Perception Towards In-Person Class Attendance: A Case Study for Computer Engineering Students

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ABSTRACT

In-person class attendance is important as one of the methods to access student attitude and eventually shape their sense of responsibility in their life. However, as semester goes by and coming to an end, student attendance shows irregular pattern as if it is a constant challenge for a student to attend an in-person class. As such, this paper shares an insight into student perception towards in-person class attendance, whether it is important to them or not. The insight is coming from a survey done to 75 respondents undergoing second year undergraduate computer engineering program in one of the higher educational public institutions in Malaysia. The finding shows that more than 90% of the respondents agree that in-person class attendance is important for the sake of knowledge gained in class.

Although the birth of AI tools can help students in understanding the course content, only 24% of respondents agree that it can replace an in-person class experience. Furthermore, 76% of respondents agree that they learn better in class compared to independent study.

Hence, it now becomes a challenge for a class instructor to give an interesting experience to students as 65% of respondents also indicate that they will regularly attend their class in-person if the sessions are interesting.

Keywords: attendance, in-person class, computer engineering program, student perception

INTRODUCTION

Attendance to in-person class had been proven to have significant effect on better student marks (McClelland & Case, 2023; Muir, 2009; Muresherwa & Makgopa, 2026) although the relationship is not linear. Meaning, there is no guarantee that regular in-class attendance improves students' grade but those who attend class regularly usually are those who get better grades in their course. Regular class attendance has also been shown to reflect the overall success of a student in their study, especially in reflecting a student's positive attitudes in life (Masnan et al., 2025; Mokhtari et al., 2020). Still, students may miss their class, especially as the semester goes by as can be seen from their irregular attendance trend (Galli, 2025).

Several studies have been conducted to find the reasons behind student absenteeism in class. Among those is 'physically unfit' as answered by students in Department of Environmental Plannings (Muir, 2009). The same study also indicated that 'doing other work' to be the reason for their absenteeism in class. Other than that, 'decreased class efficiency' is also one of the reasons that the student might miss their class as indicated by a study done to the students in the Faculty of Dentistry (Mokhtari et al., 2020).

The same survey also found that 'being tired from previous classes' is also one of the reasons for students skipping classes. 'Schedule conflicts' also become major reason for students to skip classes as indicated by a

survey to the respondents at the School of Business, Economics and Law (Galli, 2025). All the mentioned reasons are related to events or situations that are external and outside of human control.

When it comes to reasons within human control, a study conducted at Cape Peninsular University of Technology includes 'lecturer's teaching style' as one of the main reasons for student absenteeism to in-person class (Muresherwa & Makgopa, 2026). However, another study at Mid-West University in Nepal indicated that majority of the respondents does not relate their absenteeism to the academic environment (Subedi & Dhakal, 2025). This finding is consistent anyhow among most of the survey results mentioned but the interesting part in the survey findings is that the suggestion for regular in-person class attendance usually recommend for improvement to the class implementation (meaning; improvement to the academic environment). This is somehow understood because other factors that are outside of human control might not be possible to be altered, hence respondents were left with realistic suggestions for improvement that is on how the class is conducted.

Among the suggestions for improvement to irregular in-person class attendance is 'to develop positive relationship between class instructors and students' (Subedi & Dhakal, 2025). In addition to that, 'active and interactive class' is also suggested as the way the class is implemented for regular in-person class attendance (Muresherwa & Makgopa, 2026). Still, one interesting finding from a survey conducted among university students in Malaysia indicated that it is the students' self-esteem and stronger sense of purpose that motivates regular in-person class attendance (Masnan et al., 2025).

In other words, regardless of the improvement done to the academic environment, it is back to the students' perceived importance of the class that makes them decide on the best use of their time (McClelland & Case, 2023). All these findings indicated that while some survey results are universal, most of them are tied to the respondents' environment, program and background.

Hence, this paper shares yet another one of the surveys conducted to specific groups of students in Malaysia to get their perception towards in-person class attendance. Given their age at the time of the survey in this paper was conducted, this group of students come from Gen Z in which they are mostly electronically enlightened (Bhardwaj et al., 2025). The findings from this survey can help shed some light on whether the students perceived in-person class attendance as important, given how electronically enlightened this generation to the point that most of the information can be accessed and learned with the help of AI tools nowadays (Luo & Wen, 2025). It is hoped that the findings gathered from this survey can give some insights to the class instructors on what can be done within their control to promote regular in-person class attendance.

METHODOLOGY

A survey was given to 75 volunteers undergoing second-year undergraduate study in computer engineering program in one of the higher educational public institutions in Malaysia. It was conducted to get their perception of in-person class attendance. The survey was given at the start of the semester to ensure that the responds acquired from the survey are based on their experience attending in-person class for the program. The distribution of genders of the respondents is given in Table 1, consisting of 45% female and 55% male.

Table 1. Genders Distribution of the Respondents

Gender	**Counts**	**Percentage**
Female	34	45%
Male	41	55%
Total	**75**	**100%**

The survey was developed through MsOffice form consisting of nine questions related to in-class attendance as shown in Table 2. Each question was given a code which is related to the responded results that will be presented in the following section. Questions 1 to 7 respond type is a 5-point Likert Scale where 5 is for 'Strongly Agree', 4 is for 'Agree', 3 is for 'Neither Agree nor Disagree', 2 is for 'Disagree' and 1 is for 'Strongly Disagree'. The Multiple Choice response for Questions 8 and 9 consists of several options for which respondents must choose only one.

Table 2. Survey Questions and Respond Type

Code	Survey Question	Respond Type
Q1	Attending class in-person is important to me.	5-point Likert Scale
Q2	I will come to class in-person even if it is late.	5-point Likert Scale
Q3	I feel there is little need to attend class in-person because we can learn everything by AI tools and online materials.	5-point Likert Scale
Q4	As a university student, attendance should be completely optional and not mandatory.	5-point Likert Scale
Q5	I attend every class because the tuition fee is not free.	5-point Likert Scale
Q6	I consider attending class in-person is important for understanding course concept.	5-point Likert Scale
Q7	I learn better during in-person class rather than through independent study.	5-point Likert Scale
Q8	What is the primary reason you miss a class?	Multiple Choice
Q9	What would make you attend class regularly?	Multiple Choice

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, students perceived attending class in-person is important as 90.67% of respondents answer 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' as shown in Figure 1. This information is further supported by their responds in Figure 2, for which only 1.33% would not come to class if they were late. Meaning, about 98.67% of respondents would consider attending their class in-person even if it is late. When asked if the availability of AI tools and online materials nowadays affects their perceived importance of attending class in-person, only 24% of the respondents perceived that AI tools and online materials can provide what they can get in class, as shown in Figure 3.

This respond reveals that the AI tools and online materials might not possibly replace an in-person class, as perceived by the respondents. However, when asked if the attendance should be made optional, only 30.67% agree with the statement as indicated in Figure 4. This finding suggests that students still need the help of official enforcement to ensure their in-person class attendance, rather than depending on their free-will to attend classes.

Figure 1. Respondents Perceived Attending Class in-person As Important

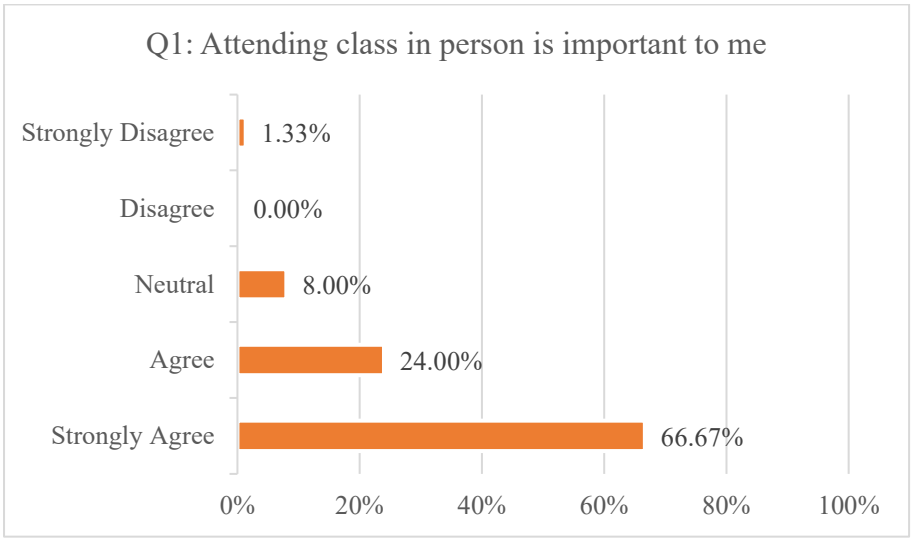


Figure 2. Less Than 2% of Respondents Would Not Come to Class if it is Late

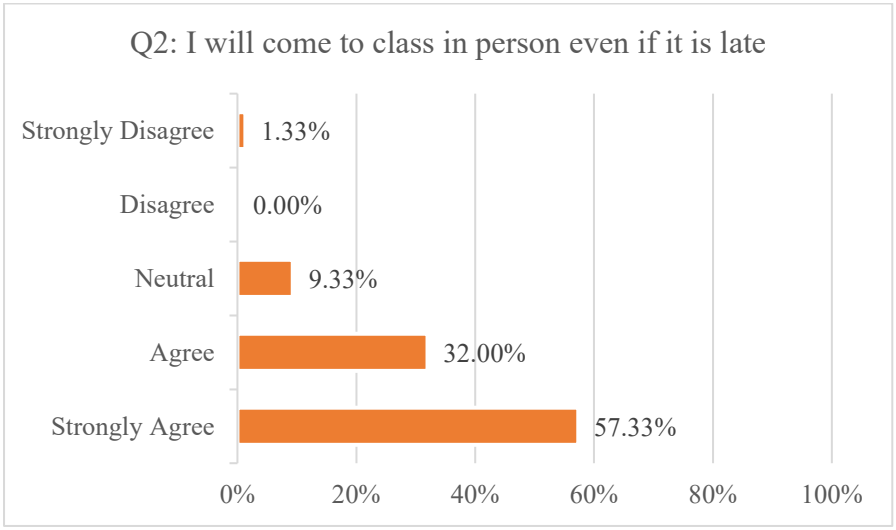


Figure 3. Less than 25% of Respondents Agree that AI Tools Can Replace In-Person Class

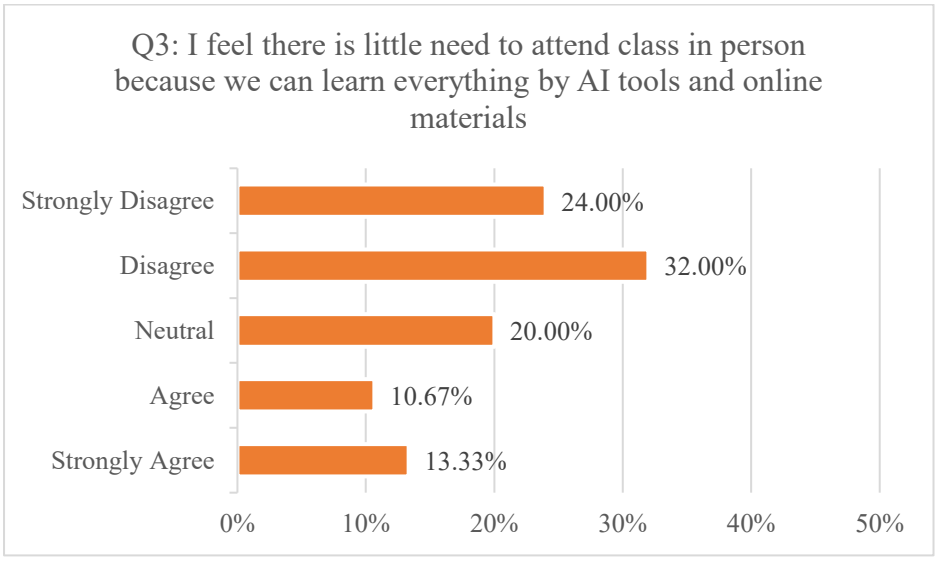
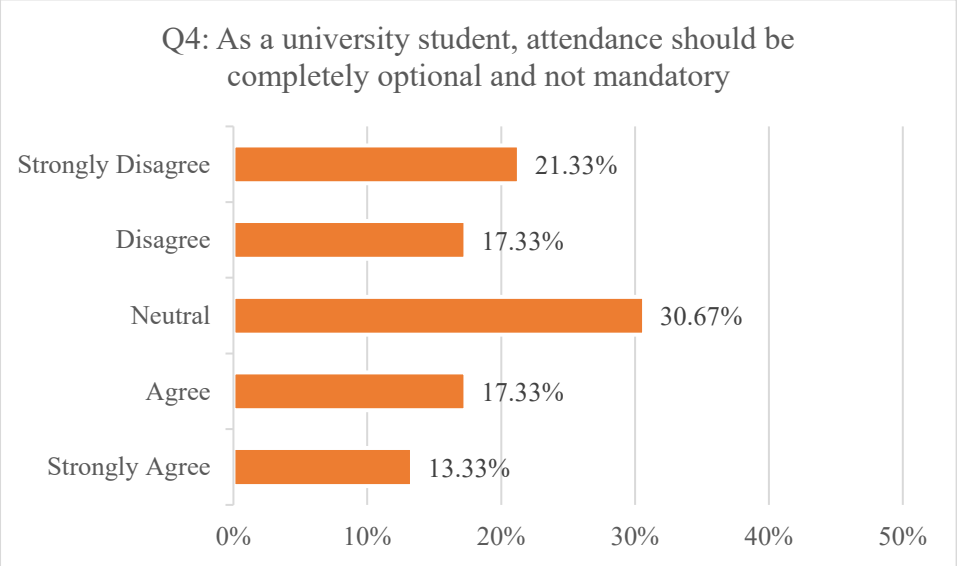


Figure 4. Less than 31% of Respondents Agree that Attendance Should Be Made Optional



When investigating whether it is the program cost or knowledge gained from the class that affects their in-person class attendance, 88% of respondents agree that it is because of the knowledge gained in class as shown in Figure 5. This finding shows that program cost is not a major reason for respondents to attend their classes but rather they value the knowledge more. Further insights into the respondents' study pattern show that 76% of them agree that they learn better in class compared to independent study as given in Figure 6. When asked the main reason that they might be absent from class, 42.67% indicated that 'Mentally or Physically Unfit' as the cause.

Other reasons such as 'Schedule Conflict', 'Academic Stress' or 'Social Pressure' are not the major cause of their absence as shown in Figure 7. Finally, 65.33% of respondents agree that 'Interesting Sessions' motivate them more to attend in-person class regularly as presented in Figure 8. Verbal query as to what did the respondents expect for a class to be interesting sessions; majority of their responds suggest 'collaborative in-class activities' as interesting sessions.

Figure 5. Respondents Valued Knowledge Gained in Class is More Than Program Cost When It Comes to in-person Class Attendance

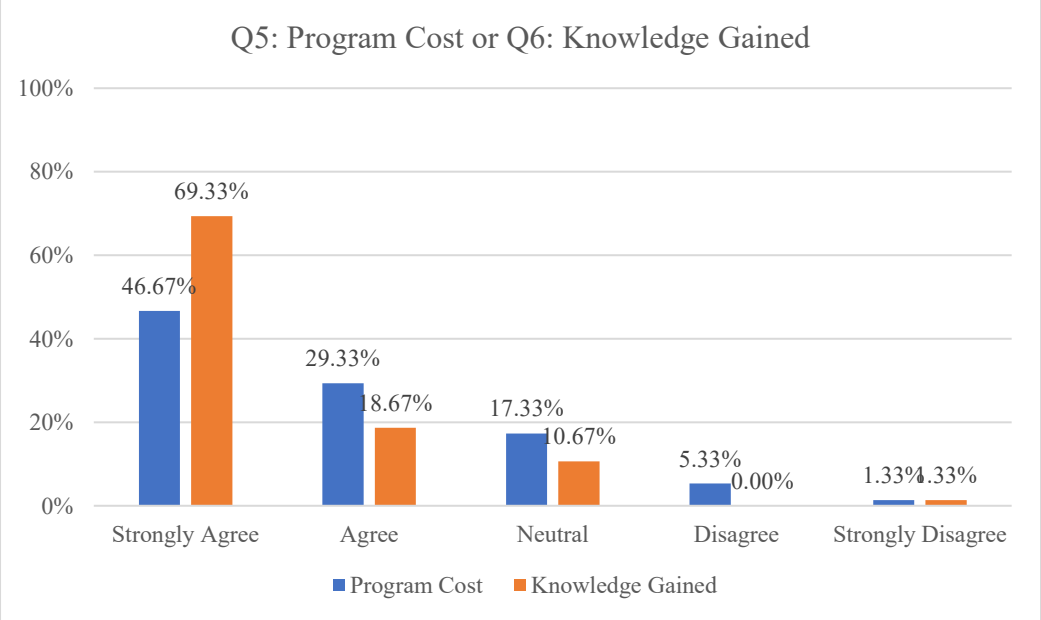


Figure 6. Respondents Agree that They Learn Better During in-person Class

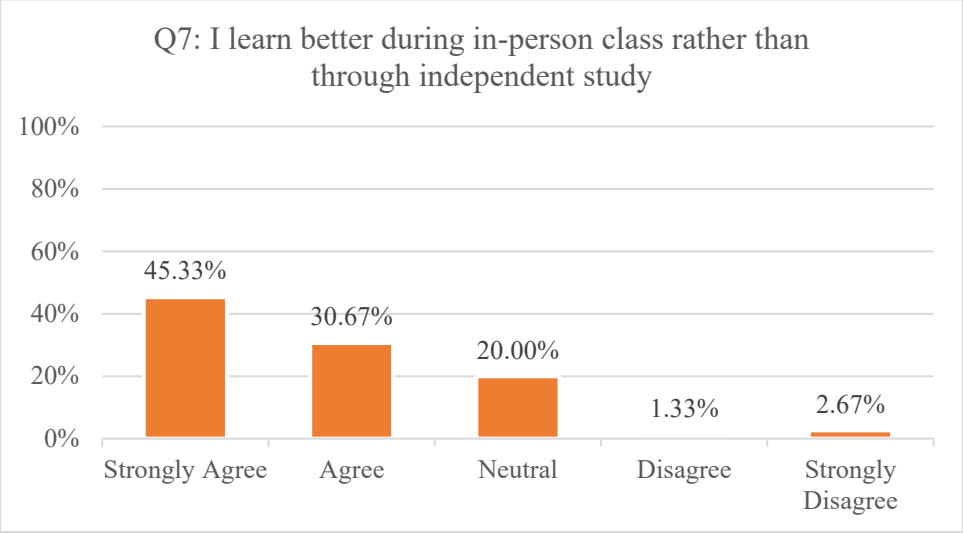


Figure 7. Main Reason Respondents Absent from Class is Mentally or Physically Unfit

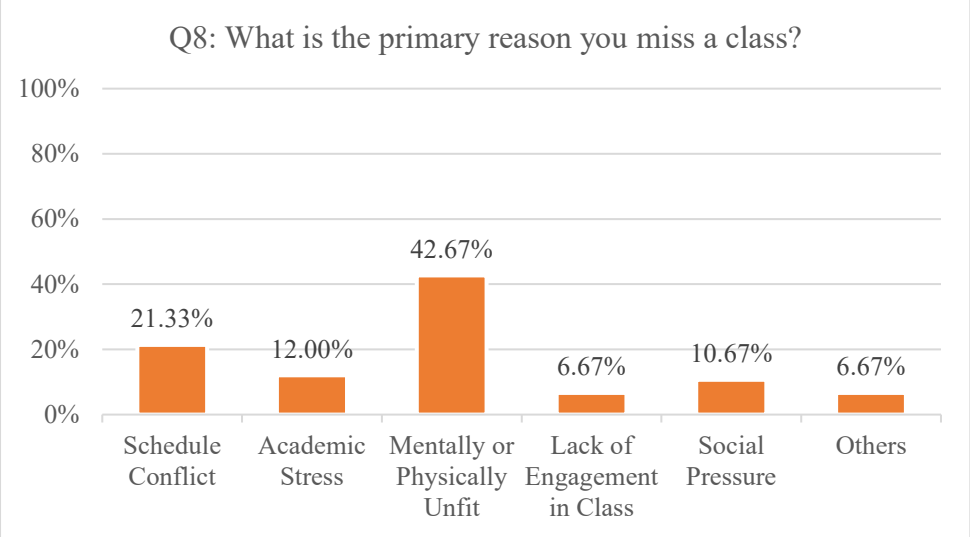
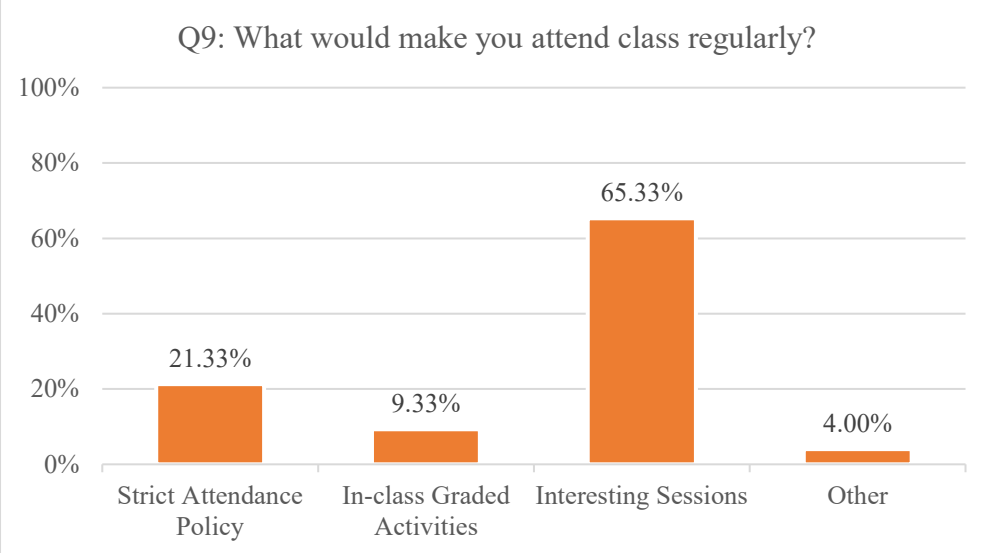


Figure 8. Respondents Will Attend the Class Regularly if the Session is Interesting



CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, it is clearly shown that students perceived their in-person class attendance as important. This is further supported by their perception that more knowledge can be obtained in class rather than through independent study. Although major reason for irregular in-person class attendance is due to mentally or physically unfit, the findings of the survey conducted in this paper also suggest that students are likely to attend in-person class regularly if the sessions are interesting. Even strict attendance policy or graded in-class activities do not guarantee the students' attendance to class. Another interesting finding is that majority of the students do not perceive that AI tools and online materials can possibly replace their in-person class experience. This can be understood as this group of students claimed that they can learn better through in-person class rather than through independent study. In addition, the survey also shows that in-person class attendance can be improved through structured or well-organized interesting activities for the session. It is now up to class instructors to make the sessions interesting as it is one of the useful findings in the survey that hints on class instructors' role in affecting the students' attendance trend.

As the volunteer for this survey is limited to computer engineering students, improvements can be made for future work comprises of findings collected from students in other programs as well, with larger number of respondents. Other than that, the findings of this survey were purely based on students' perception; hence for future work suggestions, it can be further improved to include students' actual performance or course grade together with their actual attendance trend or record. With that, the importance of in-person class attendance can be objectively measured against the students' academic performance. As mentioned before, not all findings from the previously conducted surveys were universal, hence there is a constant need for surveys to be regularly done given variation to respondents' background, environment and program. This kind of survey can give better insights to class instructors on the best practices for their classes.

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