

Autonomy, Competence, and Relatedness Developed in Extracurricular Activities: Roles in Shaping the Student Classroom Engagement

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Abstract

Low student classroom engagement is alarming. I describe how autonomy, competence, and relatedness developed through extracurricular activities shape classroom engagement. Using a qualitative descriptive design, I interviewed fourteen purposively selected students and applied thematic analysis. I found that the roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in developing classroom engagement involve strengthening students' self-discipline, skill mastery, and supportive relationships. Teachers may strengthen classroom engagement through collaborative activities and professional development initiatives. Future studies may utilize Multiple Linear Regression Analysis to predict classroom engagement, and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to develop and validate instruments based on the identified themes.

Keywords: *Autonomy: competence: relatedness: extracurricular activities: student classroom engagement*

INTRODUCTION

In this section, I presented the problem and its scope, the study's significance, the research questions, the theoretical lens, the study's paradigm, and my assumptions.

The Problem and Its Scope

Low student engagement in the classroom remained a significant concern worldwide. Across various learning environments, students demonstrated low levels of classroom participation, reduced involvement in academic activities, and limited interaction during instructional processes. Recent studies highlighted that maintaining students' active participation and sustained engagement remained a continuing challenge in educational institutions across different contexts and settings (Quibrantar & Ezezika, 2023). Similarly, disruptions in students' motivation and classroom involvement persisted in educational environments, underscoring that student disengagement remains a persistent concern in contemporary education (Manisha Hari Rajan et al., 2024).

Across countries, the same concern had also been observed. In Vietnam, students demonstrated varying levels of disengagement characterized by low participation and reduced involvement in academic activities (Dang & Nguyen Viet, 2021). In the United States, recent reports indicate that student disengagement remains a concern, particularly regarding classroom participation and academic involvement (Fredricks, 2023). In Australia, educational observations similarly documented difficulties in sustaining students' active engagement and participation within learning environments (Vo & Ho, 2024).

In the Philippines, the problem had also been evident. Vispo and Macalinao (2024) found that students with limited involvement in extracurricular activities demonstrated lower academic engagement and weaker academic performance. Similarly, Lastra et al. (2024) reported that limited participation in extracurricular activities among Filipino students reflects challenges in sustaining student engagement and involvement in school-related activities. These findings suggested that the absence of extracurricular opportunities negatively affected student engagement in Filipino schools.

Existing literature has extensively examined student engagement across different educational contexts and highlighted the influence of various school-related factors on students' participation and learning outcomes. However, these studies have primarily focused on the outcomes and determinants of engagement rather than students' own perspectives regarding how autonomy, competence, and relatedness develop classroom engagement through extracurricular participation. Recent studies also noted that student voice and students' perspectives remain underrepresented in educational discussions and research (Holquist et al., 2023; Resch, 2023). While I understand the existing knowledge on student engagement, I found limited literature that explored students' own viewpoints and perceptions of the roles of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in extracurricular activities in developing classroom engagement. I addressed this gap by shifting the focus from general engagement outcomes to students' own perspectives on how autonomy, competence, and relatedness through participation in extracurricular activities develop classroom engagement. This gap served as my basis for conducting this study.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it explores how autonomy, competence, and relatedness in extracurricular activities foster student engagement, contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education, which promotes inclusive and holistic learning opportunities. The study aligned with the mission and vision of Holy Cross of Davao College in forming competent, compassionate, and committed individuals through transformative service by emphasizing students' active participation and holistic development. For students, the findings highlighted how extracurricular participation fostered motivation, belongingness, and personal growth, while for future researchers, the study provided a basis for further investigation of student engagement across different educational contexts.

Research Questions

In this study, I described how autonomy, competence, and relatedness developed through extracurricular activities shape classroom engagement. Specifically, I sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the roles of autonomy developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement?
2. What are the roles of competence developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement?
3. What are the roles of relatedness developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement?

Theoretical Lens

This study was guided by Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000). According to SDT, motivation and engagement flourish when three psychological needs are satisfied: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In the context of extracurricular activities, autonomy was expressed when students freely chose activities that reflected their interests and passions (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Competence emerged as students developed new skills, gained confidence, and experienced mastery in their chosen fields (Howard et al., 2016). Relatedness was evident in friendships, collaboration, and a sense of belonging nurtured through shared experiences (Soria et al., 2022). By applying SDT, I framed extracurricular involvement not just as an additional school activity but as a key contributor to shaping and sustaining student engagement beyond the classroom.

Paradigm of the Study

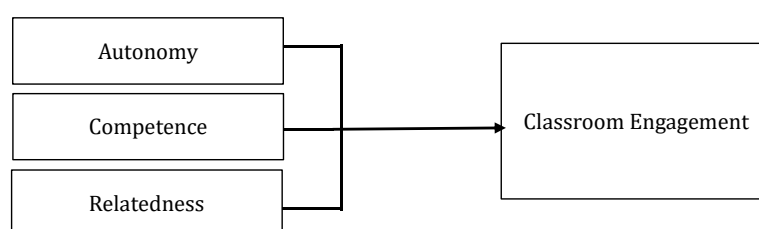


Figure 1: Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000)

Assumptions

This study was built on several assumptions derived from the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). First, I assumed that student engagement in extracurricular activities was influenced by the fulfillment of the psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Second, I assumed that when these needs were satisfied, students were more likely to experience increased academic motivation, stronger social connections, and greater personal

growth (Vergara-Morales & Del Valle, 2021). Third, I assumed that extracurricular involvement provided meaningful contexts in which students practiced leadership, resilience, and teamwork, thereby enhancing their overall engagement in school (Leupold et al., 2020). Finally, I assumed that when these psychological needs were not adequately met, students might still participate in activities but could experience disengagement, stress, or a lack of fulfillment (Vansteenkiste et al., 2018). These assumptions emphasized that the quality of engagement in extracurricular activities was more important than the mere frequency of participation.

METHOD

In this chapter, I presented the study's methodologies. It consists of the research design, research locale, sample, sampling technique, data-gathering technique, data analysis technique, and the study's trustworthiness.

Research Design

In this study, I utilized a qualitative descriptive research design. I adopted this approach to provide a detailed description of students' perceptions of how participation in extracurricular activities influenced their classroom engagement, using the dimensions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Qualitative research focuses on understanding and interpreting participants' perspectives and meanings within their natural settings (Creswell & Poth, 2016), while qualitative descriptive research allows for a comprehensive and straightforward presentation of participants' viewpoints (Doyle et al., 2020). I emphasized presenting participants' perceptions accurately, setting aside personal biases and preconceived assumptions to provide a clear understanding of their views on extracurricular participation and engagement.

Research Locale

I conducted this study in selected private senior high schools in Davao City under the Department of Education (DepEd) Region XI. These schools cater to learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, offering both academic and technical-vocational tracks. They were also known for providing a wide range of extracurricular programs, including student organizations, academic clubs, sports, and performing arts. The presence of these opportunities made the school an ideal setting for exploring how extracurricular activities shape student engagement. The choice of private schools as the locale is intentional, as these institutions often provide structured and diverse extracurricular offerings supported by their school policies and resources. Conducting the study in this setting allows for a deeper understanding of how senior high school students experience autonomy, competence, and relatedness through their extracurricular participation, and how these experiences influence their academic, personal, and social development.

Sample and Sampling Technique

In this study, the participants were fourteen (14) senior high school students from selected private schools in Davao City who were actively involved in extracurricular activities such as student organizations, clubs, sports, and academic competitions. These students were selected because they could provide meaningful perceptions regarding how participation in extracurricular activities influenced their classroom engagement through autonomy, competence, and relatedness. I utilized purposive sampling to select participants who met the study's specific criteria. The sample consisted of six (6) participants for in-depth interviews (IDI) and eight (8) participants for one focus group discussion (FGD). This number was consistent with qualitative research recommendations for obtaining rich and detailed descriptions of participants' perspectives, which typically involve 6 to 20 participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

Data Gathering Technique

To gather the data for this study, I utilized in-depth interviews (IDIs) and one focus group discussion (FGD) as the primary methods of data collection. I conducted individual interviews with six (6) students and one focus group discussion with eight (8) participants to obtain detailed descriptions of their perceptions regarding how participation in extracurricular activities influenced their classroom engagement. These methods were appropriate for qualitative research because they allowed participants to freely express their perspectives while enabling me to use probing and follow-up questions to obtain richer, more meaningful data (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Data Analysis Technique

I analyzed the data using thematic analysis. It is a qualitative approach used to identify, organize, and interpret recurring patterns and themes within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2021). I utilized this method to systematically examine participants' perceptions of how extracurricular activities influenced their classroom engagement, using the dimensions of autonomy, competence, and relatedness within the Self-Determination Theory framework. I transcribed and reviewed the

collected responses, conducted coding, and organized related ideas into meaningful themes to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives. This process enabled me to present findings that were grounded in the participants' viewpoints while also allowing additional themes to emerge from the data.

Trustworthiness of the Study

In this study, I established trustworthiness by adhering to the four criteria of qualitative rigor: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017). I ensured credibility through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, supported by probing questions and rapport-building, to elicit detailed participant responses. I maintained transferability by providing clear descriptions of the research setting and participants, enabling readers to assess the applicability of the findings in similar contexts (Hadi & José Closs, 2016). To establish dependability, I systematically followed the data collection and analysis procedures while maintaining records of transcripts and coding processes (Roberts et al., 2019). Lastly, I ensured confirmability through member checking, reflexive journaling, and peer debriefing to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the participants' perceptions while minimizing researcher bias (Stahl & King, 2020). I also adhered to the ethical standards of the Society for Moral Integrity and Legal Ethics (SMILE) of Holy Cross of Davao College by ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, voluntary participation, and respect for participants throughout the study.

RESULTS

In this section, I presented and discussed the findings of my study and the modified paradigm.

Roles of autonomy developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement

In examining autonomy within classroom engagement, I encountered stories marked by a quiet tension at the beginning—a hesitation that seemed to exist between silence and participation. They shared moments of trembling voices, mental blocks, and an ongoing fear of being judged. However, as I traced the progression of their narratives, I began to notice a gradual shift. What was once fear slowly started to loosen its hold through repeated exposure, shared classroom spaces, and small yet meaningful acts of courage.

As one participant shared:

In social engagement, ma'am siyempre mas naa naman kay kumpanyansa sa sarili, like you are more willing to share your knowledge sa imung fellow classmates, and you are more open, socially open sa ilaha (In social engagement, ma'am, I have more confidence in myself. I am more willing to share knowledge with my classmates and more socially open to them) (IDI – P1, Lines 106–108).

One participant expressed:

For me is I am very introverted person ma'am... mag-kurog jud ko ana tapos dili ko katarung ug sturya... pero pagka-try nako sa extracurricular activities... murag nabawasan gamay... (For me, ma'am, I am a very introverted person. But when I tried joining intramurals, my introversion lessened a bit) (IDI – P2, Line 328–330).

Another participant expressed:

I always volunteer... dili ko gusto na wala koy buhaton... (I always volunteer because I do not want to be called all the time.) I always make myself active because I do not want to have nothing to do) (FGD – P4, Line 2078–2079).

As one participant explained:

I think ma'am participating sa mga extracurricular activities actually helped my decision making, my critical thinking... ma-enhance siya... (I always volunteer because I do not want to be called all the time. I always make myself active because I do not want to have nothing to do) (FGD – P5, Lines 545–546).

Another participant claimed:

Yes ma'am, yes, being able to help me feel freedom makaapekto jud sa amoang kuan the way we participate in our class ma'am kay murag mas confident ka sa imung sarili mas confident ka whether mali ka or tama knowing na ahm you have freedom, you can be right or wrong, you are able or you are able to express yourselves to express your ideas, and of course that gives me confidence ma'am mao nato. (Yes, ma'am, yes. Being able to feel freedom really affects how we participate in class because you become more confident in yourself, whether you are right or

wrong. Knowing that you have freedom, you can be right or wrong, you are able to express yourselves and your ideas, and that gives me confidence, ma'am.) (IDI – P1, Lines 56–64).

Another participant similarly reflected:

There is nothing wrong na mag express sa imong ideas or perspective sa certain things ... murag freely nako ma express... dili nako maulaw... (I am now able to freely express my ideas and communicate with others without feeling shy, because I have realized that there is nothing wrong with sharing my perspectives.) (FGD – P2, Line 710–713).

As I brought these accounts together, I realized that autonomy developed through participation in extracurricular activities played a significant role in shaping students' classroom engagement. Through these experiences, students gradually developed confidence, became more willing to initiate participation, strengthened their critical thinking and decision-making abilities, and engaged more freely in classroom discussions without fear of judgment or making mistakes. I observed noticeable changes in how participants expressed themselves during the interviews. Some who initially responded with brief answers, pauses, and occasional stuttering gradually became more focused in their responses, spoke with greater ease, and expressed their thoughts with fuller, more detailed explanations. Their responses became more fluid and sustained as the conversation progressed, reflecting a visible shift from hesitation to more open and active expression. These experiences revealed that autonomy was reflected not only in increased participation but also in students' ability to actively and confidently engage in their classroom learning.

Roles of competence developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement

In examining competence within classroom engagement, I noticed a different kind of shift in their stories—one grounded in control rather than fear. At first, they described feeling overwhelmed, managing responsibilities without a clear structure, which often led to pressure and uncertainty. However, as they became involved in extracurricular activities, I observed them gradually learning to organize their time, manage their efforts, and approach responsibilities more intentionally. What once felt reactive became deliberate. Over time, it became clear to me that discipline was no longer something imposed from the outside but something they gradually carried within themselves.

One participant shared:

You learn how to manage your workflow, you learn how to manage your time, your efficiency... like sa imuhang academics... (You learn how to manage members, workflow, time, efficiency, and sustainability of your academics.) (IDI – P1, Lines 156–157).

Another participant emphasized:

...dapat dili ta mag-cramming... kailangan dapat lihukon nato siya... kay naa jud consequences. (We should finish tasks immediately so we can rest. We avoid cramming because it has consequences.) (IDI – P4, Lines 995–996; 998).

Another participant emphasized:

Mas willing ko... humanon dayon nako ang tasks even though under pressure nako... kaya naman nako isabay akoang acads and extracurricular activities... (I am more willing to participate in class and immediately finish tasks even when I am under pressure because I can manage both academics and extracurricular activities.) (FGD – P1, Line 1274–1276).

One participant described this transition:

Kanang mahadlok ko mag take engage sa classroom because mahadlok ma judge but then nag apil nako og extracurricular activities dako po kaayo og improvement in a way na maka sturya nako og recitation. Dili nako mahadlok and nitaas jud akoang confidence. (I used to be shy and afraid to participate because I feared being judged. However, after becoming involved in extracurricular activities, I experienced a great improvement—I can now speak during recitations without fear, and my confidence has increased.) (FGD – P3, Line 724–727; 729–732).

Similarly, another participant reflected:

Before, I was like really shy jud... but since nag-join ko ug mga clubs... na-enhance ang akoang confidence (Before I used to be very shy. However, after joining clubs offered by the school, my confidence improved.) (FGD – P6, Lines 355–358).

One participant explained how leadership skills transferred across contexts:

Um. In football kay you also have to lead, so ang pagiging leader is not only for the room sa football, but also a room in the inside the classroom. So in that way, kay murag ma-practice nako ma enhance nako akong self and how to live into something na kanang mas ma-better nako ang isa ka place with me leading in it. (In football, you have to lead. Leadership is not only for the field but also in the classroom. In that way, I practice and enhance myself in becoming better at leading a group or situation.) (IDI – P3, Line 671–677).

Another described how acquired skills became useful in classroom outputs:

...nahasa didto ang akoang writing skills... so murag magamit nako tung skills... mas ma-expand nako ang akoang ideas. (My writing skills have been developed, which helps me in classroom essay activities. Because of my experience, I can expand my ideas.) (FGD – P2, Lines 407–408; 412).

One participant also highlighted the continuity of learning:

The more ko mahibal-an sa club, the more mahibal-an diri pud sa class (the knowledge I gain from my clubs helps me perform better in classroom activities) (FGD – P5, Line 456–457).

As I pieced together the participants' answers, it became evident that competence developed through participation in extracurricular activities played a significant role in shaping students' classroom engagement. Through these experiences, students gradually developed self-discipline, strengthened confidence, improved their ability to manage responsibilities, and applied acquired skills to academic tasks and classroom interactions. When participants talked about balancing multiple responsibilities, extracurricular activities, and time management, some showed visible signs of struggle and frustration. Their voices occasionally grew softer and slower, with noticeable pauses as they searched for words, while others let out slight sighs or laughed nervously before continuing. Some avoided direct eye contact by looking downward or shifting their gaze while discussing the pressures they experienced, and a few displayed facial expressions, such as frowning, pursed lips, or slightly furrowed brows, that suggested stress and difficulty. However, as the interviews progressed and they began discussing how they managed and adapted to these challenges, these expressions gradually changed. Their voices became more stable and assured, their eye contact more consistent, and their responses more detailed and expressive as they spoke with greater ease and confidence. These perceptions revealed that competence was reflected not only in task performance but also in students' ability to adapt, participate meaningfully, and engage effectively within the classroom learning environment.

Roles of relatedness developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement

At the outset, I observed that many students positioned themselves in the background—present but not fully seen or heard. Their participation was minimal, often limited to listening, as they described themselves as “normal students” who stayed within the safety of observation. While this felt familiar to them, I also saw its limitations. However, as students became involved in extracurricular activities, I noticed changes in how they interacted with others and in how they positioned themselves within classroom spaces. Relationships and social connections gradually became an important part of how they engaged in learning.

One participant shared:

In social engagement, ma'am siyempre mas naa naman kay kumpyansa sa sarili, like you are more willing to share your knowledge sa imung fellow classmates, and you are more open, socially open sa ilaha, and also sa amoang classroom activities mas kuan kaayo ka mas active kaayo ka mas willing kaayo ka. (In social engagement, ma'am, I have more confidence in myself. I am more willing to share knowledge with my classmates and more socially open to them. In classroom activities, I am more active and willing) (IDI – P1, Lines 106–109)

Others described how familiarity and social connection reduced hesitation and fear:

Murag okay lang pud sa ako nga mag participate kay kaila naman pud namo... I have no fear (I became comfortable participating because I already know them. There is nothing much to fear about) (IDI – P3, Lines 638–640)

One participant reflected:

before wala pa koy club... I was just a normal student... galingkod lang sa classroom... karon po is kanang madungog na akong pangalan. (I did not join any club or extracurricular activity before; I would be a normal student sitting in the classroom..., now I hear my name being called) (FGD – P3, Lines 2056–2057; 2061)

One participant explained:

Well, this relationships between peers and mentor gani maam greatly helps the way I ahm socialize sa during group work or class discussions. Kay murag gaan lang gani sa akong pamati kaayo na mu-participate wala kaayo koy ma-feel na pressure or di kaayo ko maka-feel na kanang conscious kanang ma-conscious ka overly conscious na mahadlok i-judge because murag ma-feel nko na mas comfortable ko mu-exert knowing na these people can help me na mas ma-develop pa jud ko. (These relationships greatly help how I socialize during group work or discussions because I feel more comfortable participating. I do not feel too much pressure or self-consciousness because these people can help me develop further.) (IDI – P1, Line 236–241)

Another participant similarly shared:

Ano po because of them kay mas ni mas comfortable nako mag share ug ideas and mag participate sa class and ahm also murag dili na kayo ko maulaw mag-ask ug opinions sa ilaha and mag ask ko ug help or ako ang mag provide ug help sa ilaha. (Because of them, I became more comfortable in sharing ideas and participating in class. I am no longer too shy to ask for opinions, ask for help, or even provide help to them.) (FGD – P1, Line 1434–1436)

Another participant affirmed:

...dili ko ma-uncomfy po na mu-reach out sa iyaha if need nako ug clarifications need nako ug questions para himuon akong part since naa nami relationship na na-build po na dahil sa mga extracurricular activities. (so now I feel comfortable reaching out to her whenever I need clarification in our research tasks because we already built a relationship through extracurricular activities.) (FGD – P2, Line 1681–1684)

Another participant reflected:

...murag naging way siya... team building... nagatabangay mi para makasugakod sabay-sabay... (It became like team building, where we support each other to keep up together.) (FGD – P3, Lines 1693–1695)

One participant shared:

...kung supported ka mas motivated ka... dako jud kaayo siya na impact... (Support has a big influence on student-athletes. If people support you, you become more motivated) (IDI – P3, Lines 760–762)

Similarly, another participant expressed:

...unless kung walay mag support... but when naa jud... I felt happy... naa jud diay someone... (when I feel supported. Support from others motivates me, helps me perform better, and makes me feel happy) (FGD – P8, Line 1904;1910–1911)

Hearing all these from my study participants, I recognized that relatedness developed through participation in extracurricular activities played an important role in shaping students' classroom engagement. Through these experiences, students gradually developed stronger social connections, experienced greater trust and a sense of belonging, and became more comfortable interacting with peers, mentors, and teachers. I found that when participants talked about receiving support from classmates, peers, and teachers, many showed visible signs of happiness and comfort through smiles, lighter, more enthusiastic tones of voice, more consistent eye contact, and relaxed facial expressions as they shared their experiences. Some even laughed softly or became more expressive when recalling moments of encouragement and teamwork. As the conversations progressed, their responses became more open and detailed, reflecting a shift from hesitation to greater ease and confidence in sharing their experiences. These narratives revealed that relatedness was reflected not only in students' relationships with others but also in their willingness to participate, seek support, collaborate, and engage meaningfully within classroom learning experiences.

Strengthening Self-Confidence in Classroom Engagement

In examining self-confidence in classroom engagement, I observed a gradual transformation in how students perceived themselves and participated in learning experiences. At the beginning of their stories, many described feeling hesitant, uncertain, and unable to express themselves in front of others. Several participants spoke about doubting their own capabilities and feeling uncomfortable in situations that required communication and visibility. However, as they became more involved in extracurricular activities, I noticed changes in how they viewed themselves and how they approached classroom participation. Through repeated opportunities for expression, decision-making, and interaction, students gradually developed stronger trust in their own abilities.

One participant reflected on how freedom and self-expression strengthened both confidence and self-trust:

Well, if you have freedom to express yourself and ahm murag matagaan kag confidence and murag trust in yourself kay in that way kanang ma-evaluate gani nimu ang imuhang capabilities (Well, if you have the freedom to express yourself, it gives you confidence and trust in yourself. In that way, you can evaluate your capabilities) (IDI – P1, Lines 43–45)

The same participant further explained:

Being allowed to make decisions in extracurricular activities... it gives you confidence, improves your self-esteem, and ahm ma-develop ang imuhang kuan ang imuhang pagsalig sa imuhang kaugalingon... (Being allowed to make decisions in extracurricular activities, as I said earlier, gives you confidence, improves your self-esteem, and develops your self-trust) (IDI – P1, Lines 80–82)

One participant described this shift:

Of course, pag-abot nako sa classroom kay murag easy peasy na lang sa akong mga hands up nga taas kag confidence, especially na I know kay I'm knowledgeable enough na makatubag pud ko sa teacher. (Of course, when I go to the classroom, it becomes easy peasy for me to raise my hand with high confidence, especially since I know I am knowledgeable enough to answer the teacher.) (IDI – P3, Lines 572–574)

Similarly, another participant shared:

For me maam, before running, I was very hesitant maam to run and while during the long run maam the extracurricular or the activities that we are doing po maam it improves my confidence po so when it comes sa classroom pud maam like I am willing to participate naman po maam (For me, before becoming involved, I was very hesitant. However, over time, my extracurricular activities improved my confidence. As a result, I am now more willing to participate) (FGD – P7, Lines 369–372)

One participant added:

For me maam I would say yes po since sa akoang extracurricular activities po more on again engaging po... murag nahasa pud dira ang among public speaking and then I think murag naging nakuhaan pud nako na siya ug confidence maam kumbaga nga murag naka isturya gani ko sa ano in front of other students how much more sa classroom... (For me, yes, because my extracurricular activities are highly engaging... Additionally, public speaking skills are strengthened, as the role requires communication and cooperation with students. This exposure has increased my confidence—if I can speak in front of many students, I can do so in the classroom as well. (FGD – P2, Lines 285–286; 292–295)

Another participant reflected:

Especial last time is after nako pag join jud nako sa BRIDGE na-forced jud ko na mag gawas sakong comfort zone nako ba... na-open akoang skills na like not being afraid of the crowds so yes mao nay reason ngano much more naga-participate nako sa class... (After joining The Bridge, I was pushed to step out of my comfort zone... I became more open and less afraid of crowds, which helped me develop my skills. Because of this, I now participate more actively in class) (FGD – P8, Lines 381–382; 385–386)

I noticed a shared pattern in how extracurricular involvement gradually strengthened students' self-confidence. Some participants initially spoke in softer voices, gave brief responses, made occasional pauses, and maintained limited eye contact, often showing signs of hesitation. However, as they discussed their extracurricular experiences, their voices became more assured, their eye contact steadier, and their responses more expressive and detailed. These responses revealed that self-confidence extended beyond feeling assured, as it encouraged students to communicate more openly and participate more actively in classroom experiences.

Summary of Findings

1. The roles of autonomy developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement are strengthening confidence through the freedom to express, encouraging initiative and active participation, enhancing decision-making and critical thinking, and promoting social openness.

2. The roles of competence developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement are strengthening self-discipline and personal standard-setting, transforming shyness into public confidence, enhancing the application of specialized skills and mastery, and developing professional work ethics and consistent academic habits.
3. The roles of relatedness developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement are increasing visibility and encouraging active participation, creating a safe space that encourages sharing ideas, strengthening collaboration and teamwork in academic tasks, providing support that reduces academic discouragement, and encouraging risk-taking through social support.

Modified Paradigm

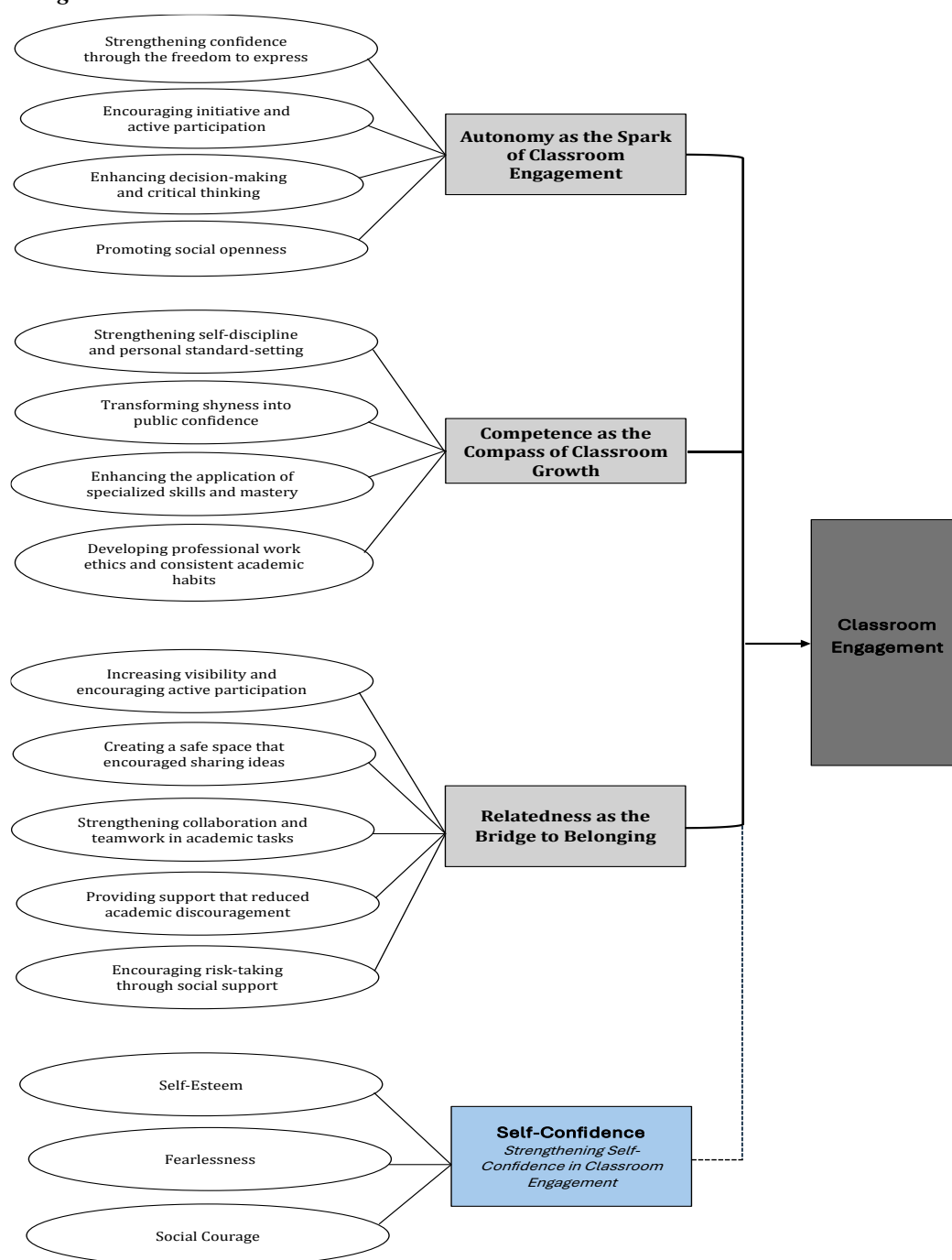


Figure 2: Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2000)

DISCUSSIONS

In this section, I presented the discussion of my study's findings. I also presented the implications for practice and future directions of my study.

Autonomy as the Spark of Classroom Engagement

The perspectives shared by the participants made me reflect on the role of autonomy in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement, strengthening confidence through the freedom to express, encouraging initiative and active participation, enhancing decision-making and critical thinking, and promoting social openness.

My reflection supports the claims of Howard et al. (2025), who assert that autonomy-supportive environments strengthen students' psychological need satisfaction and are positively associated with higher classroom engagement, participation, and well-being. Their findings suggest that when students are provided with opportunities for choice and self-expression, they become more motivated and actively involved in the learning process, which parallels the present finding that extracurricular activities strengthened students' confidence, initiative, and openness. Similarly, the current finding also aligns with Wang et al. (2024), who found that autonomy support positively influences students' classroom engagement by satisfying basic psychological needs and enhancing academic participation. Their study showed that students who experience autonomy support demonstrate stronger communication, willingness to participate, and greater confidence in expressing ideas. This supports my finding that repeated involvement and self-directed experiences in extracurricular activities enhanced students' decision-making, critical thinking, and social openness.

However, my claim contradicts the study of Johansen et al. (2023), explaining that autonomy alone may not be sufficient to sustain student engagement and positive learning outcomes without additional support factors. Their findings suggest that engagement becomes stronger when autonomy is accompanied by structure and other psychological needs. This contrasts with my study, which found that autonomous experiences in extracurricular activities directly strengthened students' confidence, initiative, decision-making, and social openness in classroom engagement.

Competence as the Compass of Classroom Growth

Based on the participants' accounts, I found that the roles of competence developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement are strengthening self-discipline and personal standard-setting, transforming shyness into public confidence, enhancing the application of specialized skills and mastery, developing professional work ethics, and consistent academic habits.

My findings align with the study by Cunha et al. (2023), which found that self-regulation interventions significantly improved students' classroom engagement and satisfaction of psychological needs. Their findings emphasized that students who developed stronger self-regulatory behaviors demonstrated better responsibility, persistence, and active participation in learning tasks. This supports the present finding that extracurricular participation strengthened students' self-discipline, accountability, and consistent academic habits. Likewise, my assertion aligns with the study by Navarro et al. (2023), which affirms that self-regulation strategies and academic self-efficacy positively influence students' academic performance and learning experiences. Their study showed that students with stronger self-management and confidence were better able to apply acquired skills and handle academic demands. This parallels the present finding that extracurricular experiences strengthened students' mastery of skills, confidence, and ability to apply competencies in classroom activities and responsibilities.

In contrast, my findings differ from Dutt et al.'s (2023) assertion that students who experience learning difficulties and insufficient support often demonstrate reduced motivation and engagement despite competence-related experiences. While Dutt et al. suggested that competence alone may not be enough to sustain participation and motivation without additional support factors, participants in this study reported that competence developed through extracurricular involvement strengthened their self-discipline, confidence, skill mastery, and responsibility in classroom engagement. What makes my findings significant is that competence was not merely reflected in students' abilities, but also in how extracurricular experiences provided opportunities to apply and strengthen these competencies, thereby encouraging active classroom participation.

Relatedness as the Bridge to Belonging

Looking back at my study participants' responses, this revealed to me that the roles of relatedness developed in extracurricular activities in shaping classroom engagement are increasing visibility and encouraging active participation,

creating a safe space that encouraged sharing ideas, strengthening collaboration and teamwork in academic tasks, providing support that reduced academic discouragement, and encouraging risk-taking through social support.

This finding aligns with the claims of Alfonso & Noltemeyer (2024), highlighting that students' sense of social connectedness with peers and teachers significantly enhances their participation and sustained engagement in academic activities. Similarly, my findings support the study by Pan and Yi Yong Yao (2023), which explains that teacher support and teacher-student rapport significantly enhance students' academic engagement. Their findings emphasized that supportive relationships create a positive learning environment where students feel more comfortable participating and expressing themselves. This affirms my finding that relatedness through supportive interactions with peers and mentors strengthened students' confidence and willingness to engage in classroom activities.

However, my findings differ from those of Hendrick et al. (2023), who claim that students' social relationships and sense of relatedness do not always lead to stronger academic engagement, particularly when feelings of loneliness and unmet social needs persist. While Hendrick et al. suggest that social interaction alone may not consistently strengthen participation and motivation, the participants in my study reported that supportive relationships with peers, classmates, teachers, and mentors created a safe and encouraging environment that increased their confidence and willingness to participate. This suggests that meaningful and supportive relationships, rather than simple social interaction, may strengthen students' classroom engagement by fostering trust, collaboration, and a stronger sense of belonging.

Implication for Practice

Upon reflecting on this study's findings, teachers and School Heads may develop student-centered practices and professional development initiatives that strengthen students' classroom engagement by fostering autonomy, competence, relatedness, and self-confidence. These may be implemented through student-led discussions, peer mentoring, collaborative learning activities, leadership opportunities, and reflective classroom practices that encourage active participation and meaningful interaction among students. Department of Education officials may also allocate funding for seminars, training, workshops, demonstrations, and other professional learning opportunities that continuously equip teachers with strategies to foster students' confidence, participation, social connectedness, and sense of capability within the learning environment. Such intentional practices may strengthen self-expression, self-discipline, teamwork, trust, social openness, and confidence, helping students become more active, responsible, and engaged learners inside and outside the classroom.

Future Directions

Future studies may employ a quantitative research design using multiple linear regression analysis to examine further the relationship between the identified psychological needs and classroom engagement. Specifically, autonomy, competence, and relatedness may serve as predictor or determinant variables, while classroom engagement may serve as the criterion or dependent variable. Researchers may determine the extent to which these psychological needs predict students' participation, confidence, self-discipline, decision-making, social interaction, and overall classroom engagement. Additionally, future studies may utilize Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to develop and refine survey questionnaires based on the themes and sub-themes identified in this study. The identified sub-themes may serve as measurement indicators for instrument development and validation, thereby strengthening the proposed framework and its applicability across different educational contexts.

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