

Children's Perception of the Teacher-Child Relationship in Tanzania: (Dis)Similarities among Children with Internalizing Versus Externalizing Behavior

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Abstract: *In this study we examined the perception of young children with internalizing and externalizing behavior of their relationship with their teacher and their (dis)similarities of their perception. The relationship with the teacher focused on warmth, conflict and autonomy support. Ninety-two (92) respondents, 40 children with internalizing behavior and 52 children with externalizing behavior, participated in the study. A series of two-way MANOVA's was used to analyze the data. Overall, findings revealed that children from both groups roughly reported to experience disharmonious and conflictual relationships with their teachers and a more directive instruction from the teachers. Furthermore, children with internalizing behavior perceived more warmth in their relationship with teachers than children with externalizing behavior. These findings highlighted the difficulties experienced by both groups in their relationship with their teachers. We propose that teachers should be trained to identify and help children with internalizing and externalizing behavior.*

Key words: children's perception, externalizing behavior, internalizing behavior, teacher-child relationship, Y-Cats measure

Introduction

Every child who joins pre-primary school experiences a transition from home to school. In schools, children experience daily interactions with a teacher that form part of their relationship. In their relationship with the teacher, children display behavior, which differs partly due to different rearing styles and partly to their temperament tendencies (see also Shavega, Brugman, & Van Tuijl, 2014). On the other side, a teacher in the school context is a role model to the child and has a significant effect on the formation of behavior, attitudes and future education (Douglas & Skipper, 2015).

The teacher-child relationship takes place in the school context, and can be regarded as a secondary relationship to the child. Although the teacher-child relationship is a more formal relationship, from an attachment perspective and especially for young children, this relationship with the

teacher is a significant one. Before children enroll in pre-primary schools, they have experienced different rearing style at home and possibly received different orientations from a wider community (Shavega *et al.*, 2014; 2015). In addition, children's temperaments differ from one another. The orientations that a child experiences before joining pre-primary schools may influence the child's expectations from his/her teachers. For instance, a child may perceive school as an exciting new environment or as an unwelcome or overwhelming new environment, and encounter the teachers and fellow children who are new to her/him with curiosity, shyness or boldness. This might have implications for their relationship with their teachers. Furthermore, teachers interact with children of diverse behavior such as prosocial, internalizing or externalizing behavior. The reactions children receive from the teacher in response to their behavior also may have implications for children's perception of their relationship with the teachers. Studies reveal that the ways children perceive their daily relationship with their teachers guide their social behavior and behavior adaptations. For example, the perception of less supportive relations worsens the behavior of young children (Laibe *et al.*, 2004). Arsenio and Lemerise (2004) assume that the way children understand and interpret social behavior and motives of others may play a fundamental role in children's immediate and long-term behavior. For many studies the teacher has been the main reporter of the teacher-child relationship. However, it is important to know how children perceive this relationship, especially when children show 'difficult' behavior. This study therefore, examined the perception of the teacher-child relationship of children with internalizing and externalizing behavior.

Attachment Theory

In the school context, the relationship between a teacher and a child can be viewed as an attachment. According to Bowlby (1980), children construct the so-called internal working models out of their relationships with caregivers, which influence the way children respond to new social partners. The construction is based on previous experiences. Therefore, if the child has negative experience, s/he may even view a friendly teacher initially as unsupportive. A secure attachment is related to positive social development, whereas children with insecure attachment are at risk for lower social competence and self esteem (O'Connor & McCartney, 2006). For example, Bowlby (1980) points out that, a child with a secure attachment experience will construct a social model of the teacher as lovable and will therefore respond to a teacher as a safe attachment figure. For a child who experienced insecure attachment will construct a social model of the teacher as unfriendly and may respond to the teacher as not a safe attachment figure. However, in the long run positive experiences with the teacher can alter the child's negative history. Koepkes and Harkins (2008) postulate that

the internal working model based on the teacher-child experiences allows children to construct generalized expectations of this relationship. According to Koepkes and Harkins (2008), the teacher-child relationship supplements the maternal attachment as a contributing factor to children's social development.

Based on internal working model, children are more likely to display friendly behavior when they view teachers as supportive. If a teacher shows authoritarian behavior (e.g., gives a lot of commands and is not supportive), a child is more likely to construct a working model as unfriendly. The child may tend to fear the teacher, which implies internalizing behavior, or the child may in turn respond in a conflictual way, which implies externalizing behavior. Attachment theory therefore, guides the explanation of a relationship between a teacher and a child in a school context.

Many studies have addressed the quality of teacher-child relationships. The key informant in the case of young children reporting the quality of the dyadic and class relationship has been the teacher (Baker *et al.*, 2008; Pianta & Stuhlman, 2004; Shavega *et al.*, 2014, 2015). However, the perspective of the child about his/her relationship with the teacher especially for children with internalizing and children with externalizing behaviors is under-researched. Although literature is lacking about children's perception on the relationship, still children judge and take actions, which have implications for their relationship with their teachers and their behavior adjustment in school. As pointed out by Mclaughlin, Aspden, and McLachlan (2015) children learn from their relationship and interactions with significant people in the school context, i.e. the teacher. This study took a lead to examine this aspect.

Teacher-Child Relationship

The teacher-child relationship is regarded as an integral part of the quality of children's experience and adaptations in schools (Dobbs & Arnold, 2009), since it nurtures the development of the child in different aspects. Furthermore, the research postulates that the quality of the teacher-child relationship is a central factor for child adjustment and adaptation in pre-schools (Dobbs & Arnold, 2009; Shavega *et al.*, 2015). The research provides evidence that the teacher-child relationship actively shapes children's capacity for self-regulation and behavior through teaching and feedback, which both have implications for short term and long-term benefits (Baker, Grant & Morlock, 2014; Jerome, Hamre & Pianta, 2009). The importance of the teacher-child relationship for children's development underscores the need for research to better understand the experience of each part (i.e. teacher and child) within the interpersonal exchanges that comprise the relationship. Children's perspectives on this relationship are often not addressed, in part because they are assumed to be less reliable and valid.

Recent research however shows that in the case of young children, reliable information on their perception of the teacher-child relationship is possible (Mantzicopoulos & Neuharth-Pretchett, 2003).

The teacher-child relationship is viewed as a complex phenomenon since it involves two parties: a teacher on one hand and a child on the other (Smith, Lewis & Stromont, 2011). In this relationship, each part has its own expectations (Smith *et al.*, 2011). A child constructs knowledge out of the relationship, while on the other hand, a teacher expects a child to behave in an acceptable manner (Smith *et al.*, 2011). This may imply that in schools teachers set standards of behavior expected from the child and a child should adhere to the standards set; on the other hand a child perceives whether the relationship is friendly or not. In addition, a young child views a teacher as the most significant person to her/him, who executes teaching as well as parenting roles in the school context. This means the teacher models desirable behavior and buffers and corrects unaccepted behavior of the child (Laibe *et al.*, 2004).

During the teacher-child interaction, especially in the dyadic relationship, children learn and teachers support the relationship that has been developed between them (McLaughlin, Aspeden & McLachlan, 2015). In a Tanzanian context, studies show that teachers are reported to stress on obedience as important characteristics for the child's adjustment (Shavega *et al.*, 2014). In this relationship, each member (teacher and child) may perceive the relationship differently, either favorable or unfavorable.

Furthermore, Garner and Waajid (2008) state that to understand the relationship between a teacher and a child, we need to address teachers and children's perceptions towards one another and their behavior. Although a common assumption is that teachers influence the behavior of children more than the vice versa, according to Taylor and Carr (1992), children's behavior strongly influences the way teachers behave towards them, especially for young children. Negative reactions of teachers then may evoke a reciprocal process of negative exchanges. This argument is in line with the observation by Dobbs, Arnold and Doctoroff (2004) that pre-school children, who misbehave frequently, have received more commands from their teachers. If the commands are frequently used, the children are more likely to develop or display externalizing behavior such as aggressive and/or internalizing behavior such as reticent, anxiety or fear. The question was whether children's perception of the teacher-child relationship offers a way to explain their behavior towards the teacher. This study therefore examined the perception of children with internalizing behavior and

children with externalizing behavior of their relationship with their teachers in pre-primary schools.

Children's Perception of the Teacher-Child Relationship

Papadopoulou and Gregoriadis (2017) in their study examined children's perception about their quality of their interaction. They studied children's perception of the quality of the teacher-child interaction among the normal children with average age of 5 years and found that, in general, children perceived positive interactions with their teachers. Skipper and Douglas (2015) examined the influence of teachers' feedback on children's perception of the teacher-child relationship. The sample consisted normal children aged between 7 and 11 years. The findings revealed that children reported a negative perception on their relationship with their teachers after the feedback of failure, but reported a positive relationship following feedback on success. Some studies focused on children's perception on their drawings (Arslan Cansever, 2017; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985; Kesicioglu & Deniz, 2014). For example, Cansever (2017) conducted a study to examine the perception of children of the teacher among normal children aged between 66 and 68 months and found that young children in primary schools were able to explain their perception towards their relationship with their teachers through drawings. Other studies evaluated children's perception with tools adapted to a particular cultural context (Longobardi *et al.*, 2016; Spilt, Koomen & Mantzicopolous, 2010). Ghysens (2009) focuses on children's perception of involvement in relation to children's learning and found a positive perception of the parent-child relationship.

Studies on the perception of children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior on their relationship with their teachers are to a great extent missing. Since teachers are role models for children and fulfill roles in the formation of children's behavior and attitudes of which perception is a crucial part, the importance of children's perceptions towards their relationship with their teachers cannot be overlooked (see also Skipper & Douglas, 2015). For example, Van Orden (2011) did a study to children with internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior and the findings revealed that behaviors were associated with an unfriendly teacher-child relationship with their teachers as reported by the children. This experience of relationship is more likely to instill negative perceptions in children towards their teachers. Since children with internalizing or externalizing behavior have been reported by their teachers to be the source of a disharmonious relationship in pre-primary schools (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Longobardi *et al.*, 2016; van Orden, 2011), it is important to explore the children's views on their relationship with their teachers. In this study, we establish that children are important stakeholders in their relationship with the teachers in school since they have great influence on the relationship. Exploration from the children perspective

may help to have a more profound understanding of the relationship and how to help children with problem behavior in a positive way.

Internalizing and Externalizing Behavior

Internalizing behavior involves behavior in which feelings or emotions are directed towards oneself, such as depression, fearfulness, reticent or withdrawn behavior, feeling isolated and anxious to mention a few (Koledin, 2005; Skipper & Douglas, 2015; Van Orden, 2011; Volckaert & Noel, 2016). Externalizing behavior is disruptive behavior directed towards others, which can involve aggressive behavior such as hitting, bullying and beating other children. Research indicates that during early childhood, non-compliance, temper, tantrums, and aggression are regarded as normative since they are common to many children. As children grow older, they become more able to understand, memorize and comply with rules and routines. Non-compliant behavior may stop at a certain age, but for some children it may persist over time and develop into maladaptive behavior (Smith, Cowie & Blades, 2011; Wakschlag *et al.*, 2007). Pre-school children exhibiting early externalizing behavior are at risk of developing anti-social problem behavior in the long run (Calkins & Keane, 2009) whereas pre-school children with internalizing behavior are at risk for developing emotional problems. A positive teacher-child relationship may help children to adjust in schools, including buffering problem behavior (O'Connor, Dearing & Collins, 2011), whereas a negative teacher-child relationship may exacerbate or even be the source of problem behavior in children, especially if children perceive the dyadic relationship as disharmonious. If teachers are not warm or friendly during their interactions with children, children are more likely to be afraid of the teachers, hence become reticent, or behave in an unfriendly way.

Perceptions of children of their relationships with the teachers are more likely to guide their behavior than perceptions of the teachers. For example, Liu *et al.* (2011) report that children aged four to ten years drew upon their perception to guide their social interactions. Moreover, children who experienced unfriendly relationships in other settings, like home, are more likely to maintain their perceptions of adults as unfriendly and of relationships as conflictual. These perceptions can become self-fulfilling prophecies, leading to more conflict (see also Calkins & Keane, 2009), especially for a teacher who lacks the skills in handling children with internalizing behavior or externalizing behavior. In this study, we assume that children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior might face problems during interaction with their teachers, and that their perception of the relationship with teachers plays a crucial role in the maintenance of problem behavior or their adjustment to the school setting.

In most studies, teachers have been the main informants of their relationship with young children (Baker, 2006; O'Connor *et al.*, 2011; Shavega *et al.*, 2015; Waas, 2008). This study adds to this body of knowledge by exploring the children's perspective on the teacher-child relationship as a factor in the maintenance of problem behavior. Internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior have been chosen since children experience from an early stage and they tend to continue over time if there is no intervention (O'Connor *et al.*, 2011).

The Role of Gender

The role of gender in both problem behavior and the teacher-child relationship has been investigated and confirmed: Boys display more externalizing behavior problems than girls and also experience higher levels of conflict with their teacher as reported by their teachers (Jerome *et al.*, 2009; Koepkes & Harkins, 2008; Liu *et al.*, 2011; O'Connor *et al.*, 2011). Liu *et al.* (2011) further comment that males who are reported to have externalizing problems display poorer relationships with teachers. Girls show more internalizing behavior problems than boys and a more favorable relationship with their teachers (Hendrickson & Rydell's, 2004; Jerome *et al.*, 2009; Liu *et al.*, 2011; Mullola *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, we expect gender differences for children with internalizing or externalizing behavior in the child's perception of the teacher-child relationship. In this study, we aimed to establish whether there is an interaction effect between gender and behavior on the perception of the teacher-child relationship.

Pre-Primary Schools in the Tanzanian Context

Tanzania is located in the Eastern part of Africa with a total area of 945,089 square kilometers. About 80% of its people are local farmers engaged in agricultural sector. About two decades ago, in Tanzania there were no programs to prepare children for school before they joined primary education (Grade 1) at age 7. In 1995, Tanzania established the Education and Training Policy through the Ministry of Education and Culture (1995), which focused on preparing children aged 5 to 6 years for primary education. According to the policy, it was mandatory that every child aged 5 to 6 years should attend a pre-primary class before joining primary education. To implement this policy each primary school was supposed to have a pre-primary class on its premises. Another Education and Training Policy was developed in 2014 (URT, 2014). Education structure in this policy is 1-6-4-2-3+; one year for pre-primary education, 6 years for primary education, 4 years for ordinary secondary education, 2 years for advanced secondary education and 3+ years for tertiary education. In this education structure implementation was done for pre-primary school where a child should attend one year, but for 6 years for primary education is yet to be accommodated. The rest education levels have remained the same.

Pre-primary education' is the official term for early childhood education in Tanzania. The term has been adapted in this study to refer to all children who are being prepared to join primary education (standard one). In 1995, pre-primary education became part of the formal education system. In public pre-primary schools, children spend five hours a day from 7.30 am to 12.30 pm, whereas in private schools they spend longer hours, and some children are in boarding schools (see also Shavega *et al.*, 2014). In Tanzania, a public pre-primary class has only one teacher (see also Shavega *et al.*, 2014). The language of instruction in public schools is Kiswahili (national language), whereas, in private schools it is English. The government is responsible to train pre-primary teachers (Tanzania Institute of Education, 2009) as well as private sectors. Teachers attend short courses on early childhood education. These short courses are sometimes organized by the government in teachers colleges and sometimes by private sectors such as Plan International (see also Shavega *et al.*, 2014). In the Tanzania cultural context, people are increasingly becoming aware of the importance of pre-primary classes for children before they join primary education.

The Present Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the perception of two groups of children (i.e., children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior) of their relationship with their teachers in pre-primary schools. Specifically, the study aimed at addressing two key questions. First, how do children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior perceive their relationship with their teachers? And, does the perception of the teacher-child relationship differ between children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior? Second, does the type of behavior (internalizing vs externalizing) interact with gender? The research indicates that, the way children perceive their relationships with their teachers shapes their behavior trajectory either towards a positive or a negative direction (Douglas & Skipper, 2015; Jellesman & Koomen, 2011). In addition, the research indicates that perceptions guide children's behavior trajectory (Van Orden, 2011). Furthermore, Henricsson and Rydell (2004) found that internalizing behaviors are often characterized by negative expectations, which may lead to poor social skills and finally affecting the relationship with other people. Exploring children's perceptions from the perspective of children with internalizing and children with externalizing behavior may help us to understand children's personal experience in their daily lives with their teachers.

Internalizing and externalizing behavior were chosen since these types of behavior have been reported to affect children from early stage and tend to

continue over time if not intervened. For example, a child experiencing anxiety, withdrawal, and fear is more likely to display such behavior in the future if not supported by significant people including teachers. Likewise, a child displaying disruptive behavior can persist with such behavior if not supported and this behavior may become serious in the future if it becomes stable over time (Bub, McCartney & Willet, 2007). Specifically, this study was guided by the following objectives: To explore the perception of children with two types of behavior problems of their relationship with their teacher, especially to examine whether there is a difference in perception of the teacher-child relationship (on conflict, warmth and autonomy) between children who display internalizing behavior and those who display externalizing behavior; and to explore whether gender affects the perception of children with internalizing or externalizing behavior of their teacher-child relationship.

Methods

Participants

This study was done in Ilala municipality, Dar es Salaam region, in Tanzania. Participants were pre-primary children who displayed internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior as nominated by peers as well as rated by the teachers. This group involved a total of 92 children, 47 (51.1%) males and 45 (48.9% females) from 16 schools. Class size ranged between 24 and 98 children. Only children aged 5 years and above participated because they were assumed to have the capabilities to respond to the interview. Each child in the class was interviewed and participated in nominating children who display internalizing behavior and children who display externalizing behavior.

Procedures used to obtain children with internalizing and externalizing behavior

Two procedures were used to obtain children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior. The first step comprised of peer rating. All 384 children from 10 pre-primary classes who were present during the interview period were contacted and were first asked to nominate children displaying internalizing behavior followed with children who display externalizing behavior. This procedure was much similar to that of Shavega, Van Tuijl and Brugman (2016). For internalizing behavior, we selected a few indicators, which are common to children aged 3 to 6 years such as loneliness, fearfulness, reticent and withdrawn behaviors. For example, a child was asked to mention a child who is always lonely, quiet and does not like to join other children during play. For externalizing behavior, we asked every child to mention children who frequently bully,

pinch and beat other children in the class and during playtime outside the classroom. An example of an item is: *"Tell me names of children who frequently bully other children in the class and during play time.* During the interview we stressed that for a child to be considered as displaying internalizing behavior or externalizing behavior, the behavior should occur repeatedly.

Each interview with a child lasted between six and eight minutes. Children who were able to mention both groups (children who display internalizing behavior and children who display externalizing behavior) were allowed to continue in the nomination process. Children who were not able to mention children with such behaviors were not included in the study. Of 384 children, 290 were eligible to continue with the nomination process. The participation rate among classes ranged between 60% and 85%.

There was no overlap between the group with internalizing and externalizing behaviors. After this nomination process, a researcher established tallies for each child who was mentioned to display internalizing behavior or externalizing behavior. Children who scored many tallies (by at least 1/3 of all children in the class) in one of the groups were labeled as displaying either internalizing behavior or externalizing behavior. Tallies for children nominated as displaying internalizing behavior ranged between 8 and 15 and for children nominated as displaying externalizing behavior ranged between 10 and 32.

The second step involved asking each class teacher to report children who displayed internalizing behavior and children who displayed externalizing behavior. Teachers filled in the Children Behavior Checklist (CBCL) (Achenbach, 1991) for younger children version for children who were nominated both by peers and the teacher. Of this questionnaire, two scales were used: internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior (both five items for indicators). We prepared a list of children who were nominated by the children and those who were not nominated. Every teacher reported on every child on the list whether the child was displaying internalizing behavior or externalizing behavior. Since teachers were not involved during the peer rating they were therefore blind to children's nomination.

In the third step the researcher crosschecked the names. A child who was frequently rated by peers as displaying internalizing behavior or externalizing behavior and reported by the teacher as displaying the same behavior respectively, was included in the study to report their relationship with their teachers. Based on this criterion, two groups nominated by peers and reported by teachers were selected. 40 children displaying internalizing behavior and 52 children displaying externalizing behavior from ten classes

participated in this study. The interview with the selected children was arranged after class hours to avoid interruption of class timetable. The focus in the interview was on the children's perception of their relationship with their teachers, using the Y-CAT tool (Mantzicopoulos & Neuharth-Pretchett, 2003). The author interviewed the children and coded all the responses from each child. The interview was done in Kiswahili, which is the national language and lasted between 15 and 20 minutes. Since children do not concentrate on one thing for long time, during interview we asked a child to break for 1 or 2 minutes so as to persist with interview after 15 minutes.

Measure

Two measures were used in this study. First, we used Children Behavior Checklist (CBL) for selection procedure (Achenbach, 1991) for children aged 4 to 18 ages. The checklist has three Likert Scale which are Not true = 0, Sometimes true = 1 and often true = 2.

Second, we used the Young Children's Appraisals of Teacher Support (Y-CATS, Mantzicopoulos & Neuharth-Pretchett, 2003). This instrument aims to assess child's perceptions of his/her relationship with his/her teacher. The measure consists of 31 items from three sub-scales, namely warmth, conflict and teacher support for autonomy. Warmth refers to whether a child feels that a teacher likes him/her, says nice things/words about the child, and feels loved, such as "*my teacher likes me*". Conflict refers to behavior which shows a disharmonious relationship with the teacher. Examples of items are "*the teacher gets angry with me*", "*the teacher tells me that I don't listen*". Autonomy support refers to whether a teacher offers help to a child or the teacher's ability to stimulate the child's autonomy in the class, for example "*My teacher lets me do different activities*". The researchers have adapted this tool in their cultural context (e.g., Longobardi *et al.*, 2016; Spilt, 2010). Cronbach's Alpha in the previous studies were acceptable; for example Mantzicopoulos and Neuharth-Pretchett (2003) reported a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .75 for warmth, .78 for conflict and .70 for teacher's autonomy support. Spilt (2010) reported a Cronbach's Alpha of .65 for warmth, .72 for conflict and .61 for teachers' autonomy support and the mean age of children was 69.5 months.

Previous studies used dichotomous responses of Yes/No; *true/untrue*; true or yes for agreement and *untrue* or no for disagreement (Longobardi *et al.*, 2016; Mantzicopoulos & Neuharth-Pretchett, 2003; Spilt, 2010). Because the Tanzanian context could differ from a more western context, especially with regard to autonomy support, a pilot study was conducted with 25 normal pre-school children. The pilot study showed that children used to respond "yes", "no" and "sometimes". Therefore, we opted a three point Likert scale; Not at all = 1; sometimes = 2; and always = 3. Not at all refers to disagreement, sometimes refers to partially agreement and always refers to

agreement. The number of respondents determined the agreement or disagreement. With regard to autonomy support, the results from all respondents indicated that autonomy support for children was practiced in a limited number of situations. For example, in the classroom children were allowed to choose a study corner they were interested in, especially during the recess period. Autonomy support was practiced also outside the classroom during playtime; children were allowed to choose the type of play they were interested in. Therefore, under these conditions the autonomy support subscale was adapted in the context of this study. Cronbach's alpha was .73 (10 items) for warmth, .65 (7 items) for conflict, and .71 (5 items) for autonomy, which are acceptable. Items which were not culturally relevant in the Tanzanian context such as "*my teacher remembers my day for me*" were deleted. Also, items with a very low correlation if item deleted were deleted, for example "*my teacher is mean*".

Data analysis

Items were subjected to factor analysis to obtain variables. During analysis, we first used descriptive statistics to present the general picture of the perception of children with internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior. Second, two-way multivariate analysis of variance (Two-way MANOVA) was performed to examine whether children with internalizing behavior versus externalizing behavior differ in their perception of their relationship with their teachers using the Y-CATS measure. Furthermore, we aimed to find out whether there was an interaction between children's behavior (internalizing/externalizing) and child's gender (male/female) on their perception of the teacher-child relationship. We used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 21 version to analyze the data.

Results

Table 1: Children's responses on their perception of their relationship with their teachers (percentages and frequencies)

Child teacher relationship items	Internalizing behavior			Externalizing behavior		
	Response			Response		
	Not at all % (N)	Sometimes % (N)	Always % (N)	Not at all % (N)	Sometimes % (N)	Always % (N)
1. Variable: Warmth						
1. My teacher is my friend	50 (20)	50 (20)	00	84.6 (44)	15.4 (9)	00
2. My teacher likes my family	60 (24)	40 (16)	00	88.5 (46)	11.5 (6)	00
3. My teacher says nice things about my work	57.5 (23)	42.5 (17)	00	76.9 (40)	23.1 (12)	00
4. My teacher tells me I'm smart	60 (24)	40 (16)	00	84.6 (44)	15.4 (8)	00
5. My teacher likes me	65.5 (27)	30 (1)	2.5 (1)	82.7 (43)	17.3 (9)	00
6. My teacher smiles a lot	40 (16)	57.5 (23)	2.5 (1)	51.9 (27)	48.1 (25)	00
7. My teacher helps me when I don't understand	55 (22)	43 (18)	00	57.7 (30)	48.1 (25)	00
8. My teacher tells me good stories	35 (14)	65 (26)	00	50 (26)	50 (26)	00
9. My teacher answers my questions	52.5 (21)	47.5 (9)	00	44.2 (23)	55.8 (29)	00
10. My teacher makes fun in class	25 (10)	75 (30)	00	44.2 (23)	55.8 (29)	00
2. Variable: Conflict						
1. My teacher tells me I'm doing wrong	00	32.5 (13)	67.5 (27)	00	23.1 (12)	76.9 (40)
2. My teacher gets angry with me	00	30 (12)	70 (28)	00	21.2 (11)	78.8 (41)
3. My teacher tells me I don't try hard enough	2.5 (1)	47.5 (19)	50 (20)	00	51.9 (27)	48.1 (25)
4. My teacher tells me I don't listen	00	60 (24)	40 (16)	00	50 (26)	50 (26)
5. My teacher tells me I will be in trouble	00	27.5 (11)	72.5 (29)	00	21.2 (11)	78.8 (41)
6. My teacher has too many rules for us	2.5 (1)	62.5 (25)	35 (14)	00	61.5 (32)	38.5 (20)
7. My teacher shouts at me	2.5 (1)	25 (10)	72.5 (29)	00	17.3 (9)	82.7 (43)
3. Variable: Autonomy support						
1. My teacher lets me choose what I want to do	65 (26)	35 (14)	00	82.7 (43)	17.3 (9)	00
2. My teacher lets me do activities I want to do	75 (30)	25 (10)	00	82.7 (43)	17.3 (9)	00
3. My teacher lets me do different activities	65 (26)	35 (14)	00	76.9 (40)	17.1 (12)	00
4. My teacher does activities with me	67.5 (27)	32.5 (13)	00	82.7 (43)	17.3 (9)	00
5. My teacher lets me choose where to sit	77.5 (31)	22.5 (9)	00	76.9 (40)	23.1 (12)	00

From Table 1 it shows that both groups reported to experience conflict with their teachers but in a differing degree. For example, low scores on warmth for children with internalizing behavior ranged between 0 and 2.5%. Moderate scores ranged between 25% and 62.5% and higher scores ranged between 35% and 72.5%. For conflict moderate scores ranged between 17% and 61.5% and higher response ranged between 38.5% and 82.7%. Higher scores on conflict means children perceived higher conflict with teachers.

Responses about whether children receive autonomy support from the teachers revealed a high score from both groups but with a differing degree. For example, for children with internalizing behavior higher scores on disagreement ranged between 65% and 77.5%. Moderate scores (partial agreement) ranged between 22.5% and 35% and there was no response on agreement. For children with externalizing behavior higher scores on disagreement ranged between 76.9% and 82.7%. Partial agreement ranged between 17.1% and 23.1% and there was no response on agreement.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of Y-CATS variables including age, warmth, conflict and autonomy and Pearson correlation (N = 92)

Variables	N items	Min	Max	Mean	S D	α	Warmth	Conflict	Autonomy
Age		5.00	6.00	5.50	.62				
Warmth	10	2.32	2.73	2.56	2.57	.79		-.12	.28**
Conflict	7	1.27	1.65	1.42	1.88	.74			-.25*
Autonomy	5	2.64	2.76	2.71	1.45	.81			

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

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of warmth, conflict and autonomy by children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior

TCR	Group					
	Internalizing			Externalizing		
	M	SD	n	M	SD	n
Warmth	2.45	2.22	40	1.03	1.70	52
Conflict	6.45	1.71	40	6.75	.83	52
Autonomy	.47	1.37	40	.11	.37	52

Children's perception regarding their relationship with their teachers on warmth, conflict and autonomy support

A two-way multivariate analysis of variance (Two-way MANOVA) was performed to examine whether children with internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior differ in their perception of the relationship with their teacher and also whether there was an interaction between the type of

children's behavior and child's gender on perception. The independent variables were type of children's behavior (internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior) and child's gender. In order to perform a two-way MANOVA, several assumptions should be met. Preliminary, assumptions for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices and multicollinearity were tested. No violation of assumptions was noted.

To reduce Type 1 error and to achieve a better result, we set a higher alpha value and we applied a Bonferroni adjustment. We divided the p-value (.05) by 3 (i.e., the number of dependent variables), which gave us a new alpha value of .017 (Field, 2009). Therefore, a variable with a p-value < .017 was considered as significant. In our findings, only one dependent variable (warmth) recorded a significant value less than this cut-off, $F(1,88) = 7.09, p = .009$.

We examined whether the effect of type of children's behavior on the perception of the relationship with their teacher was dependent on the gender of the child. The result from the two-way MANOVA revealed that there was no statistically significant interaction effect between type of child behavior (internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior) and gender on the combined dependent variables; $F(3, 86) = 539, p = .66$, Wilk's, Lambda = .982.

Results from the main effects two-way Manova revealed a statistically significant difference between children with internalizing behavior *versus* those with externalizing behavior on the combined variables $F(3,86) = 2.677, p < .05$; Wilks Lambda = .85; partial eta .085, which indicates a medium effect. When the results for the independent variables were considered separately, the only difference to reach statistical significance, using a Bonferroni adjusted alpha level of .017 (Field, 2009), was on perceived warmth, $F(1, 88) = 7.09, p = .009$, partial eta squared = .09 which indicate a medium effect. The remaining two dependent variables, conflict and autonomy support, revealed non-statistically significant differences. Mean scores indicated that children with internalizing behavior reported rather lower score on warmth ($M = 15.02; SD = 2.74$) than children with externalizing behavior ($M = 13.35; SD = 2.19$).

Results on main effect about whether females perceived higher or lower on the perception of teacher-child relationship revealed a non-statistical significant difference on all variables: warmth ($F(1,88) = .010, p = .92$), conflict ($F(1, 88) = 1.869, p = .17$) and autonomy support ($F(1, 88) = .653, p = .42$), indicating that there was no interaction effect.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore perception of children with internalizing and externalizing behavior about their relationship with their teachers regarding warmth, conflict and autonomy support from their teachers. It also aimed to examine whether children with internalizing behavior differ from children with externalizing behavior in perception regarding their relationship with their teachers using a Y-CATS measure as well as possible interactions between type of behavior and children's gender on warmth, conflict and autonomy support.

Responses on perception on their relationship regarding warmth, conflict, and autonomy support for children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior roughly indicated the same direction for both groups. For example, both groups rated higher on disagreement about warmth and lower on autonomy support. This indicates that many children perceive teacher as unfriendly in the school context. In addition, both groups recorded high on a conflictual relationship with teachers, which indicate that many children regardless of displaying internalizing or externalizing behavior experienced a disharmonious relationship with their teachers. This implies that the quality of the teacher-child relationship as perceived by the children from both groups is of poor quality. The findings are contrary to that of Papadopoulou and Gregariadis (2017) who state that children perceive a positive interaction with their teachers. This difference might be attributed to the sample of this study, which used only children with extreme behavior problems. In addition, these studies are done in different contexts where the teacher-child relationships may differ as due to cultural orientations. Children adapt their behavior to adults such as parents and teachers, as was pointed out by Mclaughlin, Aspdem and Mclach (2015) that children learn from their relationships and interactions with significant people in the home and school context. If a teacher is not friendly during interactions with a child, the child may develop a negative perception on the relationship with the teacher. This may happen especially when a teacher views a child as problematic and lacks skills of helping a child with internalizing and or with externalizing behavior. In this context each child may perceive the relationship as not friendly.

We examined whether there were differences in the perception on the teacher-child relationship between children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior. The results partially supported our hypotheses. We found a statistically significant difference in the perceived warmth between children with internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior.

Children with internalizing behavior reported rather higher on warmth indicating that they partially experience less relational difficulties as compared to children with externalizing behavior. These findings are contrary to that of Henricsson and Rydell (2004) who found that children with internalizing behavior had more negative interaction with teachers. The findings are also contrary to the findings from studies which report that for children with internalizing behavior, negative perceptions matter more than positive perceptions (Jellesman, Zee & Koomen, 2015). However, this might be attributed by the nature of children with internalizing behavior as they are not readily visible and can't be easily recognized. Furthermore, since these children are so silent, it is difficult for other people including teachers and peers to help them (see also Stephens, 2016).

We also found out that both groups reported to experience a conflictual relationship with their teachers and a lack of autonomy support from the teachers. This generally implied that both, children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior experience misunderstanding during their interaction with their teachers. In addition, both groups do not receive autonomy support from the teachers. The findings are in line with that of Baker, Grant and Marlock (2018) who argue that children with internalizing and children with externalizing behavior are at risk for relational difficulties and poor adjustment at school. Teachers tend to dislike children who display unacceptable behaviors and it is difficult for them to maintain a positive quality of the relationship because if a child feels disliked s/he will perceive the relationship as unfriendly (see also Fumo & Hargreaves, 2003; Rudasilli & Rim-Kaufman, 2009; Silva *et al.*, 2010). In Tanzania, obedience is encouraged in children, a disobedient child may elicit anger in a teacher and a teacher may respond in an unfriendly way to the child. This may lead to a vicious circle of conflictual relationship. For example, it may lead into a trajectory path of problem behavior and finally develop into difficult behavior in future hence difficult to maintain relationship with other people in different context.

The responses on all variables from both groups roughly indicate the same direction but with a varying degree. Both groups indicated higher on disagreement and very low on agreement about warmth and autonomy support from teachers. In contrast, in both groups, responses on conflict indicated higher agreement and no responses on disagreement indicating that conflict relational was high to both groups.

Conclusion

This study highlighted the perception of children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior on their relationship with

their teachers and whether the perception differ between them or not. The study further examined whether there is an interaction effect between gender and child behavior. The findings revealed that both groups rated higher disagreement and lower on warmth and autonomy support and higher agreement on conflict. This indicates that both groups; children displaying internalizing behavior and children displaying externalizing behavior perceive a disharmonious relationship with their teachers and that teachers are not supportive to these children. Two-way MANOVA revealed that children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior view their teacher as not friendly, not supportive and that they experience a conflictual relationship; a situation which puts children at risk of developing a trajectory of problem behavior in their school career. Teachers' reports are in line with this assertion as they report difficulties to relate to a child who persistently shows negative behavior (Fumo, Hargreaves & Maxwell, 2003); however, they view this as indication of teacher failure. Generally, the findings imply that children who display internalizing behavior and children who display externalizing behaviors are not treated in a friendly manner as a result lead into a negative perception into children which may lead a vicious circle of these behavior and relational trajectory.

Strengths and Limitation

This is the first study to explore perceptions of children with internalizing and children externalizing behavior about their relationship with their teachers. We used peer rating and teachers report to obtain children who display internalizing behavior and children who display externalizing behavior; this leads to methodological strength as two types of informants were involved. Furthermore, the study highlighted the relational problems facing children with internalizing behavior and externalizing behavior that may inform teachers on how to manage these behaviors in pre-primary schools. However, this study has limitations. First, only children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior reported on their relationship with their teachers. In the future, to bring a clear picture about the quality of child interactions with the teacher in pre-primary schools normal children should be included in the sample study to report their relationship with teachers. This may serve the purpose of comparison between normal children and children with internalizing behavior and those with externalizing behavior. In addition, children displaying these behaviors should report their relationship with other people who are significant to them such as parents and siblings. This shall reveal the relationship of the child with other people in home and school settings. Furthermore, in the future parents should be involved to report whether the

child displays internalizing behavior or externalizing behavior; this can reveal a real picture of child development at home and at school and may help teachers to handle their dyadic relationship with these children from the beginning a child starts a school.

Implications for Practice

The study highlighted the perceptions of teacher-child relations from the child's perspective of children with internalizing behavior or and children with externalizing behavior. The study suggests that in pre-primary schools children with internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior perceived a disharmonious relationship with their teacher, more directives from the teachers as well as more conflict. Literature suggests that perceptions on these behaviors may become stable and the children are more likely to experience more relational difficulties with their teachers, and finally poor adjustment in the school context. This informs teachers that they have roles to help these children to develop a positive relationship.

According to Baker *et al.* (2018) teachers have a role of scaffolding the development of behavior competence and self-regulation in children. In addition, teachers have a role of protecting children against developing further internalizing or externalizing behavior; they should help children to develop beliefs and positive attitude towards behavior competency. In this study we suggest that pre-primary teachers should be trained to identify children with internalizing and children with externalizing behavior in pre-primary schools. Furthermore, teachers should be equipped with skills which will help them in identifying children with indicators of internalizing behavior and children with externalizing behavior so as to help these children to establish positive perception on the dyadic relationship with teachers. From the time children start pre-primary schools should be screened to identify children with internalizing behavior or externalizing behavior for the purposes of helping them. In addition, studies should be done to identify several behaviors in children, which may affect relationship with teachers in schools and prevent young children from developing circles of relational difficulties. Since children come from different home background with differing rearing styles; their behavior differs; in this situation, a pre-primary teacher should act as a buffering factor of internalizing and externalizing behavior in children. This will make teacher-child relationship in school an integral part of children's behavior regulation.

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