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Interplay of Teacher Humor and Classroom Climate at School

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Schlossbau S. 2.32

Abstract:

Teacher humor encompasses motivational, emotional, instructional, and social dimensions (e.g., Bieg & Dresel, 2018). Despite its significance, there is a lack of longitudinal studies on how classroom dimensions, such as teaching climate are influenced by teacher humor. Previous studies have largely relied on correlational designs related to student emotions, leaving the causal and reciprocal relationships of specific humor types and teaching climate unclear, particularly in secondary school contexts. To address this gap, we conducted a longitudinal study exploring these reciprocal relations. We followed 1,298 German-speaking 9th-grade students (51.9 % female; Mage: 14.30 years; SD = .52) from 62 secondary school classes (Gymnasium) during the school years 2023–2024. Students' perceptions of teacher humor were measured with HUMLAS (Bieg & Dresel, 2016, 17 items, $\omega = .85 - .94$), and teaching climate was assessed with a scale from Helmke (2017, 3 items, $\omega = .80$). Data were collected at three measurement points. The reciprocal associations of different teacher humor types and instructional and student aspects were analyzed by identifying crossed-lagged panel models with latent variables (using Mplus 8.6), which all models yielded satisfying fit indices. The results indicated reciprocal relationships between teacher humor and teaching climate over time. Specifically, course-related humor at the start of the school year (T1) positively predicted teaching climate at mid-year (T2); further, teaching climate at T2

predicted enhanced course-related humor at the end of the school year (T3). In contrast, aggressive humor had a negative impact on teaching climate at T2, and teaching climate at T1 negatively predicted teaching climate at T2. Besides, teaching climate at T1 predicted lower levels of aggressive teacher humor at T2. We also found that the teaching climate at T2 predicted aggressive humor at T3 negatively. Furthermore, irrelevant humor at T2 negatively influenced teaching climate at T3. There were no reciprocal or one-way effect between self-disparaging humor and teaching climate. These findings emphasize the positive role of course-related humor in fostering a supportive teaching climate and vice versa, while highlighting the harmful effects of aggressive humor on teaching climate. Educators are encouraged to adopt adaptive teacher humor to improve positive teaching climate and create a positive educational environment.

References

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