essential for developing relational trust, which, in turn, supported collaborative practices in educational settings. By utilizing interviews and focus groups, they explored teachers' experiences of collaboration, revealing that mutual respect and support were critical components in building relational capacity within teaching teams. The findings of this qualitative study underscored the importance of relational trust in professional collaboration. The results demonstrated that when teachers felt trusted and supported, they were more likely to engage in collaborative practices that benefited both their professional growth and student learning (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2022).

The research outlined ensure the validity and reliability of the study, with the researcher's role, ethical considerations, and chosen qualitative interview approach contributing to a comprehensive understanding of secondary educators' perceptions of relational capacity in relation to student learning (Creswell, 2018; Muzari et al., 2022; Nicholson & Kurucz, 2017). Recommendations include conducting longitudinal studies to understand how relational capacity evolves over time and influences academic outcomes. Broadening the scope to diverse educational settings enhances understanding across different contexts.

Conduct comparative studies across diverse demographic groups to examine variations in relational capacity and its effects on student achievement. Comparative research can reveal disparities and offer insights into culturally responsive practices that promote effective relational capacity across diverse student populations. Investigate mediating factors such as student motivation, socio-emotional well-being, and classroom climate that may influence the relationship between relational capacity and student achievement. Understanding these factors

can elucidate mechanisms through which relational dynamics shape academic outcomes and inform targeted interventions. Conduct intervention studies using experimental or quasi-experimental designs to test the efficacy of specific strategies aimed at enhancing relational capacity. Rigorous evaluation of interventions can establish causal relationships between relational capacity-building efforts and improved student achievement outcomes.

Explore the policy implications of relational capacity research for educational practices and policies at local, national, and international levels. Policy analysis can inform systemic changes that support the cultivation of positive relationships in schools, thereby enhancing overall student achievement. These recommendations aim to advance both practice and research in the field of building relational capacity, emphasizing its critical role in improving student achievement and fostering a supportive learning environment.

Summary

Studying the development of relational capacity and its implications for student achievement has provided several crucial findings and implications. The results supported existing research, affirming the significance of relational capacity in enhancing student achievement as highlighted in the literature. Previous studies have underscored that strong teacher-student relationships positively influence motivation, engagement, and academic performance.

This study also identified challenges and obstacles associated with building relational capacity, building upon prior literature by acknowledging these inherent difficulties.

Recognizing these challenges is crucial for devising effective strategies to overcome them.

Existing literature stresses the necessity for further research in this domain, highlighting gaps and inconsistencies while offering valuable insights. Further research is needed to explore in-depth

the complexities involved in developing relational capacity and its nuanced implications for student achievement.

Methodological considerations addressed in the discussion built upon past literature, emphasizing the importance of specificity regarding temporal limitations and methodological variations and exploring potential positive relationships between relational capacity and student achievement. The discussion also highlighted cultural and contextual factors, emphasizing their importance in understanding the relationship between relational capacity and student achievement. Discussing findings in relation to past literature enhances understanding of the complex interplay between building relational capacity and student achievement. By acknowledging existing research, identifying gaps, and considering methodological considerations, the study contributes to the ongoing discourse in this field and informs future research and practice.

Furthermore, future research endeavors should provide an evidence-based understanding of the critical role played by relational capacity in influencing student achievement. This understanding can inform actionable strategies for educators, guide policymaking decisions, and ultimately enhance educational experiences and outcomes for students worldwide. Embracing a comprehensive and inclusive approach to research paves the way for more effective interventions, policies, and practices that prioritize and elevate relational capacity within educational institutions. Such an approach cultivates an environment where every student can thrive.

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Appendix A: Principal Letter

Subject: Request for Recommendations: Interviewing Teachers

Dear [Principal's Name]

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Veronica Robinson and I am a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University. I am currently working on a research project focused on exploring effective strategies for building relational capacity between general education teachers and their students in secondary settings. As part of this project, I am seeking recommendations from knowledgeable educators like yourself.

I am reaching out to request your assistance in identifying secondary general education teachers who have demonstrated exemplary practices in fostering strong relationships with their students. These teachers should be known for their ability to establish rapport, trust, and mutual respect with their students, ultimately contributing to positive academic and socio-emotional outcomes.

If you could kindly recommend any general education teachers who you believe exemplify these qualities and have a track record of success in building relational capacity with their students, I would greatly appreciate it. These recommendations will help me select candidates to invite for interviews as part of my research. The interviews will provide an opportunity for these recommended teachers to share their insights, experiences, and best practices in building relational capacity with students.

Their perspectives will be invaluable in informing my research and contributing to a deeper understanding of effective teaching practices.

Appendix B: Prospective Interview Participant Email

Dear Prospective Interview Participant,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Veronica Robinson, and I am a doctoral student at Abilene Christian University currently conducting research on exploring effective strategies for building relational capacity between general education teachers and their students at the secondary level. The focus of my study revolves around understanding the pivotal role that these interactions play in shaping the overall learning experience, with a specific emphasis on the relational capacity established between educators and students.

The primary aim of this research is to investigate the dynamics of relational capacity and its potential influence on overall student achievement by gaining a deeper understanding of the intricacies of these relationships, I aim to contribute valuable insights that educators and educational institutions can use to develop strategies for enhancing student outcomes and fostering a positive learning environment.

As part of this study, I am seeking your participation. Selected participants will receive the Informed Consent Form electronically, which they are required to read and acknowledge.

Expressing agreement to participate will involve providing an electronic signature in the Consent E-Signature Section of the form, which participants will then email back to me before their scheduled interview.

The interviews will be conducted through an online meeting application, such as Zoom or Google Meet. Given the vast geographical scope of North Texas, where the study is being conducted, individual virtual interviews will be scheduled. These sessions will be recorded using the Google Meet recording feature, with explicit permission obtained from the participant. I want to assure you that despite the virtual nature of the interviews, confidentiality will be strictly

maintained. The recorded sessions will not be shared, and participants will be anonymized using a unique identifier generated by me. Each interview is anticipated to last approximately 45 minutes.

Your participation in this study is invaluable and will contribute significantly to advancing our understanding of the complex dynamics between educators and students. If you have any questions or concerns or would like further information, please feel free to reach out to me at xxxxxxxx@acu.edu.

Thank you for considering participation in this research, and I look forward to the possibility of working with you.

Best regards,

Veronica Robinson

Veronica Robinson

Appendix C: Prospective Interview Participant Flyer

As a participant, you will be interviewed via Google Meet and recorded both audio and video. The entire process will take no more than 45 minutes. To express your agreement to participate in the study, please provide an electronic signature in the Consent E-Signature Section of the Informed Consent Form, which is attached to this email. Please email the signed form back to the researcher at [REDACTED] before your scheduled interview.



Unlocking Academic



Exploring the Interplay of Relational Capacity in Educational Leadership and Student Achievement

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED



Share Your Perspective and Experience

- ❖ You are invited to participate in a research study that will be invaluable and contribute significantly to advancing the understanding of the complex dynamics between educators and students.
- ❖ The primary goal of this research is to delve into the dynamics of relational capacity and its potential impact on overall student achievement.



Every Accomplishment Starts With the Decision to Try.

See detailed information in email. Sign up to participate Today!

Please feel free to reach out to me directly if you have any questions or require further information about the research project. Thank you in advance for your assistance and support in this endeavor.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards,

Veronica Robinson

Veronica Robinson
Abilene Christian University
Ed.D. Candidate

Appendix D: Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study. This form provides important information about that study, including the risks and benefits to you as a potential participant. Please read this form carefully and ask me any questions that you may have about the study. You can ask about research activities and any risks or benefits you may experience.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to participate or stop your participation at any time and for any reason without any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

PURPOSE AND DESCRIPTION: The primary goal of this research is to delve into the dynamics of relational capacity and its potential effect on overall student achievement. By gaining a deeper understanding of the intricacies of these relationships, I aim to contribute valuable insights that educators and educational institutions can use to develop strategies for enhancing student outcomes and fostering a positive learning environment.

The interviews will be conducted through an online meeting application, Google Meet. These sessions will be recorded using the Google Meet recording feature, with explicit permission obtained from the participant. Each interview is anticipated to last approximately 45 minutes.

I want to assure you that despite the virtual nature of the interviews, confidentiality will be strictly maintained. The recorded sessions will not be shared, and you will be anonymized using a unique identifier generated by me.

Your participation in this study is invaluable and will contribute significantly to advancing our understanding of the complex dynamics between educators and students. If you have any questions or concerns or would like further information, please feel free to reach out to me at xxxxxxxxxxx@acu.edu.

RISKS & BENEFITS: There are minimal risk to taking part in this research study. Such risk could include breach of confidentiality. Also, you may find some difficulty in answering the interview questions. In such case, you may decline to answer any or all questions and you may terminate your involvement at any time should you choose to do so.

Participating in this study may offer benefits, including the added value your perspectives bring to the research topic, assisting school districts in implementing best practices, as I aim to contribute valuable insights that educators and educational institutions can use to develop strategies for enhancing student outcomes and fostering a positive learning environment. However, the researchers cannot guarantee that you will experience any personal benefits from participating in this study.

PRIVACY & CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information you provide will be confidential to the extent allowable by law. Some identifiable data may have to be shared with individuals outside of the study team, such as members of the ACU Institutional Review Board. Otherwise, your confidentiality will be protected by all means. Every effort will be made to maintain your confidentiality:

Introduction: Unlocking Academic Success: Exploring the Interplay of Relational Capacity in Educational Leadership and Student Achievement

- All notes, interview transcriptions, and identifying participant information will be securely stored in a locked safe under the researcher's personal possession to maintain confidentiality.
- Code names/numbers will be assigned to participants to preserve confidentiality, which will be utilized on all research notes and documents.

CONTACTS: If you have questions about the research study, the lead researcher is Veronica Robinson and may be contacted xxxxxxxx@acu.edu. If you are unable to reach the lead researcher, or wish to speak to someone other than the lead researcher, you may contact Dissertation Chair, Dr. Gary Railsback, xxxxxxxx@acu.edu.

If you have concerns about this study, believe you may have been injured because of this study, or have general questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact ACU's Executive Director of Research, Qi Hang, at xxxxxxxx@acu.edu.

Your participation may be ended early by the researchers for certain reasons. For example, we may end your participation if you no longer meet study requirements, the researchers believe it is no longer in your best interest to continue participating, you do not follow the instructions provided by the researchers, or the study is ended. You will be contacted by the researchers and given further instructions in the event that you are removed from the study.

Please sign this form if you voluntarily agree to participate in this study. Sign only after you have read all of the information provided and your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. You should receive a copy of this signed consent form. You do not waive any legal rights by signing this form. If you wish to have a copy of this consent form, you may print it now. You do not waive any legal rights by consenting to this study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix E: Interview Questions

1. What is your name and professional title?
2. How long have you been an educator?
3. What is the socioeconomic status of the district you are currently working?
4. How do you perceive the significance of relational capacity in influencing student learning outcomes, especially within the framework of effective educational practices?
5. Can you describe the processes you employ in building relational capacity between yourself and your students? How do you believe these processes effect students' cognitive engagement and academic achievement?
6. From your perspective, how do you conceptualize the relationship between student cognitive engagement, self-efficacy, and academic achievement? Specifically, how do you think relational capacity plays a role in shaping this relationship, considering the theoretical framework of effective educational practices?
7. In your opinion, how does student cognitive engagement influence learners' self-efficacy, particularly in terms of student achievement, and what role does relational capacity play in this dynamic?
8. How do you think student achievement is affected by the presence of educational support systems and the existence of barriers within the secondary school environment?

Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter

Date: May 7, 2024

PI: Veronica Robinson

Department: ONL-Online Student, 17250-EdD Online

Re: Initial - IRB-2024-34

Unlocking Academic Success: Exploring the Interplay of Relational Capacity in Educational Leadership and Student Achievement

The Abilene Christian University Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for Unlocking Academic Success: Exploring the Interplay of Relational Capacity in Educational Leadership and Student Achievement. The administrative check-in date is May 8, 2025.

Decision: Exempt

Category: Category 2.(ii). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording) if at least one of the following criteria is met:

Any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research would not reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, educational advancement, or reputation; or

Research Notes:

Additional Approvals/Instructions:

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee can determine whether or not the exempt status is still applicable. All approval letters and study documents are located within the Study Details in Cayuse IRB.

The following are all responsibilities of the Primary Investigator (PI). Violation of these responsibilities may result in suspension or termination of research by the Institutional Review Board. If the Primary Investigator is a student and fails to fulfil any of these responsibilities, the Faculty Advisor then becomes responsible for completing or upholding any and all of the following:

- When the research is completed, inform the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. If your study is Exempt, Non-Research, or Non-Human Research, email orsp@acu.edu to indicate that the research has finished.
- According to ACU policy, research data must be stored on ACU campus (or electronically) for 3 years from inactivation of the study, in a manner that is secure but accessible should the IRB request access.
- It is the Investigator's responsibility to maintain a general environment of safety for all research participants and all members of the research team. All risks to physical, mental, and emotional well-being as well as any risks to confidentiality should be minimized.

For additional information on the policies and procedures above, please visit the IRB website <http://www.acu.edu/community/offices/academic/orsp...>

or email orsp@acu.edu with your questions.

Sincerely,

Abilene Christian University Institutional Review Board