

Grade 7 Students' Perceptions of Class Homogenization and Inclusivity and their Relationship to Academic Performance

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Abstract. The composition of classrooms has become a key focus in educational research due to its significant influence on student learning outcomes. This study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to explore Grade 7 students' perceptions of class homogenization and inclusivity, as well as their relationship to academic performance. Experts validated a self-made questionnaire and pilot-tested with a homogeneous class to assess reliability, yielding a Cronbach's alpha of 0.925. The results revealed that students in highly homogenized classes have a mean score of 3.8 (SD = 0.326), reflecting a "very high level of agreement" about their positive learning environment. Conversely, students in less homogenized classes indicated a mean score of 3.6 (SD = 0.412), also demonstrating agreement but with more response variability. In an inclusive environment, students in highly homogenized classes scored 3.8 (SD = 0.445), affirming their belief in equal participation and supportive teachers. Students in less homogenized classes scored 3.76 (SD = 0.447), also showing a "very high level of agreement." The Mann-Whitney U test revealed a significant difference in academic performance between the two groups: students in highly homogenized classes (Mean = 89.9, SD = 2.82) and less homogenized classes (Mean = 83.2, SD = 4.57), with a statistically significant result ($U = 107$, $p < 0.001$). Spearman correlation analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between class homogeneity and academic performance ($\rho = 0.313$, $p = 0.013$), whereas the relationship between inclusivity and academic performance was not statistically significant ($\rho = 0.042$, $p = 0.744$). Overall, class homogenization had a measurable effect on academic performance, with students in highly homogenized classes having higher academic scores. Inclusivity was rated highly in both groups; however, no significant relationship was found between inclusivity and academic performance. These findings suggest that educational strategies should consider class composition to enhance students' academic outcomes.

Keywords: Class homogenization; Perceived inclusivity; Academic performance; Student perception.

1.0 Introduction

The composition of classrooms has emerged as a critical focus in educational research, particularly in terms of its influence on student learning outcomes. Class homogenization, which involves grouping students by similar academic abilities, contrasts with the principles of inclusive education that advocate for the integration of diverse learners within the same classroom. This approach contradicts the concept of inclusive education, which advocates for placing students with diverse backgrounds and abilities in the same class to promote equal learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2017).

Several studies have explored the effects of classroom grouping on student learning. Grouping students by ability can lead to positive peer influence, particularly when high-performing learners encourage their peers to strive for excellence (Kuzmina & Ivanova, 2018). Teachers may also find it easier to adjust the pace of lessons and provide more targeted instruction. Still, this setup does not always benefit everyone. Learners with lower academic performance may feel discouraged, have fewer chances to interact meaningfully, and may become less involved in class (Huang & Zhu, 2020). On the other hand, mixed-ability or inclusive classrooms tend to encourage collaboration, empathy, and stronger peer relationships. A review by Nishina et al. (2019) found that inclusive settings help students build better social skills and, in many cases, improve academic performance, especially in early education.

Despite its advantages, inclusive education can be harder to manage in secondary schools. Inclusive practices in the early grades are often most effective when teachers employ flexible teaching strategies and work collaboratively to meet diverse learners' needs (Florian & Spratt, 2013). However, in high school settings, challenges to inclusive education often stem from systemic inflexibility, such as rigid timetables and insufficient teacher preparation for addressing diverse learners' needs (Manyatsi, 2020; Mavuso, 2020).

In the Philippines, most elementary schools following the Department of Education (DepEd) standards use mixed-ability groupings, allowing teachers to reach all students with similar teaching methods. However, at Mindanao State University - Naawan Integrated Developmental School, students face a shift in classroom structure when they enter Grade 7. Coming from a heterogeneous elementary school setup, students are now placed into sections based on their scores on the entrance exam. The highest scorers comprise the top section, followed by others in descending order of performance. This shift marks a clear move toward homogeneous grouping, particularly within a science-focused curriculum that introduces elective subjects and increases the academic workload.

Given this transition, it is essential to consider how students perceive the changes in classroom grouping. While some may thrive in settings with academically similar peers, others may feel isolated or limited. Exploring these perceptions can offer valuable insights into how students experience learning under different grouping practices. This study aims to explore the perceptions of Grade 7 students at MSU Naawan on class homogenization and inclusivity, and how these perceptions relate to their academic performance. The findings will support teachers in refining their instructional strategies to meet the varying needs of learners within stratified classroom settings.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive research design to examine the perceptions of class homogenization and inclusivity, as well as their impact on the academic performance of Grade 7 students. This design facilitated a comparison between two groups: students from high-homogenized classes and those from low-homogenized classes. By examining the perceptions and performance of these groups, the study aimed to identify patterns and relationships that show how class composition and inclusivity influence academic outcomes.

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

The research was conducted at the Mindanao State University at Naawan Integrated Developmental School, involving a total of 102 Grade 7 students. Participants were selected in two phases. The first group, composed of 40 students, participated in the pilot testing of the survey instrument. This phase helped assess the clarity, structure, and consistency of the questionnaire. Experts in the field reviewed the instrument for content relevance, grammar, and sentence construction. Feedback from this stage contributed to revisions that enhanced the tool's overall quality. The pilot test yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.92, indicating strong internal consistency. For the main study, 62 students were selected through purposive sampling, aiming to represent two distinct classroom types. The sample was evenly divided: 31 students from a highly homogeneous class and 31 from a low-homogeneous class. This stratified sampling approach ensured that both classroom contexts were fairly represented, allowing for reliable comparisons of students' perceptions and academic performance.

2.3 Research Instrument

The primary instrument used in this study was a researcher-designed survey questionnaire. It was developed to capture students' perceptions of classroom grouping and inclusivity, as well as their potential influence on

academic performance. To ensure its validity, the questionnaire was evaluated by subject-matter experts, who provided feedback on its content accuracy, clarity, and language use. It was then pilot-tested with a group of students from a school that utilized homogeneous class settings. The results of this test supported the instrument's validity and reliability, confirming its appropriateness for the main study.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

This study was conducted at the end of the school year to assess the participants' perceptions in a homogeneous class setting. The researcher developed the questionnaire and had it validated by experts. After the validation process, the tool was pilot-tested on students. The pilot test was not mandatory. Based on the pilot data, the researcher eliminated the items that did not pass the reliability test. The researcher issued a consent form to the participants, informing them that they needed to have their parents sign it to participate in the study. The study included only participants who signed and agreed to take part. This is a one-shot survey and was conducted face-to-face.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

This study employed both descriptive and inferential statistical methods to address the research problem. A pilot test was conducted with a random sample of 40 students to establish the reliability of the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire utilized a Likert scale, as outlined in Table 1. Additionally, academic performance was categorized using the criteria presented in Table 2. The scale for academic performance interpretation is based on commonly accepted academic performance standards used in educational research.

Table 1. *Likert Scale for Measuring Perceptions of Class Homogenization and Inclusivity*

Scale	Descriptor	Range	Interpretation
1	Strongly Disagree	1.00 - 1.80	Very low level of agreement
2	Disagree	1.81 - 2.60	Low level of agreement
3	Neutral	2.61 - 3.40	Moderate or undecided level of agreement
4	Agree	3.41 - 4.20	High level of agreement
5	Strongly Agree	4.21 - 5.00	Very high level of agreement

Table 2. *Academic Performance Scale and Interpretation*

Scale	Descriptor	Interpretation
90 - 100	Outstanding	Demonstrates exceptional mastery of the subject matter.
85 - 89	Very Satisfactory	Exceeds the required competency with a high level of performance.
80 - 84	Satisfactory	Meets the required competency.
75 - 79	Fairly Satisfactory	Meets the minimum standard; improvement is needed.
Below 75	Did Not Meet Expectations	Does not meet the minimum standard; requires significant remediation.

The internal consistency of the items was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a reliability score of 0.925 or higher deemed acceptable for proceeding with the study. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution, were utilized to summarize students' perceptions of class homogenization and inclusivity, as well as their academic performance levels.

To compare the perceptions and academic performance levels of students in high-homogenized and low-homogenized classes, the Mann-Whitney U test was employed instead of an independent samples t-test because the data did not meet the assumptions of normality, as verified by the Shapiro-Wilk test. This non-parametric test was appropriate for comparing the two independent groups under non-normal conditions. Spearman's correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between students' perceptions of class homogenization, inclusivity, and their academic performance, addressing the strength and direction of these relationships, with significance tested at the 0.05 alpha level. Additionally, multiple regression analysis was performed to explore the combined effect of perceptions of class homogenization and inclusivity on academic performance.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to strict ethical standards, ensuring that all participants were treated with respect and consideration at all times. Informed consent was obtained from the participants, who were signed by their parents, allowing their child to participate in the study. Responses were kept confidential and maintained throughout the study.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 Student Perceptions of Class Homogenization

Tables 3 and 4 illustrate how students perceive class homogenization. In high-homogenized classes, students have an overall mean score of 3.76 ($SD = 0.326$), which means they generally agree with a "high level of agreement" about their positive learning environment. They appreciate clear explanations, well-designed lessons, and suitable materials, indicating they feel well-supported in their studies. However, they have neutral feelings about peer competition ($M = 3.16$) and whether their classmates perform at the same academic level ($M = 2.84$), suggesting some challenges in their peer relationships.

Table 3. *Students' Perceptions of Class Homogenization in High-Homogenized Class*

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. I can keep up with the lessons without falling behind.	3.90	0.651	Agree
2. My teachers adjust the difficulty of the class to meet the needs of all students.	3.65	0.798	Agree
3. There is minimal competition among my peers in class.	3.16	0.934	Neutral
4. I believe that most of my classmates perform at the same academic level as I.	2.84	0.688	Neutral
5. Teachers design lessons that accommodate the majority of the students' capabilities.	3.87	0.67	Agree
6. There is minimal competition among my peers in class.	3.29	1.189	Neutral
7. The homogeneity of the class reduces feelings of anxiety and stress.	3.29	1.006	Neutral
8. I feel more motivated in class when I see that my peers are progressing at a similar rate.	3.94	0.854	Agree
9. My teacher's explanations are clear and easy to follow in class.	4.03	0.836	Agree
10. The instructional materials provided are appropriate for my level of understanding.	3.87	0.67	Agree
11. My teacher frequently checks whether the class understands the lesson.	4.23	0.845	Strongly Agree
12. I find the class activities to be engaging and well-suited to my learning needs.	3.97	0.795	Agree
13. The teacher's teaching methods help me grasp complex concepts more easily.	4.03	0.657	Agree
14. The teacher uses examples and exercises that are at the right difficulty level for the class.	4.29	0.588	Strongly Agree
15. The teaching strategies used in this class improve my academic performance.	4.00	0.856	Agree
Overall	3.76	0.326	Agree

Table 4. *Students' Perceptions of Class Homogenization in Low-Homogenized Class*

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. I can keep up with the lessons without falling behind.	3.52	0.677	Agree
2. My teachers adjust the difficulty of the class to meet the needs of all students.	3.81	0.749	Agree
3. There is minimal competition among my peers in class.	2.77	0.956	Neutral
4. I believe that most of my classmates perform at the same academic level as I.	2.55	0.995	Disagree
5. Teachers design lessons that accommodate the majority of the students' capabilities.	3.55	0.675	Agree
6. There is minimal competition among my peers in class.	2.94	0.998	Neutral
7. The homogeneity of the class reduces feelings of anxiety and stress.	3.52	0.89	Agree
8. I feel more motivated in class when I see that my peers are progressing at a similar rate.	3.52	0.851	Agree
9. My teacher's explanations are clear and easy to follow in class.	3.94	0.772	Agree
10. The instructional materials provided are appropriate for my level of understanding.	3.77	0.497	Agree
11. My teacher frequently checks whether the class understands the lesson.	4.35	0.709	Strongly Agree
12. I find the class activities to be engaging and well-suited to my learning needs.	3.77	0.669	Agree
13. The teacher's teaching methods help me grasp complex concepts more easily.	3.9	0.7	Agree
14. The teacher uses examples and exercises that are at the right difficulty level for the class.	4.13	0.562	Agree
15. The teaching strategies used in this class improve my academic performance.	4.03	0.706	Agree
Overall	3.60	0.412	Agree

In contrast, low-homogenized classes have a slightly lower overall mean score of 3.60 ($SD = 0.412$), also indicating a "high level of agreement." While students in these classes also view their learning environment positively, their responses vary more. For example, the statement about classmates performing at the same level scored a mean of 2.55 (interpreted as "Disagree"), suggesting that students may struggle to relate to their peers' academic abilities. Additionally, their views on peer competition and whether class homogeneity reduces stress were neutral, indicating challenges with inclusivity and teamwork.

Overall, both types of classes have positive perceptions; however, highly homogenized classes exhibit slightly better alignment and cohesion in their learning experiences compared to low-homogenized classes. These findings are supported by the study by Deskmate et al. (2013), which highlights how class grouping affects peer interactions and academic results. While grouping students by ability can focus instruction and support higher achievers, it may foster a culture of dependency and diminished learning opportunities for lower-attaining students, ultimately reducing their motivation (Mazenod et al., 2018).

3.2. Student Perceptions of Inclusivity

Tables 5 and 6 illustrate the students' perceptions of inclusivity in their classrooms. In high-homogenized classes, students reported an overall mean score of 3.76 (SD = 0.445), indicating that they generally agree with a "high level of agreement" regarding inclusivity. They believe that classroom discussions allow everyone to participate equally, that their teachers are supportive, and that their learning environment promotes respect and a sense of belonging. However, some students expressed neutral feelings about peer relationships and mutual respect, indicating that there are still areas for improvement in inclusivity.

Table 5. *Students' Perceptions of Inclusivity in High-Homogeneous Class*

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Classroom discussions allow equal participation from all students.	3.71	0.938	Agree
2. I feel valued in my class regardless of my background or abilities.	3.48	0.926	Agree
3. The classroom environment promotes respect among students.	3.23	0.805	Neutral
4. The classroom promotes a sense of belonging for all students.	3.71	0.783	Agree
5. My teacher ensures that all students receive equal attention during lessons.	4.1	0.746	Agree
6. My teacher makes an effort to include all students in class discussions.	4.35	0.839	Strongly Agree
7. My teacher encourages students with different abilities to participate equally.	4.29	0.693	Strongly Agree
8. I feel comfortable asking questions because my teacher is supportive of all students.	3.55	0.888	Agree
9. My teacher creates an inclusive and safe environment for all students.	4.32	0.599	Strongly Agree
10. I feel that my teacher listens to and respects my opinions equally.	4.1	0.7	Agree
11. I feel that I belong to the class group when working on projects.	3.61	1.145	Agree
12. I feel comfortable collaborating with my classmates in group activities.	3.71	1.006	Agree
13. My classmates treat me with respect regardless of my abilities or background.	3.35	0.709	Neutral
14. I feel supported by my peers when I ask for help during class.	3.39	0.803	Neutral
15. My peers encourage me to participate in class activities.	3.48	1.092	Agree
Overall	3.76	0.445	Agree

Table 6. *Students' Perceptions of Inclusivity in Low-Homogeneous Class*

Statement	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
1. Classroom discussions allow equal participation from all students.	3.55	0.624	Agree
2. I feel valued in my class regardless of my background or abilities.	3.32	0.599	Neutral
3. The classroom environment promotes respect among students.	3.42	0.807	Agree
4. The classroom promotes a sense of belonging for all students.	3.52	0.769	Agree
5. My teacher ensures that all students receive equal attention during lessons.	3.97	0.836	Agree
6. My teacher makes an effort to include all students in class discussions.	4.26	0.729	Strongly Agree
7. My teacher encourages students with different abilities to participate equally.	4.13	0.619	Agree
8. I feel comfortable asking questions because my teacher is supportive of all students.	3.55	0.925	Agree
9. My teacher creates an inclusive and safe environment for all students.	4.16	0.735	Agree
10. I feel that my teacher listens to and respects my opinions equally.	3.97	0.706	Agree
11. I feel that I belong to the class group when working on projects.	3.48	0.811	Agree
12. I feel comfortable collaborating with my classmates in group activities.	3.77	0.845	Agree
13. My classmates treat me with respect regardless of my abilities or background.	3.42	0.765	Agree
14. I feel supported by my peers when I ask for help during class.	3.84	0.969	Agree
15. My peers encourage me to participate in class activities.	4.03	0.795	Agree
Overall	3.76	0.447	Agree

On the other hand, low-homogenized classes had a mean score of 3.76 (SD = 0.447), also showing a "high level of agreement" regarding inclusivity. These students reported positive feelings about fairness, respect, and equal participation, but their responses varied more. This variability may be due to the diverse academic levels and backgrounds of students in these classes. Still, positive teacher efforts, like fostering a sense of belonging and creating safe learning environments, were evident in both groups, highlighting the important role teachers play in shaping students' experiences. Ertesvåg et al. (2024) highlight that robust instructional support from teachers is

associated with improved peer relationships in the classroom, which in turn fosters student engagement.

3.3. Students' Performance in Homogenized Classes

Figure 1 illustrates the academic performance of Grade 7 students in a homogenized setting. It reveals that 58.06% of students in the high-homogenized class achieved an outstanding performance, compared to only 9.68% in the low-homogenized class. In the "very satisfactory" category, 38.71% of students from the high-homogenized class performed well, while 29.03% from the low-homogenized group did. Additionally, 3.23% of the high-homogenized group received a satisfactory grade, in contrast to 41.94% of the low-homogenized group. Notably, there were no students from the high-homogenized group in the "fairly satisfactory" category, whereas 19.35% of students from the low-homogenized group fell into this category.

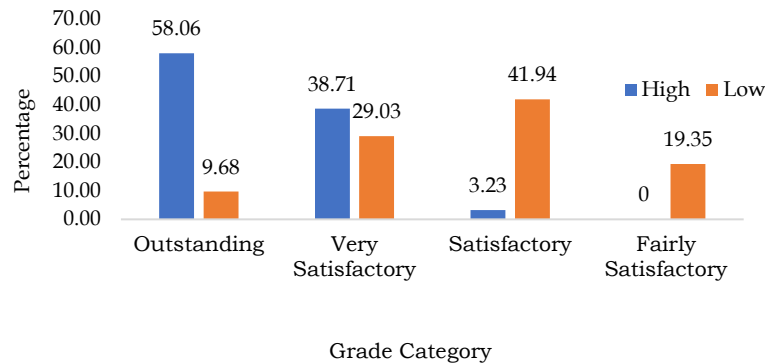


Figure 1. Academic Performance in a Homogenized Class

The findings of this study align with those of Jardinez and Natividad (2024), who explore the implementation of inclusive education in mainstream classrooms, highlighting its transformative potential for fostering diversity, empathy, and acceptance. Similarly, findings from a meta-analysis conducted by Steenbergen-Hu et al. (2016) suggest that homogeneous grouping tends to improve academic outcomes, particularly when students are placed with peers who share similar levels of academic readiness. This supports the observation in the present study that students in the high-homogenized class exhibited a higher proportion of learners performing at outstanding and very satisfactory levels. Such groupings may provide a more focused learning environment, allowing teachers to tailor instruction more effectively and students to progress at a consistent pace.

In addition to grouping practices, the teacher's role in fostering a positive and inclusive environment also significantly contributes to student success. A report published in *Frontiers in Education* (2022) highlights the critical role that teacher efforts to create a sense of belonging and a psychologically safe learning environment play in supporting student engagement, particularly in academically diverse settings.

An analysis of academic performance scores is presented in Table 7, which shows that students in the high-homogeneous class had a mean score of 89.9 (SD = 2.82). Meanwhile, students from the low-homogeneous class had a mean score of 83.2 (SD = 4.57). The relatively lower standard deviation in the high-homogenized group suggests that their performance was more consistent, with scores closely clustered around the mean. This consistency is further reflected in the standard error, which was 0.506 for the high-homogenized group, compared to 0.821 for the low-homogenized group, indicating greater stability in performance outcomes.

Table 7. Descriptive Statistics of Academic Performance for High- and Low-Homogenized Classes

Group	N	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Standard Error
High-homogenized class	31	89.9	90	2.82	0.506
Low-homogenized class	31	83.2	83	4.57	0.821

Table 8 displays the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, which was used to compare the academic performance of the two groups. The high-homogenized class recorded a mean score of 89.9 (SD = 2.82), while the low-homogenized class posted a mean of 83.2 (SD = 4.57). The test produced a U value of 107 and a p-value less than

0.001, indicating that the difference in scores between the two groups was statistically significant. These findings align with the conclusions drawn by Salehi et al. (2019), who noted that students in more uniform academic groupings tend to perform better due to reduced variation in ability levels. Similarly, Ballen et al. (2017) emphasize that classroom composition has a measurable impact on student achievement, reinforcing the idea that learning outcomes can be enhanced in environments where instructional strategies are matched more closely to students' academic profiles.

Table 8. Mann-Whitney U Test Comparing Academic Performance between the High-Homogenized and Low-Homogenized Classes

		Statistic	p	Interpretation
Academic Performance	Mann-Whitney U	107	< .001	Significant

3.4 Relationship between Class Homogenization, Inclusivity, and Academic Performance

Table 9 presents the relationship between students' perceptions of class homogenization and inclusivity and their academic performance. The Spearman correlation analysis revealed a weak positive relationship between perceived class homogenization and academic performance ($\rho = 0.313$, $df = 60$, $p = 0.013$). This suggests that students who perceive their class as more homogeneous tend to perform slightly better academically, and this relationship is statistically significant. On the other hand, perceptions of inclusivity showed a very weak and statistically insignificant positive correlation with academic performance ($\rho = 0.042$, $df = 60$, $p = 0.744$), indicating that students' sense of inclusivity within the classroom setting does not meaningfully predict academic outcomes.

Table 9. Spearman Correlation Analysis between Students' Perceptions of Inclusivity and their Academic Performance

	Correlation Coefficient (Spearman's ρ)	df	p-value	Interpretation
Class Homogeneity	0.313	60	0.013	Significant
Academic Proficiency				
Inclusivity	0.042	60	0.744	Not significant
Academic Proficiency				

These findings align with the study of Kuzmina and Ivanova (2018), who noted that homogeneous class settings tend to support higher academic performance. Similarly, Burns and Mason (2002) emphasized the influence of students' perceptions of their classroom composition on learning outcomes, reinforcing the idea that a perceived sense of similarity among classmates can enhance academic engagement. Conversely, the non-significant correlation between inclusivity and academic performance supports findings by Nishina et al. (2019), who reported that while inclusive environments may enhance students' social development, they do not consistently lead to academic gains. This finding is echoed by Lindner et al. (2021), who highlight that inclusive classrooms foster social cohesion but may not have a significant impact on academic achievement.

Table 10 presents the results of a multiple regression analysis used to investigate the influence of class homogenization, inclusivity, and class group on students' academic performance. The R value of 0.572 suggests a moderate positive relationship between the combined predictors and academic performance. At the same time, the R^2 of 0.327 indicates that about 32.7% of the variance in student achievement can be explained by these three variables. The remaining variance may be attributed to other unmeasured factors such as student motivation, instructional methods, home environment, or access to learning resources.

Table 10. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis of Students' Perceptions and Class Group as Predictors of Academic Performance

Table 10: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis: Examined Independent and Control Group as Predictors of Academic Performance					
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	88.926	5.500		16.168	0.000
Class Homogenization	2.955	1.538	0.221	1.921	0.060
Inclusivity	-1.044	1.281	-0.092	-0.815	0.418
Class Group	-6.213	0.974	-0.623	-6.378	0.000
R = 0.572		R ² = 0.327		SE = 4.25	
Dependent Variable: academic performance					

Among these three predictors, class group emerged as a significant factor ($B = -6.213$, $p < .001$), meaning that the group to which students are assigned has a strong influence on their academic performance. This finding is consistent with recent studies, such as that of Gentrup et al. (2020), which highlighted that students in lower-

performing groups tend to experience reduced expectations and limited academic opportunities, often resulting in lower performance outcomes. Similarly, Zimmermann et al. (2023) emphasized that tracking systems can inadvertently reinforce existing achievement gaps, especially when instructional quality varies across groups. The variable class homogenization showed a positive but statistically marginal relationship with performance ($B = 2.955$, $p = 0.060$). Although not significant at the .05 level, this suggests that students in academically homogeneous settings may benefit slightly from instruction that is aligned and paced with peers. Blömeke et al. (2018) reported similar trends, noting that homogeneity can support instructional clarity and allow teachers to tailor lessons better. However, its effectiveness still depends mainly on the quality of teaching.

On the other hand, inclusivity had a negative and non-significant relationship ($B = -1.044$, $p = 0.418$) with academic performance. While inclusion is widely promoted for its socio-emotional benefits, its direct impact on achievement may be limited unless accompanied by strategies like differentiated instruction or co-teaching models. Alnahdi (2020) argued that inclusive practices yield more consistent results when teachers are adequately trained and supported in adapting instruction. Similarly, Campoy-Cubillo (2019) found that although inclusive classrooms offer emotional and social growth, the academic effects are not always immediate or measurable in traditional assessments.

4.0 Conclusion

The findings of this study underscore the significant role that class grouping plays in shaping the academic outcomes of Grade 7 students. While inclusivity and class homogenization were present in both high and low-performing groups, it was the class group variable that emerged as the most powerful predictor of academic success. Students in high-homogeneous classes not only reported more favorable perceptions of their learning environment but also demonstrated higher academic performance. This suggests that students benefit from being grouped with peers of similar academic capabilities, likely due to more tailored instruction and reduced classroom variability. However, the data also show that inclusivity, though widely practiced, does not necessarily correlate with academic gains, highlighting the need to differentiate between social cohesion and academic productivity.

Given these findings, schools and policymakers should reassess existing classroom grouping practices to ensure they strike a balance between academic performance goals and equity and inclusivity. Teachers must be equipped with strategies to manage both homogeneous and diverse classrooms, particularly in addressing differentiated instruction. It is recommended that schools invest in ongoing professional development that emphasizes inclusive pedagogies and flexible grouping models, allowing educators to adapt their instruction to the specific needs of students. Furthermore, longitudinal research is encouraged to investigate how classroom composition impacts not only academic outcomes but also students' emotional well-being and long-term engagement in learning. Integrating both homogenization and inclusivity in thoughtful, intentional ways may offer the most promising path toward educational equity and excellence.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

VJCS: conceptualization, data gathering, data analysis
JPL: conceptualization, supervising

6.0 Funding

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7.0 Conflict of Interests

This study has no conflict of interest of any sort.

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