

Misunderstanding Between Teachers and Students: Causes, Impact, and Solutions

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Abstract

This article examines the major causes of misunderstanding between teachers and students, analyzes the impact of this problem on academic and psychological outcomes, and offers practical solutions to foster better communication and cooperation in the school environment.

Keywords

teacher-student misunderstanding, communication barriers, emotional intelligence, academic pressure, classroom culture, cultural differences, student psychology, teacher workload, education relationship

INTRODUCTION

Misunderstandings between teachers and students are common in schools and often arise from communication problems, differences in perspectives, academic stress, and cultural or social factors. These issues can negatively affect learning, emotional well-being, and classroom dynamics. This article briefly explores the main causes of such misunderstandings and offers practical ways to improve communication and cooperation in the school environment.

CAUSES OF MISUNDERSTANDING

1. Communication Barriers

One of the most common reasons for misunderstandings is ineffective communication. Some students struggle to articulate their needs or questions, while others may misinterpret the teacher's instructions or feedback. Meanwhile, teachers, due to time pressure and classroom dynamics, may not always explain lessons, requirements, or expectations in a manner that every student can easily grasp.

Additionally, tone of voice, body language, and non-verbal cues play a significant role in communication. A teacher's neutral or strict tone may be interpreted by a sensitive student as anger or disapproval. Likewise, when a student remains silent, a teacher might consider it indifference, when in reality the child may simply be shy or confused.

2. DIFFERENCES IN AGE, PERSPECTIVE, AND LIFE EXPERIENCE

Teachers and students belong to different generations and often view situations from very different angles. Adults tend to prioritize discipline, responsibility, and academic achievement. Students, especially teenagers, prioritize emotional comfort, freedom, and social relationships. This gap leads to contrasting expectations: when a teacher emphasizes rules and structure, students may perceive it as unnecessary strictness or lack of empathy.

Furthermore, teenagers undergo emotional and cognitive changes, which affect their behavior and decision-making. Their reactions may be influenced by peer pressure, hormonal changes, or insecurity. Teachers, however, may not always recognize these internal struggles, leading to further misunderstandings.

3. ACADEMIC PRESSURE AND STRESS

Academic competition has increased significantly in recent years. Students are often required to meet high standards, excel in multiple subjects, participate in extracurricular activities, and prepare for exams. Teachers may unintentionally add to this pressure by demanding consistent performance, punctuality, and flawless work. While these expectations aim to motivate, students may interpret them as unrealistic or stressful.

When stress rises, communication between students and teachers can become strained. A student overwhelmed by expectations may react defensively or withdraw emotionally, which the teacher may misinterpret as laziness or lack of effort.

4. CULTURAL AND SOCIAL DIFFERENCES

In diverse classrooms, cultural backgrounds can influence communication styles, attitudes, and learning preferences. Students from certain cultures may avoid eye contact out of respect, while teachers from different cultural backgrounds may interpret this as disengagement. Similarly, verbal participation may be encouraged in some cultures but considered inappropriate in others.

Social differences, such as economic inequalities, family problems, or personal challenges, also contribute to misunderstanding. A student facing difficulties at home may have trouble focusing, but the teacher may see only the surface behavior, not the underlying cause.

5. LIMITED TIME AND TEACHER WORKLOAD

Modern teachers often manage large classes, extensive paperwork, and multiple responsibilities. This heavy workload limits the time they can spend addressing individual student needs. As a result, some students may feel overlooked or misunderstood. Teachers, in turn, may struggle to interpret each student's unique behavior, learning style, or emotional condition. When personal connection is limited, misunderstandings naturally increase.

Impact of Misunderstanding on Students and the Learning Process

1. Decline in Academic Performance

A student who feels misunderstood or unfairly judged may lose motivation to study. Their participation decreases, their willingness to ask questions drops, and their performance gradually declines. A negative relationship with a teacher can cause students to avoid tasks or subjects altogether.

2. Emotional and Psychological Consequences

Misunderstandings can lead to emotional distress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and even fear of school. Students may feel unsupported or undervalued, which affects their confidence and long-term academic goals.

3. Classroom Tension

When a student and teacher experience ongoing conflict or miscommunication, the entire class may feel the tension. This can create an uncomfortable learning environment, disrupt group dynamics, and reduce overall class productivity.

4. Loss of Trust

A strong educational environment is built on trust. When misunderstandings accumulate, trust weakens, making it more difficult for students to accept guidance or constructive criticism.

5. Negative Attitudes Toward School

Long-term misunderstandings can cause students to develop negative attitudes toward school, teachers, and learning in general. This not only affects their current education but may impact their attitude toward lifelong learning.

Solutions to Improve Understanding Between Teachers and Students

1. Establish Open and Respectful Communication

Schools should foster an environment where students feel safe to voice their concerns and ask questions. Teachers must encourage open dialogue, listen actively, and show empathy. A brief conversation outside of class can often resolve tensions and prevent misunderstandings.

2. Practice Emotional Intelligence

Teachers who are aware of students' emotional needs can respond more effectively. Simple gestures—such as acknowledging effort, offering encouragement, or showing patience—can significantly improve communication. Students also need to develop emotional awareness, learning to express feelings respectfully and constructively.

3. Use Clear and Flexible Teaching Methods

Teachers can reduce misunderstandings by offering clear instructions, using visual aids, checking for comprehension, and adapting lessons to different learning styles. Flexibility in teaching methods ensures that more students understand and meet expectations.

4. Provide Individual Support

Teachers should set aside time, even if limited, to support students who struggle emotionally or academically. Personalized feedback helps students feel valued and understood.

5. Strengthen Cooperation With Parents

Teachers and parents must communicate regularly to understand the student's overall condition. When parents and teachers work together, they can identify problems early and support the student more effectively.

6. Encourage a Positive Classroom Culture

A classroom based on mutual respect, fairness, and encouragement reduces conflict. Teachers should model positive behavior, celebrate diversity, and maintain consistent but compassionate discipline.

CONCLUSION

Misunderstandings between teachers and students are common but not inevitable. They arise from communication barriers, generational gaps, academic pressure, cultural differences, and institutional constraints. If left unresolved, these misunderstandings can affect academic

performance, self-esteem, and overall school experience. However, through open communication, emotional support, flexible teaching, and collaborative relationships, schools can create an environment where teachers and students understand one another more clearly.

Ultimately, the foundation of successful education lies not only in textbooks or technology but in the human relationships that shape the learning process. When teachers and students respect and understand one another, education becomes not just a process, but a partnership—and a powerful one.

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