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School Climate and Student Engagement in Secondary School Classrooms

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Abstract: This study explored how school climate relates to classroom engagement among secondary school students. It examined environmental conditions that may encourage participation, barriers that may limit it, and students' views of teacher attitudes and classroom practices. A mixed-method approach combined responses from 24 students and five guardians with interviews from five teachers. The student data showed that 83.33% felt a positive classroom atmosphere encouraged participation. The most frequently reported difficulties were classroom noise (54.17%), insufficient learning materials (45.83%), and academic pressure (41.67%). Guardians also identified hesitation about making mistakes, peer behaviour, classroom comfort, resources, confidence, and motivation as concerns. Teachers emphasised safety, supportive relationships, constructive peer interaction, and purposeful teaching practices. Overall, the findings indicate that a respectful and supportive learning environment may facilitate participation, while physical, social, and psychological barriers may restrict it.

Keywords: *School Climate, Classroom Engagement, Secondary School Students, Teacher–Student Relationship, Student Participation, Classroom Environment.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

Schools support social and emotional development as well as academic learning. Students' experiences of school can influence their relationships, confidence, well-being, and willingness to contribute during lessons (Wang & Degol, 2016; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015).

Here, school climate refers to the conditions and relationships experienced by people in a school. These include safety, interactions, teaching and learning practices, and the physical, social, and academic setting (Wang & Degol, 2016; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015).

Classroom engagement concerns the ways learners take part in learning, such as contributing to discussion, asking or answering questions, exchanging ideas, collaborating, and completing tasks. It is often considered through behavioural, emotional, and cognitive dimensions (Fredricks et al., 2004).

Environmental influences include physical conditions, social relationships, emotional atmosphere, and academic arrangements that may shape participation. These factors form important aspects of school climate (Wang & Degol, 2016; Kutsyuruba et al., 2015).

In this study, barriers are circumstances that make students less willing or able to join classroom activities. Examples include concern about wrong answers, low confidence, bullying or negative peer comments, distracting noise, limited learning materials, and insufficient teacher encouragement (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015; Fredricks et al., 2004).

Teacher attitudes are reflected in how educators communicate with learners and respond to their needs. Fairness, respect, encouragement, empathy, and listening can foster teacher–student relationships that support learning (Emslander et al., 2025).

Classroom practices are the approaches teachers use to organise learning and invite contributions. They may include discussion, collaboration, interactive tasks, questioning, feedback, and opportunities for students to explain their thinking (Wang & Degol, 2016; Fredricks et al., 2004).

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In this paper, secondary school students means learners enrolled at the secondary level in the participating institutions. Secondary education follows primary education in the classification described by UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS, 2012).

➢ *Statement of the Problem*

Although participation is important for learning, students do not contribute to classroom activities equally. Some remain silent, hesitate to answer, withhold opinions, or show limited involvement. These patterns have been discussed in the engagement literature (Fredricks et al., 2004) and may be associated with safety, relationships, instructional practices, and the classroom's physical and social conditions (Wang & Degol, 2016).

Students may face several obstacles, including anxiety about incorrect answers, low confidence, peer ridicule or bullying, inadequate resources, distracting noise, limited encouragement, and uncomfortable classroom conditions. Research has linked school climate with students' well-being and school experiences (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015; Wang & Degol, 2016). Teacher responses and lesson design may also influence participation, and supportive teacher–student relationships are associated with student outcomes (Emslander et al., 2025).

This study examines school climate from the perspectives of students, guardians, and teachers. It identifies environmental conditions associated with participation, considers obstacles students encounter, and explores perceptions of how teacher behaviour and classroom approaches affect engagement.

➢ *Objectives of the Study*

The general objective of this study is to find out the element of school climate on students' classroom engagement among secondary school students. Specifically, the study aims to:

- To Identify the environmental factors that influence students' classroom engagement;
- To Determine the barriers that negatively affect students' participation and engagement in the classroom; and
- To Explore students' perceptions of how teachers' attitudes and classroom practices influence their classroom engagement.

These objectives are reflected in the article instruments used in the study. The student questionnaire addresses all three objectives, while the guardian checklist provides additional information about barriers to participation and the teacher interview provides qualitative information about barriers and teacher-related classroom practices.

➢ *Significance of the Study*

The findings may help teachers and school leaders identify conditions that encourage participation and difficulties that discourage it. They may inform practical changes such as supportive communication, interactive lessons, constructive feedback, group tasks, and fair opportunities to contribute. The results may also help school authorities consider safety, peer relations, classroom conditions, and learning resources, while offering context-specific information for researchers and policymakers.

➢ *Scope and Limitations of the Study*

The study focuses on school climate and classroom engagement in the participating secondary schools, particularly teacher–student and peer relationships, safety, classroom conditions, discipline, and learning facilities. Student and guardian questionnaires provide quantitative information, while teacher interviews provide qualitative perspectives. The inquiry considers behavioural, emotional, and cognitive engagement and the conditions that may support or restrict participation.

The results have limitations. The research was conducted in selected schools in one geographical area, so the findings cannot be assumed to represent all secondary schools in Bangladesh. The small sample and convenience and purposive sampling approaches may also limit generalisability.

Questionnaire responses may be influenced by personal views or a desire to give socially acceptable answers. Limited classroom observation also restricted comparison between reported and directly observed engagement. Time and resource constraints meant that longer-term changes in school climate and participation could not be examined.

Family circumstances, socioeconomic position, parental support, and individual motivation may also affect participation. Because this mixed-method study identifies patterns rather than experimentally testing cause and effect, it cannot establish causation. Its findings should therefore be interpreted in context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

School climate is widely studied because the school setting can influence students' academic, social, emotional, and behavioural experiences. It encompasses relationships, safety, instructional practice, rules, resources, and the physical setting. Wang and Degol (2016) describe academic, community, safety, and institutional dimensions of climate, all of which may shape students' experiences.

Kutsyuruba et al. (2015) reviewed links between school climate, safety, and student well-being and noted that learners may experience the same school differently. Castro et al. (2026) likewise discuss safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment as major dimensions relevant to middle and secondary schools.

Engagement includes attention, interest, interaction, and active contribution to learning. When learners feel accepted and respected, they may be more comfortable participating. Fear, bullying, conflict, weak support, and poor classroom conditions can instead discourage involvement (Wang & Degol, 2016).

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The present study examines this relationship in secondary education, with particular attention to environmental influences, participation barriers, and students' perceptions of teacher attitudes and classroom practices.

The first objective of the present study is to identify environmental factors that influence students' classroom engagement. Previous literature suggests that the physical, social, and academic environment of a school can shape students' classroom experiences.

Gonzálvez et al. (2023) identified relationships, physical environment, safety and discipline, and academic factors among the domains used in school-climate measures. An orderly, comfortable, and supportive classroom may help learners focus and take part.

Students' sense of safety matters for confident participation. Bullying, victimisation, and violence can weaken that sense of security and harm well-being and school experience (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015). Safety is also a central dimension in Castro et al.'s (2026) review.

Classmate interactions can encourage or inhibit participation. Cooperation and shared activities create opportunities to exchange ideas, whereas exclusion, teasing, ridicule, or bullying may make students reluctant to speak (Castro et al., 2026; Wang & Degol, 2016).

Classroom resources and facilities also matter. Suitable materials and a supportive physical setting can make participation easier, while shortages or unsuitable conditions may add barriers (Gonzálvez et al., 2023; Wang & Degol, 2016).

The second objective of the study is to identify barriers that negatively affect students' classroom participation and engagement. These barriers may arise from teachers, peers, classroom conditions, academic demands, or students' own experiences.

A lack of encouragement, unfair treatment, or few chances to express ideas may discourage learners. In contrast, constructive teacher–student relationships can support positive classroom experiences; Emslander et al. (2025) reviewed evidence on these relationships and student outcomes.

Students who expect ridicule, rejection, teasing, or bullying may avoid answering questions or sharing opinions. Research on school safety also connects bullying and victimisation with adverse student experiences (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015).

Disruptive noise, insufficient materials, difficult lessons, excessive academic demands, and teaching that offers few chances to contribute may all reduce participation. These concerns overlap with the school-climate domains reviewed by Gonzálvez et al. (2023).

The third objective of the study is to explore students' perceptions of how teachers' attitudes and classroom practices influence their engagement. Teachers play an important role in creating a supportive classroom climate. Respectful treatment, encouragement, academic support, and constructive communication may help students feel valued and confident enough to participate.

Castro et al. (2026) include teacher–student relationships and social-emotional support among relevant school-climate dimensions. Emslander et al. (2025) also synthesised evidence on teacher–student relationships and student outcomes.

Shao et al. (2025) studied teacher support in relation to secondary students' learning engagement. Relevant forms of support in the present context include encouragement, respectful treatment, recognition of effort, constructive feedback, and help for learners experiencing difficulties.

Lesson design can affect opportunities to participate. Discussion, group activities, purposeful questions, and tasks that invite students to explain ideas can encourage active involvement. Teaching and learning are also recognised as key aspects of school climate (Castro et al., 2026; Wang & Degol, 2016).

The secondary school stage is particularly important because students experience significant academic, social, and emotional changes during this period. Their relationships with teachers and peers, sense of safety, belonging, and classroom experiences may therefore influence their engagement.

Castro et al. (2026), in reviewing school-climate measures for middle and secondary schools, identified broad areas of agreement including safety, relationships, teaching and learning, and the institutional environment. These areas are relevant to the current investigation.

Although previous research has explored different aspects of school climate, their operation in a particular educational setting still requires attention. Participation may reflect facilities, teacher and peer relationships, resource access, academic pressure, and instructional methods.

Accordingly, the study explores local patterns in school climate and student engagement by examining environmental conditions, barriers, and perceptions of teacher attitudes and practices.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method design combined numerical responses from students and guardians with qualitative data from teacher interviews. The research was conducted at Scholarshome Majortila College and Scholarshome Shahi Eidgah in Sylhet, Bangladesh. It focused on school environment, safety, relationships, learning resources, and classroom practices. The participants were 24 secondary

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students, five guardians, and five teachers, selected using convenience and purposive sampling.

Three instruments were used:

- 30-item student questionnaire
- 5-item guardian checklist
- Semi-structured teacher interview

The instruments covered classroom conditions, safety, peer relations, teacher support, learning resources, participation barriers, and teaching practices. Quantitative responses were summarised using frequencies and percentages and presented in tables and figures. Teacher interviews were analysed thematically; the main themes included classroom environment, safety, peer relationships, teacher–student relationships, and teaching practices.

➢ *Reliability*

Before data collection, the instruments were checked for clarity, relevance to the research objectives, and consistent wording to support the collection of clear responses.

➢ *Ethical Considerations*

Participation was voluntary, respondents were informed about the study, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Information was used for academic purposes.

IV. FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This section presents the questionnaire results from 24 students, checklist responses from five guardians, and thematic findings from five teacher interviews. Quantitative results are reported as frequencies and percentages. Findings are organised around environmental influences, barriers to participation, and perceptions of teacher attitudes and classroom practices.

➢ *Environmental Factors and Students' Classroom Engagement*

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of students' responses regarding environmental factors that influence classroom engagement (Questions 1–10).

Table 1 Environmental Factors Influencing Classroom Engagement (N = 24)

Question / Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1. Feel physically and emotionally safe in the classroom	Yes	13	54.2%
	Sometimes	6	25.0%
	No	5	20.8%
2. Classroom is comfortable and suitable for learning	Yes	14	58.3%
	Sometimes	6	25.0%
	No	4	16.7%
3. Feel comfortable expressing opinions	Always	5	20.8%
	Sometimes	11	45.8%
	No	6	25.0%
	Never	2	8.3%
4. Teacher creates a friendly and supportive environment	Always	12	50.0%
	Sometimes	12	50.0%
5. Teacher treats students respectfully	Always	15	62.5%
	Sometimes	7	29.2%
	Never / Other	2	8.3%
6. Classmates cooperate with one another	Always	11	45.8%
	Sometimes	11	45.8%
	Never	2	8.3%
7. Feel accepted by classmates	Yes	14	58.3%
	Sometimes	7	29.2%
	No	3	12.5%
8. Classroom is quiet enough for effective learning	Always	2	8.3%
	Sometimes	14	58.3%
	Never	8	33.3%
9. Adequate learning resources are available	Yes	10	41.7%
	Sometimes	3	12.5%
	No / Other	11	45.8%
10. Positive classroom environment encourages participation	Yes	20	83.3%
	Sometimes	4	16.7%

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➢ *Analysis of Environmental Factors*

The responses show that some supportive features were present, although students also reported areas where the classroom experience could be improved.

- Safety and Physical Comfort. Thirteen students (54.2%) reported feeling physically and emotionally safe in class; six (25.0%) felt safe only sometimes, and five (20.8%) did not. Fourteen respondents (58.3%) considered their classroom comfortable and suitable for learning. These responses indicate that safety and comfort were not experienced consistently by all participants.
- Psychological Safety and Voice. Five students (20.8%) said they could always express opinions comfortably. Eleven (45.8%) selected "sometimes," while eight (33.3%) answered "no" or "never," suggesting that open expression remains difficult for a considerable part of the sample.
- Teacher Support and Respect. Twelve students (50.0%) said teachers always created a friendly, supportive atmosphere; the other 12 reported this occurred sometimes. Fifteen students (62.5%) said teachers consistently treated them respectfully, while seven (29.2%) experienced respectful treatment sometimes.
- Peer relationships. Eleven students (45.8%) reported that classmates always cooperated, and another 11 said cooperation occurred sometimes. Fourteen (58.3%) felt accepted by peers, whereas three (12.5%) did not.
- Noise and learning resources. Only two students (8.3%) said the classroom was always quiet enough for learning; 14 (58.3%) said this was true sometimes and eight (33.3%) said it was never quiet enough. Ten students (41.7%) reported adequate learning resources, while 11 (45.8%) selected "no/other."
- Overall impact. Twenty students (83.3%) said a positive classroom environment encouraged their participation, while four (16.7%) said it did so sometimes. This was the strongest positive response in the environmental section.

➢ *Finding 1*

Finding 1. Students' answers suggest that a supportive and comfortable classroom can encourage participation. Noise and uneven access to learning materials remain important concerns.

- *Barriers Affecting Students' Classroom Engagement*

Table 2 reports student responses to items 11–20 about experiences that may reduce classroom participation.

Table 2 Barriers Affecting Classroom Engagement (N = 24)

Question / Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
11. Fear of giving a wrong answer	Yes	9	37.5%
	Sometimes	6	25.0%
	No / Other	9	37.5%
12. Lack of teacher encouragement	Yes	13	54.2%
	Sometimes	4	16.7%
	No	7	29.2%
13. Negative comments from classmates make me uncomfortable	Often	9	37.5%
	Sometimes	9	37.5%
	Never	6	25.0%
14. Teasing or bullying prevents participation	Yes	6	25.0%
	Sometimes	5	20.8%
	No / Other	13	54.2%
15. Lack of classmates' cooperation	Yes	10	41.7%
	Sometimes	3	12.5%
	No	11	45.8%
16. Excessive classroom noise reduces concentration	**Often**	**13**	**54.2%**
	Sometimes	7	29.2%
	Never / Other	4	16.7%
17. Lack of learning materials	Yes	11	45.8%
	Sometimes	6	25.0%
	No	7	29.2%
18. Difficult lessons reduce participation	Often	4	16.7%
	Sometimes	8	33.3%
	Never / Other	12	50.0%
19. Excessive academic pressure	Yes	10	41.7%
	Sometimes	8	33.3%
	No	6	25.0%
20. Lack of confidence	Yes	7	29.2%
	Sometimes	4	16.7%
	No	13	54.2%

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➢ *Analysis of Barriers*

The responses indicate psychological, social, instructional, and physical obstacles to engagement.

- Psychological barriers. Nine students (37.5%) reported that fear of a wrong answer affected them, and six (25.0%) experienced this sometimes. Seven (29.2%) reported low confidence, with another four (16.7%) selecting "sometimes."
- Teacher-related barriers. Thirteen students (54.2%) said insufficient teacher encouragement reduced their participation; another four (16.7%) said this occurred sometimes.
- Peer-related barriers. Nine students (37.5%) often felt uncomfortable because of classmates' negative comments, and nine more (37.5%) felt this sometimes. Six (25.0%) said teasing or bullying prevented participation, while five (20.8%) said it sometimes did. Ten (41.7%) also reported insufficient cooperation from classmates.
- Physical and resource barriers. Noise was the most commonly reported difficulty: 13 students (54.2%) said it often reduced concentration, and seven (29.2%) experienced it sometimes. Eleven students (45.8%) reported a lack of learning materials, and six (25.0%) said this happened sometimes.
- Academic barriers. Ten students (41.7%) said excessive academic pressure affected participation, while eight (33.3%) experienced it sometimes. Four students (16.7%) said difficult lessons often limited participation, and eight (33.3%) selected "sometimes."

➢ *Finding 2*

Finding 2. Students identified a range of barriers, including noise, limited teacher encouragement, insufficient materials, negative peer comments, academic pressure, and fear of mistakes. These concerns span the classroom setting, relationships, confidence, and instructional support.

- *Teachers' Attitudes and Classroom Practices*

Table 3 presents students' perceptions of teachers' attitudes and classroom practices (Questions 21–30).

Table 3 Teachers' Attitudes and Classroom Practices (N = 24)

Question / Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
21. Teacher encourages classroom discussion	Always	10	41.7%
	Sometimes	11	45.8%
	Never	3	12.5%
22. Teacher listens to questions and opinions	Always	14	58.3%
	Sometimes	9	37.5%
	Never	1	4.2%
23. Equal opportunities to participate	Yes	12	50.0%
	Sometimes	4	16.7%
	No / Other	8	33.3%
24. Teacher appreciates students' efforts	Always	11	45.8%
	Sometimes	11	45.8%
	Never	2	8.3%
25. Teacher provides helpful feedback	Always	16	66.7%
	Sometimes	5	20.8%
	Never / Other	3	12.5%
26. Teacher supports students with learning difficulties	Always	13	54.2%
	Sometimes	9	37.5%
	Never	2	8.3%
27. Teacher uses interesting teaching methods	Always	6	25.0%
	Sometimes	9	37.5%
	Never	9	37.5%
28. Group work and interactive activities are used	Frequently	4	16.7%
	Sometimes	11	45.8%
	Never / Other	9	37.5%
29. Teacher encourages asking questions	Always	13	54.2%
	Sometimes	8	33.3%
	Never	3	12.5%
30. Positive teacher attitude motivates active participation	**Yes**	**20**	**83.3%**
	Sometimes	2	8.3%
	No	2	8.3%

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➢ *Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes and Practices*

Students tended to view teachers' interpersonal behaviour positively, but their responses pointed to less consistent use of interactive teaching approaches.

- Encouragement and listening. Ten students (41.7%) said teachers always encouraged discussion, while 11 (45.8%) said this happened sometimes. Fourteen (58.3%) reported that teachers always listened to their questions and opinions.
- Feedback, support, and recognition. Sixteen students (66.7%) reported that helpful feedback was always provided. Thirteen (54.2%) said teachers consistently supported them when they had learning difficulties. Recognition of effort was less consistent: 11 students (45.8%) reported it always and 11 sometimes.
- Equal opportunity. Twelve students (50.0%) felt that participation opportunities were equal. Four (16.7%) chose "sometimes," while eight (33.3%) selected "no/other."
- Teaching methods and interactivity. Six students (25.0%) said interesting teaching methods were always used, while nine (37.5%) said they were never used. Only four students (16.7%) reported frequent group work and interactive activities; nine (37.5%) said these activities never occurred.
- Overall motivational impact. Twenty students (83.3%) said positive teacher attitudes motivated them to participate; two (8.3%) answered "sometimes," and two (8.3%) answered "no." This is similar to the response pattern for a positive classroom environment in Table 1.

➢ *Finding 3*

Finding 3. Students' responses connect participation with respectful treatment, encouragement, attentive listening, useful feedback, and support with learning difficulties. More regular use of interactive lessons and group activities may create further opportunities to participate.

- *Guardian Checklist: Results and Findings*

Five guardians completed a checklist concerning factors that may affect their children's classroom participation. The responses are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Guardian Checklist Data on Factors Affecting Classroom Engagement (N = 5)

Checklist Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1. Fear or hesitation to participate because of making mistakes	Yes	0	0%
	Sometimes	4	80%
	No	1	20%
2. Negative behaviour, teasing, or bullying by classmates	Yes	1	20%
	Sometimes	3	60%
	No	1	20%
3. Excessive noise or uncomfortable classroom environment affecting concentration	Yes	2	40%
	Sometimes	2	40%
	No	1	20%
4. Lack of learning materials or resources affecting participation	Yes	1	20%
	Sometimes	2	40%
	No	2	40%
5. Lack of confidence or motivation affecting active participation	Yes	0	0%
	Sometimes	5	100%
	No	0	0%

➢ *Analysis of Guardian Responses*

Guardians described concerns that broadly overlapped with those raised by students, including confidence, peer behaviour, classroom conditions, and learning resources.

- Fear of mistakes. Four guardians (80%) said their children sometimes hesitated to participate because they might make a mistake. This resembles the student responses, in which many participants reported similar concerns.
- Peer behaviour. Three guardians (60%) said negative peer behaviour, teasing, or bullying affected their child sometimes; one (20%) reported that it did, and one (20%) reported no such concern.
- Physical environment and resources. Four guardians (80%) said noise or an uncomfortable classroom affected concentration either directly or sometimes. Three guardians (60%) reported at least occasional problems with learning materials.
- Confidence and motivation. All five guardians (100%) reported that their child sometimes experienced low confidence or motivation affecting participation. This was the most consistent concern in this small group.

➢ *Finding 4*

Finding 4. Guardian responses also point to hesitation, confidence and motivation, peer behaviour, classroom noise, and limited resources as possible barriers to active participation.

- *Teacher Interview: Analysis of Teacher Responses and Findings*

The teacher interviews explored educators' views of school climate and classroom engagement. Five interviews were reviewed thematically, with attention to the physical setting, teacher–student relationships, safety, peer relations, and factors considered especially influential.

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➢ *Participants*

The five teachers interviewed were aged 28–41. They described environmental and interpersonal conditions that they believed could affect students' confidence, motivation, and involvement in classroom activities.

➢ *Physical and Structural Classroom Environment*

Teachers identified cleanliness, comfort, ventilation, temperature, lighting, noise, and access to learning materials as relevant features of the classroom setting.

Participant 1 stated:

"*A clean, comfortable, friendly and supportive classroom environment encourages students to participate and engage in activities."*

Participant 3 identified several relevant conditions:

"Classroom atmosphere (friendly, peaceful, respectful), ventilation, temperature, noise level, safety, cleanliness, teaching resources."

Participant 4 emphasized the importance of a peaceful classroom:

"A noise-free classroom environment and positive thinking influences students most to engage in classroom activities."

Taken together, these comments indicate that teachers considered classroom comfort, available resources, and noise levels relevant to students' attention and participation.

➢ *Teacher–Student Relationships and Classroom Engagement*

Teacher–student relationships were a prominent interview theme. Participants referred to trust, respect, encouragement, confidence, and motivation when discussing students' involvement in lessons.

Participant 1 explained:

"A positive and respectful relationship makes students feel confident, valued and willing to participate."

Participant 2 also stated:

"A positive teacher–student relationship builds trust, confidence, motivation, and a sense of belonging, which encourages students to participate actively in classroom activities."

Participant 4 highlighted the importance of encouragement:

"If the student feels fearless, whether his or her answer is correct or incorrect, he or she will be motivated by the teacher."

Participant 5 added:

"A positive teacher–student relationship builds a safe and welcoming environment that directly increases students' participation and engagement in classroom activities."

The accounts suggest that supportive teacher–student relationships may help learners feel comfortable sharing opinions and taking part in classroom activities.

➢ *Physical and Emotional Safety*

All five teachers raised physical safety and emotional respect, including the need to prevent bullying, humiliation, and fear.

Participant 1 stated:

"When students feel safe and free from fear, bullying and embarrassment, they participate more actively in classroom activities."

Participant 2 similarly explained:

"When students feel physically protected, emotionally respected, and free from bullying or humiliation, they are more confident, attentive, and actively engaged in classroom activities."

These comments suggest that respectful and safe classrooms may reduce students' hesitation and support more confident participation.

➢ *Peer Relationships and Classroom Engagement*

Teachers associated positive peer relations with teamwork, communication, cooperation, confidence, and the development of social skills.

Participant 1 stated:

"Good relationships with classmates encourage teamwork, communication and active participation."

Participant 2 explained:

"Positive peer relationships create a supportive and collaborative classroom environment, increasing students' confidence, motivation, participation, and overall engagement."

Participant 4 added:

"If the peer relationship is cooperative, the students feel free to express their opinions in the classroom and engage spontaneously."

The accounts indicate that constructive peer interaction can support collaboration and help students feel more comfortable sharing ideas.

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- *Most Influential Factors Affecting Classroom Engagement*

Four of the five teachers identified the teacher–student relationship as the factor with the greatest influence on classroom engagement.

Participant 1 explained:

"I think a supportive teacher–student relationship has the greatest influence because students feel valued, confident and motivated to learn."

Participant 2 stated:

"A strong teacher–student relationship creates trust and motivation, which are the foundation of active classroom participation and engagement."

Participant 5 emphasized:

"Teacher-student relationship, because students feel safe, comfortable and motivated."

However, Participant 4 offered a different perspective:

"A noise-free classroom environment and positive thinking influences students most to engage in classroom activities."

Four interviewees (80%) prioritised teacher–student relationships, while one (20%) emphasised a quiet classroom and positive thinking. These proportions apply only to the five teachers interviewed.

Although participants raised several shared themes, they differed in which aspect of school climate they considered most influential.

Overall, teachers described school climate as relevant to classroom engagement. Teacher–student relationships were most prominent, while physical comfort, emotional safety, peer relations, noise, and learning resources were also mentioned. These themes can be considered alongside the student and guardian results.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings suggest that school climate is associated with secondary students' classroom engagement. Students frequently described a positive classroom environment and supportive teacher behaviour as encouraging, whereas noise, inadequate materials, fear of mistakes, limited encouragement, and academic pressure were identified as possible barriers.

The questionnaire, guardian checklist, and teacher interviews highlighted connected influences: classroom conditions, confidence, peer relationships, and teacher behaviour. Student responses particularly emphasised the value of a positive classroom atmosphere while drawing attention to noise and resource shortages.

Teachers also stressed emotional safety and supportive relationships. In their accounts, students were more willing to participate when they felt respected and supported and did not fear bullying or embarrassment.

Attention to school climate may therefore be one practical way to support engagement. Given the small, locally selected sample, however, these findings should be understood as context-specific rather than generalisable to every secondary school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the findings of this study:

- Create a safe classroom climate: Establish practices that protect students' physical safety and emotional well-being.
- Strengthen teacher–student relationships: Communicate with students respectfully, fairly, and supportively, and make help accessible when needed.
- Encourage student contributions: Invite questions and opinions, and treat incorrect answers as opportunities for learning rather than embarrassment.
- Manage classroom noise: Use clear routines and consistent classroom-management strategies to support concentration.
- Respond to bullying and harmful peer behaviour: Address teasing, exclusion, humiliation, and negative comments promptly and consistently.
- Improve learning-resource access: Ensure that appropriate teaching materials are available and can be used by students during lessons.
- Use more interactive teaching: Build in discussion, group work, practical tasks, and other activities that give learners an active role.
- Provide constructive feedback: Give specific, encouraging guidance that recognises progress and explains how students can improve.
- Maintain balanced academic demands: Encourage effort and achievement without creating unnecessary pressure.
- Build confidence and motivation: Offer regular chances for students to express ideas, collaborate, and contribute to classroom learning.

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