

---

## Democratic teachers: Do they exist in Indonesian high schools?

---

UMAR ABDULLAH<sup>1\*</sup> AND DJAYADI HANAN<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Democracy can thrive well in societies where individuals practice democratic values in their daily lives. Such democratic attitudes can be obtained through education that applies democratic principles. This study aims to explore how students in Indonesian high schools perceived the democratic attitudes exhibited by their teachers during instruction. Guided by a quantitative research design, the study involved 180 respondents conveniently chosen from 12 high schools in West Sumatra, South Kalimantan, DI Yogyakarta, and DKI Jakarta provinces. Data were elicited through a survey questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The study findings indicated that participants viewed teachers in provinces with a high democracy index as demonstrating democratic attitudes on most survey items, in contrast to those in areas with a low democracy index. The participants noted that teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching enhance their motivation to study and elevate their academic achievement. This study underscores the necessity of fostering teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching through teacher professional development programs.

### Keywords

Democratic attitudes,  
democratic teachers,  
education, teaching

### Article History

Received 01 March 2025

Accepted 01 May 2025

### How to Cite

Abdullah, U., & Hanan, D. (2025). Democratic teachers: Do they exist in Indonesian high schools. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education | IRJE*, 9(1), 111-129. <https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v9i01.43387>

---

<sup>1\*</sup> Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia, Corresponding email: umarabdullah@radenfatah.ac.id

<sup>2</sup> Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII), Indonesia

## Introduction

The world's fourth-most populous country, Indonesia, uses democracy as its system of government. Yet, the quality of its democracy is still in the flawed democracy category based on the Democracy Index report by the [Economist Intelligence Unit \(EIU\)](#) in 2021. While labelled as the ten most improved countries in the index, Indonesia still ranked 52<sup>nd</sup> out of 167 with an overall score of 6.71. Meanwhile, according to the 2020 research by the [Indonesian Center for Statistics \(BPS\)](#), many provinces in Indonesia were put in the low democracy category regarding civil liberties and political rights. West Sumatra, South Sulawesi, Lampung, and South Kalimantan were the bottom four provinces in the civil liberties aspect, while West Papua, Papua, Southeast Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, East Java, Bengkulu, North Sumatra, Jambi, and West Nusa Tenggara were among the bottom provinces in the political rights aspect (BPS, 2020). This is not surprising because Indonesia is still, comparatively, a young democracy. Older and more established democracies like the United States and countries in Western Europe, for instance, need hundreds of years to achieve high-quality democracies.

A democratic society demands conscious, critical, active, participating, and compassionate people (Egan-Simon, 2022). Education helps equip people with the values necessary to satisfy the demands of a democratic society as it provides platforms for instructing individuals on their rights and responsibilities to maintain democratic values within and beyond the classroom (Murtaza & Akbar, 2019). Education embodying democratic principles and values forms the basis for a democratic learning environment (Turabik & Gün, 2016) significant for fostering social change towards freedom, as it includes all students irrespective of their backgrounds, provides equal opportunities, enhances critical awareness of social realities, offers relevant community support, and allows students to engage with democratic practices (Ovens & Lynch, 2019). Hence, for the school to be a meaningful setting for forming democratic habits and establishing a democratic society, education must accommodate democratic norms and principles in teachers' teaching attitudes.

Published research on democratic education and teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching in Indonesia is quite limited. One research (Johar et al., 2017) studied students' perception of implementing democratic classrooms conducted by teachers using the Realistic Mathematics Education (RME) approach. The study reported that teachers have implemented 10 out of 12 characteristics of a democratic classroom. However, the study participants indicated they were not given enough opportunity to express their opinions and conclusions at the end of the lesson. They also received no feedback after their presentations. These two elements of democratic attitudes must be modelled by teachers so that students can internalize and adopt them daily. Another study by Maksum (2021) discussed democratic education in the "Merdeka Belajar" policy. This study suggested that to be democratic, while teachers function as role models, facilitators, and motivators, students should be the subject of learning and receive hands-on experience to develop their independence, creativity, and tolerance. The teaching and learning process must be based on a constructivist approach using problem-oriented learning materials, carried out in democratic, flexible, and fun ways, he further emphasized.

As democratic attitudes can be learned and acquired by students through routine practices and models exhibited by teachers in the classroom, we argue that the low index of democracy in Indonesia is, in some ways, related to the democratic attitudes exercised by teachers in teaching. Studies investigating this issue are still scarce in Indonesian literature. Thus, how democratic teachers teach is worth further investigation. It is hoped that the results of this study will inform policymakers and related educational stakeholders about the necessity of fostering teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching, which in turn helps them design effective teacher professional development programs. Using a survey questionnaire, this study explored how students in low and high democracy index areas in Indonesia perceived the democratic attitudes exhibited by their teachers when teaching. In particular, this study aims to answer two research questions: (1) to what extent are the democratic attitudes of high school teachers in teaching perceived by high school students? And (2) to what extent do democratic attitudes of teachers in teaching affect students' learning?

## Literature Review

### *Democracy*

Democracy is a form of government widely used in the world. Derived from Greek, democracy has been tied to various meanings: a way of life (Dewey, 1938), a civic ideal (Crick, 2002), equality (Tocqueville, 1835), and the power and voice of the people (Akar, 2016). In political literature, it is more commonly defined as a government on behalf of all the people, according to their will (Council of Europe, 2022). In a democracy, citizens have equal rights and obligations and individual autonomy to live their own lives.

Democracy has three dimensions (see Diamond & Morlino, 2004; Skaaning, 2022). The first is the procedural dimension, which includes competition, accountability, participation, and the rule of law. One important aspect (if not the most important) of the procedural dimension is election. The second is the substantive dimension. This includes respect for political and human rights and decreasing social, economic, and political inequality. The third is the result dimension. This is about the capacity of the political system or government to provide proper responses (in the form of public policies) to the needs of the public. Political transformation in Indonesia is still characterised by procedural democracy. Thus, on its way to a more substantive and responsive democracy, Indonesia needs knowledge support and a proper understanding of people's democracy.

### *Democratic attitudes*

In general, democratic attitudes refer to the attitudes that promote inclusion, representation, voice, and participation. A democratic classroom engages students to live democratically by fostering such values as agency, equality, criticality, freedom, and dialogue among classroom members (Egan-Simon, 2022). Similarly, Johar et al. (2017) state that the freedom, equality, and communication amongst students and between students and teachers are characteristics of a democratic classroom. A democratic classroom recognises everyone as unique with different characteristics and needs and allows them to maximise their potential. More specifically, in a democratic classroom, teachers apply an appropriate balance of dominance and cooperation (Marzano, 2009) and nurture students to think critically,

discuss effectively, struggle against inequity, work cooperatively with solidarity, have empathy feeling, be self-actualized, take action, participate, respect differences, be prepared for a better world, and develop responsibility for today and future generations (Awan et al., 2018; Maksum (2021); Murtaza & Akbar, 2019; Ovens & Lynch, 2019; Turabik & Gün, 2016). As students can learn and internalise democratic attitudes through routine practice, teachers should demonstrate these attitudes and behaviours in their daily teaching and conduct in school.

### *Democratic teaching*

Democracy can thrive well in societies where individuals possess democratic attitudes and practice democratic values in their routine lives. Democratic attitudes can be obtained through education that applies democratic principles. Democratic education promotes the culture of democracy and thus helps society to acquire the culture (Egan-Simon, 2022). Playing an important role in transmitting democratic attitudes to new generations, teachers should first internalise and practice democratic attitudes in their daily conduct and teaching practices before teaching the attitudes to students because democratic values are driven forward by the teachers' attitudes and behaviours (Gulec & Balcik, 2009; Rowland, 2003; Yigit & Colak, 2010). When teachers teach democratically, their classrooms can be a good place for cultivating democratic behaviours (Erbil & Kocabaş, 2018; Johar et al., 2017; Kula & Aytac, 2022; Murtaza & Akbar, 2019).

Although myriad studies have examined teachers' teaching skills and practices, relatively less attention has been paid to teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching. Previous research suggests that teachers are highly influential in helping students acquire democratic attitudes. For this to happen, teachers must first be aware of the values and act as the model of democratic behaviour in the classroom for their students (Gulec & Balcik, 2009). Acting as a model, teachers can help create an environment that supports the growth of democratic values among students in class. Findings by Gelis and Abril (2020), Johar et al. (2017), and Maksum (2021) suggested that democratic attitudes and behaviour are formed significantly by class climate; it is, therefore, important to create a teaching framework embodying values and norms, including pluralism and openness, as the basis for forming democratic thought, they further emphasised. Planning for a democratic classroom is paramount. Johar et al. (2017) argued that well-planned lesson time is important for successfully implementing a democratic classroom. However, when creating a class climate, teachers tend to focus more on rules and regulations by demanding students obey the laws and regulations, making the classroom like a bureaucratic organisation. Teachers also did not adequately exhibit democratic attitudes in their teaching practices. That is why they were perceived as democratically inadequate and rated very low on democratic role modelling (Akar, 2016).

## **Methodology**

### *Research design, site, and participants*

This pilot study was conducted between July and October 2022 as part of the Teachers' Training for Teaching Democracy program administered by the Paramadina Institute for Education Reform (PIER). A quantitative research design using a Likert scale

questionnaire (Groves et al., 2009) was administered to answer the research questions. Based on the 2020 report on the index of democracy in the civil liberties aspect by BPS, two provinces with low democracy index scores, West Sumatra and South Kalimantan, and two provinces with high democracy index scores, DI Yogyakarta and DKI Jakarta, were selected as the sites for data collection. Conveniently chosen, the respondents were students from twelve high schools in Indonesia; 6 schools were located in low democracy index areas, and six were in high democracy index areas. In particular, 180 participants (15 students from each school) responded to the questionnaire. Participation is voluntary, and anonymity is assured.

### *Data collection and analysis*

Data from the survey were collected through a questionnaire and analysed quantitatively using descriptive statistics following Fowler (2018). The survey questionnaire consisted of two scales. The first scale asking about the democratic attitude of teachers was adapted from Gulec and Balcik (2009); this scale was originally written in English and comprised 24 items. One item was eliminated due to redundancy, and the other 23 questions were translated into Bahasa Indonesia. The second scale rating the effect of teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching on students' learning was added. It consisted of 6 items. Two general questions asking whether or not the participants knew the word "democracy" and how they defined "democracy" were added. The first survey scale used a 5-point scale, ranging from "never" (1) to "always" (5). The second scale used a 5-point scale, ranging from "completely disagree" (1) to "completely agree" (5). Five researchers were involved in designing the survey questionnaire and translating the first scale of the survey questionnaire. They all hold doctorates from reputable universities in Indonesia and overseas universities, majoring in political science (3 researchers) and education (2 researchers). All of them were experts in survey and qualitative studies and fluent in English.

The researchers utilised a Likert scale questionnaire through a face-to-face interview with the research participants to elicit data from the study. The procedure included distributing consent forms and instructions for students from schools in the area with low and high democracy indexes to respond to the survey questionnaire. Trained interviewers interviewed each participant. Survey completion took approximately 30 minutes, and the respondents' responses were anonymous. Two research team members were sent to each location to ensure the quality of the survey data collection. They were responsible for supervising and supporting the interviewers if questions were from related parties, including the schools and students involved in the survey. They were also responsible for solving any issues during the data collection.

All statistical analyses were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) for the survey data. To verify the reliability of the questionnaire, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was calculated; the Cronbach Alpha coefficient was 0.831 for the first scale and 0.636 for the second scale. So, it was concluded that the questionnaire was reliable. Basic descriptive statistics were used to determine the levels of the students' perceptions of the teachers' democratic attitudes. The validity of the survey was limited by its face-to-face interview format. The study's rigour and internal validity were increased by carefully selecting an established survey questionnaire from the literature, implementing uniform procedures

for data collection across participants/cohorts, and integrating input on the survey from experts on the topic and experts in educational research and measurement.

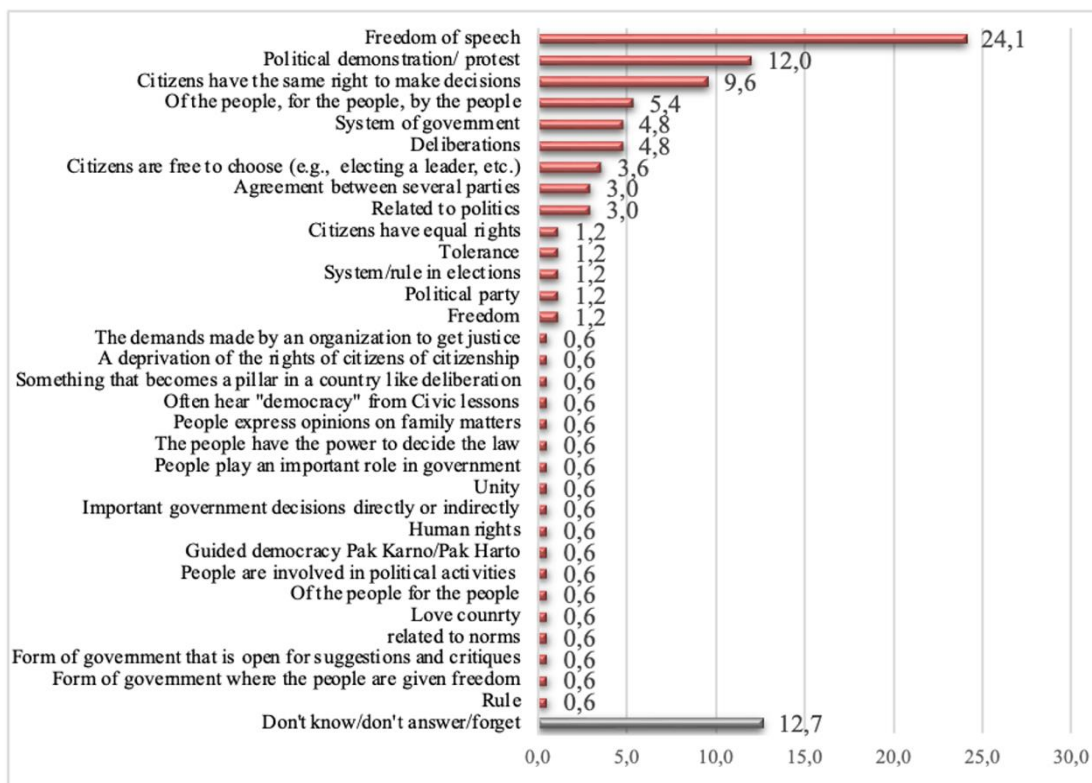
## Results

This section highlights the study's findings in light of the research questions. It is divided into the participants' awareness of democracy, the participants' perceptions of teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching (based on age, gender, and grade), and the participants' perceptions of the effect of teachers' democratic attitudes on learning.

### *Awareness of democracy*

Before giving a response to the survey questionnaire, the respondents were asked whether or not they knew the word "democracy." The majority of them answered "yes" (92%). Those who answered yes were then asked to define the meaning of "democracy." As can be seen in Figure 1 below, the majority of them defined "democracy" as freedom of speech (24.1%), followed by political demonstration/protest (12%), equal rights to make decisions (9.6%), of people, for the people and by the people (5.4%), and system of government and deliberations (4.8% each). The figure indicated that although most participants knew the word "democracy," their understanding of democracy was still at the level of procedural democracy.

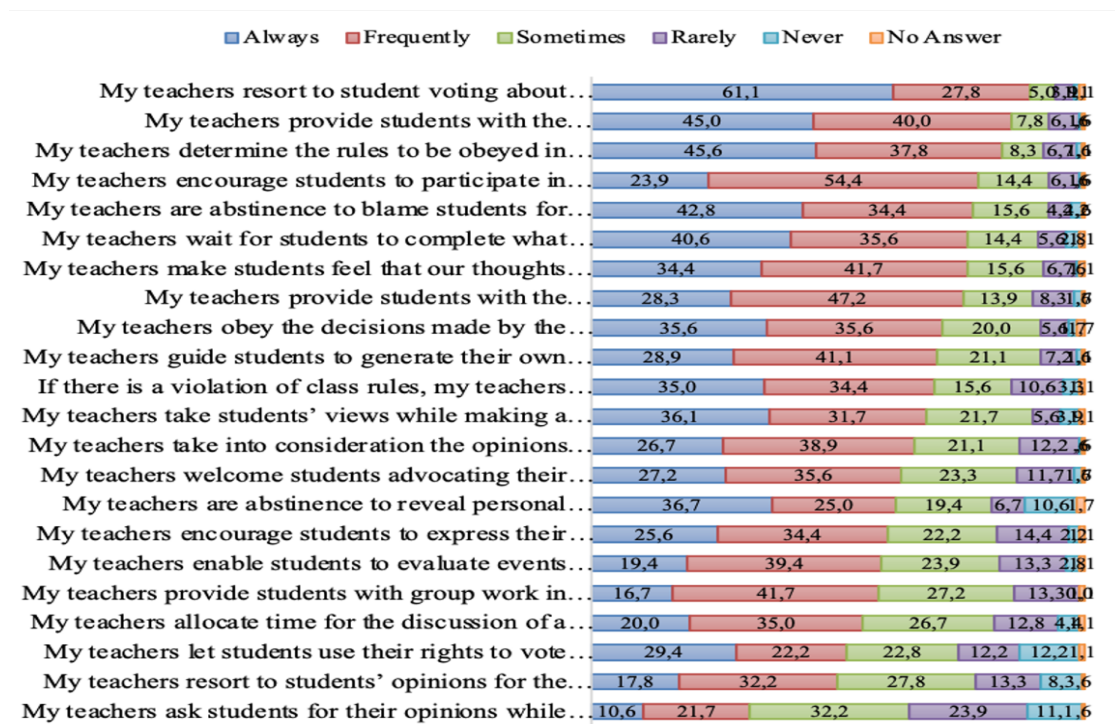
**Figure 1.** Respondents' definition of democracy



### *Students' perceptions of teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching*

Descriptive statistics were used to determine the level of the student's perceptions of teachers' democratic attitudes. As shown in Figure 2, the students perceived that their teachers exhibited democratic attitudes in classroom activities. Out of 23 democratic attitudes questioned, the respondents marked "always" and "frequently" for 11 items with a percentage of 70 and above, six items with a percentage between 60 and 69, and 6 items with a percentage below 60. When answers to the individual item were scrutinised, most respondents selected the answer "always" and "frequently" regarding the efforts by teachers to encourage students to respect others' opinions (90%), the attempts by teachers to have students vote about matters requiring a co-decision by the class (88.9%), the provision of freedom for students to express their opinions (85%), and the opportunity given by teachers for students to discuss classroom rules with their teachers (83.4%). The items to which the answers "sometimes" and below were most frequently given were the opportunity provided by teachers for students to share their opinions for determining the kinds of exams (67.2%), the attempts by teachers to have students' opinions for the arrangement of seating in the classroom (49.4%), and the opportunity given by teachers for students to use their rights to vote in the secret ballot (47.21%). Figure 3 below depicts the complete percentage for the 23 survey items.

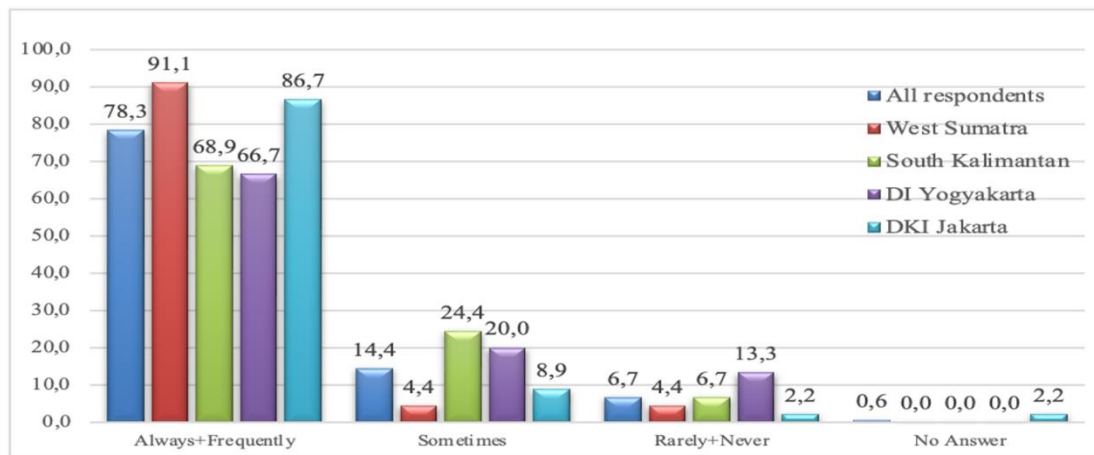
**Figure 2.** *The percentage of students' perceptions of teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching*



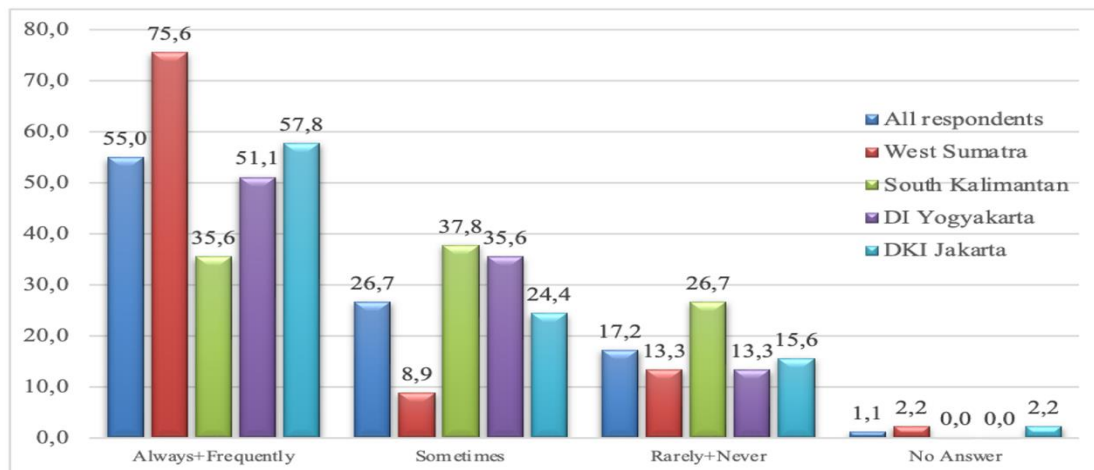
*Students' perceptions based on the province*

Regarding the province, it appeared that teachers teaching in high democracy index provinces tended to be perceived as more democratic by the respondents in most of the survey items than their counterparts teaching in low democracy index provinces. However, answers given in some of the questionnaire items indicated that teachers at West Sumatra province, a low democracy index province, were perceived the other way by the respondents. As can be seen in Figure 3, 91.1% of the respondents in West Sumatra province rated their teachers "always" and "frequently" in terms of the efforts by teachers to encourage student participation in classroom and group activities. Meanwhile, 75.6% of the respondents marked "always" and "frequently" for the provision of time by teachers for students to discuss the current event happening in the classroom (see Figure 4).

**Figure 3.** Respondent's answer for the efforts by teachers to encourage student participation in classroom and group activities based on province



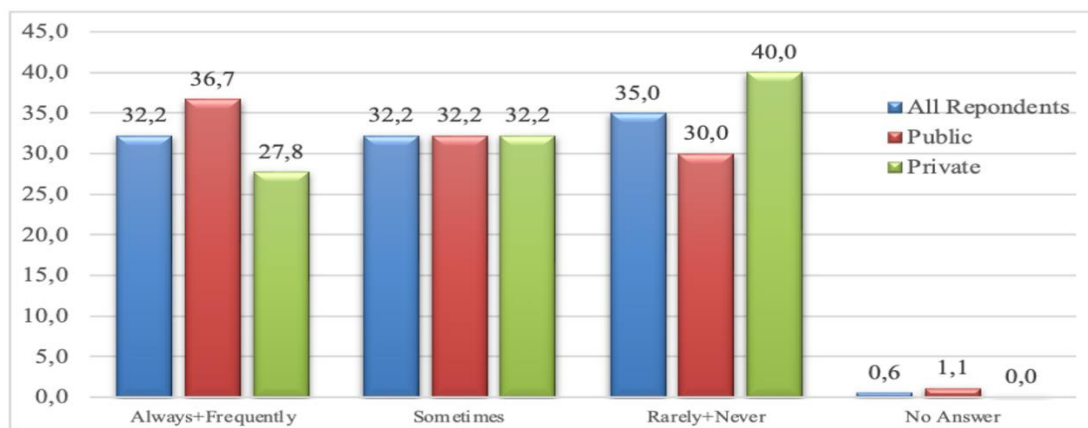
**Figure 4.** Respondent's answer for the provision of time by teachers for students to discuss the current event happening in the classroom based on province



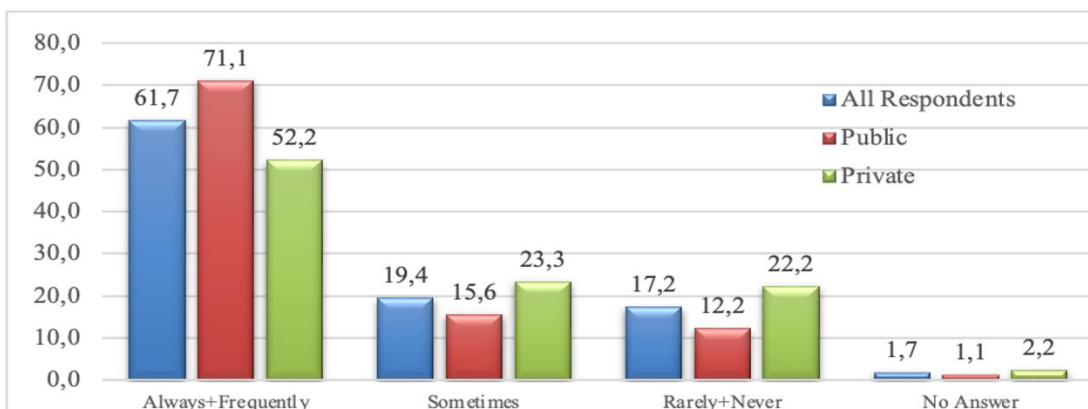
*Students' perceptions based on school types*

Regarding school types, most of the students, both from public and private schools, selected “always” and “frequently” for many aspects of the teachers’ democratic attitudes. Interestingly, when we examined the answers to all of the survey items, we found that teachers in private schools appeared to be rated more democratic than public school teachers. However, the teachers in private schools were rated very low in terms of the opportunity given by teachers for students to share opinions for determining the kinds of exams; the answers “sometimes”, “rarely”, and “never” were most frequently given to this item with a percentage of 72.2 (Figure 5). Respondents in private schools also rated their teachers quite low in terms of abstinence from revealing personal information about students (e.g., arrears in tuition fees, low grades in exams), where answers “always” and “frequently” were given only 52.2% (Figure 6).

**Figure 5.** Respondent's answer for the opportunity given by teachers for students to share opinions for determining the kinds of exams based on school type



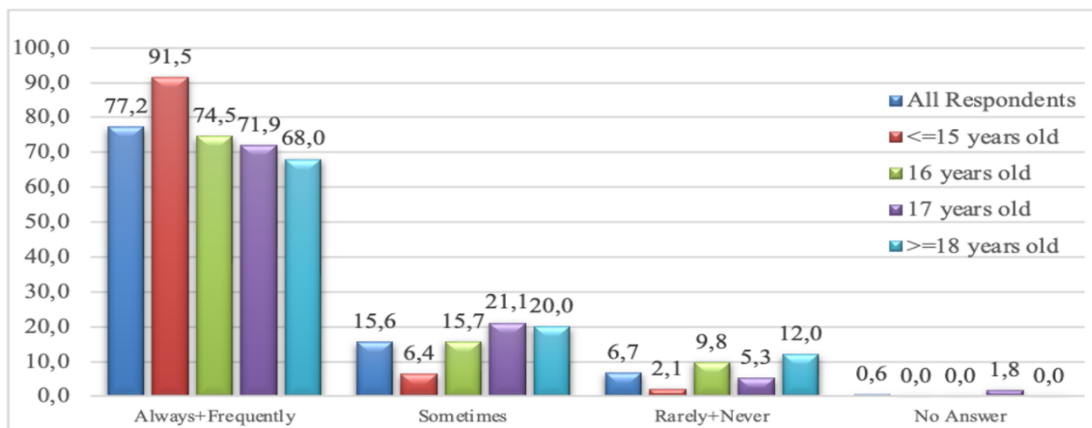
**Figure 6.** Respondent's answer for teachers' abstinence to reveal personal information about students based on school type



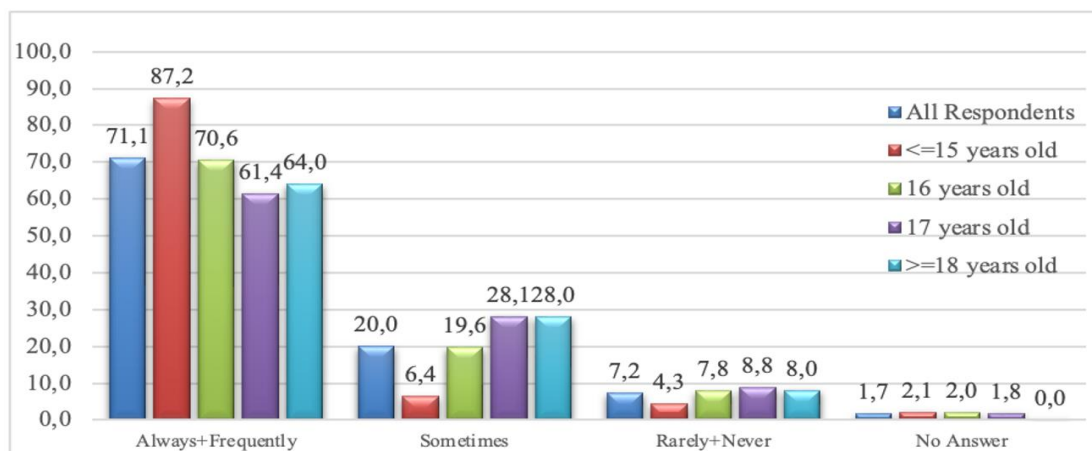
*Students' perceptions based on age*

For the study, an analysis was also performed to indicate whether or not the participants' responses varied in age. While no significant result was obtained, there appeared to be slight differences regarding the participants' age. The respondents aged 15 and below and 18 or above tended to select the alternatives "always" and "frequently" for several items more often than those from the other age groups. As observed, the students aged 15 and below marked the alternatives "always" and "frequently" with a difference of 16% or more for teachers' abstinence to blame students for their opinions (Figure 7) and with a difference of 16% or more for teachers' obedience to the class decisions (Figure 8). The students aged 18 and above selected the alternatives "always" and "frequently" with a difference of 17% or more for teachers' acknowledgement of students' thoughts, although in opposition with their teachers (Figure 9), and with a difference of 13% or more for the provision of group work for students in classroom demonstrations and other group activities (Figure 10).

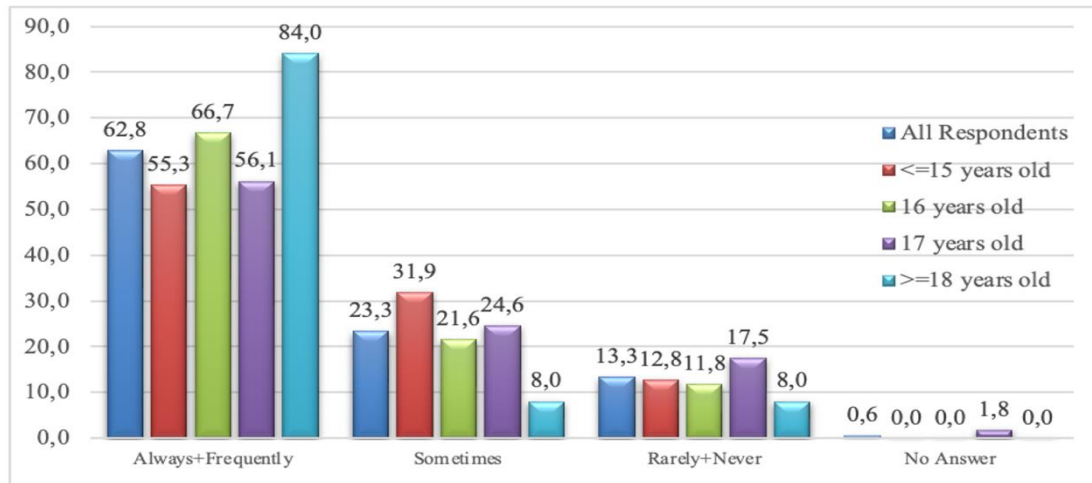
**Figure 7.** Respondent's answers for teachers' abstinence to blame students for their opinions based on age



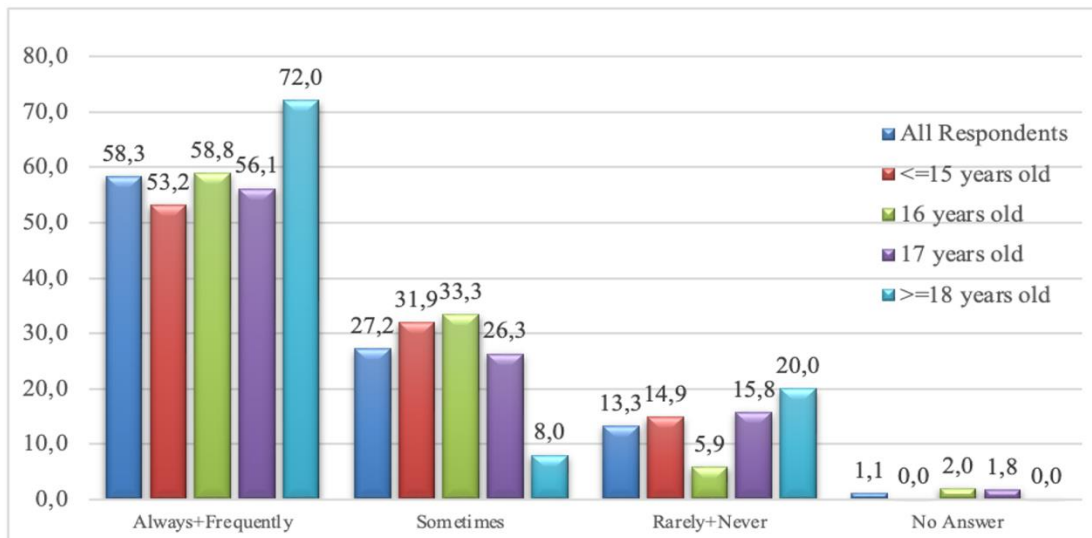
**Figure 8.** Respondent's answers for teachers' obedience to the class decisions based on age



**Figure 9.** Respondent's answers for teachers' acknowledgement of students' thoughts although in opposition with their teachers based on grade



**Figure 10.** Respondent's answers for the provision of group work for students in classroom demonstrations and other group activities based on grade

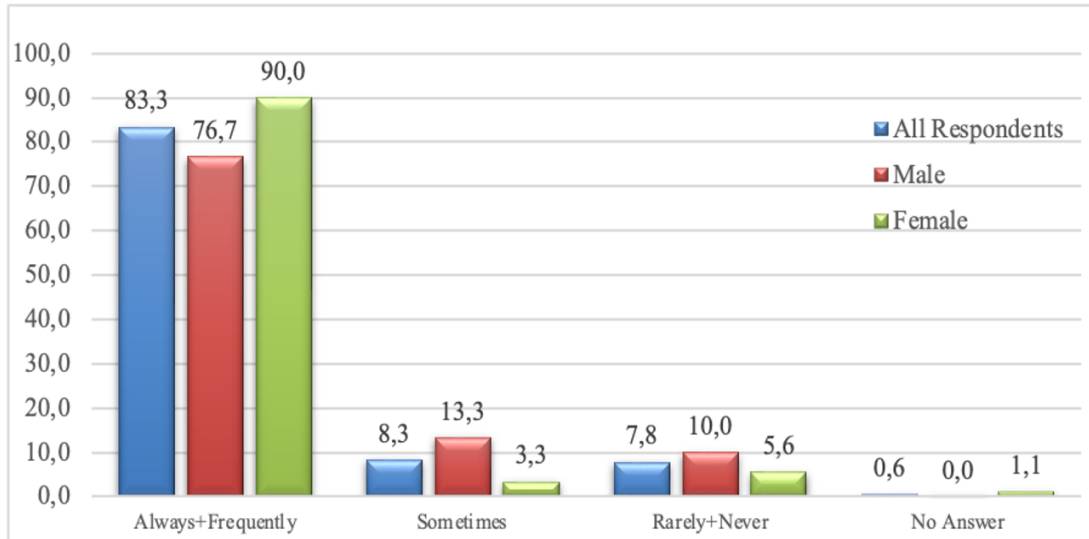


### *Students' perceptions based on gender*

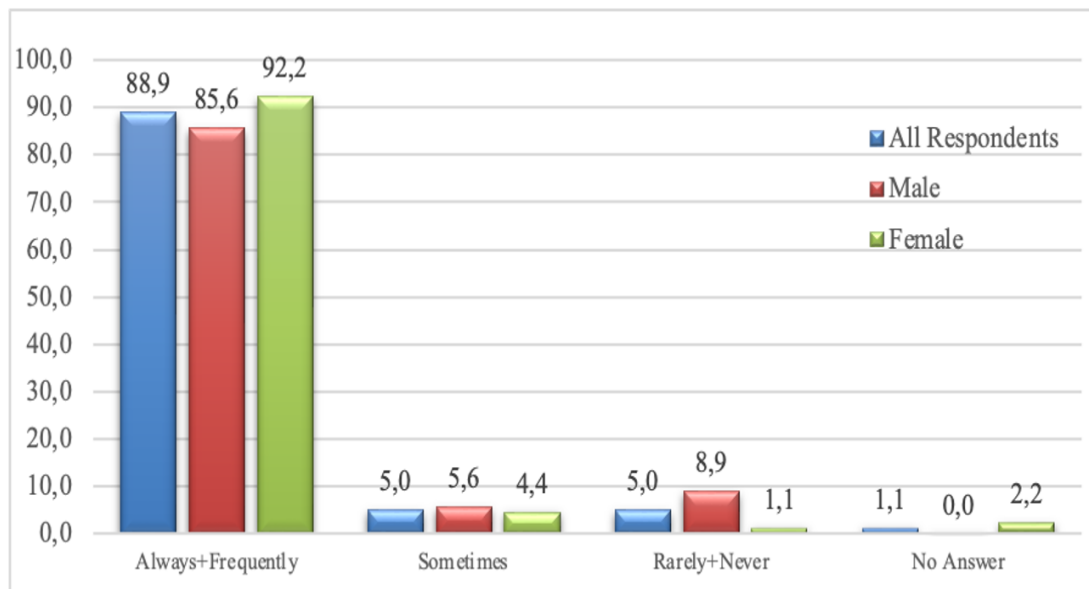
When analysed carefully, the respondents' answers to the individual item of the survey concerning their gender, female respondents appeared to rate their teachers more democratic than male respondents did. As evidence, it was observed that 90% of the female respondents selected "always" and "frequently" for the opportunity given by teachers for students to discuss classroom rules with their teachers (Figure 11). The answers given to the attempts by teachers to have students vote about matters requiring a co-decision by the class further

indicated that female students marked the alternatives “always” and “frequently” more frequently than those from the other sex group, as depicted in Figure 12. A result was also observed in favour of female respondents selecting the options “always” and “frequently” for teachers’ abstinence to blame students for their opinion, with a difference of about 6% (Figure 13). This might be because most teachers teaching in schools are female teachers.

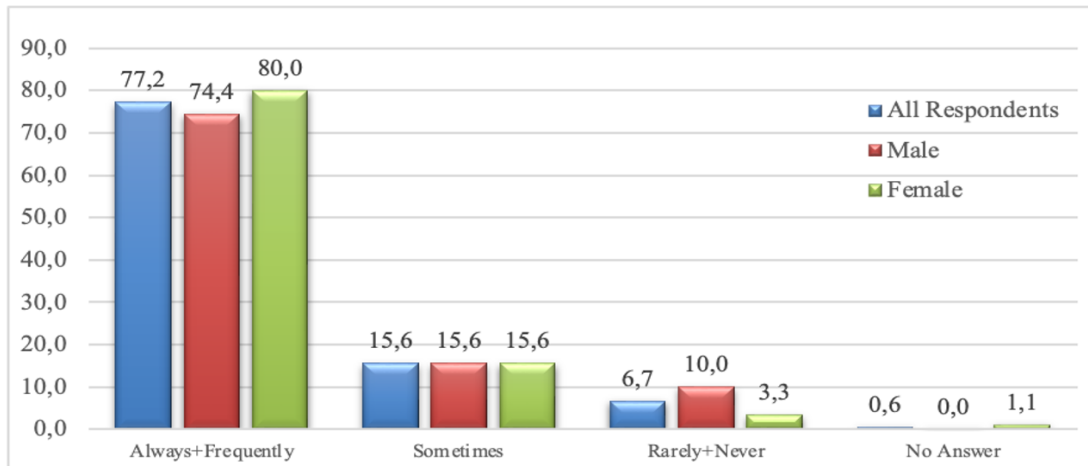
**Figure 11.** Respondent's answers for the opportunity given by teachers for students to discuss classroom rules with their teachers based on gender



**Figure 12.** Respondent's answers for the attempts by teachers to have students vote about matters requiring a co-decision by the class based on gender



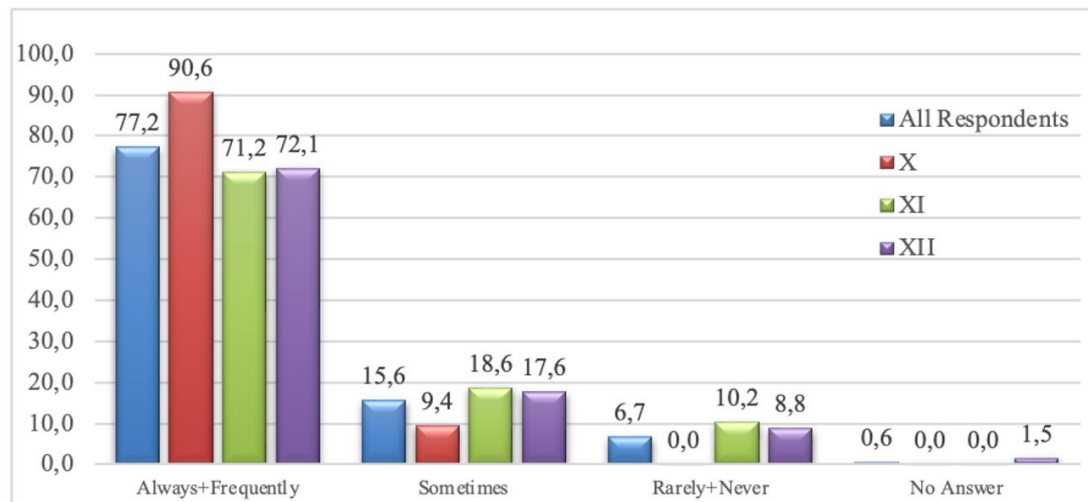
**Figure 13.** Respondent's answers for teachers' abstinence to blame students for their opinion based on gender



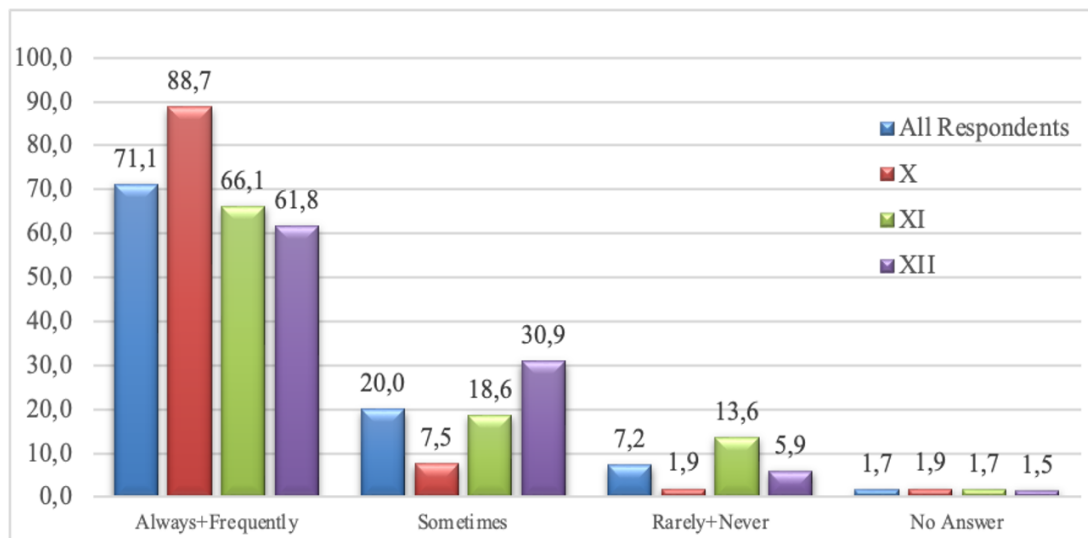
### *Students' perceptions based on grade*

The findings also showed that the grade ten participants marked the options “always” and “frequently” more frequently than the other grade-level students in many survey items. As depicted in Figure 14, the result was on the side of the grade ten students selecting “always” and “frequently” for teachers’ abstinence to blame students for their opinions, with a difference of about 18%. The result was also for the grade ten students, with a more than 20% difference in teachers’ obedience to the class decision (Figure 15). The answers given to the provision of freedom for students to express their opinions also indicated that the tenth-grade students marked the alternatives “always” and “frequently” more than those from the other group levels (see Figure 16).

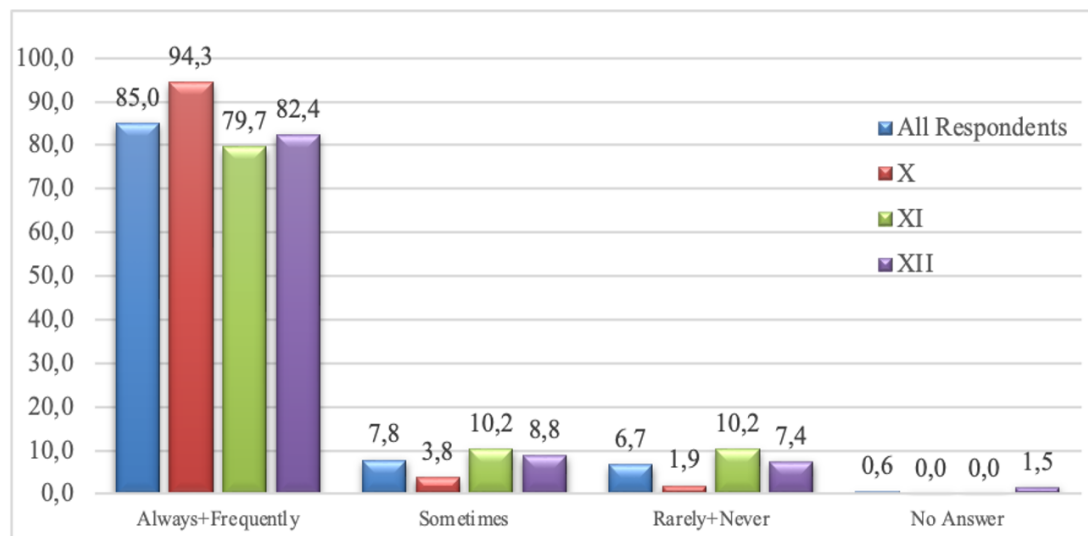
**Figure 14.** Respondent's answers for teachers' abstinence to blame students for their opinions based on grade



**Figure 15.** Respondent's answers for teachers' obedience to the class decision based on grade



**Figure 16.** Respondent's answers for the provision of freedom for students to express their opinions based on grade

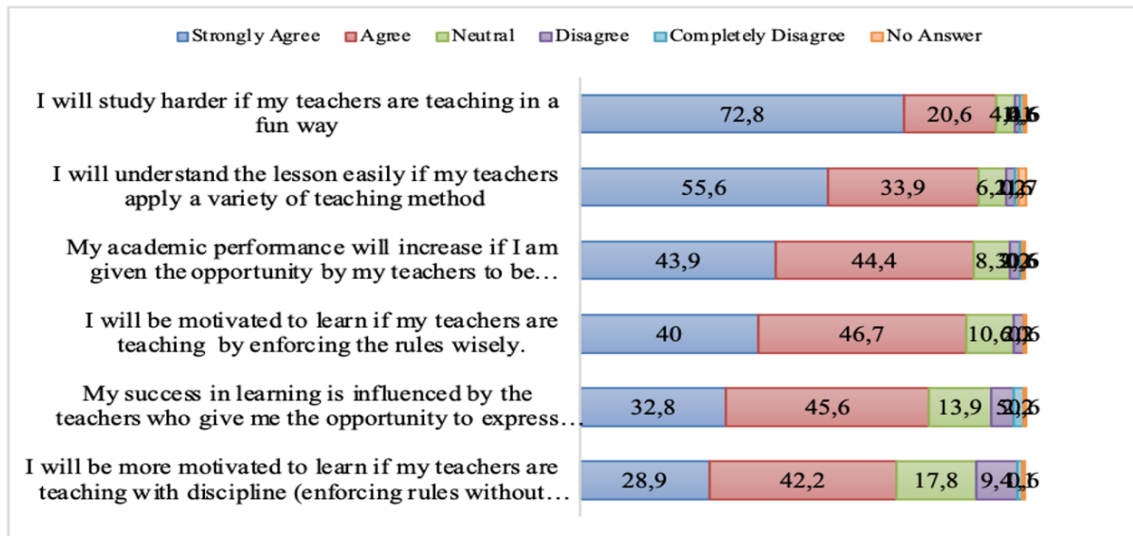


***The effects of teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching on students' learning***

When answers given to the effects of democratic attitudes of teachers in teaching on students' learning were examined, it appeared that the majority of the respondents marked the alternatives "strongly agree" and "agree" more frequently than the others options for all of the survey items with a percentage of 71.1% and above. In particular, the answers "strongly agree" and "agree" were given most frequently to the item "I will study harder if my teachers are teaching in a fun way", with a percentage of 93.4. The answers "strongly

agree” and “agree” were least frequently given to the item “I will be more motivated to learn if my teachers are teaching with discipline (enforcing rules without compromise)”, with a percentage of 71.1. The findings indicated that the students needed teachers’ democratic attitudes in teaching to motivate them to learn and improve their academic performance (see Figure 17). The analysis indicated whether or not the participants’ responses varied in age, gender, and grade was also performed. As observed, there was no significant difference between the answers and the variables.

**Figure 17.** *The effects of teachers’ democratic attitudes on students’ learning*



## Discussion

The study indicated that although most participants knew the word “democracy,” their understanding of democracy was still at the level of procedural democracy. This is, in general, in line with the general assessment that Indonesian democracy is still considered a procedural or electoral democracy (Diamond & Morlino, 2004; Skaaning, 2022). Students’ understanding of democracy seems to be a reflection of what they are seeing about the practice of democracy in the country (such as thousands of elections conducted regularly at the national, provincial, and local levels) and probably also the kind of democratic practices in the school system where they live. Therefore, it is unsurprising that students seem to demand or observe that a more substantive aspect of democracy is still lacking in their environment. The items to which the answers “sometimes” and below were most frequently given were the opportunity provided by teachers for students to share their opinions for determining the kinds of exams, the attempts by teachers to have students’ opinions for the arrangement of seating in the classroom, and the opportunity given by teachers for students to use their rights to vote in the secret ballot. These aspects can be related to a more substantive dimension of democracy.

Regarding the province, it appeared that teachers teaching in high democracy index provinces tended to be perceived as more democratic by the respondents in most of the survey items than their counterparts teaching in low democracy index provinces. This

finding should not be surprising. It indicates that the practice of democracy in a larger system (the province) can be, to some extent, reflected in the smaller part and probably vice versa. Democratic education, as evidenced by teachers' teaching attitudes, effectively instills democratic values and principles necessary for meeting the requirements of a democratic society (Egan-Simon, 2022). Education informed by democratic values and principles fosters a democratic learning environment (Turabik & Gün, 2016), which cultivates awareness of rights and responsibilities essential for maintaining democratic norms either inside or beyond the classroom (Murtaza & Akbar, 2019), and facilitates experiential learning of democracy (Ovens & Lynch, 2019). Thus, it is safe to argue that the more democratic the teachers are, the more democratic the society. Nevertheless, the causal mechanism or the link between the measurement of democracy at the provincial level and the perception of democratic practice in its sub-units (such as schools) needs to be further examined in larger and more detailed studies. Interestingly, answers given in some of the questionnaires indicated that teachers in West Sumatra province, a low democracy index province, were perceived differently by the respondents. This could indicate the disconnection between the practice of democracy in general and the value and practice of democracy in smaller units like the school system. Again, however, this possibility needs further and more careful examination in future studies.

Interestingly, when we examined the answers to all of the survey items, we found that teachers in private schools appeared to be rated more democratic than public school teachers. Bhatti et al. (2012) suggest that teachers in public schools feel more secure than their counterparts in the private sector, which encourages them to have a sense of ownership that stimulates them to perform better in their daily teaching. The findings of this study could indicate that teachers in private schools were perceived better in terms of democratic teaching attitudes because the teachers were more satisfied with their jobs due to the nature of their workplace, including shared belief system, private school culture, and student dynamics (Small & Buckman, 2021), which encourage them to do better in their day-to-day instruction. However, the researchers also assume that private school teachers tended to perform better than the teachers in public schools because their position was not secure. Thus, they must maintain their quality performance to keep their position secured.

The grade ten participants aged 15 and below tended to mark the options "always" and "frequently" more frequently than the higher grade-level students in many survey items. The findings may indicate that the longer the participants studied in the schools, the less exposure to democratic attitudes from the teachers they received. This contradicts the research conducted by Kula and Aytac (2022), which indicated that an increase in a student's grade correlates with an enhanced perception of the teacher's democratic attitudes. Female respondents appeared to rate their teachers more democratic than male respondents did. While it is difficult to conclude, this might be because most school teachers are female. Of 3.3 million teachers teaching in the 2022/2023 academic year, 70% were female teachers (MoECRT, 2023). However, when we looked over the data carefully and linked it with the current theory, the findings may indicate that "gender otherness" is not yet introduced as part of the substantial elements of democracy. In school, a gender perspective should be one of the pillars of understanding democracy and be included in the school curriculum and classroom routine practices (Gelis & Abril, 2020).

The findings indicated that the students needed teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching as it would motivate them to learn and improve their academic performance (Erbil

& Kocabaş, 2018). This was so because, in a democratic classroom, teachers foster students' critical thinking, effective communication, teamwork, action, participation, readiness for a better world, and responsibility (Egan-Simon, 2022; Kula & Aytac, 2022; Maksum, 2021; Murtaza & Akbar, 2019; Ovens & Lynch, 2019). Students need these elements of democracy as learning skills to succeed in their studies and an arsenal to compete in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The findings should be considered an encouraging sign of more substantive and deeper democratic consolidation in Indonesia. When teachers accommodate more democratic attitudes and methods in teaching and learning, it will increase the possibility of the students adopting democratic values better and influencing their future attitudes (Maksum, 2021). In the long term, this could also increase the breeding of democratic citizens, which, from below, could support improving the practice of democracy at the system level, which, in turn, creates a democratic society. However, again, this indication should be a strong stimulant for larger and more robust studies.

As with all research, readers must consider the study's limitations when interpreting the results. This study is limited by the exclusive use of a survey questionnaire for data collection, the non-random selection of participants, the small sample size, and the limited geographical distribution of research locations (provinces). Identifying the study's limitations facilitates recommending areas for further investigation into teachers' democratic teaching attitudes. Future studies should therefore use various data collection instruments to elucidate the findings and include more randomly chosen participants from multiple educational stakeholders (parents, teachers, principals, and students) in other parts of Indonesia.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The study indicated that participants viewed teachers in provinces with a high democracy index as demonstrating democratic attitudes on most survey items, in contrast to those in areas with a low democracy index. The participants noted that teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching enhance their motivation to study and elevate their academic achievement. This study underscores the necessity of fostering teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching through teacher professional development programs.

Based on the findings, two recommendations were proposed as follows. First, while the survey findings have indicated that many aspects of democratic behaviours have been demonstrated by the majority of the teachers in their classroom, about half of the democratic attributes were performed less frequently by the teachers. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate teachers' democratic attitudes in teaching through teacher professional development programs such as periodic training and workshops, mentoring and coaching clinics, and seminars, so that more democratic teachers are available in every school in Indonesia. Second, the findings highlighted in this report were based on a pilot study involving a few participants from twelve high schools in four provinces in Indonesia. Further studies that involve more participants from diverse educational stakeholders (students, teachers, principals, and parents) and other areas in Indonesia and employ multiple data collection instruments are needed to clarify the findings. By doing so, it is hoped that more conclusive and generalised results can be obtained and precise educational policies can be formulated.

### **Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Acknowledgments

This research was part of the Teachers' Training for Teaching Democracy program administered by the Paramadina Institute for Education Reform (PIER), funded by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) Indonesia. We, therefore, gratefully acknowledge KAS Indonesia for providing funds for this research project.

## References

- Akar, C. (2016). Investigating the students' perceptions of the democratic values of academicians. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 7(1), 96–139.
- Awan, A. S., Perveen, M., & Abiodullah, M. (2018). An analysis of the critical thinking for citizenship education in the curriculum at secondary level. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 40(1), 141-153
- Badan Pusat Statistik. (2022, April 16). *Indeks Demokrasi Indonesia (IDI) menurut aspek dan provinsi 2018-2020*. <https://www.bps.go.id/indicator/34/599/1/indeks-demokrasi-indonesia-idi-menurut-aspek-dan-provinsi.html>
- Bhatti, N., Maitlo, G. M., Shaikh, N., Hashmi, M. A., & Shaikh, F. N. (2012). The impact of autocratic and democratic leadership style on job satisfaction. *International Business Research*, 5(2), 192–201.
- Crick, B. R. (2002). *Democracy: a very short introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Council of Europe. (2022, April 15). *Democracy*. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass/democracy>
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education*. New York: Collier.
- Diamond, L. J., & Morlino, L. (2004). The quality of democracy: An overview. *Journal of Democracy*, 15(4), 20–31.
- Economist Intelligent Unit. (2022, April 16). *Democracy Index 2021: Less than half the world lives in a democracy*. <https://www.eiu.com/n/democracy-index-2021-less-than-half-the-world-lives-in-a-democracy/>
- Egan-Simon, D. (2022). Active agents of change: A conceptual framework for social justice-orientated citizenship education. *Equity in Education and Society*, 1(2), 297–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/27526461221089350>
- Erbil, D. G., & Kocabaş, A. (2018). Cooperative learning as a democratic learning method. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 32(1), 81-93. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2017.1385548>
- Fowler, F. J. (2018). *Survey Research Methodology*. Sage Publications.
- Gelis, J. F., & Abril, P. (2020). Gender perspective as a dimension of democracy in schools. *Profesorado*, 24(1), 1-21
- Groves R. B., Fowler, F. J., Couper, M. P., Lepkowski, J. M., Singer, E., & Tourangeau, R. (2009). *Survey Methodology*. Wiley.
- Gulec, S., & Balcik, E. G. (2009). An examination of democratic attitudes of primary school teachers. *Bulgarian Journal of Science and Education Policy*, 3(2), 173–194.
- Johar, R., Patmawati, D., & Munzir, S. (2017, October 16-17). *Students' perception of the implementation of democratic classroom in mathematics learning* [Conference Session]. 2nd Annual International Seminar on Transformative Education and Educational

- Leadership. Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia. <https://www.atlantispress.com/proceedings/aisteel-17/25887413>
- Kula, S. S., & Aytac, T. (2022). Comparative analysis of democratic attitude and value perceptions of school administrators, teachers, preservice teachers, and students: A meta-analysis study. *International Journal of Psychology and Education Studies*, 9(1), 244–61.
- Maksum, K. (2021). Democratic education in “Merdeka Belajar” era. *Progres Pendidikan*, 2(2), 107–114.
- Marzano, R. J. (2009). *Classroom management that works: Research-based strategies for every teacher*. New Jersey, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology – MoECRT (2023, July 12). *Data guru tahun semester 2022/2023 genap*. <https://dapo.kemdikbud.go.id/guru>
- Murtaza, A., & Akbar, R. A. (2019). Teachers’ classroom democratic practices: Perceptions, interpretations and consequences. *Bulletin of Education and Research*, 41(3), 19–34.
- Ovens, A. & Lynch, S. (2019). Democratic teacher education practices. In M. A. Peters (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Teacher Education*. Springer Nature Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1179-6\\_218-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-1179-6_218-1)
- Rowland, S. (2003). Teaching for democracy in higher education. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 8(1), 2003, 89–101.
- Skaaning, S. (2022). *Democracy*. Aarhus University Press.
- Small, C., & Buckman, D. G. (2021). Public and private schools: A study of teacher job satisfaction. *ICPEL Education Leadership Review*, 22(1), 54–71.
- Tocqueville, A. (1835). *Democracy in America*. New York: Century.
- Turabik, T., & Gün, F. (2016). The relationship between teachers’ democratic classroom management attitudes and students’ critical thinking dispositions. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(12), 45-57.
- Yigit, E. O., & Çolak, K. (2010). Democratic attitudes of social studies pre-service teachers. *The International Journal of Research in Teacher Education*, 1(Special Issue), 82–95.
- 

### Biographical Notes

**UMAR ABDULLAH** is working at Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Indonesia, Corresponding email: [umarabdullah@radenfatah.ac.id](mailto:umarabdullah@radenfatah.ac.id)

**DJAYADI HANAN** is working at the Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia (UIII), Indonesia