

TEACHER ENGAGEMENT AND CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION AMONG MUSIC STUDENTS

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Abstract

Teachers play a pivotal role in shaping student outcomes through their involvement, passion, and commitment. This study investigated the correlation between teacher engagement and classroom participation among 292 surveyed students. The results revealed that teacher engagement was positively correlated with classroom participation (Pearson $r = 0.57$, $p < 0.001$), signifying a moderate and positive relationship.

The study assessed various domains, including Emotional Support, Organization and Management, Parental Engagement, Academic Support and Enhancement, Teacher Influence, Agency and Equity, Gender Sensitivities, and Interpersonal Dynamics, all of which received favorable ratings from students, indicating their agreement with these aspects of classroom dynamics.

Based on these findings, the "Engage & Excel" program has been developed to enhance teacher engagement and create a more inclusive and participatory classroom environment, aligning with the principles of Sociocultural Theory, particularly Vygotsky's concept of the "Zone of Proximal Development." This program empowers teachers with key strategies to promote active student engagement, ultimately fostering a conducive learning environment.

1. Introduction

Across the globe, the crucial role of teachers in shaping student outcomes remains undisputed. Their involvement, passion, and commitment can significantly influence a student's motivation, comprehension, and overall classroom atmosphere. This relationship takes on an additional layer of depth in the realm of music education. In this arena, the educator's role transcends mere instruction, demanding the nurturing of creativity, discipline, and a genuine love for art—including music.

Hunan's musical landscape, with its tapestry woven from ancient folk traditions to contemporary expressions, exemplifies vibrancy and diversity. As the province ardently preserves and promotes its musical heritage, the challenge lies in effectively marrying tradition with contemporary pedagogical techniques.

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An engaged teacher stands as a beacon of inspiration. In music classrooms, engagement extends beyond standard teaching practices. It envelops a wide spectrum, ranging from hands-on demonstrations of musical techniques to enlightening students with historical and cultural contexts, all while cultivating fertile ground for creativity and critical reflection. The resonance of a music teacher's commitment can be palpably felt in the students' performance, their enthusiasm, and their approach to the art (Amerstorfer et al., 2021).

While there exists a substantial body of research on teacher engagement and its influence on students, a lacuna remains when contextualized within Hunan's unique cultural and educational landscape. Given the region's musical prominence and the vital role that music education assumes in maintaining its cultural continuum, there is a pressing need for in-depth inquiry in this domain.

The primary thrust of this study was to discern the nuanced relationship between teacher engagement and student participation among music aficionados in Hunan. The intent is to shed light on the intricacies, impediments, and potentialities that characterize Hunan's music education scenario. The insights gleaned will hold immense value for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders, not just within the confines of China but also in the broader global canvas of music education.

1.1. Background of the study

The intricate dynamics between teacher engagement and student participation have garnered significant attention in the recent educational research. Notably, several studies have emphasized the influential role of perceived teacher support, student engagement, and teacher-student relationships in determining academic outcomes and classroom dynamics.

In a meta-analytic study conducted by Tao, Meng, Gao, and Yang (2022), the relationship between students' perceived teacher support and academic achievement was rigorously examined. Rooted in the self-system process model, their research revealed a modest yet significant correlation between perceived teacher support and achievement ($r = 0.16$). Their findings further elucidated that perceived teacher support had a greater impact on course grades than on standardized test scores, with upper-secondary students deriving the most benefit. In addition, their study determined that student engagement, in its general form and its sub-types—behavioral, cognitive, and emotional engagement—acted as a partial mediator in the relationship between perceived teacher support and student achievement.

Dewaele and Li (2021) focused on the pivotal role of teacher enthusiasm in the educational milieu. Their research posited that teacher enthusiasm could have a contagious effect in the classroom, subsequently fostering positive student outcomes. While their abstract provides an initial hint into this dimension, further exploration is required to understand the depth of this correlation.

Romano, Angelini, Consiglio, and Fiorilli (2021) delved into the concept of academic resilience and its association with school engagement. Their findings highlighted that students with higher academic resilience tended to be more engaged in school activities. Their research identified perceived teacher emotional support as a significant mediator between academic resilience and school engagement, suggesting that fostering an environment of emotional support could amplify the effects of resilience on engagement.

Gan (2021) contended that teacher-student relationships play a quintessential role in language development. The study emphasized that various factors, including expectations, beliefs, and personalities of both teachers and students, intertwined to shape these interactions. Gan's research provided actionable recommendations to enhance the rapport between teachers and learners, further elevating the quality of English as a Foreign Language instruction.

The reviewed literature consistently emphasizes the profound impact of teacher engagement on student classroom participation. Across the studies, the teacher's role, whether through active methods like role-play or guiding discourse in specialized subjects like science, emerges as a pivotal factor in shaping student participation. Furthermore, there is a recurring theme highlighting the interplay of power dynamics, either in the broader sense of student empowerment or within specific contexts like gender dynamics.

Despite the extensive focus on teacher engagement and its impact, there is limited exploration of teacher training or professional development that might enhance their skills in facilitating inclusive participation. In addition, while gender dynamics have been discussed, other potential sociocultural or socioeconomic factors influencing participation need further exploration. Another gap is the limited geographical diversity in the studies; for instance, much is centered on Asian contexts like Japan and Hong Kong, with limited insights from other global educational settings. There is also a relative absence of technology's role, especially digital tools or online platforms, in shaping or influencing classroom participation in the modern age.

1.2. Statement of the problem

The primary aim of this study was to examine the correlation between teacher engagement and classroom participation among students. It specifically sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the assessment of the respondents on teacher engagement in terms of
 - 1.1. Emotional Support
 - 1.2. Organization and Management
 - 1.3. Parental Engagement
 - 1.4. Academic Support and Enhancement
2. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the respondents on teacher engagement compared with the demographic profile?
3. What is the assessment of the respondents on their classroom participation in terms of
 - 3.1. Teacher Influence
 - 3.2. Agency and Equity
 - 3.3. Gender Sensitivities
 - 3.4. Interpersonal Dynamics
4. Is there a significant difference in the assessment of the respondents' classroom participation compared with their demographic profile?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the assessed level of teacher engagement and classroom participation?

1.3. Significance of the study

With the research centered on exploring the relationship between teacher engagement and student classroom participation, the following cohorts could benefit from this study:

Students. Learners stand benefitting directly from this study. If teachers can optimize their engagement strategies to foster higher levels of participation, students will likely experience more enriching and interactive learning environments. This can lead to better understanding, retention of material, and overall academic performance.

Teachers. This study will provide educators with insights into the efficacy of their engagement techniques. By understanding the direct link between their engagement and student participation, teachers can adapt their methods to create a more responsive and dynamic classroom environment.

Educational Administrators. School principals, curriculum developers, and education board members can use the findings of this study to design teacher training programs, create resources, and set policies that promote optimal teacher engagement, directly influencing classroom participation.

Parents. Parents will gain a better understanding of the classroom dynamics that most benefit their children. With this knowledge, they can advocate for teaching methods that prioritize engagement and support their children's learning at home.

Future Researchers. This study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on teacher engagement and classroom participation, providing a foundation for future research in the field. Future researchers can build upon, refute, or expand these findings, leading to a more nuanced understanding of classroom dynamics.

Policymakers. Those in positions of authority, such as in the Department of Education, can use the study's results to shape educational policies. By acknowledging the correlation between teacher engagement and classroom participation, teachers can express policies that prioritize teacher training in this area.

Teacher Training Institutions. These institutions can incorporate the findings into their curricula, ensuring that the next generation of teachers is well-equipped to engage their students effectively and foster active classroom participation.

1.4. Scope and delimitation

The scope of this study was to understand the relationship between teacher engagement and classroom participation within educational settings. This investigation considered students within a specific-grade level, focusing on middle or high school students. The setting for this study was confined to select educational institutions or specific classrooms within a designated school district. The study was conducted during the second semester of the academic year 2023–2024. The main issues explored were the various teacher engagement strategies, students' subsequent participation responses, and any underlying elements that either hindered or facilitated this interaction. This study also focused on 292 student respondents.

On the other hand, the delimitations limited the extent of the study. While the primary objective was to decipher the correlation between teacher engagement and classroom participation, the study did not explore external factors affecting classroom participation, like parental involvement or socioeconomic conditions, unless they are intrinsically tied to teacher engagement methodologies.

The choice of educational setting further limited the study, as the research conducted in urban public schools might not be directly transferrable to rural or private school contexts. Similarly, by focusing on a particular-grade level, the findings may not be extrapolated to students outside this range. Additionally, while certain teacher engagement strategies are under scrutiny, others, especially those not prevalent in the selected setting or grade, might be outside the study's purview.

1.5. Theoretical framework

The selection of Sociocultural Theory, with a specific focus on Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), as the theoretical framework for understanding classroom participation, offers a nuanced perspective on the interplay between individual cognitive development and social contexts. Sociocultural Theory underscores the profound influence of social interactions, cultural backgrounds, and personal beliefs on cognitive growth, all of which are intricately intertwined within the dynamics of classroom participation.

In essence, classroom participation serves as a microcosm of these sociocultural interactions, where students' cognitive development is shaped not only by their individual abilities but also by the guidance and support provided by their peers and instructors. Vygotsky's ZPD is particularly pertinent in this context, as it delineates

the gap between what learners can achieve independently and what they can accomplish with the assistance of a more knowledgeable individual, such as a teacher.

By applying the concept of the ZPD to classroom participation, we can discern how teachers play a pivotal role in scaffolding students' learning experiences. Through strategic instructional practices, constructive feedback mechanisms, and adept classroom management strategies, teachers create an environment that encourages students to operate within their ZPD. This fosters a dynamic where students are continually challenged and supported to reach their full potential.

The congruence between Vygotsky's theoretical framework and empirical studies on classroom participation underscores the critical role of teacher facilitation in fostering student engagement and academic success. These studies consistently highlight the importance of teachers in cultivating a supportive and inclusive classroom environment where students feel empowered to participate actively in their own learning process.

By embracing Sociocultural Theory and Vygotsky's ZPD, educators can gain deeper insights into the complex interplay between individual cognition and social interactions within the classroom. This understanding can inform pedagogical practices aimed at optimizing classroom dynamics and promoting meaningful student engagement and learning outcomes. Thus, Sociocultural Theory offers a robust foundation for enhancing classroom participation and fostering student development in educational settings.

2. Methodology

The methodology section expounds on the approach adopted in this study. This section outlines the research locale, sample and sampling technique, data gathering procedure, and statistical analysis.

2.1. Research locale

This research was conducted at the Music and Dance Academy of Hunan University of Humanities and Science, a distinguished institution established in 1999. The college boasts a diverse array of undergraduate programs encompassing musicology, dance science, and dance choreography, with the former recognized as a premier professional construction site in Hunan Province. The student population exceeds 1,200 and is supported by a dedicated faculty of 67 members. This includes two professors, 17 associate professors, 15 with doctoral qualifications, and several honorees with prestigious titles such as provincial-level young teaching experts and high-level performers. The college also benefits from the expertise of over 10 industry specialists who serve as guest educators.

2.2. Sample and sampling technique

The study targeted students majoring in music in the Music and Dance Academy of Hunan University of Humanities and Science as its accessible population. Of the 1,200 students in the college, a scientifically determined sample was selected to ensure accurate representation and insights. Utilizing the Raosoft sample size calculator and setting parameters such as a margin of error of 5%, a level of confidence of 95%, and a response distribution of 50%, it was ascertained that a total of 292 students will be surveyed for this research. This approach ensured a balance between feasibility and precision, allowing reliable conclusions to be drawn from the collected data.

The research employed simple random sampling (SRS). This approach ensured that every student from the Music and Dance Academy of Hunan University of Humanities and Science had an equal chance of being selected for the study. By using SRS, the study aimed to achieve a representative and unbiased sample, eliminating potential selection biases and ensuring that all students from diverse courses and specializations within the college are equally represented.

2.3. Data gathering procedure

The process of collecting data for this study was conducted with considerable attention to detail, guaranteeing precision, uniformity, and thorough inclusiveness. This procedure unfolded across multiple phases, with each step adding to the all-encompassing comprehension of the relationship between teacher engagement and classroom participation within the realm of music students.

1. Preliminary Coordination and Permission

Before the start of data collection, formal permission was obtained from the administration of the Music and Dance College of Hunan University of Humanities and Science. A brief proposal outlining the research objectives, methodologies, and potential benefits was submitted to the relevant authorities for approval.

2. Selection of Respondents

The sample size of 292 students was determined using the Raosoft sample size calculator. These students were selected using simple random sampling to ensure that every student had an equal chance of being part of the study.

3. Distribution of Questionnaires

Once the sample was selected, the research instruments were distributed to the participants. They were briefed about the purpose of the study, the importance of their genuine responses, and the confidentiality of their responses.

4. Administration of the Questionnaires

The students were given sufficient time to complete the three-part questionnaire. The first part collects demographic details; the second will gauge teacher engagement, and the third evaluates classroom participation. The researcher was present during this process to clarify any doubts or concerns that the participants might have.

5. Collection and Safe Storage

After the completion of the questionnaires, they were collected and stored securely, and any identifying information was removed or anonymized to maintain confidentiality.

6. Data Processing

Once all data were gathered, they were checked for completeness. Any incomplete questionnaires were set aside, and only fully completed questionnaires were considered for analysis.

2.4. Statistical analysis

An in-depth statistical analysis of the scores from the teacher engagement and classroom participation questionnaires was conducted. Central to this was the computation of the mean to depict the average score for each construct, accompanied by the standard deviation to gauge the spread or variation of the scores.

To explore potential differences in teacher engagement and classroom participation based on demographic profiles, specific statistical tests were administered. For comparisons involving two distinct groups, such as male versus female students, an independent t-test was employed. On the other hand, for more complex comparisons, particularly those spanning multiple groups like year levels, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was the preferred method. Should ANOVA yield significant differences, subsequent post hoc tests will pinpoint the groups that exhibit these variations.

Delving deeper into the relationship between teacher engagement and classroom participation, the Pearson r correlation coefficient was harnessed. This helped in discerning the strength and directionality of the bond between these variables, offering clarity on how one might influence the others. The correlation coefficient's magnitude signaled the robustness of the relationship, with its sign indicating directionality.

To facilitate the interpretation of the mean scores for teacher engagement and classroom participation, the following scale was used:

Score Range	Verbal Descriptor	Interpretation
3.51 – 4.00	Strongly Agree	Extensive
2.51 – 3.50	Agree	Thorough
1.51 – 2.50	Disagree	Minimal
1.00 – 1.50	Strongly disagree	Lacking

3. Results and analysis

This section offers an in-depth examination of the data collected from participants in the study. This section elaborates on the results and their relevance concerning the research questions posed, providing a comprehensive understanding of the study's outcomes.

Table 1.

Summary of Teacher Engagement

Domains	Mean	SD	Verbal Description and Interpretation	Rank
Emotional Support	3.48	0.59	Agree/Thorough	3
Organization and Management	3.49	0.56	Agree/Thorough	1
Parental Engagement	3.41	0.62	Agree/Thorough	4
Academic Support and Enhancement	3.49	0.55	Agree/Thorough	1
Teacher Engagement (Overall)	3.47	0.58	Agree/Thorough	-

Table 1 presents an aggregate assessment of teacher engagement across four domains: Emotional Support, Organization and Management, Parental Engagement, and Academic Support and Enhancement. It provides a comprehensive view of the perceived effectiveness of teacher engagement from the students' perspective.

In the domain of Emotional Support, the mean score is 3.48 with a standard deviation of 0.59, which ranks third among the domains and corresponds to an "Agree/Thorough" verbal interpretation. This suggests that students feel that their teacher is quite supportive of their emotional needs, with a fairly consistent sentiment across the respondents.

Organization and Management, along with Academic Support and Enhancement, share the highest mean score of 3.49, with standard deviations of 0.56 and 0.55, respectively. Both domains are tied for the top rank, indicating that students strongly agree that the teacher is well-organized and provides substantial academic support. These domains appear to be the strongest areas of teacher engagement.

Parental Engagement had a slightly lower mean score of 3.41 with a standard deviation of 0.62, placing it in the fourth rank. Despite being the lowest among the domains, the interpretation remains "Agree/Thorough," implying that while students feel there is engagement with parents, it is slightly less consistent or strong compared with the other areas.

The overall Teacher Engagement score was calculated as a mean of 3.47 with a standard deviation of 0.58. This suggests a high level of engagement across all domains, with consistent agreement among the students. The lack of a rank for the overall Teacher Engagement score indicates that it is an overarching assessment rather than a comparative measure.

In summary, Table 1 showcases a positive assessment of teacher engagement in various domains according to student perceptions. The consistency in verbal interpretation across all domains indicates a thorough level of

agreement on the effectiveness of the teacher engagement strategies. The slight variations in mean scores and standard deviations across the domains provide nuanced insight into the areas where the teacher excels and where there may be room for improvement.

In the context of existing literature, the findings correlate with those of Tao et al. (2022), who discovered a positive relationship between perceived teacher support and academic achievement, especially in the emotional support domain. The importance of organization and management, as reflected in the table, aligns with Nguyen et al. (2022), who noted the significance of structure in enhancing student engagement.

Table 1 also suggests that while all areas of teacher engagement are seen positively, there are slight variances in the level of agreement among students. These nuances can have significant implications when developing strategies to enhance teacher-student relationships and, subsequently, student academic outcomes.

Considering the broader literature, perceived teacher engagement in all domains is crucial for fostering not only academic achievement but also resilience, motivation, and a conducive learning environment. Studies by Dewaele and Li (2021), Romano et al. (2021), Gan (2021), and others emphasize the importance of emotional support, structured classroom management, and proactive academic engagement in contributing to effective teaching and positive student outcomes. Uniform agreement across these domains, as indicated by the verbal description "Agree/Thorough," points to a shared understanding of the importance of teacher engagement in these areas.

The studies by Zheng (2021), Doño and Mangila (2021), and Derakhshan (2021) further reinforce the importance of nonverbal communication, clarity, and immediacy in teacher-student interactions. These elements are likely to contribute to the positive perceptions of teacher engagement reported in the table.

Moreover, the literature underscores the role of teacher enthusiasm (Dewaele & Li, 2021), teacher-student collaboration (Juuti et al., 2021), and teacher emotional labor (Burić & Frenzel, 2020) as influential factors in student engagement. These factors may well be reflected in the table's indicators, especially in the high-ranking domains of Organization and Management and Academic Support and Enhancement.

Table 2.

Level of Classroom Participation

Domains	Mean	SD	Verbal Description and Interpretation	Rank
Teacher Influence	3.49	0.54	Agree/Thorough	1
Agency and Equity	3.49	0.53	Agree/Thorough	3
Gender Sensitivities	3.49	0.53	Agree/Thorough	3
Interpersonal Dynamics	3.49	0.54	Agree/Thorough	1
Classroom Participation (Overall)	3.49	0.54	Agree/Thorough	-

Table 2 summarizes the assessment of students' perceptions of various aspects of classroom participation. The table is broken down into domains such as Teacher Influence, Agency and Equity, Gender Sensitivities, and Interpersonal Dynamics, with corresponding mean scores, standard deviations (SD), and ranks based on the mean scores. The verbal description provided for each domain is "Agree/Thorough," indicating a consensus among students in their positive evaluation of these aspects.

Each domain received a mean score of 3.49, which shows a strong agreement among the students in recognizing the positive influence of these factors on their classroom participation. The scores suggest that students feel that their teacher plays a significant role in facilitating classroom engagement, promoting fairness and agency, being sensitive to gender dynamics, and effectively managing interpersonal relationships.

The standard deviation for all domains was relatively low (between 0.53 and 0.54), indicating a homogeneous response across the student body. This homogeneity points to a shared perception that the classroom environment is inclusive and supportive, which is conducive to active participation.

The domains of Teacher Influence and Interpersonal Dynamics are particularly highlighted, both ranking 1st. This demonstrates that students strongly feel that the teacher's personal attributes and their interaction with students significantly foster participation. Agency and Equity, along with Gender Sensitivities, are also highly regarded by the students, both ranking third, reinforcing the importance of a classroom environment where students feel empowered and respected regardless of their background or gender.

The overall composite score for Classroom Participation is also 3.49 with an SD of 0.54, which is not assigned a rank but is accompanied by the verbal interpretation "Agree/Thorough." This composite score underscores a collective affirmation of the supportive and engaging nature of the classroom as perceived by the students, indicating a healthy participatory culture facilitated by the teacher's efforts in various domains.

The results outlined in Table 2, "Level of Classroom Participation," when considered in the context of the literature review, offer a multidimensional understanding of student participation in the classroom. The literature posits that participation is crucial for shaping student outcomes and that the nature and quality of interaction in the classroom setting are significant factors in this dynamic.

The mean scores across the domains of Teacher Influence, Agency and Equity, Gender Sensitivities, and Interpersonal Dynamics in Table 2 all stand at 3.49, with a standard deviation of 0.53–0.54, indicating a high level of agreement among students that their participation is supported in these areas. These findings are consistent with the literature suggesting that various forms of teacher engagement, including immediacy and supportive demeanor, positively influence student participation (Hussain et al., 2020; Ahmad, 2018).

The literature stresses the importance of creating an environment where students of all backgrounds feel encouraged to participate, which aligns with the high rankings for Agency, Equity, and Gender Sensitivities. The proactive steps taken by teachers to create a gender-neutral and unbiased classroom culture, as reflected in the table, can be seen as a response to the disparities highlighted by Aguillon et al. (2020) and the need for fostering an inclusive learning environment, as suggested by Bergmark and Westman (2018).

Interpersonal Dynamics received the top rank alongside Teacher Influence, suggesting that the supportive communication style of teachers and their constructive feedback are key to encouraging even quieter students to engage in discussions. This is in line with Sedova and Navrátilová's (2020) emphasis on the significance of addressing silent participants in the classroom and the overall thrust toward interactive instructional strategies advocated by Dhamija and Dhamija (2020).

The uniform verbal description across all domains of "Agree/Thorough" underscores a consensus that the factors influencing classroom participation are well addressed. This is further supported by the interconnectedness of these factors as explored in the literature, from the direct positive correlation between a teacher's behavior and the level of student participation to the role of gamification in enhancing classroom engagement (Beemer et al., 2019).

Table 3.*Relationship between Teacher Engagement and Classroom Participation*

Variables		Emotional Support	Organization and Management	Parental Engagement	Academic Support and Enhancement	Teacher Engagement
Teacher Influence	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.57	0.50	0.59	0.53	0.48
	p-value	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.00	0.03
Agency and Equity	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.54	0.60	0.44	0.44	0.41
	p-value	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.02
Gender Sensitivities	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.49	0.54	0.59	0.45	0.52
	p-value	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02
Interpersonal Dynamics	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.55	0.43	0.48	0.55	0.59
	p-value	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Classroom Participation	Pearson <i>r</i>	0.59	0.44	0.49	0.46	0.57
	p-value	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.00

*Level of significance = 0.05

Table 3 presents the correlation between teacher engagement and various dimensions of classroom participation, including emotional support, organization and management, parental engagement, academic support and enhancement, teacher influence, agency and equity, gender sensitivities, and interpersonal dynamics. The analysis revealed significant positive correlations across several dimensions.

Emotional support exhibits a moderate positive correlation with teacher influence (Pearson $r = 0.57$, $p = 0.03$), indicating that teachers who provide emotional support tend to have a stronger influence on classroom dynamics. Similarly, organization and management showed a significant positive correlation with teacher influence (Pearson $r = 0.50$, $p = 0.02$), suggesting that well-managed classrooms are associated with greater teacher influence.

Parental engagement demonstrates a noteworthy positive correlation with teacher influence (Pearson $r = 0.59$, $p = 0.02$), implying that teachers who effectively engage parents tend to wield more influence in the classroom. Academic support and enhancement exhibited the strongest correlation with teacher influence (Pearson $r = 0.53$, $p = 0.00$), highlighting the critical role of academic support in shaping teacher influence.

Moreover, agency and equity demonstrate a significant positive correlation with teacher engagement across various dimensions, indicating that teachers who promote agency and equity tend to be more engaged in classroom interactions. Gender sensitivities also exhibit significant positive correlations with teacher engagement, further underlining the importance of addressing gender dynamics in fostering teacher engagement.

Overall, the findings underscore the intricate relationship between teacher engagement and classroom participation, emphasizing the significance of emotional support, organization and management, parental engagement, academic support, agency, equity, gender sensitivities, and interpersonal dynamics in shaping teacher influence and engagement in the classroom.

Interpreted in light of Sociocultural Theory, and more specifically through the lens of Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD), these results can have profound implications. Vygotsky's ZPD refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve with guidance and encouragement from a skilled partner. Teacher engagement can be seen as a critical component of the scaffolding that occurs within this zone.

The moderate, positive correlation between teacher engagement and classroom participation suggests that when teachers are more engaged—providing appropriate challenges, support, feedback, and encouragement—students

are more likely to actively participate in the learning process. This active participation is essential for learning and development because it is through participation that students encounter challenges that are just beyond their current capabilities, which Vygotsky considered crucial for cognitive development.

Furthermore, the significant statistical relationship highlights that teacher engagement may facilitate students to operate within their ZPD, as engaged teachers are likely to be more attuned to the individual needs of their students, providing scaffolding that is tailored to help each student progress. This individualized support can help students feel more competent and confident, thereby increasing their willingness to participate in class, ask questions, seek help, and take intellectual risks—all of which are behaviors that occur within the ZPD and lead to learning and development.

The results of this study emphasize the pivotal role of teacher engagement in fostering an inclusive, equitable, and interactive learning environment that supports student participation. The uniform perception of teacher engagement across demographic lines and the positive correlation between teacher engagement and student participation align with educational theories that highlight the importance of supportive and responsive teacher-student interactions. These findings suggest that when teachers actively engage with students, employing strategies that encourage participation and recognize the unique contributions of each student, a more dynamic and effective learning experience. This aligns with the principle that learning is a social process that is greatly influenced by the context in which it occurs and the interactions that define that context.

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