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Influence of Caring Behaviors of University Instructors on Students' Classroom Performance

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Abstract
Aim: This study determined the effect of the teachers' caring behavior on the student's classroom performance.
Methodology: The researcher made use of descriptive research in the study. Specifically, descriptive-comparative-correlational research was used.
Results: There is no correlation between the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and their academic performance.
Conclusion: The two variables do not have any relationship and that an increase in one does not affect in any way the other variable. The correlation co-efficient also indicates that the relationship between the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students is nonexistent. This may mean that the caring behavior of their teachers is an independent factor which does not seem to be related to the academic performance of the students, and the inverse of this. As such, the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students are not related with one another. Hence, the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students were found to have no correlation.

Keywords: Influence, Caring Behavior, University Instructors, Students, Classroom Performance, China

INTRODUCTION

For many Chinese students just like any learners, teachers play a significant role in their learning. Students who perceive their teachers as caring and supportive report stronger feelings of belonging and motivation to engage in school (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2021; Muńoz & Sanchez, 2023) which redounds to their academic performance.

Students' motivational attitudes are especially important for educational attainment. Motivated students are stronger achievers, aspire higher, and ultimately, attain greater educational success (Eccles & Wigfield, 2022; Simpkins, Davis-Kean, & Eccles, 2019).

The evidence to date is largely derived from studies of student populations (Safavian & Conley, 2016). However, the public school population is no longer predominantly and continues to diversify with rising proportions of first-generation immigrant youth.

Teachers are central actors within the socially constructed academic environments of youth and influence their academic socialization (Eccles et al., 2021; Wentzel, 2016; Flores, 2020; Regala, 2019a; Salendab & Dapitan, 2020). A vast body of research demonstrates that student perceptions of student-teacher relationships affect their motivation across adolescence (Lazarides, Gaspard, & Dicke, 2018; Quin, 2017; Roorda et al., 2021; Ruzek et al., 2016; Wentzel, 2021). A meta-analysis investigating the impact of perceived teacher support on students' academic emotions, including interest and enjoyment, found important differences based on the students' socio-demographic backgrounds (Lei, Cui, & Chiu, 2018; Regala, 2023). The impact of perceived teacher support was stronger for older students and for female students. They also found that perceived teacher support had stronger associations with students' academic emotions for East Asian students than for Western European and American students. Therefore, studying the influence of student-teacher relationships on math motivation and achievement may be particularly important for students from minoritized backgrounds.

With the recent scenario and situations now brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic (Dela Cruz & Natividad-Franco, 2021; Natividad-Franco, 2022; Flores, 2022; Salendab, 2021), students are more and more longing

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for the care of their teachers. This study will determine how any Chinese student's classroom performance, particularly at Guangdong Vocational and Technical University of Business and Technology in China, is influenced with the caring behavior of their teachers.

A caring and emotionally supportive relationship with a teacher might be particularly important for underrepresented minority students and learners. Teacher caring is a complex construct that includes listening and taking interest in what students have to say, considering their feelings, building trust, and helping them achieve to the best of their ability (Noddings, 2019; Sanchez, Sanchez & Sanchez, 2023). Students from minoritized backgrounds often face systematic disadvantages due to their socioeconomic status (Garcia-Reid, Peterson, & Reid, 2021). A large proportion of the underrepresented minoritized student population are also first- and second-generation immigrants. Research also suggests that immigrant youth are more likely to be unfamiliar with the mainstream educational culture and have fewer social connections (Garcia-Reid et al., 2021). Evidence suggests that experiencing a supportive relationship with a teacher is important to positive school engagement (Dizon & Sanchez, 2020; Sanchez, et al., 2022; Salendab & Cogo, 2022) and counterbalances the social resources and capital that immigrant youth might be missing (Brewster & Bowen, 2018). A number of studies have shown the importance of teacher support for ethnically diverse underrepresented minority student populations with regards to their achievement for middle school (Reyes, Brackett, Rivers, White, & Salovey, 2018) and high school students (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2018; Muller, 2017). Additionally, some evidence also supports the positive associations of a perceived supportive teacher relationship with student engagement and motivation for ethnically diverse underrepresented middle school students (Garcia-Reid et al., 2021; Garcia-Reid, Reid, & Peterson, 2015; Kiefer, Alley, & Ellerbrock, 2021; Riconscente, 2014). Fewer scholars have investigated this association for underrepresented high school youths (e.g., Rosenfeld, Richman, & Bowen, 2020). Muller (2017) found that a positive perceived student-teacher relationship was particularly important for at-risk students. Other studies have also found a positive impact of perceived teacher support on student engagement (Brewster & Bowen, 2018) and achievement (Murray, 2019) for low-income at-risk Hispanic youths.

The experiences of ethnic minority students also appear to influence the quality of their relationships with teachers. Sosa and Gomez (2018) found that low-income Hispanic youth described supportive teachers as being sensitive toward their specific challenges, such as immigration status, and considering the use of Spanish as an asset. In contrast, McHugh, Horner, Colditz, and Wallace (2019) found that Hispanic, Asian, and African American students described negative stereotypes held by teachers toward them as one of the reasons for negative relationships with their teachers.

Immigrant generational status and limited English proficiency may moderate the impact of a supportive student-teacher relationship on students' educational outcomes. For instance, Lewis et al. (2018) found that perceived teacher caring was positively related to Hispanic students' self-efficacy, especially for low-achieving Hispanic English learners in middle school. Watkins and Melde (2020) corroborated this finding in a sample of Hispanic and Asian eighth and ninth graders. They found that students fluent in their native languages had a more favorable perception of educator quality than did exclusively English-speaking students. Thus, a caring relationship with the teacher might be particularly important for English learners in overcoming the negative effects of the existing language and cultural barriers. Peguero and Bondy (2021) found that tenth-grade Hispanic, Asian American, and Black/African American first-generation students reported stronger relationships with their teachers than third-generation White students. More importantly, first-generation Hispanic students reported a stronger relationship with their teachers than second and third-generation Hispanic students. In contrast, Watkins and Melde (2020) found that first- and second-generation Hispanic and Asian eighth and ninth-grade students did not differ in their perceptions of the quality of their educators. More research is needed to explore these dynamics.

Student motivation is one key factor to consider in understanding the impact of teacher caring on students' success (Regala, 2019b; Salendab & Dapitan, 2021a; Sanchez, 2022). Student-teacher interactions are among one the many social and contextual experiences that inform students' motivated attitudes according to Eccles and colleagues' Expectancy-Value theory (EEVT) of achievement motivation (Eccles et al., 1983). Students' perceptions of teacher caring are processed and internalized into subjective ability beliefs (i.e., expectancy for success) and task attitudes (i.e., subjective task values). Both expectancies for success and subjective task values are considered the proximal components of motivated behavior that influence subsequent academic choices, persistence, and achievement-related outcomes (Eccles et al., 1983; Wigfield, Rosenzweig, & Eccles, 2017).

Expectancy for success refers to self-perceptions of competence and it is often measured using scales of self-efficacy or self-concepts of ability, which are both empirically indistinguishable among adolescents (Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2019). Students' self-perceptions of competence are linked to effort, task

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persistence, achievement, and career aspirations (Simpkins et al., 2019; Umarji, McPartlan, & Eccles, 2018; Wigfield & Eccles, 2022). Subjective task value refers to the aspects of a task that contribute to the increasing or decreasing probability that an individual will engage in and accomplish the task (Eccles et al., 1983).

The subjective value of a task includes (a) attainment value, or the value an activity has in fulfilling one's identity or self-image; (b) interest value, which refers to the expected enjoyment in task engagement; and (c) utility value, which is how useful the task is in fulfilling various short and long-term goals. Subjective task values are associated with self-regulation, effort, educational and occupational aspirations, and achievement and course enrollment (Berger & Karabenick, 2021; Luttrell et al., 2020; Nagy, Trautwein, Baumert, Koller, ¨ & Garrett, 2019; Perez, Cromley, & Kaplan, 2014; Simpkins et al., 2019; Watt, Eccles, & Durik, 2019).

Adolescents' math-related expectancies for success and subjective task values decline in middle and high school (Jacobs, Lanza, Osgood, Eccles, & Wigfield, 2022; Watt, 2018, 2019; Flores, 2019a, 2019b). Eccles et al.' (2021) Stage-Environment Fit theory posits that the developmental decline of math-related expectancy values is a function of the poor fit between adolescents' academic environments and the developmental needs of adolescents (Eccles et al., 2021).

EEVT has been instrumental in understanding math-related motivation in largely middle-class White youth, leaving us with much more to learn about non-White populations (Wigfield & Cambria, 2020). Prior research has documented racial/ethnic mean-level differences in students' expectancy-value beliefs. For example, U.S., Canadian, and English students endorsed higher self-efficacy (including self-concept) as compared to East Asian and Russian youth (Elliott, Hufton, Illusion, & Lauchlan, 2017). Similarly, White youth report higher self-efficacy relative to Hispanic youth (Stevens, Olivarez Jr, & Hamman, 2019). There are also examples of mean-level race-ethnic differences in students' endorsements of subjective task values in middle and high school (e.g., Chen & Stevenson, 2020; Conley, 2018; Safavian, 2019; Safavian & Conley, 2016). For example, research points to higher endorsements of math interest and utility among Asian and East Asian youth relative to White youth (Chen & Stevenson, 2020). East Asian youth also endorsed a higher degree of math importance relative to Hispanics (Safavian, 2019; Safavian & Conley, 2016). Additionally, English Learners of Hispanic and East Asian backgrounds endorsed math learning as more costly relative to English-fluent peers (Conley, 2018). Some research has suggested that stronger subjective task values of immigrant youth might be connected to a more positive sense of educational opportunity for immigrant youth, whose families often left their countries of origin due to a lack of opportunities (Kao & Tienda, 2020; Saito, 2022).

Connecting these motivational differences to achievement, numerous studies have found that students' math importance, interest, and utility value are important mediators of math course grades for Hispanic, East Asian, Filipino, European, and first-generation immigrant students (Fuligni, 2017). Hispanic youth were more likely to persist in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) when they also endorsed STEM learning as useful (Andersen & Ward, 2014). Similarly, Hispanic youth received stronger math grades when they endorsed higher math interest, utility, and attainment values (Safavian & Conley, 2016).

In low-resourced public schools, teacher well-being is beset by complex work demands, including the amplified responsibility of caring for students. The teaching profession has long been known for its high levels of occupational stress and burnout (Acton & Glasgow, 2021). In low-resource contexts, teacher stress is further linked with exposure to poor working conditions such as limited material and human resources, high student-teacher ratio, work-task overload, behavioral difficulties of students, managing multiple roles, and low salaries (García-Carmona et al., 2019; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005). While distressed learners are entitled to receive specialized psychosocial support in schools, the lack of such resources in these contexts inevitably places the burden of caring on the teachers' shoulders (Denise Valdez, 2018). Teachers have supported distressed students in a variety of ways, from providing more general academic, socioemotional, financial, and physical support, to implementing more specialized school-wide psychosocial interventions (Franklin et al., 2017).

While the teachers' caring role significantly benefits learners' holistic development (Regala, 2020; Salendab & Dapitan, 2021b; Salendab, 2023), it can also entail psychological costs like experiences of emotional heaviness for teachers (Alisic et al., 2018; Decenteceo, 2017; Koenig et al., 2018). The concept is based on the cultural story model which uses the locally embedded metaphor of bearing the burdens of everyday responsibilities and coping with life challenges (Decenteceo, 2019).

In teaching, we posit that "cobearing" the burdens of students from low-resource contexts, especially those in distress, can also intensify psychological costs for educators such as feelings of stress, role confusion, compassion fatigue, and burnout (Abraham-cook, 2018; Figley, 2020). However, despite what is known about the importance

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and potential risks of teachers' caring for burdened students, there are few empirical studies that illuminate how this experience unfolds for early-career teachers in low-resourced contexts (Koenig et al., 2018).

Teachers support students in varied ways that positively promote their academic success, moral development, and socio-emotional development (Sanchez, 2023a, 2023b; Sanchez & Sarmiento, 2020). This may include personal care or attending to students' socioemotional problems to promote their identity and dignity as a person, academic care, or pedagogical activities that bring about learning in the classroom (Noddings, 2022; Wentzel, 2017). Teachers' emotional support has been linked with students' increased engagement in school, emotion regulation skills, and better-coping skills (Jennings & Greenberg, 2019). Their social support is linked with positive academic emotions, a sense of connectedness and modeling of pro-social behavior (Jennings & Greenberg, 2019; Lei et al., 2018).

Teacher-facilitated psychosocial interventions endorsed by trauma-informed educational approaches are found helpful in suffering trauma effects in students (Franklin et al., 2017). In low-resource contexts, teachers may emphasize discipline, material assistance, and physical support as caring versus more emotion-centered care endorsed by western policies (Coultas et al., 2016).

While the teacher's caring functions are beneficial for students, especially those in distress, they come with psychological costs for the educator. Studies suggest that caring for struggling students affects teachers' construction of identities and the meaning of their work. Teachers who successfully address students' needs found care work as personally and professionally meaningful (Brunzell et al., 2018) and have an increased sense of compassion satisfaction, professional competence, and commitment (Abraham-cook, 2018; Hill, 2021). However, teachers' lack of specialized psychosocial care knowledge may lead to role confusion, blurring of professional boundaries, and foster a sense of incompetence (Alisic, 2018). Failing to address students' needs also led to a lowered sense of professional competence and is taken hardest by teachers who highly valued caring roles (Hill, 2021).

Western studies highlight a range of cognitive and emotional distress teachers experience when helping distressed students. To effectively care for students, teachers may engage in emotional labor and experience dissonance over needing to express emotions that are starkly different from how they genuinely feel (Wang et al., 2019). This includes suppressing their own distress and projecting positive feelings to be able to provide emotional support to students. Compassion fatigue literature posits that teachers may vicariously experience the trauma symptoms of students like having intrusive thoughts regarding their students' distress, feelings of helplessness, and negative shifts in viewing the world (Figley, 2020; Koenig et al., 2018). Burn-out literature has described teachers experiencing emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lowered sense of accomplishment with prolonged exposure to difficult circumstances (Abrahamcook, 2018). These negative effects of exposure to students' sufferings appear to be influenced by the perceived intensity of students' distress, teachers' own experience of trauma, the length of teacher exposure, and the lack of supportive systems for the teacher (Gu & Day, 2019; Ziaian-Ghafari & Berg, 2019).

Experiences of cognitive and emotional distress in caring for others can be related to the local concept of bearing in the counseling model of Decenteceo (2021, 2019). This cultural counseling model views an individual's experience of carrying out deeply valued responsibilities and bearing life's struggles via the story metaphor of burden-bearing. It has the following elements: the burden-bearer who go through the journey of carrying responsibilities, the burden, task, responsibility or relationship that is carried by the burden-bearer out of a sense of duty), the path the burden-bearer goes through in carrying the burden, and the destination or conditions where the burden-bearing is directed. In this study, bearing pertains to the sense of heaviness and difficulties that one experiences in bearing one's responsibilities.

Teachers as bearers can be seen as both burden-bearers and co-burden-bearers. Co-burden-bearers, according to Decenteceo, are helpers who are themselves bearers of their own burdens, but also bear the additional responsibility of helping other bearers carry their own burdens. The teacher's co-burden bearer's bearing is their responsibility of caring for their student burden-bearers. Their experiences consist of events and paths that they go through to achieve their aspired direction or aspired end state for their students. The educator's experience of burden in bearing may involve the affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions they relate to caring for students. Aside from burden, Bearing also considers having a sense of lightness and ease. Decenteceo recommends taking a rest or taking a breath out to ease the process of burden-bearing.

Despite what is known about the benefits and risks of teacher's care work, there are few empirical studies that illuminate how this experience unfolds for early-career public school teachers in low-resource contexts. While studies on promoting struggling students' well-being via teacher care abound, promoting teacher well-being as they engage in care work has only begun to receive attention (Wessels & Wood, 2019). The majority of literature on

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teacher care work with distressed students also hails from western contexts where teachers have greater access to specialized psychosocial support manpower and school-wide programs.

In this study, we focused on how Chinese teachers contend with the increasingly complex psychosocial concerns of students in low-resourced school contexts.

In China, for instance, while the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) of the Mental Health Act called for an increase in quality and access to specialized psychosocial support in schools, there remains a pervasive lack of the material and human resources and enabling support systems that can aid ease of implementation (Denise Valdez, 2018).

Nationwide, there are only over 3000 licensed guidance counselors vis-à-vis the 22 million public school learners, leading to the creation of "guidance teacher" roles1 filled in by educators (Denise Valdez, 2018; Ministry of Education, 2021). In this specific context, public school students may experience added distress over poverty-related challenges as well as higher vulnerability to community violence, calamities, health concerns, and rising cases of youth mental illness and suicide cases (Geronimo, 2019; Tomacruz, 2019).

The challenge in caring may be exacerbated by the sheer number of students that teachers handle in overcrowded classrooms or multiple class shifts, alongside the high volume of administrative paperwork and multiple other support roles (MalipotHernando, 2018). Urban public-school teachers also report being stressed by students' misbehaviors visà-vis a perceived lack of available sanctions for misbehavior because of child protection policies (Pagayanan, 2016). All of these may be especially heavy for early-career teachers who are still learning the ropes of their roles and tend to leave teaching within the first five years of teaching due to stress (Schaefer & Clandinin, 2018).

Given these challenges, there is a need to explore how early-career public school teachers experience and can be supported in their care-related work. While bearing may be a culturally relevant model to understand care work and design relevant interventions to mitigate its costs, there are limited studies on its application to the education context. Current bearing literature is chiefly based on Decenteceo's own reflections on his clinical practice with advocacy workers (Decenteceo, 2017, 2019), or more recent application in studies of children's experiences in conflict areas (Noguera, 2019) or psychological first aid with disaster survivors (Landoy et al., 2021). Mapping early-career public school educators' stories of bearing can inform the design of culture-specific psychosocial interventions for teachers who support struggling students.

In the past three decades, research has consistently pointed to teacher-student relationships as a key contributor to students' self-esteem (Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2021), well-being (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005), and school engagement, learning, and achievement (Roorda, Koomen, Spilt, & Oort, 2021). It has been argued that a basic component of the teacher-student relationship is the student's perception that their teacher cares for them and supports them (Muller, 2022).

In fact, caring was theorized to be a core element for creating and maintaining effective teacher-student relationships (Noddings, 2019), allowing teachers to acknowledge and respond to their student's needs and feelings (Mayseless, 2021; 2019; Pianta, 2022, 2019; Wentzel, 2017) and provide them with protection, security, and support (Mayseless, 2021). Such caring is thought to be prevalent also in familial relationships, such as parenting (Mayseless, 2021; Pianta, 2022), and in certain occupations that require caring for others, such as healthcare professions (Dobrowolska & Palese, 2016).

The need to be cared for is hypothesized to be specifically important for students, as they are considered particularly vulnerable. This vulnerability is related to their age and to the hierarchical structure of schools (Karn € a, Voeten, Poskiparta, € & Salmivalli, 2020), but it is also generally related to learning and developmental processes (aimed to take place in schools), which typically require exploring new things and entail some degree of uncertainty (Sharan & Sharan, 2022). These processes occur in various learning and work environments and necessitate a sense of security, which enables stepping out of one's "comfort zone" and confront uncertainty (Mayseless, 2021; Pianta, 2022; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2019). This sense of security can be achieved by feeling others' care and concern for one's well-being, which assures receiving the required support, help, and encouragement when needed (Mayseless, 2021; Pianta, 2022; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2019). Thus, in the present research, we empirically explored how caring, as an essential component of secure relationships (Mayseless, 2021; Noddings, 2022), is linked with students' relationships with their teachers and with students' self-esteem, well-being, and school engagement, shown to be affected by these relationships (Roorda et al., 2021; Spilt et al., 2021).

Furthermore, since feeling cared for was theorized to be so essential for students feeling that they have a secure learning environment, we sought to explore its correlates with teachers' reports of their feelings at work, in an attempt to mark potential teachers' feelings that are related to students' feelings that their teachers care. This is

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especially important when acknowledging the obstacles to caring in schools (and in other large care-providing institutions), which include stressful job requirements, multiple interactions per hour (some of which can be highly negative), and unsupportive supervisors (Greenberg, Brown, & Abenavoli, 2016).

Specifically, we first explored the link between teachers' self-reported caring for their students with their students' feelings that their teachers care for them. This important link has not been examined before and can validate that teachers' feelings that they care about are reflected in their students' feelings.

Second, while seeking potential antecedents for teachers' motivation and capacity to care, we proposed teachers' sense of meaning at work. This is based on the understanding that teachers' perceived impact and contribution to others (Dik & Duffy, 2018) is manifested through their impact on their students' lives (Pines, 2022), which is attained through their relationships with them (Lavy & Bocker, 2018; Wubbels, Brekelmans, Mainhard, den Brok, & Tartwijk, 2016). Furthermore, initial research has shown the impact of teachers' sense of meaning on their daily relationships with students, which highlights the need to further examine how this impact is achieved (Lavy & Bocker, 2018).

The need to be cared for is considered a basic human need, providing individuals with the sense of security essential for survival, development, and growth. A central reason for its crucial importance and impact is that the given attention and support that the person who is being cared for receives affects their social connections and the benefits such connections hold for them. For example, it increases their sense of belonging (Mayseless, 2021) and capacity to bond with others (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2019), which are expected to eventually lead to increased joy and improved well-being.

Specifically, teachers' care and support of their students was proposed to enhance students' internal sense of self-value and well-being and enable them to engage in dialogues that positively affect their learning (Noddings, 2022). Based on these initial understandings of caring and its hypothesized effects on students (as care-receivers), we propose that students' feelings that their teacher cares for them would affect their feelings about themselves, their lives, and their school activities, as reflected in their self-esteem, well-being, and school engagement directly, and also via enhanced teacher-student relationships (of which caring is a core precursor).

Self-esteem is considered a core indicator of individuals' feelings about themselves, reflecting their perception and evaluation of themselves and their feeling that they are worthy and important for others (Pyszczynski, Greenberg, Solomon, Arndt, & Schimel, 2018). Several studies have indicated the prospective impact of self-esteem on important life experiences and outcomes. For example, a longitudinal 12-year study of over 1800 participants ages 16e67, showed that self-esteem had significant effects on effect and depression, relationship and job satisfaction, and even on health, in individuals of various ages (covering four generations) (Orth, Robins, & Widaman, 2018); a meta-analysis of 95 studies on anxiety and depression showed the role of self-esteem as a protective factor for psychological problems and decreased mental health (Sowislo & Orth, 2019); and two other meta-analyses indicated associations of self-beliefs and self-concept with academic achievement (Huang, 2021; Valentine, DuBois, & Cooper, 2018).

A large body of literature suggests that the development of such positive, realistic self-esteem (which has these positive effects) is related to children's and youths' meaningful relationships with significant adults and peers (e.g., Cassidy & Shaver, 2022) and is likely to develop when children/youths feel that others are caring and are sensitive and responsive to their needs, and their attachment security is typically significantly linked to their self-esteem (Bowlby, 2005; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2019). For example, a meta-analysis of 22 studies conducted among adolescents and emerging adults indicated a significant link between participants' feeling that peers can be trusted and are a secure base for exploration and a safe haven in times of need to increased self-esteem (Gorrese & Ruggieri, 2019), and a study of a heterogeneous sample of over 1500 American youths confirmed similar results between youths' feelings about their parents and their self-esteem (Arbona & Power, 2017). Since teachers also serve as meaningful adult figures in childhood and adolescence, with whom students spend several hours a week, in the present study we expected that their care and sensitive, responsive support would also positively affect students' self-esteem, at least to a certain extent, while making them feel valued and worthy.

Based on the literature on interpersonal relationships' effects, we also expected teachers' caring to positively affect students' well-being. Well-being has been defined in different ways, typically including reference to individuals' happiness, life satisfaction, and positive affect (Diener, 2017). In the present study, we focus on a common definition that constitutes well-being as individuals' subjective overall evaluation of their satisfaction and happiness in life (Campell, 2017).

This kind of subjective well-being was consistently linked with several desirable outcomes. For example, a review of prospective longitudinal studies, experimental studies, and naturalistic studies compellingly show that well-

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being contributes to improved health and longevity (Diener & Chan, 2021), and a few studies showed that employees with higher well-being have better performance (Wright & Cropanzano, 2020).

Furthermore, nurturing well-being (in the long term) has also been suggested as one of the goals of contemporary education.

Researchers have proposed that caring is one of the many mechanisms that can positively impact the well-being of the cared for because one of the main goals of the care provider is to enhance and foster the well-being of the one being cared for in various physical, psychological, and mental ways (Noddings, 2017). Furthermore, Noddings (2017) proposed that joy is a special effect that arises out of the receptivity of caring for the care provider claiming that the effect of joy "accompanies our recognition of relatedness and reflects our basic reality. Its occurrence and recurrence maintain us in caring" (Noddings, 2017, p. 147).

Empirical research has supported these ideas, showing that positive, meaningful relationships, which typically comprise the feeling that someone cares for us, are among the best predictors of well-being at the daily level (Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2020) and also in a review of longitudinal and correlational studies (Seligman, 2018). As teachers' interactions with students occur frequently and can be significant, we thought that feeling cared for by the teacher can have a significant effect on their student's well-being.

Another critical factor that is expected to be positively affected by teachers' caring is students' school engagement, which reflects their involvement and interest in learning and their active participation and attention in school (Newmann, 2022; Orkibi & Tuaf, 2017). School engagement is expressed in various ways, including behavioral expressions manifested in actual participation in activities; emotional expressions, which include positive and negative reactions in the classroom, emotional reactions to the school and the teacher, and identification with the school; and cognitive expressions manifested in investment in learning, a desire to go beyond the requirements of school, and seeking cognitive challenges.

Notable research, including integrative reviews (Lamborn, Newmann, & Wehlage, 2022) and a meta-analysis of 99 studies (Roorda et al., 2021), has indicated that students' school engagement and motivation to learn are highly affected by their relationship with their teacher. Moreover, students' engagement in school and in learning tasks was affected by the warmth and support that students felt they received from their teachers (Marks, 2020; Roorda et al., 2021). Because teachers' caring is a basic component of meaningful positive teacher-student interactions and relationships (Noddings, 2017), we propose that teachers' caring has a crucial role in driving these effects. Furthermore, caring for students and acknowledging their needs and interests may enable the modification of learning explanations and tasks in ways that fit their personalities, feelings, and interests, thus promoting their engagement. This proposed impact of teachers' caring on their student's school engagement is important, as school engagement was found to have notable effects on several desirable outcomes such as students' achievement (Kotrlik & Redmann, 2019; Roorda et al., 2021), classroom learning and motivation, and students' efforts invested in complex tasks (Lamborn et al., 2022)

As noted above, one of the routes through which students' feelings that their teacher cares for them affects their self-esteem, well-being, and school engagement is their relationships with their teachers. The feeling that their teachers care may directly affect students' feeling that they are valued and worthy (Mayseless, 2021); increase their positive feelings about themselves, their lives, and their school activities (Noddings, 2017, 2019); and foster a sense of security, which can increase their ability to engage in school activities (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2020; Pianta, 2022, 2019). However, as feeling that their teacher cares for them is expected to increase students' trust and have a positive effect on him/her, and trust was linked to open communication with teachers (e.g., Frymier & Houser, 2020), teachers' caring is also expected to enhance students' willingness to openly interact with their teacher, disclose emotional and personal information, and thus contribute to their relationship with him/her (Muller, 2017). Thus caring, as a behavior and feeling (Mayseless, 2021), has been considered a foundation of a positive, reinforcing teacher-student relationship that involves a meaningful connection allowing teachers to fulfill the students' needs sensitively with empathy, affection, and concern (Mayseless, 2021; Noddings, 2017, 2022; Pianta, 2022, 2019; Wentzel, 2017).

Teacher-student relationships were consistently claimed core of the educational process, robustly predicting students' motivation and learning behavior that supports coping with school-related challenges (Roorda et al., 2021), affecting students' mental state, self-esteem, positive feelings (Reddy, Rhodes, & Mulhall, 2017), and school engagement (Klem & Connell, 2018) and ultimately positively affecting students' achievements (Roorda et al., 2021). Thus, in the present study, we suggest that these relationships are the main mechanism through which teachers' caring affects students (Kim & Schallert, 2021), and we examine it as an important mediator of the effects of teachers' caring on students' self-esteem, well-being, and school engagement.

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As teachers' caring is expected to be crucial for their students, we sought to explore not only its links with students' conditions but also its possible correlates with teachers' conditions. Specifically, we tried to reveal potential teacher attitudes/feelings that are associated with students' feelings that their teacher cares for them and what may contribute to these feelings. Teachers, like other caregivers (e.g., parents), typically bond with their students in the quest of offering them a sense of security and safety, which can promote their exploration, growth, and development (Mayseless, 2021; Noddings, 2019). The ways in which receiving care fosters individuals' development and its crucial importance have been widely discussed (as reviewed above). However, interestingly, the caregiver's need to care for and support others was also suggested to be fundamental human motivation, complementing the need to be cared for (Mayseless, 2021; Shaver & Mikulincer, 2019).

It has been suggested that caring benefits not only the care receiver but also the caregiver since it promotes the caregiver's joy, happiness (Noddings, 2017), health, self-evaluation, social connections, and bonds between the caregiver and the cared for (Mayseless, 2021). These bonds and positive relationships are important not only for the care receiver but also for the caregiver validating his/her sense of meaning (Lavy & Bocker, 2018; Martela & Pessi, 2018). We suggest that this internal motivation and capacity to care that teachers may have as care providers may be closely linked with the quality of the care they provide as reflected in their students' feelings that they care for them.

This motivation is important, as being a caring teacher may not be easy. It was suggested (in the theoretical writing of education researchers) that caring teachers would be supportive, kind, responsive, and compassionate toward their students (Goldstein, 2022), listen to their student's expressed and inferred needs (Noddings, 2019), and try to understand what should be done in order to motivate, teach, and make issues interesting for students (Webb & Blond, 2020; Elbaz, 2022; Noddings, 2022, 2019, 2018). Furthermore, caring teachers were hypothesized to encourage students to do their best and exceed their abilities (Noddings, 2022). These high expectations of caring teachers are not simple to apply and require a high interest in students, motivation to benefit the students, and concern for their welfare. We suggest that the internal feelings of teachers that they care for their students will provide them with the motivation and capacity to conduct these caring behaviors, and thus teachers' feelings of care for their students will be reflected in their students' feelings that they are cared for.

Teaching is considered one of the most complex occupations, filled with emotion (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2022), stress (Lavy & Eshet, 2018), and compassion fatigue (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2019; Joinson, 2022). Teachers are required to provide care and support to a large number of students while confronting student misbehavior (Aldrup, Klusmann, Lüdtke, Gollner, € & Trautwein, 2018; Perry-Hazan, 2021), stressful achievement requirements, and supervisors who are not always supportive (Greenberg et al., 2016; Perry-Hazan & Birnhack, 2019). In such conditions, it is difficult to maintain the capacity to care for others. What can enable teachers to maintain their caring despite the obstacles evident in contemporary schools? Based on initial evidence (Lavy & Bocker, 2018), we suggest that an enhanced sense of meaning at work can enhance teachers' motivation and capacity to care in their daily work.

Meaningful work has been defined as employees feeling that their work is significant and has a positive valence, as it serves a worthwhile purpose and/or fosters growth, fulfillment, or improvement in some way (Steger et al., 2018). Its three components were suggested to be significance, purpose, and self-realization (Martela & Pessi, 2018) all highly relevant to teachers' work, and specifically to teachers' care for their students. Individuals who feel that their work is meaningful report a sense of coherence, direction, significance, and/or belonging to their workplace (Schnell, Hoge, € & Pollet, 2019). Quantitative studies of employees in various occupations show that these feelings allow them to invest more effort in their careers (Steger et al., 2018), as reflected, for example, in increased motivation, engagement, and performance (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2018). On the other hand, individuals who do not experience a sense of meaning at work may feel a lack of commitment for their job and organization (May et al., 2018). Importantly, although employees' sense of meaning is considered to be relatively stable (Steger et al., 2018), it was also shown to be affected by employees' beliefs and perspectives about their job (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2020) and their changing work experience (May et al., 2018, Rosso et al., 2020: Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2017), to fluctuate daily (Lavy & Bocker, 2018), and to be fostered in simple ways (e.g., via daily boosts; Lavy, manuscript submitted for publication).

A sense of meaning at work is especially important for teachers and is considered a central component of their work (Schnell et al., 2019), as teachers have a high potential to influence peoples' lives (i.e., students, families/communities, and society) (Schnell et al., 2019). As reviewed above, the effects of particular teachers on their students' achievements, social life, and well-being have been well-validated (Roorda et al., 2021). Recent research on teachers' sense of meaning at work has shown that it is closely related to teachers' ability to cultivate

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positive relationships with their students, predicting the daily quality of these teacher-student relationships (Lavy & Bocker, 2018). Furthermore, initial evidence suggests that increasing teachers' sense of meaning may enhance their work engagement and decrease their job burnout (Lavy, manuscript submitted for publication). These processes may buffer the erosion of teachers' caring capacity, enabling them to feel and express more care for their students. As their caring for their students and their relationships with them is the main vehicle through which teachers can experience and promote their positive impact (based on Roorda et al., 2021), we propose that teachers' sense of meaning at work will be closely related to their caring for their students as they perceive it and also contribute to their caring capacity reflected in their students' perceptions of their caring. Teachers with a higher sense of meaning at work are expected to feel more caring toward their students, think more about their student's needs, and focus more on ways in which they can help fulfill these needs. Furthermore, these teachers' capacity to sensitively notice and respond to their students is expected to increase, as their higher sense of meaning at work increases their internal resources and ability to do this, despite the daily hassles and challenging circumstances. This process is expected to be reflected in a connection between teachers' sense of meaning and their students' feeling that they care for them.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses the theory of caring by Noddings (2017) as its framework. The concept of caring was initially introduced by Noddings (2017), to describe the encounter, relation, and interaction between a caregiver and the person who is being cared for toward whom this care is directed. It was proposed that in such encounters and relationships, caring can be manifested in a sense of closeness (Mayseless, 2021), compassion (Goldstein, 2022), openness to the needs of others (Noddings, 2022), attention to the person's needs, and empathy between the caring person and the person cared-for (Noddings, 2018). In her theoretical work, Noddings (2019, 2018) argued that students need to be aware of their teachers' care and feel it, so they can enjoy the sense of security that it provides and experience the resultant benefits. She proposed that teachers' caring is complete only when it is reflected in their students' feeling that they are cared for. Thus, she proposed that making students feel that they are cared for is one of the central roles of teachers key to fostering students' learning, as well as their development and happiness.

These theoretical understandings correspond with evidence from attachment research, which systematically shows that when individuals experience responsive, sensitive caregiving from others, they tend to develop attachment security, characterized by a sense of realistic competence and a basic trust in oneself and in others, which contributes to their ability to explore opportunities, develop, and cope with difficulties and adversities (Feeney & Collins, 2021). Individuals with such secure attachment (resulting from responsive, sensitive caring) demonstrated higher self-esteem (Wilkinson, 2018), and better socioemotional functioning in interpersonal relationships and groups (Lavy, 2017; Lavy, Bareli, & Ein-Dor, 2021), higher wellbeing (Lavy & Littman-Ovadia, 2021), and improved academic achievement (Fass & Tubman, 2022).

Specifically, it found answers to the profile of the student respondents in terms of age, sex, and year level. Then, it looked into the assessment of the student respondents of how their teachers show care to them; differences in the assessment of the student respondents of how their teachers show care to them; and this leads to the ways teachers show learners they care.

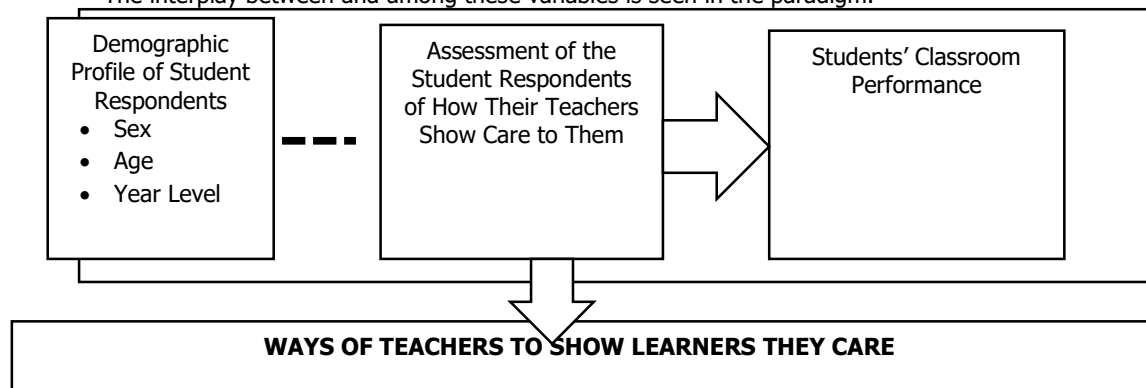The interplay between and among these variables is seen in the paradigm.

Figure 1. *Research Paradigm*

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As shown in the figure, the researcher first gathered data on the demographic profile of the student respondents in terms of their sex, age, and year level.

Then, the researcher looked into the assessment of the student respondents of how their teachers show care to them and their classroom performance.

Also, the researcher then looked for the differences in the assessment of the student respondents regarding how their teachers show care to them.

Finally, this leads to the ways teachers show learners they care.

Objective:

This study determined the effect of the teachers' caring behavior on the students' classroom performance. Specifically, the following problems were answered:
1. What is the profile of the student-respondents in terms of:
   1.1. Age
   1.2. Sex
   1.3. Year level
2. What is the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers?
3. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers when their profile is considered?
4. What is the academic performance of the students in the classroom as reflected in their last evaluation?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students?

Hypothesis

The following hypothesis were tested:
1. H01: There is no significant difference in the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers when their profile is considered.
2. Ho2: There is no significant relationship between the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students.

Significance of the Study

The researcher formulated the study in benefit, by part and whole, to the following people:

Teachers – The study will serve as the teachers' guidelines on how to foster care toward students. This affects student motivation and engagement inside the classroom. – for the students to feel that the teacher cares for them. The study will aid them in coming up with ways for them to show students they care.

School Heads – This study is also beneficial to supervisors and school heads, specifically to identify the correlation between teacher care and student performance. It allows them to determine how the teachers' attitude toward students affects their performance in the classroom. It can also serve as an avenue for further action research by the teachers and administrators regarding the topic.

MOE Officials – This study may also be beneficial for MOE Officials in terms of refining the evaluation of the school's programs on how the teachers can show care toward students.

Furthermore, the study can serve as a **precursor for further studies** about the topic. They can then disseminate results to schools for professional development programs.

Definition of Terms

For the intended readers to have a clearer understanding of this paper, the researcher has given both the conceptual and operational definition of the following terms:

Care – It refers to the process of protecting someone or something and providing what that person or thing needs.

Student-Teacher Relationship – It is referred to as a positive and favorable relationship between teachers and students. It is "a harmonious teacher–student relationship which encompasses enjoyment, connection, respect, and mutual trust".

Theory of Care – It is built on the foundation of a relationship between the carer and the cared-for, demonstrating that, with the explicit behaviors of modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation, teachers and leaders can encourage moral decision-making.

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METHODS

Research Design

The researcher made use of descriptive research in the study. Specifically, descriptive-comparative-correlational research was used.

Descriptive design is suitable wherever the subjects vary among themselves and one is interested to know the extent to which different conditions and situations are obtained among these subjects. The word survey signifies the gathering of data regarding the present conditions. A survey is useful in (1) providing the value of facts, and (2) focusing attention on the most important things to be reported.

Specifically, the type of descriptive aside from the generic descriptive design is status which is problem-solving and seeks to answer questions to real facts relating to existing conditions. This is a technique of quantitative description that determines the prevailing conditions in a group of cases chosen for the study.

Descriptive comparative considers two variables (not manipulated) and establishes a formal procedure to compare and conclude that one is better than the other. After the comparative assessment, the researcher considered the evaluative part of the paper which carefully appraises the worthiness of the present study.

Research Locale

This study was conducted at Guangdong Vocational and Technical University of Business and Technology in China.

Guangdong Vocational and Technical University of Business and Technology is located in Zhaoqing City, Guangdong Province, it is a full-time private undergraduate college approved by the Ministry of Education and a demonstration school of innovation and entrepreneurship education for college students in Guangdong Province.

The school's predecessor is Zhaoqing Oriental Talent School founded in 1996, Zhaoqing Industrial and Commercial Vocational School founded in 1997, Zhaoqing Industrial and Commercial Vocational College founded in 1999 and upgraded to Zhaoqing Industrial and Commercial Vocational and Technical College in 2019. In 2014, it was renamed Guangdong Vocational College of Industry and Commerce. In 2019, it was upgraded to Guangdong Polytechnic University of Industry and Commerce with the approval of the Ministry of Education.

By June 2022, the university has two campuses, Xinghu and Dawang, covering an area of 1,742 mu with a building area of 580,000 square meters. The total value of teaching and research equipment is 186 million yuan. There are 19300 full-time students and 1072 full-time teachers. It has 14 teaching units, offering 22 undergraduate majors and 53 junior majors.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The researcher used students as respondents to the study. From the almost 19,300 students at Guangdong Vocational and Technical University of Business and Technology in China, the researcher used a simple random technique using the Qualtrics calculator for Samples.

Research Instrument

The study made use of the researcher-made tool to gather the data. It determined the assessment of the students on the caring behavior of the teachers towards their students.

The instrument consisted of 3 parts. The first part is on the demographic profile of the students namely age, sex and year level.

The second part is on the classroom performance of the students based on the average of their latest evaluation.

The third part is on the assessment of the students on the caring behavior of their teachers toward the students consisting of 55 items distributed into the different domains of care.

The said instrument was subjected to the validation of the experts with the Cronbach Alpha Index.

Data Gathering Procedure

The method of gathering data was a survey questionnaire which is a product of a thorough reading of related literature and studies. After the construction, the questionnaire was validated by the experts and the researcher's colleagues, and the researcher asked for the help of former professors in the graduate school in the

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revision of the survey. Moreover, the last step in the validation is proposal defense where the comments and suggestions of the panel were included in the revision.

Statistical Analysis of the Data

After the gathering of data and asking permission from the different offices, the gathered data were subjected to the statistical treatment of data.

The instrument is developed using a 4-point scale (Salkind, 2018).

The gathered data were subjected to statistical treatment which as follows:

(1) Frequency Count – This was used by the researcher in the analysis of the data profile of the respondents from the subject school.
(2) Weighted Mean – This was used by the researcher in determining the degree of the responses of the respondents from the subject school.
(3) T-test/Anova - This tool was used by the researcher in the analysis of the comparison of the assessment of the respondents from the subject school.

The following values of the computed mean were interpreted as follows:

Point	Range of Values	Qualitative Description	Interpretation
1	1.00 – 1.50	Not Evident	
2	1.51 – 2.50	Somewhat Evident	
3	2.51 – 3.50	Evident	
4	3.51 – 4.00	Highly Evident	

(4) Pearson's r. This was used by the researcher in determining the relationship that exists between the two constructs in the study.

Furthermore, this study made use of the 5% level of significance in all the statistical analyses thereby providing a 95% level of confidence in the rejection or acceptance of the stated hypothesis. Using the SPSS software, any value of Sig found lower than 0.05 level will be rejected.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Profile of the Student Respondents

Table 3.1 shows the demographic profile of the student respondents in terms of their age, sex, and section.

Table 3.1
Frequency Distribution of the Student Respondents' Profile

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
19 years old	13	3.3%
20 years old	66	16.5%
21 years old	85	21.3%
22 years old	78	19.5%
23 years old	100	25%
24 years old	25	6.3%
25 years old	22	5.5%
26 years old	11	2.8%
Total	**400**	**100%**
Sex		
Male	202	50.5%
Female	198	49.5%
Total	**400**	**100%**
Year Level		
Freshmen	99	24.8%
Sophomore	197	49.3%

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Junior	104	26%
Total	**400**	**100%**

In terms of age, thirteen (13) or about 3.3% of the student respondents are within 19 years old, sixty-six (66) or about 16.5% of the student respondents are within 20 years old, eighty-five (85) or about 21.3% of the student respondents are within 21 years old, seventy-eight (78) or about 19.5% of the student respondents are within 22 years old, one-hundred (100) or 25% of the student respondents are within 23 years old, twenty-five (25) or about 6.3% of the student respondents are within 24 years old, twenty-two (22) or about 5.5% of the student respondents are within 25 years old, and eleven (11) or about 2.8% of the student respondents are within 26 years old. This means that majority of the student respondents are within 23 years old. This may be taken to mean that the students are in the appropriate grade level for their age.

In terms of sex, two-hundred and two (202) or about 50.5% of the student respondents are male and the remaining one-hundred ninety-eight (198) or about 49.5% of the student respondents are male. This means that majority of the student respondents are males in terms of sex. This illustrates that there are more male students in the institution than female students.

In terms of year level, ninety-nine (99) or about 24.8% of the student respondents are freshmen, one hundred and ninety-seven (197) or about 49.3% of the student respondents are sophomores, and one hundred and four (104) or 26% of the student respondents are juniors. This means that majority of the student respondents are sophomores. This may be taken to mean that the students are at the appropriate year level considering their age.

Assessment of Student Respondents on their Academic Performance

Table 3.2 shows the academic performance of the student respondents as evident in their grades.

Table 3.2
Pretest Scores of the Student Respondents on their Academic Performance

	Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	SD
Students' Academic Performance (Grades)	70	18	4.5%	**81.59**	**7.22**
	71	18	4.5%		
	72	19	4.8%		
	73	15	3.8%		
	74	24	6.0%		
	75	13	3.3%		
	76	23	5.8%		
	77	12	3.0%		
	78	7	1.8%		
	79	14	3.5%		
	80	22	5.5%		
	81	4	1.0%		
	82	19	4.8%		
	83	19	4.8%		
	84	16	4.0%		
	85	20	5.0%		
	86	15	3.8%		
	87	17	4.3%		
	88	14	3.5%		
	89	18	4.5%		
	90	17	4.3%		
	91	21	5.3%		
	92	10	2.5%		
	93	15	3.8%		

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	94	10	2.5%		

Table 3.2 shows the academic performance of the student respondents as evident in their grades.

As can be seen, eighteen (18) or about 4.5% of the students have a grade of 70, eighteen (18) or about 4.5% of the students have a grade of 71, nineteen (19) or about 4.8% of the students have a grade of 72, fifteen (15) or about 3.8% of the students have a grade of 73, twenty-four (24) or about 6% of the students have a grade of 74, thirteen (13) or about 3.3% of the students have a grade of 75, twenty-three (23) or about 5.8% of the students have a grade of 76, twelve (12) or about 3% of the students have a grade of 77, seven (7) or about 1.8% of the students have a grade of 78, fourteen (14) or about 3.5% of the students have a grade of 79, twenty-two (22) or about 5.5% of the students have a grade of 80, four (4) or about 1% of the students have a grade of 81, nineteen (19) or about 4.8% of the students have a grade of 82, nineteen (19) or about 4.8% of the students have a grade of 83, sixteen (16) or about 4% of the students have a grade of 84, twenty (20) or about 5% of the students have a grade of 85, fifteen (15) or about 3.8% of the students have a grade of 86, seventeen (17) or about 4.3% of the students have a grade of 87, fourteen (14) or about 3.5% of the students have a grade of 88, eighteen (18) or about 4.5% of the students have a grade of 89, seventeen (17) or about 4.3% of the students have a grade of 90, twenty-one (21) or about 5.3% of the students have a grade of 91, ten (10) or about 5.5% of the students have a grade of 92, fifteen (15) or about 3.8% of the students have a grade of 93, and ten (10) or about 5.5% of the students have a grade of 94. This shows that majority of the student respondents received a grade of 74, which shows a very low academic performance among the students. This is indicative of the poor performance of the students with respect to the grade of the students, but it should be noted that the frequency of grades of the students are too close to each other. The mean score obtained, 81.59, however shows that the students have a good performance which contradicts the majority of scores found among the students. This may mean that there are more students with grades higher than the average score. This indicates that the students have an average academic performance with respect to their grades.

Assessment of Student Respondents on the Caring Behavior of the Teachers

Table 3.3 shows the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers.

Table 3.2
Assessment of Student-Respondents on the Caring Behavior of the Teachers

My teacher shows he/she cares by . . .	Mean	Qualitative Description	Interpretation
1. noticing me	2.31	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
2. smiling at me	2.22	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
3. learning my name	2.34	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
4. looking at me in the eye when he/she talks to them	2.24	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
5. asking me about myself	2.32	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
6. letting me tell him/her how I feel	2.32	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
7. listening to my stories	2.33	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
8. laughing at my joke	2.27	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
9. answering my questions	2.26	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
10. asking my opinions	2.27	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
11. giving me his/her undivided attention	2.31	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
12. believing what I say	2.29	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
13. telling me what he she likes about me	2.29	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
14. delighting in my discoveries	2.27	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring

15.	applauding my success	2.31	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
16.	tolerating my interruptions	2.31	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
17.	letting me act my age	2.33	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
18.	telling me how much he/she likes being with me	2.31	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
19.	accepting me as I am	2.31	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
20.	telling me about myself	2.36	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
21.	being nice to them	2.38	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
22.	being honest with me	2.28	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
23.	keeping the promises, he/she makes to me	2.32	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
24.	telling me what he/she expects from me	2.30	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
25.	respecting me	2.26	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
26.	believing in me	2.32	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
27.	making time to be with me	2.28	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
28.	being excited when he/she sees me	2.33	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
29.	noticing when I grow	2.35	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
30.	remembering my birthday	2.33	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
31.	introducing me to other learners in school not only in my class	2.34	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
32.	meeting his/her friends in school	2.40	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
33.	calling me on the phone just to say hi	2.34	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
34.	including me in conversations with other learners	2.33	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
35.	giving me his / her mobile number.	2.44	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
36.	sending me an email or message	2.32	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
37.	finding a common interest with me	2.29	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
38.	doing what I like to do	2.27	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
39.	listening to my favorite music	2.33	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
40.	contributing to my collections	2.31	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
41.	showing up at my games and special events	2.30	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
42.	reading aloud together	2.33	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
43.	sharing a meal together	2.31	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
44.	going to school if it permits	2.32	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
45.	building something together	2.29	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
46.	making decisions together	2.27	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
47.	helping me learn something new	2.29	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
48.	asking me to help him/her with something	2.28	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
49.	encouraging them to help others	2.32	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
50.	letting me make mistakes	2.28	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
51.	admitting when we (the teacher–adviser and the learners) make a mistake	2.30	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring

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52. suggesting better behavior when I act up or out	2.37	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
53. helping me take a stand, then he /she stands with me	2.29	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
54. telling me how proud he/she is proud of me	2.37	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
55. encouraging me to think big	2.32	Somewhat Evident	Somehow Caring
Composite Mean	2.31	**Somewhat Evident**	**Somehow Caring**

Legend: 3.51-4.00 Highly Evident/ Very Caring; 2.51-3.50 Evident / Caring; 1.51-2.50 Somewhat Evident/ Somehow Caring; 1.00-1.50 Not Evident/ Not Caring

Taking into consideration the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers, the highest mean of 2.44, with the qualitative description of the students evaluating that this is somewhat evident among the teachers and is interpreted as the teachers showing that they are somehow caring, was found for item 35 which states that the teachers show that they care by giving me his/her mobile number. Once teachers become teachers, you care, not just about education, but about your students' education. Great teachers care about their students. They want them to succeed and are committed to helping them achieve their goals. Moreover, teachers care about their students' happiness, well-being and life beyond the classroom.

Science has found that students who have caring relationships with teachers are academically more successful and show greater "pro-social" (or kind, helpful) behavior. A caring teacher can transform the school experience, especially for students who face enormous difficulties, such as dropping out or dysfunctional home lives. One student who faced these kinds of hardships told a researcher that the greatest thing a teacher can do is to care and to understand. "Because if not," he said, "the kid will say, 'Oh, they're giving up on me, so I might as well give up on myself.'"

Teachers are effective when they deeply care about the learning of each student. As Noddings (1992, 27) emphasized, "Caring is the very bedrock of all successful education." Teachers who believe in their students' abilities demonstrate that they care by placing the learners at the center of the educational process. With this focus on caring foremost, teachers engage students actively in the learning process. This engagement is essential for learning to be fun, meaningful, and enduring. The caring teacher continually reflects on and refines his or her instructional approaches to ensure that the needs of each student are met.

On the other hand, the lowest mean of 2.22, with the qualitative description of the students evaluating that this is somewhat evident among the teachers and is interpreted as the teachers showing that they are somehow caring, was found for item 2 which states that teachers show that they care by smiling at the students. Smiling has been found to correlate highly with successful outcomes for teachers: having a good grin gets good grades. This is largely down to its effect on lowering stress, facilitating empathy and building relationships. A smile is also contagious - if the teachers smile, the students will likely smile too.

One prominent strand in this literature has explored smiling and laughter within situations that involve humour and (language) play (e.g. Cekaite & Aronsson, 2004; Cekaite & Aronsson, 2005; Hasegawa, 2018; Liang, 2015; Matsumoto, 2014; Reddington & Waring, 2015). Many such studies have been conducted in second language (L2) classroom contexts, exploring among other things how humour and play can offer resources for language learning (e.g. Hasegawa, 2018) and what kinds of L2 interactional competencies humour demands from students (e.g. Matsumoto, 2014).

Humour itself is a broad phenomenon, which does not always have the celebratory sense referred to by Glenn and Holt (2013) but may sometimes involve teasing and 'banter'. This is tangible in situations where smiles or laughter are used to manage normative transgressions in the classroom, as a way to modulate the actions/turns-at-talk they accompany. For example, sometimes teachers smile or laugh to mark their responses to incongruous, 'cheeky' or otherwise disruptive student actions as sarcastic (Hazel & Mortensen, 2017; Lehtimaja, 2011; Piirainen-Marsh, 2011) or to playfully tease students for different kinds of transgressions (İçbay & Yıldırım, 2013; Jakonen, 2016; Looney & Kim, 2018). In these kinds of activity environments where the moral order of classroom-based education becomes questioned by students, smiling or laughing can be a way for the teacher to "build on the humour and relational work that such exchanges involve, but also accomplish evaluations which mark student actions as going too far", as Piirainen-Marsh (2011, p. 373) argues is the case for irony. Therefore, as Looney and Kim (2018, p. 68) also highlight, a potentially relevant feature in trying to analytically understand the purpose of teacher smiles

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is to look at how students' prior turns align or misalign with the on-going activity and its demands for locally appropriate student conduct.

As a student's resource, laughter-relevant practices can be employed for a range of actions in environments involving interactional, institutional or epistemic trouble (e.g. Andrén & Cekaite, 2016; Degoumois et al., 2017; Jacknick, 2013; Petitjean & González-Martínez, 2015; Sert & Jacknick, 2015). Petitjean and González-Martínez (2015, p. 102) argue that laughter and smiling are economical resources because they allow "students to simultaneously index interactional trouble and minimize it" (see also Looney and Kim, 2018). An uninvited laughter or smile alongside a student's verbal response turn can be a way to pre-empt (in turn-initial position) and modulate (in mid-turn or post-turn) its problematic nature (Petitjean & González-Martínez, 2015) or soften the sensitive action of student-initiated challenges presented to the teacher (Jacknick, 2013; Merke, 2012). A student's smile can also be treated as an action in its own right. This is the case when a smile with no verbal accompaniment in response to the teacher's question is treated as a display of lack of knowledge or unwillingness to participate in instructional talk (Sert & Jacknick, 2015; see also Matsumoto, 2018).

The overall mean of 2.31 shows that the students evaluated their teachers and observed that being caring is somewhat evident among the teachers and is interpreted as the teachers showing that they are somehow caring. Caring teachers build relationships with their students. They believe in each student's ability to achieve and shape the teaching-learning process by placing the learner at the center. Effective teachers actively engage students' minds while transferring to them greater responsibility for their learning. The teacher who cares is dedicated to a lifelong quest to become the best teacher possible in order to create the optimal learning environment for students.

The theory of the Pygmalion effect, or self-fulfilling prophecy, when applied to education posits that if teachers continuously show that they believe in students' abilities, almost all students will respond with greater effort. Pedersen, Faucher, and Eaton (1978) described the long-term impact on student learning of one remarkable first-grade teacher. The children she taught, despite their challenging life circumstances, achieved at higher levels than other students throughout their years in school. As adults, all recalled how much this teacher cared. They emphasized that her confidence in their abilities helped them believe in themselves and become productive citizens. Caring teachers nurture relationships with students through affirming students' efforts and talents.

These teachers realize that learning is much more likely to occur when positive, reinforcing comments outnumber critical comments. While teachers will, at times, provide constructive critiques of the performances of students, caring teachers persistently reward the efforts of students, their learning from mistakes, and their not giving up even though they sometimes struggle to learn. Caring teachers' expectations contribute to students' feelings that their efforts will be rewarded as learning becomes more meaningful.

A great example of a caring teacher was Anne Sullivan, who believed that Helen Keller could learn to read and write, even though others doubted this was possible for a deaf and blind person. A book of tribute by Helen Keller (1985), entitled Teacher, affirmed that Keller knew how much Sullivan cared. Another teacher who deeply cared was Jaime Escalante, who developed a program to help poor, ethnic minority students in East Los Angeles achieve remarkable success in mathematics (Escalante & Dirmann 1990). Escalante refused to accept the prevailing attitude that these youth could not overcome past educational deprivations. Rather, he championed that if these students were taught effectively by a caring teacher, they would pass advanced placement tests in preparation for college; and they did.

The caring teacher uses multiple instructional approaches and provides diverse learning experiences to engage students' interest and learning (DeCastro-Ambrosetti & Cho, 2005). Action-based or experiential learning teams and problem-based learning are more successful than lectures in helping students see the relevance of what they are expected to learn as well as in helping them remember and apply what they are learning (Bassis 2003; DiLisi et al. 2006; Krockover et al. 2002; McCarthy & Anderson 2000). Alvarez (2002), reporting on the establishment of a grade 6–12 charter school by the University of California–San Diego for under-represented groups at that institution, stated that the curriculum should be designed to address student motivation and engagement by focusing on teaching for understanding. That is, when students are engaged, they are more likely to learn.

Caring teachers establish clear and realistic expectations for the quality of class participation, homework assignments, individual and group projects, collaborative learning experiences, problem-solving exercises, and examinations (Cabrera, Crissman, and Bernal 2002; Colbeck, Campbell, and Bjorklund 2000). In doing so, teachers challenge students to engage with and think critically about real problems, not just memorize facts and regurgitate them on tests (Hernandez, Kaplan, and Schwartz 2006).

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Significant Differences in the Assessment of Student-Respondents on the Caring Behavior of the Teachers

Tables 3.4 to 3.6 show the significant differences in the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers when the respondent's demographic profiles are taken as test factors.

Table 3.4
Differences in the Assessment of Student-Respondents on the Caring Behavior of the Teachers According to Age

	Group	Mean	SD	F-value	Sig	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Age	19 years old	2.32	.22	.50	.83	Accepted	Not Significant
	20 years old	2.33	.11				
	21 years old	2.31	.13				
	22 years old	2.33	.14				
	23 years old	2.30	.13				
	24 years old	2.30	.12				
	25 years old	2.29	.10				
	26 years old	2.31	.13				
	Total	2.31	.13				

In terms of age, a computed F-value of 0.50 and a significance value of 0.83 were identified. Since the significance value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted which means that there is no significant difference in the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers when their age is taken as a test factor. This means that there is no difference in the assessment of the student respondents on the general happiness scale despite the difference in the age of the students. This may be taken to mean that the older and younger students have similar assessments of the caring behavior of the teachers. Thus, the factor age does not affect the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers.

Table 3.5
Differences in the Assessment of Student-Respondents on the Caring Behavior of the Teachers According to Sex

	Group	Mean	SD	F-value	Sig	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Sex	Male	2.30	.12	1.93	.22	Accepted	Not Significant
	Female	2.32	.14				
	Total	2.31	.13				

In terms of sex, a computed F-value of 1.93 and a significance value of 0.22 were identified. Since the significance value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted which means that there is no significant difference in the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers when the respondents are grouped according to sex. This means that there is no difference in the assessment of student

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respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers although there is a difference in the sex of the students. This may be taken to mean that the male and female students have similar assessment of the caring behavior of the teachers. Thus, the factor sex does not affect the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers.

Table 3.6
Differences in the Assessment of Student-Respondents on the Caring Behavior of the Teachers According to Year Level

	Group	Mean	SD	F-value	Sig	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Year Level	Freshmen	2.29	.14	2.63	.07	Accepted	Not Significant
	Sophomore	2.32	.13				
	Junior	2.30	.12				
	Total	2.31	.13				

In terms of year level, a computed F-value of 2.63 and a significance value of 0.07 were identified. Since the significance value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted which means that there is no significant difference in the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers when their grade level is taken as a test factor. This means that there is no difference in the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers considering the difference in the year level of the students. This may be taken to mean that the students in the lower grade levels and those in the higher grade levels have similar assessment of the caring behavior of the teachers. Thus, the factor grade level does not affect the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers.

Significant Differences in the Academic Performance Grades

Table 3.7 to 3.9 show the significant differences in the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance when the respondent's demographic profiles are taken as test factors.

Table 3.7
Differences in the Assessment of Student-Respondents on the Academic Performance According to Age

	Group	Mean	SD	F-value	Sig	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Age	19 years old	83.00	6.25	1.05	.39	Accepted	Not Significant
	20 years old	81.96	7.29				
	21 years old	81.69	6.79				
	22 years old	80.84	7.17				
	23 years old	81.89	7.43				
	24 years old	79.16	7.60				
	25 years old	81.50	8.15				
	26 years old	85.27	6.35				

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Total	81.59	7.22				

In terms of age, a computed F-value of 1.05 and a significance value of 0.39 were identified. Since the significance value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted which means that there is no significant difference in the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance when their age is taken as a test factor. This means that there is no difference in the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance despite the difference in the age of the students. This may be taken to mean that the older and younger students have similar assessment of their academic performance. Thus, the factor age does not affect the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance.

Table 3.8
Differences in the Assessment of Student-Respondents on the Academic Performance According to Sex

	Group	Mean	SD	F-value	Sig	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Sex	Male	81.09	7.05	2.69	.47	Accepted	Not Significant
	Female	82.19	7.35				
	Total	81.59	7.22				

In terms of sex, a computed F-value of 2.69 and a significance value of 0.47 were identified. Since the significance value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted which means that there is no significant difference in the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance when the respondents are grouped according to sex. This means that there is no difference in the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance although there is a difference in the sex of the students. This may be taken to mean that the male and female students have similar assessment of their academic performance. Thus, the factor sex does not affect the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance.

Table 3.9
Differences in the Assessment of Student-Respondents on their Learning Styles According to Year Level

	Group	Mean	SD	F-value	Sig	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Year Level	Freshmen	81.73	6.64	.51	.59	Accepted	Not Significant
	Sophomore	81.84	7.45				
	Junior	80.98	7.33				
	Total	81.59	7.22				

In terms of grade level, a computed F-value of 0.51 and a significance value of 0.59 were identified. Since the significance value is greater than 0.05 level of significance, the null hypothesis is accepted which means that there is no significant difference in the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance when their grade level is taken as a test factor. This means that there is no difference in the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance although there is a difference in the student's year level. This may be taken to mean that the students in the lower year level have the same assessment of their academic performance as that of the students in the higher grade levels. Thus, the factor year level does not affect the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance.

Significant Differences in the Assessment of Student-Respondents on the Caring Behavior of the Teachers and Academic Performance

Table 3.10 shows the difference in the assessment of student-respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the assessment of student-respondents on their academic performance.

Table 3.10
Difference on Assessment of the Student-Respondents on the Caring Behavior of the Teachers and Academic Performance

Variable	Profile	Mean	SD	R-value	Sig	Decision on Ho	Interpretation
Student Assessment	Academic Performance	81.59	7.22	-.00	.97	Accepted	Not Significant
	Caring behavior of the Teachers	2.31	.13				

Comparing the assessment of the student respondents on caring behavior of their teachers and their assessment of their academic performance, a computed R-value of .00 and a significance value of 0.00 were identified. The R-value indicates no correlation between the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and their academic performance. This means that the two variables do not have any relationship and that an increase in one does not affect in any way the other variable. The correlation co-efficient also indicates that the relationship between the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students is nonexistent. This may mean that the caring behavior of their teachers is an independent factor which does not seem to be related to the academic performance of the students, and the inverse of this. As such, the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students are not related with one another. Hence, the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students were found to have no correlation.

Conclusion
1. The demographic profile of the student respondents revealed that majority of the student respondents are within 23 years old, are males in terms of sex, and are sophomores.
2. The grades of the students are indicative of the poor performance of the students with respect to the grade of the students, but it should be noted that the frequency of grades of the students are too close to each other. The mean, however, shows that the students have a good performance which contradicts the majority of scores found among the students. This indicates that the students have an average academic performance with respect to their grades.
3. The teachers show that they care by giving me his/her mobile number. Once teachers become teachers, you care, not just about education, but about your students' education. Great teachers care about their students. They want them to succeed and are committed to helping them achieve their goals. Moreover, teachers care about their students' happiness, well-being and life beyond the classroom.
4. The teachers show that they care by smiling at the students. Smiling has been found to correlate highly with successful outcomes for teachers: having a good grin gets good grades. This is largely down to its effect on lowering stress, facilitating empathy and building relationships. A smile is also contagious - if the teachers smile, the students will likely smile too.
5. The students evaluated their teachers and observed that being caring is somewhat evident among the teachers and is interpreted as the teachers showing that they are somehow caring. Caring teachers build relationships with their students. They believe in each student's ability to achieve and shape the teaching-learning process by placing the learner at the center. Effective teachers actively engage students' minds

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while transferring to them greater responsibility for their learning. The teacher who cares is dedicated to a lifelong quest to become the best teacher possible in order to create the optimal learning environment for students.

6. The factors age, sex, and grade level do not affect the assessment of student respondents on the caring behavior of the teachers.
7. The factors age, sex, and grade level do not affect the assessment of student respondents on their academic performance.
8. The caring behavior of their teachers is an independent factor which does not seem to be related to the academic performance of the students, and the inverse of this. As such, the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students are not related with one another. Hence, the assessment of the student respondents on the caring behavior of their teachers and the academic performance of the students were found to have no correlation.

Recommendations
1. Establish specific standards for caring and respectful behavior and guidelines for unacceptable language and conduct. Encourage students to think about why certain words and actions can be hurtful. Consider enlisting students to establish the standards and to hold each other accountable.
2. Don't just put values and expectations in the mission statement or on a poster — talk about what they mean at school assemblies, expect school staff to model them, and incorporate them into their daily practice. For example, give students regular opportunities to pitch in to support the community. Let students give "shout outs" or awards to each other for especially kind behavior. Provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on whether they are modeling the school's values.
3. Create opportunities to practice taking another's perspective and imagining what others are thinking. Play charades, role-play, read and discuss books, and use "what would you do?" style vignettes or case studies.
4. Encourage students to reach out to new students or students with whom they are not familiar. Have students interview a classmate or other member of the school community who is outside their circle of friends and then create a video or short narrative about that person.
5. Engage students in a circle of concern exercise in which they consider who is inside and who is outside their circle of concern. This kind of activity can lead to more diverse relationships and serves as a starting point for further reflection and discussion.

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