



Bridging the Gap: Comparative Analysis of Academic Support and Teacher-Student Relationships in Faith-Based Schools Across Regional and Urban Contexts

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Abstract

This article investigates the association between teachers providing academic support to their students and student's perceptions of their relationships with their teachers, with a focus on the role of geographical location. Utilising the Revised School Climate Measure, this pilot study surveyed 522 students across four Australian faith-based schools—two urban, and two regional schools. The data were analysed using a combination of correlations, one-way MANOVA and binomial regression. The results indicate that academic support is a contributing factor to students in regional schools reporting stronger relationships with their teachers compared to their urban peers. This study provides a foundation for future research and could be replicated on a larger scale. The implications offer school leaders and policymakers additional information to help address areas of disadvantage within regional Australian schools, while also highlighting the need for further investigation in this area.

Keywords: *school climate, academic support, teacher-student relationships, Australian schools*

Introduction

Students in regional, remote and rural communities generally experience lower academic achievement and school outcomes compared to their urban peers (Guenther et al., 2023; Halsey, 2018). This disparity arises from various factors, including school-based challenges such as small class sizes, composite classes, and a lack of specialist teachers. Additionally, regional cohorts are often impacted by community incidents like severe weather and tragic events (Halsey, 2018). Subsequently, there is an increased burden in terms of emotional toil and workload on teachers within schools in regional communities. In response to these challenges, relationships between teachers and students in regional schools have become increasingly important, not only for students but also for the broader community. These relationships appear to motivate teachers to become highly invested in their students' academic success (Angelini et al., 2021). Consequently, teachers in regional schools often dedicate more time to providing academic support to their students to maintain and improve academic achievement (Kingsford-Smith et al., 2023). However, the relationship between geographical location, teacher-provided academic support, and students' perceptions of their relationships with teachers remains understudied.

This research aims to investigate this connection, exploring how the unique context of regional schools might influence the interplay between academic support and teacher-student relationships, with a specific focus on faith-based educational settings.

Schools often provide more academic support to help students improve their performance (Halsey, 2018). This can involve innovative curriculum deployment, dedicated support programs,

and greater community activities designed to ensure that students derive meaning from their educational experience and see broader impacts into the community (Halsey, 2018). In many circumstances, the schools become a quasi-community hub, as the community uses the school to forge connections with each other. These programs seek to make academic activities more accessible and interesting to students, with clear and explicit links to practical applications (Angelini et al., 2021). Because of this, the role of the teacher-student relationship is vital to ensuring that schools in regional communities maintain a positive climate and high levels of school satisfaction and academic achievement.

Current research into the role of teacher-student relationships has not focussed on regional schools' unique situation in sufficient detail. For example, even accounting for different sample sizes, Gavidia-Payne et al. (2015) focussed their results on pastoral care and student wellbeing, as opposed to examining academic achievement. Zhou et al. (2021) compared teacher-student relationships in mathematics classes in rural and urban China. The findings from both Gavidia-Payne et al. (2015) and Zhou et al. (2021) indicated that students in rural areas had closer relationships with their teachers and received additional academic support compared to their urban peers.

This study aims to explore the relationship between academic support, teacher-student relationships, and geographical location in Australian schools. Specifically, there was an attempt to address the following research questions:

1. Do students in regional schools report stronger relationships with their teachers compared to their urban counterparts?
2. Is there a connection between the level of academic support provided and the strength of teacher-student relationships?
3. How does the geographical location of a school influence the interplay between academic support and teacher-student relationships?

To investigate these questions, this paper will examine existing research on academic support and teacher relationships, providing clear definitions for these concepts within the context of our study. This paper will then utilise the Academic Support and Teacher Relationship domains from the Revised School Climate Measure [RSCM] (Zullig et al., 2015) to collect and analyse data from four faith-based Australian K-12 schools, two regional and two urban, during 2021 and 2022.

This research aims to contribute to our understanding of how geographical location may influence the dynamics of academic support and teacher-student relationships in Australian schools. The findings may have implications for educational policy and practice, particularly in addressing the unique challenges faced by regional faith-based schools.

What is Academic Support?

Academic support is specific teacher-led interventions with students in one-on-one or small-group settings to support student achievement (Moreira et al., 2018). Academic support goes beyond general class instruction but focuses on the teacher adapting their pedagogy to ensure that students understand what they need to do to succeed (Angelini et al., 2021). It is in this context that the teacher-student relationship is further strengthened, as Angelini et al. (2021) note, that the teacher not only provides the student with tailored support, but also provides the student with emotional support. Emotional support considers the student's perspective of the task, with the teacher empathising with the student's challenges (Angelini et al., 2021). In adopting this approach, the teacher can better adapt and adjust how they explain and guide the student through the task that has been assigned. This, in turn, allows the student to feel supported and that the teacher has considered their needs when approaching the task at hand.

Beyond the emotional support provided by teachers, the type of academic support provided can involve small groups where students with similar needs are brought together and taught the same way (Bolic Baric et al., 2016). This is most likely a different way from extensive classroom instruction however it is not necessarily effective for students (Bolic Baric et al., 2016). Individualised support allows the teacher to adapt their delivery method to match student needs and interests (Yates et al., 2021). Since to the growth of online learning in Australian schools, students found that individualised academic support was most effective in maintaining their academic results (Archer, 2012; Ronksley-Pavia & Neumann, 2022; Yates et al., 2021). Individualised academic support in this context also includes the use of differentiated pedagogical techniques. Differentiated pedagogical techniques can have a significant influence on student results in regional schools, as students are able to undertake personalised learning journeys through curriculum points (Murphy, 2022). This enhances teacher-student relationships and helps to create a positive school climate, as students perceive the learning environment as supportive and a contributory factor to school connectedness (Zullig et al., 2011).

Teacher-Student Relationships

Teacher-student relationships are a hallmark of a positive school climate (Zullig et al., 2010, 2011). A positive school climate helps ensure that all students are satisfied with their experience and are inspired to do their best pastorally, academically and in extra-curricular activities (Zullig et al., 2011). Teacher-student relationships have been shown to assist students in navigating life-stage transitions (Longobardi et al., 2016), improving academic self-efficacy (Hughes et al., 2012; Hughes & Chen, 2011; Martin, 2014), enhancing student wellbeing (García-Moya et al., 2020; Krane et al., 2016; Sointu et al., 2017), the sense of safety within the school (Lenzi et al., 2017) and even family dynamics (Gavidia-Payne et al., 2015). Therefore, it is not unexpected that positive teacher-student relationships have an impact on the students individually but also on the community. Hence, teacher-student relationships are meaningful in a regional school for both academic development as well as community benefits.

Recent research into teacher-student relationships has centred on the impact of positive relationships on student outcomes. Virat (2022) undertook an examination of the role that compassion has on student connectedness. In this context, compassionate is part of the attributes that teachers within faith-based schools need to display to be effective in their role (Sprecher & Fehr, 2005). This is in the same vein as the findings from Morgan & Cieminski (2021), which identified the role of adult support as a critical element for student motivation and connectedness. If students feel cared for and supported by the critical adults in their school life, then it follows that they will feel connected to the school environment and thus be inspired to achieve academically in schools. Barksdale et. al. (2021) noted that when extended across an entire classroom, the connectedness facilitated by the teacher can inspire group-level achievement.

As students in regional schools often require further academic support than their urban counterparts to achieve similar grades (Halsey, 2018), there is a need to examine the impact of teacher-student relationships on academic outcomes. Teachers are often identified as significantly impacting students' motivation levels. This is motivation to succeed and keep a significant adult in their lives happy and approve of their behaviour. Hughes et. al. (2012) note that these relationships are vital, especially in the early primary school years. The quality of teacher-student relationships can help predict behavioural issues and academic performance from the commencement of primary school to the later years of primary schooling (Hughes et al., 2012; Spilt et al., 2012). Similar observations can be made in secondary education as well. However, results are not as strong in larger classes (Allen et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2021), which can often be the norm in secondary school contexts (McGrath-Champ et al., 2018). When replicated across an entire cohort or classroom, students support each other in the same vein that a teacher

would (Barksdale et al., 2021). This involves providing academic and social support, with students looking to the teacher as a model of interacting with each other (Barksdale et al., 2021).

When magnified across an entire school, positive teacher-student relationships can make the classroom a protective factor for students. Regional communities are susceptible to significant events such as natural disasters, so students and their families lean into the school for additional support (Edwards & Baxter, 2013). This is because the school is identified as a positive place for students, and there is a more vital willingness for the students and their families to engage positively with the school's academic program (Gavidia-Payne et al., 2015; Lenzi et al., 2017; Ulviye et al., 2018). It then falls onto the teacher to spend more time with students to improve their academic outcomes. Given that regional schools have smaller class sizes than urban schools (Halsey, 2018), the relationships that develop within the classroom in regional schools are of higher quality than in urban schools because of the environment of the classroom (Allen et al., 2013; Zhou et al., 2021).

Challenges of Regional Schools

Research consistently indicates a relationship between a school's geographic location and students' academic achievement levels (Halsey, 2018; Pegg & Panizzon, 2007; Sullivan et al., 2013, 2018). While the reasons for this disparity are complex and multifaceted, some researchers have suggested that current funding distribution models in Australia may favour urban schools (Chesters & Cuervo, 2022; Halsey, 2018). However, it's important to note that other factors likely contribute to these differences, including socioeconomic variations in school communities, cultural differences, local employment opportunities, and attitudes towards education (Archer et al., 2024; Chesters & Cuervo, 2022; Halsey, 2018).

One significant challenge faced by regional schools is the difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers (Dalley-Trim & Alloway, 2010; Downes & Roberts, 2018; Murphy, 2020). This staffing issue may further constrain student achievement and opportunities in regional communities (Beswick et al., 2019). The interplay of these various factors creates a complex educational landscape in regional areas, warranting further investigation into how these challenges might influence teacher-student relationships and academic support.

Teachers working in regional schools often shoulder greater responsibilities that extend beyond the classroom. In addition to navigating the inherent challenges of regional education, these teachers frequently take on prominent roles within their communities. As a result, they become more recognisable figures, playing a significant part not only in their students' lives but also in the broader community (Gavidia-Payne et al., 2015; Thiele et al., 2023). The ongoing provision of education, consistent operation of classes, and presence as a stable figure in students' lives can have a comforting effect that extends into the wider community (Berger et al., 2018; Coombe et al., 2015; Nye, 2016). This expanded role, while potentially rewarding, can also place significant pressure on teachers in regional schools.

Halsey (2018) notes that teachers in regional areas often face unique challenges, which may include dealing with the impacts of community events on their students' lives and learning. These circumstances underscore the importance of strong student-teacher relationships within regional schools, as teachers often serve as a source of stability and support for their students and the community at large.

Young people in regional communities often face unique challenges in obtaining educational qualifications (Cuervo, 2014). Many are acutely aware of their geographical isolation and the additional hurdles this creates, particularly in terms of teacher recruitment. This is supported by Pini et al. (2010) who noted most students showed significant appreciation of teachers in their schools when there are multiple opportunities in urban settings they could be working in. Within

both Cuervo (2014) and Pini et al.'s (2010) studies, students frequently cited their relationships with educators as a significantly positive influence in their lives.

In regional schools, a considerable number of students recognize the extra time, effort, and energy their teachers invest in their learning. These educators often strive to personalize the learning experience, balancing the complexities of the curriculum while making it relevant to the students' geographic location (Halsey, 2018; Waldrip et al., 2014).

According to Murphy (2022), academic support in these contexts typically involves higher levels of differentiation and one-on-one instruction. However, it's crucial to note that while these observations are significant, they may not encompass the experiences of all students in regional schools. The culmination of this indicates that students in regional schools require additional academic support compared to their urban peers. As a result of this, the relationships between teachers and students grow as teachers can invest more time, effort and energy into working alongside their students. Therefore, it can be expected that students in regional schools will report more positive relationships with their teachers than students in urban schools.

Methodology

This study was part of a broader project examining school climate and faith engagement. Students in faith-based schools were invited to complete an adapted version of the Revised School Climate Measure [RSCM] (Zullig et al., 2015). This measure enables assessments to be made from large, multi-school datasets and provides data for schools to make practical adjustments to improve the overall climate (Zullig et al., 2011). The RSCM measure developed by Zullig et al. (2015) has advantages over other measures due to its preliminary testing in multiple countries and cultural backgrounds. As Australian schools become more reflective of a multicultural society (Davies, 2023), the reliability and validity of a school climate measure relevant to children from diverse backgrounds is paramount. Previous studies that have utilised the RSCM and its predecessor have demonstrated reliability and validity with white, urban students (Zullig et al., 2010), Latinx migrants (Zullig et al., 2014), students from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Zullig et al., 2017) and Australian urban students (Petrie et al., 2019). The proven efficacy of the measure across these contexts provides confidence that the measure is an appropriate tool for the project.

Sample

This analysis examines responses from four Australian comprehensive (K-12) schools, two in urban areas (one in Western Australia and another in New South Wales) and two in regional areas (one in Queensland, one in New South Wales). The schools were chosen based on a convenience sampling method, where 12 schools were invited to participate, and the four participating schools responded. According to the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022), the two regional schools are classified as RA2 (Inner Regional community with less than 250,000 people), where the two urban schools are classified as RA1 (Major Cities). A total of 522 students participated, with 233 students from regional schools and 289 from urban schools responding to the survey (Table 2). Table 1 provides an overview of the statements students were asked to respond to and the Likert scale ratings provided.

To help to ensure responses were accurate reflections of student experiences, the final question in the RSCM asked students to use a Likert scale to respond to the statement: 'I have been honest in my answers'. Only students who responded with a 5 (Strongly Agree) or 4 (Agree) had their responses included in this study. It is noted that incorporating responses of 3 (Neutral) to 1 (Strongly Disagree) resulted in a larger statistical variation, likely due to the student responses received.

Table 1: School Climate Domains Examined in Study

Domain	Statement	Response Scale
Teacher Relationships		1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree
	Teachers understand my problems	
	Teachers and staff seem to take a real interest in my future.	
	Teachers are available when I need to talk with them.	
	It is easy to talk with teachers.	
	Students get along well with teachers.	
	Teachers at my school help us students with our problems.	
	My teachers care about me.	
	My teacher makes me feel good about myself.	
Academic Support		1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree
	I usually understand my homework assignments.	
	Teachers make it clear what work needs to be done to get the grade I want.	
	I believe that teachers expect all students to learn.	
	I feel that I can do well in this school.	

Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics for all participants who completed the survey. Most participants were Caucasian, with 233 participants from regional schools and 289 from urban schools. The urban schools had a more diverse sample size, with a nearly equal proportion of male and female-identifying students across both groups.

Table 2: Demographics: Number of Participants by age

	10 Years Old	11 Years Olds	12 Years Old	13 Years Old	14 Years Old	15 Years Old	16 Years Old	17 Years Old	18 Years Old	Total
Regional Female	10	12	18	19	12	16	13	11	1	112
Regional Male	5	8	18	18	18	24	16	8	6	121
Regional Non- Binary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Urban Female	12	11	23	17	32	19	17	9	2	142
Urban Male	9	9	23	21	42	22	9	10	1	146
Urban Non- Binary	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Total	36	40	82	75	105	81	55	38	10	522

Data Analysis and Results

All analyses were conducted using SPSS 29. As the study is comparing two domains exclusively, a Cronbach's Alpha test for reliability of items within each domain was conducted to ensure the comparisons were valid. A result of 0.79 was returned, indicating a high level of reliability between the two measures (Cronbach, 1951; Zullig et al., 2014).

A Kendall's tau-b was chosen as the most appropriate analytical method for correlation as the data examined is ordinal in nature, maintained paired observations, and there is a monotonic relationship between the two domains (Kendall, 1945; Siegel, 1956). The test was undertaken on the combined dataset of 522 responses, and then the regional schools were compared with the urban schools.

Regional schools had a significant correlation of 0.604 between the teacher relationship and academic support domains, whereas urban schools had a smaller significant correlation of 0.459. This is a difference of 0.145, indicating that the connection between academic support and teacher relationships is stronger in regional than urban schools.

To determine the effect size of the school's geographical location on student-teacher relationships in this connection between the two domains, a one-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) test was conducted. The One-Way MANOVA test was chosen as the geographic location is considered an independent variable, with the Academic Support domain and Teacher Relationship domains considered dependent variables. This enables the Hotelling's Trace test to be applied to determine the statistical significance of geographical location and the effect size (Don, 2018).

There was a statistically significant difference between the geographical location of the participants on the combined dependent variables, $F(2, 522) = 38.820, p < .001; Wilks' \Lambda = .961; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .0.39$.

A binomial logistic regression was conducted to ascertain the feasibility of establishing a model that establishes a relationship between academic support and teacher connections, considering the school's geographical location. The Box-Tidwell (1962) approach was used to evaluate the

linearity of the continuous variables in relation to the logit of the dependent variable. A Bonferroni adjustment was implemented, incorporating all eight terms in the model. This led to the acceptance of statistical significance only when the p-value was less than .0125 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). According to this evaluation, it was determined that all continuous independent variables had a linear relationship with the logit of the dependent variable.

Subsequently, this model demonstrates 13.5% of the variance between regional and urban school correlation and the effect between academic support and teacher relationships using Nagelkerke R² could be explained. Figure 1 predicts the likelihood of academic support significantly influencing student perception of teacher-student relationships in regional schools. Figure 2 provides a comparison of urban schools and regional schools as base operations.

Figure 1: Receiver Operator Characteristic Curve Predicting Interaction Between Academic Support and Teacher-Student Relationships in Regional Schools.

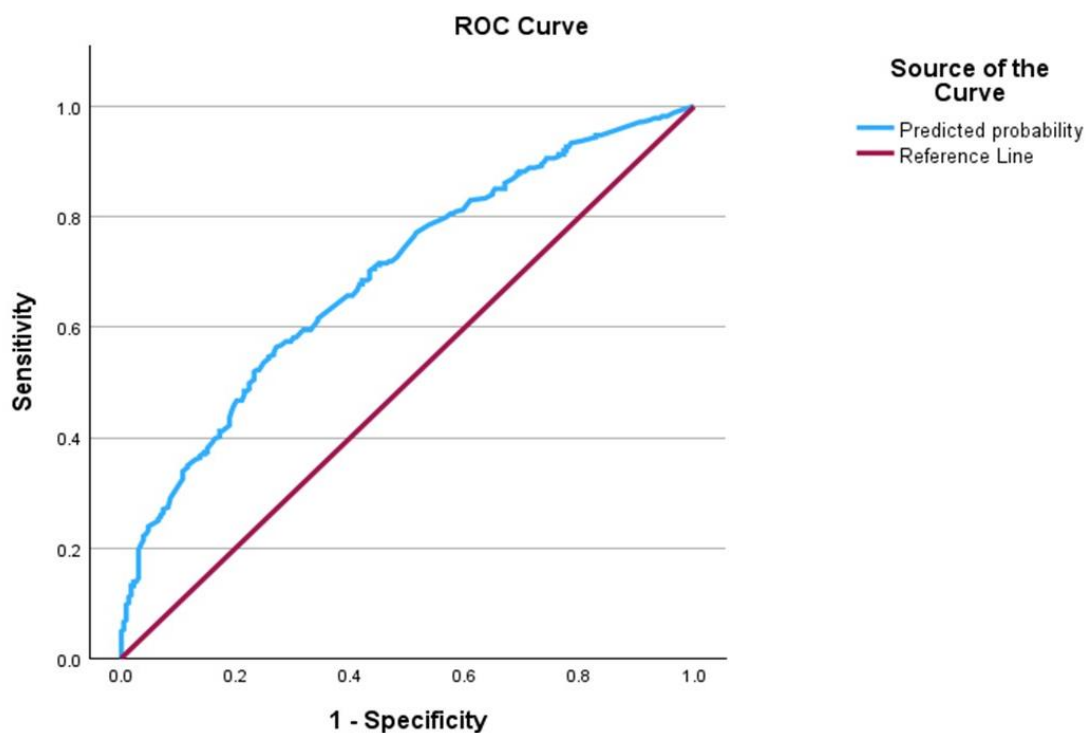
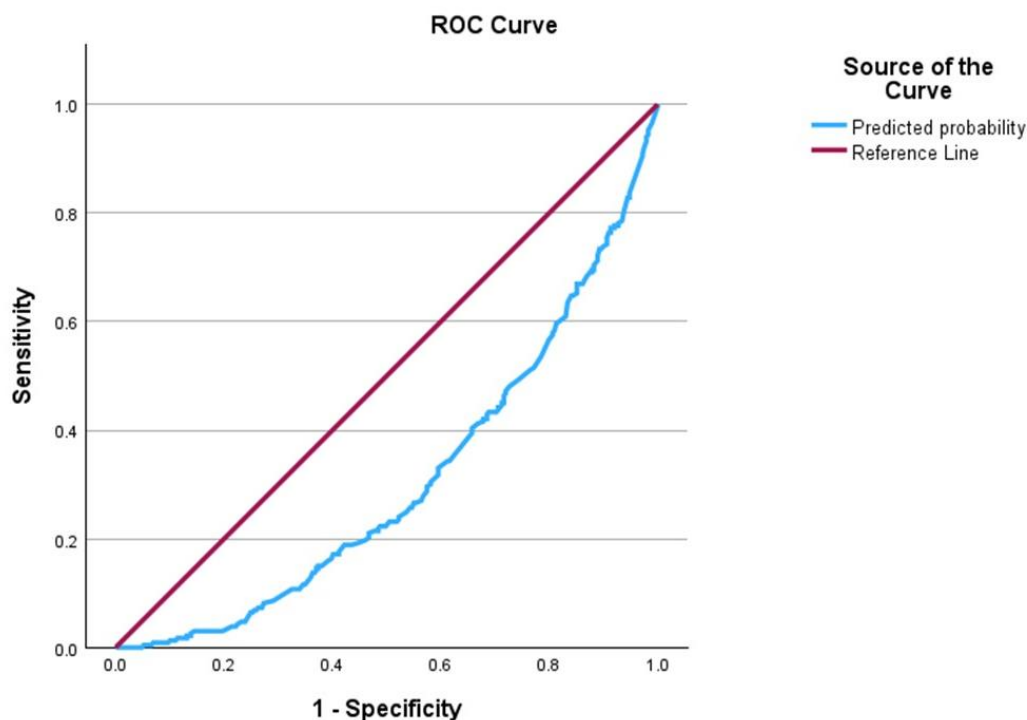


Figure 2: Receiver Operator Characteristic Curve Predicting Interaction Between Academic Support and Teacher-Student Relationships in Urban Schools, Assuming Regional Schools as a Baseline



This means that we can accurately determine that academic support significantly contributes to student perception of teacher relationships for schools in regional areas, with a small positive effect size of 0.35 (Table 3).

Table 3: Between-Subject Test Results

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Teacher Relationships	45.656 ^a	1	45.656	69.115	<.001	.035
	Academic Support	29.907 ^b	1	29.907	57.514	<.001	.030

Discussion

The analysis of data collected using the adapted RSCM (Zullig et al., 2015) indicates that students in regional schools perceive their relationships with teachers as significantly supported by the academic support provided. This is unsurprising, given that students in regional schools receive more academic support than their peers and supports the hypothesis that stronger relationships form between teachers and students as a result.

However, we must consider these findings within the context of the study's limitations. Our sample size was relatively small and convenient, focusing exclusively on faith-based schools. This specific context may have influenced the results, as faith-based schools often emphasize strong community relationships (Archer, 2023), potentially amplifying the effect we observed.

It's also worth considering whether similar patterns might emerge in other contexts where increased academic support is provided. For instance, future research could explore whether catch-up tutorial groups (post-COVID) or other academic interventions in various school settings

yield similar improvements in teacher-student relationships. While the findings suggest a connection between academic support and stronger teacher-student relationships in regional schools, we cannot definitively claim causation. The relationship may be bidirectional, with strong relationships also potentially leading to increased academic support.

Given the nature of our sample, we should be cautious about drawing broad policy implications. However, these findings do suggest that the unique situation of regional schools may create an environment where academic support plays a crucial role in fostering positive teacher-student relationships. Future research with larger, more diverse samples could help clarify whether this pattern holds true across different contexts and school types.

Implications for Schools

In this context, teacher-led academic support initiatives can positively influence overall school climate and therefore satisfaction. This is particularly important in regional communities where there is significant competition between schools for enrolments, where competitive advantage is often a paramount concern for Principals and school leaders (Abbott-Chapman et al., 2020; MacDonald et al., 2020). Principals can support teachers by providing additional training and development for staff in providing personalised academic support, including differentiation techniques. In addition, Principals need to be supported by education departments in removing administrative burdens from teachers to assist in facilitating academic support to students (Halsey, 2018). The academic support provided by teachers through differentiation is a method that not only improves academic achievement but also provides an opportunity for teachers to ensure that students are learning in a manner that is suited to their circumstances (Murphy, 2022).

Schools can also take advantage of the connection between academic support and student perception of teacher relationships regarding staff recruitment. Teachers often report that they are motivated through the relationships they establish with their students (Spilt et al., 2012; Virat, 2022; Yoon, 2002), and the connection that teachers establish with their students can serve as a motivating factor for teachers considering a school, especially early in their career. Should the Principal successfully reduce administrative burdens from their staff, there is potential for higher levels of staff retention within the school as teachers can dedicate more time to developing positive relationships with students and mentoring and supporting new and junior colleagues (Leugers, 2018). Further to this, teachers need to also be aware of the strong relationships formed by engaging with more intent with their students' academic achievement. This can have a positive impact on not only student outcomes, but also overall job satisfaction.

Implications for Policy

As a highly regulated industry, school-based education is dependent upon government decisions. There are numerous examples of government policies acting against the interests of schools in regional areas (Chesters & Cuervo, 2022; Cuervo, 2014; Halsey, 2018). However, by identifying the connection between academic support and teacher relationships in regional schools; there is an opportunity to make some positive changes. Halsey (2018) identified a need for increased government support for placement opportunities in regional areas to encourage early career teachers to consider relocating for employment (Handal et al., 2018; Richards, 2012; Trinidad et al., 2014). By providing preservice teachers and early career teachers with exposure to regional schools where academic support is a significant feature, there is the potential for early career teachers to feel engaged and motivated to commence their careers in regional schools.

A further policy initiative could be drawn from the development of the school climate measure. Departmental policies and programs that connect academic support initiatives within a school to student-teacher relationships through academic achievement could be developed. These

approaches effectively combat behavioural challenges in some rural schools in the United States (Ellis et al., 2022). With some focussed development, the potential exists for further development of similar initiatives in Australia with the consideration of school-community hub models being implemented more broadly.

Limitations and Implications for Research

Further research is required to test the model proposed in this study across multiple periods and with a larger sample size across both faith-based and non-faith-based schools. It is noted that the sample size is acceptable for the tests that have been deployed. However, a larger sample size across greater diversity of schools will enable greater model robustness and ultimately result in a more accurate model (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018). In addition, it is worth considering whether this model applies exclusively within the Australian context. Additional research in multiple countries and contexts would be beneficial to determine the model's efficacy on a global scale.

As the schools included in the broader project were all faith-based schools, applying the study design in non-faith-based schools could provide further confidence in the model's accuracy. McLure and Aldridge (2023) hypothesised that faith-based schools, explicitly Christian schools, have an additional layer of school culture that influences each domain. The potential exists for the model developed in this study to incorporate the measure developed by McLure and Aldridge to investigate the influence of religious belief in the school climate domains.

Additional research is also required to determine whether there is a connection between Academic Support, Teacher Relationships and School Satisfaction. Existing literature regarding school climate indicates connections between each domain and overall school satisfaction (Ellis et al., 2022; Zullig et al., 2011, 2021). However, this has not been tested for in this study. In addition, allowances have not been made in this study for differentiations between gender or ethnicity. This is primarily due to inadequate sample sizes – for this study to provide accurate results and demonstrate an appropriate model, there is a need to be as inclusive as possible. Therefore, non-binary genders and minority ethnicities could not be analysed in this study as the potential exists that these models and results would be inaccurate due to their small sample size (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2018).

Conclusion

Utilising the Revised School Climate Measure (Zullig et al., 2015), this study has identified that student-teacher relationships appear stronger in regional schools due in part to the higher level of academic support provided by teachers in these schools. As teachers in regional schools navigate challenges associated with disadvantage due to geography, there is greater emphasis on their ability to differentiate instruction and provide individual support to help students achieve academically. This creates an inherent tension for teachers who must balance their own resource constraints, professional isolation, and increased workloads with the heightened needs of their students. Regional teachers often find themselves extending beyond traditional instructional roles to become academic mentors, pastoral care providers, and community liaisons - roles that both enhance and complicate their relationships with students.

The relationships between teachers and students in regional settings frequently transcend traditional classroom boundaries, extending into sporting activities, community events, and informal interactions within the broader community context. This multi-faceted connection appears to strengthen the academic support relationship, as teachers develop deeper understanding of their students' lived experiences and circumstances. However, this expanded relationship scope also presents challenges for teachers in maintaining professional boundaries while remaining accessible and supportive, particularly in small communities where they may regularly encounter students and their families outside of school hours.

This degree of academic support, coupled with the broader community-embedded nature of teacher-student relationships, positively influences student perceptions of their relationships with their teachers. However, the sustainability of these intensive support relationships deserves further investigation, particularly regarding teacher wellbeing and burnout risk. Future research activities in this area are needed to test the veracity of the model with a larger sample size and in different contexts outside of Australia, while also examining the long-term implications of these expanded teacher-student relationships for both parties.

Acknowledgements

Ethics approval to undertake the broader project was obtained twelve months before the initial data collection [Avondale University Approval Number: 2017:22-2021]. A condition of the ethics approval is that the schools remain unidentifiable, and that ICSEA data for the schools is not reported on within the research to assist in the confidentiality being maintained.

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