

Examining Classroom Quality as a Moderator in the Association between Teacher Well-being and Teacher-Child Relationships

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INTRODUCTION

- High classroom quality is critical for children’s social, emotional, and academic development, and teacher well-being plays a central role in shaping these daily interactions (Hamre et al., 2008; Howes et al., 2008; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009).
- Existing research has focused mainly on psychological well-being (stress, depression, burnout), but a broader lens that includes professional, psychological, and physical domains is needed to fully understand factors influencing teacher–child relationships (Byun & Jeon, 2023; Cumming & Wong, 2019).
- Professional well-being (e.g., job commitment, self-efficacy) and psychological well-being (e.g., stress, emotion regulation) have established links to teacher–child relationships, while physical well-being remains underexplored despite the high prevalence of health issues among early educators (Hornig et al., 2008; Zee & Koomen, 2016).

PRESENT STUDY

Drawing on the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and the Whole Teacher Well-Being Model (Kwon et al., 2021), this study aims to explore how professional, psychological, and physical well-being relate to teacher-child closeness and conflict. In addition, this study further proposes that classroom quality in ECE settings will buffer the associations between teacher well-being and teacher-child relationships.

METHOD

Participants

The sample consisted of 144 full-time early childhood teachers from 58 Head Start programs located in a Midwestern U.S. city. Of these, 61% taught infants/toddlers and 39% preschoolers. By role, 69% were lead teachers and 31% were assistants or aides. Educationally, 44% had a high school diploma or some college, 19% held an associate degree, and 37% held a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Analysis

- Descriptive statistics to assess teachers’ demographic information.
- Multiple linear regression with an interaction term to test the moderation model.

RESULTS

Table 1
Multiple Linear Regressions of Associations between Whole Teacher Well-being and Classroom Quality on Teacher-Child Relationships

Variable	Teacher-Child Relationship			
	Closeness		Conflict	
	β (SE)	R^2	β (SE)	R^2
Model 4		.10		.07
Professional well-being				
Job commitment	.18* (.09)		-.25** (.09)	
Self-efficacy	.39*** (.09)		-.19* (.09)	
Psychological well-being				
Perceived stress	-.18 (.10)		.33*** (.10)	
Emotion regulation	-.02 (.08)		.15 (.08)	
Physical well-being				
Ergonomic pain	.14 (.17)		-.04 (.17)	
Physical health	-.27** (.10)		.18 (.10)	
Classroom quality				
Emotional-behavioral support	.00 (.09)		.04 (.09)	
Instructional support	.09 (.09)		-.01 (.09)	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Figure 1
Interaction of Self-efficacy and Emotional-behavioral Support in Predicting Closeness in Teacher-child Relationship

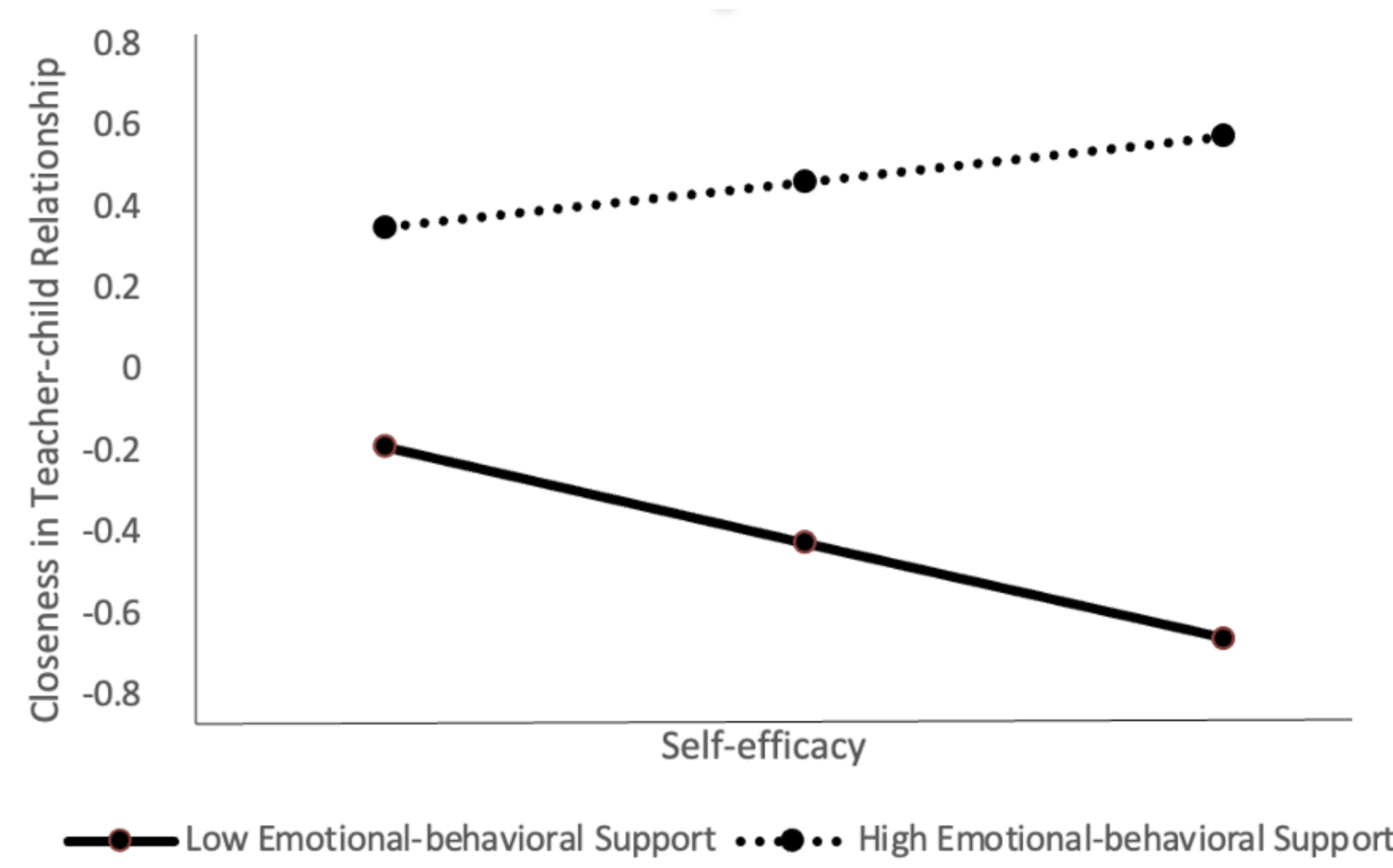
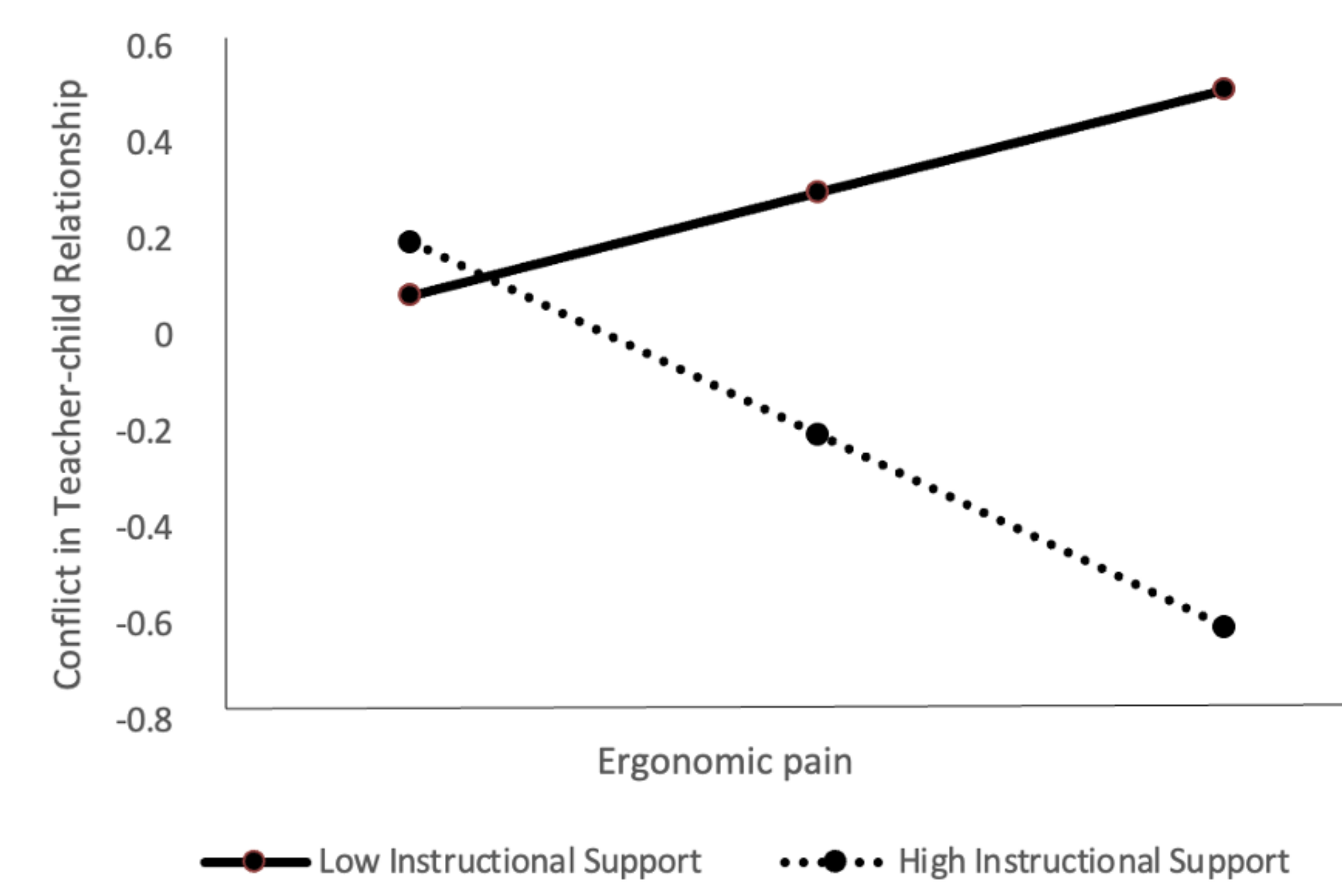


Table 2
Classroom Quality as a Moderator between Whole Teacher Well-being and Teacher-Child Relationships

Variable	Teacher-Child relationship			
	Closeness		Conflict	
	β	SE	β	SE
Professional well-being X Classroom quality				
Self-efficacy X Emotional-behavioral support	.23*	.11	.09	.11
Physical well-being X Classroom quality				
Ergonomic pain X Instructional support	-.06	.15	-.22*	.15

* $p < .05$

Figure 2
Interaction of Ergonomic Pain and Instructional Support in Predicting Conflict in Teacher-Child Relationship



DISCUSSION/IMPLICATIONS

- The findings of this study align with the Prosocial Classroom Model (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009) and the Whole Teacher Well-Being Model (Kwon et al., 2021), emphasizing the interconnected nature of teacher well-being and classroom processes.
- Classroom quality moderated the associations between teacher well-being and teacher–child relationships, such that high emotional–behavioral support strengthened the positive association between self-efficacy and closeness, while high instructional support buffered the negative association between ergonomic pain and conflict.
- From a practical and policy perspective, the results highlight the need to strengthen teachers’ self-efficacy through coaching, targeted training, and supportive policies that provide resources, autonomy, and well-being supports to enhance positive teacher–child relationships.
- Taken together, our findings highlight the need of future research that incorporate mixed-methods designs and include more diverse samples across different contexts in order to capture a fuller picture.

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