The Impact of Short-Term Student-Teacher Relationships on Student Well-Being in Higher Education

Hanna M. Foerst

Department of Psychology, University of Twente

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Drs. Rick Pinkster, PhD Yudit Namer

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Abstract

The frequent transitions between topics and teachers in higher education can have negative consequences for student well-being, such as increased pressure and a diminished sense of belonging. This rapidness of change is especially the case for educational models such as that of the University of Twente, which is based on short, consecutive thematic modules with different topics and teachers each. This study explored the impact of short-term student-teacher relationships on student well-being and further aimed to provide suggestions for teaching staff of the University of Twente to foster positive student-teacher relationships. Qualitative descriptive methods in the form of semi-structured interviews were utilised, with 18 bachelor students of the University of Twente from various study programmes participating. For data analysis, the coding process was conducted through an inductive, thematic coding approach. It was found that, overall, while time constraints within a module pose challenges to developing an affectionate bond and receiving valuable academic support, certain factors can still positively influence the relationship. These include frequent and direct interactions, teachers being involved in helping and educating their students, and the effort of students to bond with teachers. Moreover, the students interviewed varied in their individual experiences and opinions towards student-teacher relationships, being dependent on factors such as personal preferences regarding bonding or different study programme designs allowing for more or less interaction. Considering these findings, a deepened knowledge regarding students' opinions and experiences surrounding short-term student-teacher relationships could be gathered. Most students feel that time constraints restrict their ability to form strong bonds with teachers, ultimately affecting their well-being. Further, recommendations for university teachers to improve said relationships are provided, highlighting the need for caring for and directly interacting with students. With these findings, positive contributions to students' academic experiences and well-being can be made.

Keywords: student-teacher relationships, short-term relationships, student well-being, higher education, time constraints

Contents

Introduction

Numerous universities employ an educational model that divides each curriculum into consecutive modules focusing on different themes. This can offer academic benefits such as deepened learning experiences and increased adaptability (University of Twente [UT], 2020a). However, rapid transitions between topics and teachers may create pressure for students to quickly adapt to different requirements and can impede their sense of belonging (Cage et al., 2021; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Thus, prioritising the well-being of students in a learning environment of short, consecutive modules presents itself as an important issue.

As a part of positive psychology, well-being is defined as "optimal psychological experience and functioning," as it allows people to live emotionally well and grow (Ryan & Deci, 2001, p. 1). For students in higher education, well-being entails experiencing a balance between one's academic and personal life, receiving social support from peers, family, and teachers, as well as successfully adapting to stress (Douwes et al., 2023). Further, high learner well-being is associated with high academic performance as well as improved emotional and social capabilities and self-assessment (Zheng, 2022). Nonetheless, preserving learner well-being is dependent on how much time is available to students (Kelly, 2003; Kyndt et al., 2013). For example, said researchers found that limited time to complete one's workload can result in stress, worry, hopelessness, overload, and depression. Accordingly, it is crucial for educational institutions, especially those whose educational design is based on short, consecutive modules, to care for and foster student well-being.

Student-Teacher Relationships and Student Well-Being

The interpersonal relationship between teachers and students has been shown to impact learner well-being greatly. Emphasising this, Dicker et al. (2018) explained that "learning and teaching are both deeply personal as well as professional activities, and it is unsurprising that relationships formed in the classroom impact upon learning" (p. 1432). Over time, as the relationship between student and teacher is built and developed, the interactions and relationship can impact numerous aspects related to student well-being (Jiang et al., 2022; Kiltz et al., 2020). Illustrating this, Jiang et al. (2022) found through repeated self-report surveys that, over the course of 18 months, student-teacher relationships are significantly positively correlated with student well-being, including factors such as student engagement and study satisfaction.

If a student-teacher relationship is built over time, the experienced social and emotional support can create a sense of belonging that helps students to adapt and feel connected to the university and increase study satisfaction (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Further, students feeling

that their teachers care about their success and well-being can lead to higher engagement and motivation to learn (Eloff et al., 2021; Kim & Lundberg, 2016). Other factors related to mental well-being positively influenced by student-teacher relationships include higher levels of self-esteem, a facilitated definition of the self, greater emotional and social intelligence, and intellectual development along with critical thinking (Eloff et al., 2021; Kim & Lundberg, 2016). In contrast, a negative relationship between students and teachers can lead to negative emotional outcomes for students, such as heightened anger, anxiety, shame, hopelessness, and boredom in class (Mazer et al., 2014). Further, poor and abusive communication from the teacher has been shown to possibly lead to lower student engagement, as well as increased absenteeism (Mazer et al., 2014; Rocca, 2007). Therefore, fostering positive student-teacher relationships is necessary to lastingly impact students' development and success in school and beyond.

Nonetheless, it must be considered that the student-teacher relationship is heavily dependent on different contexts (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). For example, student-teacher relationships are experienced differently dependent on study programmes. Illustrating this, a study by Sander et al. (2000) showed that psychology students rated the importance of personal student-teacher relationships significantly higher than business students. Additionally, perceptions of and needs regarding student-teacher relationships can differ dependent on individual factors such as gender, personality, ethnic and socio-economic background, or study progression (Hagenauer et al., 2022; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Finally, different course formats can allow for more or less opportunity for student-teacher interaction: building relationships between teachers and students in a seminar, for example, is easier than during a lecture. Such interactive teaching approaches that give opportunities for interaction, such as discussions or group work, promote the social integration of teachers and students in the classroom (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Kiltz et al., 2020). Concludingly, the nature of student-teacher relationships is profoundly influenced by various contextual factors.

Theory Surrounding Student-Teacher Relationships

Multiple theories and models have been used in the literature to further understand the effects of student-teacher relationships on student well-being. For this study, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2002) and Hagenauer and Volet's framework for student-teacher relationships in higher education (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014) have been found to be useful. In detail, these theories aid in discerning student-teacher relationships' impact on student well-being in higher education while minding the impact of time. First, as detected by Kiltz et al. (2020), self-determination shows how relationships play a role in student well-being, as they

can especially fulfil students' relatedness needs. Second, Hagenauer and Volet's (2014) framework demonstrates what comprises a positive student-teacher relationship, which aids in understanding how such a relationship should look in order to enhance student well-being (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Kiltz et al., 2020). Both theories consider repeating student-teacher interaction as a requirement for student-teacher relationships to develop, highlighting the need for sufficient time to provide opportunities for such interaction.

Firstly, as described by Kiltz et al. (2020), self-determination theory is applicable to higher education settings, as "teachers seemed to contribute to their students' well-being in satisfying their need for competence, autonomy, as well as relatedness when interacting with them" (p. 14). The concept of self-determination suggests that a person's well-being depends on the fulfilment of three fundamental psychological needs, namely competence, autonomy, and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2002). In the context of student-teacher relationships, relatedness is especially relevant. According to the findings of Kiltz et al. (2020), meaningful interactions between students and teachers can establish student-teacher relationships. Such positive bonds can create a sense of social connectedness and being a part of a caring environment for students, fulfilling their relatedness needs.

Secondly, Hagenauer and Volet (2014) have created a framework to explain student-teacher relationships in higher education, as seen in Figure 1. Here, based on the frequency and quality of student-teacher interactions, a positive student-teacher relationship can be established. As suggested by said researchers, the frequency of student-teacher interaction is a foundational element of the relationship, as "it might be difficult to establish positive relationships when interactions rarely occur" (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 381). While it is thus important that interactions occur often, they must also be positive for a relationship to establish. Influenced by these antecedents, two dimensions have been identified to describe student-teacher relationships, namely, the dimensions of affection and support.

The affective dimension refers to the emotional bond between students and teachers, which is essential for building positive relationships that are secure and affective. This can be achieved by displaying caring behaviour, actively integrating students, and being friendly, such as by "knowing students' names, staying in class to meet students, saying 'hi' to students on campus, smiling often" (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014, p. 378). Further, maintaining a balance between formal and informal communication is important, which can be achieved, for example, by remembering students' personal information or telling personal anecdotes (Douwes et al., 2023; Hagenauer et al., 2022). In addition, teachers can foster trust and honesty by being honest about students' academic performance and promoting open communication and feedback.

Finally, teachers should be open, tolerant, and value students' questions and opinions (Hagenauer et al., 2022).

The support dimension encompasses the support teachers must provide students for their success at university. This involves setting clear expectations, promptly answering student emails, and challenging students in a way that is tailored to their individual needs (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Other factors that can positively affect the quality of support are teachers providing regular feedback and being engaged, well-organised, knowledgeable, and enthusiastic about teaching (Douwes et al., 2023; Hagenauer et al., 2022; Zheng, 2022). Additionally, approachability through an open-door policy and availability is beneficial (Douwes et al., 2023; Hagenauer et al., 2022). Concludingly, the framework proposed by Hagenauer and Volet (2014) aids in understanding student-teacher relationships in higher education, encompassing the dimensions of affection and support and the impact of the quality and frequency of student-teacher interactions.

Figure 1

Hagenauer & Volet's (2014) Framework for Student-Teacher Relationships in Higher Education
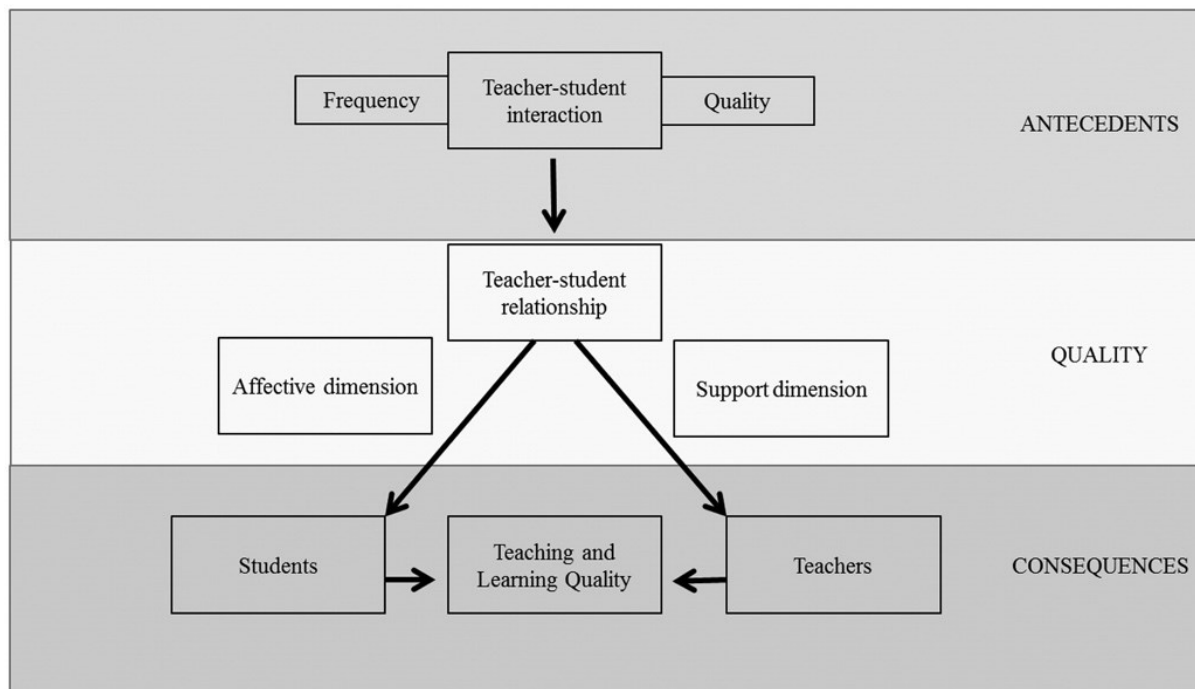
Student-Teacher Relationships and Time

After looking at the literature discussing student-teacher relationships, it becomes clear that enough time and continuing interaction are essential when aiming for a positive

relationship. However, as described earlier, numerous university programmes are structured into consecutive thematic modules, such as the bachelor programmes at the UT in the Netherlands (UT, 2020b). The Twente Educational Model (TOM) at the UT divides each bachelor programme into 10-week modules that are separate from each other in the subjects taught and the related teachers. Thus, the question arises of whether high-quality student-teacher relationships can develop when the interaction is limited to a 10-week timeframe.

In the literature, the consequences of short-term student-teacher relationships are sparsely discussed. For one, studies have been conducted to specifically discern the benefits of long-term student-teacher relationships, such as the positive effects on student well-being after eight or 18 months (Jiang et al., 2022; Wu & Zhang, 2022). Further, it has been found that rarely present teachers, such as sessional lecturers, cannot support students as much as regular academic staff (Hagenauer et al., 2022). Also, secure student-teacher relationships require continuing and frequent interaction, for which a sufficient amount of time is necessary. In university, teaching tends to be more fragmented, and teachers and students have little interaction, especially when students are hesitant to approach their teachers outside the classroom (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). In conclusion, the literature overall lacks a comprehensive exploration of the consequences of short-term student-teacher relationships in university settings, leaving many questions about how a time limitation can affect the relationship quality open.

Study Aim

Building upon the existing literature, this study seeks to examine the impact of time constraints on student-teacher relationships and subsequent outcomes. The bachelor students of the UT are one group who are timely limited in their student-teacher relationships in such a way due to the TOM design. The UT offers 20 different bachelor's programmes, ranging from multiple technology-focused programmes to social sciences and health sciences (UT, 2022). Each year, around 2,000 new bachelor students start their studies at the UT (UT, 2018). Thus, UT students' opinions on their experience with timely limited student-teacher relationships can provide a deeper and comprehensive understanding of the possibly confounded effects on their academic experience, including their well-being (Soutter et al., 2013). Additionally, the findings of this research aim to ultimately provide concrete suggestions for the UT teaching staff on how to enhance their short relationships with students from a student perspective.

To understand how students experience the effect of short-term relationships with teachers on their well-being, deepened knowledge is needed regarding several areas. First is the effect of the time limitations of a module on the student-teacher relationship, as it is found that

this topic is sparsely researched and thus requires further understanding. Second, the positive impact of student-teacher relationships on student relatedness needs and thus well-being has been explored in the literature, particularly in the form of students experiencing an emotional bond to and receiving valuable support from their teachers (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Kiltz et al., 2020). Thus, whether students themselves share these opinions in relation to time limitations should be further investigated to gain a more nuanced understanding of how short-term student-teacher relationships can influence student well-being. Third, possible enhancements in short-term student-teacher relationships experienced by students need to be researched to provide valuable recommendations for UT teaching staff to aid in effectively fostering students' academic and mental well-being.

To be able to deepen the understanding regarding said areas, this study will involve students by conducting interviews in which their opinions and experiences can be shared openly. Based on the opinions provided regarding students' student-teacher relationship experiences, the following research question will be investigated: How do students experience the effect of short-term student-teacher relationships on their well-being? To address this question, the study has the following sub-questions relating to the three areas described above:

1. What are the effects of time constraints on the student-teacher relationship quality?
2. What are students' experiences in feeling socially connected to their teacher within the scope of a module?
3. What can enhance the quality of timely limited student-teacher relationships?

Methods

Design

A qualitative study was conducted as part of a larger research project concerned with the effect of student-teacher relationships on student well-being. For this report, the focus is exclusive to the questions relevant to the topic at hand, being the impact of short-term student-teacher relationships on student well-being. The study used qualitative descriptive methods in the form of semi-structured interviews, as students' elaborations on their personal experiences and opinions allow for elaborate and insightful investigation. Further, semi-structured interviews let students speak freely while allowing the researchers to direct the conversation and adapt to the interviewees' answers when needed (Harrison & Rentzelas, 2021).

Participants

The study focused on undergraduate students of any bachelor programme at the UT. The inclusion criteria required interviewees to be over the age of 18 and proficient in English to ensure effective communication with participants and accurate interpretation of their

experiences across researchers. In total, 18 students were recruited via convenience sampling, as researchers invited students from their social circles. Nine of the participants identified as female and nine as male. Further, eight students were German, six Romanian, two Dutch, one Greek, and one Armenian. The interviewees were aged between 20 and 23 years, resulting in a mean age of 21.72 years ($SD = 0.96$). Nine participants studied Psychology, four Technical Computer Science, and two International Business Administration, while the remaining three participants studied Civil Engineering, Creative Technology, and Management, Society and Technology, respectively. Additionally, two students attended the second year, 15 the third year, and one the fourth year of their bachelor studies. The UT's Committee of Ethics for BMS approved this study with the application number 230323 prior to recruitment and conducting interviews, and each participant provided written informed consent.

Materials

To obtain elaborate information about students' experiences and opinions, an interview guide was created comprising an introduction, questions regarding demographic information, and four open questions with additional probes to be used for every interview (Appendix A). The introduction contains information about the study, the participant's rights, and the handling of their data. The open interview questions, in alignment with the sub-research questions, are concerned with the topics of how the change of teachers in each module affects the student-teacher relationship; what students' experiences are in feeling socially connected to teachers within a module; and what can enhance the quality of short-term student-teacher relationships. Additionally, to gain written informed consent from all participants, a document comprising an information sheet and an informed consent form in line with the General Data Protection Regulation was provided. Within the consent form, the participants were also provided with all researchers' contact details.

All interviews were conducted and recorded online using Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The subsequent transcription of each interview was done through Otter.ai or the transcription programs incorporated into Zoom or Microsoft Teams. Here, the data was anonymised by removing any personal information, including names, dates, and locations, to maintain confidentiality. To ensure the safe storage of the participants' provided information, all collected data is stored within a cloud service with a UT account, to which only the researcher team and the supervisors have access. Six months after the conduction of each interview, the gathered data is destroyed.

Procedure

Before carrying out the interviews according to the final interview scheme, two pilot tests were conducted to gain information about any needed improvements. These pilot tests lasted around 45 minutes and revealed that, first, participants needed information about the study's content prior to conducting the interviews in order to be prepared sufficiently. Second, interviewees required probes for several questions as well as short introductions to each set of questions to give elaborate and knowledgeable answers. These aspects were adapted accordingly.

For the actual interviews, students were invited via WhatsApp, accompanied by a short explanation of the study's purpose as well as the incentive to think back to prior relationships with teachers in higher education. All interviews were conducted online between March 29 and April 11, 2023. For each interview, one research team member was present as the interviewer, and each of the five team members conducted a total of three to four interviews. The interview started by reading out the introduction as written in the interview scheme. Before continuing with the interview, the participant was asked to fill out and send the consent form through email or the video conference chat function. Afterwards, an audio recording was started. Each interview was conducted using the open questions and probes as outlined in the interview guide. The different probes were used to obtain specific and detailed answers when necessary, for example, when the interviewee required further understanding of the question or provided too short of an answer. After each interview was finished, the participant was asked once again if they wanted to continue their participation and the audio recording was stopped. Each interview, including other questions part of the larger research project, lasted between a minimum of 32 and a maximum of 70 minutes.

Data Analysis

In order to better understand, structure, and to interpret and analyse the collected data, the created transcripts were coded using ATLAS.ti. Here, an inductive coding approach through thematic analysis was utilised. This approach allowed to deeply explore the sparsely researched effect of time limitations on the student-teacher relationship and to stay close to the opinions as stated by the students (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019).

As informed by the approach for thematic coding proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), multiple steps were executed. First, all interview transcripts were read to gain familiarity with the content and to develop an overall understanding of the data while noting ideas for potential codes simultaneously. This initial immersion in the data allowed an in-depth exploration of the students' perspectives and experiences. Next, each potentially meaningful fragment in the first

two transcripts was coded together by five researchers, and the differences were discussed until a consensus was reached to ensure the reliability of the analysis. This process involved going through the transcripts line-by-line and assigning descriptive labels to each meaningful sentence or phrase relevant to the research question, capturing the essence of the expressed information. In detail, the criteria for applying codes included the quote being informative about students' experiences and opinions regarding the role of time in bonding; factors related to the quality of the bond within a module; or the effects of the short relationship on student well-being.

To further refine the initial set of codes, the coding process, as outlined above, was repeated multiple times by the main researcher. Here, the researcher went through all transcripts repeatedly to create new codes in case new information emerged. Eventually, codes that were similar and low in quotes were merged and overarching themes were created and later refined. These themes aimed to represent related groups of codes and underlying patterns or concepts that emerged from the data. After the codes and themes were finalised, a second researcher conducted a thorough review of the codes and themes. This further enabled reliability across researchers and ensured that the codes within each theme were coherent and representative of the participants' perspectives. A saturation of codes was reached after three interviews and then confirmed with 15 subsequent interviews.

Results

The interviewed students showed a wide variety of ways in which they experienced the relationships with their teachers, which are limited to 10 weeks each. Their perceptions ranged from the direct impact of these time limitations to aspects that influence the student-teacher relationship quality regardless of time. These aspects include the qualities of the teacher or student, as well as the frequency and kind of interaction between teacher and student. In total, 11 codes with three themes emerged from the collected data. A table visualising the coding scheme can be found in Table 1.

1. Role of Time

The coding theme "role of time" explores the direct impact of time limitations on student-teacher relationships. Through the interviews, it could be found that insufficient time within modules can hinder the formation of strong bonds between students and teachers. Further, having the same teacher across multiple modules or over a term provides more opportunities for interaction and fosters a stronger connection.

1.1. Time Constraints in Bonding

First, the information provided by students revealed that time played a significant role in directly shaping the quality of the student-teacher relationship. While some participants

expressed that not enough time is given within a module to form a positive and secure bond with their teachers, others additionally stressed the priority of taking time to adjust and adapt to the teacher's expectations. When asked how the repeated changing of teachers affects the relationship, one psychology student stated, "I guess the cons … is that you cannot really form a personal relationship with the teacher. And the relationship is very shallow or even non-existent." However, when a student did come to build a positive relationship with a teacher, students reported missing them when the module changed. Conversely, students who disliked their teachers felt that having them replaced quickly was helpful. To be able to keep preferred teachers, some students suggested being allowed to have a preference list for what teachers they would like to have in future modules.

Moreover, many students, such as one psychology student, noted that good academic support can only be provided after a few weeks when the initial bond is created: "At the beginning, it's a bit hard to always get to know each other first, because the first few weeks, you cannot concentrate on the work already, but you rather have to get to know each other every time." Multiple students emphasised that the focus is on adapting to new teachers, which leaves little room for strengthening the relationship. Some students also found it unfortunate that they do not have enough time to create a secure relationship with a teacher that allows for long-term support. For example, a psychology student wished for teachers to be responsible for academic feedback for a longer period to aid in profoundly forming one's academic capabilities, while another negatively remarked upon teachers not being available to help with mental well-being struggles in the long term.

In addition, students expressed stress and difficulty adapting to new teachers frequently, as stated by a technical computer science student: "Always new teachers and new expectations. You don't get a moment to breathe." For individual students, this led to doubting their academic capabilities due to the numerous diverging opinions from different teachers. Conversely, other students highlighted the benefits of learning from different experts and getting diverse feedback through the frequent switch in teachers, thus allowing for an enhanced learning experience. Further, some students remarked that frequently switching teachers allowed them to improve their adaptability skills. Overall, while some students perceived the change of teachers as a significant problem in their academic experience and well-being, others saw it as rather inconsequential. Concludingly, it is suggested that the time limitations of a module can inhibit establishing a student-teacher connection and introduce complications by having to adapt to different expectations and teaching styles.

1.2. Teachers Repeating, Two-Block Modules

While acknowledging the restrictions described above, numerous participants indicated that not all student-teacher relationships are heavily limited by time, as some teachers reappear in later modules and some modules span over an entire term. Here, participants noted that having the same teacher for multiple modules can significantly aid in creating a relationship as there is more opportunity for interaction and thus building a connection with them. Illustrating this, a management, society and technology student stated, "I think I definitely feel more connected to the teachers I had several modules each year." Especially for students who have little interaction with their teachers due to the design of their study programme, teachers reappearing from previous modules presents one of the few ways to provide enough opportunity to bond. This was specifically reported by students of the Technical Computer Science, International Business Administration, and Management, Society and Technology study programmes, as illustrated by a technical computer science student: "If the modules were … instead of 10 weeks 20 weeks, … [interacting with a teacher] would still be rare but would happen on more occasions." Additionally, one technical computer science student mentioned that having had to repeat modules gave him more time to get to know his teachers. Therefore, having the same teacher for multiple modules or over a term is suggested to be beneficial in creating a positive student-teacher relationship.

2. Amount and Kind of Interaction

The coding theme "amount and kind of interaction" examines how the frequency and different types of interactions impact the student-teacher relationship within a limited timeframe. Interactive and practical course formats, such as tutorials, and individual and frequent interactions with students were found to facilitate a deeper bond between students and teachers within a module. Additionally, personal and informal interactions, where teachers show interest in students' lives and well-being, were valued for creating a stronger connection.

2.1. Interactive Course Format

Multiple participants mentioned the importance of interactive and practical courses for building a strong student-teacher relationship within a module. This type of teaching provides more opportunities for communication and interaction between the teacher and students, as it also often involves smaller class sizes compared to lectures. Such interactive teaching can take various forms, such as practical lessons and tutorials, lectures that allow for debate and communication, or Q&A sessions. For example, a creative technology student stated, "the teachers I had the best bonds with were the ones at practicals," and a student in psychology noted, "when you have tutorials and you're working together with them, I think those are things

that can enhance teacher-student relationship." However, negative feedback was also noted, particularly concerning lectures, where students reported finding it challenging to connect with their teacher. For example, a psychology student expressed, "because we are so many students and most of the lectures … we don't really have the chance to get in touch with a teacher and create like a bond. It's very superficial." Concludingly, interactive and practical courses are suggested to facilitate forming student-teacher relationships within a module.

2.2. Individual Interaction

Several students mentioned the value of teachers interacting with students individually, either in a one-on-one or small group setting, such as within a project group, given the time limitations of a module. This type of direct, individual interaction was reported to allow for a deeper connection to be built, giving students the opportunity to get to know their teacher better, receive more individualised feedback, and increase the quality of support. For example, one psychology student stated that a meeting with their teacher allowed them to create a deeper connection: "If teachers get the chance to talk with students individually, I think that definitely creates that territory, you know, for getting to know a teacher." Another psychology student spoke about how one-on-one and small-group conversations allowed for more personalised feedback: "One-on-one or group-and-teacher conversations … are a bit longer so that they can tell you the feedback not only for the whole class but for a group … or for yourself more specifically." However, students with little to no experience with one-on-one interactions reported feeling less connected to their teachers. Some students expressed a desire for open-office hours as a way to increase these interactions, such as explained by a technical computer science student:

I feel like individual hours, uh, those are the ones that for sure can create a connection. … I think it would help a lot of people … to have some kind of time slots of five minutes or 10 minutes. … So that everyone has time for that.

To summarise, students repeatedly mentioned that direct, individual interaction allows them to build deeper connections with teachers within a module.

2.3. Interaction Frequency

Several different participants mentioned the concept of interaction frequency. Students explained that building a secure relationship with their teachers is easier when they interact frequently, especially given that the relationship is limited to 10 weeks. However, most students have had little experience interacting often with their teachers, except for certain modules such as module eight in psychology, in which interactions were frequent and the relationships were accordingly good. For example, one psychology student stated, "I would say it's really about

seeing them often. … But in module eight with that teacher, yeah, I still feel it was really easy to build a connection with the teacher." On the other hand, most students have very little interaction with their teachers and wish for more. Illustrating this, a psychology student stated:

> You cannot even get close to creating a bond because you don't really see each other that often. And if you see each other, like once a week, or like even twice every two weeks or something, I think it's harder to get a bond, especially in the 10 weeks.

Concludingly, frequent interaction between students and teachers within the limited timeframe of a module is suggested as beneficial for building secure relationships.

2.4. Personal Bonding

The importance of a personal or informal relationship between teachers and students was highlighted by multiple students. This type of relationship positively impacts the student-teacher relationship quality within a limited timeframe by allowing for interactions that go beyond the superficial and strictly professional level. For one, students valued teachers who are interested in their students, their personal lives, feelings, and well-being. For example, one management, society and technology student said, "if they try to exchange opinions and a bit more personal life things with you, I think that's nice, and you feel more connected to the teacher on a personal friendship-like level." Another psychology student stated, "it would be nice if students will wear badges with their names, so that teachers could actually address people by their names. It makes the relationship more personal." An additional aspect is having informal interactions with teachers, such as spending time together, laughing, and getting to know each other better, as described by one international business administration student:

> Also introducing like events or maybe activities that are not related to the specific topics and subjects, but where you can like spend some time with your teachers and maybe laugh a little. I don't know. Have some fun. Get to know them better.

However, some students prefer a strictly professional relationship with teachers for a good academic experience rather than becoming friends with them. Illustrating this, a psychology student explained:

> I really enjoyed the time with these kinds of teachers when you just had, like, a serious relationship with each other. Like in this university frame, yeah. So that the teacher like focuses only on you and your university stuff, not ask you about your personal life.

In fact, some students expressed their negative attitude towards a relationship made too personal by the teacher. For example, some students felt uncomfortable when teachers asked too many personal questions, such as about personal details, opinions, or insights into their well-being

the student is not willing to share. Overall, the findings suggest that a personal but appropriate relationship can enhance the student-teacher bond within a module.

3. Teacher Qualities

The coding theme "teacher qualities" explores how certain teacher characteristics and behaviours impact the student-teacher relationship within a module. Students highly valued involved and helpful teachers, as they showed willingness to support individual student needs and provided guidance and encouragement. Open-mindedness and transparency were also appreciated, while negative experiences were associated with close-minded and disrespectful teachers. Professionalism and competence were recognised as essential qualities for effective teaching, while matching personalities between teachers and students were also seen as important for building positive relationships.

3.1. Involved Teachers

All 18 participants mentioned the importance of involved and helpful teachers, highlighting their positive impact on the student-teacher relationship and academic success within a module. Students valued teachers who were willing and motivated to help with individual student needs compared to those who were distanced and uninterested in providing help. These positive experiences regarding teachers who are eager to help their students can be categorised into different meanings. For example, some students appreciated teachers who cared for individual students' needs and were encouraging, as one psychology student stated:

> The teacher I had … was very nice, very patient. And she was also very understandable because of difficulties we had in group work. And … we also always knew that, if new difficulties would come up, we can always go to her and ask her, and she would give us advice or more time or something.

Others found it valuable when teachers presented themselves as available and were motivated to help and teach, such as one civil engineering student who stated, "they would help you with anything they can. They always say, yeah, you can e-mail me on this, you can contact me if you have any questions. So, they for sure make it easy for you to contact them." Students also appreciated teachers who provided individual instructional, tailored help in class or through feedback. For example, one creative technology student stated, "he really made sure you understood and really engaged with you, which was nice."

On the other hand, students also shared negative experiences regarding teachers who were distanced and were uninterested in creating a student-teacher relationship. Participants reported experiences with teachers who would not hear out students with problems or would not interact but only presented lecture materials. Others, such as one psychology student,

negatively remarked upon teachers who do not care whether students understood the material: "the teacher didn't really try to include people who didn't understand. … She was not that inviting to be like, hey, if there is something you don't understand, it's fine. And maybe talk a little bit more about that." One psychology student reported such a lack of personal bond negatively affecting their motivation, as teachers do not care about their individual performance. Finally, negative experiences with uninvolved teachers relate to those who are uncommunicative, eventually negatively impacting the student's grades. A creative technology student stated, "they just, like, leave you to wait for a week or even fail you for missing like one specific thing which is not that crucial." Overall, the data suggest that having involved and supportive teachers can help students boost their academic success and emotional well-being within a module.

3.2. Open Teachers

Moreover, students mentioned the positive impact that open-minded teachers have on timely limited student-teacher relationships. According to the students, these teachers are authentic, transparent, and admit their mistakes. They are open to different opinions and seek to improve themselves, which creates a better hierarchy where students do not feel inferior. Conversely, students mentioned negative experiences with teachers who are close-minded, rude, or create an unfair power dynamic. These teachers do not allow for different opinions and treat students as inferior, which hinders their ability to connect with students, as illustrated by a psychology student: "If they're too closely minded, fixed in their opinion, and don't really get any more other opinions from students and don't want to change their opinion, I think it's much harder to connect." Even more extreme examples of this negative behaviour include degrading or disrespecting students, using harsh words, and disregarding student feelings. To summarise, it is suggested that open-minded teachers positively influence student-teacher relationships within time constraints.

3.3. Professional Teachers

The topic of professional and competent teachers emerged in the interviews with several different students. Here, it was reported that teachers who are able to teach efficiently allow students to experience valuable academic support within a module. Students highlighted the importance of teachers who know how to effectively present material, make it understandable and engaging, and provide good academic advice. For example, one psychology student stated, "when the teacher knows really the topic, like really can explain it so good and make it so understandable, I can follow it. … I feel more connected because then I would really enjoy listening to the teacher." Moreover, some students experienced that teacher professionality

positively impacts the student-teacher relationship because they enjoy the time spent with them more. However, students also noted negative examples, such as teachers not being competent or knowledgeable enough to properly teach their subject. Concludingly, students appreciated professional and competent teachers as they provide valuable academic support and can allow for fruitful student-teacher connections.

3.4. Matching Student-Teacher Personalities

Regardless of mostly universally liked teacher characteristics as described above, students often mentioned the importance of matching personalities between teachers and students to foster student-teacher relationships within a module. This included aspects such as common interests and shared personality traits between them and their teachers. For example, a psychology student explained that:

> Some teachers I like more than others, but I think that's also again very subjective. Because maybe there was some teachers that shared some personality traits that I have and that make me like them more. And if they had different personality types, that made me not just like them.

Some students also pointed out that crucial differences between the characteristics of a teacher and a student can make it difficult to connect, for example, gaps in age or personal interests. This contrast can be further seen in that different students can have contrasting opinions and likings towards the same teacher, as mentioned by one psychology student. Moreover, some students believe that a positive consequence of the regular switch of teachers is that every student will eventually find a teacher they like. To summarise, it is suggested that matching personalities between teachers and students can positively affect student-teacher relationships within a module.

4. Student Effort in Bonding

Aside from the effort put in by the teacher, the student also plays an essential part in establishing a secure student-teacher relationship within a module. As numerous students mentioned, actively initiating contact with teachers by attending lectures, asking questions, and speaking with them after class can improve the student-teacher bond. For example, one creative technology student noted:

> I guess that's also depending on how much effort the student puts in. Because you can drop by the teacher's office, usually like to ask questions if you have them, which would, I guess, improve your, your bond with them.

Conversely, some students are uninterested in interacting with teachers or may feel uncomfortable doing so, which can result in a lack of relationship. For instance, a technical

computer science student noted, "if you just come [to class] and don't come out in the light, I don't think you will have a good time with creating strong relations or even relations with those teachers." Ultimately, the findings suggest that, considering the time limitations, student effort plays a crucial role in bonding with teachers and receiving academic support.

Connections Between Codes

After having understood each code individually, connections between codes are also worth noting. First, some codes are more connected to each other than others. For instance, many codes were mentioned in the interviews in succession and closely connected to that of "interactive course format." For example, "involved teachers" and "interactive course format" have been mentioned together because teachers naturally engage more with their students when the teaching context calls for interaction. Another example is "interactive course format" and "interaction frequency," as is the case for a civil engineering student whose programme mostly consists of lectures and thus has very little interaction with his teachers within a module. As a final example of this, "interactive course format" and "individual interaction" are repeatedly mentioned together, as a practical teaching situation facilitates direct interaction with students while most lectures do not. This can be easily seen when looking at a longer excerpt from an interview with a creative technology student as compared to a short quotation:

> But just in general, the teachers I had the best bonds with were the ones at practicals because you get more info through them. Just having the practical lessons and getting more personal contact instead of like being spoken to in the lecture room is the key, I guess.

Another important connection to highlight is that of different experiences for students from different programmes. For instance, a clear contrast can be seen between technical computer science students and psychology students. Students in the Technical Computer Science field have very little direct contact with teachers within a module, as teachers are mostly responsible for lectures, while interactive learning is done through teaching assistants. Thus, this group is one which especially reported on being able to only build bonds with teachers if the module spans over two blocks ("teachers repeating, two block modules") or who say that it is dependent on high student effort to create a bond with teachers: "Sometimes, my friends, we would joke that we would go to exams and see that teacher for the first time. You know, okay, this again, because, like, we skipped lectures." In contrast to this, almost all psychology students remembered having much interaction with teachers despite time limitations, partly because they had modules dedicated to it:

Because if we look at, for example, module eight, I never had such a fun class, so to speak. Like there were so many people in the class, and … the teachers made it feel like an actual class. Like a bunch of people that were working towards a similar goal and stuff like that. So, it's a prime example that it can be done.

Keeping these differences and connections in mind is important when wanting to truthfully understand the opinions as told directly and openly by students.

To summarise, multiple student opinions and experiences regarding short-term student-teacher relationships could be gathered. First, numerous students elaborated on the role of time in shaping the quality of the student-teacher relationship. Here, some participants expressed the need for more time to build a meaningful connection, and others stressed the importance of taking time to adjust and adapt to the teacher's expectations. Having the same teacher for multiple modules or over a term was also often mentioned to be beneficial in creating a positive student-teacher relationship.

Despite the limited time, many students expressed valuing frequent interaction with their teachers, including one-on-one interaction, and preferred involved and helpful teachers who were willing to assist individual student needs. Students also reported valuing practical classes, which allow for recurring interaction, over lectures to form student-teacher connections. In addition, a matching personality between teacher and student was perceived as beneficial by multiple interviewees. Student effort in initiating contact with teachers was also often seen as crucial in establishing a secure student-teacher relationship. Finally, differences in experiences between students from different programmes could be seen. Concludingly, student perspectives on short-term student-teacher relationships highlighted the impact of time, student-teacher interaction, teacher qualities, student effort, and differences between study programmes.

Table 1

Coding Scheme

Code	Definition	Frequency	*n*	Example quote
Role of time				
Time constraints in bonding	Students do not have enough time within a module to form a positive and secure bond with the teacher, and the time needed to adjust and adapt to the teacher's expectations often is of higher priority.	42	14	"You can't really focus on strengthening the relationship, but more – you have to focus on adapting to new and new teachers all the time."
Teachers repeating, two-block modules	Many teachers repeat throughout modules, and some modules span over an entire term, allowing for more opportunity to bond.	11	10	"I think I definitely feel more connected to the teachers I had several modules each year."
Amount and kind of interaction				
Interactive course format	Interactive and practical teaching provides more opportunities for bonding between teachers and students.	20	11	"But just in general, the teachers I had the best bonds with were the ones at practicals because you get more info through them … and getting more personal contact."
Individual interaction	Interacting with a teacher one-on-one or within a small group allows for forming a deeper connection within a module.	21	12	"If teachers get the chance to talk with students individually, I think that definitely creates that territory, you know, for getting to know a teacher. As it was, in my case, with the teacher I told you about. Because she, like, made a meeting with me. And that's how I got to know her better."

Code	Definition	Frequency	*n*	Example quote
Interaction frequency	Building a secure student-teacher relationship is easier when the two see each other often and interact frequently within a module.	9	7	"I feel like it's just easier, obviously, to build a connection when you see a person more frequently. So, when you only have 10 weeks, it makes sense to see them more frequently."
Personal bonding	A personal relationship positively impacts timely limited student-teacher relationships by allowing for interactions beyond the superficial and strictly professional level.	22	15	"If they try to, like, exchange opinions and a bit more personal life things with you, I think that's nice. And you feel more connected to the teacher on a personal friendship-like level."
Teacher qualities				
Involved teachers	Teachers who are involved in their students' needs and academic success, and willing and motivated to help, allow for forming a positive student-teacher relationship within a module.	69	18	"For example, in the first year, when I went to some tutorials, most of the time, I encountered teachers who are willing to help and who like their job. So, it was also a nice experience for me to go there."
Open teachers	Teachers who have an open personality allow for forming a positive student-teacher relationship within a module.	19	12	"If they're too closely minded, fixed in their opinion, and don't really get any more other opinions from students and don't want to change their opinion, I think it's much harder to connect, especially if you don't have the same opinion than they have."
Professional teachers	Teachers who are able to teach efficiently because they are professional and competent in their field of expertise allow for forming a supportive student-teacher relationship within a module.	13	11	"Nearly always, I really enjoyed the time I spent with the teachers because they were always very serious and were prepared."

Code	Definition	Frequency	n	Example quote
Matching student-teacher personalities	Matching personalities between teacher and student can impact how positive their bond can be within a module.	14	12	"Yeah, some teachers I like more than others. But I think that's also again very subjective because maybe there was some teachers that shared some personality traits that I have, and that make me like them more. And if they had different personality types, that made me not just like them."
Student effort in bonding	Students play an essential part in establishing a secure student-teacher relationship by actively seeking contact with a teacher within a limited timeframe.	31	14	"I think it always depends on how often you attend to lectures and tutorials. But if you're also active, and you also ask questions, and maybe speak with the teacher after class, if you want to clarify something or ask something, then I think it's possible to build a positive relationship with the teachers."

Note. Frequency = how often the code occurred in total; *n* = the number of different participants who mentioned the code.

Discussion

This study explored the impact of short-term student-teacher relationships on student well-being. It was found that due to the time restrictions of a module, most students reported having experienced difficulties in forming positive relationships with teachers, affecting their well-being in different ways. To better investigate the research question, three sub-topics were examined: the impact of time constraints on the student-teacher relationship quality, students' experiences in feeling socially connected to teachers within a module, and enhancements of timely limited student-teacher relationships. First, the findings indicate that relationship duration largely inhibits the development of a qualitative bond. Second, time limitations pose challenges for students to feel socially connected to teachers. Nonetheless, students' perceptions depend on individual experiences, such as the different kinds of teachers encountered. Third, aspects such as the involvement of teachers and valuable, direct interactions can enhance the student-teacher relationship regardless of time restrictions. Overall, the time limitations of a module pose restrictions for students from forming positive connections with teachers. Because of this, it is suggested that students do not experience fulfilled relatedness needs through the student-teacher relationship and partially even experience heightened stress due to frequent teacher switches.

In exploring how limited time affects the quality of student-teacher relationships, the findings revealed varying perceptions among participants. Most students had negative experiences forming connections with teachers due to limited relationship duration, as they felt that more time was necessary for a positive bond or that adjusting to the new academic expectations of teachers had priority. This finding is represented in previous literature highlighting the positive evolvement of student-teacher relationships over time (Jiang et al., 2022; Wu & Zhang, 2022), as well as the dependence of the relationship quality on interaction frequency (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). As stated by multiple interviewees, relationships need a profound amount of time to develop to be secure, for which 10 weeks are repeatedly reported not or barely to be enough.

In comparison, it should be noted that some students' perceptions of student-teacher relationships were unaffected by time. For example, some students were generally not interested in deeply connecting with their teachers. Moreover, others appreciated having numerous experts as teachers more than bonding with a single teacher over a longer period. Such differences across students concerning their perceptions of and needs regarding student-teacher relationships align with the findings of Hagenauer and colleagues (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Hagenauer et al., 2022). Further, this study replicated the finding that students experience

student-teacher relationships differently dependent on their study programme (Sander et al., 2000). Especially lecture-centred programmes offer limited opportunities for student-teacher interaction compared to, for example, the Psychology programme, which includes modules with interaction as a central aspect. Overall, the limited time restricts most students from forming strong bonds with their teachers, although its extent can vary across individuals.

Similar to the quality of the student-teacher relationship, limited time also plays a role in how student-teacher relationships impact student well-being. In this study, student well-being was explored based on the fulfilment of relatedness needs through affective and supportive student-teacher relationships (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Kiltz et al., 2020). Firstly, the possibility of developing an affective bond within a module varied across the students' individual experiences. Some participants never experienced having an affective bond with a teacher, whereas oftentimes the quality of the bond depended on the specific teacher. For example, involved teachers who care for students individually and are encouraging allowed students to feel connected, as also found in the literature (Dicker et al., 2018; Hagenauer et al., 2022; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). While most students had encountered teachers with these qualities, many also experienced teachers who were distanced and uninvolved with their students. Further, numerous students struggled to build affectionate bonds with teachers who were opinionated, disrespectful or rude towards students. According to Hagenauer et al. (2022), being open and tolerant towards students is a vital teacher quality for positive relationships. Additionally, the importance of time was again affirmed in that many students could best feel connected to a teacher they saw for longer than 10 weeks, such as through longer modules or the teacher returning from previous courses.

Secondly, students generally perceived that they receive the support they need within a module despite the limited time. Again, especially teachers who are involved in terms of being available and motivated to help are essential for valuable support. In line with previous research, teachers who help students individually and promptly answer student emails, solve issues, provide regular feedback, and are encouraging towards students are perceived positively (Douwes et al., 2023; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Zheng, 2022). However, almost as often as students recounted such positive encounters, they also experienced teachers that were distanced, did not provide help or were unreachable when contacted directly. Next, as also found in previous research, students experienced good academic support from teachers when interacting directly, allowing for focused and valuable academic support and feedback sessions (Arizona State University, n.d.; Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Further, in line with Dicker et al. (2018),

students experienced an enhanced learning experience and higher engagement in interactive course formats compared to lectures.

Thirdly, this study adds to the existing knowledge on the impact of student-teacher relationships on student well-being by uncovering additional factors relevant within a limited timeframe. Firstly, it was found that tailored support requires familiarity between students and teachers, which takes time to develop. Accordingly, working towards a meaningful connection is postponed through this academic adjustment, further showcasing the limitations imposed by short modules. Secondly, students emphasised the importance of their own role in seeking interaction with teachers to connect and be supported within the limited timeframe. Finally, it was found that regular teacher switches can cause additional mental health consequences, such as heightened stress, but also higher study satisfaction because of the insights gained from different expert teachers over time. Concludingly, the findings show that time constraints pose challenges to developing an affectionate bond and receiving valuable support, leaving relatedness needs to some extent unfulfilled. Nevertheless, students' perceptions depend on their individual experiences during higher education.

This study also explored what enhances student-teacher relationships within a module. As mentioned by all interviewed students, creating a positive bond despite time limitations can be facilitated if the teacher is involved in students' needs and academic success. Here, teachers can put in effort by being friendly, encouraging, taking time and being available for students individually, and remembering students' personal information (Douwes et al., 2023; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Teachers can strive to continuously engage with different students and work on their interpersonal skills to best support their students (Hagenauer et al., 2022; McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006). Next, meaningful and direct interaction between students and teachers is essential for establishing strong relationships in a limited amount of time (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). This can be achieved through teachers being openly available for one-on-one support, interactive course formats, and informal out-of-class interactions (Douwes et al., 2023; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Kiltz et al., 2020). Finally, students recognised their own role in fostering strong bonds through active participation. Forming reciprocal relationships between students and teachers is crucial for student well-being, especially in the context of limited time. When students are rarely offered the opportunity for interaction, it is essential for them to actively initiate forming positive relationships. By considering these findings and implementing strategies that prioritise meaningful interactions and supportive learning environments, the university can enhance student-teacher relationships and positively impact students' well-being and academic success.

Overall, in exploring how students experience the effect of short-term student-teacher relationships on their well-being, the findings reveal a nuanced understanding. Most students reported difficulties in forming positive relationships within a limited timeframe. Nonetheless, factors such as direct and frequent interaction, teachers being involved and caring for students, and students themselves being engaged in bonding with teachers, can facilitate forming positive student-teacher relationships regardless of time limitations. Moreover, the interviewed students had different perceptions regarding student-teacher relationships depending on individual preferences or their study programme. Nonetheless, some students could not feel socially connected to any teachers within a module, implying negative consequences for their well-being. Additionally, other mental health-related consequences were highlighted, such as stress or increased study satisfaction. In conclusion, students feel that time constraints can restrict their ability to form strong bonds with teachers, which can negatively impact their well-being.

Limitations

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the dependency on specific study programmes emerged as a prominent factor influencing students' experiences. In this study, students were recruited through convenience sampling, resulting in half of the interviewees being psychology students. In total, students from six different majors participated, although the UT offers 20 different bachelor's programmes. A randomly recruited sample that includes students from more study programmes would have allowed for a broader exploration of how different disciplinary contexts shape the dynamics of short-term student-teacher relationships. Therefore, future research should aim to recruit students from a more diverse range of study programmes through probability sampling.

Secondly, the interview questions focused primarily on investigating the impact of short-term student-teacher relationships on student well-being through the lens of fulfilled relatedness needs. However, it became evident that additional well-being-related consequences were reported by students, such as increased stress resulting from frequent teacher switches. To obtain a more in-depth understanding of these unanticipated implications, it would have been helpful to include targeted questions specifically addressing the effects of short-term relationships on student well-being beyond the scope of relatedness. In future research, this could provide more comprehensive insights and a deeper understanding of the different ways in which timely limited student-teacher relationships can affect student well-being. Overall, the listed limitations indicate that the full extent of the impact of short-term student-teacher relationships on student well-being may not have been fully captured. Thus, future research

should seek to improve these shortcomings to build upon the current findings. Nonetheless, this study's findings provide a sound first step in more deeply understanding student-teacher relationships and their effect on student well-being within a limited timeframe. Through in-depth interviews with students from the UT, valuable insights could be gained into the workings of student-teacher relationships in universities with educational designs based on short, consecutive modules.

Recommendations

Concrete recommendations to the teaching staff of the UT are provided for supporting student well-being through positive student-teacher relationships. Overall, it is important for teachers to actively show care and encouragement towards their students to be able to build a secure, positive bond within a limited timeframe. To do so, firstly, teachers should strive for a personal and caring relationship by being friendly, encouraging, and taking the time to be available for students on an individual basis. It is also recommended that teachers strive to remember personal details about their students to create a personal connection (Douwes et al., 2023; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Secondly, direct interaction with students should be fostered. For example, this can be employed through increasing feedback sessions with single students or project groups, enabling focused and tailored academic help (Arizona State University, n.d.; Cotten & Wilson, 2006). In addition, open office hours should be openly advertised to students to provide support when needed (Dicker et al., 2018; Hagenauer et al., 2022). Moreover, informal out-of-class interactions with students or sharing personal anecdotes can strengthen the student-teacher relationship and enhance student well-being (Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Hagenauer et al., 2022).

Furthermore, recommendations that concern the course design of the different bachelor's programmes at the UT are provided. Here, the importance of employing more interactive course formats, such as tutorials or interactive lectures, is highlighted. Multiple bachelor's programmes have few of such included in their schedules, and those that do, such as the Psychology programme, are remarked upon overarchingly positively by its students: Students have plenty of opportunity for interaction with their teachers, enhancing their sense of connectedness to both their teachers and class (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Kiltz et al., 2020). By implementing these recommendations, the UT and its teachers can create a more positive and productive environment for students, strengthening their connection to teachers and their well-being.

Finally, to further explore the influence of time on student-teacher relationships in higher education, it would be beneficial to research the amount of time necessary for developing

a relationship. According to students interviewed in this study, a significant amount of time is required for relationships to become secure, for which 10 weeks are often reported not to be enough. However, the literature thus far does not provide clear guidance on the optimal timeframe for developing these relationships. Therefore, to gain a deeper understanding of the role of time in the development of student-teacher relationships, it is recommended for future research to be conducted in this area.

Conclusion

The educational design of the UT, consisting of short, consecutive thematic modules, allows for an enhanced learning experience through numerous topics explored in various ways. Nonetheless, in most cases, it does not allow students to create bonds with teachers that last more than 10 weeks. As found through this study, this limitation has strong implications on the quality of relationships between students and teachers and consequently students' academic experience and well-being. With the deepened knowledge gathered through this study, suggestions for teaching staff on improving their relationships with students and, consequently, student well-being could be provided. Teachers are essential for students in their academic experience. Although university is centred around self-managed learning, the bond between teachers and students impacts how students experience their life during higher education. Therefore, caring for positive and strong relationships for students is a meaningful contribution to allowing students to flourish both academically and mentally.

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Appendix A
Interview Guide

Introduction

To start off, I would like to thank you for taking the time to do this interview with me today. But before we start, I want to give you some more information about the interview. The overall topic focuses on the effect of student-teacher relationships on student well-being in higher education. The interview is part of a research conducted by five students (Hanna, Lea, Linnea, Maike and Viola). The aim of the interview is to gain new insights into the topic of *the impact of short-term teacher relationships on student well-being*.

In order to conduct the interview, we ask you to sign the informed consent which I will send you now. By giving your signature, you agree to all terms mentioned within the informed consent. The interview will be consequently recorded to later on transcribe and analyse the responses. The transcript can only be accessed by the research group and the two supervisors. Your data will be treated anonymously, meaning all information allowing to identify you as a person will be removed. In case that you feel uncomfortable with answering any questions or with your answers being used for this research, you can withdraw from the study at any point.

Please keep in mind that there are no correct or incorrect answers, as we are curious about your personal experience and thoughts. Do you have any questions regarding the information given verbally and written? If not, I would kindly ask you to send me the signed version of the informed consent form back. I will start the recording now.

Personal Background

1. How old are you?
2. What is your nationality?
3. What is your gender?
4. What do you study?
5. In which year of the study are you?

The next questions deal with how you experience your relationships with teachers within the time limitations of a module. As you know, at the University of Twente, our study programme is divided into 10-week modules, and so are your relationships with most teachers. So, we want to learn about how these time limitations affect your relationships with teachers.

1. What are your experiences with switching the teachers you are involved with every module (so 10 weeks)?

Probe: Did you ever experience this affecting the quality of the relationship? If yes, how?

2. Do you think that being involved with a teacher for only one module allows one to create a positive bond with them? Please elaborate.

   Probe in case "bond" needs further explanation: A positive bond between students and teachers often entails an honest, trusting, and respectful relationship, as well as the teacher caring about their students.

3. Given that your involvement with teachers is limited to one module each, do you think that you receive useful academic support from your teachers? Please elaborate.

   Probe in case "support" needs further explanation: Teacher support often takes the form of teachers setting clear expectations, promptly answering student mails, and challenging students in a way that is tailored to their individual needs.

4. If you were free to choose, how do you think your relationship with a teacher could be improved, given that it is limited to a 10-week module?

   Examples as probe: amount and kind of interaction, classroom setting (activities and class side), efforts the teacher should make (maybe outside the classroom), etc.

General Probes

1. Nodding, verbal affirmation.
2. Can you think of a specific situation?
3. Could you give an example?
4. Please elaborate.