

Exploring the Different Needs in Class Discussions

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i8/14352>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v12-i8/14352

Published Date: 02 August 2022

Abstract

Promoting and facilitating classroom discussions not only help students learn from one another but also help students understand and retain the lessons better. Class discussions encourage learners to interact in groups. Group interaction is a good platform for the construction of knowledge. Group members gain more than knowledge in the interaction, they gain communication skills and many more. Nevertheless, in order to come to a consensus or to solve problems in groups, team members would go through extensive communication. Some team members would stand out to be more competent than others. Some team members are more agreeable and want to remain likeable, while some need to be seen as significant. This study investigates learners' perception on class discussions. This study is done to explore the different types of needs in group dynamics. 47 students responded to instrument which is a survey. The survey has 4 sections Section A has items on demographic profile, section B has 20 items for the needs to be competent, section C has 7 items for the needs to be likeable and section D has 6 items on the need to be significant. This study revealed interesting findings about the needs for team members to be competent, to be likeable and also the need to be significant. In the effort to be competent, team members are aware that asking for further information during discussions can lead to arguments. However, they felt that the disagreement is a catalyst for further interactions especially when clarifications are needed. The findings has future implications to group formation in class discussions.

Keywords: Needs, Class Discussions, Competent, Likeable, Significant.

Introduction

Background of Study

Learning activities usually include class discussions at the beginning or end to facilitate understanding of the lessons. Promoting and facilitating classroom discussions not only help students learn from one another but also help students understand and retain the lessons better. Class discussions encourage learners to interact in groups. According to Rahmat (2022), group interactions are good platforms for the construction of knowledge. Group members gain more than knowledge in the interaction, they gain communication skills and many more. Learners learn for one another, whether or not they are conscious of that. According to Vygotsky (1978), in group interaction, learners learn from a more knowledgeable other- the one member who normally shares his/her ideas more than the others.

Class discussions have disadvantages and disadvantages. During discussions, team members may not always agree with one another. The discussions may then take a different turn. The dispute can lead to the practice of another skill. Class discussions can lead team members practice problem solving skills (Rahmat, 2020). Nevertheless, in order to come to a consensus or to solve problems in groups, team members would go through extensive communication. Some team members would stand out to be more competent than others. Some team members are more agreeable and want to remain likeable, while some need to be seen as significant. This study investigates learners’ perception on class discussions. Specifically, this study is done to answer the following questions;

- How does class discussions influence the need to be competent?
- How does class discussions influence the need to be likeable?
- How does class discussions influence the need to be significant?
- Is there a relationship between need to be competent and the need to be likeable and significant?

Literature Review

Group Interaction

During group interactions, team members behave in ways that portray their needs. According to Schutz (1958) in figure 1, team members display three interpersonal needs and the needs are (a) needs of affection, (b) needs for control and (c) needs for belongings.

	Inclusion	Control	Affection
Wants from others	Acceptance	Guidance	Closeness
Expresses to others	Interest	Leadership	Liking

Figure 1- Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation (source: Schutz, 1958)

Based on figure 1, firstly, team members display wants form others. These wants are that of acceptance, guidance and closeness. They then express to others interest, leadership and liking. They want inclusion in terms of acceptance. They display control through guidance. Finally, they want affection through closeness and liking.

Schultz (1958) is also known for this FIRO theory. This theory identifies three basic needs that all human beings share: the need to feel significant, competent and likable. This theory suggests these needs express themselves across three levels of human interaction: behavior, feelings and self-concept.

Past Studies

The study by Echiverri et al (2020) explores the dynamics of class discussions. The quantitative study used convenience sampling of 105 undergraduates. The majority of the samples are English as a Second Language (ESL) learners at Wenzhou Kean University (WKU) in China. They participated in this descriptive correlational online survey. Findings showed a strong and positive relationship between class discussion and class participation. When there is enough time given for a group of three to five students to discuss general and creative topics on discussion questions given by instructors, the students are more confident to actively participate in the class discussions.

Sim et.al (2021) conducted a study on the perception on what team members do in the class discussions. The quantitative study was done on 164 respondents. The instrument is a 32 item questionnaire. Section A has items on demographic profile, Section B looks at learners' perception on competing, section C has items on accommodating, section D looks at avoiding, and section E has items on compromising and collaborating. Findings revealed that conflicts in group discussions occur when team members cannot talk about different ideas, or even listen to different opinions. The main challenge of class discussions are poor communication, poor attendance.

Guerrero (2019) conducted a study on engagement in class discussions. The study was triggered when the researcher found that during several non-participant observations of two advanced College English classes at Jiangsu University, it was noticed that most of the students did not engage in class discussions. This study was also done to ascertain what the problem was, but from learners' perspectives. Seventy-one students enrolled in College English at Jiangsu University volunteered to take part in this study. A self-administered questionnaire was used to gather the data. The findings indicate that most of the respondents did not take an active stance in class discussions because of their lack of knowledge on strategies to bear their thoughts or opinions. Other expressed that they did not know about the topics to discuss in class, and that was a significant barrier to their performance. Besides, some participants doubted to speak in class. That can be linked to their shyness. Knowledge about these findings is helpful for teachers and College English authorities to examine what kind of training should be offered to students and teachers to make steady improvements.

Mallon et al (2020) conducted an action research project to determine whether teaching explicit discussion strategies to students receiving special education services would lead to an increase in self-confidence and participation during small group and whole class discussions in a general education classroom. Data were collected by two teacher researchers in a fifth grade English Language Arts (ELA) classroom using a pre/post student survey and classroom observation. Findings of the study suggest that explicitly teaching social skills focused on discussion allows special education students to self-identify situations where they struggle, rehearse new skills and receive feedback, and self-monitor their progress, sometimes with the desired end result of generalization to other settings.

Next, the study by Hasan et.al (2021) was done to find out how students feel about engaging in class discussions and voicing their agreement and dissatisfaction using the English language as the tool of instruction. The participants in this research are first-semester Malay Language for Professional Communication students. These students are majoring in Malay Language Studies, and they are required to take the English for Oral Presentation course as part of their degree requirements. Findings showed that that students' perceptions of engaging in class debates, as well as voicing consensus and opposition, were relatively poor to medium. Their negative impression suggests that the students could be confronted with barriers that prevented them from having productive class discussions. The findings of this research would have important consequences on how class discussions are used in language classrooms.

Finally, the study by Alshoraty (2014) was done to determine the reasons for the Hashemite University students' non-participation in class discussions, and their relation to some variables. The instrument used is a questionnaire that consisted of two domains: The first domain was about the reasons related to faculty members, whereas, the second one dealt with the reasons related to students. 401 copies of the questionnaire were distributed. Findings of the study showed that the reasons related to faculty members played a more important role in preventing students from participating in class discussions than the reasons related to students. Also, the results revealed that the main reasons for students' non-participation in class discussions were: student's feeling of boredom, student's preference to listen only, the change of faculty members' moods, the absence of prior student's preparation, student's fear of making mistakes, fanaticism of faculty members to their opinions and ideas, quick anger of faculty members, lack of dialogue instruction, and students' shyness. Finally, the results showed no statistically significant differences in the students' perception of the reasons for non-participation in class discussions due to the following variables: participation, sex, college, grade point average, and university year.

Conceptual Framework of the Study

This study is rooted from Schutz's (1958) group needs. With reference to figure 2, team members in a team display some types of needs and the needs are; the need to (a) feel significant, (b) competent and (c) likable. To begin with, the need to be competent is the factor that can glue the team members together. When team members want to be competent, they will strive for excellence through group participation. Next, the act of trying to make sure that communication is working at its bests, some team members would try their best to be likeable. On the other hand, there can be a small number in the team who may try to be significant. The need to be significant can in turn pull the team apart is group disagreements are not addressed well.

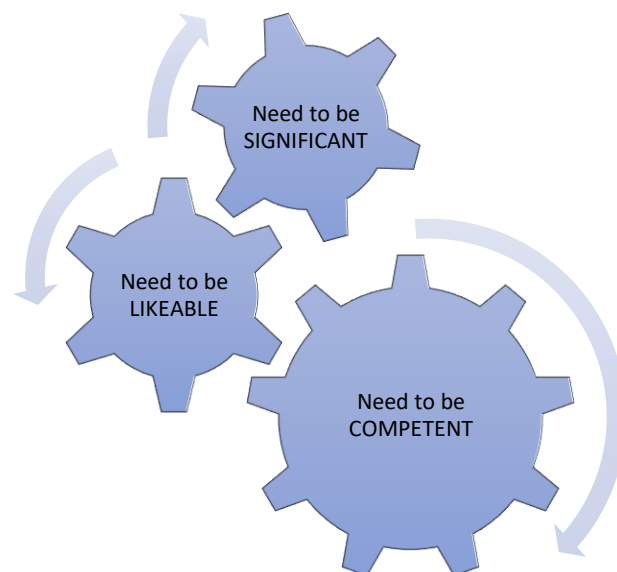


Figure 2- Conceptual Framework of the Study –Needs in Group Dynamics (source: Schutz, 1958)

Methodology

This study is done to explore the different types of needs in group dynamics. 47 students responded to instrument which is a survey. The survey is adapted from items of group participation by (Davis, 2013). Section A has items on demographic profile, section B has 20 items for the needs to be competent, section C has 7 items for the needs to be likeable and section D has 6 items on the need to be significant.

Table 1

Distribution of Items in the Survey

SECTION	Constructs (the need to be;)	No of items
B	Competent	20
C	Likeable	7
D	Significant	6
	Total number of items	33

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics for the instrument. SPSS analysis showed a Cronbach alpha of .951; thus, revealing a high reliability for the instrument.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics for the Instrument

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.951	33

Findings

Findings for demographic profile

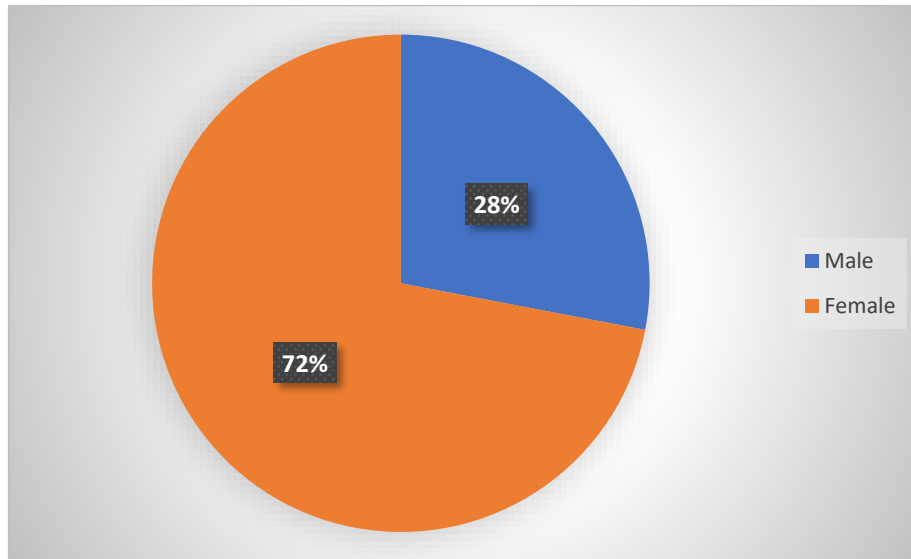


Figure 3- Percentage for Gender

Figure 3 shows the percentage for gender. 28% are male while 72% are female respondents.

Findings for the need to be Competent

This section presents findings to answer research question 1: How does class discussions influence the need to be competent?

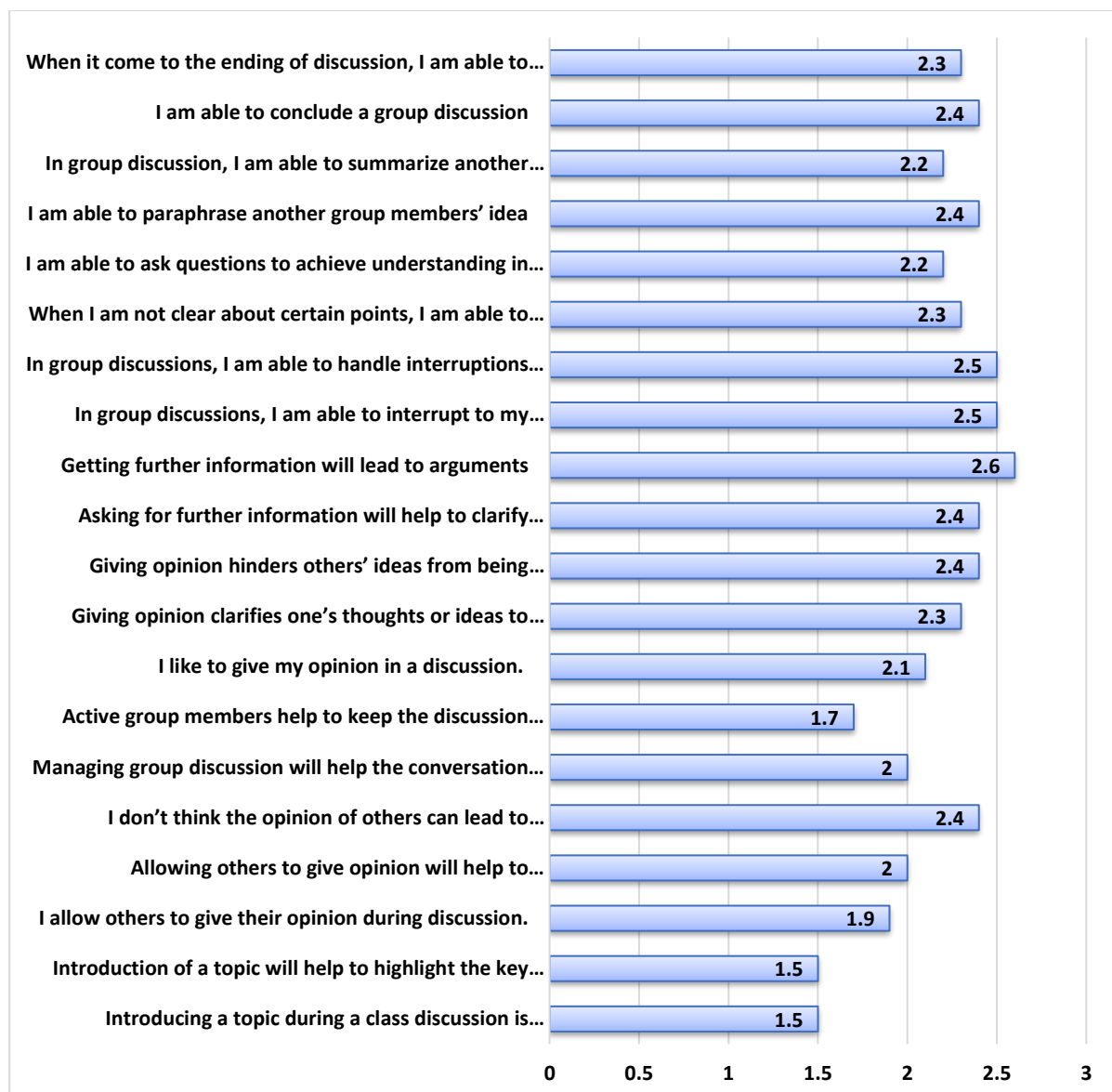


Figure 4- Mean for the Need to be Competent

Figure 4 shows the mean for the need to be competent. The highest mean is 2.6 for the item "Getting further information will lead to arguments". Next, two items share a mean of 2.5 and they are "In group discussions, I am able to interrupt to my group members' points" and "In group discussions, I am able to handle interruptions by my group members". Five items have the same mean of 2.4 and they are "I don't think the opinion of others can lead to argument", "Giving opinion hinders others' ideas from being discussed", "Asking for further information will help to clarify opinion", "I am able to paraphrase another group members' idea", and "I am able to conclude a group discussion".

Findings for the need to be likeable

This section presents findings to answer research question 2: How does class discussions influence the need to be likeable?

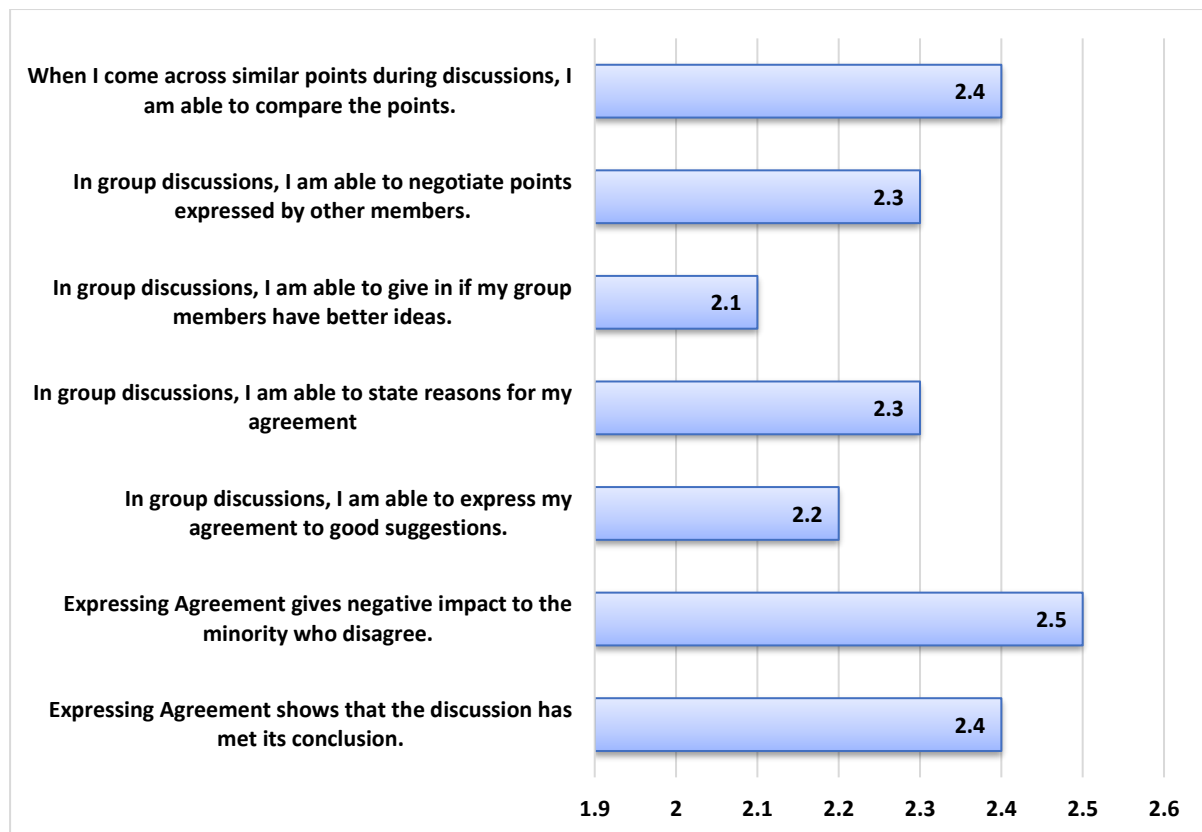


Figure 5- Mean for the Need to be Likeable

Figure 5 shows the mean for the need to be likeable. The highest mean is 2.5 for the item “Expressing Agreement gives negative impact to the minority who disagree”. This is followed by two items for the mean of 2.4 and they are “Expressing Agreement shows that the discussion has met its conclusion” and “When I come across similar points during discussions, I am able to compare the points”.

Findings for the need to be Significant

This section presents findings to answer research question 3: How does class discussions influence the need to be significant?

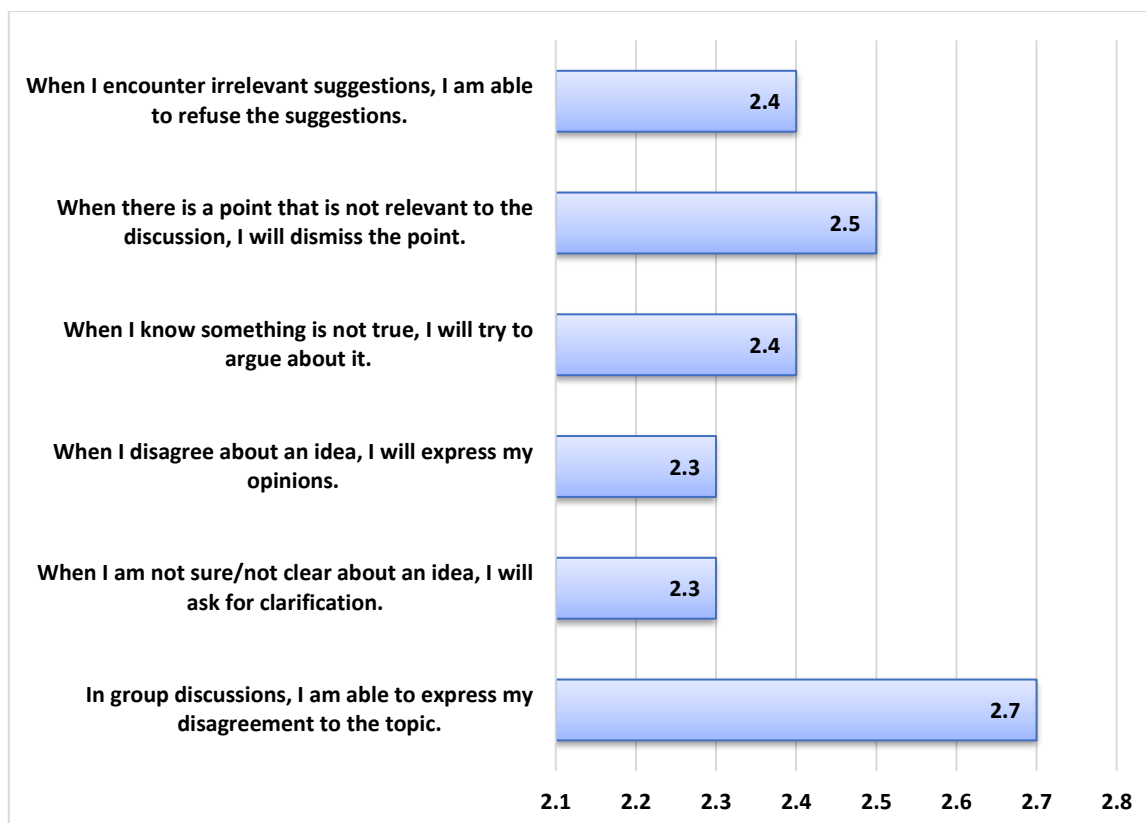


Figure 4- Mean for the Need to be Significant

Figure 4 shows the mean for the need to be significant. The highest mean of 2.7 is for the item “In group discussions, I am able to express my disagreement to the topic”. Next, with a mean of 2.5 is for the item “When there is a point that is not relevant to the discussion, I will dismiss the point”. Two items had the same mean of 2.4 and they are “When I know something is not true, I will try to argue about it”, and “When I encounter irrelevant suggestions, I am able to refuse the suggestions”.

Findings for Relationship between the need to be competent and the need to be likeable and significant

This section presents findings to answer research question 4: Is there a relationship between need to be competent and the need to be likeable and significant? Analysis is done to look at whether there is a relationship between the need to be competent and the need to be likeable and significant.

To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between writing and cooperative, correlation coefficient was conducted. Table 3 shows that there is a moderate significant association between the need to be competent and likeable ($r=.775^{***}$) and ($p=.000$). The correlation coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level. According to Jackson (2015), positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. The stronger the positive correlation, the more likely the stocks are to move in the same direction. Hence, there is a strong positive correlation between the need to be competent and likeable. The relationship is also significant.

Table 3

Correlation for the need to be competent and likeable

		Competent	Likeable
Competent	Pearson Correlation	1	.775 ^{***}
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	47	47
Likeable	Pearson Correlation	.775 ^{***}	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	47	47

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

To determine if there is a significant association in the mean scores between writing and cooperative, correlation coefficient was conducted. Table 4 shows that there is a moderate significant association between the need to be competent and thee need to be significant ($r=.590^{**}$) and ($p=.000$). The correlation coefficient is significant at the 0.05 level. According to Jackson (2015), positive correlation is measured on a 0.1 to 1.0 scale. Weak positive correlation would be in the range of 0.1 to 0.3, moderate positive correlation from 0.3 to 0.5, and strong positive correlation from 0.5 to 1.0. The stronger the positive correlation, the more likely the stocks are to move in the same direction. Hence, there is a strong positive corelation between the need to be competent and the need to be significant. The relationship is also significant.

Table 4

Correlation for the need to be competent and significant

		Competent	Significant
Competent	Pearson Correlation	1	.590 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	47	47
Need to be Significant	Pearson Correlation	.590 ^{**}	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	47	47

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Conclusion

Summary of Findings and Discussion

This study revealed interesting findings about the needs for team members to be competent, to be likeable and also the need to be significant. In the effort to be competent, team members are aware that asking for further information during discussions can lead to arguments. However, they felt that the disagreement is a catalyst for further interactions especially when clarifications are needed. The study by Echiverri et al (2020), also found that interactions boost team members confidence. Next, the findings also revealed the need to be likeable. Respondents found that expressing agreements showed that the discussion is coming to an end. This is also agreed by Mallon et al (2020), who emphasised on the use social skills to make the task a success. When it comes to the need to be significant, findings showed that the need to be significant can lead to more disagreement in the team. This happens because the member who wants to be significant may be adamant to be heard and gave less chance to the others to express their views. The study by Sim et al (2021), and

Hasan, et al (2021), agreed that disagreements are caused by poor communication. Poor communication and also be caused by lack of engagement (Guerrero , 2019; Alshoraty 2014).

This study has revealed that there is a strong positive correlation between the need to be competent and likeable . The relationship is also significant. This means members in the group need to feel they are well versed with the topic of discussion to be liked by other team members. In addition to that, there is a strong positive correlation between the need to be competent and the need to be significant. The relationship is also significant. This means that the members also have the desire to stand out in the team. This is also in accordance with the study by Echiverri et al (2020), who found that there is a correlation between active participation and discussion. The findings in this study adds on to the body of knowledge in the area of class discussions. Specifically, the findings add on to the existing theoretical contribution towards the many needs for class discussions.

Pedagogical Implications and Suggestion for Future Research

Team members need to feel they are being accepted by the other members. They need to feel significant. Rapport among team members is very crucial to ensure the completion of the group's task. So, for group formation, perhaps instructors should leave it up to the learners to decide who they want to work with. This is to ensure good rapport in the team that can further enhance quality task completion. Future research could look into comparison between choice of team members in the group. Future research could also look into comparison of team members and if the numbers have an impact on the completion of tasks in groups.

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