

How does allowing children to remove their shoes in the primary classroom impact their learning experience?

Researcher

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References

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Objectives

What did I want to find out?
If given permission to remove their shoes in the classroom, would children's learning experience be impacted?

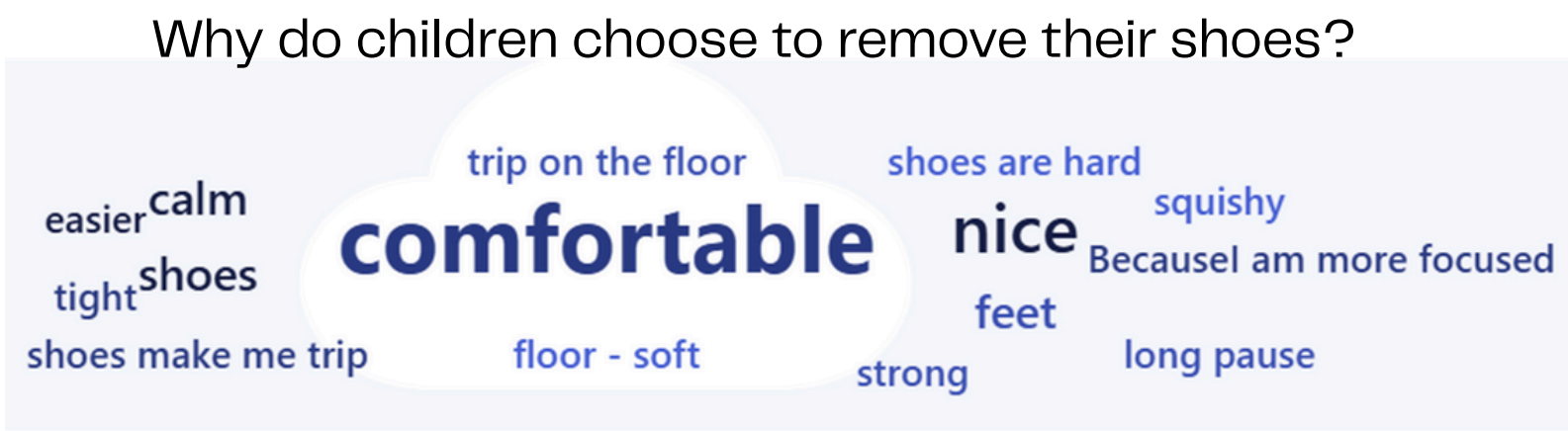
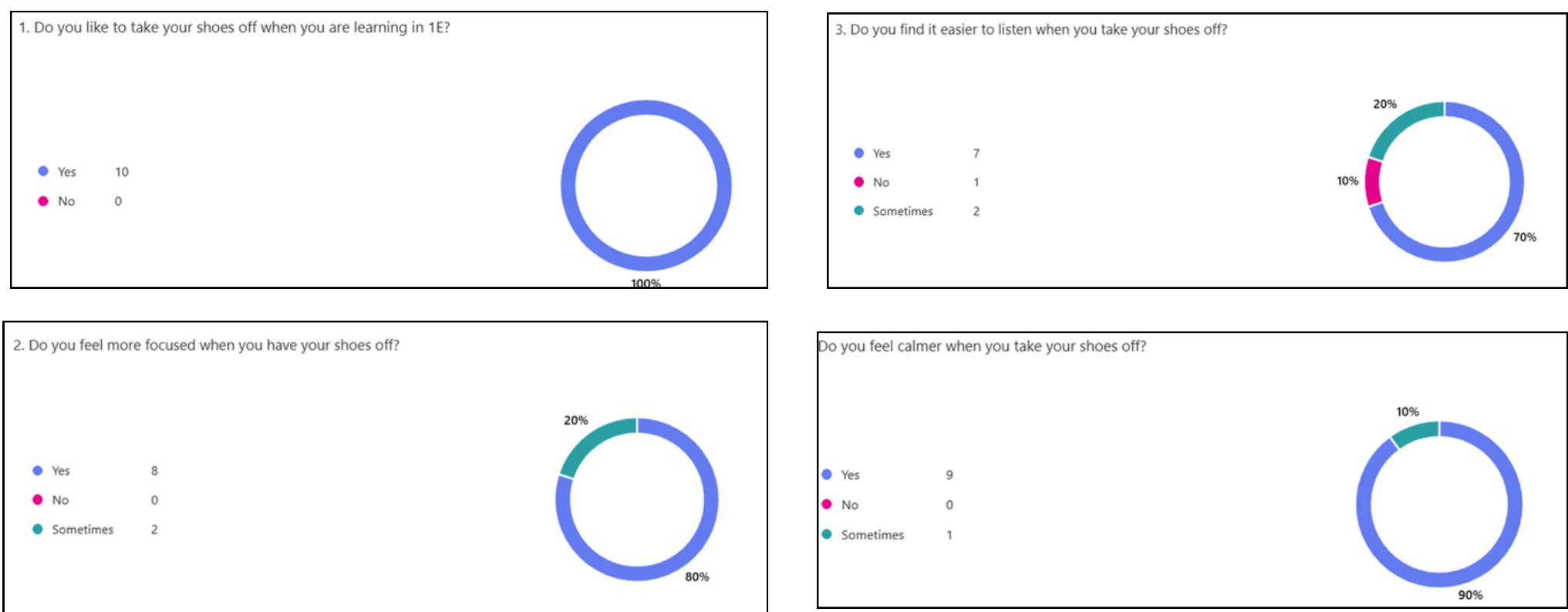
My research questions

- Do children like having the choice to remove their shoes?
- How is children's readiness to learn impacted by removing their shoes?
- Why do children choose to remove their shoes?

Methodology

- This was a case study.
- My Year 1 class were the sample.
- Children, who take off their shoes consistently (every lesson), were chosen to complete a simple questionnaire.
- I also used observations as the classroom teacher to inform my research.

Results



“Because I am more focused. Because I am not hot. I am calm because my shoes are hard and it is soft with without them. Because I like to.”

“ It makes me feel comfortable. It like feels so nice when my feet touch the floor – soft and squishy.”

Discussion

- My findings echo that of Barrett et al (2015) that comfort is important to learning experience. I was unable to observe if there was an impact on distractions.
- Though I was not measuring foot development, like Hollander et al (2017), children's comments about their feet feeling tight in their shoes suggests physical as well as mental benefits too.
- Like Heppel (2016), I encountered and discovered many benefits to children removing their shoes. However, I was unable to measure if the environment was calmer as I introduced the option to remove shoes very early on in the school year.
- Conducting this research made me think more deeply about Madudili's (2024) research and what actually is an appropriate physical environment for our young learner. What further changes could I make in the future?
- Adopting a shoeless classroom took time, patience and strong routines. Most children adapted quickly but I do still find random shoes in the middle of the floor.

Limitations

- Research bias. I believed this would help my learners and therefore promoted it, establish routines around it and was fully invested. It would be interesting to see the impact on a class where the teacher is more neutral at the start.
- It was hard to objectively measure my outcomes. By nature, comfort and concentration are challenging to measure in young children. I could only rely on what they had to say at the point in time I asked for their opinions as well as my observations.



Conclusions

Overall, I found that having the choice to remove their shoes had a positive impact on my student's learning experience. They reported feeling calmer, more focused and more comfortable.

From my observations, children spent much less time inside with shoes on and all the children in my class removed their shoes at some point throughout the year. Some children only wear them when they have to – for safety reasons.

It would be beneficial to consider this as a whole school approach in the future as well as other adaptations for comfort.

