Contributing and Hindering Factors of Learner's Persistence in a Free Basic Education

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Abstract

Access to free basic education is a critical cornerstone for the development of individuals and societies. However, despite efforts to provide free education, learner persistence remains a challenge in many regions. Hence, the study was conducted to discuss contributing and hindering factors affecting learner's persistence. A survey was conducted among 79 pupils from Kinder to Grade IV. The findings showed that contributing factors were mostly teacher and school related. While hindering factors were student and classroom related. By understanding these factors, policymakers and educators can design targeted interventions to enhance the effectiveness of education initiatives. Thus, stakeholders must collaborate to create an environment where learners are empowered to overcome barriers and pursue their educational aspirations.

1. Introduction

Education should prepare young people for life, work, and citizenship. Knowledge of the natural and engineered environments and how people live in the world is critical to all three purposes of education. Critical thinking, creativity, interpersonal skills, and a sense of social responsibility all influence success in life, work, and citizenship. Education help instill curiosity and a love for learning in every child, so that they develop into young adults who contribute to humanity, follow their

passions, and think for themselves, such that they leave school with a purpose and have the confidence to fulfill that purpose.

The availability of high-quality education for everyone has significantly improved around the world. Yet, it is a reality that most families in many developing nations struggle to make ends meet so that their children can attend school. As a result, millions of children in school are denied their fundamental right to a free education. As of June 2022, 58.4 million children, or 8% of the 787 million children enrolled in primary school, were unable to attend school, according to data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. 12.8 million kids in South Asia do not attend school. In light of this, numerous researchers have made analyzing learner persistence a top subject of research for education since the 1960s (UNESCO, 2022). However, most of these studies focus on the persistence of adult learners in higher education, and there are very few articles published in scientific literature that address the factors that affect the persistence of learners in basic education. Mostly, journal publications are outdated. One latest study was conducted by Wekullo (2020) who observed that family socio-economic position, the level of engagement, positive school experience, parents' involvement and collaboration with the school, and a high-quality school with supporting learning were also positively connected with academic persistence of primary pupils in Kenya. The concept of persistence was defined as an individual phenomenon. That is learners persist to goal and that is to complete an academic program (Ortega-Dela Cruz, 2016). Persistence factors include student-related, institution-related, and classroom-related factors.

Many Filipinos in the Philippines place a high value on education. All Filipino students will receive high-quality education, according to the Philippine government. In the political, economic, social, and cultural life of the Philippines, education is of utmost importance. It has always been held in high regard as a cornerstone of national development and a key pathway for social and economic mobility. The right to education is also guaranteed by Article XIV, Section 5, paragraph 5 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. In accordance with its provisions, "The State shall protect and promote the right of all citizens to quality education at all levels and shall take appropriate steps to make education accessible to all" (Official Gazette of the Philippines, 2022).

However, while the country has already offered free primary and secondary education, there are still indirect costs related to pursuing school. These include schoolbooks, uniform and travel or transportation expenses that prevent the children from low-income families to access school

(International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, 2009). The biggest challenge is how to improve access to affordable quality education so that the country can maximize its demographic dividend. The schools are challenged on how they can sustain their operations and maintain high quality of education without any economic returns (Dayagbil et al., 2021). This reality has also become a challenge for schools that are implementing or offering free education.

While the children are interested in attending school for free, the incidental costs in going to school hamper the students, especially those from poor families. Their parents face challenges on where to get money to pay for incidental expenses. Many of the children in the community tend to take education for granted although it is already free. The percentage of tardiness and absenteeism is relatively high because of these costs and the school management are being challenged on whether it is their obligation to provide support to these children so they can come to school regularly.

In 2021, close to four million students were not able to enroll according to the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd). The number of out-of-school youth (OSYs) in the country continues to increase and provides serious backlash in terms of improving the quality of education in the country. The Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA) data indicated that the most common reasons among OSYs for not attending school were marriage or family matters, lack of personal interest, and high cost of education or financial concerns (DepEd, 2021).

The private school located in Nagcarlan, Laguna, in the southern part of the Philippines, is one of the educational institutions in the country facing significant challenges when it comes to providing access to education. It has encountered numerous difficulties and obstacles in its operations. One of the primary issues it faces is the lack of parental interest in sending their children to school. This challenge is further compounded by the economic circumstances and social status of the parents, making it even more challenging to motivate the children to pursue their education. Most of the community residents surrounding the school are living in poverty, relying primarily on farming as their main source of livelihood.

Despite providing a free education and the provision of the school ranging from books to food to clothes, school supplies, and transportation, still the school struggles to motivate the pupils to go to class on a regular basis. Despite the efforts made, there has been a marked rise in the number of dropouts during the past five years, something that bothers the school administration. With this, it is imperative to acquire sufficient data on the variables affecting learners' persistence in taking

advantage of a free basic education program. The ability to solve the issue and boost learners' persistence for free basic education programs depends on knowledge of the contributing and impeding elements. Furthermore, this study will add to the existing body of knowledge on the multifaceted landscape of factors that contribute to or hinder learner persistence, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities within the education system. Specifically, this study aimed to determine the contributing and hindering factors that affect the learner's persistence in a free basic education program in a developing country.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Research Design

Descriptive research design was used to identify the contributing and hindering factors affecting the learners' persistence in a free basic education in a developing country. Specifically, the study used survey research design. According to Check and Schutt (2012), survey research design is defined as the "the collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions". The study utilized both quantitative and qualitative data to address the research objective.

2.2 Research Participants

Since there are only 79 pupils in the school, total enumeration was done. This means that all the pupils served as respondents of the study. As for obtaining parental consent, a meeting was conducted by the teacher in each respective class to inform the parents about the study and the involvement of their children as respondents. It is worth noting that all the parents agreed to participate.

The age range of the respondents ranges from four to 10 years old, with the majority falling into the seven-year-old age group (24%), followed by eight-year-olds (18%) and five-year-olds (16%). The sex distribution is almost equal, with 48% male and 52% female participants, indicating a balanced representation of both sexes (Table 1).

The distribution of respondents across different grade levels is noteworthy, with the largest group of participants from kindergarten (33%), followed by Grade 2 (23%) and Grade 1 (20%).

Grade 3 had the lowest percentage of respondents (10%). It is also essential to note that most participants come from households with 5-8 members (55%), while 35% come from families with 1-4 members, and 10% come from households with more than eight members.

The most common occupation of the fathers who participated in the survey is a laborer (41%), followed by farmer and carpenter (11% each). Other occupations include government employees, OFW, and delivery, among others. Meanwhile, the most common occupation of the mothers is a housewife (25%), followed by buy and sell (15%). Sixteen percent responded with "none," and other occupations include laborer (9%), OFW (8%), sweeper (6%), helper (5%), farmer, and government employee (4%), among others. Among the other household members who have sources of income, the most common are grandmothers (16%) and grandfathers (15%). Other sources of income include sisters (11%), brothers (10%), cousins (4%), aunts (1%), and uncles (1%).

Lastly, the type of house distribution indicates that most respondents live in houses made from wood/concrete (51%), followed by concrete (25%), then made from wood/GI sheet (16%). Fewer respondents live in houses made from bamboo/nipa shingles (8%).

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents

Age	f	%
4 years old	8	10
5 years old	13	16
6 years old	11	14
7 years old	19	24
8 years old	14	18
9 years old	10	13
10 years old	4	5
N	**79**	**100**
Sex		
Male	38	48
Female	41	52
N	**79**	**100**
Grade Level		
Kinder	26	33
Grade 1	16	20
Grade 2	18	23
Grade 3	8	10
Grade 4	11	14
N	**79**	**100**
Household Size		

1-4	27	35
5-8	44	55
>8	8	10
N	**79**	**100**
Primary Occupation of the Father	**f**	**%**
Farmer	9	11
Private Employee	5	6
Carpenter	9	11
Gov't Employees	3	4
Laborer	32	41
Mechanic	2	3
Delivery	1	1
OFW	2	3
Shoemaker	2	3
None	6	7
Security Guard	2	3
Driver	3	4
Work from Home	1	1
Housekeeping	1	1
Steelman	1	1
N	**79**	**100**
Primary Occupation of the Mother		
Farmer	3	4
Private Employee	4	5
Buy and Sell	12	15
Helper	4	5
Gov't Employees	3	4
Laborer	7	9
Dressmaker	1	1
OFW	6	8
Housewife	20	25
None	13	16
Delivery	1	1
Sweeper	5	6
N	**79**	**100**
Other Household Members who have Sources of Income		
Sister	9	11
Brother	8	10
Grandmother	13	16
Cousin	3	4
Grandfather	12	15
Aunt	1	1
Uncle	1	1
None	33	41
N	**80**	**100**
Type of house		
Made form bamboo/ nipa shingles	6	8

Made from wood/ GI sheet	13	16
Made from wood/ concrete	40	51
Made from concrete	20	25
N	**79**	**100**

2.3 Instrumentation

The study was conducted using researcher-made questionnaires which determine the pupil's socio-economic profile, and their persistence. Statements from the perception survey were used to gauge persistence. This was created following a thorough examination of the literature. Contributing and hindering variables were the two categories into which persistence factors were divided. The three subgroups of these elements were: classroom-related, school-related, and student-related. A five-point Likert scale, with the options of strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), uncertain (3) agree (4), and strongly agree (5), was used to identify these. The survey questionnaires were examined by two distinct parties as part of the face validity testing of the instrument. One education professional and two sociologists with experience and training in survey questionnaire development made up the first group. They assessed the statements to ensure that the research topic and problem were adequately conveyed in each one. A statistician conducted a second assessment to make sure the survey was free of frequent mistakes like leading, ambiguous, or double-barrelled questions or remarks. The survey questionnaire's contents were slightly altered as a result of the validation procedure. Additionally, the survey was pilot tested by the researcher, who also examined the internal consistency of the questions by administering a reliability test to a sample of 20 non-participating pupils from another school. The Cronbach-Alpha method was used, and the outcome was a reliability factor of "good" with total test score of 0.80.

2.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis, consisting of frequency counts and percentages, was used in analyzing the data on contributing and hindering factors that affect learners' persistence in availing the free basic education program.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

For the recruitment of respondents, the researcher wrote a formal letter to seek permission to conduct the study. The researcher requested permission from the school to access the official list of the pupils.

The researcher addressed the survey questionnaire to the parents of the respondents to obtain their consent as well as verbal assent for the pupil's participation. The questionnaire contained the message from the researcher asking for their consent to involve their children in the survey. The letter of consent was included in the questionnaire.

Regarding confidentiality, the Data Privacy Act of 2012 or the Philippine Republic Act 10173 was mentioned in the first part of the questionnaire along with the letter of consent. This was done to inform the respondents that the researcher would only use the data they provided for the study. The collected data was stored in a digital drive with password protection and security, accessible only by the researcher. Furthermore, the results of the study were presented to the school officials, and stakeholders were given the opportunity to provide feedback to the researcher about the study.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Contributing and Hindering Factors Affecting Learner's Persistence in a Free Basic Education Program

Table 2 presents the top 10 contributing factors based on the overall frequencies. It is significant to note that almost all the pupils (72) strongly agreed that their teacher teaches them well. On the other hand, there is only a slight difference in the frequency on the statements, "All teachers in my school are kind and accommodating" (69 strongly agree), "My school provides food for the students" (68 strongly agree), "All teachers and school administrators are approachable" (67 strongly agree), and "My school provides a welcoming environment" (65 strongly agree).

In general, positive results were obtained regarding the factors contributing to availing free basic education. This suggests that while public schools also offer free education, pupils prefer to study in private schools due to factors such as accessibility, provision of free food and school supplies, a welcoming environment, and a sense of security in the classroom.

Table 2. Contributing factors affecting learner's persistence

Statements	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1. My teacher teaches me well.	72	7	0	0	0
2. All teachers in my school are kind and accommodating.	69	10	0	0	0
3. My school provides food for the students.	68	11	0	0	0
4. My school provides free tuition fee and miscellaneous expenses.	68	6	0	0	5
5. All teachers and school administrators are approachable.	67	12	0	0	0
6. My school provides a welcoming environment.	65	14	0	0	0
7. My school recognizes my academic performance by holding an annual recognition program.	63	16	0	0	0
8. My classmates are friendly.	63	14	1	1	0
9. My school instills values in students.	61	18	0	0	0
10. My school has a good curriculum.	57	22	0	0	0

The availability of free education, despite the school being private, is a significant reason why students persist in their studies at this institution. Additionally, the school's spacious playground provides students with time to play and enjoy themselves with their classmates, which they find enjoyable. The small class sizes enable students to receive individual attention and personalized learning from their teachers, fostering better relationships between students and teachers and encouraging students to enroll and attend classes. The school's provision of free tuition and daily snacks also serves as a motivation for students from less privileged families to pursue their education.

Furthermore, recognizing students' achievements with awards and rewards acts as a motivating factor for them to continue their education. According to the findings of Rehman and Haider (2013), offering incentives for academic success can positively influence students' motivation to learn. These rewards can also boost their self-esteem and instill a sense of pride in their accomplishments. Similarly, Buckley and Doyle (2016) found that acknowledging academic achievements through rewards can increase students' motivation, improve their academic performance, and enhance their overall attitude towards education.

Table 3 shows that a significant number of pupils (33) answered with agreement regarding parents paying for other school expenses. Several studies have demonstrated that school expenses can impose a financial burden on families, particularly those with low-income backgrounds. On the other hand, the second statement indicates that many pupils answered with disagreement when asked if their school requires projects that impact their family budget.

Table 3. Hindering school-related factors

School-related factors	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1. My school requires our parents to pay other school expenses.	7	33	9	12	18
2. My school requires many projects from the students which affect our family budget.	7	3	8	34	27
3. My school has strict teachers.	13	14	3	22	27
4. My school has playground for the students.	67	11	0	1	0
5. My school has many extra-curricular activities.	22	33	13	11	0
6. My school does not have security guards.	35	9	8	8	19
7. My school does not have classes/ programs for deaf and mute and kids with disabilities.	26	10	15	13	15

Negru, and Sava (2023) study found that excessive homework and school projects can have a detrimental impact on students' well-being, particularly when they result in stress and anxiety. This effect is particularly significant for younger students who may require additional skills or resources to handle these tasks autonomously. The findings of this study suggest that schools should carefully consider the quantity and nature of the homework and projects they assign to students, in order to prevent overburdening families.

In terms of teacher strictness, 27 pupils strongly disagreed, while an almost equal number of respondents (13) strongly agreed and (14) agreed. Regarding statement number 4, most pupils (67) answered strongly agree, which pertains to the availability of playgrounds.

Research has consistently shown that while a certain level of structure and discipline is necessary for effective teaching and learning, the teaching style of more relaxed or authoritarian teachers can positively impact student motivation and engagement. A recent review conducted by

Rickert and Skinner (2022) discovered that teacher support and warmth were strongly correlated with students' academic engagement and achievement. Furthermore, a meta-analysis examining teacher-student relationships by Ranellucci et al. (2015) found that positive relationships between teachers and students resulted in higher levels of academic engagement, motivation, and achievement among students. Another study conducted by Roorda et al. (2017) revealed a positive association between teacher support and encouragement and students' academic engagement and achievement in mathematics. Moreover, an independent study demonstrated that students who perceived their teachers as warm and supportive were more likely to actively participate in class, complete their homework, and achieve better academically (Tenenbaum et al., 2020).

Statement five reveals that 33 pupils agreed that they have many extracurricular activities, while item six on academic tasks and actions received an equal number of pupils answering disagree (21) and agree (20).

Extracurricular activities can bring several benefits to students, including improved academic performance, increased self-esteem, and enhanced social skills (Fredricks & Simpkins, 2013). Additionally, participating in extracurricular activities allows students to explore their interests and develop their talents outside the confines of the classroom. Schools that offer a diverse range of extracurricular activities are better positioned to engage students and promote their overall well-being (Weiss et al., 2016).

Conversely, 35 pupils strongly agreed on the lack of security guards. The absence of adequate security measures in schools can raise concerns among students, as it increases the risk of violence and other potential harm (Wang et al., 2020). In response to these concerns, many schools have implemented various security measures, such as metal detectors, security cameras, and security guards. However, it is essential to note that these measures are not without controversy and may have unintended consequences, such as increasing students' feelings of fear and anxiety (Wang et al., 2020).

Lastly, 26 pupils strongly agreed that classes for children with disabilities were not available. Miyauchi (2020) discovered that inclusive education practices, including providing support services and accommodations, positively correlated with the academic and social outcomes of students with disabilities. Another study conducted by Tarantino et al. (2022) found that students with disabilities who received specialized education achieved higher academic performance and experienced better

social outcomes compared to those who did not receive such targeted education. It is also noteworthy that inclusive education practices benefit not only students with disabilities but also their non-disabled peers, as they foster positive attitudes and perceptions toward diversity and inclusivity among non-disabled students (Miyauchi, 2020).

Overall, the survey results indicate that the pupils in this study (Kindergarten to Grade 4) generally hold undecided opinions about various school-related factors. This may be attributed to the fact that younger students may not have fully developed their viewpoints on some of the factors mentioned in the survey. Additionally, younger students may prioritize and have concerns that differ from those of older students, which could influence their responses (Ranellucci et al., 2015). Schools should consider the perspectives and needs of all students, regardless of their age, when making decisions that impact their education and well-being.

Table 4 shows the factors affecting learner's persistence. Based on the results of the survey, the following information were obtained:

Table 4. Hindering student-related factors

Student-related factors	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1. Our house is far from our school.	24	20	2	11	22
2. I have to take good care of my siblings while my parents are working outside our home.	13	20	2	11	33
3. I need to help my parents in working for daily living.	17	10	3	10	39
4. I find it difficult to find friends in my school.	6	9	0	16	48
5. I experienced bullying / teasing in school.	2	22	7	15	33
6. I often get sick which hinders me from going to school.	2	18	8	16	35

Firstly, a significant number of pupils (24) strongly agree that their residences are located too far from their schools, which can make it challenging for them to attend classes consistently.

This finding aligns with recent studies suggesting that commuting time and distance traveled can negatively impact school attendance and academic achievement (Chang et al., 2021). In fact, research by Pleić, and Jakovčić (2017) suggests that long commuting hours can cause stress in

students, which in turn can harm their motivation and ability to focus on academics. Consequently, reducing commuting time and distance traveled could be an effective intervention to enhance school attendance and academic performance (Pleić, & Jakovčić, 2017). To mitigate the negative impact of commuting on students' academic achievement, educational institutions could explore the feasibility of introducing new transportation options or relocating to more accessible areas. By doing so, schools can help alleviate the burden of long commutes and create a more conducive learning environment for their students (Pleić, & Jakovčić, 2017).

The second and third factors both relate to family obligations that may take up a student's time and limit their ability to focus on academics. A notable number of pupils agreed or strongly agreed that they had to take care of younger siblings (33) and assist their parents with daily tasks (27). These findings suggest that family responsibilities may be a more significant barrier to academic success. The study by Chang et al. (2021) supports this finding by suggesting that family obligations can indeed affect academic performance. To address this issue, schools can implement interventions such as providing after-school care or tutoring services to support students who have caregiving duties. Additionally, offering flexible scheduling and resources to help students manage these responsibilities can also be beneficial. Furthermore, the research has also shown that parental leave and parental involvement in education can have a positive impact on children's academic achievement. Therefore, involving parents in the academic process and encouraging their participation can be another way to address the challenges faced by students with family obligations (Chang et al., 2021).

The fourth factor mentioned in the survey both pertain to social aspects that may impact academic performance. A significant number of pupils (64) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the notion of finding it difficult to make friends. While recent studies, such as the one conducted by Giersch (2018), have highlighted the influence of social networks and social comparison on academic achievement, the results of this study suggest that social isolation may not be a significant factor affecting academic performance for most students.

Educators and schools can utilize opportunities to foster positive relationships between students and teachers, as well as encourage interactions among peers, to cultivate a sense of belonging and connectedness among students (Ahmadi et al., 2020). According to a study by Neel and Fuligni (2013), a sense of connectedness to school is associated with higher academic achievement, lower

rates of school dropout, and fewer problem behaviors among students. For students who struggle to form friendships, participating in programs that promote social connectivity, such as peer mentoring and after-school organizations, may prove beneficial.

The fifth factor in the table highlights the possibility that some pupils may have encountered bullying or teasing, which can have detrimental effects on their self-worth and overall well-being. However, it is important to note that only two pupils strongly agreed with these statements, while the majority of 33 pupils strongly disagreed. Recent research conducted by Mullan et al. (2023) demonstrates that implementing evidence-based anti-bullying programs can effectively enhance academic performance and reduce incidents of bullying. Schools can play a crucial role in preventing bullying that are supported by empirical evidence and providing resources for students who have been victimized. Anti-bullying programs and restorative justice practices can be implemented to support academic success for students who have experienced bullying, while also promoting a healthy and inclusive school climate (Scheer et al., 2020).

According to the sixth factor in the table, some pupils may face health-related difficulties that hinder their regular attendance at school. In the survey, 35 pupils responded negatively when asked if they frequently feel sick, which interferes with their ability to attend school. Although only two pupils strongly agreed with this statement, a significant number of pupils (18) agreed, and eight were uncertain, suggesting that health-related absences may be a prevalent issue among students. The finding that health-related difficulties can impact academic achievement is consistent with the research of Bridgeman (2019), which highlights the potential positive impact of school-based health centers on academic performance. Furthermore, Bridgeman's research suggests that students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences may be particularly vulnerable to lower academic achievement. In response to these challenges, schools can consider providing on-campus mental health support and medical services to meet the diverse health needs of their students (Bridgeman, 2019). By prioritizing student health and well-being and providing comprehensive support services, schools can create a more inclusive and supportive learning environment that enables all students to succeed academically and personally.

It is essential to recognize that students may have strong opinions about factors that affect their academic performance in certain areas. Addressing these factors can lead to better outcomes for all

students. By identifying and addressing these factors, schools can provide the necessary support and resources to help students succeed academically.

The results in the table correspond with other research on student-related issues that can impact academic achievement negatively. Implementing interventions to address these issues, such as reducing travel time, providing support for students with caregiving responsibilities, promoting social connectivity, addressing bullying, prioritizing student health and well-being, and alleviating poverty, could potentially improve students' academic success (Wang & Degol, 2016).

Table 5 presents classroom-related factors that were evaluated through a survey. The factor "My teacher has a special treatment with other kids" received the highest number of Strongly Disagree (33) pupils, while 23 pupils strongly agreed that their teacher does not show favoritism. This indicates that the participants viewed teacher favoritism as a significant hindrance (Table 5).

Table 5. Hindering classroom-related factors

Classroom-related factors	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
1. My teacher has special treatment with other kids.	23	12	1	10	33
2. My teacher's lecture is difficult to understand.	3	5	1	20	50
3. The learning materials are not enough for me and my classmates.	2	1	3	29	44
4. The audiovisual aids in school are not reliable and audible for my classmates sitting at the back.	0	5	1	30	43
5. Our classroom is not spacious enough for our learning activities.	4	6	0	29	40
6. I cannot focus on class because the room temperature/ ventilation bothers me.	2	26	0	26	25
7. I do not enjoy the learning activities and play time within our classroom.	17	3	0	13	46

The perception of teacher favoritism can negatively affect a student's academic performance and overall well-being. Research conducted by Lee et al. (2019) indicates that students who perceive favoritism from their teachers toward certain students have lower academic achievement and self-esteem. Furthermore, these students are more likely to display disruptive behaviors and harbor negative attitudes toward school if they perceive their teachers as being unfair. These findings

highlight the importance of addressing perceptions of favoritism and unfair treatment in the classroom to support positive academic outcomes and student well-being.

A majority of pupils agreed that they find their teacher's lectures challenging, with 50 pupils strongly disagreed that class is easy to understand. Difficulties in comprehending teacher lectures can adversely affect students' learning outcomes. Recent research has investigated various factors that may contribute to the issue of understanding teacher lectures. Among these factors, the use of academic language has been identified as a significant influence on students' ability to comprehend the material being presented. According to a study by Ghoneam (2016), students who lack proficiency in academic language may require assistance in comprehending teacher lectures that involve complex vocabulary and sentence structures. Educators can employ strategies such as simplifying language and providing visual aids to enhance understanding of the content in order to support these students.

Regarding the insufficiency of learning materials, most pupils expressed disagreement, with 44 of them strongly disagreed. The availability and effectiveness of learning materials and audio-visual aids play a crucial role in students' engagement and achievement in the classroom. Recent literature has examined these issues and proposed strategies to enhance the quality of these resources. Ridwan and Samsul (2022) conducted a study indicating that provision of high-quality instructional materials positively influenced students' academic performance and engagement. The study also revealed that students who accessed digital learning resources, such as e-books and online videos, demonstrated higher motivation and satisfaction with their learning experience.

The statement, "The audio-visual aids in school are not reliable and audible for my classmates sitting at the back" received the highest number of Strongly Disagree responses. This indicates that most of the pupils did not find this factor to be a significant hindrance. Interestingly, no respondents strongly agreed with this statement. These findings underscore the positive impact of high-quality learning materials and effective audio-visual aids on students' engagement, motivation, and academic achievement. To enhance the quality of these resources, teachers and schools can consider investing in digital technologies, providing training for teachers on their utilization, and seeking feedback from students regarding their effectiveness.

"Our classroom is not spacious enough for our learning activities" received the highest number of Strongly Disagree responses, indicating that most respondents did not find this factor a significant

hindrance. When considering the classroom environment, two important factors to consider are the physical space and the temperature/ventilation inside the school.

Based on the results, 26 pupils expressed agreement with the statement, indicating that they disagree, while 25 strongly disagreed. In relation to the issues of temperature and ventilation, research conducted by Wyon et al. (2019) found that inadequate indoor air quality, which encompasses problems with temperature and ventilation, can have a detrimental effect on students' cognitive function. This includes their ability to focus, retain information, and solve problems effectively. The findings highlight the significance of providing an optimal temperature and ventilation environment in classrooms to support students' cognitive abilities and overall learning outcomes.

Based on the findings of this research, it is evident that providing students with adequate physical space and maintaining an optimal temperature and ventilation level in the classroom can have a positive impact on student's motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. To improve the classroom environment, teachers and schools can take steps such as considering the needs of students when arranging the classroom layout, ensuring sufficient space and appropriate seating arrangements, and implementing measures to regulate temperature and ventilation. By prioritizing these aspects, educators can create a conducive learning environment that supports students' overall well-being and enhances their educational experience.

Most pupils, with 46 strongly disagreeing, express enjoyment in participating in learning activities and playtime in their classroom. It is important to note that students' level of engagement and motivation in academics is closely tied to their enjoyment of learning tasks. When students find their assigned tasks uninteresting or lacking engagement, their motivation to learn and participate in class activities may diminish. Conversely, students who genuinely enjoy learning activities are more likely to actively engage in and seek out educational opportunities.

Lee et al. (2020) conducted a study in relation to the impact students' enjoyment of learning activities had on their academic performance and level of engagement. The findings revealed that students who derived pleasure from the learning process achieved higher academic success and displayed increased participation in the classroom compared to their peers.

In a study conducted by Sanpanich (2021) the factors contributing to students' satisfaction with learning experiences in school were investigated. The findings emphasized the significant role of

classroom environment in fostering students' joy of studying. This encompassed establishing supportive relationships between teachers and students, cultivating positive attitudes among teachers, and implementing engaging teaching methods. The study also revealed a direct correlation between the enjoyment of learning activities and students' levels of academic motivation, engagement, and achievement. To enhance the enjoyment of learning activities, teachers and educational institutions can focus on creating suitable classroom environments, employing engaging instructional strategies, and promoting students' autonomy and competence.

Based on the survey results, the pupils identified the perception of preferential treatment from the teacher as the most significant barrier to classroom learning. Other factors such as challenging lectures, inadequate learning materials, and limited classroom space were not considered significant barriers. However, some pupils did express concerns about issues related to audio-visual aids and the temperature and ventilation of the classroom.

4. Conclusions

Learner persistence is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, both positive and negative. This study has highlighted key contributing factors such as a teacher and school related, along with hindering factors including student, classroom related.

Learner persistence in free basic education is a critical factor that directly impacts individual and societal development. The ability of learners to remain engaged and committed to their education has far-reaching implications for personal growth, economic prosperity, and social progress.

Understanding these contributing and hindering factors is essential for designing effective strategies to promote learner persistence in free basic education. Policymakers, educators, and communities need to collaborate to create an environment that encourages students to continue their education and overcome challenges that might otherwise hinder their progress.

The findings of this study were limited to the responses of the pupils who were recipients of free education in a private school. They were purposefully selected, which limits the data analysis to descriptive only.

In relation to the limitations of the study, future research may cover other private and public schools that offer free education to broaden the sample size. This will facilitate the use of inferential analysis in investigating the impact of additional support services, such as counseling and mentoring, on learners' persistence and academic outcomes. The role of technology in improving learners' outcomes in a free basic education program, including the use of educational apps, online resources, and virtual learning environments may be an interesting aspect to explore. Longitudinal studies can provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of interventions on learners' outcomes and can help identify best practices for promoting academic success and persistence.

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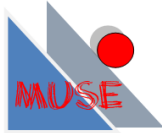
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