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LA PERCEPCIÓN DE LA AUTORIDAD EN DOCENTES JÓVENES DE INGLÉS Y SU INFLUENCIA EN LA DISCIPLINA DEL AULA Y LA MOTIVACIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN COLEGIOS ECUATORIANOS

YOUNG ENGLISH TEACHERS' AUTHORITY PERCEPTION, CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE, AND STUDENT MOTIVATION IN ECUADOR

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Young English Teachers' Authority Perception, Classroom Discipline, and Student Motivation in Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates how young English educators are perceived in terms of authority and its impact on classroom discipline and student engagement in Ecuadorian high schools. A mixed-methods approach was used, combining a 30-question Likert-scale questionnaire for students with teacher surveys and focus groups. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative inputs underwent thematic analysis.The findings indicated a moderate positive correlation between perceived teacher authority and classroom discipline (r = 0.64), and a moderate link with student motivation (r = r=57). Qualitative results showed that while young teachers face challenges like lack of respect and management difficulties, authority depends more on confidence and pedagogical strategies than age. The study concludes that teacher authority is crucial for maintaining discipline, whereas its influence on motivation is indirect. These findings highlight the importance of classroom management training in EFL contexts.

Keywords: teacher authority, classroom discipline, student motivation, EFL, young teachers

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La Percepción de la Autoridad en Docentes Jóvenes de Inglés y su Influencia en la Disciplina del Aula y la Motivación de los Estudiantes en Colegios Ecuatorianos

RESUMEN

Esta investigación analiza cómo se percibe la autoridad de los docentes jóvenes de inglés y su impacto en la disciplina en el aula y el compromiso estudiantil en colegios ecuatorianos. Se empleó un enfoque de métodos mixtos que combinó un cuestionario de escala Likert de 30 preguntas para estudiantes con encuestas a profesores y grupos focales. Los datos cuantitativos se analizaron con estadística descriptiva e inferencial, y los cualitativos mediante análisis temático. Los hallazgos indicaron una correlación positiva moderada entre la percepción de la autoridad docente y la disciplina (r = 0.64), así como un vínculo moderado con la motivación estudiantil (r = 0.57). Los resultados cualitativos mostraron que, aunque los docentes jóvenes enfrentan desafíos como la falta de respeto y dificultades de gestión, la autoridad depende más de la confianza y las estrategias pedagógicas que de la edad. El estudio concluye que la autoridad es crucial para la disciplina, mientras que su influencia en la motivación es indirecta.

Palabras clave: autoridad docente, disciplina en el aula, motivación estudiantil, EFL (inglés como lengua extranjera), docentes jóvenes

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INTRODUCTION

In the field of education, The English teachers play a crucial role not only as transmitter of knowledge but also as figures of authority and credibility, which shape how students respond and engage in the learning process. In Ecuadorian High School, young English teachers frequently encounter challenges stablishing and consolidating authority and credibility, which are generally associated with the expertise and respect, When students perceive a teacher as less authoritative or more friendly, the classroom management becomes more difficult, the discipline may weaken, leading to potentially reduction in student motivation and engagement.

In studies about psychological perspective, teacher credibility refers to the degree to which students perceive their teacher as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and caring (McCroskey & Teven, 1999). Teacher authority, on the other hand, relates to the teacher's ability to establish control, set behavioral expectations, and maintain discipline (Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005). Both concepts are closely related to student motivation and discipline, defined as the internal process that directs, energizes, and sustains learning behaviors (Johnson, n.d.). When student perceive teachers as authoritative is more probably that they will be more comply with the rules and invest more effort in learning.

Previous research has explored how teacher characteristics in particular age, experience and authority affect management classroom and student motivation. In an important study carried out by Martin and Shoho (n.d.) found that older teachers tend to employ more structured and controlling classroom management styles, suggesting a

correlation between age and discipline effectiveness. Nevertheless, other studies challenge the assumption that age alone predicts teaching success. For instance, Rahida Aini Mohd Ismail (2018) concluded that teaching methodology and professional development, are stronger predictors of teacher effectiveness than age.

Similarly, Nezakatgoo et al. (2022) revealed that experience and academic preparation, not chronological age, correlated with higher levels of student engagement in EFL classrooms. In Ecuador, Yanza et al. (2023) compared classroom management strategies in public and private Ecuadorian schools, finding that while public school teachers exhibited more authoritative control, private school teachers used more varied pedagogical strategies to maintain engagement.

Their findings reinforce the idea that effective management and motivation depend more on teaching methods and institutional culture than on age itself.

Despite existing research, a significant gap remains in the Ecuadorian contexts. Few studies have examined how young English teachers often face difficulties in establishing authority and credibility due to students' perceptions related to age and experience. This perceived lack of authority may negatively affect classroom discipline and reduce student motivation. The most studies are focused on general teacher performance or classroom management but abandon the sociocultural perceptions tied to teacher age and appearance in EFL settings. By exploring this topic, the research is important because it will contribute to a relevant and underexplored issue in high school education, as well as provide practical insights for teachers and educational institutions interested in improving the classroom climate with the participation of young teachers.

The purpose of this study is to analyze students' perceptions of authority in young English teachers and examine its influence on classroom discipline and student motivation in Ecuadorian high schools. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study will combine a Likert-scale questionnaire, surveys and focus group with teachers and students to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Finally, the following research questions guide the study:

RQ1(quantitative): Is there a significant relationship between students' perceptions of young English teachers' authority and classroom discipline in Ecuadorian secondary schools?

RQ2(quantitative): To what extent does perceive teacher authority predict students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language?

RQ3 (qualitative): How do young English teachers describe the challenges they face when establishing authority in EFL classrooms?

Objectives

General objective

To analyze students' perceptions of authority and credibility in young English teachers and examine its influence on classroom discipline and student motivation in Ecuadorian high schools.

Specific objectives

- To identify students' perceptions of authority and credibility in young English teachers in Ecuadorian high schools.
- To examine the relationship between perceived teacher authority and classroom discipline in Ecuadorian secondary EFL classrooms.
- To determine the extent to which perceived authority of young English teachers predicts student motivation to learn English as a foreign language.
- To explore young English teachers' perspectives on the challenges they face when establishing authority in the classroom.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach with a convergent parallel design, combining quantitative and qualitative data to obtain a comprehensive understanding of research problem. The quantitative component followed a non-experimental, correlational design, as no variables were manipulated, and the study sought to examine the relationships between perceived teacher authority, classroom discipline, and student motivation. Similarity, the qualitative component employed a descriptive and interpretive approach, allowing for an in-depth exploration of young English teachers' perspectives on the challenges they face in establishing authority in the classroom. This mixed-methods design allowed for data triangulation and strengthened the validity of the findings.

About participants and context, the study was conducted in the province of Manabi, Ecuador. The primary setting took place in a private High school located in Pedernales Twon. Additionally, the study involved participants with difference professional perspectives on the research topic from various other educational institutions throughout the Manabí province. The target population for this study were Two distinct groups, English as a foreign language (EFL) professors and students.

Students: Thirty students from the first and tenth grades of high school, between ages of 14-17. The student participants were selected using convenience sampling, based on their accessibility and willingness to participate. These students provide data via a Likert-scale.

Teachers: A group of five young English teachers who teach at the secondary level participated. With a special focus on young English teachers between the ages of 22-30 who have between 1 and 5 years

of teaching experience. The teachers were also selected using convenience sampling, considering their age and experience teaching English as a foreign language.

All participants participated voluntarily, and their identities were kept completely anonymous to ensure confidentiality and ethical compliance throughout the research process.

The study examined one independent and two dependent variables. The independent variable was perceived teacher authority, defined as students' perceptions of the teacher's ability to establish credibility, control, and leadership in the classroom. The dependent variables were classroom discipline and student motivation. Classroom discipline referred to students' perceptions of order, adherence to rules, and behavior management in the classroom, while student motivation was defined as students' interest, participation, and willingness to engage in English language learning activities. These variables were measured using students' responses to a Likert-scale questionnaire and were supplemented with qualitative data from the teachers.

Instruments

Three instruments were used for data collection.

- First, a 30-item Likert-scale questionnaire: This was administered to the student participants. The questionnaire employed a five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). The instrument was organized into five dimensions: perceived authority of the English teacher (items 1–6), teacher credibility (items 7–12), classroom discipline (items 13–18), student motivation (items 19–24), and teacher influence on the learning environment (items 25–30).

Justification. This instrument was designed to measure students' perceptions related to the study variables (authority, classroom discipline and motivation).

- Second, a teacher survey consisting of 18 opened and closed questions. This was administered to 5 young English teachers from different high schools of Manabí, Ecuador. The instrument was organized into five sections: General data, perceived teacher authority, classroom discipline, student motivation and perception and experience.

Justifications: To gather qualitative and complementary quantitative information regarding their experiences on perceptions of authority, classroom management and students' discipline, and motivation.

- Finally, a focus group: This was conducted with the same 5 young English teachers. The session lasted 60 minutes and was conducted via zoom. The discussion was audio-recorded and later analyzed.

ILUSTRATIONS TABLES, GRAPHICS

To ensure the quality and rigor of the instruments, both content validity and realiability procedures were established. Regarding Validity, all instruments used in this study (Likert-scale questionnaire, teacher survey, and focus group guide) were evaluated before to applied, five external experts reviewed each instrument and using a validation checklist they gave a judgment, first they assessed aspects such as clarity, relevance coherence and alignments with the research objectives. Based on their feedback, several modifications were made to improve the wording, structure and organization of items, ensuring that the instruments adequately measured the objective data.

Continuing with Reliability, the internal consistency of the Likert- Scale questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach´s Alpha. The results showed acceptable to high reliability across all dimensions. Specifically: Dimension #1 (Perceived Teacher Authority) obtained a = 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency; Dimension #2 (Teacher Credibility) showed a = 0,83; Dimension #3 (Classroom Discipline) a= 0,87; Dimension #4 (students Motivation) a = 0.88 and Dimension #5 (Learning Environment) a = 0,87, all results reflecting good reliability levels.

These data demonstrate that the instruments are consistent and ratability for measuring students and teachers' perceptions related to teachers' authority, classroom discipline, and students' motivation so important within the context of this study.

Procedures

The procedure was conducted in the following steps.

First authorization to conduct the study was requested to the principal of school via Whatsapp message, and followed by a formal request through email, which was promptly approved.

Participant selection: students and teachers were selected using convenience sampling, students were chosen from 10th, 1st and 2nd years of High School. As these levels typically present more challenges related to authority and classroom discipline and motivation. As for the teachers, young teachers with little experience in the professional field of teaching English were chosen

Ethical procedures: before data collection, inform consent were sent to parents and assent forms were provide to students, the researcher explained the purpose of the instruments and the nature of study to students.

Instrument administration: once all ethical clearances were secured, the Likert scale was administered to students in person. The teacher survey was distributed to young English teachers from different educational institutions across the Manabí province were selected. These professors were contacted through Whatsapp and in the same way the researcher explained the purpose of the instruments and the nature of study. And focus group was applied to the same teachers and this was conducted via Zoom. And is important mention that coordinated this session was a complex task due to the participants have diverse work schedules and the dialogues and session link was shared via Whatsapp.

All participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used exclusively for academic purposes.

Data analysis: quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately and then triangulated.

RESULTS

Quantitative results

The descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to examine students´ perceptions across the five dimensions measured in the Likert-Scale questionnaire: Perceived teacher authority, Teacher credibility, Classroom discipline, Student motivation and learning environment.

The results on Dimension #1(Teacher Authority) Indicate a Mean score of (M=3,43), a median of (4), a Standard deviation of (1,23) and a mode of (4). These values suggest a moderate level of perceived authority, indicating that while students generally recognize their teachers' leadership, there may be inconsistencies in how authority is exercised in the classroom. This variability could reflect differences in teaching strategies, classroom management skills, or student expectations. In contrast, with Dimension #2 (Teacher Credibility) present the highest scores, with a Mean of (M=4.01), a Median of 5 and a Mode of (5) along with a Standard deviation of (1.11). These indicate a high level of perceived credibility, suggesting that students generally view their young English teachers as competent and trustworthy.

Regarding dimension #3 (Classroom discipline), the Mean score was (M=3.45), with a Median and Mode of (3) and a Standard deviation of (1.20). These results reflect a moderate perception of classroom discipline, indicating some inconsistency in students´ experiences.

For Dimension 4 (Student Motivation) the Mean score was (M=3.20), with a Median of 4, a Mode of 5 and a Standard Deviation of (1.39) the highest of all dimensions. This suggests a moderate level of motivation, but also highlights considerable variability in students´ responses.

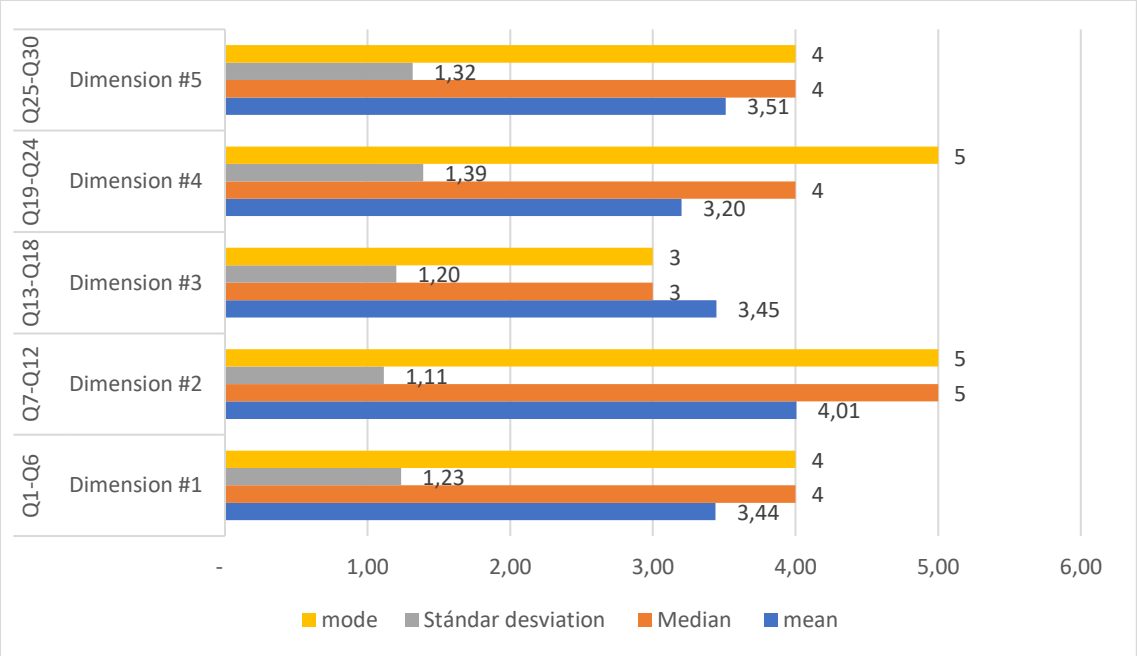
Finally Dimension #5 (Learning Environment Influence) obtained a Mean of (M=3.51) with a Median and a Mode of 4 and a Standard Deviation of (1.32). These results indicate a moderately positive perception of learning environment in English classes, although responses vary across participants.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics

RANGE	DIMENSIONS	MEAN	MEDIAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	MODE
Q1-Q6	Dimension #1 Perceived Autority	3,438888889	4	1,23452145	4
Q7-Q12	Dimension #2 Teacher Credibility	4,006481481	5	1,11437022	5
Q13-Q18	Dimension #3 Classroom Discipline	3,44537037	3	1,201799063	3
Q19-Q24	Dimension #4 Student Motivation	3,201851852	4	1,390900506	5
Q25-Q30	Dimension #5 Learning Environment	3,510983397	4	1,316419726	4

Note: In general, the descriptive results show that while teachers' credibility is perceived at a high level, the remaining dimensions particularly authority, discipline and motivation are perceived at moderate levels, suggesting opportunities for improvement in classroom dynamics.

Graphic #1: Statistic Graphic by Dimension.



Note: Statistics extracted from the analysis carried out on students to examine the perceptions of students towards teachers.

Research question#1: **Is there a significant relationship between students' perceptions of young English teachers' authority and classroom discipline in Ecuadorian secondary schools?**

The Pearson correlation analysis showed a moderate positive e relationship between perceived teacher authority and classroom discipline (r=0.64) this indicates that higher level of perceived are associated with better classroom discipline.

This result suggests that when students perceive their teachers as authoritative, classroom behavior tends to be more controlled and structured.

Table 2 Correlation between Variables

Principal Variables			
Variable	Authority	Discipline	Motivation
Authority	1	0,64281626	
Discipline	0,64281626	1	
Motivation	0,57702524	0,55987855	1

Note: The Pearson correlation analysis

Research question #2: **To what extent does perceive teacher authority predict students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language?**

The analysis also showed a moderate positive correlation between perceived teacher authority and students' motivation (r=0,57) this suggests that teacher authority contributes to student motivation, although the relationship is not as strong as with classroom discipline.

Additionally, the correlation between classroom discipline and motivation (r=0,55) indicates that a well-managed classroom environment may also support student engagement.

Qualitative results

Research Question #3: How do young English teachers describe the challenges they face when establishing authority in EFL classrooms?

The thematic analysis of focus group and teacher survey revealed several key themes. First teachers defined the authority as a combination of respect, control and leadership, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balance between discipline and positive classroom environment.

Second, participants agreed that age is not the primary factor influencing authority. Instead, confidence, teaching strategies, and classroom management skills were identified as more relevant.

Third, teachers reported multiple challenges in establishing authority, including student disrespect, difficulty managing large groups, limited experience, and external pressure from parents.

Furthermore, participants highlighted a strong relationship between authority and classroom discipline stating that effective authority helps maintain order and structure in the classroom.

Finally, the relationship between authority and motivation was described as complex. While authority can contribute to motivation, teachers emphasized that motivation largely depends on teaching strategies, the classroom environment, and student engagement.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study confirm that perceived teacher authority plays a significant role in classroom discipline. The moderate positive correlation *(r=0.64)* indicates that authority is an important factor in maintaining order. In the same way, this result is important because it highlights that authority is not merely a personal trait but a pedagogical tool that directly impacts classroom functionality. Also, this finding aligns with opinions of researchers, for example, Emmer and Sabornie (2015), who argue that effective classroom management is strongly associated with teachers 'ability to stablish clear authority. Similarly, Wubbles and Brekelmans (2005) emphasize that perceived authority contributes to structured and disciplined classroom environments.

Regarding student motivation, the results revelated a moderated relation *(r=0,57),* suggesting that authority contributes to motivation but is not the sole determining factor. This is further supported by the qualitative findings, where teachers emphasized the importance of teaching strategies and the classroom environment.

Interestingly, teacher credibility received the highest mean score *(M=4.00),* indicating that students perceive teachers as competent even when authority is moderate. This suggests that credibility and authority, while related, may function differently in the influencing classroom dynamics.

Furthermore, the findings challenge the assumption that age determines authority. Buth quantitative and qualitative data indicate that personal and professional skills, rather that age are more relevant in shaping students' perceptions.

Overall, the study highlights the multidimensional nature of teacher authority and its variable impact on discipline and motivation

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the understanding of teacher authority in EFL contexts by demonstrating that students 'perceptions significantly influence classroom discipline and motivation. The findings highlight the need for teacher training programs to focus not only on pedagogical skills but also on strategies to build perceived in the classroom.

Furthermore, the study demonstrates that age is not a determining factor in stablishing authority. Instead, elements such as trust, credibility and classroom management skills play a more significant role in students´ perceptions of authority.

These findings contribute to a better understanding of teacher authority in English as Foreign Language (EFL) context in Ecuador and highlight the importance of training programs that strengthen pedagogical and classroom management skills.

Likewise, the integration of quantitate and qualitative data allowed for a deeper understanding of the research problem, confirming that, while statistical relationships experiences offer valuable insights into the complexity of classroom dynamics.

Similarly, this study underscores the importance of understanding teacher authority as a dynamic and multifaceted constructed, rather than a fixed characteristic determined by age or experience. In this sense, the results suggest that young English teachers can effectively establish their authority when they demonstrate confidence, effective classroom management, and strong pedagogical skills.

Despite its strengths, this study has certain limitations. The relatively small sample size and focus on a specific geographic context may limit the generalizability of the results. Moreover, the subjective nature of the perceptions could have influenced the findings.

Consequently, future research should consider larger sample and include additional variables to explore these relationships more deeply.

Overall, this study contributes to the field of English language teaching by providing empirical evidence on the role of teacher authority in Ecuadorian High schools and highlights the need for a balanced approach that combines authority with effective pedagogical practices.

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