

## INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CLASS SIZE AND STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

<sup>1</sup>Dr. USHA GOYAL

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Keshav Mahavidyalaya, Atru, Baran, Rajasthan

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### ABSTRACT

Classroom size is a crucial factor in the educational setting, often linked to student learning and academic achievement. An in-depth investigation of the intricate correlation between class size and student learning results is presented in this research, which is based on a survey of current studies. A comprehensive analysis is conducted to investigate the impact of reduced class sizes on many aspects of student achievement, such as academic performance, engagement, and cognitive development. The analysis emphasizes that decreasing class sizes can promote more individualized instruction, strengthen student-teacher interactions, and establish a favorable learning environment, all of which together lead to better learning results. Nevertheless, the present study also acknowledges the obstacles and constraints associated with the implementation of reduced class sizes, including heightened financial and logistical requirements on educational establishments. Furthermore, it investigates alternate approaches for maximizing student results, such as utilizing technology, implementing customized education, and providing professional development for teachers. Through a comprehensive analysis of the effects of class size, this study intends to guide legislative decisions and educational methods that aim to improve student performance in various learning environments.

**Keywords:** Class Size, Student Learning Outcomes, Academic Performance, Educational Achievement, Classroom Environment

### INTRODUCTION

Considerable attention from teachers, parents, and lawmakers alike has been devoted to the consequences of class size on student learning outcomes, making it a longstanding focal point in educational research and policy discussions. Class size controversy is based on the notion that smaller classrooms promote a more favorable learning environment by enabling personalized attention, promoting increased student involvement, and improving classroom management (Finn & Achilles, 1999). Proponents contend that these elements together enhance academic performance, especially in the early grades where fundamental abilities are developed.

Notwithstanding the prevalent support for reduced class sizes, the correlation between class size and student learning results is not clear-cut and continues to be a subject of significant controversy. Although several studies, such as those carried out by Finn and Achilles (1999), have shown that small class sizes have a beneficial influence on student achievement, other research, including Hattie's (2005) meta-analyses, indicates that the effect of reducing class sizes may be limited. The extent of this impact often varies depending on contextual elements such as grade level, subject matter, and teaching quality.

This discrepancy in results prompts important inquiries concerning the cost-effectiveness of decreasing class sizes and whether other approaches may get comparable or even better results.

Furthermore, the logistical and budgetary ramifications of decreasing class sizes present substantial obstacles, especially in educational systems with limited resources. Deploying smaller classes sometimes necessitates significant financial commitment in extra classrooms, instructors, and resources, which may not be viable or enduring in every situation. Hence, policymakers must carefully evaluate the possible advantages in comparison to the drawbacks, contemplating whether the resources designated for reducing class sizes could be more efficiently utilized in other domains, such as enhancing teacher training, implementing instructional technology, or implementing focused interventions for students facing difficulties.

This research aims to explore the intricate correlation between class size and student learning outcomes by quantitatively assessing the impact of smaller classrooms on academic performance, student involvement, and overall educational excellence. By conducting an extensive literature analysis, this study seeks to clarify the processes via which class size affects learning and to investigate the wider consequences for educational policy and practice. Through a rigorous analysis of the evidence, this study aims to offer significant insights that can direct future decisions on the most effective approach to class size optimization and resource allocation, with the goal of maximizing student achievement.

The objective of this investigation of the relationship between class size and student learning results is to transcend the oversimplified belief that "smaller is always better." Conversely, its objective is to offer an equitable viewpoint that takes into account the intricate interaction of elements that impact the quality of education, acknowledging that successful teaching and learning are influenced by numerous aspects. The purpose of this study is to enhance knowledge and understanding of the dynamics of class size and their impact on the wider educational environment.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Based on the premise that smaller classrooms promote more effective teaching and learning, the theoretical foundations of the relationship between class size and student learning outcomes are established. A fundamental argument in favor of reduced class sizes is the individual attention hypothesis. This theory suggests that teachers in smaller classrooms are able to allocate more time and resources to each student, resulting in improved academic achievements (Blatchford et al., 2003). This heightened level of individual attention can be seen in the provision of more tailored feedback, the implementation of differentiated instruction, and the establishment of better teacher-student connections, all of which are linked to enhanced learning outcomes.

An additional significant notion is the classroom management hypothesis, positing that reduced class numbers result in a decrease in disciplinary issues and an increase in instructional time (Finn et al., 2003). By adopting smaller class sizes, teachers may more efficiently control the classroom atmosphere, therefore minimizing distractions and disturbances that may hinder the learning process. This hypothesis emphasizes the significance of classroom dynamics in moderating the correlation between the number of students in a class and their academic achievements.

Extensive research has investigated the influence of class size on student learning outcomes, yielding inconclusive findings. A seminal study in this field is the Tennessee STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio) project, a comprehensive experiment that revealed superior performance in reading and math among students in smaller classes (13-17 students) compared to those in regular-sized classes (22-25 students) during early grades (Finn & Achilles, 1999). The study revealed that smaller class sizes

had a more significant positive impact on underprivileged and minority students, indicating that reducing class sizes could potentially contribute to narrowing achievement disparities.

Nevertheless, further investigation has yielded more intricate conclusions. A meta-analysis conducted by Hattie (2005) revealed that although smaller class sizes do indeed provide a beneficial impact on student learning, the magnitude of this impact is very limited in comparison to other educational strategies, such as enhancing teacher effectiveness. Furthermore, Hanushek (1999) contended that the advantages of decreasing the number of students in a class are often surpassed by the disadvantages, especially when resources are redirected from other domains that could have a more significant influence on student performance. The disparity in results among studies can be ascribed to various elements, such as variations in study methodology, the age and demography of pupils, the caliber of instruction, and the particular circumstances in which reduced class sizes are applied (Nye et al., 2000). Specifically, although the lowering of class sizes in early grades has repeatedly demonstrated beneficial outcomes, the data is less conclusive for middle and high school children (Krueger, 2002).

There are various processes that mediate the relationship between class size and student learning results. Initially, reduced class sizes can improve teacher-student interactions, enabling more customized teaching and greater chances for student engagement (Blatchford et al., 2007). Teachers in smaller classrooms possess a greater capacity to recognize and attend to the specific learning requirements of each student, offer prompt feedback, and cultivate a nurturing learning atmosphere. Furthermore, implementing smaller class numbers can enhance classroom management, therefore decreasing the occurrence of behavioral problems and enabling more time to be allocated to direct teaching (Finn et al., 2003). This can result in a more concentrated and efficient classroom environment, which facilitates and enhances student learning. Furthermore, smaller class sizes can enhance collaborative and active learning methods, such as group work and discussions, which are linked to increased student involvement and more profound acquired knowledge (Tobin, 1987). Effective implementation of such educational tactics in larger courses can be more difficult due to logistical limitations and the requirement to handle a greater number of pupils.

### **Challenges and Limitations of Reducing Class Size**

- Although there is extensive documentation on the possible advantages of reduced class sizes, there are also notable difficulties and constraints linked to this method. An inherent obstacle is the financial burden associated with decreasing class sizes, which can be extremely significant. Reduced class sizes necessitate a greater number of instructors and classrooms, resulting in higher costs for wages, infrastructure, and educational resources (Glass & Smith, 1979). For certain educational institutions, especially those with constrained financial resources, the cost of reducing class sizes may be overly burdensome.
- Another constraint is the principle of decreasing returns linked to the reduction of class size. Existing research indicates that the effects of decreasing class sizes are most pronounced when transitioning from very large to moderately sized classrooms. However, the advantages diminish as class sizes fall (Hoxby, 2000). This gives rise to inquiries regarding the most effective class size and whether any further decreases beyond a particular threshold result in significant enhancements in student educational achievements.
- Moreover, the caliber of instruction significantly influences the efficacy of reducing average class sizes. Mere reduction in class size does not inherently result in improved learning results unless teachers possess the necessary skills and resources to effectively utilize the smaller class setting

(Slavin, 1989). Factors like as teacher quality and instructional methods can either amplify or diminish the possible advantages of smaller courses.

### **Implications for Educational Policy and Practice**

Significant implications for educational policy and practice arise from the data on class size and student learning outcomes. Although smaller class sizes can enhance learning results, they should not be considered as an independent remedy. As part of a comprehensive approach that encompasses expenditures in teacher training, curriculum development, and student support services, legislators should contemplate the implementation of class size reductions (Konstantopoulos, 2008).

Where budget limitations prevent the reduction of class size, various approaches can be considered. One approach that schools can take is to provide focused reductions in class sizes during the early grades or for kids who are most likely to have positive outcomes, such as those from underprivileged homes (Molnar et al., 1999). Furthermore, educational institutions can prioritize the improvement of teaching quality and offer professional development opportunities for teachers to enhance instructional methods in all class sizes.

### **CONCLUSION**

A multitude of variables, including teaching quality, classroom management, and student demographics, exert effect on the intricate link between class size and student learning outcomes. Although reduced class sizes can provide substantial advantages, especially in the early stages of education and for underprivileged students, the impacts are not consistent in all situations. The decision to decrease class sizes should be thoroughly evaluated in comparison to other possible investments in education, with an emphasis on optimizing the net effect on student learning. Further investigation should persist in examining the circumstances in which decreases in class size yield the greatest effectiveness, together with exploring alternate approaches to maximize student achievements. Through adopting a holistic strategy that takes into account the interaction between class size, teacher competence, and teaching methods, educators and policymakers can strive to provide learning settings that optimally facilitate student achievement.

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