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Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Student Engagement in The Classroom

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Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Student Engagement in The Classroom

A Project Presented to The Graduate Faculty of
Minnesota State University Moorhead

By
Ismail Adam Ismail

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Curriculum and
Instruction
Spring 2023
Moorhead, Minnesota

Abstract

One of the most effective teaching methods is positive reinforcement. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on student engagement in the classroom academically, behaviorally, and socially. In particular, Somali bilingual students. This action research project took place at a kindergarten through twelfth grade school in Minnesota. The school had two sites (K–4 and 5–12) and enrolled approximately 308 students. The participants in the study were teachers and staff in K–12 grades. The research design was a quantitative research project. To collect data, teachers who were taking part in this study received an electronic survey consisting of an informed consent form and a questionnaire regarding their experience using positive reinforcement. The survey consisted of ten (10) questions. Each question was scored on a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., very important = 5, important = 4, moderately important = 3, slightly important = 2, unimportant = 1), and the participants rated these five points by marking one of the responses. The results of the survey have shown that positive reinforcement increases student engagement in the classroom.

Keywords: positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, tangible reinforcement, and social reinforcement.

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Dedication

This action research project is dedicated to my parents, family, professors, friends, and colleagues for their unwavering support throughout my journey.

Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by thanking God, the Almighty, who enabled and granted me the opportunity to accomplish this study. After that, I want to thank all of my instructors in the online curriculum and instruction program. Especially Dr. Kathy Enger for being my research project advisor and committee chairperson. Without her expertise, invaluable guidance, and patience, I would not have been able to complete this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Michael Coquyt, the program coordinator, my advisor, and a committee member for encouraging me to enroll in this program and providing endless support to achieve my goal of earning a master's degree. I would also like to thank my entire family and friends, who helped me stay positive and believed in my endeavors during my educational journey. Finally, I would like to thank my school superintendent for his consent to conduct this study and my colleagues who voluntarily participated in this project to share their perspective and experience on positive reinforcement.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

“To teach is to engage students in learning; thus, teaching consists of getting students involved in the active construction of knowledge” (Christensen, et al., 1991, p. xiii). Teachers can provide their students with a sense of caring, respect, and appreciation that can increase their participation in the learning process and classroom activities (Wang & Eccles, 2012). Methods to effectively engage students in positive ways and promote active learning can vary. However, positive reinforcement is one of the strategies to enhance engagement. If a student is rewarded for doing an excellent job, the chances of him or her continuing engaging behavior may increase (Hawes, 2018).

Souders (2019) stated that positive reinforcement enables teachers to highlight the talents, interests, and personality features of their students. As a result, it provides teachers with a chance to engage with students, communicate effectively, and eventually empower them to be more of themselves. In this action research project, the aim was to examine the effects of positive reinforcement on student engagement in the classroom academically, behaviorally, and socially. In particular, Somali bilingual students. Also, the study intended to analyze how positive reinforcement builds strong relationships with students that encourage culturally responsive teaching strategies. Positive reinforcement can be applied in a variety of ways. This study primarily focused on social and tangible reinforcers.

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Definition of key terms

To comprehend the research concept and the limits of the study, there are a few key terms that should be clarified. Downing et al. (1991, P. 87) stated some terms of reinforcement. These may include the following four terms:

Positive reinforcement is "the presentation of a pleasurable or desirable consequence for behavior, such as praising a student for satisfactory work."

Negative reinforcement is "removing an unpleasant consequence to increase a behavior, such as restoring recess privilege for assignment."

completion."

Tangible reinforcement is "a reinforcer that the student can actually touch, such as an award sticker or edibles like gum or candy."

Social reinforcement is the feedback we get from other people in response to what we do. It might take the form of smiles, acceptance, praise, applause, and attention (Cherry, 2022).

Brief Literature Review

Positive reinforcement is a universal principle in effect regardless of a child's age, gender, culture, or disability (Maag, 2001, p. 174). Positive reinforcement is an important strategy that teachers can use to encourage student involvement in the classroom. However, there are numerous studies and debates that discuss whether the use of positive reinforcement is effective for increasing student engagement or not. The literature on the importance of positive reinforcement for this study focused primarily on how positive reinforcement increases student engagement in the classroom. In particular, the areas of student academic performance, behavior management, and social and emotional learning.

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Statement of the Problem

Classroom challenges faced by teachers may vary. However, the most common teaching issues may include a lack of student involvement in the classroom, disruptive behavior, and ineffective classroom management that affect students' academic performance. This study aimed to determine whether using positive reinforcement can enhance student engagement in the classroom, behavior management strategies, and social and emotional learning development.

Purpose of the Study

The study's purpose was to examine the impact of positive reinforcement on student engagement in the classroom. Specifically, social and tangible reinforcers. The findings and results of this research may help classroom teachers understand how positive reinforcement provides a desired behavior. Thereafter, use it in their teaching instructions to improve the students' learning process.

Research Question(s)

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on students' engagement in the classroom by answering the following three questions:

1. Does positive reinforcement have an impact on student academic performance?
2. Does positive reinforcement play a role in developing and managing student behavior in classes?
3. Does positive reinforcement increase students' social-emotional learning skills?

Definition of Variables

The following are the independent and dependent variables of the study:

1. The independent variables of this research are positive reinforcement strategies. These include tangible reinforcers (rewards, candy, treats, toys, and money) and social reinforcers

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(praising a student for being a good listener, making a student a line leader, having lunch with a teacher, and so on).

2. The dependent variable engages the students in the learning process through positive reinforcement techniques.

Significance of the Study

Engaging students in the learning process is essential for increasing their focus on the course materials and inspiring them to develop critical thinking. This action research project is intended to examine whether positive reinforcement can be used as an effective technique that allows teachers to interact with their students by giving them the right choice to increase their classroom engagement and manage their behavior.

Research Ethics

Permission and IRB Approval: To conduct this action research, the researcher obtained approval for exempt status from MSUM's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and a letter of permission from the school district in which the study took place to ensure the ethical conduct of research involving human subjects.

Informed Consent: After obtaining permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Minnesota State University Moorhead and the school district where the research was conducted, the IRB's research protocol was followed to protect human subjects involved in the study. The researcher informed the participants about the study's purpose and all procedures before taking part in the research (see Appendix A for an informed consent form). There was no known risk associated with participating in this research.

Limitations

Some of the possible limitations of this study may include the following:

1. The instrument of this study is limited to the use of an electronic survey.
2. Positive reinforcement forms may vary. This study focused only on social and tangible reinforcers.
3. The participants in this study were teachers and staff who teach and work with Somali-English bilingual students in kindergarten through grade twelve. The data collected may reflect only this sample of educators. Consequently, the findings of the study are not generalized.

Conclusion

The introductory chapter discussed the purpose of this research and the importance of positive reinforcement in increasing student engagement in classrooms by guiding through the following question: Does using positive reinforcement increase student engagement in the classroom? In chapter two, I will review some of the existing literature that emphasizes the need for positive reinforcement and its impact on the student's performance academically, behaviorally, and socially.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study analyzed the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on student engagement in classrooms. This review of the literature examines the significance of positive reinforcement and its role in the teaching environment, answering the research question: does using positive reinforcement increase student engagement in the classroom? The chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the concept of positive reinforcement theory and its types. The second section provides an overview of the effects of positive reinforcement on student academic performance. The third section explores how positive reinforcement reduces disruptive behavior and improves classroom management. The fourth section focuses on how positive reinforcement increases students' social and emotional learning. The last section summarizes the sections of the chapter.

What is positive reinforcement?

Positive reinforcement was introduced by the behaviorist B.F. Skinner. His theory is known as operant conditioning. Skinner argued that if a person or a child were rewarded for acting in a positive way, that treatment could change their behavior, and they would consider it the most natural and advantageous way to act (McCarthy, 2010). Accordingly, positive reinforcement intends to increase the desired behavior by adding a favorable stimulus immediately after it occurs. It is a reward for students to behave in a certain way, and this reward encourages them to do so again (Li, 2022).

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Positive reinforcement refers to “the introduction of desirable or pleasant stimuli after the performance of a behavior.” The purpose of using desirable stimuli after a performance is to reinforce that positive behavior and make it occur again in the future (Nickerson, 2022).

Staddon and Cerutti (2003) stated that Skinner's behavior theory is controlled by its consequences. If a behavior is followed by a positive consequence (reinforcement), that behavior is more likely to occur again, but if the behavior is followed by a negative consequence (punishment), it is less likely to occur again. Therefore, Skinner contended that explaining the behavior requires external motivation and observable causes rather than internal motivation (Staddon & Cerutti, 2003).

Positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement have the same goal—to encourage a certain behavior—but they use different methods. Positive reinforcement adds a desirable stimulus to the situation, while negative reinforcement removes an undesirable stimulus, both in the service of reinforcing the behavior that was displayed (Ackerman, 2019). For example, if a teacher gives his or her students candy for cleaning up their toys or withholds recess from some students until they finish their work as other students do, both positive and negative reinforcement is intended to increase desired behaviors.

Positive reinforcement tools may vary. However, there are four major types of positive reinforcers that can be used to encourage students' behavior and develop their emotional intelligence, depending on the individual and the situation (Cherry, 2022). These include the following:

1. Natural reinforcers are those that occur directly because of the behavior. For example, students pay attention in class and work hard on the exams. As a result, they earned great points.

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2. Social reinforcers are expressions of approval for a behavior, such as a teacher saying or writing “excellent work” to a student.
3. Tangible reinforcers refer to touchable rewards such as candy, treats, toys, money, and other desired objects.
4. Token reinforcers are points or tokens that are awarded for performing certain actions. Then these tokens can be exchanged for something of value.

Section summary

Skinner's reinforcement theory demonstrates the following key ideas:

1. Positive reinforcement refers to the encouragement that follows good behavior.
2. Positive reinforcement can be used to influence and change behaviors.
3. Both positive and negative reinforcement have significant effects on students and intend to increase desired behaviors in different ways.

Effects of positive reinforcement on student academic performance

Numerous studies have been done on the efficiency of positive reinforcement in the educational setting. As a result, positive reinforcement clearly has a significant impact on kids' academics. Khattak and Ahmad (2018) conducted research to examine the effects of positive reinforcement on students' academic performance. The study focused on students with the same socioeconomic background and no cultural differences. The study's findings showed and suggested that positive reinforcement affects student academic achievement. So, teachers can therefore utilize positive reinforcement to improve classroom strategies and boost students' academic development.

Another study regarding the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on student performance was conducted by Dad, et al. (2010). The study's purpose was to compare the

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frequency and effectiveness of positive and negative reinforcement practices deployed by schoolteachers. According to the findings of this study, rewards and punishment reinforcement can be effective tools for increasing student academic achievement and developing desired behavior in the classroom. Student academic engagement is one of the strongest predictors that teachers employ to measure students' performance. However, that requires students' self-regulation skills to control their behavior. One of the teaching strategies teachers can use to ensure and provide appropriate learning environments where students feel safe and supported academically, socially, and emotionally is positive reinforcement through encouraging and building positive relationships (Otero & Haut, 2015).

Eremie and Doueyi-Fiderikumo (2018) conducted research to investigate the effects of positive reinforcement on student academic achievement. In particular, the study focused on students in secondary schools by using a survey design methodology. The research result showed that positive reinforcement can be important in improving students' academic achievement. Furthermore, the researchers recommend that teachers at all levels use positive reinforcement in their learning environments. Therefore, school districts and sites may provide appropriate training for teachers and staff on how to apply and implement positive reinforcement in the classroom.

Section summary

Several studies have shown that positive reinforcement plays a significant role in increasing student academic performance. So, it can be used by teachers as one of the valuable techniques to improve students' positive behaviors. However, there are some areas that still need more research, such as the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on language development,

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how to use positive reinforcement in classes (e.g., procedures and rules), and using differentiated instructions to make it clearer whether it is sometimes disadvantageous or not.

Positive reinforcement and classroom management

One of the usual challenges faced by teachers is managing students' behavior during the learning process in class. Positive reinforcement is an effective way to teach and manage instructional strategies (Craig, 2019). So, reinforcement can be a particularly useful tool for promoting a desirable change in student behavior (Smith, 2017). Also, it is the most valuable behavior management strategy. Moreover, it helps teachers improve student performance and engage in classroom discussions (Eremie & Doueyi-Fiderikumo, 2018). In addition, positive reinforcement can be an effective technique for modifying student behavior and motivating them to be responsible, safe, and kind (Morin, 2022).

Section summary

Positive reinforcement is an effective way to manage students' behavior, promote their engagement in the learning process, and teach classroom expectations such as responsibility, safety, and kindness.

Positive reinforcement increases student social and emotional learning

According to the Hillside site (2020), social and emotional learning (SEL) is the process through which children develop and practice their social and emotional skills. Social and emotional learning skills are those we use to cope healthily with negative emotions, create long-term goals, and make decisions. SEL has five core competencies. They include the following: self-awareness, self-management, decision-making, social awareness, and relationship skills. Along with academic performance and classroom management, positive reinforcement develops and promotes students' self-regulation skills and social behavior (Otero & Haut, 2015). Self-

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management and self-monitoring are critical in developing students' awareness of how to control their behavior in class. According to Rumfola (2017), positive reinforcement is crucial for our students and teaching behaviors to see the positive effects on students' academic and social success in and out of the classroom walls. Therefore, positive reinforcement is one strategy to increase students' social awareness and abilities.

Theoretical Framework

This study's theoretical framework is grounded in the operant conditioning of learning attributed to B.F. Skinner. According to operant conditioning theory, the behavior reinforced (rewarded) is more likely to be repeated, while the behavior punished is less likely to occur (McLeod, 2018). This action research's goal was to provide an analytical study on the effects of positive reinforcement on student engagement in the classroom by looking at positive reinforcement that emerged from operant conditioning. Therefore, teachers may employ positive reinforcement as a powerful strategy that may strengthen and improve student behavior, such as by providing rewards, praise, and other social attention that motivates students in the learning process. For example, if a teacher rewards his or her student with candy for completing homework, the student is more likely to do so again.

Research Question(s)

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on students' engagement in the classroom by answering the following three questions:

1. Does positive reinforcement impact student academic performance?
2. Does positive reinforcement play a role in developing and managing student behavior in classes?

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3. Does positive reinforcement increase students' social-emotional learning skills?

Chapter Summary

Throughout the research, positive reinforcement has been identified as an important technique that can positively engage students in the learning process. In particular, the areas of academic performance, classroom management, and social-emotional learning of students. In Chapter three, I will discuss research methods and design, setting, participants, instrumentation (such as data collection, data analysis, and research question(s) and system alignment), procedures, ethical considerations, and the conclusion.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

Introduction

Hamm (2018) stated that positive reinforcement is “a type of behavior management that focuses on rewarding what students do well.” Teachers can use positive reinforcement as an effective tool to increase student engagement and desired behavior in the classroom. This action research aimed to explore how positive reinforcement affects student involvement in the learning process academically, socially, and behaviorally. Furthermore, by employing positive reinforcement, teachers may be able to better understand their students, which helps create effective learning strategies.

Research Question(s)

The purpose of this study was to examine how positive reinforcement affects students' classroom involvement. Specifically, in academic performance, managing behavior, and increasing student social and emotional learning. The following questions will guide this research:

1. Does positive reinforcement have an impact on student academic performance?
2. Does positive reinforcement play a role in developing and managing student behavior in classes?
3. Does positive reinforcement increase students' social-emotional learning skills?

Research Design

In this quantitative research project, data was gathered to examine how positive reinforcement affects students' involvement in classes. This may enable teachers to comprehend the viewpoints and backgrounds of their students and support the development of effective teaching strategies in education. This study's research design was a

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survey. The survey was conducted to get quantitative data about the effectiveness of positive reinforcement in increasing student engagement. The researcher sent a questionnaire to the participants about how positive reinforcement affects student engagement in the classroom. The survey questionnaire consisted of ten questions (see Appendix B). Each question had a 5-point Likert scale such as (very important = 5, important = 4, moderately important = 3, slightly important = 2, unimportant = 1). Teachers and staff were asked to rate these five points by marking one of the responses. The purpose of using a survey research design was to collect reliable quantitative data from participants about the impact of positive reinforcement on student engagement.

Setting

This research took place at a kindergarten through twelfth grade school in Minnesota. The school had two sites (K–4 and 5–12) and enrolled approximately 308 students. 15 students had Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). The school's demographic was primarily African American (Somalis). Also, most families were from low-income backgrounds, so all students were eligible for free or reduced lunch services.

Participants

The participants in this study were teachers and staff in grades kindergarten through twelve. Teachers and other staff who work with classroom teachers received an email with a link to a teacher survey that addresses the role positive reinforcement plays in boosting classroom participation. The researcher provided a brief explanation of the study's purpose and benefits to students. Before taking part in the study, participants were required to read and sign a consent form.

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Sampling

The sample participants in this study were teachers and staff who teach kindergarten through grade twelve. The researcher created a survey questionnaire using the Qualtrics tool. Following MSUM's IRB procedures, the data collected from the participants was kept confidential and on a secure electronic device that was always with the co-investigator.

Instrumentation

Data Collection

This study's research design was a survey tool. Teachers and staff received an email with a link to a teacher survey and were requested to participate (see Appendix A for an informed consent form). The survey consisted of an informed consent form that included the following: the title, purpose of the study, information, time, foreseeable risks in the research, benefits to the participant, contacts, and a questionnaire. There was a checkbox for a (yes or no response) at the bottom of the consent form. By checking this box with the response "yes," teachers and staff agreed to participate in this study. In the survey, a 5-point Likert scale system was used to rate responses 1 through 5 for each question. Once the participants had completed their answers, they submitted them.

Data Analysis

Following the survey's completion by the participants, the researcher analyzed and reflected on the collected data to determine if the positive reinforcement increased student engagement in the classroom. The collected data was classified using a 5-point Likert scale as follows: very important = 5, important = 4, moderately important = 3, slightly important = 2, unimportant = 1). The total number of responses was then computed, and the result of each scale was displayed in a graph.

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Research Question(s) and System Alignment. The table below (i.e., Table 3.1.)

Describing the alignment between the study Research Question(s) and the methods used in this study to ensure that all study variables have been accounted for adequately.

Table 3.1.

Research Question(s) Alignment

Research Question	Variables	Design	Instrument	Validity & Reliability	Technique (e.g., interview)	Source
Does using Positive reinforcement Increase student Engagement in the classroom?	DV: Student engagement in the classroom IV: Positive reinforcement strategies	Quantitative Research project	Teacher Survey Questionnaire	A research design protocol will be followed to collect direct results from the survey	Survey Questions via emails	K-12 School TCHR

Procedures

I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for my research in January 2023. Then I sent an electronic survey invitation to the participants via email, along with an informed consent form. To gather more data and ensure that participants have sufficient time, collecting the survey data took approximately four weeks. In early March 2023, the researcher began to classify and organize the data obtained to prepare the findings and conclusion. This lasted until the beginning of April. As Action Research Course ED 696-3 was ending on May 10, 2023, this study was completed with the submission of the final report on May 8.

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Ethical Considerations

To protect the well-being of participants, the researcher has obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), which has indicated that there is no known risk associated with participating in this research survey. Before being involved in the study, teachers and staff signed a consent form stating that their participation in this study is voluntary. In addition, they have the option to opt out or withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and there was no negative effect in this regard. Throughout the study, participants' identification and data were kept confidential, and responses to this survey were anonymous. Finally, for any question or concern, the participants can contact the co-investigator and principal investigator, as well as the chair and secretary of the Minnesota State University Moorhead Institutional Review Board.

Conclusion

Chapter three reviewed the method of the study. It described the project's design, setting, and participants, as well as the collected data and analysis. There were also research procedures and ethical considerations. Throughout the study, the researcher used a survey questionnaire to collect data directly from the participants. In Chapter 4, I will go over data gathering, data analysis, and the results of the survey.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Introduction

The study's purpose was to determine the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on student engagement in classes. The research design was quantitative. Therefore, anonymous survey questions were emailed to all K–12 teachers and staff who collaborate with classroom teachers at a Minnesota school. Throughout this quantitative action research project, the data was collected through surveys that asked teachers and staff about their perceptions and experiences with utilizing positive reinforcement in the classroom. Specifically, the focus was on the areas of academic achievement, behavior management, and social-emotional learning by answering the following three questions:

1. Does positive reinforcement have an impact on student academic performance?
2. Does positive reinforcement play a role in developing and managing student behavior in classes?
3. Does positive reinforcement increase students' social-emotional learning skills?

Data collection

After gaining an approval letter from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the superintendent of the school where the study was conducted, the researcher created an online survey in Qualtrics to gather the data for the study. The survey consisted of ten (10) questions (see Appendix B) and was e-mailed to all participants on Thursday, February 9, 2023, and the researcher gave them until Thursday, March 9, 2023, to complete it. The questions were multiple-choice with a 5-point scale. Meanwhile, there was an informal follow-up with teachers, and staff continued to encourage them to take part in the study.

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Data analysis and results

Approximately four weeks into collecting data, 26 respondents completed the survey.

The responses of the participants were as follows:

The first question asked participants if they were considering using positive reinforcement as an effective way to involve students in the learning process. The response results are shown below:

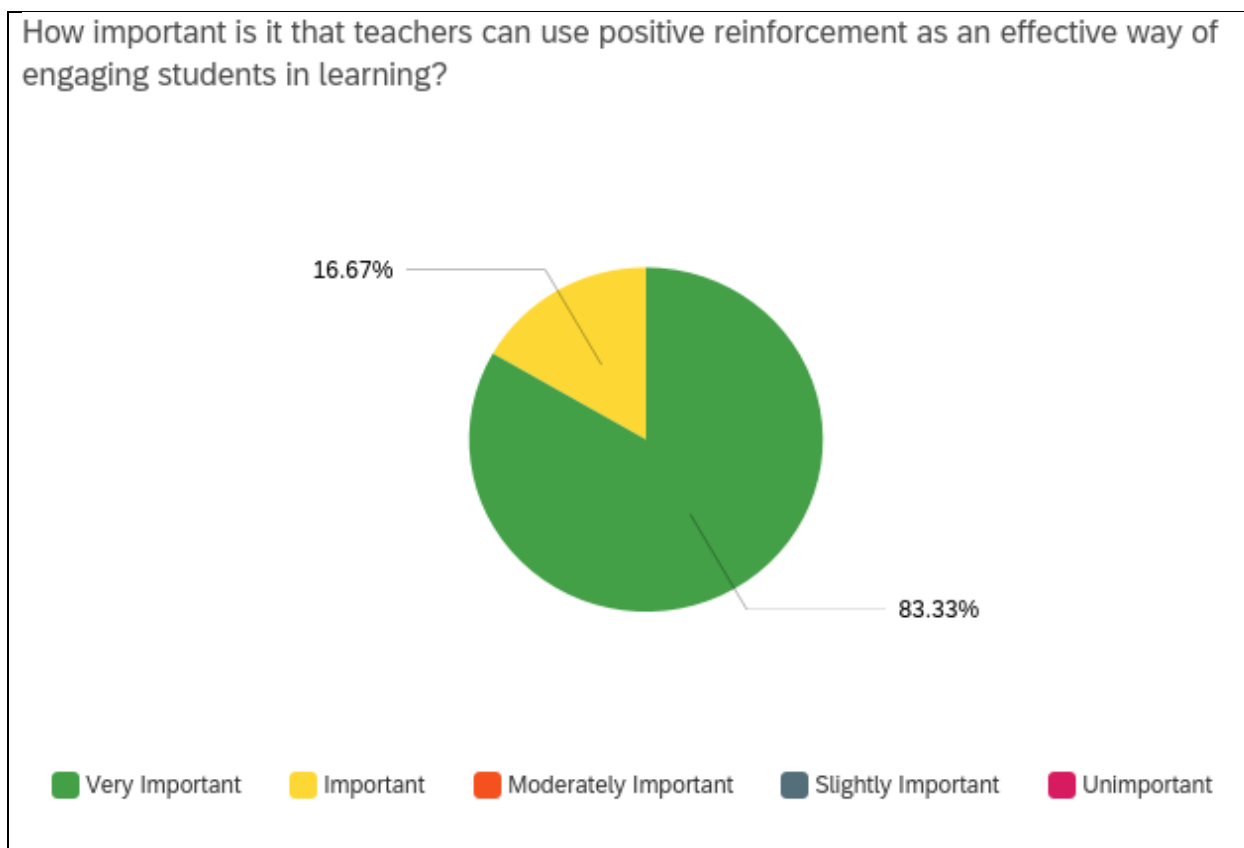


Figure 1. Results from Question 1 of the survey.

The second question in the survey was about how the use of positive reinforcement can reinforce desirable behaviors that are more likely to be repeated. The figure below shows participants' responses:

Positive Reinforcement

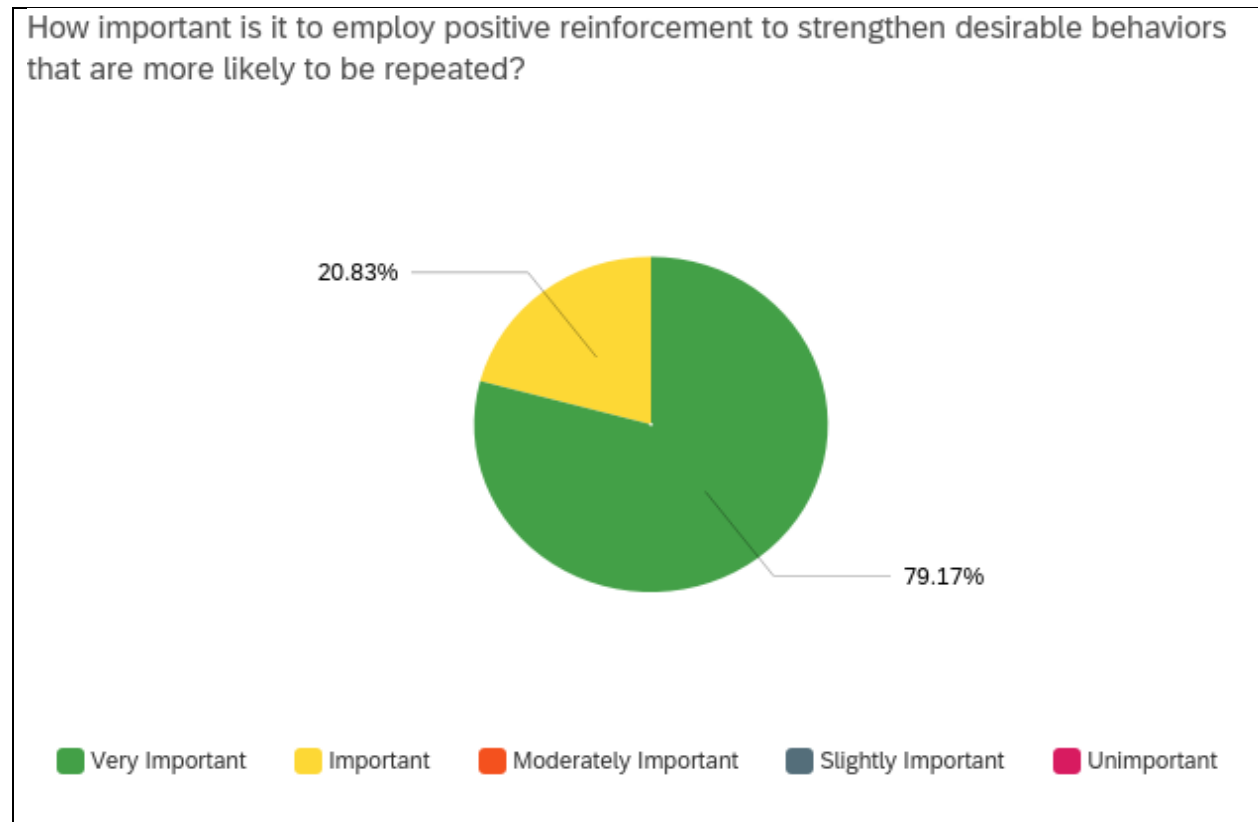


Figure 2. Results from Question 2 of the survey.

The third question centered on the significance of using positive reinforcement to motivate and inspire students' academic growth. The participants' responses are displayed as a percentage in the figure below:

Positive Reinforcement

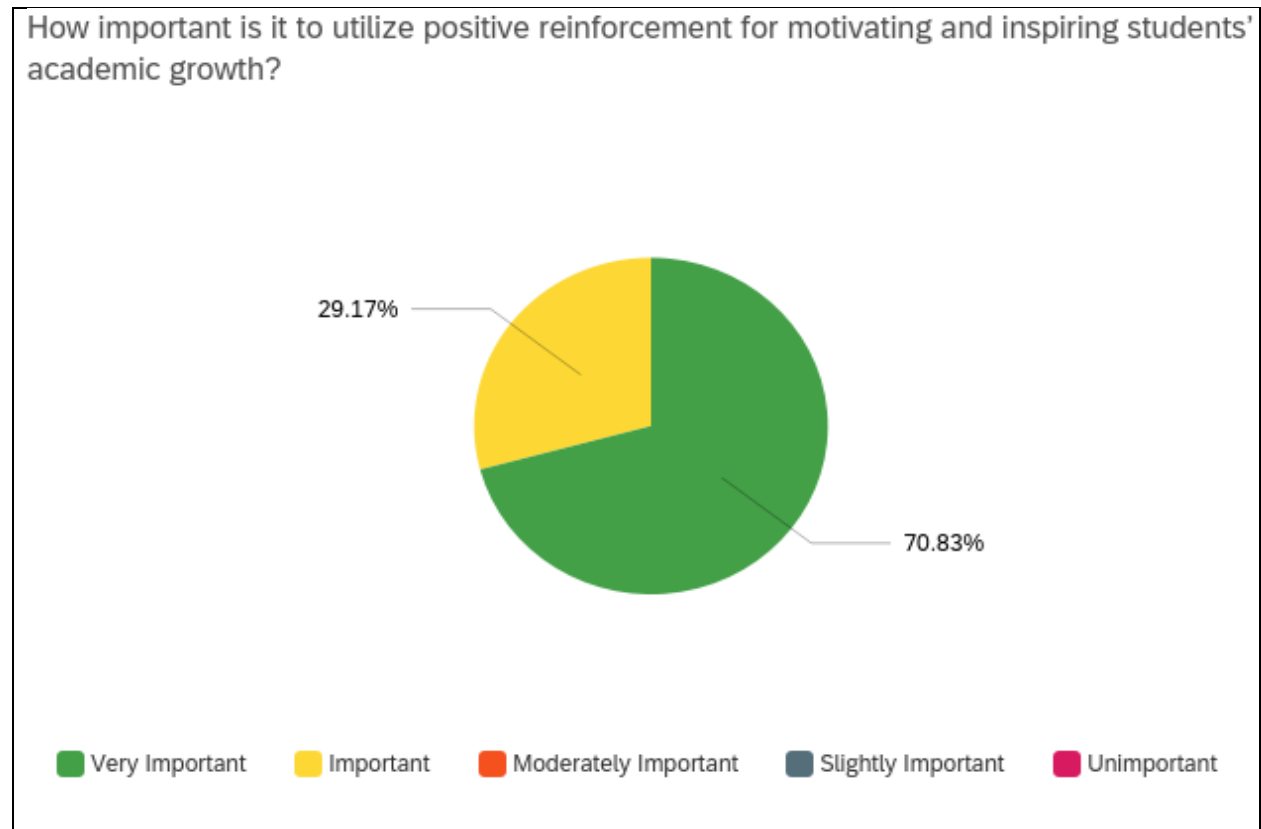


Figure 3. Results from Question 3 of the survey.

The fourth question asked participants how to effectively manage classrooms using positive reinforcement strategies. Figure 4 shows the results:

Positive Reinforcement

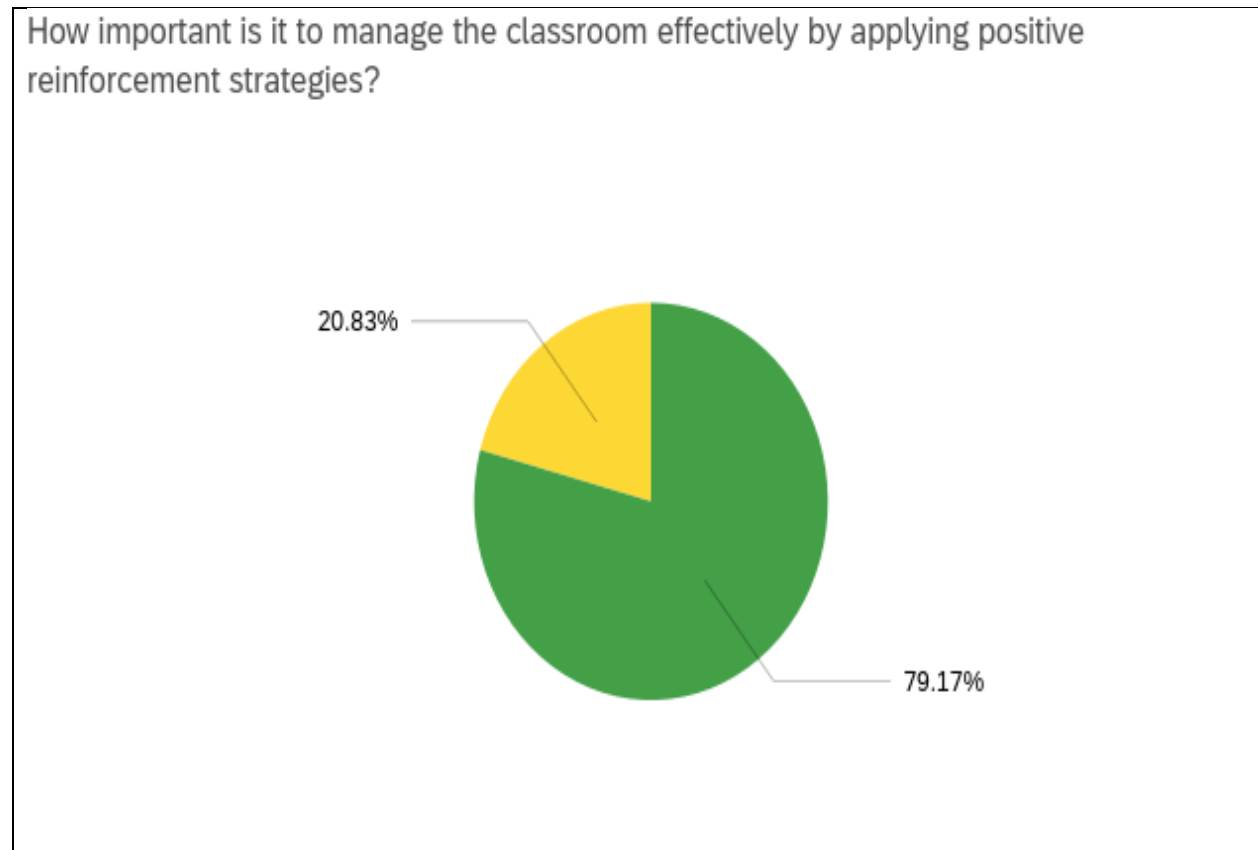


Figure 4. Results from Question 4 of the survey.

The fifth question focused on the importance of positive reinforcement in helping students develop their social and emotional learning. The results are illustrated in Figure 5.

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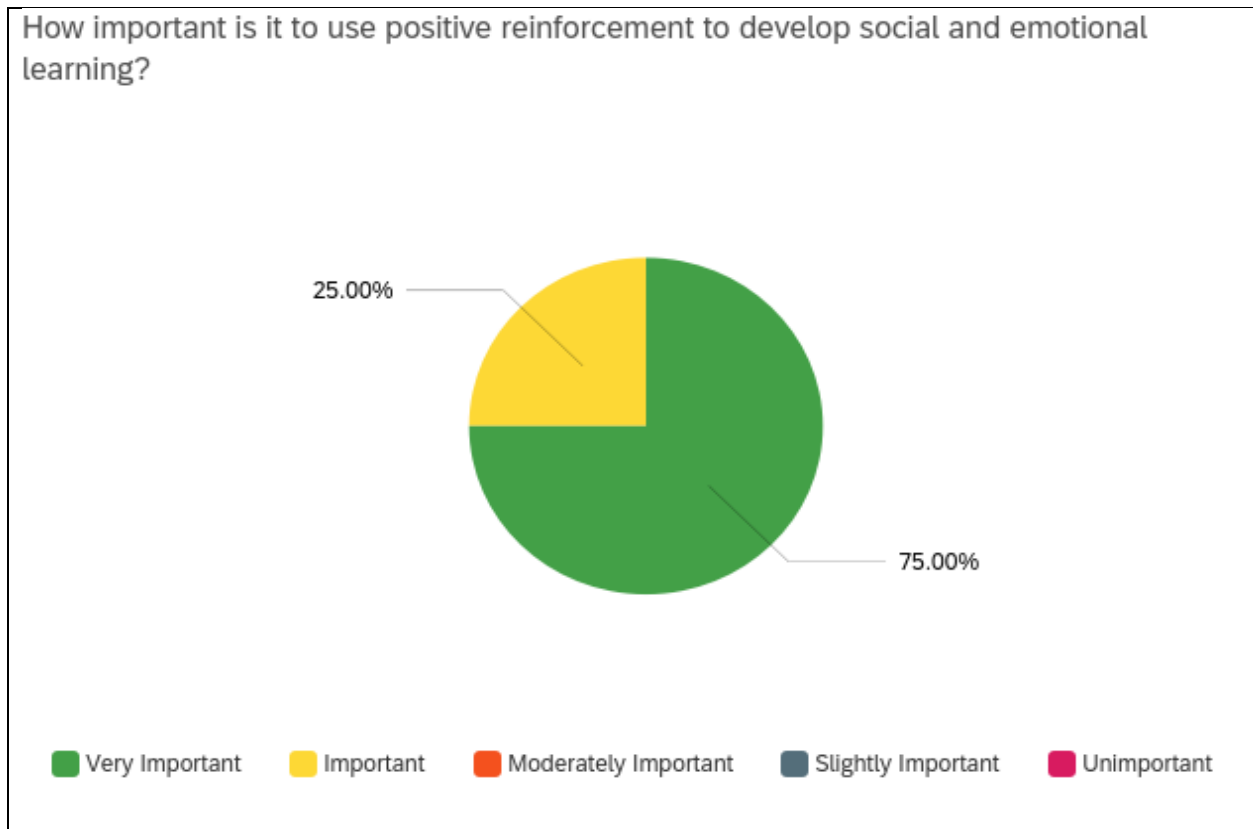


Figure 5. Results from Question 5 of the survey.

In the sixth question, the participants were required to rate the importance of teaching students' responsibility, safety, and respect through positive reinforcement. The response percentages are illustrated in Figure 6.

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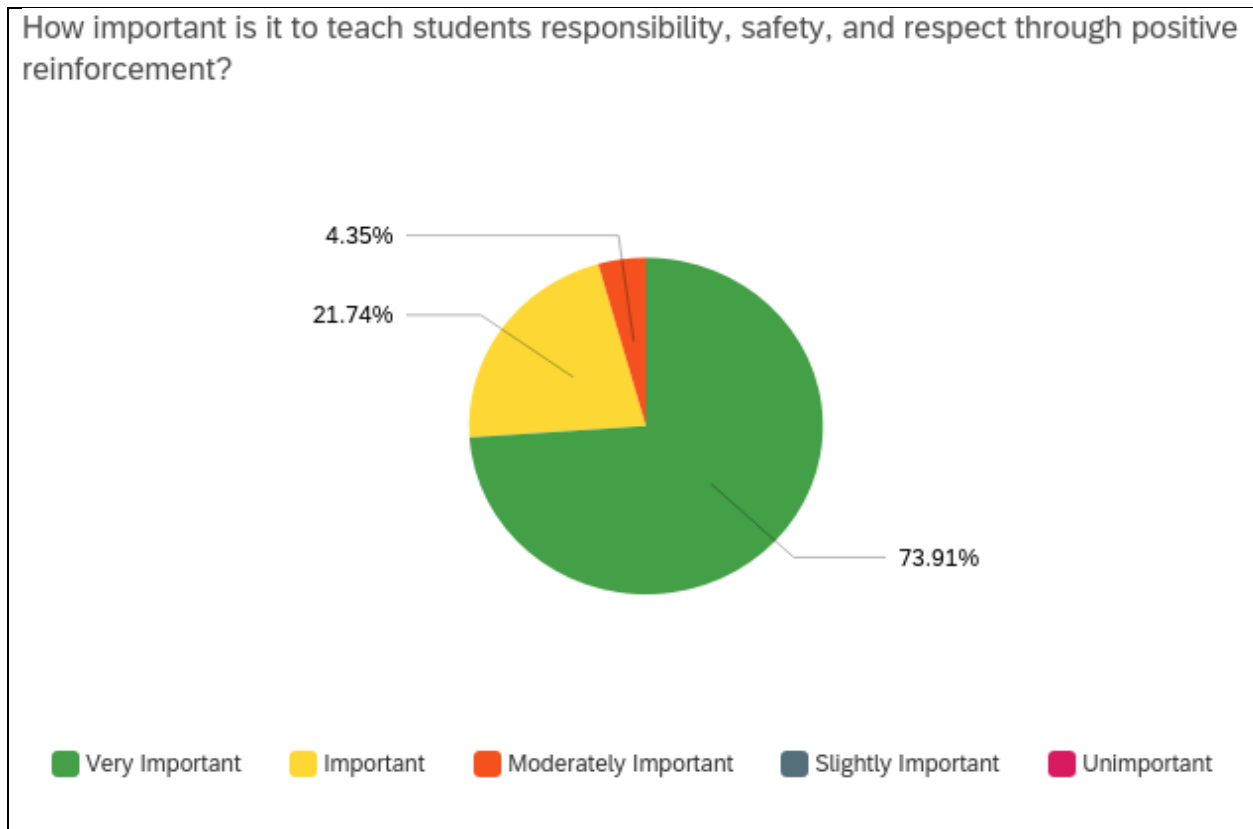


Figure 6. Results from Question 6 of the survey.

In the seventh question, the participants were required to rate the importance of positive reinforcement for improving students' self-confidence by recognizing their performance. Figure 7 shows the responses of the participants.

Positive Reinforcement

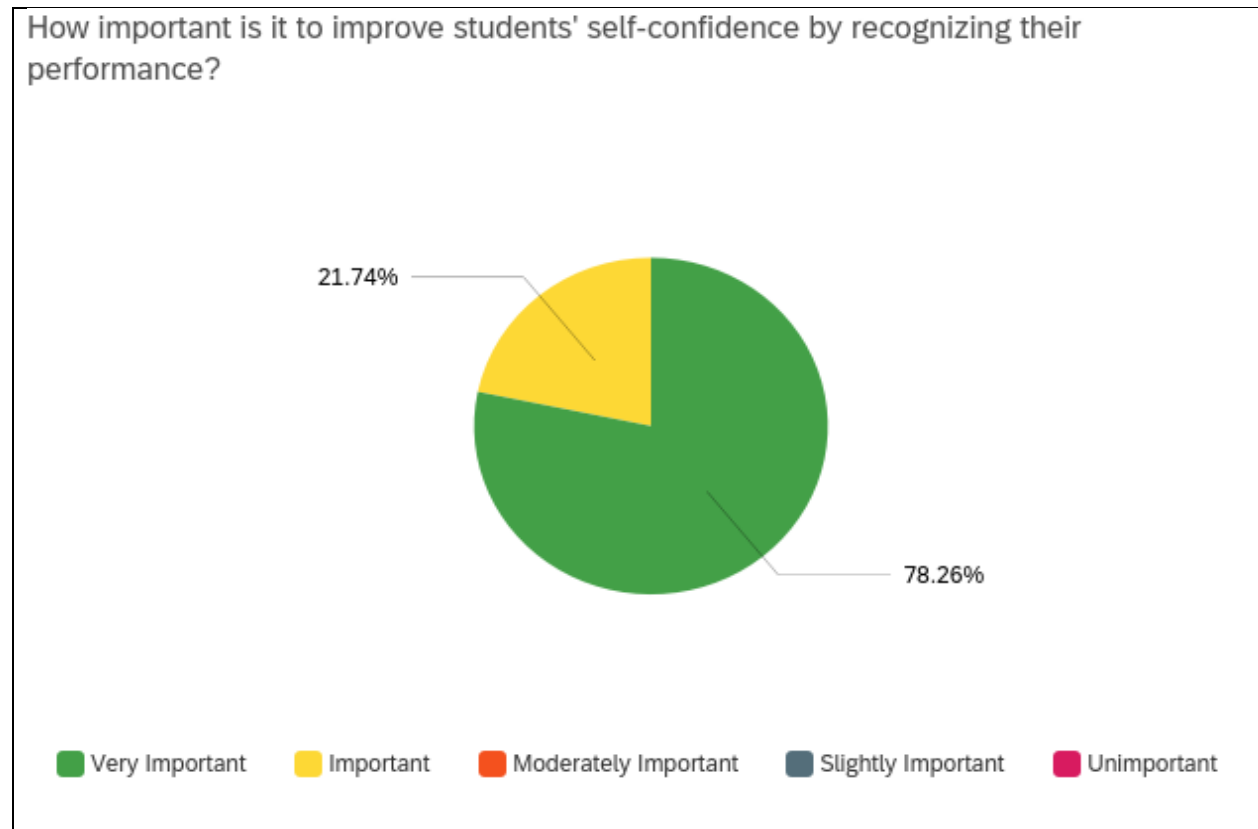


Figure 7. Results from Question 7 of the survey.

The eighth question in the survey asked the participants about the importance of praising and rewarding students for desired behavior right away. The responses are illustrated in figure 8.

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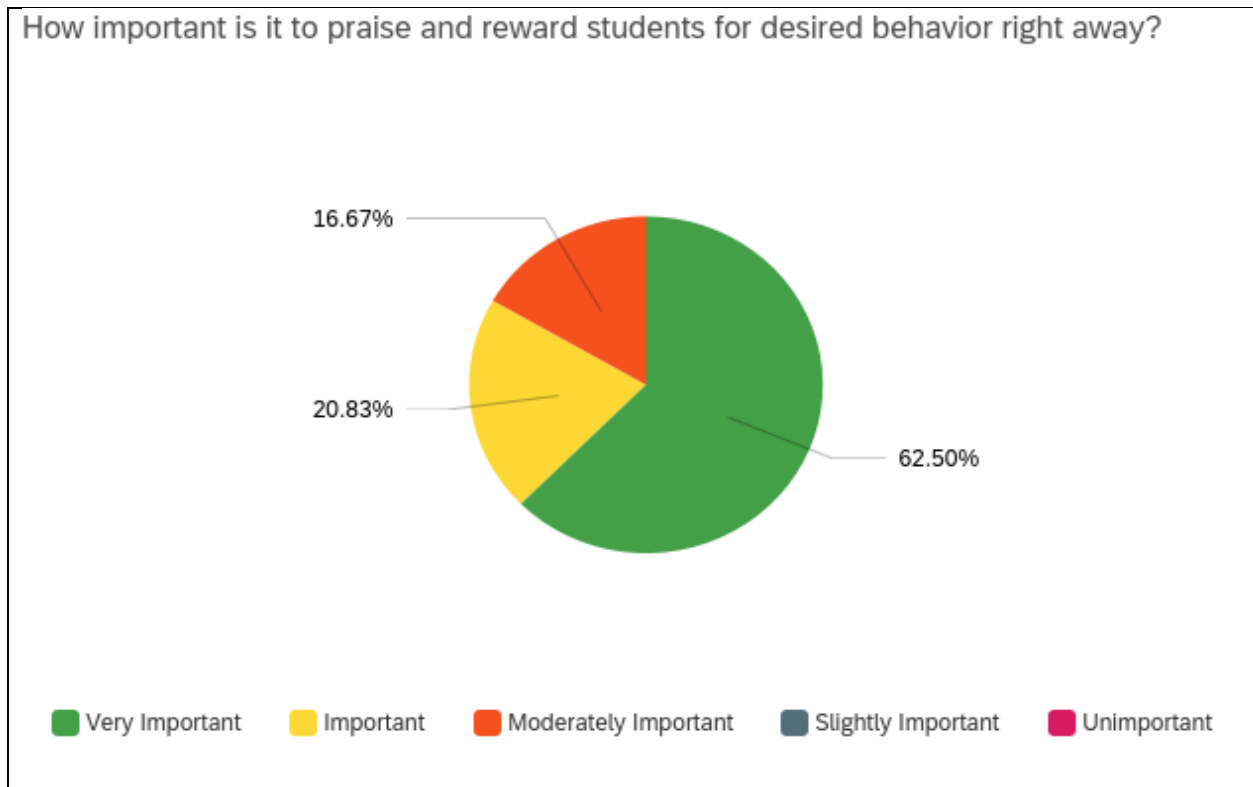


Figure 8. Results from Question 8 of the survey.

The ninth question asked participants about the importance of fostering trusting relationships with students by communicating positively. The results are shown in Figure 9.

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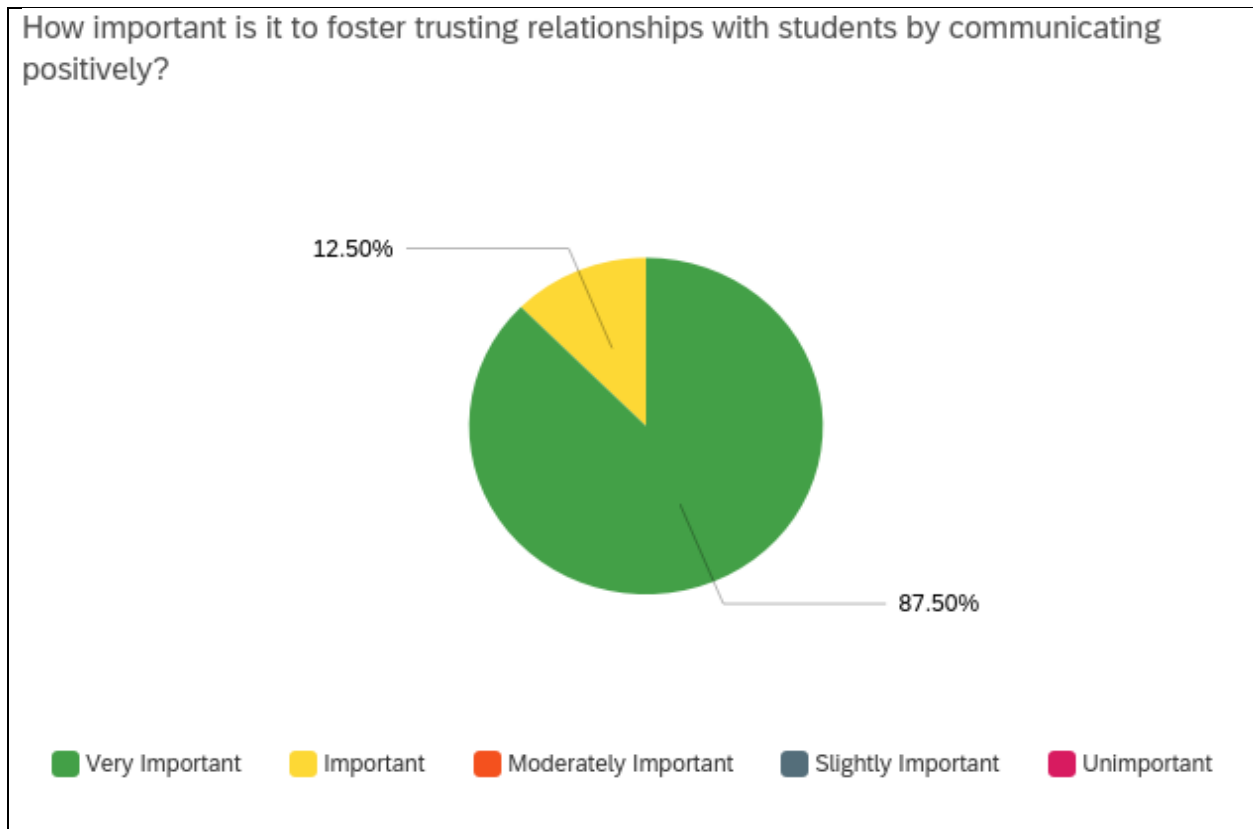
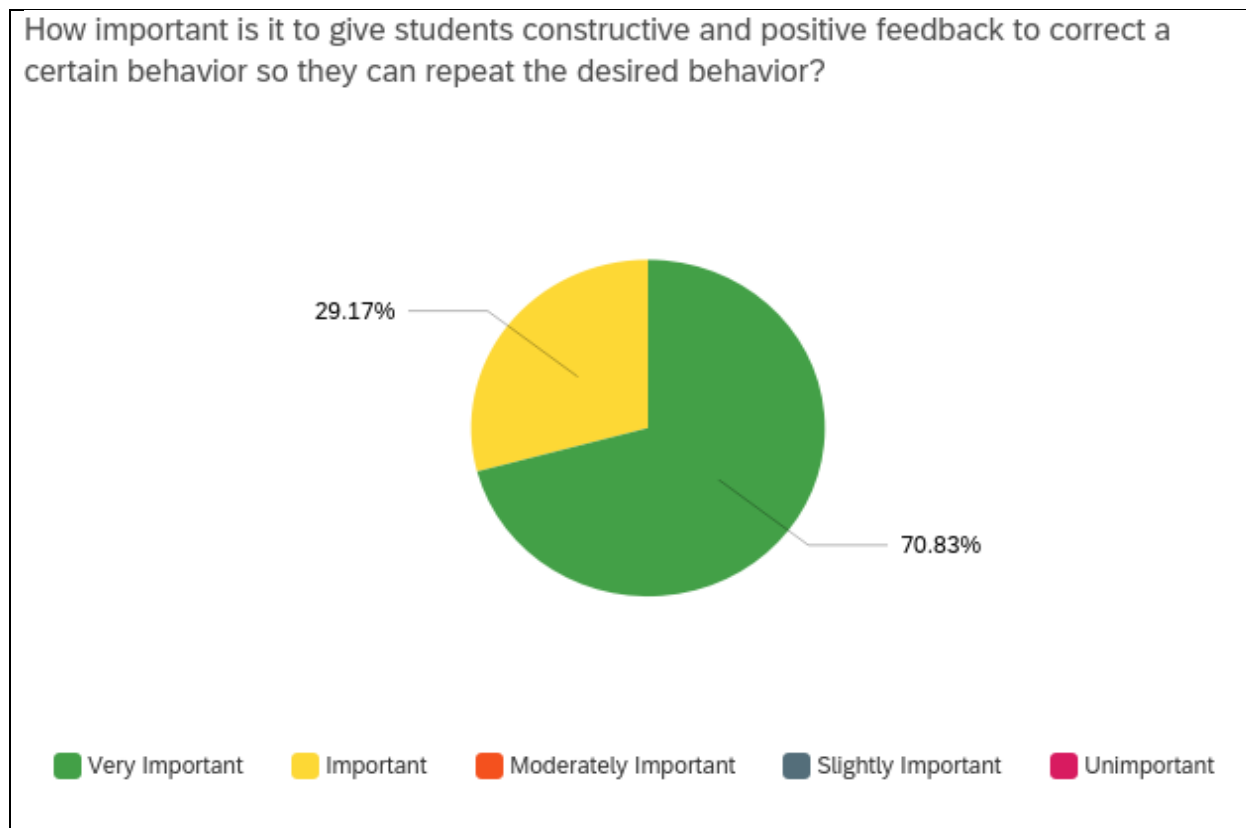


Figure 9. Results from Question 9 of the survey.

In the final question, participants were asked to rate the importance of giving students constructive and positive feedback to correct a certain behavior so that they can repeat the desired behavior. Figure 10 shows the responses of the participants.

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Conclusion

This action research project's aim was to explore the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on student engagement in the classroom. According to the data collected from the survey, 75% of the responses indicated that positive reinforcement is essential for increasing student engagement in the classroom. Similarly, the findings of this study support the other data discussed in the literature review that suggested positive reinforcement as an effective tool for involving students in the learning process. Therefore, positive reinforcement can be a useful technique for motivating students academically, behaviorally, and socially. Chapter five focuses on the implications for practice of reflecting on the findings of the research.

CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Action plan

This study examined how positive reinforcement affects student involvement in the classroom. The results of the survey have shown that positive reinforcement increases student engagement in the classroom. Reflecting on the collected data from the survey, I intend to use and apply positive reinforcement in the classroom as an effective tool for engaging students in the learning process. This might encourage students to interact with other students in a positive way and build relationships with their teachers. Positive reinforcement can take many forms, but this action research focused on tangible and social reinforcers. So, I plan to include tangible and social reinforcers in my teaching strategies and classroom management to help students meet the required expectations for the classroom, such as respect, responsibility, safety, and kindness. Additionally, I will propose to my school district and sites that they provide training for teachers and staff on how positive reinforcement affects students' involvement in class and enhances their social and emotional learning.

Plan for sharing

I plan to share the findings of my action research project with my school administration, which will decide whether to use it to increase students' engagement in classes or share it with school staff. Although the results of this study cannot be generalized, I will encourage my coworkers and colleagues at work to use positive reinforcement techniques to involve their students in the learning process. This will be accomplished through regular school meetings and discussions such as staff professional development days (PD), professional learning communities (PLCs), and restorative practices in staff professional relationships. Positive reinforcement is one

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of the strategies that supports and plays a significant role in managing student behavior, and I will recommend it to my school's Behavior Support and Engagement Team.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Student Engagement in The Classroom

You are invited to participate in a research study about how the use of positive reinforcement affects students' involvement in the classroom. This study is for educational purposes only. It is conducted by Ismail Adam Ismail as part of an action research project in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction at Minnesota State University, Moorhead.

Title: Using Positive Reinforcement to Increase Student Engagement in The Classroom

Purpose: This study examines the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on student engagement in classrooms and how it impacts their performance academically, socially, and behaviorally.

Procedure: The research analyzes the effectiveness of positive reinforcement on student engagement in classrooms. An electronic survey will be sent to teachers to learn more about their experiences and how positive reinforcement works for their students. Because our students are bilingual in Somali and English, the study will also look at how positive reinforcement affects culturally responsive teaching.

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Time: This study will take place during the spring of 2023, and the survey will be brief, lasting no more than 5 to 10 minutes.

Risks: There is no known risk associated with participating in this research survey.

Benefits: Participation in this survey may reflect teachers' experiences with positive reinforcement for increasing student engagement. Also, it may help to explore the areas where teachers may need to develop culturally responsive teaching.

Confidentiality: Participant data will be kept confidential, and responses to this survey will be anonymous.

Participation and withdrawal: Participation in this survey is voluntary. You have the option not to participate or to withdraw at any time without giving a reason, and there will be no negative effect regarding that.

Contacts and Questions: If you have any questions or concerns about the study, you may contact me at ismail.adamismail@go.mnstate.edu. You may also contact my advisors, Michael Coquyt at michael.coquyt@mnstate.edu or Kathy Enger at kathy.enger@mnstate.edu .

Any questions about your rights may be directed to Robert Nava, Chair and Secretary of the Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM) Institutional Review Board, at 218.477.4308 or by email at irb@mnstate.edu.

By clicking "Yes" in the checkbox at the bottom of the letter, you agree and confirm that you have read the information above and agree to take part in this study.

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Do you agree to participate?

- Yes
- No

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Appendix B

Questionnaire and survey

Please rate the importance of positive reinforcement to increase student engagement using a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., very important = 5, important = 4, moderately important = 3, slightly important = 2, unimportant = 1).

1. How important is it that teachers can use positive reinforcement as an effective way of engaging students in learning?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

2. How important is it to employ positive reinforcement to strengthen desirable behaviors that are more likely to be repeated?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

3. How important is it to utilize positive reinforcement for motivating and inspiring students' academic growth?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

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4. How important is it to manage the classroom effectively by applying positive reinforcement strategies?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

5. How important is it to use positive reinforcement to develop social and emotional learning?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

6. How important is it to teach students responsibility, safety, and respect through reinforcement?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

7. How important is it to improve students' self-confidence by recognizing their performance?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

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8. How important is it to praise and reward students for desired behavior right away?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

9. How important is it to foster trusting relationships with students by communicating positively?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant

10. How important is it to give students constructive and positive feedback to correct a certain behavior so they can repeat the desired behavior?

- Very Important
- Important
- Moderately Important
- Slightly Important
- Unimportant