
NEWSLETTER

The Effects of Criticism on the Behavioral Improvement Intention of Junior and Senior Secondary School Students: The Role of the Teacher-Student Relationship

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THE CULTIVATION of good behavioral habits in students is among the chief goals of school education. The teacher's praise and criticism play important roles in this process. As opposed to praise, criticism is a negation of student misconduct, which is usually deemed negative feedback by the students criticized, but in the teacher's eyes, is meant to make them aware of and correct their misbehavior. Currently, there remain divides among researchers on the effects of criticism in the education process. Recruiting 228 8th- and 11th-graders from a middle school and a high school in X City, this study seeks to explore the effects of different types of criticism (outcome, process, and person criticism) on the relationship between the secondary teacher and their students as well as on the latter's behavioral improvement intention. Also examined is the role of the teacher-student relationship in the relation between the type of criticism and student behavioral improvement intention.

Research Findings:

- As opposed to outcome criticism, the effects of process criticism and person criticism on the teacher-student relationship varied in the two education phases. For the high school students, process criticism could help enhance their perception of the close relationship with their teacher, whereas person criticism had the opposite effect. For the middle school students, both process criticism and person criticism could weaken their perception of the close relationship with their teacher.
- Both process criticism and person criticism impacted the students' behavioral improvement intention by changing their perception of the relationship with their teacher, though with differential features in junior and senior secondary education. In junior secondary education, both of them had negative impacts on student behavioral improvement intention by undermining the close relationship between the teacher and students. In senior secondary

education, process criticism helped augment the behavioral improvement intention of the students by bolstering the teacher-student relationship, whereas person criticism negatively affected their behavioral improvement intention by impairing the teacher-student relationship.

Research Implications:

- Long-term experience of person criticism has the potential of establishing negative self-concepts in students, who would choose to reject the opportunities for self-improvement. The teacher must avoid it in administering criticism to students.
- There are differences in the effects of process criticism on the behavioral improvement intention of junior and senior secondary school students, as well as in the impact routes. The teacher must be mindful of the possible negative consequences of process criticism for middle school students.
- Junior secondary students in their early adolescence have difficulty distinguishing process and person criticism and comprehending the positive intent of teacher criticism, which means middle school teachers, face more challenges in correcting their students' misbehavior.

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