Effect of Student-Teacher Relationship on Undergraduate Students' Self-Esteem

Dr. Irfan Bashir[1]
Rabia Farooq[2]
Dr. Afshan Naseem[3]

ABSTRACT

This study explores the effect of student-teacher relationships on the self-esteem at undergraduate level students. Supportive Student-Teacher relationships play a wide role to shape self-esteem of students, but empirical evidences shows that across South-Asian higher educational universities there is limited research. This study explores the effect of student-teacher relationships on the self-esteem at undergraduate level of students in Lahore, Pakistan. A cross-sectional, stratified-random sampling technique was used. A sample of 500 undergraduates (250 form private and 250 form public sector universities students was drawn from an estimated number of population (250000) undergraduate students. Data was collected using standardizes tools on student's teacher-relationship and self-esteem. Participants completed the student-teacher relationship scale (STR) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE) scale. Both the tools show high internal consistency >.89. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was run to measure the effect of Student-Teacher Relationship while controlling for institutional sector and gender. The findings of this study reveal that student-teacher relationship has a significant but small proportion of variance in self-esteem ($R2=.013$, $F=6.76,p=.010$). But sector-specific results reveal a difference: the relationship predicted in public universities is 8.8% of self-esteem variance which is ($R2=.088,F=23.97,P <.001$), and on other hand in private sector universities the results show only 0.5% which is ($R2=.005,F=1.29,P=.275$). Gender-stratified results reveal that the predictive effect on female is significant ($P=.044$), and for males it is non-significant ($P=.056$). The findings suggests that positive student-teacher interactions and good relations play a major role to reinforce self-esteem within public sector universities where resources are limited among female students at undergraduate level. While in private sector universities where resources are available, it may still need targeted methodologies to strengthen student-teacher relationships. Early interventions such as professional development trainings, workshops based on relational pedagogies and mentoring policies can enhance undergraduate academic engagement and well-being. This can help students to feel supported and valued.

Key Words: Student-Teacher Relationship, Undergraduate Students, Self-Esteem, Public vs. Private Universities, Pakistan

[1] Assistant Professor, UMT, Lahore, (irfanbashir@umt.edu.pk)

[2] MPhil Scholar, UMT, Lahore (S2022088010@umt.edu.pk)

[3] Assistant Professor, UMT, Lahore (afshan.naseem@umt.edu.pk)

1. Introduction

Supportive relationships among student-teachers influence students' self-esteem and lifelong learning (Afzal et al.,2023). When teachers provide constructive feedback and encouragement, students feel more valued, confident, and motivated. Similarly, negative interactions may hinder the progress of learning and confidence (Roorda et al., 2020).

Classroom engagement is defined as student behavioral, emotional, and cognitive involvement in learning activities (Fredrick's et al.,2019) is the pathway through which good student-teacher relationships shape self-esteem. The present study reveals that engagement has three main parts which divide in three subparts: behavioral engagement (Participation and effort), emotional engagement (feelings of belonging) and cognitive engagement (investment in learning methodologies).

Empirical evidences in western settings show that positive student-teacher relationships predict high engagement and high self-esteem level (Gablinske,2021). Analysis by Roorda et al.,(2011) reach same conclusion across both secondary and primary schools. However, there is not much evidences from South-Asian universities.

This study is guided by two theories (Self-Determination Theory and Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1988). These theories posit that supportive student-teachers relationships provide students safe, secure, confident, and connected towards learning which boost self-esteem of students.

Positive academic self-concept is interlinked with high achievement and motivation varies based on gender differences such as male and female Wang and Yu (2023). Whenever students are admitted to university they come into to entirely different environment because they are involved in a transitional period in their educational or academic journey. Whenever students pursue their undergraduate academic journey their personal growth depends on their relationships with their teachers, and how good their bond is because that bond totally depends on their sense of self and their self–esteem. Positive student's student-teacher relations help children to enhance their self-esteem to develop supportive interactions, positive feedback, and develop student capabilities (Bear, 2020).

In the educational context self-esteem refers to the perspectives of students about their academic achievements, their skills, abilities in academics, their motivation toward studies, and their confidence to perform challenging learning experiences to achieve academic success (Mohammad, 2010). Students who have high self-esteem towards their academics and have confidence in their skills can achieve academic success. A student's self-esteem is something related to believing in one's own abilities and the support they receive form their teachers during their academic journey (Gerbresilase & Zhao, 2023).

To test this model, we measure (a) perceived teaching support, (b) the three engagement subclasses and (c) global self-esteem. The researchers used Hierarchical regression analyses to determine whether teacher support predicted self-esteem directly and indirectly via engagement while controlling for both sector universities and Gender.

1.1. Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Attachment Theory and Self-Determination Theory, both of which emphasis the significance of psychological development and social relationships. According to Marshall's and Brown (2006) Top-Down Affective Model, emotional experiences embedded in supporting relations to influence the formation of self-esteem. Furthermore, Roger (1951) and

Maslow's hierarchy of needs were employed by reinforcing that self-esteem stems from acceptance and validation often intervened by adult figures such as educators.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study are to:

1. Find out commonly reported self-esteem indicators by the students.
2. Evaluate the effect of student-teacher relationships on students' self-esteem.
3. Compare the effect of student-teacher relationships on student self-esteem based on students' gender, program, and sector.

2. Literature Review

The literature on self-esteem distinguishes between **global self-esteem** and **domain-particular self-esteem** both of which are influenced by teacher interactions (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023). When someone conveys a sense of complete self-worth, it implies a comprehensive component of their self-esteem. Self-esteem is one of the important factors in student personal and academic growth. When it is proposed for a particular field or context, it refers to the domain-particular self-esteem. Self-esteem is the subjective evaluation of one's personality, self-worth, and competence. It is related to an individual own self-worth, feelings of self-acceptance, and self-confidence across various Phases of life. (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023). Feedback mechanisms, as discussed by (Mandouit & Hattie et al., 2023) states that timely and task-focused response develops children's self-esteem and self-efficacy effectively. And shaping emotional development. They highlight the significance of student-teacher relationships during the feedback process. It examines how constructive feedback helps children to develop trustworthy and positive relationships which helps students to enhance their self-esteem and engagement during their learning experiences. The concept of self-esteem is not limited to a single universally agreed-upon term; instead, one can discover many different explanations of self-esteem in the study. Self-esteem is utilized in various ways. Among these options, three have significance. Self-esteem is a term that can be defined as a universal personality attribute, the way one evaluates their skills and personality characteristics, or specific emotional situations (Jordan, Zeigler-Hill, & Cameron, 2020).

Self-esteem is the subjective evaluation of one's own worth or value. Self-evaluation refers to the process of assessing and forming judgments about one's own abilities, qualities, and characteristics (Baumeister, 2016). (De Prada et al., 2024) defines self-esteem as an individual's perception of their own image and value. Self-esteem can be defined as the emotional component of one's self. Self-esteem is a person attribute who work independently. Self-esteem is a term we use on a regular basis. It can be described literally as the value that individuals place on themselves. Based on one's own assessment, it is that self-awareness (Baumeister et al., 2016). Rosenberg (1989) defined self-esteem as a person's sense of self-worth or the extent to which a person assigns value or worth to themselves. This view is based on an understanding of how other people evaluate individuals.

Study by Rosenberg (1965), Orth & Robins (2014), and other affirms that high self-esteem contributes to better academic performance, resilience, and well-being. It enables individuals to thrive in a more favorable social setting. Individuals' choices and involvement in different activities are influenced by their perceptions, which are shaped by their efforts, tenacity, cognitive processes, and emotional tendencies towards their life commitments. Models of self-esteem development sociological, cognitive, and emotional indicates that student teacher relations

considerably shape these paradigms (Brown et al., 2001). Conversely, previous research (eg.Furre & Skinner,2003) lacks sufficient analysis of these relations in South Asian academic settings.

According to (Saraff & Tiwari, 2020) self-esteem is a mindset. It was also regarded by Rosenberg (1965; 1989) as an attitude that might be beneficial or detrimental toward oneself. According to (Donnellan et al., 2015), who quoted Rogers, "self-regarding attitudes" fall into three main categories: There are three types of attitudes: cognitive (the content), evaluative (an assessment about the subject matter in relation to a standard), and affective (the emotion associated with that assessment). As revealed by (Arshad et al., 2015) numerous investigations have shown consistently that self-esteem is vital in the wide array of notions that are related to individuals 'incentives, efficiency, and well-being. Self-esteem is an important predictor which plays an essential role in students' academic achievement. (Orth et al., 2012) defines self-esteem has significant effects on all aspects of our lives, including creativity and emotional well-being. It enables individuals to thrive in a more favorable social setting. Individuals' choices and involvement in different activities are influenced by their perceptions, which are shaped by their efforts, tenacity, cognitive processes, and emotional tendencies toward their life commitments. It is closely linked to positive outcomes of life, which includes physical and mental health, well-being, job satisfaction and strong interpersonal relations.

There is no room for question when it comes to the existence of oneself, but rather a perception of self. The significance attributed to the self and associated concepts offers sufficient motivation for researchers to conduct investigations into self-related notions. An illustration of this is the study conducted on self-esteem. Three models are commonly discussed for the development of self-esteem: emotional (top-down), cognitive (bottom-up), and social models. 'From the model of top down: self-esteem and self-evaluation,'' are influenced by the sense of self-worth of individuals. The study revealed that high self-esteem is linked with self-enhancing methods which include the attributes of success to the internal factors and failure of the external factors for maintaining a positive view of self (Brown et al., 2001).

Figure 1

A Top-down Affective Model of the Formation and Functioning of Self-Esteem (Brown Marshall, 2006).

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In contrast, cognitive models propose that self-esteem is dependent on appraisals of one's potential. The third paradigm is the sociology model, which posits that a person's self-esteem is formed depending on societal perceptions. Parents, classmates, instructors, friends, and other individuals who are concerned consistently assess the individual's progress and development throughout their lives.

Figure 2

Formation and Operation of Self-Esteem (Brown & Marshall, 2006)
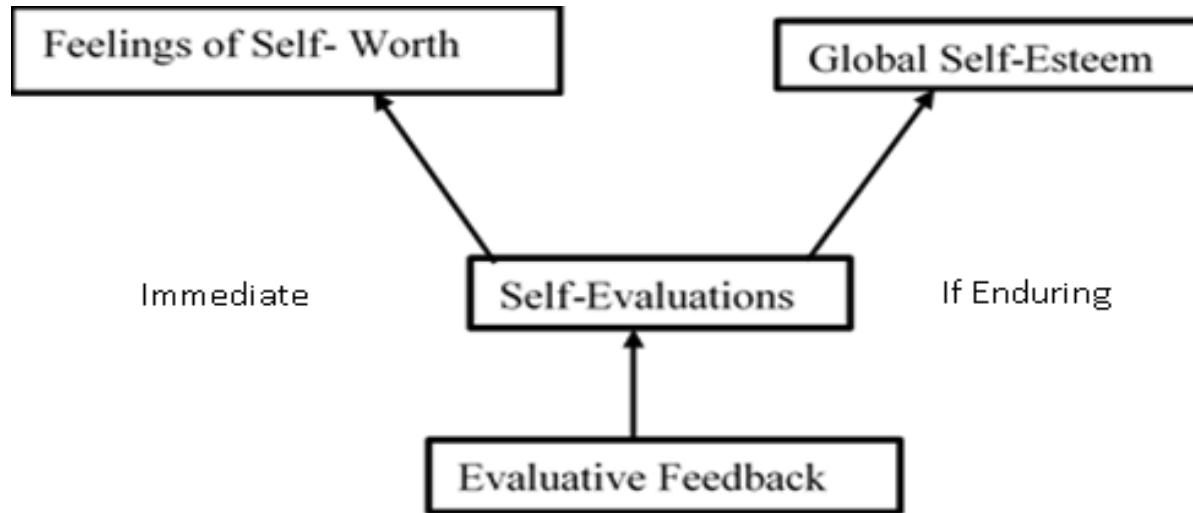
Self-esteem is based on a process of evaluation that stems from an individual's unique ideas and ideals about how to behave in different situations. The development of self-esteem occurs as a result of a healthy, affectionate, and optimistic parent-child interaction. Over time, people assess their various attributes and enhance their self-perception. As individuals interact in society, they undergo assessments that result in varying degrees of self-esteem. In their study Brown Marshall (2006) observed that young individuals typically want to protect their self-image and avoid circumstances where their performance could have detrimental consequences, potentially leading to a bad perception within their immediate community. In situations of competition, such as athletics or similar activities, individuals strive to maintain an optimistic outlook and uphold a good sense of self-worth. Students with elevated self-esteem possess an optimistic mindset and consistently demonstrate readiness to confront problems. Self-esteem is a protective characteristic that enhances resilience. It is a crucial aspect that plays a central role in the development and formulation of a learner's reactions in bad situations (Bond et al., 2019).

Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902) examined how social perception affects one's self-concept. For the further development of this approach, they believe that we understand ourselves better through communication and the analysis of other people's reactions. Self-concept is "a constructive or deconstructive perspective regarding a specific thing, namely, the self," according to Morris Rosenberg (1965). Rosenberg views a high self-concept as a person's positive feelings about themselves, and he regards himself with respect. But a low self-concept is a manifestation of the person's worthlessness. It cultivates the attitude of unhappiness and contempt. The presence or absence of such seeming worthiness directs one toward either positive or negative events or outcomes. Good or terrible experiences are determined by how one views what is worthy or

unworthy. According to a core set of self-morality, each person has a self-concept that determines how unique they are. These moral principles are based on what people have taught to be admirable through socialization (Miller, 2024). Degrees of self-concept are related to assessments, perceptions, and concepts.

Humanistic psychologists carefully consider their self-concept to understand human behavior. (Mruk, 2006) believed that having a positive self-concept is essential to human development. According to Rogers (1951), as we grow in self-awareness, we all need a self-concept. Positive respect from others fosters the formation of a positive self-concept, but this regard needs to be unconditional, according to Rogers. A positive regard that is not subject to any restrictions or conditions is known as unconditional positive regard. However, children acquire conditions of worth when their parents provide them with conditional positive respect. Their sense of self is based on achieving the objectives their parents have set for them (Gordon, 2023).

A person does an affirmative self-analysis and feels a desire for validation from others. Maslow also said that the need for status, attention, respect from others, and acknowledgment is the lowest level need. Higher levels are the foundation for the needs for power, competence, mastery, and self-assurance. Because it is founded on internal competency gained through experience, the higher need is known as the most significant one. External recognitions, according to him, are dangerous because they may cause a person to develop an inferiority complex. Maslow explained that the self-actualization demand can be met by satisfying the self-esteem need. Following the satisfying of the need for self-esteem, the individual moves on to the greatest degree of need, or self-actualization. A person who has reached self-actualization makes use of his or her abilities and accomplishes their objectives. This need, according to Maslow, is also the need to grow and to become everything that one is capable of becoming (Mruk, 2016).

This study fills the gaps by focusing only Lahore undergraduate students from both public and private sectors.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

A **quantitative cross-sectional design** was used to explore the relationship between student –teacher self-esteem and interactions.

3.2. Sampling techniques and population

The study focuses on undergraduate-level students from both sectors in Lahore. For data collection, both universities were divided into two groups (1) Public and (2) Private. Stratified-random sampling selected 500 undergraduate students from both sectors (250 Public and 250 Private) in Lahore, Pakistan. Gender distribution was 25% male and 75% female.

3.3. Instruments

The study utilized the questionnaire of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (a> 0.89) and Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STR) (a> 0.89) to measure self-esteem levels among university students. The data was analyzed for determine the correlation between student-teacher relationship's and self-esteem. Standardized questionnaires were used to find out effect of the student-teacher relationship on undergraduate students self-esteem.

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

The data was gathered via institutional permission using anonymous technique for filling out questionnaire focusing ethical considerations.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

The researcher used Belmont Report principles for collecting data which involves:

- Voluntary participation and confidentiality.
- Make sure that participants did not harm.
- Fair distribution for selection of participants.

3.6. Data Analyses Procedures:
- Descriptive statistics for self-esteem indicators.
- Regression analysis for testing hypothesis.
- Comparative analysis for both sector and gender.

4. Data Analysis

Table: 1

Demographic Information of Respondents

Demographics	N	%
Gender		
Male	125	25.0
Female	375	75.0
(Institute)Sector		
Private	250	50%
Public	250	50%

What are commonly reported self-esteem indicators by the students?

H_{01}: There is no effect of student-teacher relationships on students' self-esteem.

Table 2

Commonly Reported Student Self-Esteem Indicators

Ser	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1.	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	38.4	41.0	16.8	3.8	00
2.	At times I think I am no good at all.	4.0	3.4	8.4	66.8	17.4
3.	I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	42.6	41.2	9.6	4.0	2.6
4.	I am able to do things as well as most other people.	23.4	46.4	16.4	9.2	4.6
5.	I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	13.6	20.0	18.6	28.8	19.0

Table 2 shows the percentage of responses on items 1 to 5 of the student self-esteem scale.

According to the data majority of the participants show positive self-esteem (79.4 % = 38.4% strongly agree and 41.0% agree) are satisfied with themselves. Furthermore, 83.8 % (42.6% strongly agree and 41.2% agree) report that they have good qualities, and 69.8 % (23.4% strongly agree and 46.4% agree) feel that they are capable of performing tasks the same as their peers. Only a few people show (7.4%) that they did not have anything proud of. So, the results show a higher level of self-esteem, and these are commonly reported self-esteem indicators.

Table: 3

Commonly Reported Student Self-Esteem Indicators

Ser	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
6.	I certainly feel useless at times	5.0	11.0	16.0	47.2	20.8
7.	I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.	12.4	56.2	26.2	3.0	.6
8.	I wish I could have more respect for myself.	2.0	3.2	21.6	46.0	27.2

9.	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.	0	.6	21.4	52.2	25.8
10.	I take a positive attitude toward myself.	32.2	45.6	18.4	3.8	0

Table 3 shows the percentage of responses on items 6 to 10 of the student self-esteem scale.

What is the effect of student-teacher relationships on student self-esteem at the university level?

According to the data majority of the participants show positive self-esteem 77.8% (32.2%strongly agree and 45.6% agree) they take a positive attitude and 68.6 % (12.4% strongly agree and 56.2% agree) that they are the ones who have the highest self-worth. Only a few people show with only 0.6%storngly disagreeing and 21.4%agreeing. Furthermore, 67.8 % (47.2% disagree and 20.8% strongly disagree) do not feel useless. The overall result shows higher self-esteem.

Table *4*

Student Teacher Relationship on Student Self-Esteem

S/ No	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig.
1	Regression	120.546	1	120.546	6.755	.011	4.22438	.010
2	Residual	8887.022	498	17.845				
3	Total	9007.568	499					

a: Dependent Variable: total SEa

b: Predictors: Constant, total STRb

The analysis of regression reveals that the predictor variable of the student-teacher relationship shows a significant relationship with the dependent variable of self-esteem [df(1,498), F=6.755, Adjusted R2=.011,p=.010]. The regression linear test was applied for the result. The result shows the R-square value of .013.

It can be concluded that the student-teacher relationship has a low yet significant effect on undergraduate student self-esteem.

Table 5

Institute wise comparison of Student Teacher Relationship effect on students' self-esteem

Institute	Model	R	R Square	F	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Sig.
Public	1	.297[a]	.088	23.966	.084	3.78421	.000
Private	1	.072[a]	.005	1.290	.001	4.32697	.257

a: Dependent Variable: total SE

b: Predictors: Constant, total STR

The result of this (Regression) analysis for examining the impact of the predictor variable of student's teacher relationship on the dependent variable of self-esteem through the different public and private sectors.

The result indicates for the public sector the test results shows that the predictor variable is significant and predicts self-esteem [F (1,248) = 23,966, p<.001]. The result shows an 8.8% of variance of self-esteem (R^2 =.088), with an adjusted R^2 of .084, and the standard value shows an estimate of 3.78421.

The result of this analysis examining the impact of the predictor variable of student teacher relationship on the dependent variable does not significantly predict self-esteem [F (1,248) =1.290, p=.257]. The result shows only 0.5% of the variance of self-esteem R^2 =.005), with an adjusted R^2 of .001 and the standard value shows the estimate of 4.32697.

In summary for public sector institutes the linear regression shows the total student-teacher relationship indicates a significant predictor of total self-esteem while on the other hand private sector institutes the predictor variable does not have a significant effect on total self-esteem

It can be concluded that for the public sector student-teacher relations has a very low or even negligible significant effect on students' self-esteem while there is no significant effect on the private sector**.**

5. Findings

Following are the findings based on the results of the data:

- The findings indicates that the significant majority of the students report a high level of self-esteem, with 79.4% expressing satisfaction with themselves and 83.8% recognizing their good qualities. Confidence in task performance was also notable, as 69.8% felt capable compared to their peers. Conversely, a minority felt they had little to be proud of (7.4%). Overall, these results demonstrate a high level of self-esteem among the students, with satisfaction, recognition of good qualities, and confidence in abilities being the most reported indicators.

- The findings of Student Teacher Relationship show a significant relationship with the dependent variable of self-esteem [df(1,498), F=6.755, Adjusted R2=.011,p=.010]. The regression linear test was applied for the result. The result shows the R-square value of .013.It can be concluded that the student-teacher relationship has a low yet significant effect on undergraduate student self-esteem.

- The findings of Gender based analysis revealed that differential effect of student teacher relationship does not significantly predict self-esteem, as indicated by [df (1,124), F=3.710, AR²=.012, p=.056], with an R-square of .029. This suggests that only 2.9% of the variance in self-esteem among males can be explained by the student-teacher relationship. Conversely, for females, the student-teacher relationship significantly predicts self-esteem, evidenced by [df (1,374), F=4.081, AR²=.008, p=.044], with an R-square of .011. This indicates that 1.1% of the variance in self-esteem among females is explained by the student-teacher relationship. The findings of the study highlight a significant predictive effect of student-teacher relationships on self-esteem in females, while no significant effect is observed in males. This result aligns with Eccles (2011), who found that according to gender female students have greater value in interpersonal relationship within the educational setting at the undergraduate level. Conversely, on the other hand there is no significant effect for males suggests that many other factors play the role to enhance the self-esteem of students (Li,2018).

- The findings indicate for the public sector the test of regression results shows that the predictor variable is significant and predicts self-esteem [F (1,248) = 23,966, p<.001]. The result shows an 8.8% of the variance of self-esteem (R2 =.088), with an adjusted R2 of .084, and the standard value shows an estimate of 3.78421.

- The findings of Institute based comparison of STR effect on students' self-esteem" indicates that the impact of the student-teacher relationship on self-esteem varies

significantly between the public and private sectors. In public sector institutes, the regression results show that the student-teacher relationship significantly predicts self-esteem [F(1,248) = 23.966, p < .001], accounting for 8.8% of the variance in self-esteem (R² = .088), with an adjusted R² of .084 and a standard estimate of 3.78421. Conversely, in private sector institutes, the student-teacher relationship does not significantly predict self-esteem [F(1,248) = 1.290, p = .257], accounting for only 0.5% of the variance in self-esteem (R² = .005), with an adjusted R² of .001 and a standard estimate of 4.32697. This finding is aligned with the study of Afzal et al, (2023), who state that positive interactions among teachers play a significant role in public universities where they don't have many resources because resources are limited so, a teacher in the public sector play a significant role in providing academic and emotional support to students which enhance students' self-esteem. Conversely, the relationship in private sector universities did not play a prominent role in shaping students' self-esteem.

Overall, findings of the study revealed that most undergraduate students reported high level of self-esteem. Specifically, 79.4 % of students satisfied with themselves,83.8 % acknowledged their good qualities and believed that they were as capable as their peers the ratio is 69.8 %.Analyses of regression shows that student teacher relationships had very small but statistically significant or minimum effect on student self-esteem, with F(1,498)=6.755,P=.010, and the adjusted R^2 value of .011.Gender based analysis was found to be significant for female (p=.044,Adjusted $R^{2=}$ .008),indicates a positive impact on their self-esteem. On the other hand, for male students, the effect was not statistically significant (P=.056, Adjusted R^2 =.012).Further analysis based on the institutional comparison reveals that public universities, student teacher relationship's significantly predicts self-esteem (R^2 =.088,p<.001),on other hand private universities results shows minimal and not statistically significant (R^2 =.005,p=.275).At the end results shows that influence of teacher supports on the self-esteem of students is more evident in public institutions among female students of undergraduate level.

6. Discussion

The present study examined the effects of student-teacher relationships on undergraduate students' self-esteem from both public and private sector universities of Lahore. The results demonstrate a high level of self-esteem among the students and this result aligns with Orth and Robbins's (2014), study which emphasized the strong association between higher self-esteem levels and positive outcomes of life which include better-increased motivation and academic performance for achievement. The confidence among students during task performance where 69.8% of students felt higher capability as compared to their peers which supported by Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which is linked with the self-esteem to make perceptions about competence and capabilities in different educational tasks. The study findings reveals that student-teacher relationship reveals a significant relationship of self-esteem indicate that quality of interaction among student and teacher can have positive effect on students' perspective of their own self and self-worth. The study supports previous research that high self-esteem is linked with self-enhancing methods which include the attributes of success to the internal factors and failure of the external factors for maintaining a positive view of self (Brown et al., 2001).

The study findings reveals that student-teacher relationship reveals a significant relationship of self-esteem indicate that quality of interaction among student and teacher can have positive effect on students' perspective of their own self and self-worth. The study supports previous research that high self-esteem is linked with self-enhancing methods which include the

attributes of success to the internal factors and failure of the external factors for maintaining a positive view of self (Brown et al., 2001). For public sector students, the student-teacher relationship significantly predicted self-esteem, indicating that in public universities, positive interactions with teachers are crucial for students' self-perception and confidence (van et al., 2021). In contrast, for private sector students, the relationship was not significant suggesting that other factors, such as institutional resources and peer interactions, might play a more prominent role in shaping self-esteem in private universities. These differences highlight the varying contexts of public and private educational institutions and the need for tailored approaches to student support (Acosta-Gonzaga, 2023). The study's findings on self-esteem indicators revealed that most of the students reported positive self-esteem, with high percentages agreeing that they are satisfied with themselves and recognize their good qualities. This aligns with the broader literature indicating that positive self-esteem is prevalent among university students, driven by supportive educational environments and personal accomplishments. However, the minority of students who reported lower self-esteem highlight the need for targeted interventions to support these individuals, potentially through counseling services and mentorship programs (Kim, 2021).

Moreover, gender differences in the impact of student-teacher relationships known for gender-sensitive approaches in educational practices. Female students, who appear to derive more self-esteem benefits from positive teacher interactions, might benefit from mentorship programs and leadership opportunities that foster strong, supportive relationships. For male students, alternative strategies that address other contributing factors to self-esteem should be explored, ensuring a holistic approach to student development. The findings also have policy implications. Educational policymakers should consider the importance of teacher training programs that emphasize relationship-building skills, emotional intelligence, and student-centered teaching approaches. Policies that support smaller teacher-to-student ratios, particularly in public universities, can enhance the quality of interactions and contribute to enhance student self-esteem. Furthermore, integrating mental health and well-being services within the university framework can address the broader determinants of student self-esteem providing a comprehensive support system for all students (Semeraro et al., 2020). The findings show that students positive relationships with their teachers report high self-esteem. The effect is more prominent in public universities where students feel more valued and supported when they build positive connections with their teacher.

This study confirms that positive student-teacher relationships interlinked with high level of self-esteem among undergraduate levels consistent with the findings by Brown et al (2001) and Orth & Robins (2014). Female students show high level of correlation aligns with Eccles (2011), notice that females develop more psychological support from interpersonal relationships in academics. Public sector universities students benefit more from positive teacher interactions, probably due to limited institutional resources and great support on emotional support (Afzal et al., 2023). In contrast private sector universities students depend more on peer infrastructure or influence.

7. Conclusion

Student-teacher relationships play a major role to foster self-esteem, particularly in public sector universities and among female students at undergraduate level. Although the effect is small, it is statistically significant and contextually meaningful.

8. Recommendations

- Implementing teacher professional development trainings focusing on relationship-building and emotional intelligence.
- Take initiative for introducing programs that encourage teacher-student interactions especially in private sector institutions.
- Plan and design support systems that cater different psychological needs for male and female students in both sectors.
- For future research qualitative follow up help students to explore perceptions and causal mechanisms.

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