

# Influence of Teachers' Conscientiousness Personality on Quality of Teacher - Student Relationship in Learning in Nakuru County, Kenya

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## Abstract

*Teacher-student relationship is crucial in the learning process in schools. Warm teacher-student relationship is linked to enhancement of communication between the teachers and their students and also promotes discipline and effective learning in schools. Education stake holders are concerned at how some personality types of some teachers can cause this relationship to be negative and so lead to ineffective learning, poor communication and indiscipline. The purpose of this study was to investigate the influence that the teacher's conscientiousness personality has on the relationship between the teachers and their students in selected public secondary schools in Nakuru County, Kenya. Quantitative research methodology and ex-post facto research design was used. A total of 12 (10%) schools were selected and a sample of 25 students from each of the 12 schools in Nakuru County was selected making a sample of 300 students. The findings showed clearly that conscientiousness personality of teacher ( $r=0.78$ ) created warm (Highest quality) teacher-student relationship. The conclusion of the study was that indeed teacher-student relationship is influenced by teachers' conscientiousness personality.*

## Keywords

*Teachers' Conscientiousness Personality, Quality of Teacher - Student Relationship*

## I. Introduction

The learning process in secondary schools involves active interactions between the teachers and their students through which teacher-student relationship develops (M.O.E.S.T., 2001). The quality of this teacher-student relationship, determines how effective the teacher would be in carrying out his role of communicating knowledge, providing guidance, direction, life skills and support to the students (Liu 2014; Arker, 2010; Mumbi, 2002; Odera&Muthiora, 2008). Warm Positive relationship between the teacher and students is instrumental for effective communication and in ensuring progressive social, emotional, (Silver, Measella, Amstrong and Essex, 2005), psychological (Baker, 2006), and intellectual development of the learners (Cushman & Cowan, 2010). Furthermore, existence of a warm relationship between students and their teachers enables students to be positive in all educational learning processes in school which promotes improved performance in school and decline in cases of school dropout (Omotere, 2011; Liu, 2014). According to Hens & Chambers 2002, the quality of this teacher-student relationship is determined by the teacher's personality since the personality traits of the teacher is reflected in the way they manage their students in class, teaching methodology used and these consequently influence the degree to which students will interact with them in learning.

According to Craig (2015) teacher-student relationship studies make more sense when causative agent like the personality of the teacher is considered. According to Henson & Chambers (2002), teacher's personality is instrumental in determining the degree of teacher-student interactions in learning.

Several studies have revealed that negative personality traits in teachers like suspiciousness, sadness, pessimism, anxiousness, aggression and shyness which are referred to as "the dark side" negatively impacted learning process in schools (Moscoso&Slagado, 2004; Liu, 2014). According to Kisa (2019), students won't interact freely nor gladly take instructions from a teacher who displays neuroticism personality traits like sadness, anger, stress, and depression in the process

of teaching. Muhammad (2012) in his study stated that such negative personality traits negatively affects teacher-student relationship which then creates poor communication between the teacher and students, causes gigantic damage to the mental, physiological health position of students and weakens performance of brilliant students.

The ministry of education and other education stake holders in Kenya were greatly concerned about the situation in Nakuru county where many schools experienced strikes, increase in indiscipline cases in 2008 and a drop in KCSE form 4 exam results which were attributed to teachers stressing students, poor communication and bad student-teacher relationship (M.O.E.S.T, 2001; Odera&Muthiora, 2008; Baker, 2006; NCKC, 2009; Njoroge, 2005; Mumbi, 2002; UNHCR, 2009; UNICEF, 2010). These situations make students to undergo learning difficulties and adjustments in school; however if they are handled by a teacher with personality traits such as warmth, caring and support, they develop positive teacher-student relationship, accept teachers' guidance, instructions on studies and discipline and progress well in their academic performance (Jamila& Stevens, 2009). Kisa (2019) in his study found that students would interact closely, befriend and gladly take instructions from a teacher who is caring, supportive, and trustworthy and that these results into warm teacher-student relationship which enhances communication and promotes discipline.

## Teacher's Conscientiousness Personality and Teacher-Student Relationship

Costa & McCrae, 1992; Lindzey, (2009) described Conscientiousness personality features to encompass: acting after serious careful thought, energised strong desire for progress and purpose driven conduct. They stated that teachers higher in conscientiousness are good in the way they organise their work, considerate on detailed accounts of something, effective and not carelessly accepting ideas without reasoning. The study also observed that they display self-discipline in their work, acting willingly, purpose is accomplishment, exhibit good planning

in their work, show good organisation and are reliable. They added that persons with conscientiousness personality manifest typical mannerisms like neatness, orderly, careful, thorough, and when in a discussion they give their opinion after serious considerations. They further explained that Conscientiousness personality, according to tradition is considered as one that has strong character. Teachers with conscientiousness personality are hard-working and dependable. Persons with higher levels of conscientious personality may end up being “workaholics”, exhibit perfectionism, and behave compulsively while teachers who are graded lower in conscientiousness show less concern in their work, are less energised in their desire for progress, exhibit less purpose driven behaviour; they most of the time indulge in crime (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Lindzey, 2009).

A study on impact of teacher personality basing on the big 5 personality traits by Gacia, Kupczynski, & Holland (2011), noted that, the personality traits of the teacher play major role in learners relationships and achievement in school. Out of the 16 areas in which personality types of the teacher were examined in their study, the one they found to be more common was *Conscientiousness personality* in promoting academic achievement among adolescents. The study also noted that since this is the ultimate goal for most students, such teachers end up being liked by them.

In Greece, a study was carried out by Kokkinos (2007) on effect of teachers’ personality on vocational stress and burnout in learning institutions in Cyprus. His study investigated the relative contributions of these variables on teacher burnout namely emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. He stated that these variables can determine the way in which the teacher relates with students in class. In his study emotional exhaustion was predicted by feelings of stress in managing student misbehavior in school. In his findings of the variables of personality, conscientiousness had a significant positive correlation with personal accomplishment ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ), and a negative correlation with depersonalization ( $r = -.30, p < .001$ ). He concluded that burnout was less in teachers with conscientiousness personality and that student indicated they would interact more with a teacher of conscientiousness personality since they were active, goal oriented and less stressing.

Eryilmaz (2014) carried out a research in Tokyo on perceived personality type of the teacher and how it relates to the subjective well-being, interactions and intellectual progress of students. He used the big five theory to investigate the liked, neutral and disliked teachers and the effect on students interactions and having affection. In his findings he obtained a high mean of 37.97 for liked teachers with conscientiousness personality. He attributed this high liking to the fact that their hardworking, organised and efficient way of working made conscientiousness teachers more liked and so they exerted more positive influence on academic achievement, affection and interactions of the adolescent student.

In his study on perception of teacher-student relationship in school, Ping Liu (2013) used 111 student respondents to put in writing a brief description of a teacher they require in effective learning. The students in his study used the expression: “inspire students to work harder” to describe the type of teacher they would prefer in their interactions for effective learning. He concluded that teachers with conscientiousness personality are hard-working and inspire students to work hard so as to achieve

higher grades such teachers are liked by students for their effectiveness.

In Guangdong province in China a study done by Zhang in 2009 sought to investigate satisfaction of the relationship between teachers and students from student perspective. He found that 5.2% were very satisfied, 47% were satisfied about the relationship, 39% considered the relationship to be general, 8.5% were dissatisfied and very dissatisfied with the relationship. He recommended that it is important that an investigation be made to establish characteristics of teachers and students that can lead to creation and establishment of positive interactions between teachers and learners in school set up.

In Kenya several studies have been done on students and schools such as; Influence of workmates on teacher’s planning and influence of interactions between the teachers and students on teacher’s organization efficiency in Nakuru North by Kariuki, Kipchumba&Kombo (2013); Investigation of causes of student unrests in learning institutions by Muthee (2013); Effect of suspensions on psychological wellbeing of learners in boarding secondary schools in Nakuru Kenya by Wanjiku (2015); Very few studies in Kenya have addressed the influence of teachers’ conscientiousness personality on teacher-student relationship. The purpose of this study is therefore to investigate influence of teachers’ conscientiousness personality on teacher-student relationship basing on students view since such study makes more sense when done from student’s perspective (Craig, 2015).

### **Objective**

To investigate influence of teachers’ conscientiousness personality on teacher-student relationship in selected schools in Nakuru County, Kenya.

### **Purpose of study**

To examine the various ways in which conscientiousness personality of the teacher influences teacher-student relationship.

## **II. Method**

### **Participants**

The study population comprised of 12 selected Public Secondary Schools in Nakuru County, where the main focus in each school was on 25 students.

### **Sampling Procedure and Techniques**

The sampling procedures used included stratified sampling which was used to sample the schools while purposive sampling was used to select the students. Further respondents were stratified on the basis of gender (boys and girls).

### **Research Instruments**

The researcher developed the research instrument based on the study objective, research question and the related literature. A closed ended 5-point likert scale questionnaire was developed using some sections from the Inventory of Teacher–Student Relationships-IT-SR developed by Murray & Zvoch (2011) which measures teacher-student relationship basing on how students perceive it as in this study.

### **Procedure**

Permit to carry out the research was firstly obtained from NACOSTI, the Nakuru County Education director and Nakuru

County Commissioner. Then the researcher got permission to carry out the research from the Principals of the selected schools in Nakuru County. The questionnaire was then administered to the students in the selected schools by the researcher and his assistant. The researcher collected the questionnaire immediately after completion. All the students who had been sampled participated.

### Research Method and Design

Quantitative research methodology was used in this study. This is because it deals with testing of stated theories and usage of statistical description to show relationship between variables (Orodho, 2003). The quantitative research data, is prevalently regarded as closed-ended, and is collected in a typical way using questionnaire where respondents are required to respond to restricted questions through which an explanation is obtained concerning the variables under study (Creswell & Clark, 2006). This is followed by the quantitative researcher deductively analyzing the quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire by utilizing statistically appropriate procedure. He then contrasts the outcomes with prior predictions and results of other related studies, and then presents the end results in an acceptable criterion style that exhibits the objectives of the research (Creswell, 2002).

This study employed the ex-post facto research design that entails researching on the relationships that exist between variables and which cannot be manipulated by the researcher since their manifestation have already taken place (Orodho, 2009; Simon & Goes, 2013; Goddard, 2004; Franknel& Warren, 2000). The researcher examined the influence of teachers' conscientiousness personality on teacher –student relationship in public secondary Schools in Nakuru County.

### Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative techniques were used to analyze and explain relationships between various variables using the data collected in the research (Orodho, 2005). The data captured by the questionnaire were coded and entered into the computer using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 23 (Mugenda, 2003).

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data using percentages and frequencies. Pearson correlation was used to ascertain if a significant relationship exist between dependent and independent variables. Paired samples test was done using t-test to establish if there was a significant difference between the means of the two variables under study. (Mutai, 2000).

### III. Results

The researcher started by finding out from the students, the ideal quality of teacher-student, relationship that they prefer to have for their effective learning in school and psychological wellbeing. These qualities in decreasing order are warm, Luke warm, neutral, conflict and more conflict relationship. The students did this by considering the characteristics of each of the qualities of teacher-student relationship above and selecting the one he desires most for effective learning in school. The results of this ideal quality of teacher-student relationship that the student prefers to have was important since it helped the researcher to correlate with the quality of teacher-student relationship created by teachers' conscientiousness personality. The findings are summarized in table 1.

Table 1: Frequency and Percent of Quality of Ideal Teacher-Student Relationship the Student Requires in Learning

Quality of relationship	Frequency	Percentage
More conflict	2	.7
Conflict	2	.7
Neutral	3	1.0
Luke warm	8	2.7
Warm	285	95.0
Total	300	100.0

These results indicate clearly that majority of students (95%) like warm relationship (highest quality positive teacher-student relationship characterized with more support, care, love and friendship).

Amanda (2011), Fisher (2001) & Elder (2004), in their research found out that students prefer warm teacher-student relationship since it is linked to happier disposition on the side of both the teacher and students in and out of class and better academic performance.

The findings also show that very few students (2%) preferred more conflict aggressive negative teacher-student relationship probably since aggressive teachers are no nonsense type and instil strict discipline that create silent environment in school that is suitable for learning (Malcolm 1985; Lesly 2013; Sadeghi 2014). Majority of the students do not like teacher-student relationship with conflict. This is supported by research findings of Baloglu (2009) who found out that student did not like aggressive teachers who display anger in their teaching since they show favouritism and also humiliate and stress them.

### Influence of Teachers' Conscientiousness Personality on Teacher-Student Relationship

The study sought to investigate the quality of teacher-student relationship that a teacher with conscientiousness personality type would create with students in learning as stated in objective. Teachers with conscientiousness personality are self-disciplined, thorough, careful, neat, efficient, organised, hard-working and their main aim is student achievement. The students were required to relate these traits to their teachers and to determine the quality of relationship they would form with such teachers in learning.

### Descriptive Statistics of Influence of Teacher's Conscientiousness Personality on the Teacher-Student Relationship

Frequencies and percentages of students' responses were as in table 2.

Table 2: Quality of Relationship with a Teacher with Conscientiousness Personality in Learning

	1	2	3	4	5
I would interact closely, befriend, and gladly take instructions from a teacher who is organised.	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)	1 (.7%)	34 (11.3%)	263 (87.7%)
I would interact closely, befriend and gladly take instructions from a teacher who is hard-working and strives for achievement.	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)	2 (.7%)	46 (15.3%)	250 (83.3%)
I would interact closely, befriend and gladly take instructions from a teacher who is thorough and efficient in teaching.	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)	35 (12.7%)	262 (87.3%)
I would interact closely, befriend and gladly take instructions from a teacher who is careful.	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)	2 (.7%)	45 (15%)	251 (83.7%)
I would interact closely, befriend and gladly take instructions from a teacher who is self-disciplined.	1 (.3%)	2 (.7%)	2 (.7%)	43 (14.3%)	252 (84%)
Average (N=300) (100%)	1 (.3%)	1 (.3%)	2 (.7%)	45 (15%)	251 (83.7%)

The results in table 2 shows that 15% of the sampled students, form lukewarm (positive high quality) teacher-student relationship and 83.7% of the students acknowledge that they can form warm (positive highest quality) student-teacher relationship with teachers who have conscientiousness personality. A small fraction of 0.6% students feel that Conscientiousness personality can create conflict negative relationship with their teachers. These results are in line with the findings of Colquitt (2009) who found that teachers with conscientiousness personality formed strong relationship since they are ambitious, high performers, and have good organization ability.

In another study Olaogun and Ajoke (2013) found that 16.9% of students would interact more with teachers who are hard-working. An investigation on perception of teacher-student relationship by Ling (2013), 82% of students indicated that they had positive perception and respond positively when teachers “love teaching,” “make students feel comfortable asking questions” and “inspire students to work harder.” In practice, teachers who love teaching and inspiring others to work hard is one with conscientiousness personality and so are hard-working and organised (Ling (2013). These findings are in agreement with those in the present study where 98.7% of students liked and would form high quality relationship with conscientiousness personality teachers.

Gacia, Kupczynski& Holland (2011) basing on the big 5 personality types found the most prevalent and liked was conscientiousness in impacting positive learning outcomes.

Inferential Statistics of Influence of Teacher’s Conscientiousness Personality on the Teacher-Student Relationship

The researcher carried out correlation analysis using Spearman

correlation coefficient so as to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between the variables under study.

The respondents’ ratings in the statements related to quality of relationship conscientiousness personality of the teacher creates from Table 2 and the ratings of the ideal quality of teacher-student relationship the student requires in learning of table 1 were used to compute the Pearson correlation coefficient to establish whether there was a correlation between them. The results of the correlation are shown in Table 3.

From the correlation analysis in table 3, it was established that there was a strong correlation between conscientiousness personality of teacher and the quality of teacher – student relationship in the various schools ( $r = 0.780$ ). The strong positive correlation implies that higher levels of the quality of teacher – student relationship can be strongly associated to the conscientiousness personality of the teachers.

The results are in agreement to those of Garcia *et al.*, (2011), who found similar strong relationship between conscientiousness and teacher liking by students. Zaidiet *al.*, (2012) also found the highest correlation ( $r=0.305$ ) for conscientiousness teacher as compared to the other personality types in work engagement.

Wainaina, Kipchumba&Kombo (2014) however found a low positive correlation of  $r=0.236$  between teacher organization commitment and conscientiousness personality in their research. They attributed the low correlation to other factors among students like indiscipline and disrespect which can hinder teacher commitment.

Table 3: Correlation of Conscientiousness and Quality of Teacher-Student Relationship

			Quality of teacher-student relationship	Quality of relationship that conscientiousness personality creates
Pearson rho	Quality of teacher-student relationship	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.780**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	300	300
	Quality of relationship that conscientiousness personality creates	Correlation Coefficient	.780**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	300	300

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

For the purpose of testing the significance in the difference between the mean of ideal quality of teacher-student relationship and quality of teacher-student relationship that conscientiousness personality creates, the study used the t-test statistic. The t-value at 299 df, 0.05 level of significance and 95% confidence was found to be 5.438. Since the calculated t-value was found to be greater than the critical value (1.960), it was concluded that conscientiousness personality of teacher played a significant influence on quality of teacher-student relationship.

#### IV. Discussion

The study established that the teacher-student relationship is enhanced with teachers who show high levels of thoughtfulness, who have good impulse control, who act dutifully and aim for achievement, who were organized and efficient in handling students issues, who showed self-discipline and display planned behavior and who were systematic and thorough when relating to students. Conscientiousness is related to teacher's high performance ability (Barrick et al., 2001; Colquit, 2003), which students seriously require in their career advancement. Students perceive this to mean such teachers care for their future and so end up forming very high quality relationship with them. The academic security that teachers with conscientiousness personality provide through their thoroughness, perseverance and hard work, leads to emotional stability and psychological wellbeing of the students which in turn improves their academic performance and greatly increases their relationship with the teacher. The study deduced that generally conscientiousness personality of the teacher had great influence on the quality of teacher-student relationship in learning. It was further established that there was a very strong positive correlation between the quality of relationship that teachers with conscientiousness create and the quality of teacher-student relationship that the students require in learning ( $r = 0.780$ ). This implies that higher levels of the quality of teacher-student relationship can be strongly associated to the conscientiousness personality of the teachers.

#### V. Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher has drawn some conclusions from students' perspective. That conscientiousness personality creates warm (highest quality) teacher-student relationship in learning.

#### VI. Recommendations

- Teacher training curriculum should have an aspect where special programs are developed on how to foster positive personality of teachers that promotes high quality teacher-student relation in learning.
- School management should put into consideration the teacher's personality when allocating teachers to be in charge of various departments in school. For instance academic and careers dean may require a teacher of conscientiousness personality and not neuroticism personality.
- The Teachers Service Commission – TSC which are entrusted with hiring, employing and promoting teachers, should put into consideration the teachers' personality in the entire process.

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