When personal becomes relational

Investigating the role of personality traits in affective student-teacher relationships

Du, Q.

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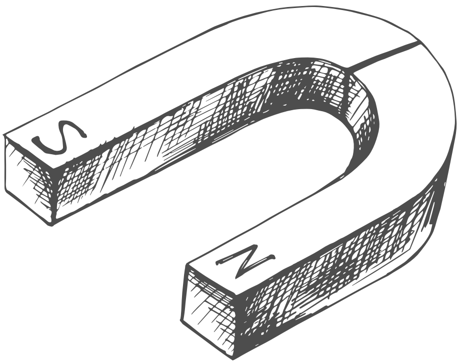
Chapter 4

The More Similar the Better?
Investigating the Role of Personality Traits and Personality Similarity in Student–Teacher Relationships in Upper Elementary Schools



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Abstract

In the present study, we investigated the unique role of teachers' and students' personality traits as well as the match between personality traits of both partners in the affective quality of dyadic student–teacher relationships (i.e., closeness, conflict). To explore these associations, we used a Chinese sample of 4638 upper elementary students and their 104 class teachers who reported about their own personality traits and the quality of their mutual relationship. Using multilevel polynomial regression modeling with response surface analysis, we found that both students' and teachers' agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were generally positively associated with closeness and negatively associated with conflict. Neuroticism was found to be negatively associated with closeness and positively associated with conflict. In particular, for agreeableness and openness, these associations held true regardless of the informant (i.e., who reported about the levels of closeness and conflict). Regarding personality similarity, relationships were found to be closer and less conflictual when both relationship partners were similarly high in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, and low in neuroticism, compared to when both teachers and students were similarly low in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, and high in neuroticism. These results were evident both in the student-reported and teacher-reported relationship quality. Preliminary findings indicate that both teachers and students reported higher levels of closeness when their own personality trait levels were more positive than those of their relationship partner. Together, these findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of personality traits and personality similarity/dissimilarity in student–teacher relationships and suggest that a focus on personality may be a promising avenue for enhancing students' affective relationships with teachers.

Keywords: personality traits, personality similarity, student–teacher relationships, elementary students

Introduction

The affective quality of dyadic student–teacher relationships (i.e., the emotional bond between teachers and individual students) has been theorized to serve as an important context for students' development, both academically and socially (Pianta et al., 2003; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). Empirical research has repeatedly confirmed this idea and indicated that students who share positive relationships with teachers are likely to engage with schoolwork, perform better academically, and form better relationships with peers (see Endedijk et al., 2022; Roorda et al., 2017 for meta-analyses). In contrast, students who have negative relationships with their teachers tend to be less engaged in class, have lower grades, and display more behavior problems (Lei et al., 2016; Roorda et al., 2017). Considering the importance of the affective quality of dyadic student–teacher relationships, it seems necessary to investigate factors that may be relevant for developing high-quality relationships.

One of the factors that may impact the quality of student–teacher relationships is students' and teachers' personality traits. Personality traits generally describe the differences among individuals in the ways they think, behave, and feel, and therefore may be associated with social relationships (Back et al., 2023; Pianta et al., 2003; Shiner & Caspi, 2003). Thus far, a handful of empirical studies have investigated the associations of students' and teachers' personality traits with student–teacher relationships (e.g., Kim et al., 2018; Zee et al., 2013). Notably, these studies have either focused on how students' or teachers' personality traits are associated with the affective quality of student–teacher relationships. Yet, as students' and teachers' personality traits may both be associated with student–teacher relationships, it seems relevant to explore whether the associations remain after controlling for the relationship partner's personality traits.

Furthermore, it has been theorized that the match between relationship partners' personality traits impacts their relationship quality (Pianta et al., 2003). There are generally two views about this association. One view is that people who are more *similar* with regard to their personality traits (i.e., personality similarity) are expected to share more favorable relationships with each other (Byrne, 1997; Byrne et al., 1986). Another view focuses on *dissimilarity* and assumes that being dissimilar on certain aspects of personality may benefit relationship development (Tracey, 1994). As far as we know, however, only one study has been conducted to investigate the role of personality similarity and student–teacher relationships in secondary schools (i.e., Pancorbo et al., 2022), leaving the match between students' and teachers' personality traits understudied in student–teacher relationships in the context of elementary schools. To address this lacuna, we therefore investigated the personality–relationship link by including students' and teachers' personality traits as well as their match in the upper elementary school period. This exploration is notable, as investigating personality traits could deepen our understanding of how individual psychological variations are linked to student–teacher relationships and thus provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to positive student–teacher relationships. In practice, this investigation could help teachers develop greater awareness of their own personalities and the ways these may influence their interactions with students. Additionally, it could encourage teachers to better understand their students' personalities and tailor affective support to meet the unique need of students with specific personality traits.

Theoretical Framework

Thus far, the majority of studies about the affective quality of student–teacher relationships have been based on the (extended) attachment theory. According to the attachment theory (Pianta, 1999; Verschueren, 2015; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012), positive student–teacher relationships are those in which teachers function as a secure base, satisfying students' emotional need for security when they engage in school activities. By contrast, the absence of such a sense of security in negative student–teacher relationships may interrupt students' learning process.

Two different dimensions are often distinguished that reflect the degree of security in a relationship: Closeness and conflict (Pianta, 1999; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). Specifically, closeness is regarded as a positive relationship dimension, indicating the level of warmth, affection, and open communication in the relationship, whereas conflict is regarded as a negative dimension that describes the level of fights, discordance, and negative feelings in the relationship (Pianta, 1999; Verschueren & Koomen, 2012). Notably, closeness and conflict are two independent dimensions that can coexist in various combinations. In this regard, student–teacher relationships with high levels of closeness and low levels of conflict are seen to be most optimal for students' development (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012).

Further guided by developmental systems theory, the affective quality of student–teacher relationships, as an important developmental outcome, is likely to be shaped by the individual characteristics of both students and teachers, such as personality traits (Pianta et al., 2003). Personality traits are commonly defined as the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that are relatively consistent across time and contexts (Shiner & Caspi, 2003). Personality traits, as stable and identifiable dispositions, delineate an individual's overall style of navigating the social world and thus may be linked to the development of student–teacher relationships (Back et al., 2023; McAdams & Pals, 2006).

Additionally, developmental systems theory suggests that children develop through dynamic processes, evaluating their goodness of fit within the relational environment and adapting their responses accordingly (Pianta et al., 2003). This perspective highlights the importance of individual's personality traits as well as the match between the personality traits of relationship partners for student–teacher relationships.

Personality Traits and Student–Teacher Relationships

In recent decades, most researchers in personality psychology have reached consensus that personality may be composed of five main traits, namely agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism (sometimes also operationalized as emotional stability), and openness to experience (John, 2021; McCrae & Costa, 2008). Conceivably, these five personality traits may be associated with the quality of the relationships teachers and students share with each other (Back et al., 2023; Pianta et al., 2003). Specifically, according to John (2021), agreeableness indicates how prosocial, easy-going, and friendly individuals are. Empirical research has shown that highly agreeable individuals tend to compromise during conflicts and engage in either support-giving or support-seeking behaviors (Denissen et al., 2009; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002; Zupančič & Kavčič, 2014). These tendencies may contribute to the development of close and conflict-free relationships. Conscientiousness describes the degree to which people are responsible, organized, thoughtful, and rule-abiding. Individuals with high levels of conscientiousness are considered good at regulating their behavior and acting in socially appropriate ways, which may reduce the likelihood of relational conflicts (Denissen et al., 2009; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2016). Extraversion indicates how much individuals enjoy highly stimulating environments and social interactions. Extraverted individuals are likely to initiate interactions with others, thereby increasing the closeness in their relationships (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002). Neuroticism refers to the likelihood that individuals experience negative feelings, such as anxiety and stress. Individuals who score high on neuroticism have been found to perceive relationships in a more negative way than individuals who score low on neuroticism (Finn et al., 2013; McNulty, 2008). This negative perception may bring conflicts in the relationships. Finally, openness delineates the degree to which individuals embrace novel experiences and demonstrate creativity in thinking (John, 2021). As these people are interested in new things and experiences, they are believed to be good at cultivating unique experiences within relationships, contributing to higher levels of warmth and shared experiences in relationships (McCrae & Greenberg, 2014; Prinzie et al., 2009).

Most of these suppositions have been based on theory and research in the fields of psychology. As far as we know, only five cross-sectional studies have investigated the association between personality traits and relationship quality in the educational context. Regarding *teachers'* personality traits, a study with around 600 secondary school students showed that teachers who were more agreeable and conscientious were liked more by their students (Pancorbo et al., 2022). In another study, including a large sample size of 2000 students, secondary students perceived more emotional support from teachers who were with higher levels of agreeableness (Kim et al., 2018). Only one study thus far has been conducted among elementary school students. This study showed that students experienced more positive relationships with teachers who displayed lower levels of neuroticism (Wettstein et al., 2021).

Next to teachers' personality traits, some studies have examined the link between *students'* personality traits and student–teacher relationships. In their study with secondary school students, Pancorbo et al. (2022) found that students' own levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and neuroticism were not associated with the degree to which they liked their teachers. With respect to elementary school students, one study involving 300 elementary students revealed that students who were more extraverted felt closer to their teachers than peers with lower levels of extraversion (Charalampous & Kokkinos, 2014). In another study with more than 8000 upper elementary schoolers (Zee et al., 2013), students who were more extraverted, agreeable, and conscientious shared higher levels of closeness with teachers, according to both student- and teacher-reported relationship quality. Furthermore, teachers were likely to report conflicts with students who scored high on extraversion and low on agreeableness and conscientiousness (Zee et al., 2013). However, in this study, no student-reported conflict was available, leaving a gap in our knowledge about how students' personality traits are associated with student-reported conflict.

Taken together, these studies provide some evidence that teachers' and students' personality traits may play a role in the affective quality of their mutual relationship. However, not every personality trait has gained equal attention, as studies have selectively investigated certain traits instead of including all five traits. Moreover, students' and teachers' personality traits were mostly investigated in isolation from each other, which limits our understanding of the unique role of each relationship partner's personality traits in student–teacher relationships. In this study, we therefore included all five personality traits and took both students' and teachers' personality traits into account.

Personality Similarity/Dissimilarity and Student–Teacher Relationships

Next to the direct associations of teachers' and students' personality traits with the quality of their mutual relationship, the match between both partners' personality traits may also play an important role in the affective quality of student–teacher relationships. Thus far, there are generally two ways to conceptualize the match between personality traits of relationship partners in the context of dyadic relationships. One line of research focuses on personality similarity which refers to the degree to which two individuals are similar to each other on certain personality traits. These studies are primarily based on reinforcement theory (Byrne, 1997; Byrne et al., 1986) which suggests that individuals tend to be gravitated towards individuals who are more similar to themselves, for example with regard to personality traits. This inclination stems from a fundamental need to function in a logical and consistent world; interacting with relationship partners who share similarities may reinforce the perception of such a logical and consistent world (Byrne, 1997; Byrne et al., 1986). Consequently, such similarities will lead to more positive feelings, a sense of connection, and mutual understanding within relationships (Anderson et al., 2003). In a more practical sense, similarities in personality traits may lead to smoother interactions and a better understanding of each other's behaviors and, hence, more closeness and less conflict in relationships (Anderson et al., 2003).

Another line of research focuses on personality dissimilarity and suggests that differences in personality traits may allow relationship partners to complement each other (Tracey, 1994). This complementarity enables each partner to express their authentic self and contribute uniquely to their relationship, which may foster more harmonious interactions (Tett & Murphy, 2002). For instance, when partners differ in extraversion, the highly extraverted partner may prefer to take the lead, while the less extraverted partner may feel at ease letting their partner handle the initiative (Sung et al., 2014). This dissimilarity in extraversion may, in turn, contribute to fewer conflicts in their relationships.

Despite different perspectives, both theories highlight the importance of taking the match between both relationship partners' personality traits into consideration. Indeed, a focus on the match between students' and personality traits may be a promising avenue for explaining the affective quality of student–teacher relationships. Some studies with university students suggest that personality similarity may play a role in how students view their *ideal* or *preferred* teacher (e.g., Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2008; Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2005; Kim & MacCann, 2016). For instance, a cross-sectional study involving 500 university students found that students preferred teachers whose personalities were more similar to their own, based on a similarity index measuring the five major personality traits (Kim & MacCann, 2016). Corroborating these findings, another study found that agreeable students expected their ideal teachers to be agreeable while open students expected their ideal teachers to have high levels of openness as well (Furnham & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2005). Furthermore, students, when taught by teachers closer to their ideal personality types, reported more positive feelings (Kim & MacCann, 2016). Conceivably, these positive feelings may contribute to high-quality student–teacher relationships.

Investigating the match between students' and teachers' personality traits may be relevant for *actual* relationship quality. In one experimental study, when secondary students' true performance was controlled for, teachers judged the students with whom they shared similar personality traits more positively (Rausch et al., 2016). This suggests that similarity may stimulate a better impression and positive feelings in teachers. In another experiment with ninth-graders and their teachers (Gehlbach et al., 2016), teachers and students received information about things they had in common, such as hobbies and sports. In this way, a feeling of being similar was stimulated. As a result, teachers experienced their relationships with students more positively. As far as we know, only one study has directly addressed the link between similarity in personality traits and student–teacher relationships (Pancorbo et al., 2022). In this cross-sectional study, using an overall personality similarity index, secondary students who perceived their personality as more similar to their teachers were found to like their teachers more than students who perceived their teachers' personality as less similar to their own (Pancorbo et al., 2022).

Taken together, it seems the majority of the studies regarding the match between students' and teachers' personality traits in student–teacher relationships have focused on personality similarity. Less, however, is known about the extent to which personality dissimilarity is associated with student–teacher relationships. Moreover, it is yet unknown how personality similarity and dissimilarity on the five personality traits may be differentially associated with student–teacher relationships. It is important to investigate these associations at the trait level, as studies have suggested that the importance of personality similarity or dissimilarity depends on specific traits (Sung et al., 2014). Lastly, studies have predominantly focused on *perceptual* similarity, defined as the level of similarity between individuals' self-reported personality and their reports of relationship partner's personality traits. The *actual* similarity, the level of similarity between both relationship partners' self-reports on their personality traits, tends to be overlooked. Previous studies have suggested differentiating between perceived and actual personality similarity in order to comprehensively understand the associations of interest (see Montoya et al., 2008 for a meta-analysis).

Present Study

To address the gaps in prior empirical research, the present study examined the association of students' and teachers' personality traits with the affective quality of dyadic student–teacher relationships (i.e., closeness and conflict) in a sample of upper elementary students and their teachers. We contributed to the research on the personality–relationship link in several important ways. First, we not only focused on both students' and teachers' personality traits, but also on the match between their personality traits, contributing to a more holistic understanding of the personality-relationship link.

Second, unlike most previous studies that included only certain traits or measured personality similarity at a general level (e.g., Pancorbo et al., 2022; Wettstein et al., 2021; Zee et al., 2013), we examined all five personality traits—agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness—to capture their unique associations with student–teacher relationship quality[2]. Although a profile-based approach provides a more holistic perspective on how personality traits act as a whole in relationship quality, we adopted a trait-level approach to offer a more nuanced understanding by revealing whether the strength or direction of these associations varies across traits—an insight that may be obscured in profile-based analyses.

Third, as teachers and students could perceive their mutual relationships in different ways (Brinkworth et al., 2018; Pianta et al., 2003; Zee & Koomen, 2017), we included both teacher and student reports about the quality of their mutual relationship.

Lastly, most studies to date have been conducted in Western countries, leaving the personality–relationship link less understood in the Eastern context. To address this, we conducted our research in China, a collectivistic culture that emphasizes maintaining harmonious relationships, in contrast to the individualistic cultures of most European countries (Chen et al., 2019; Matsumoto et al., 2008). This cultural context provides a unique opportunity to explore whether the personality–relationship link operates differently in a context where interpersonal harmony is highly valued.

We aimed to answer three questions.

RQ 1: What is the extent to which students' and teachers' personality traits are associated with student–teacher relationship quality? We hypothesized that higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, and openness would be associated with more closeness and less conflict, whereas higher levels of neuroticism would be associated with less closeness and more conflict (Pancorbo et al., 2022; Prinzie et al., 2009; Zee et al., 2013). No specific hypotheses were formulated with regard to the type of informant (i.e., student or teacher) reporting about the quality of the student–teacher relationships.

RQ 2: What is the role of personality similarity in students' and teachers' reports about their mutual relationship? Previous studies have suggested that the effect of personality similarity on developmental outcomes (e.g., behavioral problems) may depend on whether both relationship partners score comparably on a specific personality trait (Franken et al., 2017). Therefore, we hypothesized that

[2] Although we initially aimed to examine all five personality traits, the trait of extraversion was later dropped because of psychometric concerns (see Method section for details)

personality similarity would be associated with relationship quality and that this association would vary across trait levels.

RQ3: What is the role of personality dissimilarity in students' and teachers' reports about their mutual relationship? Following previous research (Franken et al., 2017), we focused on two aspects of personality dissimilarity: Direction and degree of dissimilarity. Specifically, we investigated whether the relationship quality would differ when students score higher on certain traits than their teachers compared with the other way around. We also explored whether the degree of dissimilarity would be associated with student-teacher relationships.

Method

Participants

The initial student sample consisted of 4638 students (45.30% girls, 53.80% boys; 0.90% did not provide information about their gender) from 104 classes in eight elementary schools in a southeastern province, Fujian, China. However, there were cases with incomplete data on the item-level ranging from 0.4% to 2.4%. We excluded the cases for which the main study variables had missing values. This resulted in a final student sample of 4,574 students.

On average, classes comprised 44 students (*SD* =3.42) per class, ranging from 31 to 50 students. The students were enrolled in third-grade (*n* = 1,288 students, 28.20%), fourth-grade (*n* = 1,368 students, 29.90%), fifth-grade (*n* = 1,193 students, 23.90%), and sixth-grade classrooms (*n* = 825 students, 18.00%). Students' mean age was 10.75 years old (*SD* = 1.14 years, range = 8 to 14 years). Regarding ethnicity, 97.50% of participating students identified themselves as belonging to the Han group (i.e., the major ethnic group in China) and 2.50% of students identified themselves as belonging to other groups.

The teacher sample included 104 teachers (84.60% female; 15.40% male). On average, these teachers had 7.12 years of teaching experience (*SD* = 4.42 years, range = 1 to 29 years). All teachers worked full time (five days a week). To avoid making the completion of the questionnaires too burdensome, teachers were asked to report on their relationship with eight randomly selected students from their classes. In total, teacher reports of student-teacher relationships were available for 832 students (44.10% girls, 48.00% boys). Unfortunately, 59 of these students did not complete a questionnaire themselves, as they were absent on the day of data collection. In addition, some of the students for whom teachers reported student–teacher relationships for did not complete the questionnaires. These cases were excluded, and thus, the analyses for teacher-reported relationship quality were 765 student–teacher dyads (for students, 47.8% girls and 52.2% boys, with a mean age of 10.74 years old),

Procedure

This study is part of a large-scale cross-cultural project aiming to investigate the role of students' and teachers' personality traits in the context of elementary education. To gain ethics approval for the data collection in China, an independent senior researcher in China reviewed our research proposal. This researcher confirmed that the data collection procedure aligned with the laws and rules in China and signed an agreement letter. This agreement letter was then sent to the ethics committee of the affiliation of the first author, along with all relevant information about the data collection. The ethics committee of University of Amsterdam to which the first author was affiliated approved the data collection of the present study.

Data were collected from March to May in 2023 by the first author and trained research assistants. Schools were contacted through the social networks of the first author, and the principals of these schools were contacted via telephone and were asked to participate in this study. After schools agreed to participate, third- to sixth-grade teachers received an email with information about this study and were asked to participate. Teachers were asked to sign an online consent form prior to completing the questionnaire. Students' parents also received an information letter about this study and were given the opportunity to object to their child's participation in the study.

During planned school visits, students were invited to complete a paper questionnaire about their demographic background (e.g., age, gender), their own personality traits, their relationship with their class teachers and some other variables beyond the scope of this study. Before students filled in the questionnaire, they received information about this study and were instructed about its procedures. Students had time to ask questions if they had any. They completed the questionnaire without their class teachers being present in the classroom, which encouraged their honest responses. On average, the total questionnaire took around 20 minutes for students to complete.

Teachers completed an online questionnaire about their demographic information, their own personality traits, their relationship with the eight randomly selected students from their classrooms, and some other variables beyond the scope of the present study. Teachers were asked to fill out the questionnaire within seven days. On average, it took them about 25 minutes to complete the total questionnaire. Students and teachers did not receive any compensation for their participation in this study.

Instruments

Teachers' Personality Traits

Both teachers and students reported on their own personality traits (see Appendix A for personality items used in this study). Teachers answered questions about their personality traits on the short, 30-item version of the Big Five Inventory-2 (BFI-2-S; Soto & John, 2017; Zhang et al., 2022). This questionnaire includes five subscales of six items each, reflecting the Big Five personality traits. Specifically, agreeableness reflects to what extent teachers have a prosocial orientation, such as being friendly and cooperative (e.g., "I am a person who assumes the best about people"). Extraversion describes the degree to which teachers actively try to engage in highly stimulating environments and enjoy social interactions (e.g., "I am a person who is full of energy."). Conscientiousness refers to what extent teachers are responsible, organized, and rule-abiding (e.g., "I am a person who keeps things neat and tidy"). Neuroticism indicates the degree to which a teacher is anxious, stressed, and moody (e.g., "I am a person who worries a lot"). Finally, openness refers to what degree teachers are open to novel experiences and creative in thinking (e.g., "I am a person who is original, comes up with new ideas"). Teachers rated the extent to which these statements applied to themselves on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Definitely does not apply*) to 5 (*Definitely applies*).

Previous research found support for the reliability and validity of the BFI-2-S (Mann et al., 2020; Soto & John, 2017). A Chinese, long version of this questionnaire is available (BFI-2; Zhang et al., 2022), with Cronbach's alphas of .75, .81, .83, .82, and .75 for agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness, respectively. For purposes of the present study, the items of the BFI-2-S were selected from this longer, Chinese version (Zhang et al., 2022). Regarding reliability, Cronbach's alphas were .64, .74, .64, .82 and .66 for agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, and openness, respectively.[3]

Students' Personality Traits

Students reported about their own personality traits based on an adapted version of the BFI-2-S (Soto & John, 2017; Zhang et al., 2022), which parallels the subscales of the BFI-2-S for teachers. The second and third author adapted the complex items that were used to measure teachers' personality to be suitable for upper elementary school students (e.g., "I am a person who is respectful, treats others with respect" was changed into "I respect others"). Subsequently, the first and fourth author provided feedback on the adapted items and items were piloted with six students from third to sixth-grade students. To enhance our chances of finding reliable subscales, we added one additional item to the neuroticism and openness subscales, respectively (i.e., "I am emotional" and "I like music"). Example items for the student version are "I get along well with others" for agreeableness (6 items), "I like keeping my things in order" for conscientiousness (6 items), "I am full of energy" for extraversion (6 items), "I can suddenly become angry" for neuroticism (7 items), and "I like to come up with new ideas" for openness (7 items). To meet the criteria of commensurability between students' and teachers' personality measures (Edwards & Shipp, 2007), we ensured that the meaning of students' personality items was similar to teachers' personality items throughout the adaption process (i.e., nominal equivalence; Edwards & Shipp, 2007). In addition, we used a 5-point Likert scale for teachers as well for students, ranging from 1 (*No, that is not true*) to 5 (*Yes, that is true*; i.e., scale equivalence; Edwards & Shipp, 2007).

To examine the psychometric properties of this personality scale, we ran a series of Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFAs), starting with the hypothesized five-factor structure. However, the initial model displayed a suboptimal fit with the data ($\chi^2(485) = 4030.396$, $p < .001$, RMSEA = .062 (90% CI [.061, .064], CFI = .693, SRMR = .078). Further inspection of the factor loadings revealed negative or even low factor loadings for the extraversion items. As a result, we explored an alternative solution that excluded the extraversion dimension, leading to a four-factor model. The CFA results indicated that the four-factor model yielded a reasonable fit ($\chi^2(266) = 3758.69$, p

[3] Unfortunately, the information about the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) on this personality measure was not available due to the small teacher sample size ($N = 104$).

$< .001$; CFI = .850; RMSEA = .054 (90% CI [.052, .055]); SRMR = .060) after adding one theoretically plausible correlated residual between two items (i.e., "I like doing handcraft" and "I like drawing"). Despite the fact that the CFI was below the conventional threshold of .90 for satisfactory fit, the other model fit indexes showed a satisfactory model fit with the cutoff values of .08 and .06 for the RMSEA and SRMR, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Cronbach's alphas were .66, .63, .73, and .66 for agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness, respectively. Given the low or negative factor loadings of the extraversion items and the low Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .33$), the extraversion scale was excluded from the analyses.

Teacher-Reported Student–Teacher Relationship Quality

Teachers reported on their relationships with eight randomly selected students using the Closeness and Conflict subscales of the short, Chinese version of the Student–Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS; Chen et al., 2019; Koomen et al., 2012). The closeness subscale (5 items) taps into the level of warmth, affection, and open communication in the relationship with a specific student (e.g., "This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me"). The conflict subscale (5 items) describes the degree of fights, discordances, coercion, and negativity in the relationship with this particular student (e.g., "This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other"). Teachers rated the extent to which these statements applied to their relationships with each student on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*Definitely does not apply*) to 5 (*Definitely applies*).

A Chinese version of the short STRS is already available and has been shown to have a satisfactory reliability, as well as factorial and predictive validity (Chen et al., 2019; Zhang, 2010). In the present study, as indicated by results of a CFA, a two-factor model displayed a satisfactory fit to the data after one residual variance between two items (i.e., "This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me" and "If upset, this child will seek comfort from me") was added ($\chi^2(33) = 96.976$, $p < .001$, CFI = .939, RMSEA = .048 (90% CI [.037, .060]), SRMR = .062). Cronbach's alphas were .81 for closeness and .76 for conflict.

Student-Reported Student–Teacher Relationship Quality

Students reported about their relationships with their class teachers on the closeness and conflict subscales of the short, Chinese version of the Student Perception of Affective Relationship with Teacher Scale (SPARTS; Chen et al., 2019; Koomen & Jellesma, 2015; Zee & Koomen, 2017). The closeness subscale (6 items) measures to what degree students feel secure and supportive when they are with their teachers (e.g., "I tell my teacher things that are important to me"). The conflict subscale (6 items) describes the degree of fights, coercion, and disharmony in the relationship with their teacher (e.g., "I easily have quarrels with my teacher"). Students responded to each item on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (No, that is not true) to 5 (Yes, that is true).

The short version of SPARTS was originally in Dutch and was supported by previous studies in terms of the validity in the Dutch context (Zee & Koomen, 2017). Existing research has applied the long version of SPARTS in the Chinese context (Chen et al., 2019). In terms of reliability, the SPARTS has been suggested to have satisfactory reliability (Chen et al., 2019; Zee & De Bree, 2017; Zee & Koomen, 2017). In the present study, results of a CFA suggest that a two-factor model fitted the data well (χ^2 (53) = 435.08, $p < .001$, CFI = .969, RMSEA = .039 (90% CI [.036, .043]), SRMR = .034). Regarding reliability, both closeness (α = .82) and conflict (α = .78) subscales in the short version questionnaire appeared to be reliable.

Analyses

For the main analyses[4], we conducted the polynomial regression and response surface analyses (Berg et al., 2023; Edwards & Parry, 1993) using R version 4.4.2. Our syntax was created based on Berg et al. (2023) and Nestler et al. (2019) and can be accessed via the following link https://osf.io/kzb3m/?view_only=630a68aee55a44cda5f3434ca26cdb33. As our data had a multilevel structure, with students nested within teachers' classrooms, and included both individual-level predictors (e.g., student personality traits) and classroom-level predictors (e.g., teacher personality traits), we examined Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICCs) to assess the degree of clustering. As shown in Table 1, ICCs for student-teacher relationship quality ranged from .11 (student-reported conflict) to .48 (teacher-reported closeness), indicating substantial within-classroom dependence. Given these values, we employed multilevel polynomial regression with

[4] Prior to the main analyses, the assumptions were checked. Polynomial regression modeling and response surface analysis have been seen as a flexible methodology with few assumptions being imposed on. In addition to the standard assumptions relating to multiple regression techniques (Tabachinick & Fidell, 2017), only one assumption specific to the methodology is that both predictor variables must be commensurate (Edwards & Shinpp, 2017). In our study, this specific assumption can be seen as met (see student-reported personality measure for an explanation). We then checked the main assumptions of the multiple regression modeling.

random intercepts to appropriately model the hierarchical data structure (Berg et al., 2023; Boele et al., 2017). To avoid collinearity and ease interpretation, we centered the predictors when preparing the data (Berg et al., 2023; Tsai et al., 2022). As suggested by previous research (Tsai et al., 2022), level-1 predictors (i.e., students' personality traits) were group-mean centered, whereas level-2 predictors (i.e., teachers' personality traits, which remain constant across students from the same class) were grand-mean centered.

Modeling Procedure

As polynomial regression models are complex and may not allow for controlling other personality traits, we followed prior research (e.g., Franken et al., 2017) and built separate multilevel polynomial regression models for each personality trait. Each dimension of student-reported and teacher-reported relationship quality was also modeled separately, resulting in sixteen models in total.

We took a two-step approach to our modeling, with the maximum likelihood being used for estimation. In the first step, we fitted a baseline model in which covariates were entered. Prior research has shown that students who were boys and in higher grades experienced lower levels of closeness and higher levels of conflict with their teachers compared to students who were girls and in lower grades (Jerome et al., 2009; Koomen & Jellesma, 2015). Consequently, we included gender and grade level as covariates in our baseline models.

Second, we fitted a full multilevel polynomial model with linear terms, quadratic terms, and an interaction term. Specifically, an intercept (B_{0m}), a linear effect (B_{1m}) and quadratic effect (B_{3m}) of students' personality traits, a linear effect (B_{2m}) and quadratic effect (B_{5m}) of teachers' personality traits, and an interaction effect (B_{4m}) of students' personality traits and teachers' personality traits were estimated.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Between Study Variables

	M	*SD*	ICC	Sk	K	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.
1. Gender (S)	-	-	-	-	-	-												
2. Grade Level (S)	-	-	-	-	-	-												
3. Agreeableness (S)	4.00	0.63	.06	-0.67	0.48	.12**	.09**											
4. Conscientiousness (S)	3.88	0.67	.05	-0.27	-0.27	.13**	.07**	.57**										
5. Neuroticism (S)	2.53	0.78	.08	0.36	-0.20	.01	-. 02	-.36**	-.45**									
6. Openness (S)	3.57	0.74	.02	-0.35	-0.09	.20**	-. 01	.43**	.44**	-.21**								
7. Agreeableness (T)	4.09	0.43	-	0.17	-0.48	-.01	.07**	.04**	.06**	-.03*	.03*							
8. Conscientiousness (T)	3.96	0.53	-	-0.09	-0.72	.00	.15**	.04**	.04**	-.02	.01	.70**						
9. Neuroticism (T)	2.46	0.64	-	-0.08	-0.81	.01	-.17**	-.05**	-.05**	.05**	-.01	-.46**	-.53**					
10. Openness (T)	3.52	0.52	-	-0.20	0.22	.00	.11**	.05**	.05**	-.04**	.04**	.55**	.54**	-.56**				
11. Closeness (S)	3.30	0.99	.19	-0.29	-0.60	.06**	.06**	.41**	.40**	-.32**	.35**	.11**	.10**	-.06**	.11**			
12. Conflict (S)	1.47	0.65	.11	2.05	5.09	-.15**	-.06**	-.32**	-.29**	.29**	-.13**	-.11**	-.10**	.07**	-.10**	-.49**		
13. Closeness (T)	3.52	0.86	.48	-0.29	-0.32	.10**	-.02	.23**	.20**	-.12**	.21**	.35**	.34**	-.23**	.33**	.29**	-.17**	
14. Conflict (T)	1.83	0.74	.46	0.88	0.42	-.12**	-.05	-.24**	-.20**	.15**	-.14**	-.29**	-.34**	.26**	-.18**	-.23**	.26**	-.20**

Note. All items were rated on a 1–5 scale. Sample size: Student reports: N = 4,574; Teacher reports: N = 765. S = student; T = teacher; Sk = Skewness; K = kurtosis; For Gender: 0 = boys, 1 = girls. ** $p < .01$. * $p < .05$.

To answer RQ1, we estimated these linear terms (B_{1m} and B_{2m}) to examine whether students' and teachers' personality traits were linearly associated with student–teacher relationship quality. Additionally, the quadratic terms (B_{3m} and B_{5m}) were used to reveal the curvilinear relationships between personality traits and student–teacher relationships. To investigate whether adding these terms lead to a better representation of the data, we compared the fit indices of the baseline model and full model, using the Akaike information criterion (AIC) and the explained variance (R^2_{adj}). Negative values of AIC and significant R^2_{adj} indicate an improvement in model fit (Berg et al., 2023; Franken et al., 2017).

To answer RQ2 and RQ3 regarding personality similarity and personality dissimilarity, we conducted response surface analyses using the coefficients generated by the polynomial regression model. We created three-dimensional plots characterized by the line of congruence (LOC) and the line of incongruence (LOIC; Humberg et al., 2019; Shanock et al., 2010). As we aimed to understand how personality similarity and personality dissimilarity function differently in the quality of student–teacher relationships (i.e., RQ2 and RQ3), we followed previous research and separately interpreted LOC and LOIC (Boele et al., 2017; Franken et al., 2017; Shanock et al., 2010). Specifically, the LOC runs from the near corner where both students and teachers have low trait levels, to the far corner where both students and teachers have high trait levels. The LOC indicates what the relationship quality would be like when students and teachers are similar in their personality traits. The interpretation of the LOC is based on two parameters, a linear slope $\hat{a}_1$ and a curvilinear slope $\hat{a}_2$ (Shanock et al., 2010). For example, a positive $\hat{a}_1$ indicates that when students and teachers both rate high on a certain personality trait, they would perceive more closeness and less conflict. A positive $\hat{a}_2$ indicates that relationship quality would be highest when both students and teachers have both high or low trait levels.

The LOIC is the line that runs from the left corner where teachers' personality trait levels are higher than those of their students, to the right corner where students' trait levels are higher than those of their teacher. The LOIC reflects what the relationship quality would be like when there is a dissimilarity between students' and teachers' personality traits (Shanock et al., 2010). The LOIC also has two parameters, a linear slope $\hat{a}_3$, indicating whether the direction of dissimilarity is associated with relationship quality, and a curvilinear slope $\hat{a}_4$, indicating whether the degree of dissimilarity is associated with relationship quality. For instance, a positive $\hat{a}_3$

indicates that relationship quality would be lower when the teacher reports a higher personality trait level than the student. For the curvilinear slope, a positive $\hat{a}_4$ indicates student–teacher relationship quality would be higher when the degree of dissimilarity becomes larger.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for all study variables. First, distributional properties of the variables were inspected to assess deviations from normality. Skewness levels of all variables did not exceed the threshold of ± 1.00 ($\text{skewness}_{\text{range}}$ = -0.67 to 0.88) except for student-reported conflict (skewness = 2.05). For kurtosis, apart from student-reported conflict (kurtosis = 5.09), all other variables did not exceed the threshold of ±1.00 ($\text{kurtosis}_{\text{range}}$ = -0.81 to 0.48). This suggests that the distribution of student-reported conflict is skewed, with many lower values and a few extreme higher ones.

As expected, correlations indicated that students and teachers who reported high levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness and low levels of neuroticism were likely to report relationship quality with high closeness and low conflict. This applied to both the student-reported and teacher-reported relationship quality. Additionally, only low levels of concordance between students' and teachers' views of their mutual relationship were reported (r = .29 for closeness, and r = .26 for conflict, respectively). Students reported slightly lower levels of closeness and conflict than their teachers. The discrepancy in relationship perceptions indicates the need to take both students' and teachers' relationship perceptions into consideration.

Regarding the associations between covariates and student–teacher relationship dimensions, girls reported higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict than boys. In the same vein, teachers reported higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict with girls than with boys. Regarding grade level, students from higher grades reported to experience more closeness and less conflict than students from lower grades.

Personality Traits and Student-Reported Relationship Quality

For all eight models[5] regarding the associations between personality traits and student-reported relationship quality (i.e., RQ1), the AICs were negative (range = -41.50 to -727.00) and R^2_{adj}s were statistically significant (*p*s < .01). This indicates that the full multilevel models with linear, interaction, and squared terms fitted the data significantly better than the baseline models with age and gender as covariates.

Student-Reported Closeness

The results of the polynomial regression analyses for student-reported closeness are displayed in Table 2. The linear terms of students' personality traits on student-reported closeness were found to be significant for agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness (B_{1m} = 0.60, 0.53, -0.36, and 0.44 respectively, *p*s < .01). This means that, regardless of teachers' personality traits, students who scored high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, and low on neuroticism were likely to perceive a close relationship with their teachers. Moreover, significant quadratic terms were reported for students' agreeableness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism on student-reported closeness (B_{3m} = 0.10, 0.09, and 0.06 respectively, *p*s < .01). This indicates that the associations of these traits with closeness became stronger at higher trait levels. Notably, the quadratic term for openness was not significant, meaning that the strength of the association between students' openness and closeness did not differ across trait levels.

Regarding teachers' personality traits, independent of students' personality traits, students were likely to report higher levels of closeness with teachers who rated themselves high on agreeableness and openness (B_{2m} = 0.25 and 0.17, *p*s < .05). However, teachers' conscientiousness and neuroticism were not found to be associated with student-reported closeness.

Student-Reported Conflict

Table 3 presents the results for student-reported conflict. Students who scored high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were less likely to report conflictual relationships with teachers (B_{1m} = -0.26, -0.24, and -0.08, *p*s < .01), whereas students who scored higher on neuroticism were likely to report more conflictual student–teacher relationships (B_{1m} = 0.22, , p < .01). In particular, only the

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[5] In terms of assumption checks, given our relatively large sample size, these techniques are somewhat robust to non-normality of residuals (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019). Moreover, correlations between students' and teachers' corresponding trait ranged from .04 to .05, suggesting that the assumption of non-multicollinearity was met.

quadratic term for agreeableness was significant, suggesting that the association was statistically stronger for individuals with lower levels of agreeableness compared to those with higher levels (B_{3m} = 0.07, p < .01). Regarding teachers' personality traits, students were likely to report conflictual relationships with teachers who scored low on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness (B_{2m} = -0.16, -0.12, and -0.11, ps < .05).

Table 2

Multilevel Regression Coefficients and Response Surface Parameters of Personality Traits on Student-Reported Closeness

	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness
Fixed effects				
Intercept	2.99**	3.03**	3.01**	3.06**
Student gender	0.04	0.02	0.11**	-0.02
Student grade	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.06
B_{1m}: S	0.60**	0.53**	-0.36**	0.44**
B_{2m}: T	0.25*	0.16	-0.09	0.17*
B_{3m}: S^2	0.10**	0.09**	0.06**	0.01
B_{4m}: S*T	0.05	-0.05	0.04	0.00
B_{5m}: T^2	-0.04	-0.05	-0.06	-0.15
Random effects				
Intercept (*SD*)	0.17 (0.41)	0.17 (0.41)	0.17 (0.41)	0.16 (0.41)
Residual (*SD*)	0.67 (0.82)	0.68 (0.82)	0.72 (0.85)	0.69 (0.83)
Response surface parameters				
$\hat{a}_1$	0.85**	0.68**	-0.45**	0.61**
$\hat{a}_2$	0.11	-0.01	0.04	-0.14
$\hat{a}_3$	0.35**	0.37**	-0.27**	0.27**
$\hat{a}_4$	0.01	0.09	-0.04	-0.13

Note. Sample size: 4,574 students, 104 teachers. Student gender: 0 = boys, 1 = girls. S = student personality trait; T = teacher personality trait. Separate models were built for each personality trait. B_{1m} = linear term for students' personality trait. B_{2m} = linear term for teachers' personality trait. B_{3m} = quadratic term for students' personality trait. B_{4m} = interaction between students' and teachers' personality trait. B_{5m} = quadratic term for teachers' personality trait. $\hat{a}_1$ = linear slope of Line of Congruence (LOC); $\hat{a}_2$ = curvilinear slope of LOC; $\hat{a}_3$ = linear slope of Line of Incongruence (LOIC); $\hat{a}_4$ = curvilinear slope of LOIC. ** p < .01; * p < .05.

Table 3

Multilevel Regression Coefficients and Response Surface Parameters of Personality Traits on Student-Reported Conflict

	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness
Fixed effects				
Intercept	1.66**	1.66**	1.71**	1.70**
Student gender	-0.15**	-0.16**	-0.20**	-0.17**
Student grade	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03	-0.03
B_{1m}: S	-0.26**	-0.24**	0.22**	-0.08**
B_{2m}: T	-0.16**	-0.12**	0.06	-0.11*
B_{3m}: S^2	0.07**	0.02	0.02	0.00
B_{4m}: S*T	0.04	0.03	0.00	0.03
B_{5m}: T^2	-0.02	0.04	0.02	0.07
Random effects				
Intercept (*SD*)	0.04 (0.20)	0.04 (0.20)	0.04 (0.21)	0.04 (0.20)
Residual (*SD*)	0.34 (0.58)	0.35 (0.59)	0.34 (0.59)	0.37 (0.61)
Response surface parameters				
$\hat{a}_1$	-0.42**	-0.35**	0.28**	-0.19**
$\hat{a}_2$	0.09	0.09	0.00	0.10
$\hat{a}_3$	-0.10	-0.12**	0.16**	0.03
$\hat{a}_4$	0.02	0.03	-0.01	0.03

Note. Sample size: 4,574 students, 104 teachers. Student gender: 0 = boys, 1 = girls. S = student personality trait; T = teacher personality trait. Separate models were built for each personality trait. B_{1m} = linear term for students' personality trait. B_{2m} = linear term for teachers' personality trait. B_{3m} = quadratic term for students' personality trait. B_{4m} = interaction between students' and teachers' personality trait. B_{5m} = quadratic term for teachers' personality trait. $\hat{a}_1$ = linear slope of Line of Congruence (LOC); $\hat{a}_2$ = curvilinear slope of LOC; $\hat{a}_3$ = linear slope of Line of Incongruence (LOIC); $\hat{a}_4$ = curvilinear slope of LOIC.
** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Personality Traits and Teacher-Reported Relationship Quality

Similar to student-reported relationship quality, the AICs were negative (range = -13.00 to -43.30) and R^2_{adj}s were statistically significant (ps < .01) for all eight models regarding the associations between personality traits and teacher-reported relationship quality (i.e., RQ1). This indicates that the full models fitted the data significantly better than the baseline models.

Teacher-Reported Closeness

Table 4 displays the results of polynomial regression analyses for personality traits and teacher-reported closeness. Teachers were likely to report a close relationship with individual students who scored high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness (B_{1m} = 0.20, 0.13, and 0.18, *p*s < .01), but low on neuroticism (B_{1m} = -0.08, p < .05). Regarding teachers' personality traits, teachers who reported high levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness (B_{2m} = 0.70, 0.59, 0.53, respectively, ps < .01) and low levels of neuroticism (B_{2m} = -0.31, p < .01), were likely to report higher levels of closeness with their students. The quadratic terms were not significant, except for neuroticism (B_{5m} = 0.27, p < .05). This indicates that the association between neuroticism and teacher-reported closeness was stronger for higher levels of neuroticism compared with low levels.

Table 4

Multilevel Regression Coefficients and Response Surface Parameters of Personality Traits on Teacher-Reported Closeness

	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness
Fixed effects				
Intercept	3.54**	3.64**	3.53**	3.62**
Student gender	0.13**	0.13**	0.15**	0.10*
Student grade	-0.03	-0.05	-0.05	-0.03
B_{1m}: S	0.20**	0.13**	-0.08*	0.18**
B_{2m}: T	0.70**	0.59**	-0.31**	0.53**
B_{3m}: S^2	0.08	0.00	0.04	0.04
B_{4m}: S*T	0.10	-0.02	0.08	0.04
B_{5m}: T^2	0.11	0.19	0.27*	-0.08
Random effects				
Intercept (*SD*)	0.27 (0.52)	0.26 (0.51)	0.30 (0.55)	0.28 (0.53)
Residual (*SD*)	0.37 (0.60)	0.37 (0.61)	0.38 (0.61)	0.36 (0.60)
Response surface parameters				
$\hat{a}_1$	0.90**	0.72**	-0.39**	0.71**
$\hat{a}_2$	0.29	0.17	0.38**	0.01
$\hat{a}_3$	-0.50**	-0.46**	0.23*	-0.34**
$\hat{a}_4$	0.09	0.21	0.23	-0.08

Note. Sample size: 765 students, 104 teachers. Student gender: 0 = boys, 1 = girls. S = student personality trait; T = teacher personality trait. Separate models were built for each personality trait. B_{1m} = linear term for students' personality trait. B_{2m} = linear term for teachers' personality trait. B_{3m} = quadratic term for students' personality trait. B_{4m} = interaction between students' and teachers' personality trait. B_{5m} = quadratic term for teachers' personality trait. $\hat{a}_1$ = linear slope of Line of Congruence (LOC); $\hat{a}_2$ = curvilinear slope of LOC; $\hat{a}_3$ = linear slope of Line of Incongruence (LOIC); $\hat{a}_4$ = curvilinear slope of LOIC.
** p < .01; * p < .05.

Teacher-Reported Conflict

Table 5 displays the results for teacher-reported conflict. Regarding students' personality traits, teachers reported higher levels of conflict with students who scored low on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness (B_{1m} = -0.18, -0.13, -0.10, ps < .01), but high on neuroticism (B_{1m} = 0.08, p < .01). Teachers who rated themselves low on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness (B_{2m} = -0.51, -0.48, -0.29, ps < .01) and high on neuroticism (B_{2m} = 0.31, p < .01) were likely to report conflictual relationships with students. None of the quadratic terms were statistically significant, except for openness (B_{5m} = -0.28, p < .05), suggesting that this negative association was weaker for teachers with high openness compared with low openness.

Table 5

Multilevel Regression Coefficients and Response Surface Parameters of Personality Traits on Teacher-Reported Conflict

	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness
Fixed effects				
Intercept	1.96**	1.91**	1.97**	1.97**
Student gender	-0.18**	-0.18**	-0.21**	-0.17**
Student grade	-0.02	-0.00	-0.00	-0.00
B_{1m}: S	-0.18**	-0.13**	0.08**	-0.10**
B_{2m}: T	-0.51**	-0.48**	0.31**	-0.29**
B_{3m}: S²	0.04	-0.01	0.00	0.03
B_{4m}: S*T	0.16	0.10	-0.03	0.03
B_{5m}: T²	0.18	0.03	-0.09	-0.28*
Random effects				
Intercept (*SD*)	0.21 (0.46)	0.19 (0.44)	0.21 (0.46)	0.22 (0.47)
Residual (*SD*)	0.27 (0.52)	0.28 (0.53)	0.28 (0.53)	0.28 (0.53)
Response surface parameters				
$\hat{a}_1$	-0.69**	-0.61**	0.39**	-0.39**
$\hat{a}_2$	0.38	0.12	-0.12	-0.22
$\hat{a}_3$	0.33**	0.36**	-0.23**	0.18
$\hat{a}_4$	0.05	-0.07	-0.05	-0.28*

Note. Sample size: 765 students, 104 teachers. Student gender: 0 = boys, 1 = girls. S = student personality trait; T = teacher personality trait. Separate models were built for each personality trait. B_{1m} = linear term for students' personality trait. B_{2m} = linear term for teachers' personality trait. B_{3m} = quadratic term for students' personality trait. B_{4m} = interaction between students' and teachers' personality trait. B_{5m} = quadratic term for teachers' personality trait. $\hat{a}_1$ = linear slope of Line of Congruence (LOC); $\hat{a}_2$ = curvilinear slope of LOC; $\hat{a}_3$ = linear slope of Line of Incongruence (LOIC); $\hat{a}_4$ = curvilinear slope of LOIC.
** p < .01; * p < .05.

Personality Match and Student-Reported Relationship Quality

Student-Reported Closeness

Table 2 shows the response surface parameters for student-reported closeness, and Figure 1 displays response surface plots. Regarding RQ2 about personality similarity, the linear slopes of the LOC were positive for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness ($\hat{a}_1$ =0.85, 0.68, 0.61, ps < .01), but negative for neuroticism ($\hat{a}_1$ = -0.45, p < .01). Hence, when students and teachers had similar personality levels on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, an increase in these trait levels was associated with an increase in student-reported closeness. In contrast, when students and teachers scored similarly on neuroticism, an increase in neuroticism was associated with a decrease in student-reported closeness. The curvilinear slopes of the LOC for agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness were not significant. This means that the strength of the found associations was not influenced by trait levels.

Furthermore, regarding personality dissimilarity (i.e., RQ3), significant, positive linear slopes of the LOIC ($\hat{a}_3$) were observed for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness ($\hat{a}_3$ = 0.35, 0.37, 0.27, $ps < .01$), whereas for neuroticism a negative slope was found ($\hat{a}_3 = -0.27$, $p < .01$). This suggests that the direction of dissimilarity matters. Specifically, for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, students perceived higher levels of closeness when they scored higher on these traits than their teachers, whereas they perceived less closeness when they scored lower on these traits than teachers. Regarding neuroticism, students perceived less closeness when they scored higher than their teachers, whereas students perceived higher levels of closeness when they scored lower on neuroticism than their teachers. None of the curvilinear slopes of the LOIC ($\hat{a}_4$) were statistically significant, suggesting that the degree of dissimilarity was not associated with student-reported closeness.

Student-Reported Conflict

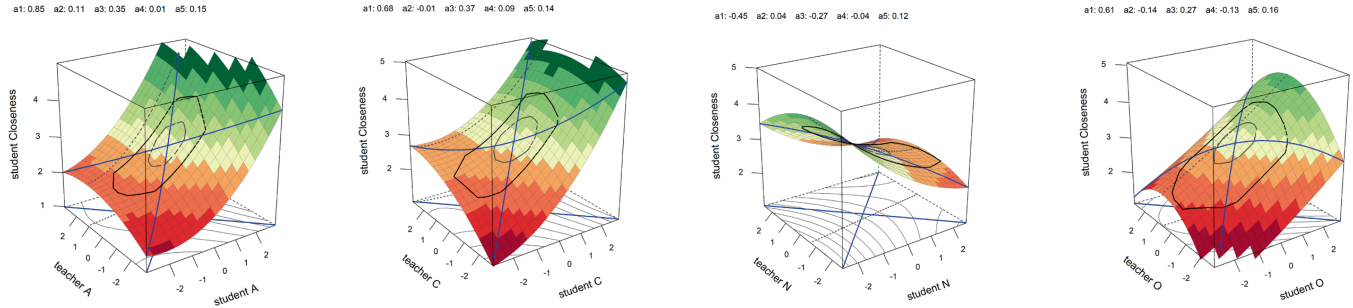
Table 3 displays the response surface parameters for student-reported conflict, and Figure 2 displays response surface plots. Significant, negative linear slopes of LOC were found for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness ($\hat{a}_1$ = -0.42, -0.35 and -0.19, $ps < .01$), whereas a positive linear slope was found for neuroticism ($\hat{a}_1 = 0.28$, $p < .01$). None of the quadratic effects were significant. This suggests that when students and teachers had similar personality levels, an increase in agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, and a decrease in neuroticism were associated with a decrease in student-reported conflict.

Regarding the LOIC, a negative linear slope was found for conscientiousness ($\hat{a}_3 = -0.12$, $p < .01$) and a positive linear slope was found for neuroticism ($\hat{a}_3 = 0.16$, $p < .01$), suggesting that the direction of dissimilarity matters for these two traits. When students scored themselves higher on conscientiousness and lower on neuroticism than their teachers, the level of conflict appeared to be lower than the other way around. None of the curvilinear slopes of the LOIC ($\hat{a}_4$) were statistically significant, suggesting that the degree of dissimilarity was not associated with student-reported conflict.

Figure 1

Average Response Surface Plots for Personality Traits and Student-Reported Closeness

(A) Agreeableness (B) Conscientiousness (C) Neuroticism (D) Openness

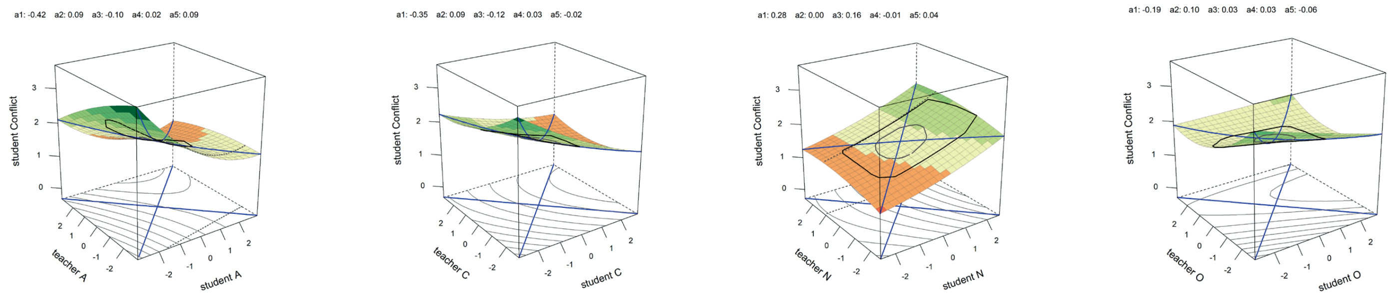


Note. Plot A-D display average response surfaces for personality traits, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness, respectively. In each plot, the X-axis indicates students' personality trait, the Y-axis indicates teachers' personality trait, and the Z-axis indicates student-reported closeness. The blue curve line on the surface running from front to the back is the Line of Congruence (similarity) and the blue curve line on the surface running from left to right is the Line of Incongruence (dissimilarity).

Figure 2

Average Response Surface Plots for Personality Traits and Student-Reported Conflict

(A) Agreeableness (B) Conscientiousness (C) Neuroticism (D) Openness



Note. Plot A-D display average response surfaces for personality traits, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness, respectively. In each plot, the X-axis indicates students' personality trait, the Y-axis indicates teachers' personality trait, and the Z-axis indicates student-reported conflict. The blue curve line on the surface running from front to the back is the Line of Congruence (similarity) and the blue curve line on the surface running from left to right is the Line of Incongruence (dissimilarity).

Personality Match and Teacher-Reported Relationship Quality

Teacher-Reported Closeness

Table 4 and Figure 3 display information about the response surface parameters for teacher-reported closeness. When reporting similar trait levels, teachers were likely to experience closer relationships with students when they scored themselves high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness ($\hat{a}_1$ = 0.90, 0.72, 0.71, respectively, *p*s < .01) and low on neuroticism ($\hat{a}_1$ = -0.39, p < .01).

The direction of dissimilarity seemed to matter for teacher-reported closeness as well. Specifically, when teachers' scores on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were higher than those of their students, these teachers perceived their mutual relationships as closer compared with fellow teachers who scored lower on these traits than their students ($\hat{a}_3$ = -0.50, -0.46, and -0.34, *p*s < .01). When teachers scored higher on neuroticism than their students, they perceived less closeness than teachers who scored lower on neuroticism than their students ($\hat{a}_3$ = 0.23, p < .05). None of the curvilinear slope of the LOIC ($\hat{a}_4$) was significant, indicating that the degree of the dissimilarity was not associated with teacher-reported closeness.

Teacher-Reported Conflict

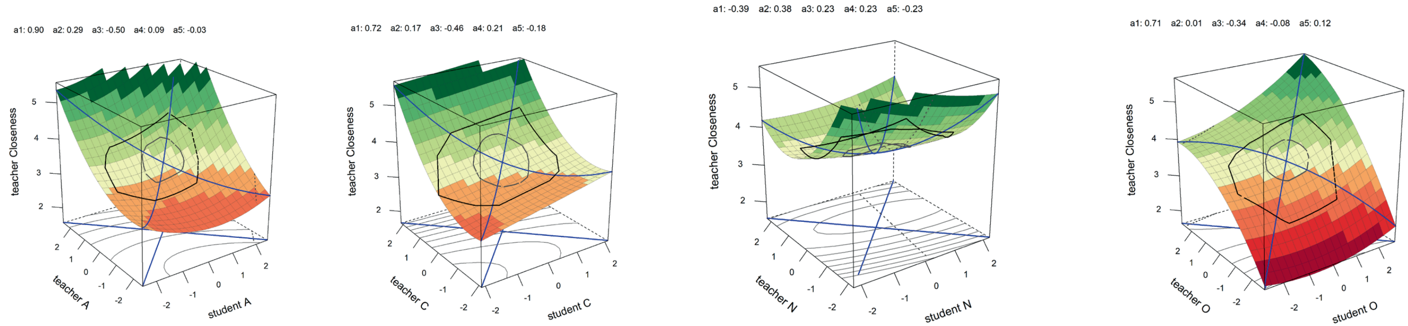
Table 5 and Figure 4 display response surface parameters relevant for teacher-reported conflict. When scoring similarly on personality traits, teachers perceived higher levels of conflict with students when both were low on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness ($\hat{a}_1$ = -0.69, -0.61, -0.39, *p*s < .01), and when both were high on neuroticism ($\hat{a}_1$ = 0.39, p < .01).

Regarding direction of dissimilarity, when teachers reported higher than their students on agreeableness and conscientiousness, they were likely to report less conflict than teachers who scored lower on both traits than their students ($\hat{a}_3$ = 0.33 and 0.36, *p*s <.01). However, when teachers scored higher on neuroticism than their students, they perceived more conflict with students compared with teachers who scored lower on neuroticism than their students ($\hat{a}_3$ = -0.23, p < .01). Regarding the degree of dissimilarity, all curvilinear slopes were non- significant except that a negative curvilinear slope was found for openness ($\hat{a}_4$ = -0.28, p < .05). This means that teachers reported less conflict when the dissimilarity between students' and teachers' openness became larger.

Figure 3

Average Response Surface Plots for Personality Traits and Teacher-Reported Closeness

(A) Agreeableness (B) Conscientiousness (C) Neuroticism (D) Openness

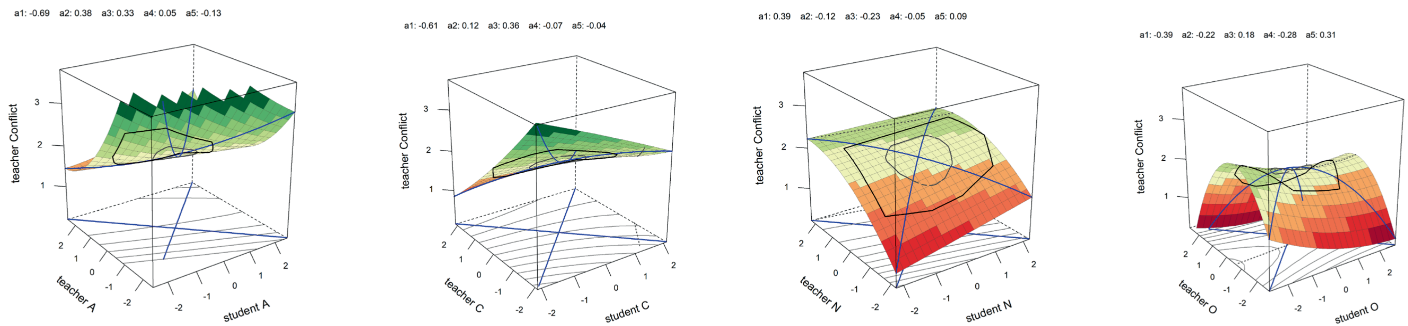


Note. Plot A-D display average response surfaces for personality traits, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness, respectively. In each plot, the X-axis indicates students' personality trait, the Y-axis indicates teachers' personality trait, and the Z-axis indicates teacher-reported closeness. The blue curve line on the surface running from front to the back is the Line of Congruence (similarity) and the blue curve line on the surface running from left to right is the Line of Incongruence (dissimilarity).

Figure 4

Average Response Surface Plots for Personality Traits and Teacher-Reported Conflict

(A) Agreeableness (B) Conscientiousness (C) Neuroticism (D) Openness



Note. Plot A-D display average response surfaces for personality traits, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, openness, respectively. In each plot, the X-axis indicates students' personality trait, the Y-axis indicates teachers' personality trait, and the Z-axis indicates teacher-reported conflict. The blue curve line on the surface running from front to the back is the Line of Congruence (similarity) and the blue curve line on the surface running from left to right is the Line of Incongruence (dissimilarity).

Discussion

Prior research has pinpointed individual characteristics (e.g., personality traits) that may be associated with the affective quality of student–teacher relationships (Du et al., 2025; Mammadov & Avci, 2024; Pianta et al., 2003). Yet, there remain gaps in current knowledge regarding the personality-relationship link. Using a large sample of upper elementary schoolers and their teachers, we investigated the role of both students' and class teachers' personality traits in the quality of their mutual relationship. Moreover, we investigated whether the match between the personality traits of both relationship partners (i.e., personality similarity, personality dissimilarity) was associated with the affective quality of student–teacher relationships. Considering the potential influence of the informant, we took both student-reported and teacher-reported relationship quality into account.

Personality Traits and Student–Teacher Relationships

In terms of our first research question about the role of personality traits in student–teacher relationships, we found relatively similar associations of both students' and teachers' personality traits with student- and teacher-reports of the quality of their mutual relationship. Specifically, we found that students who reported high levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness and low levels of neuroticism were likely to have high-quality relationships with their teachers (i.e., high closeness and low conflict). The found associations held, irrespective of the type of informant who reported on the quality of student–teacher relationships.

These findings are generally consistent with the few studies in this area that have examined the role of upper elementary students' personality in teacher-reported closeness and conflict, as well as in student-reported closeness (e.g., Zee et al., 2013). However, our results extend these previous findings by showing that students' personality traits may also play a role in student-reported conflict. This may be because individuals who score high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness and low on neuroticism are able to handle conflicts appropriately. A recent meta-analysis suggested that higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness tend to be associated with more constructive conflict resolution styles (Tehrani & Yamini, 2020). These students are likely to display more respect for their social others and adopt more open communication when conflicts arise, resulting in less conflictual relationships than their peers. In contrast, neuroticism has been found to be associated with more passive resolution styles (Tehrani & Yamini, 2020). Therefore, students scoring high on neuroticism are likely to withdraw from conflicts and leave conflicts unresolved.

In addition to students' personality traits, we investigated the unique role of teachers' personality traits in student–teacher relationships. Similar to what was found for students' personality traits, teachers' personality traits were found to play a role in the quality of student–teacher relationships, independent of students' personality traits. In line with what we expected (Kim et al., 2018; Wettstein et al., 2021), teachers who displayed higher levels of agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness were likely to establish closer and less conflictual relationships with students.

Interestingly, teachers' neuroticism was associated with teacher-reported closeness and conflict, but not student-reported closeness and conflict. One plausible explanation may be that individuals who score higher on neuroticism may display more surface acting than those who score lower on neuroticism (Diefendorff et al., 2005). This may be more pronounced in teaching as it is essentially a job requiring emotional labor (Burić & Mornar, 2023). To maintain favorable relationships with students, it is plausible that teachers who score high on neuroticism fake their emotional expressions when experiencing negative emotions with their students (Burić & Mornar, 2023). Such emotional masking can prevent students from perceiving how neurotic their teachers actually are. As a result, the level of neuroticism in teachers may not necessarily be associated with the levels of closeness and conflict students perceive. To explore this further, future studies may consider including both teacher self-reports and student reports of their teachers' personality and investigate how both may be differentially associated with the perceived relationship quality.

In terms of specific personality traits with student–teacher relationships, the associations of the more "positive" traits (i.e., agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness) were found to be stronger than those of the negative traits. Furthermore, among all investigated traits, agreeableness seems to stand out as a positive predictor of the relationship quality, followed by conscientiousness. This is reflected in the greater change in relationship quality associated with a one-unit increase in agreeableness and conscientiousness compared to the other two traits (i.e., neuroticism and openness). The higher observability of the traits of agreeableness and conscientiousness, as compared to neuroticism and openness, may possibly contribute to their relevance for interpersonal relationships (Vazire, 2010). Moreover, from an interpersonal and affective standpoint, agreeable individuals—characterized by friendliness and helpfulness—tend to value mutual respect and social support, which has been suggested to provide a robust foundation for fostering high-quality relationships (Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002). Next to agreeableness, students and teachers who display higher levels of conscientiousness may express more regulated affect and display more socially appropriate behaviors, which may evoke positive feelings from the relationship partners and, in the long run, contribute to high-quality relationships (Fayard, 2012; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002; Kim et al., 2016).

Last, the associations between personality traits and relationship quality may be influenced by factors such as the informant of the personality traits or quality of student-teacher relationships and the context where the study was conducted. When a single informant (either teacher or student) reported on both their own personality and the relationship quality, the association was stronger than when different informants provided the reports. This may be due to shared method variance, which could slightly inflate the association (Podsakoff et al., 2003). It could also be that individuals with a positive self-view may perceive the quality of their relationship with others more positively, or vice versa (Harris & Orth, 2020). Given this, future research could benefit from incorporating multiple informants' reports of personality traits to explore whether discrepancies in personality ratings relate to affective relationship quality (De Los Reyes, 2024).

Regarding the context, unlike previous studies (e.g., Pancorbo et al., 2022; Zee et al., 2013), our study was conducted in the Chinese context, where class sizes were notably larger than in Western contexts. Post-hoc analyses indicated that class size had only a weak association with student-reported closeness (r = .04, p < .05), student-reported conflict (r = -.05, p < .05), and teacher-reported closeness (r = .08, p < .05), but not with teacher-reported conflict (r = -.04, *ns*). Despite this, other aspects of the cultural context, such as cultural values, may play a role in shaping the personality–relationship link (Chen et al., 2021). For instance, harmonious relationships may be highly valued in the Chinese context, potentially leading to a stronger association between personality traits and relationship quality compared to Western contexts (Chen et al., 2021). Future studies are therefore suggested to take the role of cultural context into account when examining the associations between personality traits and relationship quality to mitigate potential biases and gain a more accurate understanding of these associations.

Personality Match and Student–Teacher Relationships

In terms of personality similarity (RQ2), we found that student–teacher dyads, being similar in terms of positive personality traits (i.e., agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness), experienced higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict, regardless of whether teachers or students reported on their mutual relationship. The same appeared to be true for neuroticism, for which the pattern of associations was the other way around. Our results, to some extent, parallel those of previous studies, pointing to the importance of being similar in personality for relationship quality (e.g., Pancorbo et al., 2022). However, our findings extend those of Pancorbo and colleagues (2022) in that such similarity effects were found not only when personality similarity was measured using personality profiles, but also when examining specific personality traits. Hence, when both students and teachers are similarly high on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, and low on neuroticism, their interactions are likely to be characterized by positive communication, mutual respect, and effective collaboration, leading to higher-quality relationships (John, 2021). On the other hand, when both parties share more negative personality traits, their interactions may be characterized by a lack of understanding or responsibility, less adaptability, or more stress and anxiety (John, 2021; Laursen & Richmond, 2014). In such cases, the similarity in negative traits can exacerbate relational issues, making the relationship less close and more conflictual. Therefore, the benefits of personality similarity for high-quality relationships may be more pronounced when the traits involved are generally positive.

Adding to previous findings, we initially investigated the role of dissimilarity in student–teacher relationships. We found that the direction of dissimilarity matters in the quality of student–teacher relationships, especially for closeness. Specifically, both students and teachers reported even higher levels of closeness and lower levels of conflict when their personality traits could be considered more "positive" than those of their relationship partner (i.e., higher on agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness, and lower on neuroticism) than the other way around. This may be explained by the idea that a more "positive" personality profile may facilitate a generally more optimistic outlook on interpersonal relationships (Bresin & Robinson, 2015). Rather than focusing on negative aspects, such a positive mindset can make it easier to recognize and appreciate the positive attributes of their relationship partners (Bresin & Robinson, 2015; Finn et al., 2013). As such, the students and teachers in our sample may have become more flexible in understanding their own roles within their mutual relationship and more open to self-disclosure (Hill & Allemand, 2012; Zhou et al., 2017). This may have contributed to more trust, open communication, and self-disclosing behavior in student–teacher relationships.

Concerning the degree of dissimilarity, we found that the degree of dissimilarity was generally not associated with the quality of student–teacher relationships, except for openness. When students and teachers were more dissimilar in openness, teachers tended to perceive the relationship with this student as less conflictual. One plausible explanation for the negative association between dissimilarity and conflict is that greater dissimilarity allows both relationship partners to contribute to the relationships in complimentary ways (Tett & Murphy, 2002). Specifically, the one who is high on openness may value novelty and new experiences, while the one who is low in openness may offer a preference for structure, consistency, and practical decision-making. As each person's tendencies fill gaps in the other's approach, minimizing opportunities for disagreement or conflict. Notably, this finding is still preliminary and thus it still requires more studies to see whether this pattern can be replicated.

Limitations

Some limitations need to be considered when interpreting our findings. First, we only investigated actual similarity, instead of perceptual similarity. Unfortunately, we were not able to investigate perceptual personality similarity and thus we are not sure whether our findings may apply to perceptual personality similarity as well. Future studies are therefore encouraged to take both similarity indexes into account to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the similarity-relationship link.

Second, the reliability of the personality measurements used in this study may have affected the results. Specifically, extraversion was removed from the analyses due to low reliability, and thus, associations relevant to extraversion were not investigated in the current study. Notably, the overall reliability of our adapted questionnaire was quite comparable to that of the original version, despite its brevity. The low reliability of our personality measurement is most likely due to characteristics of the sample (i.e., relatively young children), a pattern that has also been observed in Western contexts (e.g., Boele et al., 2017; Jensen-Campbell et al., 2002; Quartier & Rossier, 2008). Future studies should therefore replicate our research findings using more reliable personality measurements for children.

Third, our study did not include data about how familiar teachers were with the students they reported about and how well they believed they knew these students.

These factors may be important in shaping the development of student–teacher relationships as well as teachers' relationship perceptions. Therefore, in future studies teachers could be invited to report on this information to capture a more accurate association between personality traits and teacher-reported relationships.

Finally, our study was cross-sectional in design, and thus, conclusions about the causal relations between personality traits and the quality of student–teacher relationships could not be drawn. To elucidate the directionality of the associations, more longitudinal studies are needed. Specifically, research could follow participants over extended periods of time and incorporate repeated assessments (at least 3 times) of both personality traits and relationship quality. Such designs would allow researchers to examine directional effects and explore whether personality traits would predict subsequent student–teacher relationship quality after accounting for prior personality trait levels. Additionally, there is growing interest in the reverse effect—whether relationship quality may influence personality traits. This line of research assumes that important dyadic relationships may provide individuals with valuable self-knowledge by imposing expectations, evaluations about individuals (Swann & Bosson, 2008). This may initiate a process of identity negotiation, which may potentially alter individuals' characteristic patterns in behaviors, feelings, and thoughts (i.e., personality traits; Back et al., 2023; Swann & Bosson, 2008). Although previous findings on this topic are mixed (Back et al., 2023), longitudinal, cross-lagged research would enable the exploration of the direction and magnitude of the effect of relationship quality on personality traits, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how personality traits and relationship quality influence one another over time.

Implications for Practice

Despite the limitations, our findings about personality traits and the affective quality of student–teacher relationships may shed light on practice as well. Given the large sample in our study, statistical significance may not necessarily be meaningful in practice. However, we argue that our findings have practical significance for two reasons. First, compared with similar studies that utilized polynomial regression modeling to examine students' personality traits, the magnitudes of the associations between students' personality traits and student-teacher relationships were twice or sometimes even three times as large as those reported in previous studies about associations between students' personality traits and outcomes such as externalizing behaviors and victimization (e.g., Boele et al., 2017; Franken et al., 2017). Although further research is needed to replicate these findings, these substantial associations suggest that the role of personality traits in student-teacher relationships is noteworthy among various developmental outcomes. Second, we found that teachers' personality traits, as level-2 predictors, were associated with consistent differences in the quality of student–teacher relationships across whole classrooms. This suggests that teachers' personality traits are not only relevant for individual students but may also have meaningful implications at the class level.

In light of practical significance, we first advocate an awareness of personality traits in teacher training programs to enhance teachers' understanding of themselves, their students, and the development of high-quality student–teacher relationships. For instance, workshops on personality psychology may help teachers to identify their own personality profiles and enable them to understand how their personality traits may influence their behaviors toward, and interactions with students. Another approach is to implement role-playing exercises where teachers practice responding to various students' personality profiles. This approach may equip teachers with valuable experiences and skills to effectively interact with a diverse range of students.

Second, our findings also suggest that a positive personality profile (i.e., high agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness, and low neuroticism) may improve relationship quality. Although personality traits are regarded as relatively stable over a period of time, there is evidence from lifespan research indicating that personality traits tend to stabilize during adolescence and young adulthood (Bleidorn et al., 2022). This suggests that childhood may be seen as formative years for these individuals' differences, opening up opportunities for intervention targeting at building up positive personality profiles. Existing interventions have shown that personality traits can be changed by enacting the trait-relevant behaviors (Hudson et al., 2019). These interventions can be tailored to improve relationships. For instance, students and teachers could be encouraged to take on concrete weekly challenges designed to align their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors with positive personality profiles. Examples of such challenges include: "Giving a friend or family member a genuine compliment at least twice a week" or "Spending at least half an hour doing something active that you enjoy, such as sports or singing" (Hudson et al., 2019). Implementing these challenges over an extended period may foster traits that enhance relationship quality.

Conclusion

To summarize, our findings underscore the importance of personality traits in student–teacher relationships. That is, not only students' but also teachers' personality traits play a unique role in the quality of student–teacher relationships. The pattern of these associations is quite consistent across personality traits and informants of the affective quality of student–teacher relationships. Moreover, our findings suggest that it is important to develop a more comprehensive understanding of personality similarity. Specifically, it may be important to investigate the level of similarity on specific traits, as being similar on "positive" traits may have different implications for the relationship quality than being similar on "negative" traits. In addition, it seems that we cannot simply take personality similarity as the opposite of personality dissimilarity. As our study is one of the few that took both directions into account, future studies could verify our findings across diverse populations and settings and investigate the underlying mechanisms.

Appendix A

Teacher-Reported Personality Traits	**Student-Reported Personality Traits**
Agreeableness (6 items)	
Is compassionate, has a soft heart.	I empathize with others.
Is sometimes rude to others.	I am rude to others.
Can be cold and uncaring.	I only think about myself.
Assumes the best about people.	I believe that most people can be trusted.
Is respectful, treats others with respect.	I treat other people with respect.
Tends to find fault with others.	I get along well with others.
Conscientiousness (6 items)	
Tends to be disorganized.	I tend to be messy.
Has difficulty getting started on tasks.	I find it difficult to start new tasks.
Is reliable, can always be counted on.	I tend to take the others into account.
Keeps things neat and tidy.	I like keeping my things in order.
Is persistent, works until the task is finished.	If I start something, I will work until I get it done.
Can be somewhat careless.	I don't do my best for everything.
Extraversion (6 items)	
Tends to be quiet.	I tend to be quiet.
Is dominant, acts as a leader.	In a group, I like deciding what we are going to do.
Is full of energy.	I am full of energy.
Is outgoing, sociable.	I like having lots of people around me.
Prefers to have others take charge.	I like it when others tell me what to do.
Is less active than other people.	I am less active than the other children.
Neuroticism (6 items/7 items)	
Worries a lot.	I tend to be worried.
Tends to feel depressed, blue.	I feel sad easily.
Is emotionally stable, not easily upset.	I get upset easily.
Is relaxed, handles stress well.	I can handle stress well.
Feels secure, comfortable with self.	I feel confident about myself.
Is temperamental, gets emotional easily.	I am emotional.
	I can suddenly become angry.
Openness (6 items/7items)	
Is fascinated by art, music, or literature.	I like music.
Has little interest in abstract ideas.	I like thinking about difficult things.
Is original, comes up with new ideas.	I like to come up with new ideas.
Has few artistic interests.	I like drawing.
Is complex, a deep thinker.	I like to think things through carefully.
Has little creativity.	I am creative.
	I like doing handcraft.

Teacher-Reported Student–Teacher Relationships
Closeness (5 items)
This child openly shares his/her feelings and experiences with me. If upset, this child will seek comfort from me. I share an affectionate, warm relationship with this child. This child seems to feel secure with me. My interactions with this child make me feel effective and confident.
Conflict (5 items)
This child and I always seem to be struggling with each other. This child feels that I treat him/her unfairly. When this child is in a bad mood, I know we're in for a long and difficult day. Dealing with this child drains my energy. This child's feelings toward me can be unpredictable or can change suddenly.
Student-Reported Student–Teacher Relationships
Closeness (6 items)
I feel at ease with my teacher. I tell my teacher things that are important to me. My teacher understands me. I think I have a good relationship with my teacher. If I have a problem, I can share it with my teacher. My teacher usually knows how I feel.
Conflict (6 items)
I easily have quarrels with my teacher. My teacher treats me unfairly. My teacher thinks I do things sneaky. I guess my teacher gets tired of me in class. I feel that my teacher does not trust me. I can be very angry with my teacher.