



Stimulating Classroom Participation: Case Study of Class III Learners at Arekha Primary School

Dawa Phuntsho ^{a*}

^a *Arekha Primary School, Ministry of Education and Skill Development, Chhukha, Bhutan.*

Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates strategies to stimulate classroom participation among grade III learners at Arekha Primary School. The study aims to identify barriers to participation and effective strategies for enhancing engagement. Using a mixed-method approach, data was collected through surveys, interviews, and observations. The findings reveal various factors hindering participation, including shyness, reservation, and demanding behavior. Motivation, open-ended questions, favorable learning environments, and group discussions emerged as effective strategies for promoting participation. Despite limitations in sample size and participant reluctance, the study suggests promising results in improving student engagement. Recommendations include conducting future studies with diverse samples and incorporating teachers' perspectives for a comprehensive understanding of classroom dynamics and interventions. Overall, the research underscores the importance of addressing psychological and social barriers to foster a more inclusive and interactive learning environment for grade III learners.

Keywords: *Class participation; Bhutanese students; engaged learning; teaching strategy.*

*Corresponding author: Email: dawaphuntsho@gmail.com, dphuntsho1@education.gov.bt;

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past years, the authors of this article have dedicated their efforts to exploring methods aimed at enhancing student involvement, engagement, and interaction within their instruction for grade III learners. This pursuit was necessitated by the introduction of new curricular requirements, which demand more interactive and lively lessons, with learners actively participating in all instructional activities. However, it was observed that the students exhibited minimal engagement in the classroom, exacerbated by limited available time for lesson delivery and logistical challenges in organizing activities that encourage active learner involvement.

This situation led the author to predominantly assume a teaching role rather than a facilitative one, as a result of which students were increasingly unprepared and reluctant to participate. They seemed content with passively absorbing the content and seldom volunteered answers when questions were posed, with only a few students regularly participating. Consequently, the student's overall performance fell below the expected standard. In light of these circumstances, a decision was made to investigate strategies to foster greater classroom participation among learners, thereby promoting their active involvement in the learning process.

1.1 Objectives

The goal of action research is to enhance classroom participation and foster a more interactive learning environment, ultimately leading to improved learning outcomes for the learners. The following objectives have been identified:

- Investigate and document the specific barriers or challenges that hinder classroom participation among grade III learners
- Determine the most effective strategies to engage grade III learners in classroom activities, discussions, and lessons

1.2 Significance of Classroom Participation

The study suggests that classroom participation is important for students' learning, speaking proficiency, and social development, while also promoting inclusivity and connectedness within

the community and improving overall course effectiveness [1]. The study also found out there was an increase of students' oral participation in class and improvement of students' speaking proficiency. Not only can that learnings come through properly guided group thinking. Classroom participation also prepares the way for co-operative participation with older and younger workers, with peers, subordinates, and supervisors, aiding in the development of good professional relations within the agency [2].

Students' participation in classroom teaching is the foundation of the learning suitability and social development of students, and has important practical significance for the students to develop in an all-around way [3]. Classroom participation signifies active involvement, a process that enhances learning. Participation involves volunteered unsolicited responses. The study found that there was a significant positive correlation between the undergraduates' classroom learning participation and the overall learning effect [4]. In addition, the study conducted by Weimer [5] found out that the effective student participation in practice courses enhances assimilation, provides insights for instructors, and influences students' attitudes towards their professional training.

1.3 Research Question

In what ways can classroom participation be effectively enhanced for grade III learners at Arekha Primary School?

1.4 Literature Review

Classroom participation has always been an important factor in developing positive learning outcomes for learners [6]. In addition, it allows learners to build on their knowledge and to develop confidence. The study conducted by Linley & Pradhan [7] found the factor that allows the classroom participation of the students comprises shyness, fear of teacher, happy mood, introverted ness, lively class, class size, and language barrier. In addition, they found the cited factors of the students have hugely affected the students to participate more or vice-versa.

The effective classroom teaching depends on the active engagement of students. When there is active engagement of the students in teaching and learning, it has the contributions of novel ideas that illuminate the positive lessons. Additionally, class participation fosters cognitive

stimulation, challenges perspectives, and nurtures interpersonal skills [8]. In addition, the student conducted by Wonder [9] contends that dynamic classroom involvement enables students to interact with information through hearing, seeing, and tactile engagement. Further, the study conducted by Batra [10], found the participation in a class occurs at different levels. In addition, he found that participation was spontaneous, voluntary, compulsory, or forced; student-initiated or teacher-initiated; positive or negative; student to student, student to teacher.

Conversely, silence and non-participation is due to the students' limited general and professional knowledge, leading to diminished self-confidence in their academic abilities [11]. While participation is crucial, an inequality issue persists, with certain students consistently engaging while others remain reticent. [12] acknowledge the challenge of uneven participation in collaborative classes. Bhutanese education largely adheres to teacher-centered instruction, resulting in passive learners. However, empowering students to inquire, lead discussions, and express needs can foster deeper learning [13].

Learner-centered approaches advocate guiding rather than controlling students towards learning goals. Active participation proves pivotal in effective learning, aided by supportive and guiding educators [14]. In addition, the study indicated the effectiveness of developing teachers' skills in the use of whichever approaches, methods and skills best bring about learning. However, the teacher's professional capacity at the time of the study, limited resources, cultural factors and learner background influences the learner's participation. In addition, Cultural influences also play a role; Asian students may be less inclined to participate, especially in non-native language environments [15].

Gender and age can further impact participation levels. Males often assert opinions more frequently, while females might exhibit greater participation in senior classes [16]. Moreover, mature students tend to engage more actively than younger peers [17] & [18]. Further, [19] added that the personalities and confidence levels influence participation of the students in the classroom. In addition, a survey conducted by Rocca [20] also found that the size of the classroom, and the perception of peers influenced students' willingness to speak up in class.

1.5 Strategies for Enhanced Participation

Classroom discussion, a frequently embraced active learning strategy, promotes critical thinking, self-awareness, and diverse perspectives [21]. Learner-centered planning, where tutors guide and facilitate rather than control, is effective [22]. The study conducted by Fasanya and Fathizadeh [23] found that some strategies to enhance participants were to enhance the student involvement supported by teachers and fostering effective learning. By addressing these factors and implementing thoughtful strategies, classroom participation can flourish, creating a dynamic and inclusive learning environment [24].

2. METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method approach could be employed by incorporating quantitative data from surveys to complement and validate qualitative findings, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the motivating activities for classroom participation

2.1 Participants

Among a cohort of 64 third-grade students, the study has 35 students from one section and their respective parents. A total of 25 participants, including both students and parents, was randomly selected to complete a survey questionnaire, while 5 students and their parents was participated in interviews. The survey and interviews with parents were designed to explore individual behaviors in a home setting, with the goal of gaining insights into their involvement during class.

2.2 Data Collection Tools

2.2.1 Survey questionnaire

A survey questionnaire was administered to both learners and parents, which was adopted from the study conducted by [2]. The questionnaire for learners aimed to explore their sentiments regarding classroom participation and interactions with peers. The parent survey sought information about learners' behaviors and communication styles within the home setting. The questionnaire was designed to evaluate their attitudes towards various classroom activities and identify perceived motivators for participation.

2.1.2 Observation

Observation was integral to the study, enabling the documentation of various behaviors during lesson delivery and providing insight into how learners actively engaged in participation.

2.1.3 Interview

Additionally, one-on-one interviews were conducted as another research tool to delve into participants' personal experiences, preferences, and perceived barriers related to classroom participation.

2.3 Data Analysis

The quantitative data obtained from surveys was analysed using SPSS, employed descriptive statistics to quantify the prevalence of specific motivations and preferences among the students.

On the other hand, the qualitative data gathered from interviews was subjected to thematic analysis. This approach aims to identify recurring patterns, themes, and key factors influencing motivation for classroom participation.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results derived from the data collected through various instruments, such as the student questionnaire, parent survey, and teacher observation checklist, were subjected to analysis

using descriptive statistics in SPSS. Additionally, visual representations were generated using Microsoft Excel to present the findings.

3.1 Parents Survey

As mentioned, the Parent Survey was employed to determine the occurrence of students' behaviors within the home environment. The data gathered using this instrument is presented in the following Fig. 1. In the breakdown provided by Fig. 1, out of 12 qualities presented for selection, 84% (n=21) of the responses indicated behaviors that demonstrate the students' awareness of those attributes. Conversely, 16% (n=4) of the responses suggested that the behaviors did not reflect an awareness of those attributes.

This assertion finds support in the parent interviews. According to Parent 1; "obviously the hindrances to classroom participation included shyness, reservation, and being quiet". Parent 3 expressed a similar perspective; "my child tended to avoid socializing with other friends and often remained alone in the home setting". This sentiment was echoed in the student survey, where Student 1; "I don't like going out and play with friends as it is really annoying and irritating". This results the child remain shy in the classroom, tend not to engage with their peers due to low self-esteem.

However, Parent 2 provided a contrasting viewpoint; "my child is talkative, always play with

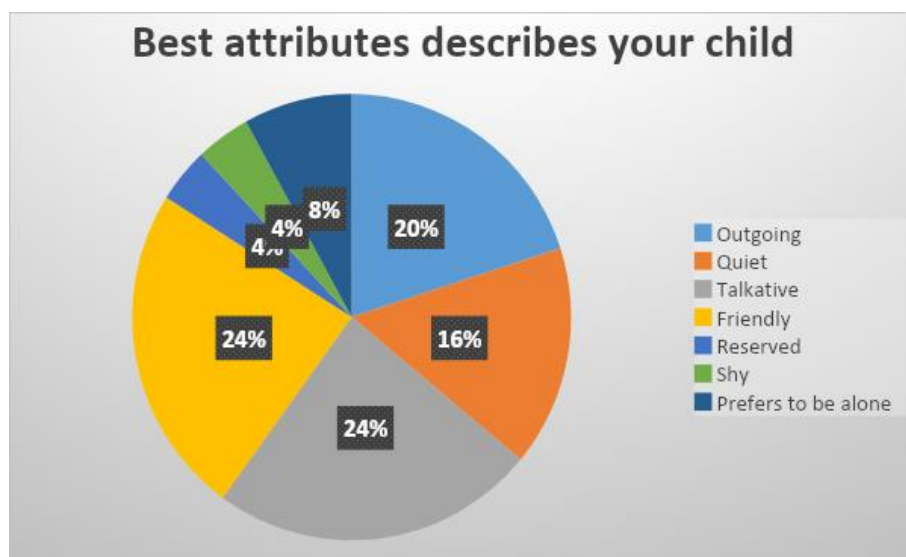


Fig. 1. Best attributes describe by parents

friends, easy going with new friends and stay friendly at home". The observer found that learner actively participates in the classroom. Thus, it appears that students who exhibit traits such as shyness, reserve, and solitude at home may be less inclined to participate in the classroom.

Fig. 2 depict one of three questions presenting four behavioral options in the parent survey. According to parents' responses, Fig. 2 revealed instances of inappropriate conduct occurring 28% of the time (n=7). This inappropriate conduct encompassed demanding behavior at 4% (n=1), whining at 4% (n=1), and passive behavior at 20% (n=5).

Figure 2: Words best describe your child's communication style when he/she requires assistance

This notion was corroborated by the interviews with parents 4; "My child knows how to communicate in home setting and use of language to different situation". This notion was echoed by the student 4; "I respect elderly people, that's the value shared by my parents". In addition, student 2 shared; "I get chocolate while I communicate properly without using bad words from my mom", meaning effective communication starts from home setting. Thereby, observer states that learners who communicate effectively at home tend to actively engage in class.

Conversely, parent 5 states; "My child demands every time, if his demand is not met, then he shows angry face and never talk with me, so I make sure his demand is made". The similar notion was shared by learner 3; "I like to participate in the class if sir give me many stars". Thereby, this displaying demanding behavior and whining may not participate unless driven by intrinsic motivation. Consequently, other factors impeding classroom participation include being demanding and exhibiting whining tendencies.

Fig. 3 displays that 60% (n=15) of parent responses reported assertive and relaxed behaviors during unstructured activities. In contrast, 40% (n=10) of parent replies indicated a deficiency in advocacy and communication skills.

In unstructured activities, both Parent 2 and Parent 4 affirmed that "my son remain always silent and shy in gathering, he likes to stay alone in the room until the gathering is over". This notion was supported by students 3 and 5: "I feel shy when there is gathering at my place, I don't like to mingle with other friends". This shows the learners who consistently remain reserved or shy tend not to participate in class. This statement was proven by observer during the class. Thus, a learner's tendency to be reserved at home emerges as another factor hindering classroom participation.

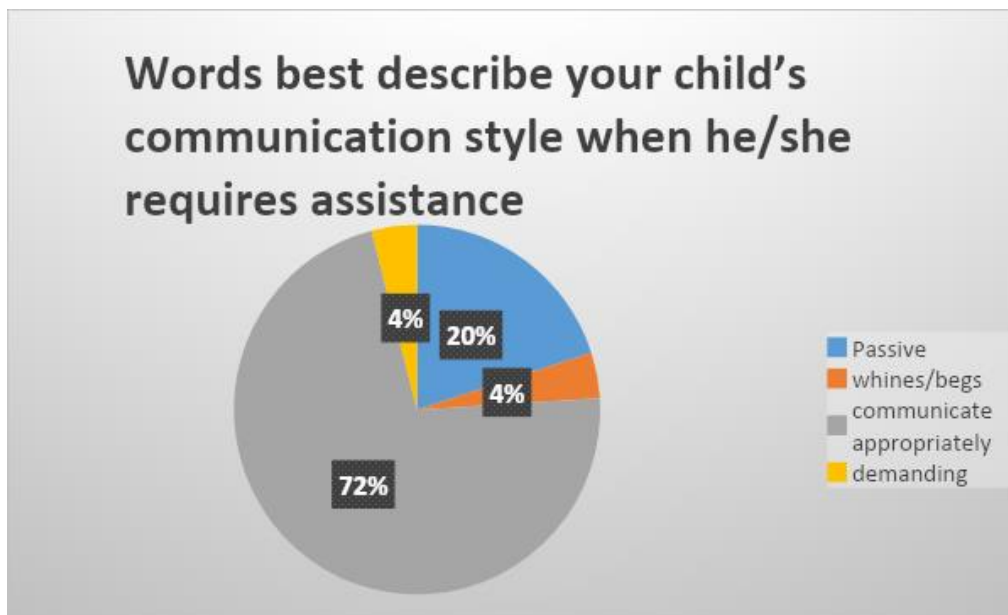


Fig. 2. Best communication skills

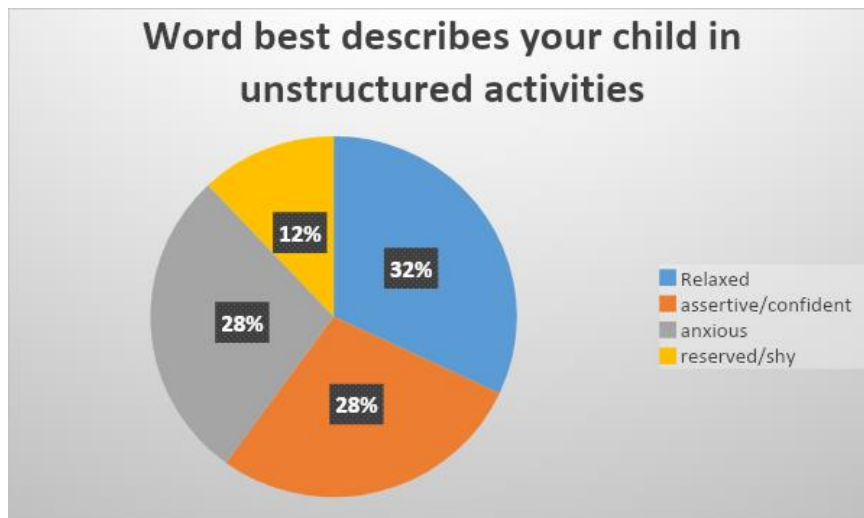


Fig. 3. Best in unstructured activities

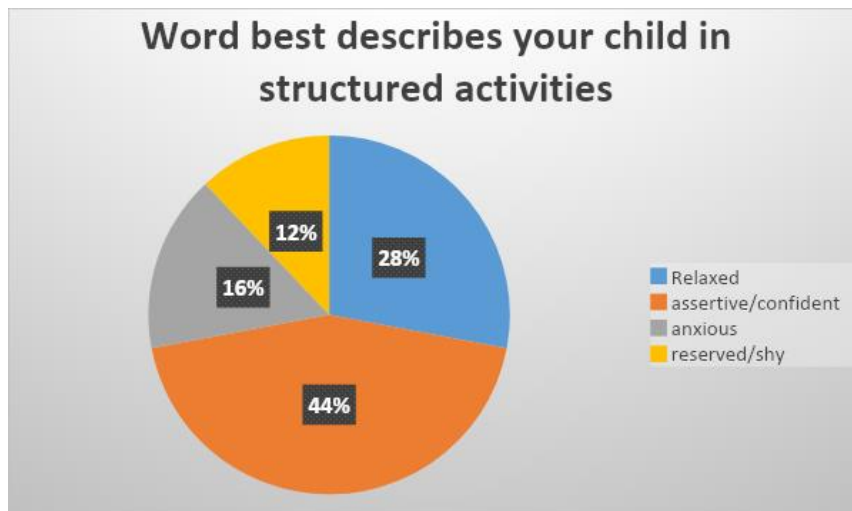


Fig. 4. Best in structured activities

Fig. 4 illustrates that in structured activities, 86% (n=35) of parents perceived their children as displaying pro-social communication skills. These behaviors encompassed assertiveness /confidence at 44% (n=11) and a relaxed demeanor at 28% (n=7). On the contrary, 28% (n=7) reported that their child did not exhibit self-advocacy behaviors, with 16% (n=4) being reserved/shy and 12% (n=3) being anxious.

Parents 1 conveyed that “I encourage my child to participate in any type of games and sport other child plays during off hours around the house but my child never participate with them, instead, they prefer playing alone at home”. The similar idea was shared by parent 3: “my child feels shy

when he participates in any type of game even playing with me”. The observer also found that those learners, who were reserved or shy tend not to engage in group activities. So thereby, it is important for the parents and teachers to explore the strategies to encourage the learners to participate in any structured activities.

As indicated, parents were asked to respond with either "yes" or "no" regarding whether their child initiates conversations about their experiences or feelings. Figure 5 reveals that 80% (n=20) of parents reported that their child initiates conversations about their feelings and experiences. On the other hand, 20% (n=5) of parents indicated that their child does not initiate such conversations.

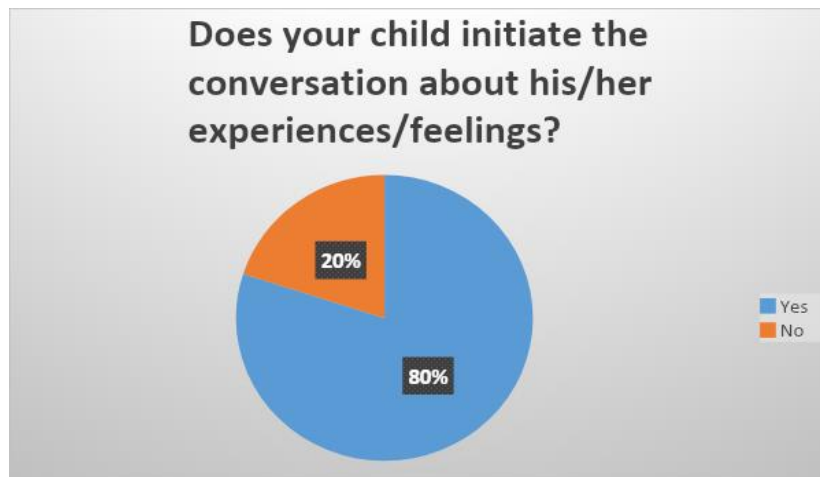


Fig. 5. Initiate the conversions about their experiences

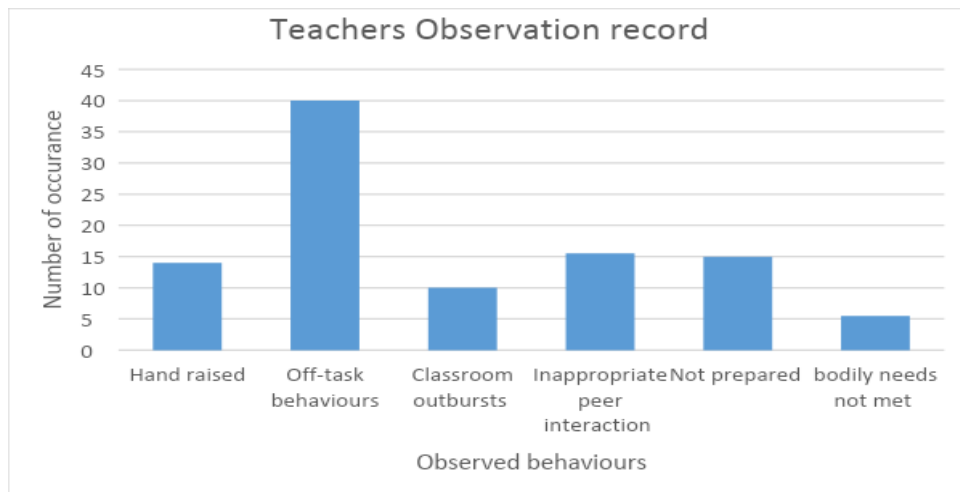


Fig. 6. Teachers' observation record

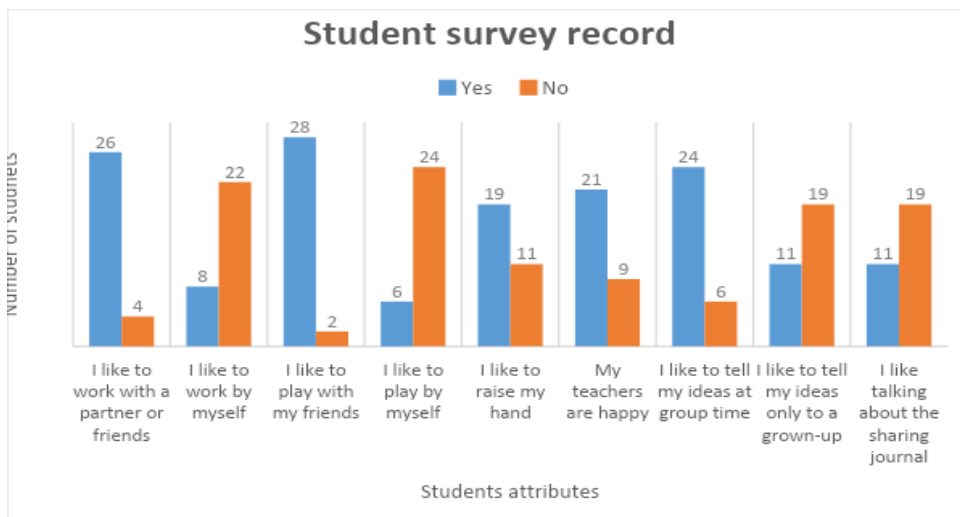


Fig. 7. Students survey report

This finding was corroborated by the accounts of parents 1, who reported that “my child shares his experiences from attended activities in the school”. In addition, “my daughter freely shares what she has done in the school and what teacher has told to her every end of the day” (parent 3). Further, “my son complains when the teacher scold him during the lesson” (parent 5). Therefore, those learners who share their experiences participates in the classroom (Observer).

Conversely, parents 2 noted “my son does not share anything happened in the school with friends or teachers even upon asking”. In addition, “my daughter never shares her experiences from the learning taken place at school or home” (Parent 4). It was observed those learners who were reluctant to share experiences, attributing this behavior to the children's reserved, demanding, and shy nature and does not participate in the class.

3.2 Teachers Observation

Fig. 6 depicts the behaviors recorded by the researcher on the Teacher Observation Checklist. Out of the 200 observed behaviors, 28 instances (14%) involved hand-raising. The remaining behaviors reflected a lack of classroom participation and advocacy, totaling 172 (86%). Among these, off-task behaviors constituted the largest incidence, accounting for 80 instances (40%). Additionally, there were 20 occurrences (10%) of classroom outbursts, and 31 instances (15.5%) of inappropriate peer interaction, illustrating undesirable behavior. Furthermore, 30 instances (15%) of unpreparedness for classroom activities and 11 occurrences (5.5%) of unmet bodily needs pointed to a deficiency in self-advocacy in classroom participation.

3.3 Students Survey

Utilizing the student questionnaire, the preliminary data presented in Figure 7 reveals that 26 respondents (86.6%) answered affirmatively to engaging in activities involving social interaction with peers and student-driven experiences. Additionally, 24 students (80%) expressed enjoyment in sharing ideas during group time, while 6 students (20%) indicated a preference against sharing in a group setting.

4. DISCUSSION

Numerous factors hinder learners' participation in the classroom, including being reserved,

experiencing shyness, staying alone, and displaying demanding behavior, as revealed through surveys and interviews. Student 3 and 4 emphasized the role of self-confidence, stating that students with confidence are more willing to participate, while those lacking confidence fear criticism for incorrect answers. Similar factors were identified by Rohi and Muslim [25], who highlighted barriers such as intimidation, lack of self-confidence, and fear of appearing unintelligent.

Conversely, [20] identified class size and a lack of time as additional hindering factors. This idea was supported by parents 3, “... the reason could be a greater number of students in one room”. In addition, “I heard the group activities requires more time, so may be one factor could be time management” (parent 5). Other potential barriers include unpreparedness, fear of being judged incorrect, low self-esteem, cultural differences, conflict avoidance, and social anxiety [26]. The similar notion was shared by parent 4, “...since my child stay shy, he must be afraid that he would be judged for sharing wrong answer”

To address these challenges, various strategies were identified in the literature. Motivation emerged as a key factor, with studies demonstrating its positive impact on engagement and learning environment perception. Studies by Turner and Patrick [27], [28], and [39] highlighted the significant positive correlation between engagement and motivation, motivating teachers to implement strategies that enhance student motivation inside and outside the classroom. The similar idea was shared by parents 1 and 3. If the learners were praised and motivates, the learners usually complete the homework and other household chores on time. The same notion was shared by learner 2 and 4; “i like to do anything if my parents and teachers motivates me”

Open-ended questions were found to be beneficial for developing students' cognitive skills, encouraging them to express and elaborate on their thoughts, as evidenced by studies conducted by Gharehbagh et al. [30] and [31]. Student 1 and 4 support the idea, “if the question is open ended, we found there is no wrong answer, we can share our more ideas on that topic”. Dallimore, et al.[32] found those questions provided an opportunity for the students to explore relationships between existing knowledge and new observations.

The design of learning environments was underscored by veal and [30] as a crucial factor influencing students' interaction and involvement. Student 2 and 3 supports this strategy, "i like to participate in the class if teacher does not scold and make us feel homely". A friendly learning environment, as emphasized by Christensen et al. [33], promotes active participation in class activities, with positive teacher-student interactions contributing to effective learning [30].

Group discussions were identified as a strategy to enhance the quality of participation and effectiveness of discussions, according to studies by Dallimore et al. [32] and [34-35]. In addition, "i like to participate in group as we can share ideas and learn from friends those idea which we don't know" (student 1). [35] highlighted the importance of teachers maximizing students' ability to engage in discourse in various group activities. The encouragement of different group formations further contributed to increased learner participation in the classroom, as observed by the researchers.

The implementation of these strategies, such as motivating factors, open-ended questions, favorable learning environments, and group discussions, resulted in increased learner participation in the classroom, as observed by the researchers.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the identified factors hindering student participation in the classroom, including reservation, shyness, solitude, and demanding behavior, underscore the importance of addressing psychological and social barriers. The findings resonate with existing literature, emphasizing the significance of factors such as self-confidence and fear of criticism in influencing student engagement.

However, the implementation of various strategies has shown promising results in enhancing student participation. Motivational factors, open-ended questions, a conducive learning environment, and group discussions have proven effective in fostering a more inclusive and interactive classroom atmosphere. The positive correlation between motivation and engagement, as well as the impact of friendly learning environments, highlights the crucial role of psychological and environmental factors in shaping student behavior.

Despite the limitations of the study, including a limited sample size and potential participant reluctance, the observed improvements in student participation indicate the potential efficacy of these strategies. Moving forward, expanding the sample size and incorporating teachers' perspectives can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved, paving the way for targeted interventions to further enhance classroom participation among students

6. RECOMMENDATION

It would be advantageous to conduct the study with a diverse and ample sample, including participants from multiple schools. Furthermore, incorporating the perspectives of teachers could contribute to a more comprehensive study in the future. This approach would offer both viewpoints and a more thorough understanding of the factors affecting classroom participation, along with strategies to enhance it.

7. LIMITATION

This study faced limitations, notably in the sample size, which was restricted to only one section of grade III learners from a single school. A more extensive sample, encompassing multiple schools, could have enhanced the generalizability of the findings to a broader group of learners. Additionally, limitations arose in terms of participant honesty and interest in participating, as some parents and learners did not always feel sufficiently at ease to offer detailed feedback

CONSENT AND ETHICAL APPROVAL

Ethical considerations were diligently addressed during the initiation of this study. Prior permission was obtained from the appropriate authority to conduct the research, and consent forms were signed by both students and parents, ensuring their voluntary participation. Confidentiality of all participants was rigorously maintained throughout the duration of the study.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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