



Do Students Participate More When Teachers Control Less?

What New Research Says About Motivation and Classroom Participation

Excellent Educator, 3(10), 3-4, 2026

WHAT RESEARCH FOUND

A recent study explored how teachers' motivating styles and student-teacher relationships influence classroom participation among adolescents. The findings showed that:

- autonomy-supportive teaching increased participation,
- positive student-teacher relationships strengthened motivation,
- while controlling teaching styles reduced classroom engagement.

Learning motivation also acted as a bridge between teaching style and participation. Students were more likely to engage when they felt psychologically supported rather than pressured.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Many classrooms still rely heavily on:

- strict control,
- compliance,
- constant correction,
- and externally driven motivation.

But this research suggests that participation may grow more effectively through:

- autonomy,
- trust,
- encouragement,
- and relationship quality.



CLASSROOM REALITY

High-Control Teaching	Autonomy-Supportive Teaching
Students comply temporarily	Students engage more willingly
Fear of mistakes increases	Participation becomes safer
Motivation depends on pressure	Motivation becomes internal
Teacher speaks more	Students contribute more

TRY TOMORROW

During questioning:

- allow 10 seconds of thinking time before calling answers,
- invite multiple perspectives,
- and acknowledge effort before correctness.

Students often participate more when psychological pressure decreases.

CAUTION

Autonomy-supportive teaching does not mean removing structure or expectations.

The study suggests students still need guidance, clarity, and supportive boundaries.

ONE KEY TAKEAWAY

Students may participate more deeply when classrooms feel supportive rather than controlling.

Keywords: classroom participation, learning motivation, autonomy support, student-teacher relationships, adolescent learning

Reference:

Xu, F., Wang, L., & Xu, J. (2025). *The impact of teachers' motivating style and student-teacher relationships on adolescents' class participation*. *Acta Psychologica*, 257, 105105.
