

The Relationship Between Teachers' Attachment Insecurity and Their Classroom Management Efficacy

Authors : Amber Hatch, Eric Wright, Feihong Wang

Abstract : Research suggests that attachment in close relationships affects one's emotional processes, mindfulness, conflict-management behaviors, and interpersonal interactions. Attachment insecurity is often associated with maladaptive social interactions and suboptimal relationship qualities. Past studies have considered how the nature of emotion regulation and mindfulness in teachers may be related to student or classroom outcomes. Still, no research has examined how the relationship between such internal experiences and classroom management outcomes may also be related to teachers' attachment insecurity. This study examined the interrelationships between teachers' attachment insecurity, mindfulness tendencies, emotion regulation abilities, and classroom management efficacy as indexed by students' classroom behavior and teachers' response effectiveness. Teachers' attachment insecurity was evaluated using the global ECRS-SF, which measures both attachment anxiety and avoidance. The present study includes a convenient sample of 357 American elementary school teachers who responded to a survey regarding their classroom management efficacy, attachment in/security, dispositional mindfulness, emotion regulation strategies, and difficulties in emotion regulation, primarily assessed via pre-existing instruments. Good construct validity was demonstrated for all scales used in the survey. Sample demographics, including gender (94% female), race (92% White), age ($M = 41.9$ yrs.), years of teaching experience ($M = 15.2$ yrs.), and education level were similar to the population from which it was drawn, (i.e., American elementary school teachers). However, white women were slightly overrepresented in our sample. Correlational results suggest that teacher attachment insecurity is associated with poorer classroom management efficacy as indexed by students' disruptive behavior and teachers' response effectiveness. Attachment anxiety was a much stronger predictor of adverse student behaviors and ineffective teacher responses to adverse behaviors than attachment avoidance. Mindfulness, emotion regulation abilities, and years of teaching experience predicted positive classroom management outcomes. Attachment insecurity and mindfulness were more strongly related to frequent adverse student behaviors, while emotion regulation abilities were more strongly related to teachers' response effectiveness. The teaching experience was negatively related to attachment insecurity and positively related to mindfulness and emotion regulation abilities. Although the data were cross-sectional, path analyses revealed that attachment insecurity is directly related to classroom management efficacy. Through two routes, this relationship is further mediated by emotion regulation and mindfulness in teachers. The first route of indirect effect suggests double mediation by teacher's emotion regulation and then teacher mindfulness in the relationship between teacher attachment insecurity and classroom management efficacy. The second indirect effect suggests mindfulness directly mediated the relationship between attachment insecurity and classroom management efficacy, resulting in improved model fit statistics. However, this indirect effect is much smaller than the double mediation route through emotion regulation and mindfulness in teachers. Given the significant predication of teacher attachment insecurity, mindfulness, and emotion regulation on teachers' classroom management efficacy both directly and indirectly, the authors recommend improving teachers' classroom management efficacy via a three-pronged approach aiming at enhancing teachers' secure attachment and supporting their learning adaptive emotion regulation strategies and mindfulness techniques.

Keywords : Classroom management efficacy, student behavior, teacher attachment, teacher emotion regulation, teacher mindfulness

Conference Title : ICDPAT 2023 : International Conference on Developmental Psychology and Attachment Theory

Conference Location : Tokyo, Japan

Conference Dates : June 15-16, 2023