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**Relationship Building as a Strategy on Adolescent Students' Behavior in an EFL
Classroom**

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Resumen

Esta investigación explora los efectos de la estrategia de construcción de relaciones en el comportamiento de los estudiantes adolescentes en un aula de Inglés como lengua extranjera. Además, responde a las preguntas sobre los factores reportados que favorecen las relaciones positivas entre profesor y estudiantes y las barreras que impiden formar dichas relaciones. Esta investigación bibliográfica exploratoria de 16 estudios empíricos examinó la estrategia con estudiantes adolescentes y profesores en diferentes contextos del Inglés como lengua extranjera. Los resultados de este análisis revelaron que los efectos de la estrategia de construcción de relaciones en el comportamiento de los estudiantes adolescentes fueron positivos. Además, se encontró que sólo los factores relacionados con las acciones, actitudes y decisiones de los maestros en el aula facilitan el desarrollo de relaciones positivas.

De manera similar, los hallazgos mostraron que todas las barreras reportadas dependían del maestro; de hecho, la falta o la contradicción a los factores reportados se consideran barreras. Se formulan recomendaciones para futuras investigaciones sobre la estrategia de creación de relaciones y algunas consecuencias prácticas.

Palabras clave: Estrategia de construcción de relaciones. Estudiantes adolescentes. Aula de inglés como lengua extranjera. Comportamiento.



Abstract

This research explores the effects of the relationship-building strategy on adolescent students' behavior in an EFL classroom. Furthermore, it answers the questions regarding the reported factors that favor positive teacher-students' relationships and the barriers that prevented them. This exploratory bibliographic research of 16 empirical studies examined the strategy with adolescent students and teachers in different EFL contexts. The results of this analysis revealed that the effects of the relationship-building strategy on adolescent students' behavior were all positive. Furthermore, it was found that only factors related to the actions, attitudes, and decisions of teachers in the classroom facilitate the development of positive relationships. Similarly, the findings showed that all the reported barriers depended on the teacher; in fact, the lack or the contradiction to the reported factors are considered barriers. Recommendations for future research on relationship building strategy and some practical implications are provided.

Keywords: Relationship-building strategy. Adolescent students. EFL classroom. Behavior.



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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'R. Tapia', written over a horizontal line.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my beloved husband, Juan; and my beautiful daughter, Amy, who offered me unconditional love and support in the good and rough times of my university career.

They are my motivation and my strength; every goal I achieve will also be theirs.

To my parents, who always believed in me. Their love and support encouraged me to continue my studies and drove me to always do my best.



Introduction

The adolescent students' behavior is an essential part for the well-functioning of every educational classroom. Therefore, the teachers' desire to seek discipline strategies that elicit the students' cooperative behavior is logical (Gregory and Ripski, 2008). Among the existing disciplinary strategies, many teachers and educational institutions have chosen to integrate exclusionary and punitive disciplinary practices in order to control the students' behavior in the classroom. However, researchers have demonstrated that these practices are ineffective in reducing disruptive behaviors among adolescent students and, at the same time, they have a long-term and negative impact on students' lives (Anyon et al., 2018). Accordingly, several studies have been carried out in order to find discipline strategies that promote positive behavior within the classroom (Milkman & Wanberg, 2012; Macías & Sanchez, 2015; Inman, 2019). Among the strategies found, the relationship-building strategy was chosen to be analyzed. The present study thus attempts to identify both teachers' and pupils' perceptions on the effects of the relationship-building strategy with adolescent students' behavior in EFL classrooms. In addition, it aims to present the possible factors which could be helpful for teachers for the building of such relationships. It also sheds some light on the role of teachers and how they can act as barriers to the development of teacher-student relationships. For this paper, the following questions were addressed.

1. What are the effects that the relationship building strategy has on adolescent students' behavior in an EFL classroom?
2. What are the reported factors that contribute to creating a positive relationship between teachers and adolescent students in an EFL classroom?
3. What are the reported barriers teachers face when building a positive relationship with adolescent students in an EFL classroom?

This research synthesis presents six chapters. The first chapter is the description of the research which includes the background, the statement of the problem, the rationale, the research questions and the objectives. Then the theoretical framework is the second chapter which consists of key concepts and definitions that help to understand some terms included in the research. The third chapter is a literature review about the topic. Moreover, the fourth chapter describes how the research synthesis was carried out and the inclusion criteria to select the studies.



Chapter five contains the analysis of the gathered studies obtained from a deep research. Finally, the conclusions and recommendations are both placed in the fifth chapter.



CHAPTER I

1. Description of the Research

1.1. Background

Discipline in schools is an issue that teachers are always concerned about as dealing with student behavior is a real challenge. Undoubtedly many teachers would like to have more control over this issue, not only to facilitate the management of the classroom, but also to prevent student behavior from affecting the student learning (Sun & Shek, 2012). Dealing with students' behavior is part of the great challenge of being a teacher since it is impossible to have a one size fits all discipline strategy that will work successfully. The decision on how to manage classroom discipline has to be made by teachers based on their experience and taking into account their students' characteristics and the context in which they teach.

Although there are several strategies that teachers could choose from such as setting classroom rules, punishment system, affective strategies like being positive, increasing the volume to get attention, giving no punishment, among other (Debreli and Ishanova, 2019), studies have shown that a high percentage of teachers use punishment and reprimand with the main purposes of deterrence and control (Lewis, Romi, Qui, & Katz, 2005), particularly when dealing with severely disruptive misbehavior. However, most of these strategies do not have the result that teachers expect as can be seen in a research carried out by Ali, Dada, Isiaka and Salmon (2014) who explained that strategies such as expulsion, corporal punishment, reprimands, verbal blows, etc. are not effective strategies to reduce students' misbehavior. Currently in Ecuador, some of the strategies mentioned above are considered a type of violence and teachers cannot use any type of violence with their students under any circumstances according to the Organic Law of Intercultural Education (LOEI). Little and Akin-Little (2008) propose effective classroom discipline and management which includes strategies that are "not merely responding effectively when problems occur, but also preventing problems from occurring by creating environments that encourage learning and appropriate behavior" (p. 227). Aldrup, Klusmann, Lüdtke, Göllner and Trautwein (2018), for instance, believe that relationship building between educators and students is a strategy that plays a positive role in students' behavior. García-Moya, Moreno and Brooks (2019) similarly



perceive relationship building as an important strategy to achieve the teachers' goals since it fosters learning and can help reduce problem behavior. However, despite being convinced of the benefits of having positive relationships with students, teachers in this study clearly saw relationship building as a double-edged sword. Therefore, they considered that some boundaries around these relationships should be established to maintain professionalism.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The issue of discipline in schools is a problematic factor for many teachers all over the world. Back in history, in Ecuador classes were part of a military indoctrination where discipline was the most important concern. Therefore, the use of punishment was allowed to manage students' misbehavior, causing psychological and bodily harm in some cases (Villafuerte, Perez, Boyes, Mena, Pinoargote, Riera & Delgado, 2018). However, with the new educational reforms in Ecuador, teachers must not react by shouting with the purpose of intimidating their students as a way to control students' behavior because it is considered emotional abuse (Jiménez, 2018, p. 61), and causing physical harm to students by punishment is even worse.

Currently, there are many disciplinary strategies available for teachers, and deciding which one to use becomes a real challenge due to certain factors that should be considered. Some of these factors are school policies to manage students' discipline, the type and cause of the indiscipline act, the students' psychological state (Ali et al. 2014), and teachers' perceptions of the cause of students' behavior, among others. (Hart and DiPerna, 2016). However, the main issue around this decision is related to the differences that exist between students because considering that everyone is different and looking for a single discipline strategy that works effectively with all students at all levels to elicit a desirable behavior appears to be unrealistic. Thus, previous research has examined discipline strategies to deal with students' behavior in class that are especially effective in children (Phelan, 2010), and some other researchers identified discipline strategies that work better with adolescents (De Laet et al., 2016). These studies showed the benefits and risks when implementing discipline strategies in a general area of teaching. However, there are other researchers who have been working on identifying discipline strategies used specifically in EFL classrooms (Debreli and Ishanova, 2019; Macías and Sanchez, 2015; Yazdanmehr and Akbari, 2015). Among these authors' findings, relationship building with students was identified as a



discipline strategy to be investigated in depth. The importance of relationship building has already been analyzed by many researchers (Sun, 2015; Lilja and Claesson, 2018; Inman, 2019), but it is also crucial to know about the influence of this strategy on adolescent students' behavior as well as the obstacles a teacher would have to go through when using this discipline strategy.

1.3. Justification

There is an ongoing debate on effective discipline strategies in schools. Some teachers consider school to be a rule-based context; therefore, teachers must be strict in setting disciplinary rules to avoid disciplinary problems (Sun, 2015). However, other researchers agree that traditional forms of discipline which involve the demand for obedience are closer to the authoritarian end and are no longer reliable. Notwithstanding, teachers agree on the fact that the “acts of indiscipline, if education providers and consumers allow them to incubate in the current favorable conditions, could incubate a monster that will be difficult to exterminate” (Ali et al. 2014, p. 256). This fact is one of the reasons why it is important to consider a strategy that will help to manage student behavior early.

As a personal experience, in the context of Ecuador, when a pre-service teacher begins to face a real classroom where not all students behave as expected, it is difficult to make a decision about which discipline strategy is more effective with each student. The teacher has to take into account mainly the students' age because it is not the same to deal with adolescents than with children. For that reason, it is necessary to research a discipline strategy specifically for EFL classrooms and with a specific age. It should be noted that EFL classrooms themselves are quite similar to general education classrooms; notwithstanding, there are a few characteristics that are significantly associated with EFL classrooms. One of these characteristics is using a language that is not the student's mother tongue, English in this case. Not using this target language in an EFL classroom, when the teacher has requested students to do so, can be considered a type of student misbehavior (Debreli & Ishanova, 2019) while in a general classroom considering the use of the mother tongue as a type of misconduct would not make much sense. Therefore, it is important to know these aspects in advance to be prepared when facing a real classroom because the theories that were analyzed and learned during instruction are only a small component of the great



challenge of being a teacher, and the need to be aware of the discipline strategies that can help teachers make decisions when dealing with student behavior are out of the question.

Among the currently existing discipline strategies in an EFL classroom, the importance of building relationships with students is highlighted (Anyon et al., 2018). Research shows a direct impact between a positive emotional climate in the classroom and less disruptive behavior (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson & Salovey, 2011), and that explains why several investigations about building relationships between teachers and students as a discipline strategy have been done. Nevertheless, the objective of the present study is to analyze the effect of relationship-building strategy on adolescents' behavior in an EFL classroom. It also aimed to discover if there are factors that can contribute to creating this relationship between teachers and students, and to identifying the existence of barriers or difficulties for teachers when they try to create such relationships. This study should be of interest to EFL teachers interested in learning about relationship building and its implications on adolescent students' behavior in the hope that teachers will find a guide to facilitate decision-making if they want to implement such a discipline strategy in a classroom.

1.4. Research Questions

After analyzing the relevant literature in the chosen field for this synthesis, the following questions have risen.

1. What are the effects that the relationship building strategy has on adolescent students' behavior in an EFL classroom?
2. What are the reported factors that contribute to creating a positive relationship between teachers and adolescent students in an EFL classroom?
3. What are the reported barriers teachers face when building a positive relationship with adolescent students in an EFL classroom?

1.5. Objectives

I will analyze already existing published research in order to achieve the following objectives.



1.5.1. General Objective

To analyze the effects that the relationship building strategy has on adolescent students' behavior in an EFL classroom.

1.5.2. Specific Objectives

- To determine the factors that can contribute to creating a positive relationship between teachers and adolescent students in an EFL classroom.
- To identify barriers teachers face when building a positive relationship with adolescent students in an EFL classroom.



CHAPTER II

2. Theoretical Framework

Classroom disruptive behaviors are one of the main challenges for teachers (Demir, 2009; Pane, 2010). Student teacher trainees face a great challenge when they encounter a real classroom, especially when they lack knowledge regarding classroom discipline. It is the teacher training educational institutions' responsibility to guide student teachers into discovering strategies to deal with classroom management (Macías and Sánchez, 2015). With the intention of elucidating these issues, relevant concepts for the present research synthesis will be described including adolescence and behavior, classroom discipline, and relationship building as a discipline strategy. Besides, considering the implication of positive discipline regarding the relationship building as a discipline strategy, teaching models as the problem-posing education (Freire, 1993) and the pedagogical theory of Social Learning and Students' Behavior (Bandura, 1977) are analyzed.

2.1. Adolescence

According to Oxford Learner's Dictionary (2000), adolescence is "the time in a person's life when he or she develops from a child into an adult". Similarly, the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (1999) defines adolescence as "the period from puberty to maturity terminating legally at the age of majority." Nevertheless, the American Psychological Association (2002) directed that there is not a standard definition of adolescent since this term could be defined regarding factors as physical, social, and cognitive development as well as age that is generally around 10 to 18 years old.

One of the famous definitions of the term 'adolescence' was given by the American psychologist and educator Granville Hall (1904, cited in Arnett 1999) who stated that adolescence is a time of storm and stress characterized by this tendency to question and contradict parents, in their mood disorders and in their propensity for reckless and antisocial behavior. Later and contrary to Hall's assumption, Arnett (1999) explains that storm and stress time is not something universal, which means that not all adolescents will experience it because of individual differences; despite that, he agrees that this period of storm and stress occurs more frequently during adolescence than in other ages.



2.2. Adolescents' Behavior

Describing the typical behavior of adolescents is quite complex due to the variation that exists between individuals and their customs. Milkman and Wanberg (2012) affirm that adolescence is like a passage to adulthood, which once completed, results in biological maturity and developed mental capacities to face adult life. However, the authors mention that it is possible to delineate some characteristics of adolescent behavior that could be considered normal.

During the process of physical development in adolescence, some regions of the brain grow which cause emotional and cognitive changes, as well as shifts in social perspectives and abilities. One of these changes is the increase of adolescents' autonomy from their parents and caregivers, that is a normal phase in all individuals. This process of emotional autonomy from the parents includes some conflict with them and at the same time is associated with identification with people outside the family as friends and especially people of the opposite sex (Freud, 1946). Due to increased autonomy in adolescence, sometimes it seems like they are not affected by their parents or adults' values, actions, and behaviors; however, the truth is that they are significantly influenced and that is why adults should be appropriate models to be followed. In addition to being a positive role model, it is important for parents and other adult authorities in adolescents' lives to point out the positive aspects of adolescents' personalities and show admiration for them in order to develop a healthy self-image (Milkman and Wanberg, 2012). The importance of developing a positive self-image lies in the correlation that exists between adolescents who have problems developing that stable self-image and their disturbed relationships with peers and family, mood disorders such as depression, and also risk of acting-out behaviors.

The practice of risky behaviors, which are potentially harmful activities for oneself or for others, are defining characteristics of adolescence that serve as alternative means of affirming adulthood. However, it should be stressed that defined risk behaviors vary according to age and place because what is considered as risky behavior in one place or age can be accepted in another. For example, sexual activity during adolescence is categorized as a risky behavior due to its possible negative outcomes as sexually transmitted diseases, or premature pregnancies. On the contrary, sexual activity during adulthood does not have the same categorization since it is considered normal (Haydon, McRee and Halpern, 2011). Moreover, sometimes it is forgotten that



adolescents need adults who can guide, teach and protect them on the road to adulthood (APA, 2002) so it is necessary for parents and teachers to always have discussions about safe lifestyles and to firm limits because of this risk-taking feature of adolescence. Despite the fact that many teens may find setting limits unpleasant, it can also be seen as a show of love and support for them; therefore, this practice should not be omitted (Milkman and Wanberg, 2012).

2.3. Adolescents' Behavior and its Management in the Classroom

The behavior of adolescents in the classroom is a response to the concepts they hold about the educational environment; in other words, it is a result of the stimuli occurring in the adolescent's surroundings (Skinner, 1971). When teens have ideas and emotions about the classroom learning environment that match their expectations, they will feel comfortable and their behavior will be appropriate. On the contrary, they will feel uncomfortable when their concepts are not met and they will use behavior as a means to change the classroom environment until it matches their concepts or expectations. This is when teachers struggle with a runaway class and deciding on a healthy coping strategy to deal with the behavior is really important to notice a real change in student behavior. Generally, most behavior management focuses on punishment, reflecting teachers' frustration at not being able to involve students in the school curriculum. These practices are, for example, isolation, suspension, impositions, withdrawal of kindness and approval, desperate denunciations and the latest; expulsion from the school community that, instead of helping to change students' anti-learning behavior, hurts them and contributes to them continuing to develop behaviors in class to challenge adults, behaviors that are nothing more than a reflection of their frustration. Therefore, the role of schools is to create conditions in which the students are the ones who want to change their behavior by themselves and not only to put a better behavior in the student, especially where it does not exist (Joseph, 2010).

2.4. Social Learning Theory and Students' Behavior

Albert Bandura, a Canadian-American psychologist proposed the Social Learning Theory (1977) in which he emphasizes that new behaviors can be acquired by observing and imitating the behavior of other individuals. The educational implications of Social Learning Theory can help teachers increase desirable students' behavior through the use of positive role models. It means



that students by observing their role models, their teachers in this case, at a later time can imitate the teacher's behavior, attitudes, and emotional reactions that they observed. Bandura (1977) proposed, in addition to observation, four conditions that are necessary in order to learn observable behaviors which are: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation. First, the teacher's behavior must capture the student's attention; then this behavior must be remembered in order to reproduce it later, and finally, the student must have the desire or must be motivated enough to imitate the model behavior.

2.5. Teacher-Students Relationships

Teachers-students' relationship should be democratic, egalitarian and respectful according to Paulo Freire, a Brazilian educationalist who developed the Problem-Posing Education method in 1996. His purpose was to guide educators in changing the traditional educational model of teaching for one where critical thinking is emphasized, and students feel liberated and not only imposed with content transferred by the teacher. This approach perceives teachers and students as equals and denies the typical hierarchy that exists between them. Teachers must be partners with their students; they must trust their students' creative power. In this way, education is characterized by communication in which dialogues allow a relevant exchange in the classroom that benefits both teacher and students. Educational dialogue is a necessary tool when deciding on the knowledge to be learned since students also have a voice in the classroom. Furthermore, Freire (1996) believed that although teachers and students are not equal in the professional sphere, both have the same democratic position in the classroom. The directive position that teachers have in educational settings cannot be denied, but it should not be abused either. In other words, teachers' authority should not become authoritarian since both teachers and students share the same democratic position. At last, Problem-Posing Education evokes educators to remain humbled by the idea that their own knowledge is limited and should be relearned through interaction with their students.

2.6. Relationship-Building as a Discipline Strategy

Discipline is defined as obeying the rules, controlling yourself, and obeying the social order (Basaran, as cited in Sadik Yalcin, 2018). Classroom discipline management instead, refers to



control time and behavior of students (Fredrick, Deitz, Bryceland, & Hummel, 2000) which is one of the most important functions of teachers, in addition to creating a positive and supportive environment based on well-organized and planned classroom management (Kayalar et al., 2017).

Relationship building is a discipline strategy that seeks for teachers to approach students as individuals and try to learn something about them that is not always academic in nature, in this way they connect with students in a positive way achieving students' cooperation with the rules and assignments in the classroom and also it is possible to mitigate conflicts. According to the attachment theory model by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth (1958), positive interactions between the teacher and students will develop a positive relationship; this in turn, promotes a safe learning environment for students. Consequently, this environment allows students to take risks to participate in classroom activities, leading to better academic performance and a more organized class for teachers, as students are engaged in activities rather than causing interruptions. Thus, when students feel that the teacher cares for them and really wants the best, when they feel the teacher's affection and concern for the student as a person, then the student will respond in the same way (Gregory & Ripski, 2008). The quality of the relationship between the teacher and the adolescent is a key factor in the student's decision to obey the teacher's orders (Laupa, Turiel & Cowan, 1995).



CHAPTER III

3. Literature Review

Teachers can have different doubts regarding the relationship-building strategy and its effects on adolescent students' behavior. The following chapter; therefore, provides a brief review of the relevant literature on the relationship-building strategy for the purpose of answering the research questions and identifying possible research gaps. This chapter is organized as follows: relationship-building strategy in EFL classrooms, adolescent student's behavior in an EFL classroom, positive teacher-student relationship, its factors and barriers and finally the effects of the relationship-building strategy..

3.1. Relationship-Building Strategy in EFL Classrooms

Researchers have paid attention to the importance of building teacher-student relationships in the field of teaching, which is why several studies have been carried out focusing on different approaches. One of them is the importance of the teacher-student relationship in the EFL classroom. For instance, Luz (2015) conducted a study at Bridgewater State University, in which 50 EFL teachers and students were involved in an open-ended questionnaire and interviews. In the case of teachers, they had to respond if they held supportive relationships with their students and the results revealed that 86% of the participant teachers assure to always try to hold a supportive relationship with students. However, according to students' responses only 42% of them reported holding a supportive relationship with their teachers. Although these contradictory results lead us to the idea that perceptions of the relationship-building strategy differ between teachers and students, the importance of this strategy in the classroom is indisputable. This is how Park (2016) mentions it in his research which gathers information on integrating rapport-building into language instruction. The author declared that language classrooms are social spaces in which teachers and students build relationships beside knowledge. Further, teachers must work hard in order to establish a good relationship with their students, and it must be done from the very first class and must continue to do so (Zunic-Rizvic & Dubravac, 2017).

Syahabuddin, Fhonna and Maghfirah (2020) carried out a study whose purpose aims at investigating the impact of relationships toward the teaching-learning process. The analysis was



carried out with 43 EFL junior high school students and 14 English teachers in Aceh, Indonesia. In the case of the students, a closed questionnaire was applied while a semi-structured interview was used for the teachers. The results showed that a high percentage of students had a positive relationship with their English teachers in the classroom; thus, the correlations of the teacher-student relationship and the teaching-learning process were also high. Therefore, the author concluded that the teacher-student relationship influenced the teaching-learning process at the school. Moreover, according to students' opinion a good teacher-student relationship is characterized by a mutual understanding between teachers and students, by teachers who have good communication with their students and who also consider them as their friends.

3.2. Adolescent Student's Behavior in the EFL classroom

Adolescent students are at a stage in life that is so complicated that it is difficult to even find a standard definition for the word "adolescence" as described in the previous chapter. Therefore, understanding their behavior in the classroom results in a much more complicated issue. In addition to physical changes, such as brain development, which have been shown to influence the behavior of adolescent students (Milkman & Wanberg, 2012), environmental factors also influence the development of specific behaviors (Bandura, 1977). In this sense, the student who manifests lack of discipline should be seen as someone who needs guidance, good role models, attention, psychological help and the acquisition of social and emotional skills to manifest positive behavior, which represents a responsibility that lies in the hands of educators and all members of the educational community (Belle, 2017).

In this sense, AlDhafiri (2015) conducted a study at two secondary high schools in Eastern Riyadh in Saudi Arabia in which they applied a questionnaire directed to 200 EFL students concerning the role that interpersonal teacher's behavior plays in enhancing Saudi student outcomes. The results of this study revealed that there is a significant impact of teacher behavior on students; hence, it is suggested that teachers should encourage communication, show respect for their students, and build mutual understanding in the classroom. Similar results were presented in the study carried out by Lamraoui and Zerrouki (2016) which emphasizes that teachers should be good models for their students by exhibiting positive behavior in class and by supporting their pupils at any moment since the results of their study reveal that one of the cause of adolescent



students' misbehavior in a secondary school in Algeria was teachers' unacceptable behaviors. Additionally, the researchers recommend that when teachers feel the need to change a student's behavior, they must first understand such behavior and the cause of such behavior (Hoque, 2016) to learn how teachers should react appropriately (Lamraoui & Zerrouki, 2016).

3.3. Positive Teacher-Student Relationship

Positive relationships between teachers and students in the classroom are essential (Syahabuddin et al., 2020). In addition, it is worth mentioning that they greatly influence the success of the teaching-learning process since it motivates students in learning and also influences their confidence. According to these authors, some problems are likely to arise if the teacher-student relationship is poor in the classroom. These problems are as follows: disruption of the teaching and learning process, decreased enthusiasm of the students, and finally, lower respect of the student towards the teacher. Consequently, several studies have been conducted to identify some factors that can help teachers in the process of establishing positive relationships with students.

3.4. Factors

3.4.1. Demonstrating Caring

The teacher-student relationship can be built quickly in some classrooms within a week or two, while in other classrooms teachers may need even a year (Sun, 2015). For that reason, researchers identified many factors that can be used for teachers to set up positive relationships with pupils. One of them is demonstrating caring toward the learners and their opinions, ideas, interests, etc. (Bouras & Keskes, 2014; Luz, 2015; Park, 2016, Zarei et al., 2019). According to Park (2016), teachers show affection towards their students when they establish a conversation in which they address information about the students' welfare inside and outside the classroom, try to find out if everything is understood during the lesson, help them to perform better in class providing interesting materials (Luz, 2015), and the amount of immediacy of the teacher with his student is significant (Zarei et al., 2019).



3.4.2. Respect

Bouras and Keskes (2014) in their study claimed that respect of the teacher towards the student is another relevant factor. The participants in this study were 50 high school students of English as a foreign language in Turkey. They were provided with a closed-end questionnaire; in which they were asked to identify the teaching practices that are perceived as the most motivating from the students' perspective. The results revealed that being a respectful teacher with students received the highest average, so it can be concluded that students should be considered as important people who deserve respect. In addition, students believe that teachers should not have any problem with this factor since it does not require much effort to put it into practice. One of the ways to respect students is to listen to their ideas, thank them for sharing their opinions with the teacher using words of praise, value what students say and show empathy towards their problems (Bouras & Keskes, 2014; AlDhafiri, 2015). As a result, these practices promote mutual understanding and harmonious relationship between teacher and students, contribute to build a positive EFL class environment, and enhance students' confidence to continue participating in classes (Sulu, 2015; Zarei et al., 2019).

3.4.3. Teachers' positive attitudes and communication with students.

The study carried out by Wei, Zhou, Barber and Brok (2015) identified two more factors that enhance the teacher-student relationship in the classroom. These factors are teachers' positive attitudes and communication with students. A sample of 823 EFL Chinese students from grade 7-10 were the subject of this study. They answered a questionnaire about teacher and class characteristics and how they affect students' perceptions of teacher influence and proximity. The findings revealed that students prefer a more positive EFL classroom environment with leading, helpful, friendly and understanding teachers. In addition, other positive attitudes include showing confidence in the ability of students, supporting them according to their needs (Luz, 2015; Lamraoui and Zerrouki, 2016), admitting teachers' mistakes and ignorance (Hoque, 2016), and avoiding any comment or action that ends in discrimination (Nouri, 2015). In general, it is important to point out that researchers agree on the importance of the attitudes and behavior of teachers since these attitudes should always serve as role models for their students. In regard to communication, English teachers in China were more dominant in their communication process



and at the same time more cooperative with their students. In the same perspective of communication, Park (2016) stated that when teachers maintain a balance between task-oriented conversation and informal conversation, they can achieve both teaching and relationship building. Likewise, in the study conducted by Zarie et al. (2019), one of the participants considered that it is the teacher's duty to involve all students in class discussions to enhance this process of communication. Additionally, it was mentioned that the attitude of teachers towards the subject to be discussed is very important and that the teacher should choose the subjects that the majority had approved. This author suggested teachers to consciously prevent being the only one who speaks in the class and give the students the opportunity to talk and listen more. In this way, students will have the opportunity to complain, ask for help, express their views on class rules, etc. (Hoque, 2016); in other words, let the students have a voice in the classroom (Luz, 2015). Listening to students' opinions is beneficial to build mutual understanding in the classroom (AlDhafiri, 2015) and to foster respect and positive attitudes between teachers and students (Lamraoui and Zerrouki, 2016). On the contrary, students would get bored and not listen when teachers are the only speakers in the classroom; as a result, they would withdraw and not participate (Zarei and Ahanga, 2019).

3.4.4. Calling students' names

In 2014, Bouras and Keskes investigated the perspectives of teachers and students on the most motivating characteristics of teachers and found that, based on the perspectives of teachers, calling students' names was a motivating practice to familiarize students with the classroom atmosphere, to break the ice and to make learners more confident to participate in class. The authors affirmed that this action makes students feel important, cared, valued, and appreciated by the teacher. Likewise, in relation to the positive effects of this technique, Hoque (2016) stated that when teachers learn the names of their students and use them during class, it helps students to see that their teachers are interested in them as well as in their learning and success. Zarei, Saeidi and Ahangari (2019) explored the factors to develop a positive relationship and they found that addressing students by the first name was a strategy to express immediacy towards the students. However, this practice was not very common in Iranian educational environment because teachers need to be conscious of their student's age beforehand. Additionally, the results revealed that older students prefer to be called by their first name because they are comfortable with this practice.



3.4.5. Positive non-verbal communication and feedback

Furthermore, another reported factor identified in the research studies was providing positive non-verbal communication. Examples include: smiling, laughing, or nodding for the purpose of creating an informal interaction with students (Park, 2016; Hoque, 2016), and making eye contact with them. This contact is necessary to encourage students' participation and involvement in the class, and as an effective way to provide positive feedback (Zarei et al., 2019). In fact, many researchers had recognized feedback as positive as another factor that helps teachers in the way of building their interpersonal relationships with students (Park, 2016; Hoque, 2016). In the analysis of teacher–student interactions (Park, 2016), the researchers showed that the way teachers correct their students was one of the strategies to build rapport. He specified that providing feedback could be a difficult interactional moment; however, teachers can turn that moment into an opportunity to have a comfortable class environment by offering compliments related to the positive aspects of students' contribution. Furthermore, according to the study led by Zunic-Rizvic, Lejla, Dubravac and Vildana (2017), the feedback from teacher to student should always be positive and supportive with constructive criticism (Ma, Du, Hau & Liu, 2018) while negative feedback has to be avoided. Furthermore, Zarei et al. (2019) believed that the main objective of feedback, especially in oral interaction, is to avoid interrupting the student while speaking unless the error is extremely serious. The teachers surveyed also stated that they try to get students to correct themselves or wait a while so they can finish the sentence. In summary, most of the teachers in this research agree on indirect feedback or promoting self-correction.

3.4.6. Providing interesting materials and methodology

In addition to the fact that positive feedback was identified to promote positive relationships between teachers and students (Zarei et al., 2019), the importance of the educational materials and how they affect the students' willingness to participate in class was also highlighted. The topics that are presented by teachers are generally related only to the information that comes from books and does not fit with the life and interests of the students. Therefore, teachers should provide interesting and varied materials to the class such as creative and artistic activities, book works, sketches, real world scenarios, music, and debates, among others to challenge the students and make them feel successful (Hoque, 2016). Also, according to the students' opinion in the study



carried out by Luz (2015), providing interesting and relevant materials is also a way of demonstrating the support and care of teachers towards students. In addition, Luz (2015) also highlighted that the materials used must be adapted to the cultural background of the students, so that in this way they feel more willing to communicate with their peers and participate more in the class, which helps to break down their language barriers or fears. Furthermore, another way to involve students in the classroom to share their opinions and favor teacher-student interactions are the teaching methods used by teachers. Bouras and Keskes (2014) in their research study concluded that teachers should see the learning process from the students' perspective to identify what methodologies they really need to improve their motivation and learn more effectively. Nouri (2015) indicated that the methodologies used by teachers must be innovative and challenging to directly influence students' performance, but in the case of low-level students, teachers must give them more time to ensure that they can participate in the learning process effectively.

3.4.7. Incorporating story-telling and humor into lessons

Another way to establish and maintain the teacher-student relationship is to engage students in informal conversations where teachers can share information about their personal preferences and their family so that students can feel interested in the teacher as a person to bridge the gap that exists between them. Moreover, informal conversations make students feel more connected and free to interact with the teacher (Luz, 2015), and at the same time, it exposes students to a more informal linguistic input on the target language (Park, 2016). Additionally, Hoque (2016) suggested teachers relate the content of their lessons to students' interests using examples, illustrations, anecdotes and stories. Zarei et al. (2019) similarly concluded that bringing personal life and experiences to the classroom increases learners' enthusiasm to share their own experiences, interests or problems. In addition, these researchers identified another factor called humor, which is generated by the teacher as a relevant motivational strategy used to relieve tension in the classroom, encourage participation in a relaxing learning environment and avoid boredom (Lamraoui & Zerrouki, 2016; Hoque, 2016). However, these researchers agree on the importance of using the right amount of humor, or even avoiding its use in some classes with too many noisy students. In these classes the teachers prefer to be a little more serious in order to control their students.



3.5. Barriers

Just as there are factors that promote the creation of relationships between teachers and students, there are also barriers or obstacles that prevent creating these relationships. Among these barriers, Bouras and Kenses (2014) found that teachers who are not close enough to their students and do not satisfy their needs won't be able to foster positive relationships in class. Furthermore, a study was carried out by Luz (2015) on the importance of caring teachers who try to establish a good relationship within the classroom. The participating students, who reported having a bad relationship with their teachers, revealed that they do not feel free to ask them questions because teachers are the only ones who have a voice in the classroom, which could possibly depend on the culture in which teachers are in a higher hierarchy. Another reason for this problem arises in the research by Zarei et al., (2019) which explains that teachers prefer to speak more than their students in the classroom as a class management strategy to prevent time problems; therefore, they allow minimal talking participation from some of their students. In the end, teachers become mere transmitters of information and their relationship with students becomes unequal. Besides, another problem that increases this unbalanced relationship is the unfair treatment that some teachers give to students, which causes them to become distant and reticent with the teachers and lose trust in them. The results of this research showed that in addition to the actions of teachers such as being the only speaker in the classroom or their unfair treatment, it also came to light that teachers' lack of competence and ignorance of disruption (Lamraoui & Zerrouki, 2016) can be obstacles to the relationship-building strategy. Moreover, one of the participants in Zaries' study mentioned "one day I noticed the teacher was so energetic, lively and the next day she looked tired and angry, then I didn't dare to speak. I preferred to keep quiet" (p. 6) which suggests the importance of teachers' attitudes. Therefore, if teachers manifest negative attitudes, these attitudes also negatively influence the students' attitudes and behavior, and the relationships they have with their teachers.

3.6. Effects of the Relationship-Building Strategy

Several studies have confirmed that the implementation of the relationship-building strategy has produced some effects on the behavior of adolescent students in the EFL context. As previously mentioned by Luz (2015), the relationship-building strategy is essential in the EFL classroom. Furthermore, she revealed that one of the effects of this strategy is that students tend to be more



interested in the learning process. Similarly, Ma, Du, Hau and Liu (2018) found a link between teacher-student relationship and academic achievement. In their research study, they used a large sample of students. In total, the participants were 11,036 students from 319 English classes among 30 schools in China. Through a questionnaire, the study examined the measures of the teacher-student relationship reported by the students. Thus, the results of these studies demonstrated that a positive teacher-student relationship characterized by caring teachers can help students to participate positively in learning, which will later benefit their learning outcomes. The more positive and supportive the teacher-student relationship is, the better the academic performance. Additionally, Zunic-Rizvic et al. (2017) emphasize that students may be inspired to learn not just at that time, but as a long-term condition, including learning the English language. Finally, Ma et al. (2018) recommended that schools may evaluate teachers' performance based on the students' perceptions concerning the perceived relationship that teachers have with them since it is vital to improve the process of education in the classroom environment (Hussein, 2014).

Going back to Luz' findings (2015), a different and important effect was identified. It is the reduction or control of misbehavior. The surveyed students declared that when they have positive relationships with teachers, they behave in a more positive way. Sun (2015) supports this section with his study conducted in secondary schools in Hong Kong with 12 EFL teachers who were interviewed with a self-constructed semi-structured interview guide to collect their responses. They were asked about the effective strategies used by teachers to control student behavior. A third of the teachers interviewed revealed that they identify a relationship-building strategy as an effective one, besides they exposed that it was quite effective for managing students' behavior. Moreover, compared to other strategies such as punishment, relationship-building characterized by patience and care facilitates long-term positive changes in behavior and attitudes of students.

In addition, the students participating in Luz's research (2015) explained that the relationship they have with their teacher has caused them to feel more encouraged to approach the teacher and ask for help and support when they need it, especially when this relationship is based on trust. Students also report that it is easier to communicate and interact with teachers with whom they have strong relationships as long as this relationship makes them feel comfortable.

The last effect identified in this research was an increase in positive peer interactions when at the same time pupils maintain a positive relationship with teachers. When students were asked



how important their relationship with their teacher was to classroom interaction, 83% of students answered that it was very important. Besides, the students commented that maintaining a solid relationship with the teacher gives them confidence and makes them feel comfortable interacting not only with the teacher but also with their classmates. In addition, they emphasize that this relationship makes communicating and interacting in the classroom much easier. In the same vein, Hoque (2016) in which he applied a questionnaire to 30 EFL students of second year of higher secondary classes in Bangladesh with the purpose of analyzing interactions between teachers and students and its success in EFL education pedagogy. As a result, the researcher suggested some techniques to encourage interaction between students. These consist of teachers using group work, encouraging class discussion, trying to brainstorm relevant topics, role playing, or whatever else they find useful.

As seen throughout this review of existing studies on the relationship building strategy, we can note that students and teachers agree that there is a direct relationship between this strategy and adolescent students' behavior. Furthermore, the effects of using this strategy have been clearly presented and labeled as positive. However, for this strategy to work correctly, teachers must know some reported factors that favor these relationships, but also what are the barriers that have been reported.



CHAPTER IV

4. Methodology

In order to analyze various sources for the following research synthesis, this study used an exploratory bibliographic research to “identify the state of the current knowledge, possible research gaps that may exist and opportunities for new contributions to the theme under study” (Villas, Macedo-Soares & Russo, 2008, p. 140). The information that was reviewed and that contributed to a better understanding of the topic was collected from various journals such as the following: *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*, *Journal of Classroom Interaction*, *Journal of School Psychology*, *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, *Psychology in the Schools*, *Journal of Language Teaching Research* among others, which were valuable for the current research synthesis. The articles were searched in different online databases including ProQuest, EBSCO host, Taylor & Francis Group, and Scholar Google. The key terms, and their combinations, that were used to find adequate information were the following: a) relationship-building strategy, b) adolescents students, c) EFL classroom, d) adolescents students’ behavior, e) effects, f) factors and g) barriers. Only articles published after 2014 in order to analyze information of the current situation were included. The participants of the studies to be analyzed were adolescent students (ages from 13 to 19 years old) without any kind of physical or mental disabilities, who belong to an English as a foreign language classroom (EFL) in which Relationship-Building has been used as a discipline strategy. Finally, regarding the design of the studies, qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods were included.



CHAPTER V

5. Analysis of the Data

The 16 studies analyzed for the purpose of this research study were divided in different categories in order to respond to the research questions. These were effects of the relationship building strategy on adolescent students' behavior, factors that favor positive teacher-student relationships and barriers for teachers when building relationships with adolescent students. These data were organized in tables with their corresponding description and discussion.

5.1. Effects of the Relationship-Building Strategy

This category provides information on the effects of the relationship building strategy that many students and teachers around the world have reported.

Table 1

Effects	Students feel confident and comfortable to approach the teacher	Increases students' willingness to learn or perform academic activities	Reduce disruptive behavior in class	Increases positive peer interactions
Authors				
Zunic-Rizvic and Dubravac (2017)		x		
Hussein (2014)		x		
Syahabuddin., Fhonna, and Maghfirah (2020)	x			
Ma, Du, Hau y Liu (2018)		x		



Sun (2015)			x	
AlDhafiri (2015)		x		
Wei, Zhou, Barber and Brok (2015)		x		
Luz (2015)	x	x	x	x
Lamraoui and Zerrouki (2016)			x	
Hoque (2016)				x
Zarei, Saeidi and Ahangari, (2019)	x			

There are four main effects reported in the studies and all of them are beneficial for adolescent students. Among the effects, it was found that students' safety and comfort to approach the teacher increased as well as the students' willingness to learn or perform academic activities, disruptive behavior in class reduced, and positive peer interactions improved. It is perceived that six out of 16 studies reported that the most recurrent effect of having a positive relationship with teachers was an increase in students' willingness to learn or perform academic activities. Ma, Du, Hau, and Liu (2018) affirmed that while the teacher-student relationship is better, so will the academic performance. This good relationship can inspire learning as a long-term condition as stated by Zunic-Rizvic et al. (2019). The other reported effects show that there is not only a direct relationship between the teacher-student relationship with behavior in the academic area, but also in other areas such as personal and group behavior.

5.2. Teachers factors

In this category it is summarized what should be the characteristics, actions and decisions of teachers in the classroom that will benefit the positive relationship between teacher and student.



Table 2

Factors Authors	Demonstrating caring	Treating students with respect	Having a positive attitude	Showing positive nonverbal communication	Recognizing students	Communicating with students
Park (2016)						x
Nouri, A. (2015)	x		x	x	x	
Zunic-Rizvic and Dubravac (2017)	x	x	x	x		
Bouras and Keskes (2014)	x	x			x	
Syahabuddin, Fhonna and	x	x	x		x	x



Maghfirah (2020)						
Ma, Du, Hau y Liu (2018)	x	x				
Sun (2015)	x		x	x		x
AlDhafiri (2015)		x	x			x
Sulu (2015)		x				
Luz (2015)	x		x			x
Lamraoui and Zerrouki (2016)						x
Hoque (2016)	x		x	x		



Zarei, Saeidi and Ahangari, (2019)	x	x	x	x		x
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Table 2 shows the factors that help teachers to create a good relationship with their students. Even though the studies have found that all of these factors have positive results on students and they were interrelated, they were separated into subcategories for the purpose of this analysis. Among the 16 studies, the factor demonstrating caring was found in nine studies that represent 56.25% of the total studies analyzed. Luz (2015) stated that teachers and students agree on the value of a supportive and caring relationship between them. The participants concluded that interaction is fundamental to the teacher-student relationship. Therefore, teachers who care about their students, care about their ideas, opinions, and lives inside and outside the classroom (Bouras and Keskes, 2014; Luz, 2015; Park, 2016, Zarei et al., 2019). In addition, Zunic-Rizvic and Dubravac (2017) mentioned that care can also be demonstrated by showing a true desire to help students learn. In this way, teachers are able to transmit knowledge more effectively, facilitate changes in students' attitudes and behaviors (Sun, 2015), and establish good relationships with students (Bouras and Keskes, 2014). The second most repeated factor was having a positive attitude with 43.75% of the studies. This quantity might lead to the belief that when it comes to teacher's qualities, teachers' enthusiasm, active presentation, and dynamism cause pupils to like him or her (Zarei, Saeidi, and Ahangari, 2019), and to engenders learners' talk (Zarei, Saeidi and Ahangari, 2019). Additionally, teachers who support learning while also supporting the student as a person would be more likely to establish positive teacher-student relationships (Ma et al., 2018).

5.3. Academic Factors

This category provides information on what should be the teachers' educational practice in the EFL classroom to create positive relationships with the students.



Table 3

Academic Factors Authors	Correcting students in a constructive way	Providing varied and interesting materials and methodologies	Incorporating storytelling into lessons	Incorporating humor into lessons
Park (2016)	x		x	x
Nouri, A. (2015)	x	x	x	x
Zunic-Rizvic and Dubravac (2017)	x	x	x	
Syhabuddin, Fhonna, and Magfirah (2020)			x	x
Al-Mahrooqi, Denman, Al-Siyabi and Al-Maamari (2015)		x		
Luz (2015)	x	x		
Hoque (2016)	x	x	x	x
Zarei, Saeidi and Ahangari (2019)	x	x	x	x

Table 3 shows academic factors useful for teachers to create positive relationships in the classroom. Of the 16 studies analyzed, six revealed that providing students with varied and



interesting materials and methodologies were reported as an effective tool for teachers in establishing a good relationship with their students. Zunic-Rizvic and Dubravac (2017) stated that each lesson must be carefully planned to offer students interesting activities concerning their individual needs. Similarly, Luz (2015) found that from the students' perspective, teachers who provide interesting material to the class are teachers who support their students. Additionally, Table 4 includes studies that highlight some other academic factors: correcting students constructively, incorporating storytelling in lessons, and incorporating humor into lessons that were also effective for EFL teachers. Each subcategory mentioned represents a relatively similar number of studies that reported these factors. It is worth mentioning that more than one category were found in the same study, but for analysis purposes, they were divided into different subcategories. Having several categories in the same study tells us that all of them are important. Consequently, they should be valued equally by EFL teachers.

5.4. Barriers

The category of barriers indicates which are the teachers' attitudes, actions, behaviors, and decisions that prevent them from building a relationship with students.

Table 4

Barriers	Limit the class to academic issues only.	Practice coercive authority or dominant behaviors	Show little attention or consideration towards students	Exhibit negative attitudes or behavior
Authors				
Park (2016)	X			
Bouras and Keskes (2014)	X			x



Syahabuddin., Fhonna, and Maghfirah (2020)			x	x
AlDhafiri (2015)		x		
Luz (2015)	X			
Lamraoui and Zerrouki (2016)				x
Hoque (2016)		x	x	
Zarei, Saeidi and Ahangari, (2019)		x	x	x

Table 4 portrays the reported barriers or problems that EFL teachers had faced when trying to create a positive relationship with adolescent students. In the studies analyzed, all the barriers reported were only related to the teacher's attitudes, behaviors, and actions. Therefore, teachers who limit themselves to academic problems only, practice coercive authority or dominant behavior, those who do not care or consider students or have negative attitudes will not be able to build a positive relationship with their students. The results from Table 4 show that in three studies, the participants affirmed that there are teachers who only limit their classes to academic issues and not to building rapport with students. In the study of Zarei, Saeidi and Ahangari (2019), one of the participating teachers reported that due to the accepted rules of intimacy between teachers and students in Iran, they prefer to keep their distance from their students. Therefore, due to this cultural peculiarity, students do not usually expect this proximity from teachers. Otherwise, Park (2016) declared that the language classroom is a social space in which teachers and students not only build knowledge but also establish relationships and teachers should accomplish both teaching and rapport-building.

In conclusion, the results of this analysis suggest the implementation of a relationship-building strategy in English as a foreign language classrooms with adolescent students based on



the positive effects reported in different contexts. Additionally, the analysis provides a guideline for teachers on the factors to take into account to favor relationships such as showing affection, being respectful with each student, having positive attitudes, among others. Finally, the role of teachers' actions and attitudes in the classroom was proven to be a direct influence on students' behavior both positively and negatively.



CHAPTER VI

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1. Conclusions

This study aimed to investigate the effects that the relationship-building strategy had on the behavior of adolescent students in an EFL classroom through the analysis of 16 empirical studies that reported the factors that helped teachers to cultivate a positive relationship with their students and the barriers that prevented them from developing such rapport. This research topic was considered of particular importance because as mentioned by Zunic-Rizvic and Dubravac (2017) very little attention has been paid to relationship management in the English as a foreign language classroom.

The results of this analysis revealed that the relationship building strategy has positive effects on students' behavior. This assumption is presented because the effects that were reported in the studies after that the relationship-building strategy was applied showed reduction of disruptive behavior in class, rise safety and comfort for students to approach the teacher, increase in positive interactions with peers, predisposition to follow teachers' directions, and willingness to learn or perform academic activities. Bandura's (1977) theory corroborates one of the findings on the effects of the aforementioned relationship building strategy, which suggests that it reduces the students' disruptive behavior. Lamraoui and Zerrouki (2016) in their research study affirmed that teacher's actions are also the cause of students' misbehavior since they are the elders and the leaders of the classroom which students are supposed to follow.

Paulo Freire (1993) and his teaching model Problem-Posing Education which stresses the importance of treating students with respect also fits with the reported factors that helped teachers to establish positive relationships with their students. Based on the analysis and its results, only factors related to the attitudes, actions, and decisions of teachers in the classroom determine the success or failure of the teachers' relationship with their students. Teachers who respect and recognize their students, demonstrate caring, have encouraging attitudes in the classroom, display



positive non-verbal communication such as a smile, communicate their opinions effectively, and listen to students' opinions are more likely to cultivate positive relationships with students. Regarding the academic aspect, correcting students in a constructive way, providing students with varied and interesting materials and methodologies, and incorporating storytelling and humor into lessons have also turned out to be factors that also positively influenced the objective of establishing positive relationships between educators and students. In the same vein, according to Bandura's (1977) theory of social learning teachers can increase the desirable behavior of their students in a class based on the concept of observational learning. For this purpose, teachers should be positive role models for their students, since, through observation, students can imitate the behavior of their teachers under certain conditions.

Another conclusion that emerged from this research is that the barriers related to the strategy of building relationships reported by the participants in the studies show that everything is back in the hands of teachers. Likewise, Freire (1993) mentions that the student-teacher relationship should be one of mutual respect where there is no traditional hierarchy between students and educators, much less an authoritarian environment where the teacher is usually a content storyteller and the students become just passive listeners. In short, the absence or contradiction of the factors that favor positive teacher-student relationships already analyzed are considered as barriers that intervene negatively to cultivate the teacher-student relationship.

In summary, the relationship-building strategy is a strategy that has direct effects on the behavior of adolescent students in an EFL environment. These effects are positive when teachers and students have developed a positive relationship, one of mutual respect. The factors that help create positive relationships between students and teachers are the sole responsibility of teachers. Teachers need to understand that dealing with adolescent students means dealing with individuals who are going through a period of change so teachers need to be able to respect them, show them affection and interest, and at the same time offer them interesting classes.



6.2. Recommendations

The aim of the study was to analyze the effects of relationship-building strategy specifically with adolescent students and in an EFL classroom. Although the number of studies related to this topic were several when referring to a general educational area, the number of studies when researching particularly the case of EFL classrooms were a few. Besides, only a small number of these studies were conducted in our continent. Therefore, future research is also needed to be conducted on relationship-building strategy and its effectiveness on students at different levels of education and according to their cognitive development in Latin America, specifically in Ecuador since it is a challenge to decipher how beneficial it would be to use the relationship-building strategy in Ecuadorian EFL classrooms as there is no research in the local context.

Since the results of this research study concluded that all of the effects reported on adolescent students' behavior were positive, a correlational study can be carried out to investigate if there is any negative effect of this strategy that could not be identified due to the limitations of this study. So that in this way, preventive and useful strategies for teachers can be found. Likewise, the results also showed some barriers that prevent the development of teacher-student relationships. Further research could be conducted to investigate the reasons for and causes of EFL teacher's barriers in order to seek possible solutions to this problem.

Regarding the practical implications of this research, the findings suggest several guidelines on how teachers can effectively engage in a positive relationship with their students. First, it is essential that they recognize the importance of establishing a good relationship with students. Second, teachers must act as role models for their students in order to guide them in behaving as desired. Third, it is necessary for teachers to understand that their positive attitudes, behaviors, and academic decisions in the classroom will improve the quality of the teacher-student relationship; so they must be carefully planned and must be carried out regularly in the classroom.

Finally, the study put forward the following recommendation for educational institutions. EFL teachers should be trained from the instructional level on the advantages that the relationship-building strategy represents for students both academically and in their behavior, since this current



study found a link between this strategy and the behavior of adolescent students. In addition, since the effects of this strategy are only positive, it should be considered as an essential part of the educational curriculum so that in this way all teachers put all their effort into creating these relationships that have a great impact on behavior and the improvement of academic performance of adolescent students.



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