

The Effect of Large Class Size on Academic Performance and Student Satisfaction in City College of El Salvador

¹Jolou Vincent M. Jala, ²Lyllan Gay D. Magdale

¹Vice-President for Internationalization and Linkages, City College of El Salvador, Philippines

²School President, City College of El Salvador, Philippines

Received 13rd August 2025; Accepted 5th September 2025; Published Online 23rd October 2025

DOI: 10.63941/DIT.ADSimrj.2025.1.4.93

ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are constantly facing an increasing number of students. With this, large class sizes became a substantial challenge due to their possible influence on the quality of education. Based on several studies, students and faculty often perceive large classes as an obstruction to learning. (Wang, Liz & Calvano, Lisa, 2022). The study conducted by Barde, Luka et al. (2021) showed that a large class size influences academic performance. Additionally, learning in overly congested classrooms results in poor learning and performance, which are among the consequences of overpopulation on the quality of learning and teaching. This study examines the effect of large class sizes on student satisfaction and academic performance at City College of El Salvador. Using a qualitative research approach, particularly in-depth interviews, this study investigates the perceptions and experiences of students regarding how class size affects their learning and satisfaction. Through one-on-one interviews with students from across four-year levels, the study offers nuanced insights into the obstacles faced in large classes, which include reduced opportunities for engagement, inadequate access to instructors, and struggles in receiving timely feedback. Many students articulated frustration with their lack of ability to participate enthusiastically in discussions, which hindered students' retention and comprehension. Moreover, students reported feeling separated from their instructors, which destructively affects their motivation and overall satisfaction with their learning involvement. The outcomes imply that large class sizes result in a decline in student satisfaction and academic performance because of a lack of personalized learning opportunities, lowered faculty-student interaction, and increased distractions. The study emphasized the necessity for strategic interventions, such as plummeting student-teacher ratios, enhancing classroom management practices, and integrating blended learning strategies to improve the quality of education in higher learning institutions. Addressing these challenges is pivotal to ensuring that students obtain significant learning experience and sustain high levels of academic satisfaction and engagement.

Keywords: *Large Class Size, Academic Performance, Student Satisfaction, Higher Education, Qualitative Research*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions worldwide are experiencing a surge in student enrollment, driven by increasing access to education, government policies promoting tertiary education, and the rising demand for skilled professionals. While this expansion is beneficial, it also introduces significant challenges, particularly in managing large class sizes. Large class sizes have implications for EFL, particularly as they make it more difficult to give students the opportunity to train in how to speak and get feedback. (Blatchford, P. & Russell, A., 2020).

Large classes can negatively impact the quality of education by limiting student engagement, personalized instruction, and effective assessment strategies. The impact of class size on student performance and satisfaction has been extensively studied, with findings indicating that both students and faculty perceive large classes as barriers to effective learning (Wang, Liz, & Calvano, Lisa, 2022).

A study by Barde, Luka et al. (2021) further emphasized that large class sizes contribute to lower

academic performance due to limited student-teacher interaction, increased distractions, and the inability to provide immediate feedback. Overcrowded classrooms not only hinder students' comprehension but also affect their motivation and overall satisfaction with their learning experience. Additionally, the challenges of large class sizes extend to faculty members who struggle to implement active learning strategies, assess student progress effectively, and maintain meaningful engagement with individual students. Teachers and faculty who teach in large classes are more pressured and stressed, which makes it difficult for them to engage students and deliver quality instruction (Vakili R. et al., 2024). Academic performance was deemed better for students in small classrooms rather than those in large ones. (Abubakar, Umar et al., 2023).

Despite these well-documented issues, many institutions continue to operate with large class sizes due to financial and logistical constraints. As a result, it becomes crucial to explore alternative solutions and strategies to enhance learning experiences even in overcrowded settings. This study seeks to examine the effect of large class sizes on student satisfaction and academic performance at City College of El Salvador. By investigating students' perceptions and experiences through in-depth interviews, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the specific challenges posed by large classes and explore potential interventions that could improve the quality of education in higher learning institutions..

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically utilizing in-depth interviews to gather data. A total of 25 students from various year levels enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Entrepreneurship at City College of El Salvador participated in the study. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents based on significant criteria, including students who have experienced learning in large class settings, those enrolled in core academic subjects, and individuals with varying levels of academic performance. One-on-one interviews were conducted to explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding how class size influences their learning engagement and satisfaction. Thematic analysis was utilized to identify recurring themes and patterns in the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from the interviews indicate that large class sizes present several challenges for students. The primary issues highlighted include limited opportunities for active engagement, inadequate access to instructors, and delayed feedback on academic performance. Thematic analysis revealed five emerging themes from the responses of the 25 participants:

The perception of the students regarding large class sizes on their learning experience

Limited Engagement and Participation

Many students reported feeling hesitant to participate in discussions due to the overwhelming number of classmates. Most of the participants (18 out of 25) mentioned that they often feel overshadowed in large classes, making it difficult to voice their thoughts or seek clarification.

Several participants expressed that the fear of speaking up in a crowded classroom discouraged them from asking questions, which hindered their understanding of the subject matter.

In the study conducted by Beauden J., 2025, the result shows that smaller class sizes typically lead to more individualized attention, higher academic achievement, and better student engagement. On the

other hand, bigger class sizes are linked to less interaction between teachers, less engagement from students, and less effective learning.

In addition, classroom congestion poses serious issues that hinder student learning and the effectiveness of instruction. (Vakili R. et al., 2024).

Challenges students face in large classroom settings

Instructor Accessibility and Interaction

Students expressed concerns about the limited access to their instructors. A significant number (20 out of 25) mentioned that their professors are unable to provide sufficient attention to each student, resulting in difficulties in obtaining guidance and feedback.

One student explained that even when they sought clarification after class, instructors were often too busy to address individual concerns, making it challenging to improve academic performance.

Feedback, interaction, and class engagement are essential for enhancing student performance in an educational setting that emphasizes learning. (Márquez, J. et al., 2023). Moreover, educators experience more stress when they are dealing with large class sizes, which leads to a more challenging situation to engage students and deliver quality instruction (Vakili R. et al., 2024)

The effect of class size on students' ability to engage in discussions and interact with instructors

Classroom Environment and Learning Comfort

Overcrowded classrooms were a common issue raised by participants. Many (15 out of 25) reported that excessive noise, distractions, and discomfort negatively impacted their ability to concentrate and absorb lessons effectively.

Some students pointed out that inadequate seating arrangements forced them to sit in areas with poor visibility and acoustics, further hampering their ability to follow lectures.

Noise distraction has been identified as a concern in schools, impairing speech intelligibility and, in turn, academic results. (Goldschagg, Paul & Bekker, Tanya, 2021). In addition, according to Swargiary, K. (2023), the ability of students to focus and efficiently process information might be severely compromised by noise.

The influence of large class sizes on academic performance and satisfaction

Academic Performance and Comprehension

The majority of the students (21 out of 25) stated that large class sizes made it harder for them to grasp complex concepts. The lack of direct interaction and reduced instructor supervision contributed to difficulties in academic performance.

A few students mentioned that large classes often led to a reliance on self-study, which was not always effective, especially for subjects requiring hands-on learning or detailed explanations.

Students' academic performance and learning opportunities are affected by large class numbers. Once more, the influence of classroom relationships on students' academic achievement has been proven. (Kwabena Odum, & Nanyele, 2023). Likewise, according to the result, smaller class sizes usually end up in higher academic achievement, greater personal attention, and better student engagement (Beauden J., 2025).

Strategies or interventions that could improve learning experiences in large classes

Suggested Interventions for Improvement

Students proposed several solutions to mitigate the negative effects of large classes. These included blended learning approaches (10 out of 25), smaller class sections (12 out of 25), and additional tutorial sessions (8 out of 25) to enhance comprehension and engagement.

Some participants suggested the integration of technology, such as recorded lectures and online discussion forums, to supplement classroom learning and provide additional opportunities for engagement.

Discussion

The findings of this study reinforce the well-documented challenges associated with large class sizes in higher education. The diminished faculty-student interaction significantly affects students' learning experiences, limiting their ability to seek clarification, receive timely feedback, and develop deeper engagement with course materials. This aligns with prior research highlighting the correlation between smaller class sizes and enhanced academic performance due to increased opportunities for personalized instruction and interaction.

Additionally, the study underscores how large class sizes foster an impersonal learning environment. Students reported feeling disconnected from their instructors, leading to decreased motivation and engagement. This separation impairs their ability to actively participate in discussions, thereby affecting knowledge retention and critical thinking skills. Without sufficient opportunities for engagement, students may struggle with course comprehension, which can ultimately result in lower academic achievement.

Moreover, the study highlights the psychological toll of overcrowded classrooms. The increased competition for attention and resources can lead to frustration, stress, and dissatisfaction among students. These emotional and cognitive burdens may further contribute to lower levels of academic performance. This suggests that institutions must take proactive measures to alleviate the negative consequences of large class sizes.

To address these issues, several strategic interventions can be considered. Reducing student-teacher ratios remains one of the most effective approaches, as smaller classes allow for greater interaction, deeper discussions, and more targeted feedback. However, when reducing class sizes is not feasible, institutions can adopt blended learning strategies, incorporating online components to supplement face-to-face instruction. Technology-enhanced learning can provide students with additional resources, asynchronous discussions, and alternative avenues for engagement, mitigating some of the challenges posed by large classes.

CONCLUSION

This study underscores the adverse impact of large class sizes on student satisfaction and academic performance at City College of El Salvador. The findings highlight the necessity for educational institutions to implement policies that promote a more conducive learning environment, ensuring meaningful student-teacher interactions and effective instructional strategies. Future research may further explore quantitative assessments to measure the direct correlation between class size and academic performance to strengthen these findings.

Recommendations

In light of the findings from this study on the effect of large class sizes on student satisfaction and academic performance at City College of El Salvador, it is strongly recommended that the institution

consider implementing targeted strategies to improve the learning environment in large classes. These include:

1. **Reducing Student-Teacher Ratios.** Hiring additional faculty or implementing teaching assistant programs to ensure more personalized attention and interaction.
2. **Adopting Blended Learning Approaches.** Incorporating online platforms for discussions, assessments, and feedback to complement face-to-face instruction can ease the burden of physical classroom congestion.
3. **Enhancing Classroom Management Practices.** Training faculty in managing large groups effectively, using active learning techniques that promote engagement and inclusion despite class size.
4. **Strengthening Faculty-Student Communication Channels.** Creating formalized avenues (e.g., office hours, online consultations) to ensure timely feedback and deeper instructor-student relationships.
5. **Regular Assessment and Feedback Mechanisms.** Establishing systems to continually gather student feedback on class size experiences and adapt interventions accordingly.
6. **Smart Classrooms.** Invest in the development of smart classrooms equipped with interactive whiteboards, projectors, audio systems, stable internet, and multimedia tools. These enhance content delivery, enable hybrid teaching, and support varied learning styles in large classes.
7. **Category by Program. Needs-Based Planning.** Organize intervention strategies according to the specific needs of each program:
 - a. **General Education (GenEd):** Prioritize class size reduction and smart classroom use due to high student volume.
 - b. **Professional Programs:** Focus on hybrid formats and instructional scaffolding for higher-level coursework.

Step-by-Step Actions

To implement these recommendations, the following phase actions are advised:

- a. **Step 1:** Conduct an institutional audit to identify courses and programs most affected by large class sizes.
- b. **Step 2:** Categorize programs and courses by student volume and instructional demand.
- c. **Step 3:** Pilot interventions such as blended learning, team teaching, or adjusted scheduling.
- d. **Step 4:** Monitor outcomes through performance data and student feedback.
- e. **Step 5:** Scale successful practices and formalize them into institutional policy.

REFERENCES

- Abubakar, Diri, Mukhtar, Dakin-Gari, Dakin-Gari, Sani, Abdullahi. (2023). The effects of class size on students academic performance in an introduction to computer science (CMP 111) Course, at Kebbi-state polytechnic Dakin-Gari, NIGERIA. *IARJSET*, 10. 30-36. 10.17148/IARJSET.2023.10406.
- Barde, Luka & Ahmed, Abubakar & Mohammed, Salamatu & Bizi, Maryam & Ibrahim, Nuhu & Uzoma, Grace. (2021). Analysis of large class-size and its effects on teaching and learning

process among students' secondary schools in Potiskum local government area. *GSC Advanced Research and Reviews*, 8. 045-052. 10.30574/gscarr.2021.8.1.0113.

Beauden, J. (2025). *The Relationship Between Class Size and Student Performance in Secondary Schools of Uvira City*.

Blatchford, Peter & Russell, Anthony. (2020). *Rethinking Class Size: The complex story of impact on teaching and learning*. 10.14324/111.9781787358799.

Goldschagg, Paul & Bekker, Tanya. (2021). Effects of Classroom Noise on Learning: Perceptions of Grade 10–12 Girl Learners. *Africa Education Review*, 17. 1-19. 10.1080/18146627.2021.2004551.

Kwabena Odum, James & Nanyele, Stephen. (2023). Effect of Class Size on the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics in Senior High Schools. 8. 113-125. 10.53075/Ijmsirq/6553535355.

Márquez, J., Lazcano, L., Bada, C., & Arroyo-Barrigüete, J. L. (2023). Class participation and feedback as enablers of student academic performance. *SAGE Open*, 13(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440231177298> (Original work published 2023)

Swargiary, Khritish. (2023). *The Impact of Study Environment on Students' Academic Performance: An Experimental Research Study*. 10.36227/techrxiv.170250911.12566888/v1.

Vakili R, Vakili S, Ajilian Abbasi M, Masoudi Sh. (2024). Overcrowded Classrooms: Challenges, Consequences, and Collaborative Solutions for Educators: A Literature Review. *Med Edu Bull* 2024, 5(2): 961-72. DOI: 10.22034/MEB.2024.492269.1103

Wang, Liz & Calvano, Lisa. (2022). Class size, student behaviors and educational outcomes. *Organization Management Journal*, 19. 10.1108/OMJ-01-2021-1139.