



The Influence of Friendship Quality and Perceived Emotional Risk of Participation on Behavioral and Cognitive Engagement



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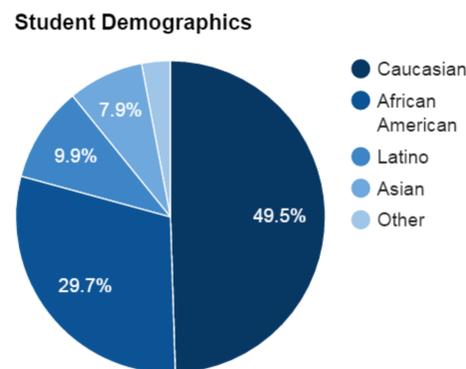
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Introduction

- Friendship quality has been shown to be associated with higher cognitive and behavioral school engagement in elementary school children in grades K-3. (Hosan & Hogg, 2017).
- Perceived risk of emotional participation is a variable which is theorized to be negatively related to friendship quality and classroom engagement (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005).
- Despite the interest in the role of friendship quality and perceived risk of participation in the academic lives of children, there is insufficient research exploring their independent contributions to cognitive and behavioral domains of academic life.
- The present study aimed to further examine the influence of friendship quality (specifically validation and caring) on student cognitive and behavioral engagement.

Method

Participants: 101 fifth-grade students ($M_{age}=10.9$ years, 61 males, 40 females) made up the sample for this study. Students attended a middle school in a middle-class suburban town in the Northeastern region of the United States.



Methods: Data was collected during the second quarter of the school year. During this one assessment session, participating students completed an online survey about friendship quality, school engagement, and perceived risk of participation. This survey included the Emotional Risk of Participation Scale (Hamm & Faircloth, 2005), the validation and caring subscale of the Friendship Quality Questionnaire (Parker & Asher, 1993), and the cognitive and behavioral engagement subscales of the School Engagement Scale (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, Friedel, & Paris, 2005).

Results

Correlation analyses were run to examine associations among study variables. Validation and caring as well as emotional risk of participating were associated with both cognitive and behavioral engagement.

Table 1.

Summary of Intercorrelations Among Variables of Interest: Gender, Cognitive and Behavioral Engagement, Friendship Quality (Validation and Caring) and Emotional Risk of Participation

Measure	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Gender			-				
2. Cognitive Engagement	9.20	4.33	-.254*	-			
3. Behavioral Engagement	13.06	2.74	-.250**	.367**	-		
4. Validation and Caring	4.39	0.73	-.201*	.410**	.240*	-	
5. Emotional Risk of Participation	11.09	3.85	.103	-.201*	-.292**	-.094	-

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, gender: female=0, male=1

To investigate how well emotional risk of participation and validation and caring scores predicted engagement, after controlling for gender, two hierarchical linear regressions were computed; first for cognitive engagement, then for behavioral engagement.

- In the first regression, when added to the model controlling for gender, emotional risk of participation did not make a large change in the prediction of cognitive engagement, $\Delta R^2 = .031$, $p < .05$. The inclusion of validation and caring significantly improved the prediction of cognitive engagement, $\Delta R^2 = .125$, $p < .05$. Overall, all variables accounted for 19.5% of the variance in predicting cognitive engagement ($F(3, 93) = 8.77$, $p < .05$, adj. $R^2 = .195$).
- In the second regression, after controlling for gender, emotional risk of participation was a statistically significant predictor of behavioral engagement, $\Delta R^2 = .071$, $p < .05$. The inclusion of validation and caring did not result in a significant change, $\Delta R^2 = .03$. Only the model controlling for gender and emotional risk of participation significantly predicted behavioral engagement ($F(2, 94) = 7.26$, $p < .05$, adj. $R^2 = .115$). Gender was a significant predictor of both cognitive and behavioral engagement, accounting for 5.5% and 5.3% of the variance for each variable, respectively.

Table 2.

Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Engagement from Gender, Emotional Risk of Participating, and Friendship Quality (Validation and Caring)

Predictors	Cognitive Engagement		Behavioral Engagement	
	ΔR^2	b	ΔR^2	b
Step 1				
Gender		-.254*		-.25*
Step 2	.031*		.071*	
Emotional Risk of Participation		-.176		-.269**
Step 3	.125*		.03*	
Validation and Caring		.362**		.178

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Discussion

- Friendship quality and perceived emotional risk of participation have been shown to have a positive impact on school engagement, which is positively correlated with academic success.
- The findings of the current study reiterate the importance of evaluating and addressing different domains of engagement (i.e. cognitive and behavioral) separately.
- These findings also highlight the importance of school culture and classroom dynamics in influencing engagement. This suggests that when trying to encourage student engagement, it is important to look at not only the child and their individual characteristics, but also their surroundings.
- For example, it may be prudent for educators to encourage the development of positive relationships between students in the classroom (which could impact friendship quality/validation and caring) while also ensuring that the classroom is a low-risk environment regarding perceived risk of participation.
- The different methods by which these goals could be met may be a topic of future educational research.

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