

# PREDICTING THE QUALITY OF MIDDLE SCHOOLERS' TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated predictors of the quality of middle school students' relationships with their math teachers. The participants were fifth- and sixth-grade middle school students and their math teachers in a Midwestern, rural school district. Most previous research has measured the quality of relationships using only teacher or student perspectives. Middle school students and their math teachers participated in a cross-sectional survey that measured their perceptions of their relationships with each other in order to predict students' perceptions of the quality of their relationships with their teachers. The analytic procedures used independent samples t-tests, bivariate correlations, and hierarchical multiple linear regression. Analyses revealed that students' math interest, math self-efficacy, and perceptions of their teachers' prosocial behaviors positively predicted students' perceptions of positive teacher relationships. The teachers' positive student relationship perceptions also predicted students' positive teacher relationship perceptions. Unexpectedly, teachers' socio-emotional support perceptions were not significantly associated with students' positive teacher relationship perceptions. Furthermore, these data show that students' own reports of math interest and math self-efficacy predicted their perceptions of positive teacher relationships. Moreover, students' perceptions of their teachers' prosocial classroom behaviors strongly predicted students' views of positive relationships with their teachers. Teachers' prosocial classroom behaviors are malleable, and study findings suggest further research on how teachers' prosocial behaviors shape students' positive teacher relationships.