

Perspectives of Two Bhutanese Women on Student-teacher Relationships

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ABSTRACT

The quality of relationship between teachers and their students is of utmost importance as it has a profound influence on students' emotions, psychological well-being, and academic performance. In an attempt to gain deeper insights into the factors that contribute to positive teacher-student relationships, the authors used a narrative exploration, drawing upon their personal experiences with both teachers and students. Through the lens of narrative accounts, this study sheds light on the dynamics that shape this relationship. Two women academics in Bhutanese higher education shared their memories and reflections, delving into their own interactions with their teachers and students. Their aim was to discern the qualities and characteristics that contribute to the success of the teacher-student relationship. Moreover, this research also explored the influence of personality and culture on the intricate process of building and maintaining this relationship. To investigate these dynamics within the unique Bhutanese context, the authors employed a narrative methodology. By sharing personal experiences deeply rooted in their memories and reflections, they were able to capture the essence of their relationship with their teachers and students. The findings from this study highlight the significance of personality and culture in shaping teacher-student relationships, revealing the pivotal role these variables play in fostering positive and productive connections with students.

KEYWORDS

Teacher-student relationships; culture; personality; narrative; reflections

Setting the context

Bhutan is known as 'Drukyl', the Land of Thunder Dragon. It is a landlocked country in the eastern Himalayas, geographically located between China in the north and India in the southwest. It has an area of 38,394 km² and a population of 787, 42400 people (National Statistics Bureau, 2022). Agriculture is the main source of living for the majority of the people. The state religion is Vajrayana Buddhism. Bhutan occupies one of the most rugged mountain terrains in the world. About 71% of the country is covered with forests (National Statistics Bureau, 2022). According to Powdyel (2014), 'Bhutan could be the only country in the world today that has pledged to remain a net carbon sink in perpetuity' (p. 3). Bhutan was ruled by hereditary kings for a century prior to the establishment of the

democratic constitutional monarchy in 2008 (Thinley, 2016). The development philosophy used in the country is the Gross National Happiness. The assessment of progress in Bhutan extends beyond measurable and materialistic socio-economic advancements and includes considerations of spiritual and emotional well-being (Thinley, 2016).

There has been a rapid growth and expansion of the education system in Bhutan since its establishment in 1914. Currently, the Bhutanese education system consists of seven years of primary education (PP–VI), four years of lower and middle secondary (VII–X), and two years of higher secondary (XI–XII). Education is provided free from Grade PP to Grade X. Bhutan accords the highest priority to education because investment in education is essential for the empowerment of its citizens and the nation's transformation (MoE, 2014). The importance the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) places on education is indicated by Article 9 of the Constitution of Bhutan, which states that “The State shall endeavour to provide education for the purpose of improving and increasing [the] knowledge, values, and skills of the entire population with education being directed towards the full development of the human personality” (Royal Government of Bhutan, 2008, p. 19). The overall objective of school education as outlined in MoE (2015) is to “equip our students with relevant knowledge, skills, and values towards realizing the national goal of Gross National Happiness (GNH)” (p. 8). Bhutan celebrated 100 years of modern education in 2013.

Admission to tertiary education after the completion of Grade XII is based on merit and determined by the human resource needs of the country. Students who do not qualify can enroll as self-financed students in one of the higher institutions in the country under the Royal University of Bhutan or in private institutions. The Royal University of Bhutan (RUB), founded in 2003, serves as the primary institution for higher education in Bhutan. It provides a wide array of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes spanning diverse fields such as education, language and culture, natural resources and sustainable development, business studies, science and technology, engineering, information technology, and arts and humanities, spread across its various colleges. Notably, the two authors are educators at Samtse College of Education, which is a constituent college of the Royal University of Bhutan. This college is located in an urban setting and is one of only two institutions in the country that offer undergraduate and postgraduate programmes specifically tailored to education. The authors are actively engaged in teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels within this educational institution. They teach students of different age ranges, from 18 to 24 years old (undergraduate) and from 22 to 30 years old (postgraduate).

Problem statement

The quality of relationship between teachers and their students is seen as critical. For instance, Gest et al. (2005) state that supportive teacher-student relationships are a critical factor in creating and maintaining a sense of school belonging that encourages positive academic and behavioral outcomes. Similarly, Komarraju et al. (2010) note factors such as respect and connectedness (as well as care) as important features of a positive teacher-student relationship. Another concept frequently discussed within the teacher-student relationship framework in higher education is the approachability of teachers (Denzine & Pulos, 2000; Devlin & O’Shea, 2012). Likewise, Sibii (2010) describes the role of a teacher in teacher-student relationship as “a friendly individual but not a friend” (p. 531). Furthermore, Smith et al. (2023) have also discussed the risk of overly close and informal relationships. Based on the empirical studies discussed above and considering the importance ascribed to teacher-student relationship, the need was felt to study the women academics’ perspectives on teacher-student relationship as little is known in this area within the context of Bhutanese higher education. Although there are many studies that have examined the factors that create or inhibit teacher-student relationships, there are hardly any studies that have explored the influence of personality and culture on teacher-student relationships. Furthermore, Spilt et al. (2011) pointed out that the association between teacher-student relationship and teacher factors is under-researched across all sectors of education, from school to university. Moreover, the research gap is notably prevalent in the higher education setting (Komarraju et al., 2010). Likewise, this is an area that is

sparsely researched in Bhutan. Hence, given this gap and considering the importance personality and culture can have on nurturing positive teacher-student relationship, this paper explored their influence on teacher-student relationship from the narrative lens of two teacher educators. The sections explore teacher-student relationships comprehensively, covering their impact on students, the role of personality, and cultural influences on interactions.

Literature review

The sections explore teacher-student relationships comprehensively, covering their impact on students, the role of personality, and cultural influences on interactions.

Teacher-student relationships

Research emphasizes the importance of positive teacher-student relationships for overall student development (Johnson, 2022). Attributes like mutual respect, care, and warmth contribute to such relationships (Hughes et al., 2005). Positive relationships lead to beneficial outcomes, including reduced aggression (Meehan et al., 2003), improved academic achievement (Dulay & Karadag, 2017), and enhanced social-emotional well-being (Waldinger et al., 2014). Positive teacher-student relationships significantly impact students, enhancing self-esteem, fostering success, and creating supportive classroom environments (Roorda et al., 2017; Yunus et al., 2011). Thapa (2010) notes that these relationships enable mutual growth through acceptance, understanding, trust, and cooperation. Conversely, negative relationships are linked to lower academic achievement, reduced school connection, and limited self-direction (Spilt et al., 2020), causing decreased motivation, emotional distress, and hindered personal growth (Pianta et al., 2012; Wentzel, 2018). In summary, positive teacher-student relationships play a crucial role in shaping students' academic, social, and emotional outcomes.

Impact of female teacher-student relationship

Studies show female teachers significantly influence students' academic performance, socio-emotional development, and motivation. For instance, Spilt et al. (2011) noted stronger relationships with students among female academics compared to males. According to Eggen and Kauchak (2001), female teachers are often viewed as effective in creating engaging classrooms, demonstrating genuine concern for student performance, and enhancing motivation-key qualities for building strong teacher-student bonds.

Furthermore, research has indicated that female teachers frequently exhibit more supportive and expressive behaviours, while male teachers tend to adopt a more authoritative and instrumental approach (Babad, 2018). Additional research highlights positive female teacher-student relationships correlating with improved academic achievement (Jones & Johnson, 2018) and heightened intrinsic motivation for learning (Brown & Davis, 2020). Liu and Lee (2021) emphasize the importance of teacher empathy, communication, and sensitivity. Conversely, Thomson and Walker (2020) note ongoing student hostility towards female academics in a British university. These studies collectively deepen our understanding of the intricate dynamics of female academicians' teacher-student relationships.

Personality and student-teacher relationship

Personality in the context of this study is conceptualized as the individual characteristics, traits, and behaviour exhibited by teachers that influence their interactions and the overall dynamics of the relationship. It encompasses a wide range of attributes, such as communication style, approachability, empathy, patience, enthusiasm, and professionalism. Female teachers can cultivate supportive educational settings by embodying warmth, empathy, and openness (Martin et al., 2019). Demonstrating care, understanding, and receptivity to students' ideas creates a safe and engaging classroom atmosphere (Wang et al., 2021). Enthusiasm and passion for the subject further enhance student engagement, motivation, and the overall learning experience (King et al., 2020). These teacher



attributes foster positive relationships and a vibrant learning environment. Female teachers' knowledge and enthusiasm enhance students' interest and participation (Allen et al., 2018). Demonstrating fairness and consistency cultivates positive teacher-student relationships by treating students equitably and providing opportunities for success (Roorda et al., 2011). Overall, female teachers' personality traits notably impact their student relationships, shaping trust, respect, and a sense of security (Hattie, 2012; Kyriacou, 2001).

Culture and teacher-student relationship

Cultural norms influence female teacher-student relationships, shaping their dynamics based on gender roles. In conservative cultures, female teachers are expected to embody nurturing qualities akin to maternal roles, fostering a supportive approach (Manzon & Rusby, 2009). Cultural values affect relationships, with high power distance cultures seeing female teachers as authoritative figures due to emphasis on authority and respect (Hofstede, 2001). In contrast, low power distance cultures prioritize equality and collaboration between female teachers and students. They also emphasize feminine qualities, expecting female teachers to foster closer emotional bonds (Hofstede, 2001). In masculinity-emphasizing cultures, female teachers may struggle to balance authority and credibility. Cultural norms on boundaries and gender roles impact intimacy and physical contact in the teacher-student relationship, with some cultures accepting nurturing behaviours like physical contact (Manzon & Rusby, 2009).

In Bhutan, the teacher-student relationship is formal and built on respect, trust, and obedience due to the cultural value of honouring elders and the use of honorific language. Teachers hold a revered position responsible for both academic and moral development, aligning with the Bhutanese emphasis on holistic education encompassing values like respect and compassion. Female teachers are addressed with honorifics like "Madam" and are regarded akin to a person's Lam (Root Guru), highlighting their influential mentoring role in students' lives. It is believed that disregarding the respect due to a teacher, even for a single word taught, can result in being reborn as a dog 500 times and being born among the worst beings (ཚིག་གཅིག་སྟོན་པའི་སློབ་དཔོན་ལ། tshig gcig ston pa'i slob dpon la) (ལྷ་མ་བདག་ཏུ་མ་འཛིན་ན། bla ma bdag tu ma 'dzin na) (ཁྱི་ཡི་སྐྱེ་བ་ལྔ་བརྒྱ་དང་། khyi yi skye ba lnga brgya dang) (དམེ་ཤ་ཅན་དུ་སྐྱེ་བར་འགྱུར། dme sha can du skye bar 'gyur). Similarly, it is believed that enlightenment is not possible without a Lam as even Buddhas have attained enlightenment by relying on a teacher (པ་ལྷ་མ་མེད་པའི་གོང་རོལ་ན། pha bla ma med pa'i gong rol na) (བུ་སངས་རྒྱལ་བའི་མེད་ཡང་མེད། bu sangs rgyas bya ba'i ming yang med) (བླ་མ་དག་ལ་བསྟེན་ནས་འབྱུང་། bla ma dag la bsaten nas 'byung).

In conclusion, the literature review highlights the vital importance of positive teacher-student relationships in the educational context. These relationships, characterized by mutual respect, caring, and warmth, have far-reaching positive impacts on students, including reduced aggression, improved academic achievement, and enhanced social-emotional well-being. Positive teacher-student relationships foster self-esteem, motivation, and academic success, creating a nurturing classroom. Conversely, negative relationships lead to lower academic achievement, reduced motivation, and emotional distress. Factors like gender, personality traits, and cultural dynamics influence these interactions. Female teachers, often more supportive and expressive, significantly impact student engagement, motivation, and achievement. Traits like warmth, empathy, openness, fairness, and emotional stability contribute to positive interactions. Cultural norms shape dynamics, affecting gender roles, authority, and boundaries. In Bhutan, the teacher-student relationship is marked by reverence, aligning with the culture's emphasis on holistic development. Understanding this cultural context informs research gaps, facilitating a more thorough exploration of Bhutanese teacher-student dynamics. The study aims to uncover nuanced cultural influences and their implications for effective teaching and learning in Bhutan. It seeks to bridge existing literature gaps by delving into the unique dynamics of teacher-student relationships in Bhutan, considering cultural expectations, individual personalities, and educational factors.

Methodology

Grounded in an interpretivist worldview, this research employed narrative as a research design to delve into the teacher-student relationship, as narrative inquiry considers experience as a storied phenomenon. Within the framework of narrative inquiry, experiences are viewed as rich, storied phenomena, inviting researchers to explore the narratives that individuals construct about their own experiences (Clandinin & Murphy, 2009). The adoption of narrative methodology in this study allowed for exploration of the storied experiences of the two women authors, thereby providing a profound understanding of teacher-student relationship. As proposed by Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), narrative inquiry operates from an ontology of experience, where reality is understood as “relational, temporal, and continuous” (p. 44). In our research, we have shared accounts of our relationships with both our teachers and students. This relational approach to inquiry has been instrumental in contextualizing our teacher-student relationship experiences, drawing upon our memories and reflections. Hence, narrative inquiry emerges as a highly suitable and robust methodological approach for this study. Embedded within an interpretivist worldview, the authors acknowledge the pivotal role of subjective experiences and the social construction of reality in shaping our understanding of teacher-student relationship. We recognize that our personal perceptions, interpretations, and interactions significantly influence our comprehension of these relationships. To capture the complexity of teacher-student relationship, we have adeptly utilized memory and reflection as our primary data collection tools, weaving together intricate and contextualized narratives that illuminate the multifaceted nature of teacher-student dynamics (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Drawing on our memories and reflections, we have unravelled the subtle intricacies and evolving dynamics of these relationships, discerning their profound impact on our roles as both students and teacher educators. Through the sharing of our personal narratives, our aim extends beyond individual introspection to contribute meaningfully to the collective knowledge base on teacher-student relationship.

As researchers, we openly acknowledge that our subjectivities, biases, and positionalities inevitably influence our narratives. To mitigate this influence and ensure the trustworthiness of our inquiry, we have employed reflexive practices, critically examining our assumptions and perspectives throughout the research process. This self-reflective approach enhances the credibility of our findings and the robustness of our inquiry. Within the framework of narrative inquiry, our exploration transcends mere description, inviting a deeper understanding of the underlying meanings, values, and beliefs that are interwoven into our experiences. By rigorously analysing and interpreting our narratives, we endeavour to extract profound insights into the multifaceted nature of teacher-student relationship, thereby shedding light on the complex factors that shape the teacher-student dynamic. In summary, narrative inquiry, firmly grounded in an interpretivist worldview, emerges as a fitting research design for the comprehensive exploration of teacher-student relationship. Through our reflexive practices and the analysis of our memories, we aspire to shed insights that not only enrich the field of education but also inform future research and practice concerning teacher-student relationship.

Our experiences with our teachers

The authors, reflecting on their own experiences as students, acknowledge the profound impact of their teacher’s personality on them. Author One clearly remembers that most of her teachers, both male and female, from her school and college days were patient, understanding, caring, supportive, and encouraging. They supported her not just as a learner but as a person too. They were a parent figure who provided emotional support and helped her overcome the challenges of school and life. She felt comfortable discussing her concerns and seeking guidance from her teachers. A teacher they trust, promoting better mental health and emotional well-being. The encouragement and motivation provided by her teachers boosted her confidence and self-esteem. In addition, they were enthusiastic and passionate about their subjects which motivated her to learn. They were also fair and consistent



in their expectations of their students which helped create a positive classroom environment. The author looked forward to attending their classes and paid utmost attention in the class which resulted in better academic performance. She emulated the behaviours of her teachers both in her professional and personal life. Research has shown that teachers who exhibit enthusiasm and passion for their subject matter have been found to positively impact student engagement and motivation and that their excitement and dedication inspire students and create a vibrant learning atmosphere (King et al., 2020). Her teachers' personality enabled her to build a positive relationship with them. She valued nurturing these positive connections since such relationships helped enhance her emotional and psychological domains and build closer bonding with them. According to Thapa (2010), a strong positive student-teacher relationship enables both teachers and students to thrive through mutual acceptance, understanding, warmth, closeness, trust, respect, care, and cooperation. The author held all her teachers in high regard and respected them. This perspective may have been influenced by religious and cultural contexts, where students are expected to treat their teachers with great reverence, akin to root gurus. Teachers are seen as respected figures who nurture the holistic development of their students. In Buddhist beliefs, disrespecting a teacher who imparts knowledge is strongly discouraged, with a saying that warns of potential rebirth as a dog if one fails to show proper respect to a teacher. Similarly, it is believed that enlightenment is not possible without a Lam (teacher), as even Buddhas have attained enlightenment by relying on a teacher. This perspective emphasizes the importance of the teacher-student relationship not only in academic development but also in personal and spiritual growth. The author's teachers played a crucial role in inspiring her to become a teacher herself, and she maintains contact with some of her teachers to this day. The enduring relationships the authors maintain with these educators reflect the lasting impact that exceptional teachers can have on their students' lives.

Author Two recalls idolizing female teachers during her school years. She was drawn to their nurturing qualities, such as love, care, affection, and warmth. These qualities created a sense of freedom and connection in the classroom, which greatly enhanced her learning experience. Martin et al. (2019) assert that female teachers who exhibit warmth and empathy tend to foster positive relationships with their students. They demonstrate care, understanding, and concern for students' well-being, which contributes to a supportive and nurturing classroom environment. Students perceive these teachers as approachable and supportive, enhancing their engagement and satisfaction in the learning process (Wentzel, 2018). The author vividly remembers enjoying lessons taught by female teachers and building strong, positive relationships with them. She was particularly drawn to teachers who were strict and unwavering in their expectations. The fear of not meeting their high standards motivated her to excel and be prepared for any question that might arise during the lessons. Two remarkable teachers from her lower school days left a lasting impact on her. The History teacher, despite being strict, delivered insightful and engaging lessons that greatly enriched her learning journey. The English teacher, known for her joyful and cheerful approach, used captivating teaching methods, including humour, to create an inclusive and exciting learning environment. These exceptional female educators, along with others, significantly influenced her perspective on education and learning. However, while transitioning to higher secondary school, she remembers having more connection and interaction with male teachers. She particularly recalls her chemistry teacher leaving a lasting impression on her. His exceptional mastery of the subject and teaching techniques greatly influenced her own approach to teaching today. He was so proficient that all students eagerly anticipated his classes due to his dynamic teaching style fuelled by his extensive subject knowledge. In a similar note, her Economics teacher, despite using a more traditional approach, was commendable for the illustrative examples he incorporated into his lessons. These teachers' qualities kept the author two highly motivated and satisfied with their lessons. Even to this day, she fondly remembers their lessons and the profound impact they had on her. Now a teacher educator herself, she strives to emulate their qualities by maintaining high standards while fostering a nurturing environment for her students, aiming to pass on the impactful guidance she once received. The authors' experiences highlight the importance of teacher-student relationships. When teachers are

patient, understanding, and supportive, they create a positive learning environment where students feel safe and respected. This can lead to increased engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. Their experiences also suggest that the teacher's personality can have a significant impact on the students. Teachers who are enthusiastic and passionate about their subjects can motivate students to learn. They can also create a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment.

Our experiences with our students

Teacher-student relationships have undergone significant changes in recent years in response to societal developments, such as the rise of social media and the increasing diversity of student populations. These changes have also been influenced by factors such as personality, culture, and exposure to different teaching styles. Maazouzi (2019) emphasizes that teachers with strong personalities are respected and considered role models by students, while those with weak personalities face disrespect. Additionally, a teacher's personality can impact their passion for the subject matter. The authors acknowledge the importance of these qualities in cultivating positive relationships with students. This self-reflection stresses the authors' commitment to continuously improving their teaching methods and fostering a more inclusive and engaging educational environment. The authors believe that creating a conducive learning environment contributes to better relationships with our students.

Based on our experiences with our students, we recall establishing smooth relationships with both male and female students. For example, Author One reveals that her students have characterized her as a strict yet respectful, caring, supportive, friendly, passionate, approachable, and punctual teacher. These qualities align with the core components of a positive teacher-student relationship, as highlighted by Komarraju et al. (2010), which include respect, connectedness, and care. Furthermore, Denzine and Pulos (2000) stress the pivotal role of teacher approachability in facilitating positive teacher-student interactions, and the author's students have indeed acknowledged her approachability and her ability to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter among all students. The author's students have expressed gratitude for her guidance, which has effectively motivated them to actively engage in their learning process. This inclusive and participatory classroom environment is marked by equal participation and contributions from both male and female students, a testament to the author's unwavering dedication to teaching, genuine enthusiasm, and consistent display of respect and empathy toward every student. These qualities are not only essential for forging strong social bonds but also serve as vital pillars for our ability to connect deeply with our students, aligning seamlessly with the factors of respect, connectedness, and care emphasized by Komarraju et al. (2010). Even in the Bhutanese cultural context, the teacher-student relationship is characterized by respect, obedience, and trust. Teachers are responsible for nurturing the all-round development of the students.

Author Two remembers creating a friendly learning environment, drawing from her rich cultural exposure. However, she notes that despite her students' positive feedback, including perceptions of her as open, supportive, passionate about teaching, and approachable, she has concerns about her direct and blunt communication style. She wonders whether this style may have unintentionally come across as rude or intimidating to some students, which could explain why only a few of them actively participated in her class, despite her sincere attempts to establish an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere. For example, the author has observed that male students tend to open up more and feel freer with her. She also indicated that male students have expressed that they feel comfortable approaching her for academic or personal issues due to the warmth and friendliness she exhibits, her passion for teaching and the subject knowledge she exudes which creates an environment conducive to open communication as well as learning. Research shows female teachers who exhibit enthusiasm and passion for their subject matter have been found to positively impact student engagement and motivation (King et al., 2020). Their excitement and dedication inspire students and create a vibrant learning atmosphere. Students perceive these teachers as knowledgeable and enthusiastic, which can enhance their interest and involvement in the classroom (Allen et al., 2018). Author two's experience



differs from the general trend as she recalls that in the past, male students interacted more frequently with her compared to female students. This difference may be due to factors like teaching style, personal dynamics, or comfort levels. Over time, she has undergone personal growth and developed a more caring approach towards her students. As a result, both male and female students now feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and perspectives with her. She has received positive feedback from students who appreciate her one-on-one consultations and feedback, which helps them track their progress. This transformation in her teaching style is linked to her personal and professional growth, leading to the use of differentiated instruction and assessment practices that prioritize inclusion and equitable treatment for all students.

In summary, it is evident that teachers with strong personalities, combined with qualities such as respect, care, and approachability, tend to foster positive connections with their students. These qualities, as highlighted by Komarraju et al. (2010), are essential components of nurturing a positive teacher-student relationship. Additionally, teachers who display passion and enthusiasm for their subjects, as noted by King et al. (2020), can greatly influence student engagement and motivation, creating a vibrant and conducive learning environment.

The experiences of the two authors reflect the nuanced nature of teacher-student relationships. While author one's approach has facilitated open communication and engagement from both male and female students, author two's journey involved personal growth and a shift in teaching style to better connect with all students. This transformation underscores the importance of self-reflection and continuous improvement in teaching methods to create inclusive and engaging educational environments. Ultimately, the quality of teacher-student relationships remains a pivotal factor in students' educational experiences. It is imperative for educators to recognize the diverse needs of their students and adapt their approaches accordingly, ensuring that every student feels respected, cared for, and supported in their learning journey. As we continue to navigate the ever-changing landscape of education, the commitment to fostering positive teacher-student relationships remains a cornerstone of effective teaching and learning.

Conclusion

The study's conclusion highlights the paramount significance of teacher-student relationships in education and learning, as cultivated by two women academics. It highlights the importance of personality and culture in the development and establishment of a positive teacher-student relationship. This finding emphasizes that the teacher-student relationship is heavily influenced by the personal bonds that educators establish, emphasizing the impact of teacher traits on fostering positive connections with students. Furthermore, the finding unveils the unique dynamics that contribute to teacher-student relationship in the Bhutanese higher education landscape. It acknowledges the multifaceted nature of teacher-student relationship, where personal attributes, cultural norms, and religious beliefs converge to shape the teacher-student dynamic. This in-depth exploration contributes to a richer understanding of the complex nature of teacher-student relationship and its relevance within this specific cultural and educational milieu.

The study's emphasis on teacher characteristics as pivotal factors in nurturing positive relationships with students is particularly noteworthy. It underscores educators' roles as facilitators of learning, responsible for creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere that encourages student engagement and trust. This resonates with existing research highlighting the influence of the learning environment on student outcomes, as well as the significance of teacher qualities like approachability, warmth, and a genuine teaching.

To conclude, this study's findings reflect the pivotal roles of teacher attributes and culture in shaping teacher-student relationship within Bhutanese higher education. Personality and culture significantly influence teacher-student relationships. Effective teachers possess a combination of qualities like enthusiasm, care, and approachability, which can transcend cultural boundaries while

also adapting to meet the diverse needs of students. These positive relationships are pivotal in creating inclusive and engaging learning environments, ensuring that all students feel respected, cared for, and supported in their educational journeys. As respect, care, and approachability, tend to foster positive connections with their students. Additionally, teachers who display passion and enthusiasm for their subjects can greatly influence student engagement and motivation, creating a vibrant and conducive learning environment. The Bhutanese culture strongly emphasizes respect, and holistic education, all of which shape the nature of student-teacher relationships. These relationships are characterized by mutual respect, a sense of mentorship, and a commitment to nurturing not only academic but also personal and ethical development in students. By understanding how personality and culture impact teacher-student relationship, the study offers a nuanced comprehension of teacher-student relationship. It recommends further research on the role gender plays in teacher-student relationships in higher education in Bhutan.

Disclosure statement

None provided.

Notes on contributors

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